

Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) - relatively new in West

Buddha: 560 B.C.E. - 480 B.C.E.

born of a royal family of India and after leaving his family and searching through the aesthetic and religious traditions of India obtained enlightenment hence the name Buddha or the awakened one.

In the Buddhist doctrine, mind is the starting point, the focal point, and also, as the liberated and purified mind of the Saint, the culminating point

predates Christianity

Buddha lived and taught 500 BCE
taught orally, (encouraged followers to use local dialect)
Earliest writings were in Pali, (later Sanskrit)
translation issues

300 - 500 – council created a canon of the three "baskets" (pitaka):

- the sutras
- the precepts
- the commentaries on the sutras (the Abhidhamma ("about the Law"))
 - o explicitly psychological works

THUS Buddhist Psychology - 2,000 years old
predating Western psychology by 18.5 Centuries.

Buddhism in Europe and the United States

4th century B.C.E.: Alexander the Great made it as far as northern India

200 years ago, Europe colonizes South and Southeast Asia -
exposed to Asian religions

e.g., T W Rhys Davids (1843–1922)

a low-level administrator in Sri Lanka learns the ancient religious language **Pali** and became interested in the early Buddhist canon. He founded the Pali Text Society to translate this early work.

In 1879 the “Light of Asia” which chronicled the life of Buddha was published.

Theosophical Movement (19th century) KEY INFLUENCE

Helen Blavatsky & Henry Olcott (founders of Theosophy) travel to Southeast Asia and were inducted into Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

At this time, great interest in pre-Christian systems:

- druid in England
- neo-pagans
- wicca
- Germanic Mythology:
 - Nazi swastika – from Thule society
 - metaphysical group which believed in the myth of Aryan supremacy
 - Tibet

World War II exposed many Westerners to the cultures of Japan and China.

1950s: Zen & the “Beats” (Kerouac/Snyder/Ginsburg)

- Zen had been in the US since 1893 when a Zen monk came to work with an American publisher to translate the Zen canon.
- Alan Watts was also exposing many people to Zen Buddhism.

US - Zen = “Zen Lite”

VIETNAM WAR (1960s and 70s)

Thailand for R&R - introduced many to Buddhism (Theravada)

Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana) totally isolated till 1950s

- China's aggressive stance towards Tibet
- 1950s – to Scotland & spread through Europe
- US (1967) - Tibetan monk joined Buddhist Studies Program (U Wisconsin)
- 1981 Dalai Lama visits US

Key Differences: US vs. Asia Buddhism

Meditation:

- A: only monks meditate
- US: both monks and laypeople; meditation emphasized

Religion:

- A: religious and existential components
 - o Rebirth & Karma
 - o entities (devas and demons)
- US: philosophy - not a religion

PSYCHOLOGY

Freud (to Jung): sexual theory serves as a "bulwark" against the black tide of "occultism" (Jung, 1963)

- Franz Alexander's "Buddhistic Training as an Artificial Catatonia).

Jung: value in Buddhism and Eastern thought

- not suitable for Westerners
 - o constituted a denial of their own history
- create something uniquely Western (Jung's Analytical Psychology?)
 - o our own culturally specific container for the universal content of these truths
- J did not appreciate that B adapts itself to the culture

Buddhism Beliefs

I. Three Treasures that Buddhists take refuge in, and look toward for guidance:

- the Buddha
- the Dharma (Law -natural, spiritual, and teachings)
- the Sangha (originally community of monks, but more generally the Buddhist religious community).

II. The Four Noble Truths

- 1) Life means suffering.
- 2) The origin of suffering is attachment.
- 3) The cessation of suffering is attainable.
- 4) The path to the cessation of suffering.

1. Life means suffering.

- human nature is not perfect
 - o neither is the world
- physical suffering (pain, sickness, injury, tiredness, old age, and death)
- psychological suffering (sadness, fear, frustration, disappointment, and depression)
 - o different degrees of suffering
 - o opposite of suffering exists (ease, comfort and happiness)
- life is imperfect and incomplete 2nd to impermanence (i.e., happy moments pass)

2. The origin of suffering is attachment to transient things and the ignorance of this attachment

- Transient things: physical objects, ideas, perceptions
 - o idea of a "self" – no permanent self
- Ignorance = lack of understanding of how our mind is attached to impermanent thing
- suffering due to desire, craving & clinging
 - o passion, ardor, wealth, prestige, fame, popularity
- Because the objects of our attachment are transient, their loss is inevitable, thus suffering will necessarily follow.

3. The cessation of suffering is attainable.

- suffering can be ended by attaining **dispassion**
 - o Nirodha: unmaking of sensual craving and conceptual attachment.
- **suffering can be overcome through human activity**
 - o simply by removing the cause of suffering

IV. The path to the cessation of suffering.

- There is a gradual path of self-improvement - to the end of suffering –
 - o the Eightfold Path
- middle way between:
 - o excessive self-indulgence (hedonism)
 - o excessive self-mortification (asceticism)

DRAFT

The Noble Eightfold Path:

1. Right View

- to see and to understand things as they really are and to realize the Four Noble Truth
 - o **cognitive** aspect of wisdom
 - o grasp the **impermanent** and **imperfect** nature of worldly objects and ideas
 - begins with the intuitive insight that all beings are subject to suffering
 - ends with complete understanding of the true nature of all things
 - right view yields right thoughts and right actions.

2. Right Intention

- volitional aspect of wisdom
- commitment to ethical and mental self-improvement
 - o renunciation of desire
 - o good will (resistance to anger and aversion)
 - o harmlessness (resistance to cruelty, violence, or

- aggression)
- develop compassion

3. Right Speech

- words can
 - break or save lives
 - make enemies or friends
 - start war or create peace
- No lies or deceit
- No **slander**
- No **malice/hateful speech**
- No **harsh** words that offend or hurt
- No **idle chatter** that lacks purpose or depth

- **i.e., to tell the truth, to speak friendly, warm, and gently and to talk only when necessary.**

4. Right Action

- deeds that involve bodily actions
 - Don't harm sentient beings (especially taking life)
 - Don't steal (rob, defraud, deceive, or any dishonesty)
 - abstain from sexual misconduct (hurting others)
- **i.e., act kindly and compassionately, be honest, respect the belongings of others, and keep sexual relationships harmless to others**

5. Right Livelihood

- earn one's living in a virtuous way - legally and peacefully
- AVOID:
 - dealing in weapons
 - dealing in living beings (raising animals for slaughter, slave trade, prostitution)
 - meat production and butchery
 - selling intoxicants and poisons, such as alcohol and drugs
 - occupation that would violate the principles of right speech and right action should be avoided.

6. Right Effort

- Mental energy is the force behind right effort
 - o negative: desire, envy, aggression, and violence
 - o positive: self-discipline, honesty, benevolence, and kindness

7. Right Mindfulness perfected cognition

- see things as they are, with clear consciousness
 - o begins with perception or thought
 - o contextualize & interpret in relation to other thoughts and experiences
 - o posit concepts & integrates into complex interpretations
 - o much of this is UNCONSCIOUS
- We often see things obscured
- Right mindfulness = awareness of the process
- Actively observe and control the way our thoughts go

Mindfulness:

- 1) contemplation of the body
- 2) contemplation of feeling (repulsive, attractive, or neutral)
- 3) contemplation of the state of mind
- 4) contemplation of the phenomena.

8. Right Concentration

- all mental faculties - unified & directed to one particular object
- concentration on wholesome thoughts and actions
- meditation facilitates this
 - o focuses on a selected object & direct mind onto it
 - o sustained concentration
 - o intensify concentration (step by step)
 - o eventually, elevated levels concentration is NORMAL

Western psychology and Buddhist psychology

I. Infancy Focus

W- development from infant into a person

B - death & Karma

'tabula rasa' is totally unthinkable in Buddhism

Karma (cause & effect)

As you do unto others, so they shall do unto you (probably

- not totally deterministic
- conditions existence, (determine probabilities (e.g. rebirth as an animal making probable a slippery series of incarnations down into a hell realm)
- person still possesses agency and through their actions may soften or mitigate the effect of negative karma, while enhancing the circumstances for the unfolding of positive karma
- e.g. – story:
 - o a villain - last thoughts was of the single positive action he did - reborn higher
- Thoughts and feelings have karmic consequence

II. Dichotomies (Mind-Body; Nature-Nurture)

B - There is a distinction made between biological, situational, and psychological states, but they are viewed more holistically – NOT a dichotomy.

III. Senses/Dualism

B – 5 senses + thought (holistic NOT dualistic)

W – 5 senses +/- mind (an emergent property)

Western dualism at odds with Western religion.

- personified God who is 'other'
- not inherent in Nature (merely its creator and overlord)
- Soul - essentially on loan – has all our cognitive abilities - separable from the body

- Soul will be judged
- body is disposable

Science: *psychology has gone to the devil*

- has sought to remain detached from the world (objective)
- definer of creative processes (evolution)
- science seeks to usurp the throne of God

Buddhism is an atheistic religion (no 'God')

- at most, Buddha is a supernatural teacher
- karma: no need for 'judgment' (already contained in the action)
- NO SEPERATION - world of a 1,001 things is illusion
- NO DUALISM
- NO SOUL

- psychological terms: **no self**
- everything is impermanent
- **Self as a process.**
 - Karma - one moment conditions the next – continuity
 - there is agency, feelings, cognition – i.e., personhood
 - no permanent unchanging self BUT still a person

ETHICS

Four Noble Truths:

- focus and concern for liberating others = moral interest
- Eight Fold Path: ethical conduct

without the practice of virtue, there will be no advancement through meditation.

MEDITATION

2 General Classes

- concentration (Samatha)
- mindfulness (Vipassana).

Concentration (most common public image)

- meditator focuses in on a single thing to the exclusion of all

else

- chanted syllable (mantra)
- image
- breath
- quality (compassion or loving kindness)

Some maintain that the results achieved by this method are lost outside of meditation when the meditator returns to everyday consciousness.

Mindfulness (last beyond the sitting)

- objective in mindfulness meditation is full awareness of one's experiences
 - objective - achieve this state of meditation permanently
- thoughts are noted and let go
 - no attempt to suppress the arising of thoughts
 - no pursuit of thoughts which arise
 - no linking of thoughts together into chains of thinking
- Same with arising emotion
- Walking Meditation - bridge towards mindfulness in every activity
- **KEY POINT** - not to force anything, but rather to gently return to awareness.

Buddhist Psychology: **very phenomenological**

- [Gestalt Psych]
- Inner experience of the individual
- vs. empirical evidence
 - repeatability by scientific method
 - public vetting
- Verification of Buddhist methods can be obtained ultimately only through personal experience.

Strong Cultural Bias:

- West – SCIENTIFIC
- Buddhism can be shared between people who have had similar experiences in the same way experiments can be

replicated and publications understood by people in the scientific community who share similar training and experience.

'Empirical' evidence for the claims of the meditation:

- see Mind-Life Institute
- Yogis don't blink (insensitive to external stim)
- Zen masters do not exhibit habituation (mindfulness)

DRAFT

Buddhist Psychotherapy (Thoughts without a Thinker by Mark Epstein)

The wheel of life: a Buddhist model of the neurotic mind.

6 realms of existence: cycle endlessly) in their rounds of rebirth.

- human realm
- animal realm

- hell realm
- hungry ghosts realm

- jealous gods realm
- God realm

Emerging out of the human realm is a path to Buddhahood, a special opportunity implicit in human birth - this awakening of Buddha mind leads to an escape from the wheel of life

Karma (merit) - ones actions in this life will affect ones rebirth

- Harming others - rebirth in hell
- indulging in passions - rebirth in the animal realms
- giving to others (esp. monks) - more comfortable human birth or rebirth in the God realms

Essential Point of mandala:

beings driven by greed, hatred, and delusion (see center of the circle - pig, snake, rooster) remain ignorant of their Buddha nature and are bound to the wheel of life

Buddhist view of suffering: causes of suffering are also the means of release

- sufferer's perspective determines whether a given realm is a vehicle for awakening or bondage
- our **perceptions** are faulty and it is these perceptions, not the realms themselves, that cause suffering

- perceptions are conditioned by attachment, aversion, and delusion
- Within each realm it is possible to correct our distorted perception
 - we can learn this and be freed from suffering.

The core question of Buddhist practice is a psychological one—“ who am I?” Investigating this question requires exploration of the entire wheel.

- Each realm is a metaphor for a different psychological state
- The entire wheel is a representation of neurotic suffering

Buddha suggests suffering is created by our fear of experiencing ourselves directly.

- Freud

Patient ‘... must find the courage to direct his attention to the phenomena of his illness. His illness itself must no longer seemed to him contemptible, but must become an enemy worthy of his metal, a piece of his personality, which has solid ground for its existence and out of which things of value for his future life have to be derived.’”

Both Buddha and Freud suggests that reconciliation can lead to release and that we **cannot** find our enlightened minds while continuing to be estranged from our neurotic ones.

“When all is said and done, it is impossible to destroy anyone in abstention or an effigy.”

NOTE: nirvana

- not a separate realm apart
- release from suffering 2nd change in perception

PARRAELLS

Freudian psychology, and Neo-Freudian as well, have explored:

- animal nature of passion
- Hellas nature of paranoia aggression and anxiety

- oral cravings of the “hungry ghosts”

Humanistic Psych: “peak experiences” of the God realm

Ego Psych & Behaviorism & Cognitive TX:

competitive self of the jealous gods

narcissism seen in the human realm

Buddhist teachings assert that human suffering and neurosis stems from the individual being estranged from their own Buddha nature or enlightened mind.

Psych returning or in re-integrating pieces of estranged human experience

Hell Realm:

- aggressive and anxiety states 2nd to being tortured by some outside forces
 - dominated by their anger or anxiety
 - they do not realize that the unwanted forces are their own and that they are imprisoned in a cell of their own making.
- e.g., Oedipal complex, son is both furious at and fearful of the father
- feelings are so strong and so dangerous they cannot be acknowledge
- are projected as e.g., fear on some external thing.

KEY:

- when we refuse to acknowledge the presence of unwanted feelings, we are bound to them
- Religion: withdraw from aggressive, erotic, or egotistical states of mind
- Psychoanalysis: understand emotions roots and recover their energy by accepting the primitive urges
- Buddhism, middle path,
 - o need to be free from destructive emotions

- such freedoms come through nonjudgmental awareness of just those emotions from which we seek freedom

Animal Realm:

- instinctual gratification of the biological drives of hunger and sexuality
- Freud's ideas of sublimation
 - inherent limitations to the pleasures of sexual gratification
 - Pleasure is inherently fleeting and its completion returns us to a state of unrest and tension/dissatisfaction.

In civilization and its discontents, Freud stated that:

“we call happiness in the strict sense comes from the (preferably sudden) satisfaction of needs which have been dammed up to a high degree, and it is from its nature only possible as a periodic phenomena.”

Sexual Dysfunction because they are unwilling to look at the animal realm and its tensions and energies.

Sexuality is a threat to spirituality only when it is not integrated.

Tantric meditation practices often culminate in ritualized sexual acts

Hungry Ghosts:

- phantom like creature with withered limbs, grossly bloated bellies, and long thin necks.
- represents a fusion of rage and desire
 - tormented by unfilled cravings and insatiable—the hungry ghosts are searching for gratification of old unfulfilled needs

- emptiness within themselves and cannot see the impossibility of correcting something that has already happened
- their ghostlike state represents their attachment to the past,

these beings while impossibly hungry and thirsty cannot drink or eat without causing themselves terrible pain or indigestion. Their throats are so narrow and raw that swallowing produces unbearable irritation—their bloated bellies are unable to digest nourishment—

cannot take in present-day satisfaction

obsessed with the fantasy of achieving complete release from the pain of their past and are stubbornly unaware that their desires is a fantasy.

Key to their release is that they are estranged from the knowledge that their fantasy is in fact a fantasy, the hungry ghosts must come in contact with the ghostlike nature of their own longings.

One key aspect of the hungry ghosts is that they show an insatiable search the kind of nourishment that they had once needed but that now was inappropriate to who they are as adults.

They will often fear what they most desire and are unable to experience satisfaction available to them

an example of this is someone who although they have relationships with others are repeatedly unsatisfied with their current relationship and are constantly seeking the next one.

They invariably will keep their current relationship at a distance, will quickly and critically uncover all of their partners faults, lose interest in them sexually, and essentially prevents them from touching the individual either physically or emotionally.

At the same time the individual would begin to fantasize about the next relationship. The individual will often be unable to reach satisfaction sexually and have a vague discomfort with any sexual intimacy.

Such a person they often have an unhappy and critical childhood where they are isolated and rejected by their parents. This person is ever seeking someone to give them the love and affection that their mother never had but it is unlikely that this would be very satisfying for very long to the adult person and in fact such behaviors they seem suffocating and that they are no longer relevant to the individual's adult needs.

Thus the patient enters a relationship with one partner and this stimulates a resurgent fantasy of a liberating relationship, which cannot happen, and so the patient fantasizes about another relationship that will provide this liberation

This is the situation where the person has a need that cannot be fulfilled in the physical realm.

Western Psychology = “low self-esteem”—that is a desperate longing for inexhaustible abundance. This inner feeling of emptiness and unworthiness in the Western psyche does not really have a parallel in Buddhist studies for the Buddhist, the emptiness of the hungry ghosts must be experienced in such a way that **reparation is no longer sought from an impossible source** but rather the emptiness must be knowledge and the individual must develop a nonjudgmental awareness that changes the self-loathing into wisdom about the self.

God Realm:

an extended version of peak experiences where the individual dissolves into the experience of pleasure and the ego boundaries are eradicated. In this state, which is known in psychology as “confluence” the self temporarily, dissolves and a new whole is created.

Confluence can present 2 types of difficulties.

- 1) A clinging to what comes to be an unhealthy confluence
- 2) a pulling back from or estrangement from a healthy confluence.

The **1st type** are those who demand the sense of that oneness from their children, lovers, friends, parents, coworkers, or other intimates AND who refuse to allow the necessary otherness that permits those others to breathe. These people become frightened by the loss of connections, who stifle their own aggressive urges because such urges are selfish, and who find others wishes intolerable when they conflict with their own wishes. There are the enablers in alcoholic families or the codependency neurotic ones

The **2nd type** are those who, usually because of early deprivation or prodding into independence, crave and yet are made anxious by the ego dissolution of confluence. They have never sufficiently experienced the relaxation of parental praise in early childhood and therefore are frightened by the approach of its corollary of adulthood and they tense or pullback during intimacy guarding the ego boundaries that they were induced to create prematurely. They are typically unaware of this tensing and feel cheated somehow but they cannot recognize the source of their feelings of continued isolation.

The God Realm represents the person's ability to relax ego boundaries, to dissolve temporarily, to acknowledge the joy of connection and of the static and intellectual pleasures. Buddhists say that this realm is routinely accessed in meditation but are no more sustainable than the sensory pleasures that Freud spoke of. In fact, when they become the objects of craving, they themselves become a potent source of suffering.

The realm of the **Jealous Gods**:

- realm of ego and aggression
 - o leading to self-control, and adaptation

- energy needed to overcome frustration, change a situation, or make contact with the new experience.
- the jealous gods embody the aggressive force necessary to approach and assimilate the obstacles to that achieving the God Realm
- Release in this domain is through discriminating awareness
- aggressive nature of the ego is not the problem
 - o this energy is in fact valued and is necessary in the spiritual path
- jealous gods need to do redirect their aggression destroying and assimilating the unawareness that keeps them estranged from themselves
- This is done through organizing the ego functions, reorienting them away from attempts of possession of things and towards the achievement of discriminating awareness.

Psychotherapy

- individuals often taught to not be excited or aggressive
- the aggression and excitement is often turned back on their own body
- being cut off from their own aggression begin to experience that aggression as directed against themselves by another such as imagining a lover's infidelity.

Human Realm:

neurotic mind is not simply self-indulgent but also hides from itself

- developing infant needs to hate in order to truly love
- sexual passion must be lived in order to understand its limitations
- fantasies of gratification of unfulfilled needs must be understood as fantasies and order for actual gratification to be appreciated
- ego functions must be freed in order to use them for spiritual as well as worldly purposes
- ego boundaries must be temporarily relaxed in order for confluence to be understood

Lower Realms (Hell & Hungry Ghosts & Animal): unacceptable desires

(as was Freud)

Upper Realms (God & Jealous gods): ego function and their temporary dissolution.

Human Realm: the search for self
psychology & creative activity
Release through Buddhahood
ISSUE - we do not really know who we are

Experience:

emptiness, inauthenticity, and alienation

lack of acknowledgment, attention, or recognition that might lie behind these disturbing feelings

e.g.

- Child, seeking contact with another person
- Narcissistic Parent, too preoccupied with their own search to attend to the child
 - child is left with the feeling of absence that becomes the seeds of her own fear and insecurity
 - child constructs a “False Self” to manage the demands of the alternatively intrusive and ignoring parent
 - o must then struggle against this false self to feel real
 - o false self obscures more spontaneous personal expressions and cuts the person off from himself.
- Parents see their children as a reflection of themselves or the parent attempts to live vicariously through their child – thus the child becomes invisible and is nothing but a reflection of the parent.

Human Realm NOT just about the false self

Possibility of Transcendent Insight into the true nature of the self.

Emptiness (sunyata): the more we grasp emptiness, the more we feel real

BUT

the core self is really a place of fear at our own insubstantiality - we do not want to be discovered and we defend this place so fiercely

Through practice we can approach that privacy without fear and create a genuine sense of liberation rather than a permanent isolation.

Greed, Hatred, Delusion

at the center of the wheel of life these forces perpetuate our estrangement from ourselves

Freudian psychoanalysis was primarily concerned with uncovering repressed desires and anger that is, Eros & Thanatos

More recently (last 50 years or so) Psych - inauthenticity & alienation 2nd estrangement from the true self

Serious Limit of Psychoanalysis: method to identify but not work directly with our confusion about ourselves.

ENDGAME:

Psychotherapy encourages adjusting to wheel of life

Buddhism Nirvana is the physical world.

learn another way of relating to each of the dimensions.

The enlightened person is in the world but not of it.

greed hatred and delusion can develop & mature
sexual & aggressive drives can develop & mature

- vs. ID as a “seething cauldron” of primitive energy that must be mastered and regulated and kept under firm control

- some see the possibility of transformation of the primitive drives through the process of giving them “access to consciousness”

The entire wheel of life is a representation of the possibility of transforming suffering by changing the way we relate to it

Liberation from the wheel of life does not mean escape, rather it means clear perception of one's self and of the entire range of human experience.

DRAFT