

1 ☐ Lecture 13

Chan Buddhism

2 ☐ Chan (Zen) Buddhism

- emphasis on Buddha-nature
- monastic life with master-apprentice relations
- messages adjusted to pupils and contexts (upaya)
- enlightenment can occur here and now
- enlightenment connected to creativity

3 ☐ Zen vs. Tiantai and Huayan

- Zen School views emphasis on scriptural studies as impediment to enlightenment
 - texts are like fingers pointing at the moon
- Zen writings tend to be playful
 - like Zhuangzhi
 - don't take the text too seriously

4 ☐ Legendary Founding in India

- Lesson: "Getting it" need not involve transmission of verbal information.

5 ☐ Legend of Bodhidharma

- See Handout, #1
- legendary founder of Zen in China (at Shaolin)
- Legend is a pedagogical tool, not an attempt at genuine history
 - also legitimates Zen
- Lesson: Clearing the mind is a way to reveal Buddha-nature
 - See Handout, #2

6 ☐ Transmission to Hui-k'o

- Bodhidharma's first student
 - See Handout, #1
 - Lesson: Zen practice requires earnestness and sincerity
- Buddha-nature is not a thing; it is a way of experiencing the world
 - See Handout, #3

7 ☐ The Rift

- After Hui-k'o, Zen gains popularity in China
- There is a succession of patriarchs (master teachers)
 - one per generation
- In the 7th century, Zen splits into two schools
 - poetry contest between Shen-hsui and Hui-neng

8 ☐ Shen-hsui's Poem

- Mind is a mirror
- Zen practice polishes the mirror
- Enlightenment is perfectly polished mirror
- Enlightenment is gradual – need to practice to get it

9 ☐ Hui-neng's Poem

- Mind is not a thing (empty)
- So mind cannot have defilements
- Enlightenment is sudden – can happen in a single step, even without practice
 - See Handout, #4

10 ☐ Hui-neng, 6th Patriarch

- 638-718 CE
- writes *Platform Sutra*
 - an enlightened Zen master *is* a Buddha

11 ☐ Enlightenment and Performance

- Hui-k'o: cuts off his arm
- Hui-neng: writes a poem
- Lesson: One actions indicates one's state of mind
 - because ...

- This is why master-student interactions are more important than textual studies

12 ☐ Chao-chou (Joshu)

- 778-897 CE
- lived during "the age of Zen activity"

13 ☐ Joshu's *Mu!* Koan

- See Handout, #5
- Standard Zen doctrine: every being has Buddha-nature
- But the question has no apparent solution:
 - If Joshu says "Yes", he is overly dependent on traditional teaching
 - If he says "No", he is arrogant for ignoring teachings of his predecessors
 - If he doesn't answer immediately, he fails to show his enlightenment

14 ☐ *Mu!*

- "mu" is Japanese for Chinese "wu"
- In Zen, "**mu**" means something like Daoist nonbeing (openness) and Nagarjuna's sunyata (emptiness)
- Shouting "*Mu!*" allows Joshu to open the context of the question

15 ☐ Koan Practice

- A **koan** is a story about an interaction between a master and a student that allows the student to show enlightenment.
- Also a story that a master might tell to a student to allow the student to *show* enlightenment in reacting to the story.

16 ☐ Two More

17 ☐ Where's the *Philosophy*?

- Zen endorses two philosophical theses:
 1. Linguistic distinctions (and the concepts formulated through them) cannot be the medium for an adequate description of reality.
 2. Experience (or: reality) arises out of a source that cannot be described as either Being or Nonbeing.
- But Zen literature contains no arguments for these theses: why?

18 ☐ Some Common (and *poor*) Explanations

- Explanation #1

– Zen is more a religion than a philosophy: it cares more about experiences than reflection on experience

- Explanation #2

- Chinese thinkers do not see the need for argumentation

Both of these are naïve.

19 ☐ **Better Explanation**

- Zen is founded upon other traditions
- Those traditions provide the arguments:
 - Madhyamika Buddhists (Nagarjuna) argue for first thesis
 - Daoists (Laozi, Zhuangzhi) argue for second thesis
- Zen accepts those arguments
 - why re-invent the wheel?

20 ☐

21 ☐ **Reminder**

Quiz #5 next class!

mu!