

## Additional Notes for Unit IIIC.

(This material contains notes for the material on Zen Buddhism and the Eastern Orthodox Heart/Hesychast tradition. I've arranged the notes according to the topics on the review sheet to make it a bit easier for you to study the material and prepare for the exam. Notes: I'm simply going to summarize what we've discussed in class. I'm not going to make any attempt to repeat all of the detail covered in lecture.)

## A. Zen Buddhism:

## 1. The article by D.T. Suzuki:

a) *Define or characterize the following terms: freedom; suffering; problem of problems; buddahood (p. 10) (see below for how these terms are defined. See p. 10 for buddahood.)*

b) *What does S mean by command to choose between the 'everlasting no' and the 'everlasting yes.' What examples of this can you give in Christian or Western experience (e.g., "Let Thy will be done.") (at some point in our lives, we either affirm our existence and the world as something good, or we refuse both by denying its goodness and seeing it as fundamentally evil). Judas is an example of someone who chose the everlasting no (not just by betraying Christ but by hanging himself -- that is, by denying any possibility for repentance, forgiveness and redemption). Christ becomes a preeminent example of the everlasting yes: by steadfastly doing the Father's will he affirms the Father as the ultimate source of goodness and reality. NOTE; so far as the choosing between the everlasting no and the everlasting yes requires choosing between one aspect of reality and another (good and evil/ God and the devil/ the world and heaven) it involves a dualism that Zen rejects (see below).*

c) *why does life essentially involve suffering;*

life involves suffering insofar as life involves struggle -- that is, the conflict among opposing forces of which one tries to get the upper hand. (see p. 5 the first full paragraph).

*how is the ego-centered character of life connected with and a cause of suffering;*

By seeing everything from our own selfish point of view, we try to bend everything and everyone to our own interests.

d) *What is meant by the 'problem of problems' (that is, the struggle between the finite/infinite; or flesh/spirit; intellect/higher power)*

the problem of problem arises when people think that the solution to life lies in someone denying ourselves or the world or the body or what is finite in favor of the infinite, God, or the spiritual.

e) *how does Zen deal with the problem of problems:*

So far as the problem of problems rests on creating the distinctions noted above, it is an illusion.

*why does S critique the idea that reason can solve the problem of problems;*

reason tries to formulate concepts that explain the world in rational terms; in what way does the solution lie in person, directly experience of life. But the solution to living does not lie in explaining reality but in living it (that is, by experiencing it). (see p. 7 - 8). That is, we cannot wait for reason (though philosophy or science) to adequately explain the world before we live. First reason and science can't adequately explain the reality; second, the task of living is lies in experience not analysis of experience.

*what is meant by the analogy of the 'finger pointing to the moon.'*

The distinction between all the ways we try to access reality and reality. The point is not to get obsessed with the finger (the ways we try to explain and think about reality).

*Why is it important not to confuse the finger with the moon.; why does Suzuki think the formulation of the problem of problems as a struggle between the finite and infinite is an illusion;*

(see p. 9)

f) what is meant by saying that “Zen never explains but indicates.” (see page 10):

Zen points toward direct, intuitive experience of the world which allows for a holistic experience of the ourselves and the world. So far as we rely on ‘explanation’ we end up living in our head and not in the world.

2. Geoffrey Arnold “The Freedom of No Escape”

1) *define or characterize: ‘grass’*

“In Zen, grass is a metaphor for delusion, for the world of things; objects, feelings, emotions, situations, crises, the place of anger and sadness; it’s the place where attachments are born.”

; ‘gates’ -- refer to the senses (which give us access to the external world.)

2) *what is meant by ‘go where there is no grass for 10 thousand miles’* “go to a place where there’s no thing, nothing to get entangled in, for ten thousand miles. Go to the place where there is no anger, no attachments, no injustice, no problems, no conflicts.”

3) *We hunt for a place with no anger, attachments, no injustice, etc. What is wrong with viewing this a ‘place’ to which we can escape.*

(see the third full paragraph of the essay. So long as we try to escape the world and go to a separate or distinct place where there is no suffering or evil, we create a dualism between the world and something else. Zen is opposed to this sort of dualism. Second if there was such a place and we got there, we would be trapped since we could never return to the world in which we live.

4) *in what way are ‘expectations,’ ‘concepts,’ ‘attachments’ and ‘desires’ causes of suffering and delusion* (this is a topic in Suzuki as well); in what way in the mind in general the source of delusion and suffering; why does Zen aim for a ‘place’ where ‘no thought arises’? What is meant by this phrase or the phrase ‘forgetting the self.’ Why is the idea that we can somehow go this place a delusion and misunderstanding? ‘expectation,’ ‘concepts,’ ‘attachments,’ and ‘desires’ are created by the mind. They create distinctions and dualisms by which we cause divisions in ourselves (what we have and what we want), are often the cause of suffering (the world and other people are never what we expect), and, with concepts, get in the way of direct and immediate experience of reality and ourselves. Zen thus aims for a meditation which is free of all thoughts and images in which we forget the self: when we are open simply to experience the world in a unified manner (peace) that can accept everything:

5) *what is meant by ‘even by not going outside the gate, the grass is boundless’?*

The grass (see above) is not just in the world and something we encounter which we go outside the gates (experience the world through our sense) but most importantly the grass is in ourselves in ourselves (that is, all of our expectations, concepts, etc.).

6) *In what way is this a summation of what Zen ‘seeks’:*

“Grass boundless inside the gate, outside the gate, you see by yourself. When the grass is boundless both inside and outside the gate, then the gate becomes meaningless, there is no boundary separating one place from another. So it is for anything that we perceive as separated from another. To go beyond all notions of divisions and edges is our practice.”

(You should be able to make sense of this in light of the above notes)

B. For the material on the Heart and Hesychasm

For the article “What is the Heart and What do We Find when We Enter” you should be able to discuss these issues::

1) *Define or characterize: ‘heart’ (see below); ‘hesychia’ (means ‘silence’)*

‘intellect’ in the philosophical sense, intellect is that by which we apprehend the natures of things; in the spiritual sense, intellect - the intuitive or immediate awareness of spiritual truth in a personal encounter with God.

‘prayer of the heart’: In Christianity, this is known as the ‘Jesus Prayer.’

2) *How is the heart understood in modern Western usage? What is the relation between ‘mind’/‘head’ and ‘heart’ in modern Western usage?*

The heart is understood primarily as the domain of emotions or affectivity. Hence, it tends to be pitted against reason. Those who prize reason, often view the heart as something irrational that needs to be controlled: reason is objective; the heart merely subjective: reason gives us knowledge of reality; the heart (our emotions) merely projects feelings onto things. Those, on the other hand, who prize the heart tend to give preference to emotions and affects often without reason.

3) *What is the meaning of the ‘heart’ in Scripture? Why is there no head (mind)/contrast in Scripture; in what sense is the heart the spiritual center of the person and the ‘meeting place’ with God; the ‘totality of the person.’*

The material here is largely the same as that in the next article. For the meaning of heart in scripture, see p. 5. For more general treatment, see p 7-8

4) *In what sense is the heart the battle ground between good and evil?*

There is an ambivalence in the heart because of human sinfulness. On the one hand, the heart is the place in which we encounter God. But the heart is the ‘place where we are brought face to face with the power of sin and evil within us’ (see Ware, p. 6 for more detail on this see Ware, pp. 6-8)). Recall the discussion we had in class about the notion of a hardened heart (the ways in which we become shut up in ourselves and thus shun others and God) in contrast to a ‘softened heart -- when we become open to loving God, others and ourselves by excising all of the attitudes, passions, etc. that harden our hearts.

5) *What is meant by the idea of ‘the mind descending into the heart.’ In what sense is the proper function of the mind ‘prayer’ How is this connected with a ‘personal encounter with God’? What sort of prayer is the ‘Prayer of the Heart.*

(see below. The material in this article complements the material in the next article.)

For the material from The Art of Prayer, you should be able to: discuss these issues

1) *How is ‘standing before God’ connected with the goal of getting the mind into the heart?*

Standing before God means to be constantly in the presence of God. This presence takes the form of a personal encounter with God, thus it takes place through prayer. Normally, we use our reason ‘in our head’ -- that is, in terms of the rational capacities of understanding, explaining, analyzing, etc. (what Aristotle calls thinking and acting in terms of universal principles and reasons). To quote Kallistos Ware” “So long as the ascetic prays with the mind in the head, he will still be working solely with the resources of the human intellect, and on this level he will never attain to an immediate and personal encounter with God. By the use of his brain, he will at best know about God, but he will not know God. For there can be no direct knowledge of God without an exceedingly great love, and such love must come, not from the brain alone, but from the whole man—that is, from the heart.”

2) *what is the difference between the body, soul, and spirit? What are their special ways of knowing?*

The material for this is laid out on pages 17-18 in the article. Note that while the philosophers we have studied so far have argued that humans are constituted by a body and soul (as the principle of life in general and human rationality in humans), none has referred to the spiritual dimension of human life—that by which we are able to know divine realities in a personal manner.

3) *What is the relation of the heart to the mind, soul and spirit?*

This material too is laid out on page 18-19. Notice in particular, the three different senses of heart that Ware distinguishes on p. 19 -- especially sense 3. The link between the heart and the spirit. As our

‘innermost self.’ -- the place where we ‘encounter God.’ The heart is the place where we encounter God and participate in his life. Hence, in this tradition, the heart is the meeting place of our spirit and God’s Spirit (that is, in Christian terms, the Holy Spirit).

*4) Why must the intellect descend into the heart to have a direct experience of God. Why can we not have such an experience with the mind by itself (in the head)?*

See the response to 1 above. Also note that because we are integrally body, soul, and spirit, we encounter God in a holistic manner and not simply in terms of our intellect. The heart, remember, provides the inner and fundamental unity of us as person.

Don’t worry about the material from 21-27 in this article EXCEPT for the second full paragraph on page 25 “Do not permit yourself any concepts, images, ...” For this paragraph you should be able to discuss the notion of pure prayer: what it is and why it is recommended.

Here is the relevant text “Our mind, which is normally dispersed abroad among a wide variety of thoughts and ideas, must be ‘unified’. It must be brought from multiplicity to simplicity and emptiness, from ‘diversity’ to ‘scantiness’ : it must be stripped naked of every mental picture and intellectual concept, until it is conscious of nothing save the presence of the invisible and incomprehensible God. Orthodox writers describe this state as ‘pure prayer’—pure, that is, not only from sinful thoughts but from all thoughts. So the basic warning about mental images is that they are our own creations; so long as our mind is filled with images, we are not unified within ourselves but dispersed among our images. These images get in the way of a direct and immediate encounter with God. (Think of the effect that your images, thoughts, preconceptions, etc about someone would get in the way of an immediate and direct personal encounter with them).

This might seem to run counter to the strong veneration that the Eastern Christian tradition gives to icons. But while icons manifest God they are rather like what in the Zen tradition, is the finger pointing to the moon. They are not the moon (God) but the finger pointing to the moon.

Like the Zen meditation, pure prayer is ‘imageless’. In the Zen tradition, the point of meditation is to get beyond all duality and difference. Zen meditation does not lead to an encounter (personal or otherwise) with God. Pure prayer, however, takes place that in pure prayer, however rare the experience, we can encounter and ‘see’ God.

Make sure that you understand the similarities and differences between Zen and the Heart tradition. Both are critical of the idea that living rationally (as understood by Plato and Aristotle) is the key to living-well. Both are critical of reason for someone similar ideas: (1) there is a sense in which reality simply can’t be explained but must be experience; (2) by being too caught up with explanation, we end up simply living in our own heads (in the models that we use to interpret and explain reality). Both stress a kind of meditative experience that steps back from all images, concepts and experience. But there are fundamental differences. Zen rejects any sort of dualism between God and the world; it does not acknowledge a notion of human sinfulness from which we need redemption. Zen meditation does not involve the prayer in the sense of standing before God in a personal encounter with God.

By way of contrast, for the Eastern Orthodox tradition: our heart is the meeting place between ourselves and God. The heart is where we are opened into God’s life and enabled to participate in it; the heart is where we discovers ourselves as persons and encounter God in a personal fashion. The Christian tradition, of course, stress the reality of human sinfulness (that we have separated ourselves from God) and thus are in need of ‘repentance’: a refashioning of our lives to that we ‘stand in the presence of God.’