

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.'*

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). The heart thus is the place where we are integrated as persons in an openness to God.

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.'*

The idea of the mind descending into the heart means that the highest function of the mind is to encounter God in a 'personal manner' in an 'I-Thou' relation. So long as the Intellect remains in the head it is focused on trying to understand God in some sort of abstract manner in terms of a nature or principle of things. Moreover, the notion of the intellect descending into the heart indicates that prayer is an activity of the whole person -- it is not merely a sort of 'head trip' as some sort of rational contemplation of the divine.

For the material from *The Art of Prayer*, you should be able to: discuss this text which we covered in class. In particular you should know the difference between body, soul, spirit, and heart, as well as the sort of knowledge that is proper to the body, soul, and spirit.

Theophan and other authors in *The Art of Prayer* speak of three elements in man—body, soul, and spirit—which Theophan describes as follows: 'The body is made of earth; yet it is not something dead but alive and endowed with a living soul. Into this soul is breathed a spirit —the spirit of God, intended to know God, to reverence Him, to seek and taste Him, and to have its joy in Him and nothing else.'⁶ The soul, then, is the basic principle of

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life—what makes a human being something alive, as opposed to an inanimate mass of flesh. But while the soul exists primarily on the natural plane, the spirit brings us into contact with the order of divine realities: it is the highest faculty in man, and that which enables him to enter into communion with God. As such, man's spirit (with a small 's') is closely linked with the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit or Spirit of God (with a capital 'S'); but though connected, the two are not identical—to confuse them would be to end in pantheism.

Body, soul, and spirit have each their special way of knowing: the body, through the five senses; the soul, through intellectual reasoning; the spirit, through the conscience, through a mystical perception that transcends man's ordinary rational processes.

Alongside the elements of spirit, soul, and body, there is another aspect of man's nature which lies outside this three-fold classification—the *heart*. The term 'heart' is of particular significance in the Orthodox doctrine of man. When people in the west today speak of the heart, they usually mean the emotions and affections. But in the Bible, as in most ascetic texts of the Orthodox Church, the heart has a far wider connotation. It is the primary organ of man's being, whether physical or spiritual; it is the centre of life, the determining principle of all our activities and aspirations. As such, the heart obviously includes the affections and emotions, but it also includes much else besides: it embraces in effect everything that goes to comprise what we call a 'person'.

The Homilies of St. Makarios develop this idea of the heart: 'The heart governs and reigns over the whole bodily organism; and when grace possesses the ranges of the heart, it rules over all the members and the thoughts. For there, in the heart, is the mind, and all the thoughts of the soul and its expectation; and in this way grace penetrates also to all the members of the body . . . within the heart are unfathomable depths. There are reception

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 d

istinguishes 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).

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 discover 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.'