

History of Buddhist Philosophy

Fall 2021

Final Exam Term Paper Assignment

Due: Monday, December 13

Write a 6-8 page (double-spaced) paper on a topic relevant to this course. The paper should include both an exposition of the philosophical teachings as well as your own thoughtful reflection on those teachings. This does not need to be a research paper, but your paper should include appropriately cited quotations from some of the key texts. Short quotations should be placed in quotation marks within the body of a paragraph of your text, longer quotations should be indented and single-spaced. Each citation should be properly referenced.

Tiantai/Tendai Buddhism

What is the distinctive teaching of the Tiantai (Japanese: Tendai) school of Chinese Buddhism emphasized in the *Lotus Sūtra*? How is the notion of *ekayana* connected to the term *upāya* and how is this brought forth in the story about the burning house from the the *Lotus Sūtra*? What is meant by the notion of the universal Buddha-nature and how is this notion related to the fundamental Mahāyāna doctrine of the *Dharmakāya*? How is this teaching expressed in the metaphor of water in waves? What are the four types of meditation practices taught by Saichō, the founder of the Tendai School in Japan? What do you think of this notion of the universal Buddha-nature?

Huayan/Kegon Buddhism

What is the distinctive teaching of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* which is the focus of the Huayan School of Buddhism in China and the Kegon School in Japan? How does this teaching develop the central teaching of Buddhism, the teaching of *pratītyasamutpāda* taught by the Buddha in the *Pali Canon*? What is meant by the *Dharmadhātu* and why is Vairocana Buddha the focus of devotion in this school of Buddhism? How did Huayan master Fazang express this fundamental teaching of Huayan Buddhism in his *Treatise on the Golden Lion*? How is the attainment of wisdom and Nirvana expressed in this treatise? How might this teaching concerning the jewels of Indra's net be relevant for us today?

Pure Land Buddhism

What is the distinctive teaching of the Jingtū (Japanese: Jōdo) or Pure Land School of Chinese Buddhism? What is the Pure Land emphasized in this school of Buddhism? How is this teaching brought forth in the *Land of Bliss Sūtras* and why is Amitābha Buddha so important in this school of Buddhism? Why does this school emphasize "Other power" (Japanese: *tariki*) over "self power" (Japanese: *jiriki*)? What is the single practice of Pure Land Buddhism? What distinguishes the Japanese Jōdo Shinshū School founded by Shinran? What do you think of this emphasis on "Other power" and devotional practice emphasized in this school and its relevance today?

Shingon Buddhism

What are the distinctive teachings of the Shingon school of Japanese Buddhism taught by Kūkai? Why is Vairocana Buddha so important in this school of Buddhism? What are the esoteric practices designed to bring about awakening in this school? Why was art so important in Kūkai's teaching of the dharma? What do you think about this emphasis on art as a vehicle for awakening?

Chan/Zen Buddhism

What is the distinctive teaching of the Chan school of Chinese Buddhism and how is this expressed in Bodhidharma's writings? How does Huineng's story in the *Platform Sūtra* illustrate the distinctive character of Chan Buddhism? How does Chan Buddhism bring together the teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Daoism? What is the distinctive practice of the Soto school of Zen founded by Dōgen? In "The Issue at Hand" essay in the *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen writes: "Studying the Buddha Way is studying oneself. Studying oneself is forgetting oneself. Forgetting oneself is being enlightened by all things." How might this sum up the philosophy of Zen? What distinguishes the Rinzai school of Zen from the Soto School? Why is the koan "Joshu's 'Mu'" so significant in Rinzai Zen?

Engaged Buddhism

What is "Engaged Buddhism"? Reflect on any of the readings from the last two weeks of the course, explaining how the author develops key Buddhist teachings, and how the teachings are relevant today in dealing with such issues as global conflict and the ecological crisis.

Nirvana

Reflect on different conceptions of nirvana in the history of Buddhist philosophy and how these conceptions may be relevant today.