

1: Buddhism - Wikipedia

Theravada Vipassana and Soto Zen meditation are quite similar, both allowing thoughts to arise and depart without being caught up in them. Rinzai Zen meditation on koans is a different practice with the same purpose.

Buddhist wisdom This website is about practice; we try to minimize philosophy. Buddhism is better understood as a skill or an art to be practiced and perfected, rather than as information and knowledge to be learned and amassed. The ten ox-herding pictures provide the ten step framework. After we have mastered the first practice, he would remind us that we are not ten percent enlightened, we are still sitting on zero. And so on through the entire course. Why bother with such a course? There are two reasons, one obvious, one subtle. We are not born to learn how to play keyboards or a guitar. Nor to become a great legend of sports, politics, literature, science or whatever. Our purpose is not to have babies, to accumulate money and properties and goods. Those who say they want nothing but to live a quiet and peaceful life are also missing the boat—*or* as the Buddha would say, the raft that carries us to the other shore. The second, more subtle reason for practicing is that it is possible to do so with drawing the contempt of Huang Po. Such a practice deepens ignorance because it increases the sense of an independent self. Buddhist practice helps us see the absence of an independent self. Those who never make the attempt to wake up never wake up. Everything depends on everything else. Even an imaginary First Cause is an effect dependent upon a preceding cause. In this course, we show what that active work is. The good news is that we can do the work in manageable bites. We all know what a stalk of bamboo looks like. It extends a few inches and comes to a joint. It then extends another few more inches and comes to another joint and so on. We can keep that picture in mind as we do our Zen practices. We can do the first step of Beginning Zen, treat that as reaching a joint in the bamboo stalk of practice, and then go straight to the last practice. Or we can do the first two steps of Beginning Zen and then go to the last one. There is a tenth step which is a collection of practices that helps maintain our enthusiasm for the nine central steps of the course but we add those practices at our leisure at any point of the course. The animal dharma realm is the eighth dharma realm, for example, the human dharma realm is the sixth, and the Buddha dharma realm, Nirvana, is the first. Each of these dharma realms is a state of mind. Think like a dog, become a dog. Think like a Buddha, become a Buddha. Our first practice is designed to lift us from the bottom dharma realm, the tenth one. The second practice lifts us from the ninth dharma realm, and so on. Thus, the ninth practice lifts us from the second dharma realm to the first and there are no higher dharma realms than the first so there is no tenth practice to lift us any further. With each practice, we make progress. Those who can practice regularly while upholding the precepts which form a part of the fifth practice can experience full and complete enlightenment because they will have practiced as instructed by the Buddha. But that flash will never come to those who do not practice. By practicing, we are plowing the field and planting seeds. We cannot begin our school years with a Ph. A child learning that twelve divided by six is two is not ready to determine the area under the curve of a function. And a first year calculus student is not yet ready for string theory. So we offer a course, a gradual path, even if it draws the scorn of Master Po. Of course he is right, but most of us are too dim to follow his injunction. So we practice until a light begins to shine, and then we, too, can scorn practice and wake up in a blinding flash of enlightenment. Those who wake up have not acquired something new, something they lacked before they practiced. All of us are whole and complete, just as we are. Practice opens up what we already have. And the absence of practice closes us up, more and more, and we never learn who we are. The first three steps are easy Beginning Zen practices. In the first step of the course we establish mindfulness by practicing: Present Moment Awareness We show how this is done. The Buddha said those who practice meditation are the happy ones. But as we will see later in the course, we must become aware of the sense of self that says: I am making progress. We have to get out of the way and let the practice be the practice. It is not something we do, like learning a new skill, for self-improvement. A person who practices to become a better person is moving closer and closer to the City of Delusion, just as Huang Po says. In the second step, we practice: It is also very enjoyable and provides enormous benefits. Silent Present Moment Awareness. This is an advanced state of mindfulness. The universe surrenders to the mind that is still.

His thoughts are important because Zen is a blend of classic Buddhism, i. They are explained in the same order they were taught by the Buddha in The Anapanasati Sutta, sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya. The Anapanasati Sutta was spoken by the Buddha more than years ago. After generations of oral transmission by monks and nuns, it was finally written down several hundred years after his passing. Due to its antiquity, it is largely unknown in the West and is quite obscure in the East as well. Now, thanks to the Internet, the most important talk the Buddha ever gave “describing the steps he followed to enlightenment” are no longer hidden in obscure texts known only to Theravada Buddhist renunciates and a handful of scholars. The Anapanasati Sutta will someday enter into the mainstream, thanks to such books. Advanced Zen begins with step eight where we apply the super power mindfulness developed in Intermediate Zen to the Doctrine of Dependent Arising. We apply the super power mindfulness developed in Intermediate Zen to koans in step nine. The tenth and final step includes non-meditation practices and unlike the first nine steps, does not lift us to a higher dharma realm because, as already noted, the ninth step lifts us to the first dharma realm. This is a rather lengthy website and it continues to grow so we may want to bookmark it for future reference. There is too much content here to absorb in one visit. The course is not limited to the practices of the Zen sect of Buddhism. We include all I think of the Zen practices, but we also include practices from other Buddhist schools, including the Theravada school, the Mahayana school, and the Pure Land sect Zen and Pure Land are sects of the Mahayana school. At the ninth step, we arrive at the first dharma realm, the realm of Buddhahood. We tie the Ox Herding pictures to the dharma realms as a teaching tool to help us understand the benefits produced by each practice. Zen practice can be hard. However, this program is for lay people, people who spend most of their waking hours attending to school or work and family matters. A good list of Zen Centers in the U. Further lists, including centers all over the world, are maintained at BuddhaNet not restricted to Zen centers and Zenguide. Zen centers are welcoming and the people there will help our practice grow. Most of us believe that Zen is impenetrable and mysterious. Three pounds of flax! Styx wisdom Getting started as a beginner is easy. Note that some people are sitting on cushions and some are in conventional or ergonomic chairs and they are not monks or nuns. Zen practice in the West is primarily a lay practice by people who lead money-driven lives. More importantly, if we persist, we will experience Stream Entry. Here we will learn and experience why the Buddha said: It is a religion, as Roshi Philip Kapleau explained, only to the extent that we have to have faith that the practices lead to increasing wholesomeness. We have to have faith that our muscles will develop if we do the work. But no increased wholesomeness awaits those who persist in their push-up practice. The Buddha also said that speculation was a waste of time. Buddhism is a practice that develops mindfulness and results in liberation from the wheel of birth, death, and rebirth. Some entrepreneurs travel the world, promoting Buddhism as a means for stress reduction, anger management, and other cool results. They make money holding seminars, selling a product. But the Buddhism they preach is far from authentic Buddhism. People can practice yoga for stress reduction and anger management; they can take long walks in the sun to treat depression or excessive worry. The practice of Buddhism reaches places untouched by the mundane world.

2: Theravada and Zen - a comparative analysis - Dhamma Wheel

coming from a zen background (a very modern version of soto-shu at that, my roshi was heavily influenced by kosho uchiyama) i easily felt in Theravada, especially the Thai forest tradition of LP Chah and the writings of LP Buddhadasa right at home.

In the Mahayana schools, such as Zen, emptiness, or the realization of emptiness seems to be an important part of the path, less so in the Theravada tradition, am I mistaken? And having trained in both traditions how do you reconcile the two? Emptiness is as important in the Theravada tradition as it is in the Mahayana. From the earliest times, Theravada Buddhism has viewed emptiness as one of the important doors to liberation. Two key Theravada sutras are devoted to emptiness: Ignoring the opening and closing, he was happy with the emptiness teaching in the core of the text. He gave a profound dharma talk on the Heart Sutra, saying that this insight is what Vipassana practice aims at. Over the centuries, emptiness came to have a range of meanings within Buddhism. The greatest change in meaning was in the Mahayana tradition where some quite diverse teachings on emptiness emerged. Even so, the great Indian philosophers of the Mahayana wrote that the standard understanding of emptiness within the Mahayana and within the earlier Buddhist traditions is the same. It is not emptiness which differentiates these traditions. Though emptiness is important in the Theravada tradition, it is usually not taught as often as in the Mahayana. This might lead some to assume it is absent in the Theravada. One reason it is not taught as often is that emptiness is seen as a liberating insight rather than a philosophical view one needs to understand intellectually. Emptiness is sometimes not taught until the student is ready for it. The frequency with which the Mahayana talks about emptiness is probably matched by the frequency with which the Theravada teaches impermanence and not-self; in practice, both traditions are often pointing to the same thing in these teachings. A final reason may be that the goal of Theravada practice is not emptiness. The goal is liberation. Emptiness is a means to liberation. While liberation comes with a deep understanding of emptiness, emptiness is secondary to Awakening.

3: Emptiness in Theravada Buddhism: Insight Meditation Center

Zen is a branch of Mahayana, which, while being an umbrella term for a variety of perspectives, set out on its own from Theravada on the grounds that the latter emphasized Enlightenment for one's own sake, while the former sought to fulfill the Bodhisattva ideal of Enlightenment for others.

What Are the Main Schools of Buddhism? A wide variety of traditions fit under these three umbrellas. By Stephanie Hertenberg Shutterstock. They are used to seeing images of the Buddha on self-help websites and have probably tried meditation at least once. Many people in the West, however, fail to grasp that Buddhism is not a monolith. That does not mean, however, that they do not have quite a few differences. Buddhism is usually divided into two or three main schools. Theravada, also somewhat pejoratively called Hinayana, is the oldest of the traditions and is predominately found in Southeast Asia. Vajrayana Buddhism, meanwhile, is most commonly associated with Tibet though some scholars argue that Vajrayana is simply an offshoot of one of the other schools. Theravada Theravada Buddhism is the oldest form of Buddhism. Theravada Buddhism does not believe in contemporary Buddhas. Instead, it only accepts past Buddhas and Gautama Buddha. The Three Trainings are the development of ethical conduct, meditation and insight-wisdom. According to Theravada Buddhism, all worldly phenomenon share three main characteristics. Everything is impermanent, unsatisfactory and lacks any sort of unique element that belongs to that phenomenon alone. Out of these three characteristics arises the idea that everything consists of specific characteristics, none of which can be referred to as a self. Understanding such ideas will help a person relieve themselves of ignorance, achieve higher levels of awareness and, eventually, nirvana. Mahayana Mahayana is the largest school of Buddhism today and is found primarily in Eastern Asia. Unlike Theravada Buddhism which is largely a single orthodoxy, Mahayana Buddhism is an umbrella term that includes a variety of different traditions. All of them, however, agree on the basic tenets of Mahayana Buddhism. Among these tenets is the belief that the primary motivation in life should be helping others. This is known as the Bodhisattva Attitude and references the goal of Mahayana practitioners. They aim to become bodhisattvas, holy people who spend multiple lifetimes teaching others how to escape samsara, even though they themselves have achieved enlightenment. Pure Land Buddhism tends to focus not on Gautama Buddha but on Amitabha Buddha and holds that those who achieve enlightenment will be reborn into the Pure Land with Amitabha. Zen Buddhism is perhaps the most famous form of Buddhism in the West, but few Westerners are familiar with even the basics of the tradition. Zen can be difficult to define, but it focuses largely on using meditation as a form of vigilance and self-discovery that leads practitioners to enlightenment. Zen itself is further divided into several schools, the most famous of which are the Soto Zen school and Rinzai Zen school. Soto Zen focuses on quiet meditation without anchors. Rinzai Zen, on the other hand, is known for practicing koan meditation. In this type of meditation, each student is given a riddle, or koan, to focus on while meditating. The riddles are nonsensical and meant to force each student to move beyond their logical, limited way of thinking. Vajrayana Vajrayana Buddhism is found largely in the Himalayan nations, especially Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia and, most famously, in Tibet. As this is the form of Buddhism associated with the Tibetan religious figures known as lamas, Vajrayana Buddhism is sometimes called Lamaism. Despite often being treated as a third major school of Buddhism, Vajrayana Buddhism has been considered by some scholars to be either part of the Mahayana or Theravada traditions. That said, Vajrayana is distinct in many ways from both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. Both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism often focus on increasing positive human characteristics and decreasing negative ones. Vajrayana Buddhism focuses on teaching adherents how to become a buddha in a single lifetime. This often involves practices such as reciting mantras, using mandalas, imagining gods and buddhas and utilizing mudras. Like other religions, Buddhism is not an orthodox monolith. There are multiple traditions within the faith, each with their own history and take on classic Buddhist theology. Adherents from each of the three traditions walk the path to enlightenment and hope to achieve that goal. What happens to those who are enlightened is up for debate, but most people are content to figure that out later. Achieving enlightenment comes first. Then, everything else will naturally fall into place.

4: Theravada teachers Archives - How To Practice Zen

Theravada Buddhism. Theravada (pronounced "more or less" "terra-VAH-dah"), the "Doctrine of the Elders," is the school of Buddhism that draws its scriptural inspiration from the Tipitaka, or Pali canon, which scholars generally agree contains the earliest surviving record of the Buddha's teachings.

Inscriptional evidence of this school has been found in Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. For some time they maintained themselves in Avanti as well as in their new territories, but gradually they tended to regroup themselves in the south, the Great Vihara Mahavihara in Anuradhapura, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka, becoming the main centre of their tradition, Kanchi a secondary center and the northern regions apparently relinquished to other schools. The rapid spread of Buddhism and the emergence of an extensive organization of the sangha are closely linked with the secular authority of the central state. There are no known artistic or architectural remains from this epoch except for the cave dwellings of the monks, reflecting the growth and spread of the new religion. The most distinctive features of this phase and virtually the only contemporary historical material, are the numerous Brahmi inscriptions associated with these caves. They record gifts to the sangha, significantly by householders and chiefs rather than by kings. The Buddhist religion itself does not seem to have established undisputed authority until the reigns of Dutthagamani and Vattagamani ca mid-2nd century BCE to mid-1st century BCE. Pali literature. Buddhaghosa c. The Sri Lankan Buddhist Sangha initially preserved the Buddhist scriptures the Tipitaka orally as it had been traditionally done, however during the first century BCE, famine and wars led to the writing down of these scriptures. The Sri Lankan chronicle The Mahavamsa records: The Theravada tradition records that even during the early days of Mahinda, there was already a tradition of Indian commentaries on the scriptures. Buddhaghosa wrote in Pali, and after him, most Sri Lankan Buddhist scholastics did as well. Theravada monks also produced other Pali literature such as historical chronicles e. Mahavamsa, hagiographies, practice manuals, summaries, textbooks, poetry and Abhidhamma works such as the Abhidhammattha-sangaha and the Abhidhammavata. Other Theravada Pali commentators and writers include Dhammapala and Buddhadatta. It was established in Myanmar in the late 11th century, in Thailand in the 13th and early 14th centuries, and in Cambodia and Laos by the end of the 14th century. Although Mahavihara never completely replaced other schools in Southeast Asia, it received special favor at most royal courts. This is due to the support it received from local elites, who exerted a very strong religious and social influence. This sculpture was found on the east coast of Sri Lanka between Batticaloa and Trincomalee and is evidence of the presence of Mahayana Buddhism in the Anuradhapura period of Sri Lanka. There are more than 2, kyaung there. The oldest surviving Buddhist texts in the Pali language come from Pyu city-state of Sri Ksetra, the text which is dated from the mid 5th to mid 6th century is written on twenty-leaf manuscript of solid gold. This began in the 11th century during the reign of the Bamar king Anawrahta " of the Pagan Kingdom who acquired the Pali scriptures in a war against the Mon as well as from Sri Lanka and build stupas and monasteries at his capital of Bagan. Sukhothai Historical Park, Thailand. Tantric Mahayana Buddhism was also a prominent faith, promoted by Buddhist emperors such as Jayavarman VII " who rejected the Hindu gods and presented himself as a Bodhisattva King. Tamalinda then returned to Cambodia and promoted Buddhist traditions according to the Theravada training he had received, galvanizing and energizing the long-standing Theravada presence that had existed throughout the Angkor empire for centuries. During the 13th and 14th centuries, Theravada monks from Sri Lanka continued introducing orthodox Theravada Buddhism which eventually became the dominant faith among all classes. This change in Cambodian Buddhism led to high levels of literacy among Cambodians. Tantric and esoteric innovations[edit] Main article: Tantric Theravada During the pre-modern era, Southeast Asian Buddhism included numerous elements which could be called tantric and esoteric such as the use of mantras and yantras in elaborate rituals. Later Theravada textual materials show new and somewhat unorthodox developments in theory and practice. These traditions include new practices and ideas which are not included in classical orthodox Theravada works like the Visuddhimagga, such as the use of mantras such as Araham, the practice of magical formulas, complex rituals and complex visualization exercises. Modernisation and spread to the

West[edit] See also: In the 19th century began a process of mutual influence of both Asian Buddhists and Hinduists, and a Western audience interested in ancient wisdom. Theravada was also influenced by this process, which lead to Buddhist modernism; especially Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott , founders of the Theosophical Society , had a profound role in this process in Sri Lanka. This took a high flight in East Asia from the s onwards with the vipassana-movement, and from the s also in the west, with western students who popularized vipassana-meditation in the west, [58] giving way to the development and popularisation of mindfulness-practice. After the British takeover, Buddhist temples were strictly administered and were only permitted to use their funds on strictly religious activities. Christian ministers were given control of the education system and their pay became state funding for missions. Western elements have been incorporated, and meditation practice has opened to a lay audience.

5: Buddhist Studies: What is Theravada Buddhism?

Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana (Tibetan)(which is sometimes considered Mahayana, and sometimes viewed as separate especially in house) and Zen are all kinds of Buddhism. Zen Buddhism, which is sometimes separated from mere sitting meditation, really doesn't need separation from Mahayana generally.

For many centuries, Theravada has been the predominant religion of Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand; today Theravada Buddhists number over million world-wide. The many names of Theravada Theravada Buddhism goes by many names. The Buddha himself called the religion he founded Dhamma-vinaya, "the doctrine and discipline," in reference to the two fundamental aspects of the system of ethical and spiritual training he taught. The use of "Hinayana" as a pejorative has its origins in the early schisms within the monastic community that ultimately led to the emergence of what would later become Mahayana. Today, however, scholars of every Buddhist and non-Buddhist persuasion often use the term "Hinayana," without pejorative intent. Most of the sermons the Buddha delivered were memorized by Ven. Of course, it can never be proved that the Pali Canon contains the actual words uttered by the historical Buddha and there is ample evidence to suggest that much of the Canon does not. The wisdom the Canon contains has nevertheless served for centuries as an indispensable guide for millions of followers in their quest for Awakening. Shortly after his Awakening, the Buddha "the Awakened One" delivered his first sermon, in which he laid out the essential framework upon which all his later teachings were based. These Truths are not fixed dogmatic principles, but living experiences to be explored individually in the heart of the sincere spiritual seeker: The Noble Truth of dukkha suffering, unsatisfactoriness, stress: The Noble Truth of the cause of dukkha: The Noble Truth of the cessation of dukkha: The Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of dukkha: The full realization of the third Noble Truth paves the way for the direct penetration of Nibbana Sanskrit: The Noble Eightfold Path offers a comprehensive practical guide to the development of those wholesome qualities and skills in the human heart that must be cultivated in order to bring the practitioner to the final goal, the supreme freedom and happiness of Nibbana. The eight qualities to be developed are: In practice, the Buddha taught the Noble Eightfold Path to his followers according to a "gradual" system of training, beginning with the development of sila, or virtue right speech, right action, and right livelihood, which are summarized in practical form by the five precepts , followed by the development of samadhi, or concentration and mental cultivation right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration , culminating in the development of panna, or wisdom right view and right resolve. Progress along the path does not follow a simple linear trajectory. Rather, development of each aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path encourages the refinement and strengthening of the others, leading the practitioner ever forward in an upward spiral of spiritual maturity that culminates in Awakening. Seen from another point of view, the long journey on the path to Awakening begins in earnest with the first tentative stirrings of right view, the first flickerings of wisdom by which one recognizes both the validity of the first Noble Truth and the inevitability of the law of kamma Sanskrit: Once one begins to see that harmful actions inevitably bring about harmful results, and wholesome actions ultimately bring about wholesome results, the desire naturally grows to live a skilful, morally upright life, to take seriously the practice of sila. The follower becomes a "Buddhist" upon expressing an inner resolve to "take refuge" in the Triple Gem: Buddhism is sometimes criticized as a "negative" or "pessimistic" religion and philosophy. After all so the argument goes life is not all misery and disappointment: Why then this pessimistic Buddhist obsession with unsatisfactoriness and suffering? The Buddha based his teachings on a frank assessment of our plight as humans: No one can argue this fact. But, like a doctor who prescribes a remedy for an illness, the Buddha offers hope the third Noble Truth and a cure the fourth Noble Truth. But he also recognized that the kinds of happiness to which most of us are accustomed cannot, by their very nature, give truly lasting satisfaction. Each level of happiness has its rewards, but each also has its drawbacks -- the most conspicuous of which is that it cannot, by its very nature, endure. In the words of one teacher, "Buddhism is the serious pursuit of happiness. It is up to each of us individually to put that claim to the test. Theravada comes West Until the late 19th century, the teachings of Theravada were little known outside of Southern and Southeast Asia, where they had flourished for some two

and one-half millennia. In recent decades, this interest has swelled, with the monastic Sangha from the various schools within Theravada establishing dozens of monasteries across Europe and North America. The turn of the 21st century presents both opportunities and dangers for Theravada in the West: Will the current popular climate of "openness" and cross-fertilization between the many different schools of Buddhism lead to the emergence of a strong new form of Buddhism unique to the West, or will it simply lead to the dilution and confusion of all these priceless teachings? These are open questions; only time will tell. Some Suggestions for Reading the Pali Discourses. They challenge us to awaken within ourselves the same truths that the Buddha discovered long ago on that full-moon night in the month of May, in the forest near Gaya, India.

The difference is an entirely different canon! Theravada follows the Pali canon whereas Zen pulls most of its philosophical underpinnings from the Mahayana sutras and its own oral and written traditions (i.e. koan collections, writings of folks like Dogen and Hakuin, etc.).

The Treasures of the Theravada: Surprisingly, of this group only three clearly identified themselves with the tradition from which their practice came, that is, the ancient Theravada school of Buddhism that survives predominantly in Southeast Asia. At similar meetings at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, most of the attending vipassana teachers likewise did not consider themselves Theravada teachers. In September, the dozen teachers directly involved-with teaching at Spirit Rock debated whether or not Spirit Rock should be considered a Theravada center. After the various reasons for and against such an identification were expressed. Yet, as Spirit Rock, in Marin county, California, is growing to be one of the largest vipassana centers in America, this preference is likely to have long-term consequences for the development of both Theravada Buddhism and the vipassana meditation movement in the West. In contrast, it is unusual for students of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism to identify themselves by a specific practice found within their respective traditions. While there are now many vipassana students in the West, hardly any call themselves students of Theravada Buddhism, let alone Theravadan Buddhists. The strong identification of American vipassana students with the practice, instead of the Theravada tradition, is to a great degree the result of a conscious decision by the early American vipassana teachers. These teachers wanted to offer an easily accessible, simple but profound practice freed from much of its Southeast Asian Buddhist context. In part, they were continuing the work of their own Asian teachers: Achaan Buddhadasa who renounced the rites and rituals of the modern Theravada and returned for inspiration to its ancient roots; Mahasi Sayadaw whose over centers focused almost solely on mindfulness training; and U Ba Khin and S. Goenka who have taught vipassana worldwide as a sufficient technique for discovering truth: Now that vipassana practice seems to be firmly rooted in America, I think it is time for the vipassana community to become better informed about the tradition from which it came. As both a student and a teacher of insight meditation, I raise this issue because I am concerned that a full spiritual life is not found through vipassana practice alone. Furthermore I am concerned that some of the riches of the Theravada tradition will be lost to Western students who are only learning vipassana meditation. Since vipassana is seldom presented within its wider Theravada context, vipassana students often turn to other Buddhist traditions to provide needed instruction. For example, the Theravada teachings on death and dying are seldom taught. As a result, many vipassana students have studied and adopted the much more readily available Tibetan teachings. The Theravada tradition has a very different and wonderfully simple perspective on death and dying that does not involve the various intermediary realms found in Tibetan Buddhism. In the last few years, a number of vipassana students have also been attracted to the non-dual teachings of various Mahayana traditions and even of the Advaita Vedanta Hindu tradition. These students may not even be aware of the profound non-dual teaching and practice styles that exist both in some of the classic Theravada scriptures. Many vipassana practitioners have distanced themselves from Theravada Buddhism because they equate that tradition with its more orthodox monastic and doctrinal expressions in Southeast Asia. But by rejecting it because of its world-renouncing, literalist, dualistic, male-centered and at times misogynist tendencies, they often lose sight of other important offerings. Today most Western lay teachers offer an alternative to such orthodoxy. Rather than stressing-world-renunciation, they stress engagement with, and freedom within the world. Rather than rejecting the body, these Western teachers embrace the body as part of the wholistic field of practice. This means that instead of aiming at the elimination of, say, anger, the practitioner is directed to see the anger clearly without either acting it out or suppressing it. In addition, many Western vipassana teachers are reevaluating the ultimate goal of enlightenment or simply placing less importance on it than do most teachers in Southeast Asia. The Western vipassana movement is also being profoundly changed by democracy, feminism and contact with other Buddhist traditions. In striking comparison to the predominance of male monastic teachers in Southeast Asia,

almost half of all vipassana teachers in the United States are lay women. While the Asian Theravada tradition has a rich history of female participation, over and over again it is the male monastics who have recorded its history, doctrines and practices. The voices of the women practitioners have largely been lost. Now the strong female practitioners and teachers in the West Sharon Salzberg, Michele McDonald-Smith, Christina Feldman and Sylvia Boorstein, to name a few are rejuvenating the tradition with perspectives that have often been marginalized. It is perhaps Western women who have found the least sustenance from the monastic sangha in Southeast Asia. While there are several female meditation teachers in Southeast Asia, for the most part there is a lack of will to empower women. Within the monasteries, women are mostly relegated to third class status, at best. In such environments there is an absence of inspiration for women either through living role models or through religious imagery. Feeling a need for female iconography to support their practice, many vipassana students have adopted Mahayana bodhisattva deities, such as Kuan-yin, Tara and other female forms of the compassionate Avalokitesvara. At Spirit Rock Center a Thai Buddha statue is on the central altar, but prominently displayed in the meditation hall are a Chinese statue of Kuan-yin, a Tibetan thangka of a female manifestation of Avalokitesvara, and a Hindu statue of a many-armed female deity. While it is not necessarily problematic to draw on other traditions in this way, it is useful to note that these bodhisattvas and gods originated from metaphysical and cosmological understandings very different from those of the less theistic Theravada tradition. Rather than turning to other traditions, Western vipassana practitioners could just as well recover the strong female images within the Theravada tradition such as Mahapajapati Gotami, the founder of the order of Buddhist nuns and the foster mother of the Buddha. In the Apadana, the only text of the Theravada canon the Tipitika still not translated completely into English; the enlightened Gotami is depicted as a female counterpart to the Buddha. Furthermore, in the literature of the Sri Lankan Theravada there are stories of how, many lifetimes ago, Shakyamuni received his initial impulse to attain Buddhahood from his mother. When it comes to meditation practices, Theravada Buddhism has a much more rich and varied repertoire than is obvious from what is offered at Western or even Southeast Asian vipassana centers. While not as elaborate as some Tibetan visualization practices, there are a wide variety of Theravada meditations involving mental imaging of buddhas; bodhisattvas, arhats, celestial realms, corpses, and the primary colors and elements. While not as carefully collected, organized and commented on as Japanese Zen Koans, there is a Theravada tradition of practicing with a dharma, question or riddle, e. In some Burmese and Thai meditation traditions there are practices that involve focusing on chakra or energy centers in the body and other practices involving energy transmission from teacher to student e. While the practice of vipassana might be highly effective, it would be a pity to ignore this wide variety of skillful means. By focusing on the relatively individualistic insight meditation practice, the Western vipassana community has also largely ignored the communal practices of Theravada Buddhism. The tradition offers a whole range of ritual practices which help foster community, connect us with the land on which we live and mark birth, death and the seasons. The collective decision-making and reconciliation practices that have benefited the monastic community for centuries could be invaluable for extending our practice from our cushions to our communities. Recently, many diverse Theravada practices were brought to Spirit Rock through the visit of Achaan Jumnien, a sixty-year-old monk from the jungles of Southern Thailand. In the course of nine days he taught thirty different practices. These included chakra practices opening of the wisdom-eye and the heart center , skeleton practices on the nature of the body , and meditations with the elements of earth, air, fire, water and space. He also performed many kinds of blessings, described exorcisms, taught chants, and offered protection rituals, visualizations and vows including bodhisattva vows, practice vows and refuge vows. Throughout, he emphasized that freedom and emptiness and joy can be found in all circumstances. And this in only one week from one Theravada teacher! It is mostly through the quirks of history that it became a label used to contrast the Theravada with the Mahayana tradition. It is also commonly assumed that the Theravada has different goals from the Mahayana. That is, the Theravada teaches the path to arhathood a path to full enlightenment which neither develops all the qualities of a Buddha nor cultivates a vow to save all beings , while the Mahayana teaches the bodhisattva path to buddhahood that involves the altruistic vow to save all beings. Though often overlooked by writers on Theravada Buddhism the bodhisattva path has remained available

within the Theravada tradition from before the rise of the Mahayana down to the present time. A small but significant number of Theravadan monks and teachers, some of whom were popularly considered to be arhats, have chosen this difficult option as their own. I believe it is important to remain connected to that tradition and to specific lineages within it. This will provide us with a reference to help us remain conscious about the choices we are making in the West. It is easily possible that without strong roots in the older tradition the American vipassana movement will lose its Buddhist identity, melding into our Judeo-Christian environment. Towards the Definition of Buddhist Thought. This article was originally published in *Inquiring Mind*, Vol 12 1 ,

7: The Treasures of the Theravada: : Insight Meditation Center

Through Tricycle Magazine someone asked Gil Fronsdal: In the Mahayana schools, such as Zen, emptiness, or the realization of emptiness seems to be an important part of the path, less so in the Theravada tradition, am I mistaken?

Not having much time at the moment just some very quick responses to the opening thoughts from Paul. Despite Japan being the most remote of the Northern Buddhist countries, with respect to the North-western Indian heartland of the Buddha, I often feel there is much in common between Zen and Theravada. There are strong differences in certain aspects, such as the position of the suttas, cultural heritage and teaching methods, but again there is something very similar they share. I feel they both approach the matter of experience and suffering directly, naturally, and in accord with nature. As a modern Theravadin, open to Buddhist sources which are consistent with the Pali Canon, I find there is much to be learned from Zen stories and Zen methods. I also find that many Zen practitioners also feel a certain respect for Theravadin teachers, particularly those of the Thai Forest Tradition, who are perhaps a little less interested in scriptural orthodoxy than other areas of the Theravadin spectrum. I agree with all you wrote right there. I think especially for modern Westerners attracted to Zen we feel a strong affinity for certain schools of Theravada because they are so similar, in the respect given to nature, the focus on meditation and mindfulness practice, moment-to-moment practice here in our lives, with the details of our lives, where-ever we are. Seeing the Dhamma everywhere, disconnecting from our inner desires and attachments, recognizing the Buddha Nature within all beings. There seem to be strong similarities I have heard with the meditation approaches of both traditions, especially vipassana and zazen. Someone who has experienced both might have more to say on that. Most of what I know about the similarities comes from discussions with Theravadan practitioners over in the E-sangha meditation forum, reading Joseph Goldstein and listening to dharma talks by Gil Fronsdal, who has studied with both traditions. To extricate the concessions made for the Chinese, Tibetans, Mongolians and so on and cut to the heart of the teachings. As I understand it though, there was little awareness or understanding of the Pali Canon or the agamas, so the early Zen masters would have to find out for themselves what was important and communicate that to their students via their unique method. What do you think of the relationship between Theravada and Zen? What benefit do you feel there is for a Theravadin in examining classical or modern Zen works? I think the modern relationship will continue to deepen, because of the great many similarities in approach. Myself, I find it very enlightening to read works by the most highly respected masters of all traditions, classical and modern. His approach to the dhamma is often very "Zen" lol, from my perspective anyway. In Peace, Chris "As Buddhists, we should aim to develop relationships that are not predominated by grasping and clinging. Our relationships should be characterised by the brahmaviharas of metta loving kindness , mudita sympathetic joy , karuna compassion , and upekkha equanimity.

8: Theravada - Wikipedia

4 More information on the bodhisattva path within Theravada Buddhism can be found in Walpola Rahula's article "The Bodhisattva Ideal in Theravada and Mahayana" in his book Zen and the Taming of the Bull: Towards the Definition of Buddhist Thought.

The two major schools of Buddhism, Theravada and the Mahayana, are to be understood as different expressions of the same teaching of the historical Buddha. And while there was a schism after the first council on the death of the Buddha, it was largely over the monastic rules and academic points such as whether an enlightened person could lapse or not. Theravada The Teachings of the Elders In the Buddhist countries of southern Asia, there never arose any serious differences on the fundamentals of Buddhism. All these countries - Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Thailand, have accepted the principles of the Theravada school and any differences there might be between the various schools is restricted to minor matters. The earliest available teachings of the Buddha are to be found in Pali literature and belongs to the school of the Theravadins, who may be called the most orthodox school of Buddhism. This school admits the human characteristics of the Buddha, and is characterised by a psychological understanding of human nature; and emphasises a meditative approach to the transformation of consciousness. The teaching of the Buddha according to this school is very plain. These can be accomplished by The Three Trainings: The philosophy of this school is straight forward. All compounded things are made up of two elements - the non-material part, the material part. They are further described as consisting of nothing but five constituent groups, namely the material quality, and the four non-material qualities - sensations, perception, mental formatives and lastly consciousness. When that perfected state of insight is reached, i. Mahayana The Great Vehicle The Mahayana is more of an umbrella body for a great variety of schools, from the Tantra school the secret teaching of Yoga well represented in Tibet and Nepal to the Pure Land sect, whose essential teaching is that salvation can be attained only through absolute trust in the saving power of Amitabha, longing to be reborn in his paradise through his grace, which are found in China, Korea and Japan. According to these schools, to look inward and not to look outwards is the only way to achieve enlightenment, which to the human mind is ultimately the same as Buddhahood. In the course of time this system developed its philosophy of intuition to such a degree that it remains unique to this day. It is generally accepted, that what we know today as the Mahayana arose from the Mahasanghikas sect who were the earliest seceders, and the forerunners of the Mahayana. They took up the cause of their new sect with zeal and enthusiasm and in a few decades grew remarkably in power and popularity. They adapted the existing monastic rules and thus revolutionised the Buddhist Order of Monks. Moreover, they made alterations in the arrangements and interpretation of the Sutra Discourses and the Vinaya Rules texts. And they rejected certain portions of the canon which had been accepted in the First Council. According to it, the Buddhas are lokottara supramundane and are connected only externally with the worldly life. This conception of the Buddha contributed much to the growth of the Mahayana philosophy. Mahayana Buddhism is divided into two systems of thought: The Madhyamikas were so called on account of the emphasis they laid on the middle view. Here, the middle path, stands for the non-acceptance of the two views concerning existence and nonexistence, eternity and non eternity, self and non-self. In short, it advocates neither the theory of reality nor that of the unreality of the world, but merely of relativity. It is, however, to be noted that the Middle Path propounded at Sarnath by the Buddha had an ethical meaning, while that of the Madhyamikas is a metaphysical concept. The Yogacara School is another important branch of the Mahayana. It was so called because it emphasised the practice of yoga meditation as the most effective method for the attainment of the highest truth Bodhi. All the ten stages of spiritual progress of Bodhisattvahood have to be passed through before Bodhi can be attained. The ideal of the Mahayana school, therefore, is that of the Bodhisattva, a person who delays his or her own enlightenment in order to compassionately assist all other beings and ultimately attains to the highest Bodhi.

9: The Buddhist Schools: Theravada and Mahayana

FROM THERAVADA TO ZEN pdf

Buddhism vs. Zen Diffeen â€° Philosophy â€° Religion â€° Buddhism Zen is a branch of Mahayana Buddhism that originated in China, when Buddhists were introduced to Taoists.

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