

PDPSA 4586

Buddhism and Psychoanalysis  
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4 Saturdays: Sept. 30, Oct. 7, & 21 and Nov. 4, 2017.

The classes will begin at 10:00 am and end at 1:00 pm, except for the final class, which will end at 1:30 pm.

Introduction:

Contemporary research demonstrates that both meditation and psychotherapy are effective in alleviating neurotic suffering. These findings have inspired an emerging field of practitioners and researchers who combine mindfulness and awareness practices and psychotherapy. A fundamental contribution of psychoanalysis is the view that psychic reality shapes neurotic suffering. Twenty-four hundred years before Freud, Shakyamuni Buddha also taught that neurotic suffering arose from psychological confusion. He closely analyzed narcissism and its complications and he believed that it was critical to understanding and healing neurosis. His method drew on meditation and contemplation as a way of transforming narcissistic vulnerabilities and confusion. Twenty-four hundred years later these same historically documented methods have attracted great interest among psychologists. Unlike psychoanalysis, Buddhism holds that conventional ego states are neurotic. While Freud's goal was to turn neurotic misery into ordinary human suffering, Shakyamuni Buddha's intention was to convert ordinary human suffering into spiritual awakening and freedom from suffering.

The aim of this class is for the candidates to become familiar with mindfulness and awareness practices, to introduce Buddhist psychology, and to discern correspondences with psychoanalytic thinking. We will compare how these methods influence psychoanalytic technique, how the analyst listens, and influences clinical thinking. It is the view of the instructors that by holding these

complementary but diverse views in mind, a creative tension arises, which we believe to be very useful for psychoanalyst and patient.

The participants will be asked to meditate each week and a particular meditation will be recommended.

In class we will read papers in a slow and deep contemplative manner, allowing for an enrichment of our experience. Papers will be chosen from among the lists here, depending on where the class is going in it's explorations.

### **Class I: The Buddhist view of Mind and the Practice of Mindfulness**

The Buddhist view of mind was developed through meditative introspection in which one attends to moment-by-moment experience of perception, feeling, emotion and consciousness. The insights gained into non-dualistic mind and the inter-relatedness of all things, are different from that of psychoanalysis but allow for the clearing away of neurotic suffering. By exploring the practice of mindfulness and Vipassana (Insight) meditation we will see for ourselves if this has merit.

We ask that you read the following before class begins:

Required readings:

Olendski, A. (2015). Buddhist psychology: A work in progress. Pp. 65-87 in *Hofer, A. (ed.), Freud and the Buddha: The Couch and the Cushion*. Karnac: London.

Thich Nhat Hanh (2012). What is mindfulness? Pp. 117-121 in *Awakening the Heart: Essential Buddhist Sutras and Commentaries*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

Suggested readings:

Gunaratana, Bhante H. (2002). *Mindfulness in Plain English*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Hanson, R., and Mendius, R. (2009), *Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love and Wisdom*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

## **Class II: The Causes and Sources of Suffering**

The earliest teaching of the Buddha is called *the Four Noble Truths*. It explicates the Buddhist view of the fact and causes of suffering and the path to cessation of that suffering. This is not an effort at dissociation, but a profound exploration of its nature. The difference between the psychoanalytic attitude to our suffering and the Buddhist will be apparent from experience near explorations of fear, sadness, frustration and/or other forms of suffering.

Required readings:

Trungpa, Chogyam (2009). *The Truth of Suffering and the Path of Liberation*. Chapters 1 and 2. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications.

Coltart, Nina (1992). *Slouching Toward Bethlehem*. Pp. 164-175. New York: Guilford Press.

Suggested Readings:

Fromm, Erich (1960). *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*. Pp. 77-94. London: Souvenir Press.

Epstein, M. (1995). *Thoughts Without a Thinker*. New York: Basic Books.

### III. Ego, Egolessness, and Non-duality

Both Psychoanalysis and Buddhism offer highly evolved and complementary maps of the conscious and unconscious mind. To understand these psychologies, we will consider Buddhist nature of mind as we read the Heart Sutra translated with commentary by Thich Nhat Hanh. And we will consider the important parallels of teachings on the holding environment by D.W. Winnicott, and on O by Wilfred Bion.

### Required Reading:

Thich Nhat Hanh (1988). *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajanaparamita Heart Sutra*. Berkeley, CA.: Parallax Press.

Bion, W. (1984). *Attention and Interpretation*. Chapter 9. London: Karnac:

### Suggested Reading:

Winnicott, D.W. (1958). The capacity to be alone. In *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment*. London: Karnac (1990).

### Class IV. Analytic Listening and the Analyst's Mind.

In learning to do psychoanalysis, we can consider what analytic attitudes are most generative? How does the analyst hold her mind and subjective experience in the face of the strain and rigors of psychoanalytic work? In this class we will consider how meditative states enhance the analyst's awareness of diverse ego states. We will see how meditative states help analyst and patient hold feelings and emotions in such a way that one invites a creative unfolding of associations.

### Required Reading:

Epstein, M. (1988). Attention in analysis. In *Psychotherapy without the Self: A Buddhist Perspective*. New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press (2007).

### Suggested Readings:

Auerbach, William (2014). Time and timelessness in the psychoanalysis of an adult with severe childhood trauma. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*. 15, no.3.

Bion, W. (1984). *Attention and Interpretation*. Chapter 8. London: Karnac.

Ghent, Emmanuel (1990). Masochism, submission, surrender: Masochism as a perversion of surrender. Pp. 211-242 in *Relational Psychoanalysis: The Emergence of a Tradition* (1999). Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.

Wallin, D. (2007). *Attachment in Psychotherapy*. Chapter 9 (pp. 133-166) and Chapter 17 (pp. 307-338) . New York: Guilford Press.

Weber, Sara (2003). An analyst's surrender. Pp. 169-189 in Safran, J. (ed.), *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism: An Unfolding Dialogue*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Learning objectives:

1) Candidates will be able to recite the instructions for mindfulness meditation on the breath.

2) They will be able to meditate for 20 minutes

3) Candidates will be able to define mindfulness and awareness.

4) Candidates will be able to compare and contrast the different definitions of neurotic suffering in Buddhism and psychoanalysis according to Erich Fromm.

5) Candidates will be able to describe Erich Fromm's theory of what changes psychically as a result of Buddhist practice.

6) The candidate can describe how meditation influences the analyst's capacity to listen and relate to his own negative emotions such as anxiety.

7) Candidates will be able to compare the meaning of ego in Buddhism and Psychoanalysis.

8) Candidates will be able to describe the Buddhist understanding of egolessness.

9) Candidates will practice meditation to calm negative feelings in themselves.

10) Candidates will be able to compare egolessness and emptiness in Buddhism.