Centrre of Buddhist Studies of The University of Hong Kong 10th Anniversary
International Conference

Buddhist Meditative Praxis:
Traditional Teachings & Modern Application

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Abstracts
Philosophy for Buddhist Monks:  
On the curriculum in the monastic universities in the 10th century

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One of the most precious manuscripts photocopied by The China Tibetology Research Center, Beijing, contains an extensive work by the renowned Buddhist philosopher and Tāntrika Jitāri (ca. 940-980). This work, which was titled perhaps Vādasthānāni (Points of Debate) seems to have been written late in Jitāri’s life, perhaps after his retirement, for the benefit of student monks who wished to undergo training in Buddhist philosophy, particularly on topics that were contested between Buddhists and other philosophical traditions in South Asia (notably Nyāya, Māṃsā and Jīnism). Twenty such points are preserved in the manuscript such as universals, momentariness, reverse causation, philosophy of language, Selflessness, God, the validity of the Vedas, and so forth. The lecture will briefly present Jitāri’s stance on these topics with special attention to the topic of reverse causation.
The Sutta on Mindfulness with In and Out Breathing

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The concern of this paper is with the canonical account of meditation on the breath and specifically with the formula which presents it in sixteen stages in four tetrads. The first three tetrads are examined in detail, referring to both Pali and non-Pali interpretations and to other complementary lists describing the practice of breathing meditation. Then the overall structure of the first three tetrads is considered before turning to the final tetrad. A picture emerges of the original meaning of the formula and how it is developed in the light of abhidha(r)mma and commentarial interpretations.
Can meditation change our brain?

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Meditation has received increasing attention among clinicians and researcher because there has been speculation that meditation would associate with significant beneficial effects on both cognitive and affective functioning of the brain. Empirical evidence accumulated thus far has pointed at the positive relationship between meditation and attention (improved sustained attention/orienting attention and reduced habitual automatic responses). Beneficial affective effects have also been reported. In this presentation, the neural effects of mediation, explored via behavioral and neural imaging studies, will be presented. Findings suggest dissociable patterns of neural activity associated with forms of meditation practice, reflecting that plastic changes in neural activity are task-specific. This is consistent with the notion of “experience-dependent neural changes”.

The Role of Meditation in the Threefold Scheme of Buddhist Mental Culture

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The Buddhist scheme of moral practice leading to final emancipation can be understood with reference to the three aspects of moral discipline (sila), concentration (samadhi), and wisdom (panna). These three aspects are mutually dependent and gradually progress towards a higher ideal. There is a clearly presented psychological theory behind this threefold scheme. According to this theory, all our moral evil exists and activates at three distinct levels. The first level is called “latency” (anusaya). It is the level at which moral evil remains dormant and latent in the form of inner dispositions and proclivities. We are not aware of these deep-seated psychological proclivities in us until they manifest themselves as excited feelings and emotions. The second level is called “arising all around” (pariyutthana). It is the level where what remained earlier as latent proclivities are now fully awake. This awakening is what we experience as the mind’s turbulence, excited feelings, or negative emotions. The third level is called “going beyond” (vitikkama). It is the level when our emotions and excited feelings externalize in the form of vocal and physical actions. The purpose of this paper is to clarify the logical sequence in the threefold scheme of mental culture and the place assigned in it to meditation with its two aspects as “calm” (samatha) and “direct seeing” (vipassana), and to show how and why “direct seeing” acts as the decisive factor in the Buddha’s path to final emancipation.
Apropos the Problems of the Theory–Praxis
Dichotomy in Buddhism: The Case of the Four Applications of Mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna: satipaṭṭhāna*) in Vajrayāna

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This paper seeks to address—mainly by resorting to Indo-Tibetan Buddhist sources—some doctrinal-cum-practical problems regarding the dichotomy between philosophical theory and spiritual praxis in Buddhism in general and the historical problems regarding the relationship between the two in particular. On the basis of some examples, it will be shown that many doctrinal development that are unique to Tibetan Buddhist traditions may be best explained as attempts made by Tibetan Buddhists to ease or resolve the doctrinal-cum-practical tension between theory and praxis. This, however, gave rise to further problems, which, in turn, required new solutions.

As for the historical problems concerning the relationship between the philosophical theory and spiritual praxis, Lambert Schmithausen, in his two separate groundbreaking articles, addressed the following issues: “Did Buddhism usually start from philosophical theories and afterwards develop corresponding spiritual practices? Or is it more typical for Buddhism that first there are spiritual practices and that philosophical theories are only the result of a subsequent reflection which leads to a theoretical consolidation and generalization of those spiritual practices?” On the basis of the history of Yogācāra idealism, he has attempted to demonstrate that particularly fundamental philosophical theories have their origin in certain spiritual praxis (Schmithausen 1976a). By taking the history of the four applications of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna: satipaṭṭhāna*), he has also attempted to illustrate that the reverse case is also possible, namely, that spiritual praxis can undergo decisive changes under the influence of (new) philosophical theories (Schmithausen 1976b). Schmithausen has made his case by considering the teaching of *smṛtyupasthāna* found in canonical, (non-Tantric) Mahāyāna, and non-Mahāyāna sources. He did not, however, pursue the issue in a Vajrayāna (or Buddhist Tantric) context. What this paper thus mainly intends to do is to take up the issue where Schmithausen has left off and demonstrate that actually also in Vajrayāna—at least as known via the Ancient (rNying-ma) School of Tibetan Buddhism—the praxis of *smṛtyupasthāna* has undergone changes under the influence of its philosophical view.

Samādi Names: The Nature of Meditative Experience in Mahāyāna

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Giving names to a limited number of mental states that result from psycho-somatic practices started in the earliest periods of Buddhist history. However, with the advent of the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra/s and other Mahāyāna texts, a different aspect of meditative experience was described. The lists of named Samādi grew in size until they contained scores of descriptive phrases not found in the earlier accounts. Understanding the nature of the identified mental states remains a challenge. In many cases, the combination of words given to a particular Samādi name is unique and no occurrences appear elsewhere in the sutra/s. The order and content of the lists differ in each example; no two lists are exactly alike. Further, there does not appear to be a progressive development in the naming. However, the practice of including ever growing listings of these names has characterized Mahāyāna literature. They cannot be dismissed as insignificant aspects of the sutra/s. Our goal, in regard to these subtle and mystical moments of experience, is to place them within the tradition and seek for better insights into the meditative practices being described by their names.
Central Asian Meditation Manuals

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-Jibin -罽賓
-습리(Swat); Gandhāra
-Bactria, Daxia 大夏.
-Area of Gandhārī(Śrī Haṇumān) , Kharoṣṭhī writing
-Kaśmīra , from ca.150-200 A.D.

Xiyu 西域: West of Dunhuang 敦煌. Westernmost part Bactria.

-First schism: ca.340 B.C.in Pāṭaliputra, during Mahāpadma Nanda.
-Sthairavāda and Mahāsāṅghika
-See: Śāriputraparipṛcchā of Eastern Jin (317-420 A.D.)

-Sarvāstivāda ca.170-200 A.D. 1. Traditional ones, Sautrāntika 經量(dharma), Dārṣṭāntika(vinaya)
meditation manuals in Abhidharmaṭṭaka
2. Vaibhāṣika”orthodoxy”. Mahāvībhāṣā ca.200 A.D.
Buddhabhāṣita Abhidharmaṭṭaka in Sanskrit; Jñānaprasthāna +6

Short vinaya, Daśabhāṇavāra

-Kuśāṇa times, first centuries A.D. Links Uḍḍiyāna, Gandhāra – Hotan 和田
End fourth century: Bactria-Pamir-Kashi 喀什– Kuqa 庫車

-Meditation manuals: Abhidharmaḥṛdaya 阿毗昙心論 (1st century B.C., says E.Frauwallner)
Saṅgharakṣa’s Yogācārabhūmi
Kumārajīva Zuo chan sanmei jing 坐禅三昧經 T.614
Chan fa yao jie 蕭法要解 T.616
Buddhabhadra Yogācārabhūmi T.618 (Damoc Duoluo chan jing 達摩多羅禪經)
Dharmamitra Wu men chan jing yao yongfa 五門禪經要用法 T.619
Chan mi yao(fajing 禪法要(法)經 T.613
T.617 Siwei lüeyao fa 思惟略要法

-Pure Land in the West of Jibin (Bactria): Sarvāstivāda
Abhirati in the East of Jibin (Gandhāra): Mahāsāṅghika

-Visualization texts, esp. Guan Wuliangshou Fo jing 觀無量壽佛經 T.365, of Kālayasaśas. Liu Song
424-442
A Reexamination of *On Being Mindless:*
Possible Meditative Implications of the Eightfold Proof of Ālayavijñāna

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In his monograph on *niruddhasamāpatti*, entitled *On Being Mindless* (1986), Paul Griffiths discusses in detail the eightfold proof of ālayavijñāna found at the outset of the *Viniścayasaṃgrahani* section of the *Yogācārabhūmi*. This proof is probably the oldest systematic discussion of ālayavijñāna in the extant Yogācāra texts and is very important. To the best of my knowledge, Griffiths’s work remains the only comprehensive discussion in English of this portion to date. In this work, he argues that ālayavijñāna was “an ad hoc intellectual construct designed to account for problems of continuity in Buddhist theories of personal identity” (p. 96) in the face of “idiosyncratic non-substantialist theories about what an individual is” (p. 97). He interprets the entire eightfold proof from this point of view. His view, however, does not seem to be supported by the text.

This time I would like to read the eightfold proof from a different point of view. As Lambert Schmithausen has noted, the physiological functions of ālayavijñāna are highly emphasized in the eightfold proof. Furthermore, as Bhikkhu Anālayo has recently pointed out, physical elements are very important in the practice of meditation. To me these points seem to suggest that ālayavijñāna has a meditative background. In this paper I shall investigate such meditative implications of ālayavijñāna through critical reappraisal of *On Being Mindless*. 
Buddhagosa’s Understanding of Meditative Praxis: 
with special reference to the ‘Seven Stages of Purification’ (*satta-visuddhi*)

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It is well known that the *Visuddhimagga* of Buddhaghosa is an exposition of the ‘Seven Stages of Purification’ (*satta-visuddhi*). The mystery of adopting this spiritual path by Buddhaghosa has not yet been resolved, as the only two instances of exposition concerning this method of treading the path leading to the final liberation, *nibbāna* are found in the Pāli Canon: one is the *Rathavinīta-sutta* (M I 145-151) where these seven purifications are described as successive stages leading to the final goal with each stage constituting the basis for the next stage – this is compared to seven chariots that are used as a relay to cover a long distance to quickly reach the destination; the other is the *Dasuttara-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya* (D III 288) where the seven stages are enumerated as part of the nine stages of purification. This *Dasuttara-sutta*, with two additional ‘factors’ ‘vijjā-pārisuddhi-padhāniyaṅga’ and ‘vimutti-pārisuddhi-padhāniyaṅga,’ describes the scheme for the attainment of liberation, *nibbāna*. Both *sutta*-s have their parallels in the Chinese translations of the *Tripiṭaka* (T I 56a and T I 238c).

Discussing the background story of the *Rathavinīta-sutta*, Bhikkhu Anālayo observes: “… the seven purifications could have been a list of purifications commonly practiced and aspired to among the various contemplative and philosophical traditions in ancient India” (Anālayo: JCBS, Vol. 3, p.135). If his observation is valid, an intriguing question may be raised: Why did Buddhaghosa adopt this concept of ‘seven stages of purification’ (*satta-visuddhi*) as the main structural scheme for his *Visuddhimagga*? The *Vimuttimagga*, which was available before Buddhaghosa’s time, adopts the scheme of the Four Noble Truths for the progress of insight (Anālayo: Fuyan Buddhist Studies, No. 4, p. 8). This fact suggests that the meditative praxis of the Mahāvihāra tradition, at least by the adoption of the seven stages of purification, became somewhat different from that of the Abhayagiri school.

This paper attempts to examine the reason why Buddhaghosa adopted the seven stages of purification as the representative Theravāda (Mahāvihāra) tradition of meditative praxis. Our methodology is initially to compare and contrast the *Visuddhimagga*’s scheme of the seven stages of purification with similar discussions in his other commentaries. This investigation will bring to light the relationship between Buddhaghosa’s understanding of the meditative praxis and that of the Mahāvihāra. A further comparison with other different Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions prevalent in India at the time may also be made.
Prajñā-vimukta, ubhayatobhāga-vimukta and vimokṣāvaraṇa

: The Sarvāstivāda perspective

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At a relatively later stage of the formation of the sūtra-piṭaka, the term, ubhayatobhāga-vimukta (Pāli: ubhatobhāga-vimutta) came to be coined for a type of arhat-s, in contrast to the prajñā-vimukta (‘wisdom-liberated’) type. In the extant sources of the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda (and other northern Abhidharma texts), we see various interpretations of this relatively new term. What is clear, however, is that it has reference to meditative attainment — and, it would seem, particularly the cessation meditative attainment (nirodha-samāpatti). In the Sarvāstivāda, the term is also linked to what is called the “liberation-hindrance” (vimokṣāvaraṇa; 解脫障): It is explained that an arhat’s inability to gain mastery over the meditative attainments is due to the presence in him of this liberation-hindrance. For some Abhidharma masters, this is to be understood as the ‘meditation-hindrance’ (定障; *samāpatty-āvarana).

An arhat in whom both this hindrance as well as the hindrance of defilement (kleśāvaraṇa) are fully overcome, is described as ubhayatobhāga-vimukta, one who is ‘liberated on both sides’. But, judging from the Great Commentary (Mahāvibhāṣā; completed around mid 2nd century CE) and the *Nyāyānusāra (circa 5th century CE), the nature of this liberation-hindrance continues to be controversial. The orthodox Vaibhāṣika master, Saṃghabhadra, argues that it is the non-defiled nescience (akliṣṭājñāna; 不染無知) which comes to be absolutely ceased only in the case of a fully enlightened buddha — a doctrinal interpretation which is obviously of great significance in terms of buddhological development for both the Abhidharma schools and the Mahāyāna.

There have been several scholarly discussion on these issues from the Theravāda sources. This paper offers an examination of them primarily from the Sarvāstivāda perspective.
The Methods of Meditation of Bodhidharma and Huineng: A Comparative Study

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Both Bodhidharma and Huineng are eminent Chan patriarchs in Chinese Buddhism nearly known to everybody. Although there are a lot of legendary stories around these two great personalities but they are historical persons and shaped Chinese Chan Buddhism tremendously. Some scholars even think that it is Huineng who made Chan Buddhism truly Chinese. In this paper, I will compare the methods of meditation advocated by both Bodhidharma and Huineng as they are quite different. Bodhidharma emphasized sitting meditation with austerity practices called “biguan” wall-gazing. But Huineng emphasized meditation in daily life with a concentration of mental training.
Do Meditative Objects Exist?

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In their meditative practice, Buddhist practitioners are instructed to observe various different objects, which may vary depending on the type or stage of meditative practice they engage. Some of these meditative objects are mundane, but some are extraordinary. Now the question is: Do these meditative objects exist? If they do not, how is it possible for a meditator to observe them? This study is part of my larger research on the concept of the cognition of nonexistent objects (asad-ālambana-jñāna) as developed among some major Buddhist philosophical schools. These schools provide us a great variety of interesting and forceful arguments for this concept, and, accordingly, they would treat meditative objects as nonexistent. In the current paper, I will examine the Sarvāstivāda-Sautrāntika controversy on the cognition of nonexistent meditative objects. This controversy will enrich our understanding of the meditative practice itself and also its relationship with philosophical discourse.
Mindfulness in the prevention of relapse of depression

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Depression is one of the highest burdens of illnesses that individuals, families and societies have to bear throughout the world, and changes in the pattern of its presentation calls for new approaches.

The most pressing problem is the high risk of relapse and recurrence in patients. Once an episode has recurred, the risk of a further episode is substantially increased. There is accumulating evidence to suggest that this risk of recurrence is highest for those people who have the most traumatic history, and who react to any small shifts in negative mood with re-triggering of old habits of negative thinking formed during previous episodes.

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) combines ancient Buddhist praxis with psycho-education about depression. Specifically, it combines Jon Kabat Zinn’s Stress Reduction program with techniques from Cognitive Therapy, and is offered in an eight week ‘class’ format for patients who are currently in remission. It aims to teach participants how to become aware of early warning signs of relapse, and to reduce tendencies to avoid these early signs. It includes breathing meditation and mindful movement to help participants become more aware of moment-to-moment changes in the mind and the body. It also includes exercises from cognitive therapy that emphasise the links between thinking and feeling.

This paper will summarise the current evidence suggesting
(a) that MBCT can be effective in reducing risk of relapse in patients,
(b) that it is especially useful in those who are more vulnerable,
(c) that it is equivalent to long-term antidepressant use for those who stop taking medication under supervision, and
(d) it can help those with treatment-resistant depression.

Future directions of research will be discussed in the light of these findings.
Neurodharma: Practicing with the Brain in Mind

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The Buddha said he taught one thing: the causes of suffering and its end. How might it serve Buddhist practice to address the ways that these causes could be natural processes embedded in our evolved human neuropsychology? Studies are showing how the conscious and unconscious mental activities of central Buddhist themes – e.g., dukkha, tanha, sati, sila, metta, upekka – depend upon underlying neural activities; mental/neural processes co-arise. Repeated patterns of mental/neural activity shape lasting neural structure: “neurons that fire together, wire together.” These new insights from neuroscience can support and enrich practice in many ways. For example, first, knowing that unwholesome mental states build unwholesome brain structure while wholesome mental states build wholesome structure helps strengthen conviction (faith) and motivation for practice. Second, it deepens insight and disenchantment to know that the coalition of millions if not billions of synapses that produces even the simplest experience, such as the sound of a bell, is fleeting, arbitrary, and selfless. Third, recognizing the brain’s evolved negativity bias – it is good at learning from bad experiences but bad at learning from good experiences – helps people both to disidentify more quickly from unwholesome states and to turn wholesome states into enduring neural structure (i.e., “neurobhavana”). Last, in neuropsychological terms, the craving that causes suffering arises largely from states of deficit and disturbance; through using neurobhavana to repeatedly internalize the felt sense of our three core needs – safety, satisfaction, connection - being met, experiences of deficit and disturbance decrease along with suffering, and there is more space in the mind for peace, contentment, and love – and for liberating insight.

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Wellspring institute for Neuroscience and Contemplative Wisdom
Awareness Training Program:
A Buddhist Teachings Based Intervention

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The dialogue and mutual influences between Buddhist teachings and the secular world have been happening since the day of the Buddha. Many new Buddhist teachings or presentation of Buddhist teachings have been developed as a result of the advancement of knowledge and changes that took place in popular culture during the course of history.

Over the past decades, there have been many attempts to integrate Buddhist teachings into psychological intervention programs. Many of them have been successful and gained recognition in their related professional disciplines. However, for various reasons, these intervention programs incorporated only part(s) of the Buddhist model's of elimination of suffering. Most of the mindfulness based intervention programs would be good examples of this.

The Awareness Training Program presented in this talk is an attempt to take advantage of the advancement in neuroscience and psychological research to formulate a Buddhist based intervention program. During the talk, I will explain why it is important to incorporate the whole of the Buddhist model's of elimination of suffering instead of just take part of the ingredients, and I will also present to the audience the framework and the theoretic foundation of the Awareness Training Program.
A Chinese Chan-based intervention: A way to improve the mind and body

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A newly developed Chinese Chan-based intervention termed Dejian Mind-body intervention, has showed by empirical evidence that can improve the psychological and physical status of children and adults. This intervention has utilized the Buddhism teachings as the foundation for psychosocial education with the purpose of obtaining self-realization and self-awareness. Another component of the intervention is to emphasis the reduce intake of the food that will increase internal body heat and inflammation; the food including all meats, eggs, spicy and hot food. The third component is practicing some Shaolin mind-body exercise for the purposes of reducing stress and obtaining inner peace, also of improving the blood and Qi circulation as a way to improve physical and psychological health. Research findings on patients with depression, children with autism, and older adults have demonstrated that this intervention is effective in reducing psychological problems (e.g. depression, bad-temper, impulsive behavior), in improving cognitive functions (e.g., memory, executive function and attention) and in enhancing physical health (e.g., sleep, digestive system and immune function).