



Buddhist Metaphysics – The beginning

Chi: The 3 icons, well first we have Buddhism, then we have philosophy and then science. Then you change to religion and then you changed it to thinker and what in the middle...?

Tammy: Metaphysics

Chi: Aah, metaphysic! Yeah, should I say this? People when they go to our website because you have the Buddha icon, the image there, so they're thinking you have something to do with Buddhism. And now in 1st year lecture we mentioned something the soul and that right away a lot of people already turn...

Tammy: turn away from it.

Chi: Because it says Buddhism doesn't have soul. That is because of the definition. So I think we have to clarify this otherwise it will be...

Dr. Lo: Fortunately it takes again, pretty much go to Year-3 "Heart Journey" before we can clarify. When Shakyamuni Buddha taught/preached most of his students were either from the Brahman or Jain (tradition). In fact, these Brahmans and Jains were scholars. They did not come to learn from Buddha; they came to challenge the Buddha.

Chi: Yes, yes...

Dr. Lo: People said "there is an enlightened person and his name is Shakyamuni". I want to see whether you are really enlightened or not. So when they both come, they ask one question: "You say you are liberated, how do you attain liberation?" So, in India they believe in the cycle of rebirth. So the Brahmans would ask "How do you break the cycle of rebirth? In Brahmanism we break the cycle of rebirth because our souls ascend and merge with Brahman." Right? Brahman is God. So when our souls merge with God's soul or in today's language, when my spirit merges with the Holy Spirit, I'm now in heaven, I'm liberated. So that was how the Brahmans asked their question.

When the Jains came, they would say "In Jainism, our teacher Mahavira taught us we can attain arahant; how do you attain arahant?" So let's take the Jain first, okay. The Jain's question was "how do you attain arahant?" Shakyamuni said "Well pretty much the same way as you guys." Right? "You purify lifetime after lifetime; you purify all your karma until you have no more desire to rebirth. So without rebirth, the cycle of life and death stops and you escape from the cycle of life and death. So that is how you attain arahant." Now the critical question the Jain asked would be "What? Your soul is imprisoned in your body. When your soul is imprisoned in your body, you are not totally free yet."

If Shakyamuni said “I agree. You are right.” Then Shakyamuni became a Jain. There is no difference between Buddhism and Jainism anymore. So Shakyamuni said “This thing called soul that you imagined is imprisoned in your body doesn’t exist. When you think of soul, you are trying to create an entity which represents yourself permanently. Let me tell you the no-self principle. You have mistaken the 5 aggregates, the 5 skandhas as your true self.” So then, he talked about the inferno of the 5 aggregates. Correct? Now we have a Buddhism which is completely separate and distinct from Jainism because Shakyamuni was able to perfect a no-self, no-soul principle and explained that at a very, very psycho-neural scientific level – how the soul is an imaginary creation by your skandhas, by your perception of reality. That is how profound his psychology was.

So now the Jains said “Oh my God! That is why I don't have to die before I attain full liberation.” So the Jains stayed and became his disciples. When they hear the 5 aggregates/the skandhas lecture they knew this man is truly enlightened. They have never heard of such lecture before. And because you don't have a soul to liberate, your body is no longer a prison of your soul. Now you don't have to destroy your prison no more because there is no one in a prison. That means you don't have to destroy your body no more. That means you don't have to do all those painful ascetic practices – pulling your hair, don't eat...just to make yourself die as soon as possible. Right? Just slows you...

Hugh: Is like practices of chanting.

Dr. Lo: No, chanting is Brahman side, has nothing to do with the Jain's side. So the Jains were happy, they became Buddhist. That's how he talked about the no-self principle, okay!

Now when the Brahmans they came and said “Look! I have to have (accept) a soul in order to merge with God.”

And Shakyamuni said: “Don't be foolish, there's no such thing as a soul. You are already liberated”. Haha!

Brahmans said: “Yeah! if there's no soul, all this so called soul merging with Soul is nonsense”. And they heard the five skandhas no-soul story, no-self, no-soul and that is fine and they all attained arahant. Now is Chapter 2...

Chapter 1 is Shakyamuni taught no-soul based on the no-self principle. The no-self principle is based on the 5 aggregates; the 5 skandhas in order for all these people who are so desperately not to return to earth. That is Chapter 1. For people who don't want to return to earth, you teach them no-soul.

Now Chapter 2 are the Bodhisattvas. They don't care about liberation for themselves. They want to return, return and return to help sentient beings. So in Chapter 2, you have to say, you have to have a thing to recycle through. No soul then who is coming to rebirth? Who has a grand vow?

Hugh: I don't wear your pendant but right now I feel heavy.

All: Haha (laughter)

Chi: Actually Bodhisattva is from Nagarjuna...

Dr. Lo: Exactly, now when Shakyamuni during his life time unfortunately no Bodhisattva come and ask him to teach Chapter 2

Chi: After Nagarjuna...

Dr. Lo: Exactly! You see the problem.

Chi: Everybody thinks that is from Buddha. It's from Nagarjuna.

Dr. Lo: Yeah, because all these people come; they want to liberate. Liberate to them means break the cycle of rebirth. If Shakyamuni said "You know what you can still be liberated without breaking the cycle of rebirth." Oh my God, this guy is not an enlightened Buddha. This guy is talking nonsense, illogical. How can you say you can liberate and still keep on rebirth? You never break your cycle of rebirth and you claim liberation? No such thing for the entire India. You see, Chapter 2 never happened.

Hugh: So why is that so many people believe in ghosts?

Dr. Lo: Because ghosts are real, souls are real. But Shakyamuni had no chance to teach that doctrine. Do you understand?

Hugh: If there is no soul, does not mean there is no ghost.

Dr. Lo: Exactly!

Chi: Depends on how you define soul.

Hugh: That is right; I'm not talking about Tom's question.

Dr. Lo: Let's say the thing that reincarnates, the thing that rebirths, the thing that continues the cycle of rebirth.

Tammy: You can call it anything, the energy.

Dr. Lo: Now the way Shakyamuni got around it is by saying the five skandhas create an illusion of self and then your 12 dependant origination drive the cycle of rebirth. The cycle is driving itself. It doesn't need a thing to drive it. Kind of ... mechanistically the wheel runs but you know you still need ... there's no such thing as a perpetual machine that does not require energy input. In other words what Shakyamuni is saying "When that cycle is in motion, it will continue in motion unless it is stopped." There are 2 ways to look at it. That statement is only true if that motion is in vacuum. Just like Newton's Law, an object in motion will always be in motion in vacuum, okay. But the world is not a vacuum; the entire universe is hardly a vacuum. You will encounter some matter, some other stuff, to some friction. So you need a driving force for it to continue. So these two, you know, is again left is right, right hand side is right. Now your thinking box has to expand. For those arahant, they don't want to hear no more, they are already liberated. But the Bodhisattvas are not happy with this. The Bodhisattvas says there must another way of liberation. You know the Bodhisattvas said "Can we still be liberated when we keep on coming back (rebirth) not for myself but for the benefit of other sentient beings. Is that doable?" During Shakyamuni's lifetime no one asked him. That belief system simply is unable to be established because the entire continent of India was dead against him because the thinking box was that narrow. So from Shakyamuni to 500 years after Shakyamuni, up to Nagarjuna's time, they rethink all this. And now the Mahayana comes along and they come out in a strong way. First they come out with (Ksitigarbha Sutra) Di Zhang- 地藏.

Tammy: 地藏經(Ksitigarbha Sutra)

Dr. Lo: Di Zhang will never rest until all beings are liberated, but all beings will never be liberated therefore he becomes immortal. And in the Di Zhang Sutra, it says very clearly people begin as some women or someone, you know and they have compassion for their mothers. And then one lifetime, two lifetimes and many lifetimes, they gave them back until they become Di Zhang.

Hugh: Really?

Dr. Lo: But Mahayana has to wait for the entire continent's thinking box to grow bigger. So today if people only heard a tiny little bit about Buddhism, about no self, no soul and they think AWE is the forgery of Buddhism. It's too bad...it means you haven't even read the Di Zhang Sutra. You haven't read any of the Mahayana Sutra and you jumped to the conclusion. So I'm sorry, too bad, you know, that they belong to the tradition that teaches only Chapter 1 with that limited thinking box of liberation for the self only, for that one person. Don't care about liberation of anyone else.