

Buddhism in Action

Dr. Stephen Minister's PHIL110 How to Live Well - September 25, 2023 - Soobin Rho

Essay

Yet again, it happened again. I happen to really like a portion of the Buddhist principles. I love them so much that I decided to incorporate them into my daily rules. Now that I think about it, Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Buddhism all have something in common. All of them, we're learning them in class, thousands of years later they were conceived. They must be doing something right, if not all. Here's what I liked the most about Buddhism.

Mindfulness

(a) I sit down everyday and do a form of mindfulness meditation. It's not exactly the same as mindfulness meditation in that I don't necessarily try to silence my thoughts, but the most important aspect of mindfulness meditation is exactly what I use for my daily 10-minute session: be present. "Our true home is not in the past. Our true home is not in the future. Our true home is in the here and the now. Life is available only in the here and the now, and it is our true home ... There are those of us who are alive but don't know it." (2019, The Practice of Mindfulness, Thich Nhat Hanh, pg. 1)

(b) I have three daily rules to follow, and whenever I fail to do those, I do a self-enforced repercussion. I walk around the entire Augie campus each time I violate any of my daily rules. For example, if I fail to do my 10 minutes of daily mindfulness meditation, I self-enforce myself to walk around the campus, which by the way takes around fifteen minutes, which is just the perfect amount of time for mindfulness personally. Currently, I failed 13 times for a variety of reasons since I started my daily rules system – e.g. forgetting to do my daily stuff and just sleeping. I had to walk around the campus seven times and I still have six more walking to do. When I do the walking, I make sure to have no distractions at all, especially technology. What I consider to be the main idea behind these sessions is to be present.

The biggest change in my life after doing this for 38 days is that I no longer resent myself. Before this, I used to resent myself everyday, for I had been spending almost the entirety of my time scrolling through LinkedIn, Hacker News, or whatever distractions my monkey brain could find. I always desired to be this version of myself that has the best math / CS / rhetorical skills in the world with six-pack abs. I always wanted the wrong things for the wrong reasons in all the wrong ways. What's more – I didn't even know I was seeking the wrong path, and because of this, I resented myself for not being able to do what I wanted to do, and it was obviously unhealthy.

Now, thanks to my daily mindfulness sessions, I am able to let go of the future. I no longer have the meaningless desires I have of the future, and I no longer daydream of the shameful and cringey mistakes I made in the past. I finally get to be content with what's remaining, the present.

What this means is that I get to clearly see what I can do right now at the present moment. This, in turn, has an unexpected but welcome side effect that I get to be more productive. It's ironic that focusing on the present actually allows me to become a better version of myself, contrary to the desires I had in that past to be the 'best' version of myself. This is not to mention the mental relief I gain from being mindful, and not forgetful. "Their mind is caught in their worries, their fears, their anger, and their regrets, and they are not mindful of being there ... You are caught in the past or in the future. You are not there in the present moment, living your life deeply. That is forgetfulness." (pg. 1)

"You are fully alive, fully present in the here and the now." (pg. 4) This is exactly how I feel everyday thanks to my daily mindfulness.

Relevant Readings

2019, The Practice of Mindfulness, Thich Nhat Hanh

"Our true home is not in the past. Our true home is not in the future. Our true home is in the here and the now. Life is available only in the here and the now, and it is our true home ... There are those of us who are alive but don't know it." (pg. 1)

"Their mind is caught in their worries, their fears, their anger, and their regrets, and they are not mindful of being there. That state of being is called forgetfulness—you are there but you are not there. You are caught in the past or in the future. You are not there in the present moment, living your life deeply. That is forgetfulness." (pg. 1)

"Walking meditation ... You don't have to make any effort during walking meditation, because it is enjoyable. You are there, body and mind together. You are fully alive, fully present in the here and the now. With every step, you touch the wonders of life that are in you and around you. When you walk like that, every step brings healing. Every step brings peace and joy, because every step is a miracle. The real miracle is not to fly or walk on fire. The real miracle is to walk on the Earth, and you can perform that miracle at any time. Just bring your mind home to your body, become alive, and perform the miracle of walking on Earth." (pg. 4)