

## **“Rebirth: A Guide to Mind, Karma, and Cosmos in the Buddhist World”**

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**April 9, 2022**

- 9:00–9:30 a.m.: Introductory
  - About the book
  - Two models of post-mortem existence (eschatology)
    - Single-life, single-destiny model
    - Multiple-life, multiple-destiny model
  - Rebirth in world cultures
    - Small-scale societies: Central African, Amerindian, South Pacific
    - Large-scale societies: Greek, Indic
  - Two versions of the multiple-life model
    - Rebirth eschatology
      - Single species
      - Cross species
    - Karmic eschatology
      - Greek models
      - Indic models
  - Rebirth in early India
    - Brahmanical/Hindu views
      - Vedic
      - Upaniṣadic
    - Non-Buddhist Shramana views
      - Materialists
      - Ājivakas
      - Jains
  - The Buddha on rebirth

- His “song of victory”
  - First-person accounts by The Buddha and others
  - Wrong view, right view, and rebirth
  - Contrarian views
- 9:30-10:15 a.m.: Rebirth in early Buddhism
  - The where: The six realms
    - The hell realms
    - The hungry ghost realm
    - The animal realm
    - The human realm (with a note on female rebirth)
    - The asura realm
    - The heavenly realms
  - The how: Dependent arising
    - As a general causal principle
    - As the twelve links
  - The why: Karma
    - Defining karma
    - The operation of karma
    - Good, bad, and mixed karma
    - The “heaviness” of karma
- 10:15–10:30: Q & A/discussion
- 10:30– 10:35: Break
- 10:35–11:05: Rebirth in Indian Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna
  - Indian Mahāyāna
    - The rhetoric of Mahāyāna “wisdom” traditions

- Prajñāpāramitā
  - Madhyamaka
  - Yogācāra/Cittamātra
  - Buddha nature discourse
  - The Avataṃsaka tradition
- The reality of Mahāyāna everyday thought and practice
  - The two truths
  - Conventional assumptions in wisdom literature
    - Prajñāpāramitā
    - Madhyamaka
    - Yogācāra/Cittamātra
    - Buddha nature discourse
    - The Avataṃsaka tradition
  - Pure Land traditions
- Indian Vajrayāna
  - The rhetoric of Vajrayāna metaphysics
    - Tantric “monism”
    - Tantric “mentalism”
  - The reality of Vajrayāna practice
    - Generation-stage practice
    - Completion-stage practice
    - Mahāmudrā and Dzokchen
- 11:05– 11:20: Meditation (mind-moment regression/progression)
- 11:20–11:50: Indian Buddhist arguments for rebirth
  - Experiential
    - The Buddha’s experience redux
    - “Come and see”: The *Kālāma Sutta*

- Experiential vs. experimental: The *Pāyāsi Sutta*
    - Pragmatic: A Buddhist Pascal's Wager?
    - Moral: Buddhist theodicy
    - Analogical
      - Nāgasena teaches King Milinda
      - Mahāyāna analogies
    - Rational
      - Nāgārjuna (*Averting the Arguments*, verse 70 and commentary)
      - Dharmakīrti (*Exposition of Valid Cognition*, chapter 2, verses 34–119)
        - The context
        - The argument
          - The materialist claim
          - Causal theory
            - Substantial causes
            - Homogeneous causes
            - Indispensable special conditions
            - Assistant conditions
          - Rejecting the materialist claim
          - Showing how rebirth makes sense
            - The relation between mind and body
            - The operations of rebirth
          - Refuting objections
            - Śāntarakṣita (*Compendium of Principles*)
    - Apologetic: Rebirth without a self
      - Analogical explanations
      - Abhidharma explanations
- 11:50–12:00: Q & A/discussion

- 12:00–12:30: Lunch
  
- 12:30–1:15: Modern takes on rebirth
  - Modernity, Buddhism, and Rebirth
    - Modernity and religion
      - The challenge of modernity
        - Colonialism
        - Science and technology
        - Western ideologies
        - Critiques of religion
        - Clifford Geertz’s analysis: “nor a question of *whether* to believe but *how* to believe”
    - Modernity and Buddhism
      - A brief history
        - 1800–1945
          - 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe: German philosophers
          - 19<sup>th</sup>-century America: Transcendentalists
          - Theosophists
          - The World Parliament of Religions
          - Evans-Wentz and Suzuki
        - 1945–date
          - “Convert” Buddhism
            - Beat Zen, Square Zen
            - The coming of mindfulness
            - Tibetan Buddhism
            - Engaged Buddhism
          - “Culture” Buddhism
            - Chinese and Japanese
            - Southeast Asian

- Tibetan
  - Four modern perspectives
    - Literalist
    - Neo-traditionalist
    - Modernist
    - Secularist
  - Contemporary debates
    - Thurman vs. Batchelor (1997)
    - Modern rational arguments: Reviving Dharmakīrti
      - Critiques of Dharmakīrti
      - Defenses of Dharmakīrti
    - Modern epistemological arguments (and their problems)
      - Taking “subjectivity” seriously
      - Reports from meditative experience
    - Modern empirical arguments (and their problems)
      - Past-life memories
      - Near-death experiences
      - Out-of-body experiences
      - Thukdam
    - Modern metaphysical arguments
      - From Madhyamaka → infinite possibilities
      - From Yogacara → reality as mental construction
      - From the New Physics → the cosmos as information
    - Buddhist agnosticism and the “As If” approach
  - 1:15–1:30: Meditation (compassion toward beings in six realms)
  - 1:30–2:00: Q & A/discussion