

Wright

What Is Buddhist Enlightenment?

What kind of person should I strive to be? What ideals should I pursue in my life? These basic human questions and others like them are components of the overall question that guides this book: What is enlightenment? As Dale Wright argues, any serious practitioner of human life, religious or not, confronts the challenge of living an authentic life, of overcoming common human disabilities like greed, hatred, and delusion that give rise to excessive suffering. Why then, Wright asks, is this essential question often avoided, even discouraged among Buddhists? One reason frequently cited by Buddhists is that pondering a distant goal might be a waste of energy that would be better applied to practice: Quiet the flow of obsessive thinking, put yourself in a mindful state of presence, and let enlightenment take care of itself. In this book, however, Wright contends that pondering this question is meditative practice--that attentive inquiry of this kind is essential as the starting point and guide for any mindful practice of life. Meditative reflection on the meaning of enlightenment focuses us on our aim and direction in life. It guides us in shaping our practices, our ideals, and the kinds of lives we will live. Asking what enlightenment is as a basic form of meditation helps to activate our lives and get transformative practice underway. From Wright's perspective, there is no more important question to ask than this one. What is Buddhist Enlightenment? offers a wide-ranging exploration of issues that have a bearing on the contemporary meaning of enlightenment, including a concluding section with 10 theses that answer the title's question. Written by a leading scholar of Buddhism, the book balances deep learning and an accessible style, offering valuable insights for students, scholars, and practitioners alike. While he takes an examination of what enlightenment has been in past Buddhist traditions as his point of departure, Wright's historical considerations yield to the question that our lives press upon us--what kinds of lives should we aspire to live here, now, and into the future?

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