



Modern Meditation

Religious vs. Spiritual

- We often ask the question, “do you have a religion?” in Korea.
 - How do you answer?
 - More and more people seem to be saying that they don’t.
- In the United States, more people are saying that they are spiritual but not religious.
 - What is the difference?

Religious vs. Spiritual

- Religion

- “one of the systems of faith that are based on the belief in the existence of a particular god or gods.” – Oxford Dictionary

- Spirituality

- “the quality of being concerned with deep, often religious, feelings and beliefs, rather than with the physical parts of life” – Cambridge Dictionary

Religious vs. Spiritual

- Many people use these words as opposites.
 - They are not.
- There is spirituality in and out of religion.
 - Spirituality in religion is usually used to suggest a believer's personal connection to their god within the context of the religion.
 - Spirituality outside of religion is also a personal connection to the spirit.
 - It works outside the confines of organized religion.
 - There may or may not be a god or gods but there is as sense of a “higher power” or a “higher force”.

Religious Pluralism

- There are several ways to understand pluralism
 - One's own religion is not the only source of truth and that other religions also have truths and true values (morals, ethics, principles)
 - Acceptance that two or more religions that may have conflicting ideas are equally valid
 - This view emphasizes similarities between religions
 - Religious tolerance; allowing different religions to coexist
- What are the benefits about pluralism?
- Are there any negative aspects?
- It can lead to ambiguity

Religious Pluralism

- Pluralism is not a new phenomenon
 - Korea:
 - Buddhism and Shamanism coexisted for centuries
- However there is a recent concern about pluralism, particularly in the west.
 - Particularly in Christianity

There is a growing pluralistic trend in the west among common people and some scholars, not much among religious leadership.

This is not the pluralism of tolerance but acceptance and looking for similarities and accepting equal but different truths

This makes many religious leaders very worried

Syncretism

- Blending two or more different religious traditions into one religion
 - This is actually very common.
 - Buddhism and Christianity – when they moved to a new area it incorporated local practices
 - Buddhism in Korea
 - Beginning of Judaism
 - Cult of Ra (Egyptian) meets Zoroastrianism
 - Beginning of Christianity
 - Christianity in Europe
- In a sense most of the new spiritual people are individually syncretic– they are incorporating elements from the different religious traditions they have encountered into their own belief system.

Trends in Modern Meditation

- Less or no emphasis on God or religious belief
- Use of terms such as universal energy, life force, higher power
- Instead of reaching Nirvana, or communing with God, the emphasis is more on earthly effects of meditation
 - Stress reduction
 - Health benefits
 - Psychological treatment
 - Search for happiness
- Merging practices from different traditions to create new systems or simplifying old systems, such as in Transcendental Meditation which was born of the yogic tradition

Trends in Modern Meditation

- Development of new tools to aid in mediation
 - Bio-feedback machines
 - Recorded guided mediations
 - Sound machines
 - White noise generators
 - Computer programs to guide meditation practice



Modern Techniques

- Self observation
 - Focuses on a search and destroy method of eliminating false selves to reach the true (non-ego) self.
- Visualization
 - A technique to attract a positive future event or state
 - Note: the popularity of *The Secret*, by Rhonda Byrns
- Taro meditation
 - The taro was originally a deck of cards for card games used by gypsies.
 - Modern cards are based on it
 - In the 18th century there is evidence of them being used for divination (telling the future)
 - Now it seems they are also being used for meditation

Tarot Cards (Rider-Waite Deck)

