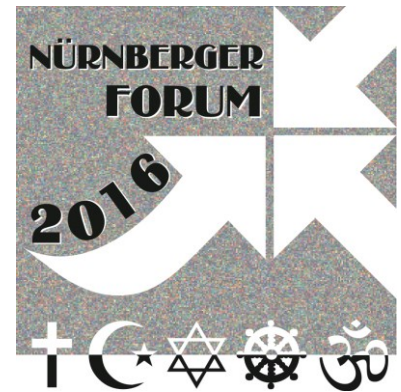


Heesoon Bai

„The Contribution of Religions to the Common Good in a Pluralistic Society“– From a Buddhist perspective



ABSTRACT

Buddhism, says Professor Robert Thurman, is a system of education. This presentation first comments on the content of this system of education and how it is enacted. The core educational philosophy undergirding this system is the possibility of realizing that we are interdependent with all of the universe, including the biotic community, Earth; and that, hence, the limited, blindly held, notion that we are ego selves with categorical separations from each other, and are therefore independent of others (including non-human others), is an illusion. This illusion is costly and is the source of endless suffering.

Buddhism is also a system of practices that can be seen as comprised of curriculum and pedagogy. It is a holistic curriculum that works with all aspects of humanity, including the physiological, neurological, the ethical, and the social, all of which is completely intertwined with the psychological understanding, subjectively and intersubjectively, of human beings. The pedagogy likewise takes holistic approaches with skillful means (*upaya*). Through this system of education, Buddhism aims at a radical transformation of human consciousness.

Currently, a mindfulness “revolution” is sweeping across North America and elsewhere. While misunderstanding and limited understanding of mindfulness and its indiscriminate and unskillful application is concerning and disconcerting, nonetheless this presents a not-to-be-missed opportunity for scholars and educators conversant in Buddhist philosophy and practice to share practice and philosophy regarding mindfulness and to facilitate understanding for all potential and current practitioners. This presentation will focus on the holistic practice of mindfulness for generating moral emotions, known as the *Four Immeasurables*: Lovingkindness (Friendliness), Compassion, Empathic joy, and Equanimity. Working with these emotions holistically (as opposed to as isolated techniques) as affective meditation may constitute a form of social activism in that individuals thus practicing could free themselves from speed, greed, and perpetual discontent that is deeply rooted in the contemporary materialistic civilization.