INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

DIDACTIC REFERENCES – SECONDARY LEVEL II

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to ...

1. identify the characteristics of Buddhism as an "experiential religion".
2. reflect on the intersections between Buddhism and philosophy, psychology, religion, and science.
3. comprehend the similarities of Buddhist philosophy and modern physics.
4. explain the conditionality of thoughts and feelings.

NOTE: THE SEC I LESSON PROVIDES A BASIC OVERVIEW OF BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS.

NOTES

This in-depth teaching unit deals with exciting points of contact between Buddhism, the humanities and natural sciences. It shows that there are both similarities and differences.

Like most religions, Buddhism has rituals and prayers. However, Buddha's teaching is not a religion of faith, but a religion of experience. There are no dogmas, everything may be critically questioned. One strives with self-responsibility for inner perfection. Buddha's teaching shows a way to overcome the dualistic way of experiencing and the goal is liberation and enlightenment.

Similar to philosophy, the essence and meaning of the world is explained, which has an influence on the shaping of life. However, Buddha's teaching does not remain with the descriptive explanation, but also shows ways how to implement the knowledge.

As in psychology, the aim is to bring about a positive change in behavior so that greater freedom and happiness will result. Buddha's teaching, however, goes beyond this. Through view and meditation, all the enlightened qualities of the human mind are developed, thus bringing the human mind to a super-personal level.

Buddha made statements about the world of appearances 2600 years ago in the Abhidharma Tantra and Heart Sutra: "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form, form and emptiness unseparated ..." Research results of quantum physics confirm these findings: There is no smallest particle, but ultimately everything consists of energy and information (CERN, Large Hydron Collider).

The Buddhist term "emptiness" means that nothing appears from itself, everything is constantly changing and also dissolves again. In the so-called Rangtong description of the world, Buddha explains that there is no smallest basic building block, but things appear. Subject, object and deed are sides of the same wholeness and condition each other, which also corresponds to the latest scientific knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Material 1 is projected and gives impulses with the question: What points of contact does Buddhism have with religion, philosophy, psychology and science? The students bring in their previous knowledge. If there are few answers, the four areas can be defined.

WORK

The students read **Material 2**. Is the teaching of Buddha religion or science? The task is to find similarities and differences between Buddhism and the respective fields.

The tasks for the students are on **Worksheet 1**. The students discuss in small groups and write down characteristics in the table. **Answers to WS 1** for the teacher offer possible answers.
The results are then compared in plenary.

DEEPENING, optional

With **Material 3**, the students receive excerpts from a scientific essay by René Staritzbichler. The author is a Buddhist and a physicist and wrote his diploma thesis on quantum field theory.
In addition, the Buddhist view of "experience" and "space" is explained in the note.

The students read the text and answer the questions on **Worksheet 2** in partner work, possibly in a division of labor, since the text is quite extensive and demanding. The answers are discussed in plenary.

DEEPENING AND TRANSFER

In this part of the lesson, the general picture of reality is reflected. Our perception conveys to us that things are real. Although everyone knows that the senses are very limited, we consider the perceived reality to be the exclusive one.

Using the sequence of images on **Worksheet 3**, the students explain the emptiness of matter (**top half**).

Thoughts and feelings are also experienced as very "real" and are thought to be real. On closer examination they are just as "empty of any self-existence". One experiences them. How we behave towards them is our free choice.

Using a text excerpt from the Heart Sutra, the students reflect on the conditional level of thoughts and feelings. They formulate conclusions from a Buddhist perspective. Partner work is recommended (**Worksheet 3, lower half**).

Answers to **Worksheet 3** give suggestions.

In the plenary, the students exchange the findings of this lesson and formulate a conclusion. The core of this conclusion should be the understanding of the conditionality and transience of all phenomena.
A Buddhist cosmological representation illustrates this insight **(Material 4**).