

Primary Point



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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sas, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive *Primary Point*, see page 31. The circulation is 1,800 copies.

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Cover: The dharma room Buddha at Vrážné Zen Center, Czech Republic. Photo by Dušan Kosour.

Correction

The previous issue of *Primary Point* (vol. 35, no. 2, Summer 2018) listed the wrong book review in the table of contents and included on page 25 extra text from a different book review. The book reviewed in the last issue was *No-Gate Gateway*. The full review of *Buddhism beyond Gender* appears in this issue. We regret the error.

The Teacher Is in Them

Dear Bobby,

Although my interest or engagement with Shambhala has been mild over the years, basically confined to reading a couple of Trungpa Rinpoche's books, I was shocked, upset, and even angry to learn recently of the long-running, credible and now public reports of sexual abuse against Shambhala's spiritual leader, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, and other teachers in the Shambhala community. This hurts the global Buddhist community, not just Shambhala.

Love,
Ames

Dear Ames,

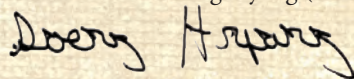
Thank you for emailing us. For us, we feel sad and grateful. Sad because so many people around the world, and not just Buddhists, are hurt and confused about this. It undermines trust and respect for the organization and the practice. We feel grateful that the truth has been released and that now they all have an opportunity to look at what they do trust and what their practice actually is. Each person, whether they have a religious teacher or not, must learn to believe in themselves and while they are learning this, they must never give away their own strength or power to a person in authority.

A teacher's authority rests only in their clear and authentic teaching and example. It cannot and should not rest on their title, personality or place in a hierarchy. The Buddha taught, "we already have it." Each one of us has the innate ability to find our way and understand the truth. A teacher's job is to help point the way. It is not to ask for devotion from students. A student's job is to listen to the teachings, do the practices and see if the path they have chosen is helping them to become strong and clear. When we are strong and clear, we can see our mistakes and the mistakes of the teacher.

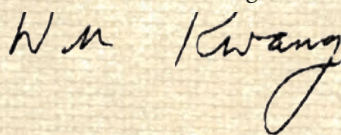
We congratulate the Shambhala sangha for seeing and exposing their current struggle. We trust that through their pain, disappointment and sadness that they will only grow stronger, realizing that the teacher is in them. They did not lose the teacher; they cannot lose the teacher. Hierarchy only works from the bottom up. May they continue to practice diligently and allow the correct leadership to naturally appear.

Sincerely,

Zen Master Soeng Hyang (*Bobby Rhodes*)



Zen Master Wu Kwang (*Richard Shrobe*)



Cause and Effect Are Clear

Zen Master Bon Hae (Judy Roitman)

In the second case of the *Mumonkan*, an old man appeared whenever Pai Chang gave a dharma talk. Nobody knew who he was; he just appeared, sat in the back, and then left. Every time Pai Chang gave a talk, the old man appeared, sat in the back, and then left.

But one day he stayed behind to talk to Pai Chang. It turns out that an unimaginably long time ago, in fact, several Buddhas ago, he had been the master on the mountain. But when a monk asked him if an enlightened person were subject to cause and effect, he answered no. For this, he had been reborn a fox for five hundred generations.

After telling his story, the old man/fox spirit begged Pai Chang, “Give me one sentence to liberate me from this fox’s body. Tell me, is an enlightened person subject to cause and effect?”

To which Pai Chang answered: “Cause and effect are clear.”



I love this kong-an. It points directly at the cause of so much suffering we inflict on other people: “I am special; whatever I do is correct; I am not subject to cause and effect like other people are.” But Pai Chang says: whoever you are, cause and effect remain clear.

Right now we are inundated with news about Buddhist teachers, Catholic priests, actors, radio hosts, movie moguls, politicians who have hurt so many people. These kinds of actions have gone on ever since humans appeared, often with no visible consequences to the people who hurt others, while the people they hurt carry indelible pain, and often keep silent because what is the point of telling anyone? And of course it is not only famous people who harass, assault, or rape people. And it is not only sexual misbehavior that causes pain to others. We hear about these things and we wonder: how can anyone do a thing like that?

It’s because they think they are exempt.

I don’t know where that monk’s question to the ancient master came from. Was it an academic question about the properties of enlightened beings? Or had he done something he knew was wrong, as we all have, and wanted to

know if enlightenment would give him a way out? But of course it doesn’t. Thousands of people can mourn at your funeral, you can have received uncounted awards and honors, you can have wielded unimaginable power, you can think you got away with whatever it is that you think you got away with. But no one gets away with anything. Whatever we do hangs there in space-time, sending out waves like a pebble dropped in water. We have to own what we do. Otherwise we kill a small part of ourselves, and even if the outside world doesn’t see it, we know a part of us has died.

Luckily, we have good medicine to help us: a great question such as *What am I?* or *What is this?* Look deeply into yourself and you see that you cannot possibly be exempt. *The Lotus Sutra* has an entire chapter (abbreviated in the *Thousand Eyes and Hands Sutra*) about how if you just chant sincerely, Kwan Seum Bosal (aka Kwan Yin Bodhisattva) will save you from a mountain of swords, from the hell of boiling fire, from earth prison hell, from hungry ghosts, asuras, animals, and so on, but everyone knows that ultimately that will fail. As Shylock cried out, “If you prick us, do we not bleed?” Consider the title of Sallie Tisdale’s book: *Advice for Future Corpses*—that’s us, folks, future corpses.

But it doesn’t stop there. We are not just future corpses distinct from each other like so many billiard balls. We are connected so closely that the notion of specialness—of ourselves or of anyone else—is a narrow, ungenerous view of reality, cutting ourselves off at the root.

There’s a line in our chant *Homage to the Three Jewels* that points in the right direction. In Sino-Korean it’s *shi bang sam se je mang char hae*. Word-for-word, it reads: “ten directions three worlds God net shining ocean.” *Ten directions, three worlds* means: throughout time and space. *God net* is Indra’s net, where each being is like a jewel in a many-dimensional matrix, each jewel reflecting all the others, intimately interconnected. And shining ocean is the ocean of great vow—our direction is this great vow, which we make over and over again, vow after vow, to liberate all beings. Reality is vast and transcendent, excluding no one, connecting everyone, like the fingers on a hand are connected.

But understanding these words, or any other words, cannot in itself help us. To what are they pointing? That’s where we need to go. Then, when we start thinking, “Ooh, I am special, I can do this thing that other people aren’t supposed to do,” maybe we can step back and say: actually, no, that’s not the way things work. And when we see someone else barging ahead because they are so special they don’t have to even think about collateral damage to other people, maybe we can say: what you are doing is wrong and has to stop right now. ♦

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Photo: Paul Bloom

Teacher and Inner Teacher

Ja An JDPSN (Bogumila Malinowska)

The master sees things as they are,
without trying to control them
She lets them go their own way
and resides at the center of the circle.
—*Tao Te Ching*, trans. Stephen Mitchell

I have been a teacher in the Kwan Um School of Zen since 2009, and I practiced Zen for about 26 years before becoming a teacher. I was also a schoolteacher, so being a Zen teacher is not entirely new. A teacher's position is a very powerful one. I knew that even as a little girl, as my mother was also a schoolteacher, and many children often came to our house to get additional help from her. I always knew I would be a teacher; however, something about being a Zen teacher is also completely different from being a schoolteacher. Nonetheless, they have two things in common: power and trust.

When I became a schoolteacher, I was still very young, and some of my students in high school were only a few years younger than me. It was difficult both to be friendly and also to do my teaching job, in order to prepare students for exams and later to give them knowledge useful in their adult life. I understood the importance of keeping healthy boundaries, so they could feel more grounded and safe and for them to trust the teaching process.

I perceived the job of a Zen teacher when I started practicing in my early 20s; somehow, this fascinated me. I once told Zen Master Seung Sahn that I wanted to be a teacher, and he said very loudly, "Wonderful!" At that time, I wasn't aware why this job appeared to be so awesome. At that time, I wasn't as conscious as I am now of how much power a Zen teacher may have. According to Rob Preece in *The Wisdom of Imperfection: The Challenge of Individuation in Buddhist Life* (Snow Lion, 2006), "This can lead to a greater depth of insight into the power of the relationship as well as the potential dangers contained within it."

Carl Jung said that human beings have a tendency to project onto others some of their internal dreams. Not perceiving the power within themselves, they project it onto people who hold powerful positions. One of the most powerful positions is that of spiritual teacher. Other powerful professions are often connected with fame or notoriety, such as directors or celebrities. Humans love to attract attention and be recognized by others, and those who do this are also given power by the ones who look at them.

Nowadays we are in a time of challenging powerful people who have abused their power. This is a time of coming out with the truth, following years of pain after being abused. This is a time of the #MeToo movement, when many women and some men have finally decided to confront and overcome the pain in their life that had come from their own power being taken away through an act of abuse. Power becomes very attractive and desirable, perhaps because it has

the ability to make a human feel most alive and to make life greatly meaningful.

The position of spiritual teacher carries a reflection of the human dream of being superhuman, free from human limitations. In Jung's language, it is an archetype of guru, a deep part of our psyche. Preece points out, "When we encounter an individual who draws out our projection of the archetype of the guru the effect can be dramatic." I remember my first visit to Warsaw in 1981 and the reaction of people who told me that Zen Master Seung Sahn could go to different planets and was fighting with demons while doing night practice.

It was shocking and dramatic to see this under the Communist regime in Poland, but it was probably what people needed—the great guru and teacher, the superhuman. According to Preece, "As we transfer the inner archetype onto the outer person we may see him or her as truly awesome. We may fall in love with the wonder and inspirational quality we are seeing.

"As we do so, that person begins to have a powerful effect on our psyche."

The person may have great gifts and qualities, but if it were not an archetypal projection, the effect wouldn't be so dramatic.

This phenomenon is what we face as teachers. It is critical, and maybe more so in these times, that teachers see their power and use it wisely to help students toward a more authentic and mature relationship. It may, however, happen that a teacher is unaware or even in denial of the subtle motivating forces that lead to using this power for their own ends, thereby abusing students as well. We are perhaps most aware of sexual relationships between the teacher and student, but this is certainly not the only form. It can lead to abuse of power and trust not only with the student but also with the whole community.

Sometimes the teacher-student relationship may have a resemblance to the parent-child relationship. It can be very healing, if the trust a student has with the teacher is not exploited. Very often our wounds around parental difficulties leave us with longing for a perfect parent. If this is unconscious, it may well be projected onto the teacher as a longed-for ideal parent.

Sometimes this projection may be so intense that it becomes unbearable for a teacher. It is important in that case that teachers see their limitations and perhaps talk with the student and encourage them to seek help outside this relationship. This honesty about the teacher's limitation can be quite important and may help the student to find their own way of healing and regaining the power lost some time in childhood.

It may also happen that a teacher makes a mistake, and the student keeps silence. For the student, it is important to speak out. This helps the student, and their healing and self-

protection should be their primary concern. It also helps the teacher and the sangha, for speaking out can prevent further harm. Even without direct harm, in many situations, interactions between student and teacher provoke the student's disillusionment and the confusion that goes along with it. It helps to return to reality and get back our own power. While this may be painful, we may end up being more connected with our own inner authority and our own inner teacher, and thus learn to trust ourselves. If there is less illusion in the first place within the teacher-student relationship then the process of becoming independent is faster and less painful.

It seems that modern life is disillusionment's friend. Espe-

cially in Western culture, we are encouraged to be self-sufficient. In a way, this creates a healthy suspicion of others and their motives. In another way, it inhibits healthy connections with others. This self-sufficiency can also inhibit cult-like behaviors in different religious organizations, making it less likely that the student will spoil the teachers with too much respect.

What is the perfect model of a teacher, then? In the words of Rob Preece: "authentic in his openness about himself, his joys, and his struggles." I would add: always developing, empathetic, challenging students, a great listener who helps students to be fully human. ♦

Karma Does Not Define Our Situation. What's Important Is What Kind of Choices We Make.

Zen Master Bon Shim (Aleksandra Porter)

From a dharma talk given during winter Kyol Che at Wu Bong Sa Temple

The most common explanation about karma is cause and effect. What that means is that whatever happens in our life, whatever we are facing, what we are dealing with, whatever obstacles and hindrances and pain and suffering—whatever we have comes from some primary cause. But if you practice for some time then you see the meaning of karma in a broader way. That means that karma does not define our situation. What's important is what kind of choices we make.

This is an important point. You cannot make excuses like "that is my karma" because it's an open situation. What's important is what you do with your karma, what kind of choices you make. And if you make right choices, then your karma might become your dharma. And then you can get free of your karma. Or at least you can control your karma. It always works in this way. Either karma controls you, or you control your karma. Having a human body means we have some karma. You cannot get rid of it, but you can use it.

You can practice, and then for the first time you can see your karma. This always comes first. You have to see your karma, and sitting a retreat, even a one-day or one-week retreat, is enough time to see your karma. Some of it. Not the whole picture—you cannot get the whole picture in one week, but you can see some of your tendencies. If you are very careful and really pay attention, you'll see your tendencies. You see your craving and you see what you are trying to get away from. You see your mind, which is maybe judging. You see yourself as not having enough confidence or believing in yourself. All of this is karma. So first see it and face it.

And then if you see it and you face it, and you have enough courage to really face it, then you can work with your karma, deal with your karma, which is to control your

karma, and eventually use your karma.

Of course it is a long process, because as we all know very well, our patterns are deeply rooted. It's true. Practice is like going against the stream, so it's hard work. And it requires a lot of effort, a lot of determination and perseverance. And of course, paying attention, because you can see your tendencies, but you can transform that if you pay attention.

This is like a first gate. You cannot do anything if you do not pay attention. It's the small things; it's not like a big transformation happening like this. [*Snaps her fingers.*] It doesn't happen this way.

Sometimes we look at our path like it is one line, and we hope that going on this path just means getting better, being more happy, having more joy, having a more successful life.

But that has never been my experience. It doesn't go like this; it's not a linear movement. It always goes around. We have life and death, and we have samsara. You are going up, then you are coming down. You have success; you have a good sitting. We can see this during one week. Every day, every block of sitting: one moment you are happy and you feel good. "My meditation is great, so clear, so strong." And the next moment, even the next round of sitting, sometimes the next five minutes, "What happened?" Some fear or maybe anger just came out of the blue. But if you sit long enough then you don't pay so much attention to that. It's changing, changing, your thinking, your feeling, your emotions are changing. Don't worry about all this karma coming and going; what is most important is to return back to before thinking, our original mind, over and over. We practice letting go, and we practice starting over again and again. What a privilege! ♦

Tropical Zen: Dealing with Anger

Zen Master Dae Bong

We often joke that Malaysia has four seasons—hot, hotter, wet and wetter. Zen Master Dae Bong arrived in Penang during the midst of the wet season—far more preferable than having to face the hot season. During his short stay here, he gave two dharma talks and led a one-day Zen retreat. His teaching trip ended with the first one-day retreat in our newly relocated Zen center in Penang. The following is an excerpt of his talk titled “Dealing with Anger.” —*Myong An Sunim JDPS*

Everybody experiences anger—even little babies experience anger. They can’t talk, they don’t know any language to think in, but everybody who has seen a baby knows they can get angry very easily.

Dogs and cats and all kinds of animals can also certainly behave like they’re angry. So, anger is a common and natural experience.

The problem with anger is that it often leads to an undesirable result. Zen Master Seung Sahn had a simple way of expressing things, and he used to say, “Angry mind appears, then soon stupid action.” You may have experienced yourself doing some stupid action. This often means that you did not get the result you wanted.

However, there are some people—and you may know someone like this—who will use anger to get what they want. However, this does not mean that it’s smart to do this. It can also be stupid, as it means that the problems for them may not appear immediately, and instead they’ll appear a little later.

In addition to experiencing anger, we really ought to know what it is. It always has behind it some kind of opposite idea—something that our body or opinion doesn’t want. It also can be something that we want but is taken away from us.

So, the root of anger comes from a view that is not true,

that is incorrect and incomplete. If we can realize this deeply then we will rarely become angry.

We all take our body and think of it as “me” or “I.” But what makes this body “me”? These are my clothes, my beads, my hand, my head—these things are not “me.”

Many of you here have a car—“my car.” But sometimes even though it’s just your car, you act as though it is “me.” For example, why do some people buy a Mercedes Benz? Perhaps it is so that others will think that they are rich or cool, or both. Why do most car advertisements have a pretty woman in them? It may make some men think, “If I buy that car, I can meet someone like her, too.” And some women might think, “If I buy that car, I can look as good as her.”

It all comes back to this idea we make of “I.” The first root of this idea of “I” is our body. But the Buddha realized that there is no “I” at all—it’s made by our thinking.

I first met Zen Master Seung Sahn more than forty years ago. During his talk, someone asked him, “What’s crazy? What’s not crazy?” I had studied psychology at university and worked in that field for five years. After that I left and got a job doing manual labor. I became very interested in the question because it was my previous field of study and I wondered how he would answer.

He replied, “If you are very attached to something, you’re very crazy. If you are a little attached to something, you’re a little crazy. If you are not attached to anything, you’re not crazy.”

Hearing that, I thought to myself, “That’s better than my ten years of studying and working in psychology!”

Zen Master Seung Sahn continued: “So, in this world everybody is crazy because everybody is attached to ‘I.’ But, this ‘I’ does not exist—it’s only made by our thinking. If you don’t want to attach to your thinking ‘I’ and want to find your true ‘I’ then you must practice Zen.” ♦

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Waking Up from the Dream

Oleg Šuk JDPSN

I will tell you a story. There was a guy who went to his psychotherapist claiming that he had a big problem, and that it had been bothering him for one year already.

“I go to sleep every day, and I have a dream at night. Mice are playing soccer. It’s a regular league, and each day, Warsaw mice are playing against mice on a different team, and it’s been like this for a year. I don’t want to see it anymore. What should I do?”

And the doctor says, “It’s OK. It’s out of stress. I have these pills; here is the prescription. Swallow one in the evening, and no more dreams.”

But then the guy says, “Can I please wait until tomorrow to start taking the pills? We have mice finals tonight. The World Cup!”

This is about our waking up. It’s very similar. We want to wake up. We know it’s a dream, and it’s not so cool. But we still want to see the finals. Or something in the dream continues to hold us back, and we wait. That’s why we stay in the dream.

So stay attentive. If you cannot wake up, or it goes slowly, that means you have something that is holding you back. And you have to know what that is.

The teacher can help you, but the best teacher is here inside yourself. ♦

The Mountain Is Green and the River Is Flowing

Zen Master Ji Kwang (Roland Wöhrle-Chon)

An old man is sitting opposite me. He smells rather strongly. The passengers next to me change their seats. I deliberately remain seated. The man drinks from a bottle of high-proof liquor and offers me a sip. I decline politely. It is obvious that the man is lonely and is looking for contact. He begins to talk: I learn that he has no home, but once he had a profession and loved a woman. And in the city, somewhere, there are his kids, whom he has not seen in a very long time. Because then everything turned out differently . . . I listen to him, ask a question sometimes, expressing appreciation for the magic tricks that he clumsily tries to demonstrate using his hands and fingers. It used to be his hobby, he tells me. It is important that one has a hobby, he calls out to everyone who enters the S-Bahn train. He wants to go to Schönefeld now, but it really doesn't matter. He then rides together with me until my stop. Before I step off, we kindly say goodbye to each other. I realize that I admire him because of his unconcern. He is a man like any other, with a history, with longings and plans, with laughter and sadness.

What is this, being human? We all say: "I." But do we understand this I? In nature, everything and anything has its job. The tiger, the snake, the flower . . . everyone understands his job. Only humans seem not to know why we came into this world. And so we search forever, for ourselves, for our destiny or fulfillment; for generally accepted rules and norms; for the reasons, possibilities and origins; and time and again for the meaning of living and of dying; for explanations, meaning and love—everyone in his own way. Some want to change the world. Others strive for amusements and consumption. Some of us settle for nice words or scientific theories. Some fall in love with the search and stay searchers. Others forget what provoked their search and what they wanted to search for. And still others don't want anything. Then there are the big attachments—sleep, food, money, fame and sex—that entangle us with life and that concern us all, about which we ask and search all over again. A wise man once said, "The mountain is the mountain and the river is the river." Undoubtedly true. It is a clear reflection of truth. But how does it occur? How does it function, and what does the experience of this truth mean in action?

Is it sufficient to say, "A watermelon is a watermelon"? If one wants to know what a watermelon is, then

one has to take a knife, cut the melon up and eat a piece: "Ahhh lovely! So that is a watermelon."

Bite—listen—just doing what needs to be done! For this we need to arrive at ourselves in this precise moment. This can only succeed when nothing stands in between: no good, no bad, no preferences or aversions. Then the mountain is the mountain and the river the river. In the moment, come back to yourself and recognize: everything is always complete. What could be missing? If this moment is clear, and the next one, too, and then the next one again . . . then our life becomes clear: the situation, our relationship to the situation and our function. Living and acting come into accord with reality. Inside and outside become one. Then the mountain is not only the mountain, and the river not only the river, but a clear reflection of truth in us becomes the experience of truth in us: the mountain is green and the river flows. And so, when we meet a person in need, then we try to help. In Zen we call this great compassion or the great bodhisattva way.

We see this in the last of the ten oxherding pictures: "With chest exposed he comes barefoot to the market. Covered in dirt and smeared with ash he broadly laughs all over his face. Without refuge in mystic powers, he brings leafless trees quickly to bloom."

To be in the market with open hands, to do what needs to be done, means to help where help is needed. The bodhisattva has jumped from the big No into the big Yes. He is not dwelling in the original unity of emptiness, which overcomes multiplicity and contrariness, and that makes up the nature of the bodhisattva, but rather in the essence of the experience of this connecting and uniting that lives between the separated and what is possible, and becomes alive in him. The world's focal point is this one point, which is nothing else besides the other person, and therefore the entire world with all beings. "The mountain is green and the river flows" becomes the expression of great love, great compassion and the great bodhisattva way. It means being—being together—being for one another.

We find the reality of great compassion not only in the biographies of Buddha, Jesus, Gandhi or Mother Theresa—and many others whose names cannot be mentioned here—but potentially in each and every one of us. We can create conditions that enable us to face each other fearlessly, open and emphatic: with open hands. ♦

The Wave of Together Action

Zen Master Joeng Hye (Andrzej Piotrowski)

From a dharma speech given at Summer Kyol Che, Warsaw, 2009

Student: What is the difference between our practice together and our individual practice later on at home?

Zen Master Joeng Hye: This time of practicing together is something special. You can say this time is like potatoes banging against one another in water. Everyone who practices in this school knows this teaching of potatoes. We are all like potatoes in a pot. When we practice it is like a stick stirring the potatoes and then the potatoes start to work on one another and the cleaning goes faster. So when we are here we learn from one another. Individual practice is not enough. We are too young for individual practice—of course I am only joking a bit, because individual practice is important too. But when we only practice individually, it is difficult to see our limitations and our karma, the karma of our mind. The sangha is like a mirror, in which you can easily see your limitations, the limits of your actions and your opinions.

To awaken our original mind we have to go beyond our likes and dislikes, because our mind is always looking around and sniffing out what it likes and dislikes, but the things we like are not necessarily good for us, and the things we dislike are not necessarily bad for us. When you are here you have no choice—then your mind of likes and dislikes appears. It is easy to see—many people have problems with it. I'm sure you have found many things that you don't like here. Do you like to get up at half past four?

Student: I like getting up early because sleeping here is very uncomfortable! [*Much laughter.*]

ZMJH: You don't like the sleeping conditions here—so you have one dislike. “I like getting up early because I don't like the sleeping conditions.” That's a like and a dislike. So you have both of these, but you also have a third thing—you have no choice. Whether you like it or not, you don't have a choice.

Together action is like a wave that carries you away and you cannot resist it. Your small self, your ego, is too weak to resist that wave. This wave of together action is the wave of your true mind, of your true self. The name of it is [*hits the floor*] just do it! You have no choice, that's why this wave of together practice is so important. If you submerge yourself in this wave from time to time, your individual practice will become stronger and you will see more clearly in your everyday life the just-do-it mind. This is the intuitive mind of prajna, our primary wisdom. Instead of losing yourself in likes and dislikes, just see the situation, let it be mirrored in your mind, see your relationship to this situation, and then you can act correctly.

That insight comes from beyond thinking, beyond the realm controlled by likes and dislikes. Zen Master Seung

Sahn called this “following the big situation.” He said that in life we have two kinds of situation: big situation and small situation. The small situation is your life controlled by likes and dislikes. Following the big situation is following the bodhisattva way, following your true mind, the way of freedom and enlightenment.

So here the sangha is your big teacher. It's not necessarily the teacher at a kong-an interview, though they might help a bit, but you see them only every couple of days, so your real teacher is sangha and together action—this wave you cannot resist, because ultimately our true self is all other beings and our small self cannot withstand this pressure. Every single one of us is himself, but at the same time we are all one. Zen Master Huang Po compared us to mercury. If you break one droplet, [*hits floor*] it makes a lot of droplets and each one of them is separate and individual. Every one of them seems to have its individual being, yet they are all elements of one big droplet of mercury. If you don't believe it then try to get them together—they will connect—become one. So we are all one and everyone individually is complete, and this is the mystery of our practice.

Student: But when we go home and become the little droplet of mercury alone, without the wave, what then?

ZMJH: Well, you have to come back. Yes, you have to come more times.

Student: It means that I become addicted to it.

ZMJH: Yes, there is an addiction which is pathology and there is an addiction that is a real relationship. We are all interconnected and we are all related to one another. In Buddhism this metaphor was once depicted as Indra's Net. The god Indra wanted to give a beautiful present to Buddha. So he wove a net that was infinite in time and space and encompassed all possible worlds, and at each intersection of this net he placed a little jewel. The effect was astounding. All jewels were mirrored in every one of them and each of these jewels was reflected in the rest. This is real dependence and real relationships, and we are these jewels.

From the point of view of I-me-myself, freedom means “I can do what I want.” This is the freedom of self. But real freedom, as understood in the buddhadharma, is the freedom from self—from the self that wants freedom for itself, because the self is the prison . . .

Once someone asked Zen Master Seung Sahn how to develop wisdom. He answered: “Only together action.”

“—but Zen Master, there are a lot of hermits in the mountains who have been practicing for many years and they have very clear minds.”

“Yes, clear minds, but no wisdom.” ♦

Ultimate Reality Cannot Be Spoken, But We Keep Trying to Converse about It Anyway

Excerpts from a manuscript on cancer, by Anne Rudloe JDPSN

Any major illness means one really must live in the present moment rather than being lost in the past or in fearful or desire-ridden fantasies of the future. It makes all the difference in the world in experiencing life as the gift that it is. If there is health and energy in a given moment, one can live it fully and not take it for granted or destroy it by fear of what may lie in the future. There's no need to turn healthy moments into sickness with mental stress.

Until we go into the fire of a crisis we cannot know if whatever insight we may think we have is really solid. Welcome crises as opportunities to move insights from theory to experiential reality.

There will be an internal restructuring as well as an external restructuring of daily life. Keeping daily life simple means that we don't drag a bunch of personal problems into a period of still reflection.

Following surgery, I spent weeks recovering at home. Sitting under huge old trees next to the Gulf of Mexico, in the company of fall wildflowers and butterflies, I slowly began to come to terms with the changed reality of a life with cancer in it. If the cancer had been caught before it spread and I could just recover from surgery and go back to business as usual, that would not be the personal mental Olympics that this prolonged life-threatening situation promised to be. Trying to make any long-term plans was now impossible, so all the endless efforts to define the next phase of life were suddenly irrelevant. I had to really learn to live in the present moment because the present was now quite literally all there was. What I might or might not do in the future would have to simply appear in each day. The situation could no longer be forced by any effort of will and hard work. I had always measured life's significance in terms of external achievements. Published books, scientific research papers, new exhibits at the aquarium were my job. Now, however, learning what this health crisis would teach was the most important work. My only goal would now be to make whatever time was left a time of growth in love and awareness—even as I hoped for a cure.

Cancer can appear out of nowhere and sweep someone away in a few months, or it can be a slow-moving process of alternating sickness and stability, unfolding over several years. For those with a possibility of either a cure or a fatal recurrence, there is living with perpetual uncertainty. The knowledge that time may be limited creates a new sense of urgency about finally doing what has been put on hold year after year.

Any personal crisis like a potentially fatal cancer diagnosis or a heart attack may trigger a lot of fundamental questions about meaning as well as reflection and a review of one's life. For many of us, the mind wanders, trying to make sense of this life. What am I? What is life and death all about? When we die, what happens? Is there some ultimate purpose or meaning to our lives, to being conscious? Is there some ultimate reason for the existence of complex organisms and consciousness and what could it be? How can I do better? These are the most important questions in life, but most of the time we stay lost in the endless affairs of daily life. It is primarily in times of crisis that we stop and struggle with the big questions. If we are open to exploring, they can be the great gift of such challenges.

The most defining characteristic of an individual life is that it is a short, finite experience proceeding inexorably through all its stages from infancy to old age and then out. The individual personality is literally as fleeting as a star at dawn, a bubble in a stream, a flash of lightning in a summer cloud, a flickering lamp, a phantom and a dream, in the poetic words of one old text. It seems remote in youth but as we age, this truth becomes more and more immediate. Midges dancing in the afternoon sunlight, totally focused on their affairs, are not so different from people buzzing about taking care of business.

As the Buddha pointed out thousands of years ago, we create tragedy and loss by being attached to things or beings that are intrinsically impermanent, including our health, our wealth and each other. Thinking that we are

[11



Photo: Johanna Kopp

limited to our physical bodies and brains, we fear death and the separation from that which we love. We see death as an extinction of being that we strive to postpone as long as possible because we fear that consciousness is created only by the physical brain and must therefore cease when the brain dies. Contemporary medicine often prolongs life too long because of that fear.

Even though an impermanent, brief life is a defining characteristic of the human experience, most of us are in denial of this and shut it out as long as possible rather than asking what is the point of a life that will soon stop. Nobody really believes that it will happen to them until it does. Why do we want some part of personal consciousness to survive? Who is it that wants survival so badly? What exactly is it that is wanted? Nobody has yet succeeded in settling these questions once and for all despite everyone's efforts for thousands of generations.

In debates about science and religion, most of the discussion amounts to little more than the throwing of sticks and stones by the most extreme proponents of both the science-has-all-the-answers camp and the scriptural-fundamentalist camp. Incessant religious arguments arise between those who base their faith on a literal reading of ancient texts and those who believe that the material reality we perceive with our ordinary senses is all there is, that science as it exists today provides an adequate picture of reality, and that existence has no meaning other than what we can invent. Both the noisy armies of fundamentalist and materialistic extremists ignore the more subtle and open-ended approaches to these questions that are also a major part of the human religious tradition. Scriptural fundamentalism is not the only form of religion, however. Unlike the various religious fundamentalisms that admit no new insight and endlessly attack each other, religion can be an experiential exploration of meaning.

When religious people deny and ignore the enormous insights into the nature of physical reality that science has provided, they risk acting like a frog in a well, claiming that there is no ocean. Religion should be inspired by scientific discoveries rather than threatened by them. The scientific exploration of both the earth and the larger universe has revealed a vastness far beyond any human ego, an emergent universe that self organizes and unfolds from itself, a universe that has become conscious of itself in human thought. The big theories of science—the Big Bang, plate tectonics, evolution, complexity theory—they all explore details of the nature of creation that earlier mythological origin statements never imagined. Whatever rational, experiential, mystical, intuitive knowledge each of us may consciously or unconsciously use in crafting a sense of personal meaning in life, we owe it to ourselves to become familiar with the best factual knowledge that the



Photo: Johanna Kopp

sciences can offer.

But when scientists equate all religion with the most aggressive, belligerent forms of fundamentalism, remaining unaware of the diversity, complexity and more nuanced approaches contained within other forms of religion, this contributes to an arid worldview of a meaningless existence and a lack of any deep-seated peace or joy in life.

Despite oft-repeated lofty pronouncements by scientists about statistical randomness accounting for all sorts of odd events, many reject science in favor of more comforting ideas that give their personal life meaning. Most people are not prepared to accept that life is all meaningless random chance that ends in personal extinction. As humans, we try to find or assign meaning to life, not only individually with meditation and prayer, but also collectively by sharing ideas, insights and experiences to help each other along in the process. That is the business of the world's religions.

Attempts to make science into a religion by reference to the elements in our body having been created in stars or the creativity of evolution don't work for most people because they are too abstract and impersonal. It's easy to be momentarily diverted by odd and amazing science, like the bizarre Ediacaran life forms of the early fossil record, but what does that have to do with our own personal lives? Despite the efforts of authors such as Ursula Goodenough and Michael Dowd, these arguments tell us nothing about what will happen to us individually at death or why life is the way it is or how we should be living it. It isn't enough just to know the stories of science. We must also know how we individually fit into the whole, and that is the subject matter of religion.

Science cannot ever replace religion because there are deep-seated human needs that are met through religion. Human spiritual exploration and religious insights have been the source of personal meaning and social norms for mil-

lennia. The monotheistic religions have been the sources of Western ideas of justice and law and of love, attempting to mitigate and manage the rapacious predatory side of human nature. Buddhism provides a precise and insightful analysis of human suffering and a practical way to alleviate it.

The core of religion is the belief that there is a transcendent dimension and we can access it in some way. Prayer, chanting or meditation are attempts to be in resonance with an ultimate source, to be still in its presence. In prayer, we speak to something Vast and in meditation, we wait and listen for a response.

Religion provides a personal sense of meaning and some way to address the fact that we must eventually die. Religion is mostly about questions that science cannot answer, questions of ultimate meaning, of suffering and evil, of the role of love and morality, the nature of life and death. All the scientific facts in the world won't resolve these philosophical questions.

Religion is a conversation that people have with each other over centuries about the Big Questions as well as a conversation they have with themselves in introspection, prayer and meditation. On rare occasions it can seem to become a two-way conversation with something that transcends the individual, personal, ego-based identity. Many label that experience with the word God, but we cannot ever fully know what we mean by that word, so who is having a conversation with what? At this point conversation simply becomes experience, often an experience that cannot be expressed in words. That is why Lao-tze, the author of the Tao Te Ching, began by admitting that the ultimate reality cannot be spoken and what can be spoken is not that reality. But even knowing that, we keep trying to converse about it anyway.

When dealing with a problem that cannot be fixed

or made to go away, we have to change how we react to the situation mentally, find ways to break it up when the mind starts obsessing. Simple mental techniques can make a huge difference in being able to be happy regardless of whether things work out as we hope they will.



The mind makes exhaustion and sorrow, but it also makes energy and joy. Keeping the mind centered and focused on what is actually happening moment to moment is the keel that keeps the boat stable in smooth or rough water. Make your best effort in each moment, but then be open to whatever arises in the next moment. This can be done only if we are not trying to get some particular result and if we know how to simply watch the mind and recognize when it engages in a painful thought process. Take care of the present moment and the future will take care of itself. Cultivating this state of mind is the one and only thing that we will never lose. Clearly see the processes of the ego-mind when it is acting so that it is our servant and not our master, and live in a way that is conducive to the arising of the alternative moment-to-moment mental state of Being. Life is hard, but also fine and beautiful. It is unpredictable and short, but it is also wonderful. Mind makes everything. If you make hell with your thinking, you get hell, but if you make heaven with thinking, you get heaven. Only cease to cherish your opinions and then you will get everything someday—or maybe right now in this moment.

Live life as a Great Question, as an endless open-ended exploration of an evolving event. Have the Great Courage to not lock down life's meaning into some rigid idea but to continue the open-ended exploration. And keep Great Faith that a resolution is possible. Moments of altered mental states are traditionally emphasized as a major goal of a spiritual practice, but the fruits of those moments as they inform daily life are more important than waiting for another such moment.

The most important mental habit to cultivate is “enough mind,” the sense that all is truly well in this moment. Having an awake and actualized life is not only the memory of some special moment when the mind opened to some degree. It also consists of how we are moment to moment, right now, of being fully awake and aware and of being responsive in each moment one after the other and of a mind that is informed by compassion to help and of knowing the sources of suffering in the specific situation at hand. ♦



Photo: Johanna Kopp

My Son's Ashes

John Holland

Dharma talk given during a precepts ceremony, Providence Zen Center, August 4, 2018

In 1957, when Zen Master Ko Bong became seriously ill, Zen Master Seung Sahn was appointed as the abbot of Hwa Gye Sa Temple in Seoul. In the course of his duties as abbot, Zen Master Seung Sahn heard of a Japanese temple in Seoul that contained the bones of 500 dead Japanese. The temple was troubled with finances and fell under the control of laypeople. The laypeople were not interested in Japanese bones; at that time there was still considerable bad feeling toward the Japanese, their former oppressors for 35 years. When Zen Master Seung Sahn heard that that the bones were going to be thrown out, he went to the temple. He told the officials, "Whether these bones were once Korean or Japanese, dead people's bones are all the same. Dead bones are dead bones!" He arranged

to have the bones removed to Hwa Gye Sa. For 100 days, he chanted *Namu Amita Bul* over the bones; the chanting was for the dead spirits. A few years later, Korea and Japan resumed diplomatic relations. Before long, some Japanese came to Korea to Hwa Gye Sa to claim the bones of their dead ancestors and carry them back to their homeland. Because of their appreciation and deep respect for the Zen master's action, the Japanese invited him to go to Japan. This invitation led him to move to Tokyo and eventually to the United States.

It has been said by some Koreans, "We lost a great master to Japan and to America because of some dead bones."

A few days ago I had my own experience with bones, or rather their ashes. They were the ashes of my son. But let me back up a bit. After my son was born, I asked the priest at an Episcopalian church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, of which I was at that time a member, to christen him. But because the godparents I had chosen were Jews, the church turned down my request. I then went to the Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village with the same request. The clergyman there agreed, and offered to write a special service to include Benjamin's Jewish godparents.

Ten years after the death of my son, my daughter converted to Judaism. Subsequently she wanted to have her brother's ashes interred in a Jewish cemetery in New Jersey so she could visit. The problem was that Benjamin was not a Jew and he had died by his own hand. It took a year to find a resting place for him, and this was only accomplished by a problem-solving, bodhisattva rabbi.

On the 49th day after Benjamin's passing I chanted *Ji Jang Bosal* in Calabria with family members before casting some of his ashes into the Tyrrhenian Sea, in which Benjamin used to enjoy bathing with his Italian cousins. On the 100th day we chanted *Namu Amita Bul* in the Chogye International Zen Center of New York.

We also recited the great verse composed by Korean Zen Master Na Ong in the 1700s (to which I am told Zen Master Seung Sahn added the question at the end):

Coming empty-handed, going empty-handed,
that is human.

When you were born, where did you come from?
When you die, where do you go?

Life is like a floating cloud which appears; death
is like a floating cloud that disappears.

The floating cloud itself does not originally exist.
Life and death, coming and going are like that.

But there is one thing that remains clear—
not depending on life and death.



Photo: Albert Lee

Then what is that pure and clear thing?

Almost overcome as I was with grief, I had read a letter from Zen Master Ta Hui, the author of *Swampland Flowers*, about feelings and affliction that said in part:

You had thought that in this realm the feelings between a father and his son, [or a mother and her daughter] the flow of affection over a thousand lives and a hundred ages, would be impossible. In the world of the five corruptions [The translator here explains these corruptions as being the corruption of the age, the corruptions of the prevalent false views and afflictions, and the consequent corruptions of sentient beings and the shortening of the human life span.] all is empty and false: there's not one that's genuinely real. I ask you to contemplate this constantly, whether you're walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. Then gradually over time (your feelings) will be worn away. Nevertheless, it is precisely when afflicted that you should carefully investigate and inquire where the affliction arises from. If you cannot get to the bottom of its origination, then where does the one who is afflicted right now come from? Right when you're afflicted, is it existent or nonexistent, empty or real? Keep investigating until your mind has nowhere to go. If you want to think, then think; if you want to cry, then cry. Just keep on crying and thinking. When you arouse yourself to the point where habit energy of love and affection within the Storehouse Consciousness is exhausted, then naturally it's like water being returned to water, giving you back your original being, without affliction, without thoughts, without sorrow or joy. . . .

Father and son are one by nature: is there such a thing as a father who is not troubled when his son dies and who doesn't think about him, or a son who isn't troubled when his father dies and doesn't think about him? If you try to suppress (such sentiments) forcibly, not daring to cry or think about it, then this is deliberately going against the natural pattern, denying your inherent nature; (it's like) raising a sound to stop an echo, or poring on oil to put out a fire.¹

What more was there to say? This search for meaning reminded me of the story about the Second Patriarch, Huike, who persistently asked for Bodhidharma's instruction while standing in waist-high snow outside a cave in Shao-lin where Bodhidharma was meditating. Legend has it that in order to demonstrate his sincerity in seeking the dharma, Huike cut off his left arm and presented it to

Bodhidharma. When Bodhidharma finally deigned to acknowledge Huike's bloody presence, Bodhidharma asked the monk, "What is it that you want?"

Huike answered, "My mind is not at peace. Please pacify my mind."

Bodhidharma replied, "Take your mind and bring it here, and I will pacify it for you."

Huike said, "When I look for my mind I can't find it."

Bodhidharma said, "Then I already pacified your mind."

What more was there to say? And yet last Thursday, when I was standing next to the rabbi in front of the niche into which my son's ashes were to be interred, I was expected to say something. I turned to the teaching of Korean Zen Master T'aego. T'aego deserves credit for unifying the disparate Nine Mountain schools of Zen into a single school, the Chogye school, in 1356. I read a poem written by Zen Master T'aego:

White clouds—inside the clouds, layers of
green mountains

Green mountains—in the mountains, many
white clouds

The sun is the constant companion of the
cloudy mountains

When the body is at peace, there's no place
that's not home.²

What does this mean?

The first two lines: "White clouds—inside the clouds, layers of green mountains / Green mountains—in the mountains, many white clouds," are a poetic restating of the Heart Sutra's teaching, "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form."³

Then, "The sun is the constant companion of the cloudy mountains": The sun is always shining brightly in the sky. Clouds come, clouds go. But there is always one thing that is not moving, not dependent on coming and going.

Then T'aego concludes, "When the body is at peace, there's no place that's not home." The last line is far from being sanctimonious; rather, it is a statement of freedom from dualism. For me to cling to my sorrow would be to resist the fundamental openness of emptiness as well as to exclude my vow for *all* sentient beings. ♦

Notes

1. Christopher Cleary, trans., *Swampland Flowers: Letters and Lectures of Zen Master Ta Hui* (New York: Grove Press, 1977).

2. J. C. Cleary, trans., *A Buddha from Korea: The Teachings of T'aego* (Boston: Shambhala, 1988).

3. Richard Shrobe, *Don't Know Mind: The Spirit of Korean Zen* (Boston: Shambhala, 2004).

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Life in the Day of a Head Dharma Teacher

Colin Beavan

Most times it has been like this: I arrive at Providence Zen Center to sit a long retreat, and someone lets me know that either the temple's head dharma teacher or the retreat Zen master is looking for me. I go to their room. They tell me the person who was supposed to be the retreat's head dharma teacher can't make it to the retreat after all.

Will I do it?

That is pretty much how I've ended up being head dharma teacher at each of four or five week-long retreats at Providence Zen Center—including, once, as part of Kyol Che, our multi-week summer retreat.

The first thing that might happen after they ask me is that a little thought of pride comes into my head. They

When you are HDT, you hope the moktak master will do a good job or you will have to be keeping an eye on the clock on top of all your other jobs. The definition of HDT heaven: A reliable moktak master. The definition of HDT hell: An unreliable one.

Orientation

No one really seems to teach you to be a head dharma teacher in the Kwan Um school, at least in my experience. You kind of get thrown into the deep end because someone has decided either (1) you are at that point in your Zen practice where you should take more responsibility, or (2) there is no one else to do it. You learn from having watched other HDTs at retreats you've sat and by running around frantically, in the hour before the retreat starts, asking people with more experience than you what to do.

Then, you're suddenly in the dharma room giving an orientation to the people who have never sat a retreat before. What do you tell them? There is no list. You tell them what you would have liked to know when you were new.

Please be on time for everything. Get a drink of water or go to the restroom during walking meditation but don't think of walking periods as time for a rest—it's still practice. You can stand up behind your mat if your legs hurt. Stay still. Biggest of all, *keep silence*, though any experienced HDT will tell you it is not the newcomers who keep breaking silence—instead it is the seasoned practitioners you find having chats in the corners.

After one orientation, a new student runs up to me:

"That big stick you walk around the dharma room with during meditation—how do you know when you should ask for a hit on the back?"

I think for a minute.

"When sitting still another minute seems so uncomfortable that even getting hit on the back with a big stick seems better. That's when you should ask for a hit."

Meditation

There is a seating chart on the bulletin board. Sometimes the retreat HDT has to make it and sometimes the temple head dharma teacher has made it for you. Monks and Ji Do Poep Sas sit closest to the Zen master. Then, ev-



Photo by Allan Matthews

could have asked anyone to help lead the retreat but they asked me! Then, I remember that they asked someone else first. I was actually only second choice. Haha. Monkey mind!

Next thing: Who is the work master? Who is the kitchen master? Have all these jobs that will keep the retreat running been assigned? Is everyone clear about their jobs? I wonder this because, while the Zen master or Ji Do Poep Sa is teaching during student interviews, the head dharma teacher is responsible for the smooth running of the retreat.

One thing I always hope: That the person assigned to be moktak master wears a good watch. Because the moktak master doesn't just lead chants, but also gives the signal that everyone should go to the dharma room five minutes before every practice period. If the moktak master is late, everyone is late.

everyone else sits in order of seniority. That is good because it puts the least experienced meditators at the end of the row closest to you, the head dharma teacher, where you can keep an eye on them and give them support.

Usually, there is a lot of confusion at the beginning of the first sitting period as people try to correlate where they are sitting to what they saw on the seating chart. Sometimes, even before the retreat starts, you get a complaint. "I took my senior dharma teacher precepts before so and so, so I should be seated closer to the Zen master!" A senior dharma teacher who is attached to where they are sitting? Welcome to being head dharma teacher!

During meditation periods, part of the HDT's job is to help maintain form, silence and stillness in the dharma room so that people's minds can settle and they can inquire into their nature. What am I? What is my human job? Don't know . . .

It is so amazing and humbling, really, that so many people have gathered to make this inquiry. After you hit the chugpi three times to mark the beginning of meditation, you might look around the silent room and take it in. A wave of gratitude for these people might wash over you.

At the beginning of the retreat, people follow correct form, sit up straight and don't move. Eventually, one of the newcomers might start to shift around on the mat and you might perceive they are too embarrassed to be the first to stand up. At that point, you might do them the favor of standing up yourself—symbolically giving them permission and encouragement to do the same.

That is a big part of the job: perceive what each person needs that will help them to maintain and hold their big question and their inquiry. How can you help participants not to be distracted by pain, by other people moving around or making noise or even by the temptation to fall asleep?

During the last practice period of the day, in the evening, you might notice someone nodding off. During one retreat where I was HDT, there were three or four people who were falling asleep a lot and the Zen master asked me to do something about it.

In the middle of one practice period, when I noticed the nodding, I waited a few moments and then shattered the silence when I roared at the top of my lungs, "Everybody wake up!" I was very embarrassed. Who was I to shout in the dharma room? But it was the only thing I could think of to do, and it worked. People stopped sleeping.

One thing you have to learn as head dharma teacher during a retreat is that you really have to trust yourself. You have to trust your perception of what is needed and then offer it the way you know how. And guess what? Not everyone will like the way you choose to do things. You get complaints from students. You get complaints from teachers who are more senior than you. Even the Zen

master might complain to you.

And still you must trust yourself and also trust getting complained at. Then there is your own practice. What is the mind that does not move through all of that complaining? Sound fun?

The Formal Meal

The first meal of the retreat is usually disorganized, but it is through the disorganization that you can see people's karma. Who is very anxious to make sure everything is in the right order on the mat where the food is placed? Who brings in a dish and then just goes and gets their bowls without further concern? Who is making sure the teaspoons in the condiment tray are all absolutely precisely aligned?

If you are really paying attention, watching people move around the mat where all the food is being placed brings up so much love and compassion. You can see people's attachments. You can see their desire to help. You can see their humanity. And when you notice your judgments come up, your own likes and dislikes, you get to see your own humanity, too.

After you hit the chugpi to begin the meal, the dance continues. Some people want to serve the food as a kindness. Others have pain in their legs and want any excuse to get up. Maybe because of that, people rush to put out their bowls so they can start serving and it can be very noisy.

The first meal is really too soon to begin asking people to be more mindful about form and silence; people need to settle in. Later, I will point out that meal service is the closest practice in the retreat to being in the real world. Serving the meal is all about giving and receiving. Living in the world is also all about giving and receiving.

The meal service is our chance to be mindful about that giving and receiving; how much noise we make, how much we clack our bowls is a sign of how mindful we are being as we give and receive. "Don't clack your bowls!"

At the end of the meal, you hit the chugpi once when it is time for tea to be served. At last summer's Kyol Che, one participant got up to serve tea at every single meal but, because he was far from the teapot, someone else always beat him too it.

Finally, I asked, "Everybody please remain seated and let that guy have a chance to serve the tea." Sometimes, the kind thing to do is not to serve. Know when to serve and know when to receive.

Carrying the Stick

If being head dharma teacher is a job then here is the pay: as head dharma teacher you get to stand up and walk around the room with the hitting stick every 15 minutes. In other words, because you're walking instead of sitting, you get paid in knees that don't hurt.

Carrying the stick is one of the really intimate parts of the retreat. As you walk, you may notice that someone has

about 15 cushions on their mat. Later, there will be a huge look of relief on their face when you whisper, “Would you prefer if I got you a chair?” Last summer, as I walked, I saw that four participants were dripping with sweat because their mats happened to be in direct sunlight. “Pull your mats back and out of the sun in the next walking period,” I whispered to them.

Some people want to be hit hard with the stick. One participant makes a fist and pumps it to say so. Others want soft; they make “just a little” sign with their thumb and forefinger. They don’t realize it, but each person who asks for a hit is doing you, the head dharma teacher, a favor.

By this stage of the retreat your heart is sometimes breaking with love for all the humans being totally human on their mats. Unlike when you are a regular participant, your job is, in part, to pay attention to other participants. You can see their struggles and joys. That makes you love them. When they ask for a hit, they do you the favor of allowing you to let the love out.

Maintaining Silence

Once, about halfway through a one-week retreat, my guiding teacher, Zen Master Wu Kwang (Richard Shrobe), announced to everyone, “This is the part of the retreat where things start to fall apart. We throw our cushions instead of placing them gently. We forget to bow at the door.” But letting into that temptation to loosen form, he told us, actually makes the retreat harder, not easier. When you are weary, that is the time to tighten form.

It is around this time of the retreat that you notice people whispering in corners of the Zen center during breaks. Also, some of the retreat participants might start to bicker at each other during work period. The kitchen master might get mad at the work master, or vice versa. Participants start to decide that they should be in charge of the

thermostat or other conditions in the dharma room, a job that belongs to the head dharma teacher.

A Ji Do Poep Sa said to me, “Everybody should just do their jobs and follow forms without talking. As long as you don’t break silence, how can there be a problem?” Nothing lasts very long on a retreat. Work period is an hour. Sitting periods are never longer than 40 minutes. Chanting is over quickly, too.

In everyday life, human beings have the habit of trying to escape what is going on in their minds by changing what is going on in the world. The retreat is a chance not to try to change the outside in order to try to change the inside. Instead, we get to truly observe our minds and watch the coming and going of our likes and dislikes. That is part of why we maintain silence.

And by the way, senior students are more difficult to convince of the importance of silence than younger students. Younger students follow the rules. Older students follow themselves. They might think, “I know when to break silence.” But sometimes they forget the effect they have on other students.

So, it is time to give the dharma room a lecture on strengthening form and maintaining silence. But, you remind them, it is not about following rules. It is about doing what is kind to your dharma brothers and sisters and what will help us all with our practice.

The Circle Talk

The retreat is over. Everyone is taking a turn talking about their experience and there is much laughter. It’s kind of sad in a way. Kind of wonderful. It’s so fun to watch people talk about their experiences, some of which, as head dharma teacher, you have intuited.

It is fun, too, to sit next to the Zen master because, during the retreat, you have been having little conversations about how the retreat is going and you both have blown off steam to each other. You’ve grown friendlier.

Everyone feels kinship to each other. It is a nice feeling. But for me, because I was head dharma teacher, I’m feeling so proud and grateful to everyone. During circle talks, everyone thanks you. But I, in turn, thank them. Because maybe being head dharma teacher—having seen everyone’s humanity and feeling at one with them—is the best way to spend the retreat of all. ♦

Colin Beavan’s coaching, consulting, speaking, writing and activism have encouraged tens of thousands of people to align their lives with what’s truly important. The lifestyle and career adjustments he helps people make allow them to live abundantly and purposefully, for the sake of both themselves and their communities. It is Colin’s mission to wake people up, on both individual and organizational levels, to ways of life and doing business that are healthier, happier and more just for individuals, for our society, and for our planet.



Photo: Albert Lee

Practicing as a Lay Dharma-Teacher-in-Training at Mu Sang Sa Temple

Hae Seong (Moon Sook Kim)

Coming to Mu Sang Sa Temple was a coincidence, but the fact that I am still here practicing is not a coincidence at all. It is because of my dharma friends, especially the DTITs with whom I have been practicing together for the last ten years. Sometimes, when I suffer because of my karma, I think to myself, “Am I crazy doing this practice?” and then I see my dharma friends doing the same things and realize, “Hey, there’s another one just like me, still trying!” And I get comfort in that. When my mother was about to pass away, it was a very difficult time for me. That time, being with my dharma friends and practicing through it together helped a lot. When Zen Master Dae Jin became ill, we wanted to do some practice to help him, so we began a practice group together and shared on Kakaotalk (a smartphone messaging app popular in Korea), and to this day, we continue to share our practice sessions daily. Every up and down of my practice till today has been thanks to the support of my dharma friends.

20] It’s been almost ten years since I first joined the Monday meditation class at Mu Sang Sa. Wow, ten years! In the beginning, I thought, “Let’s try it for ten years, then probably something will appear!” Yes, that enlightenment thing. Now, I no longer attach to enlightenment. What’s more important is practicing don’t-know. Still there is something . . . ahh, don’t check! I met my dharma friends first at the Monday meditation class. At that time, there were a few people in the group who had strong opinions about what is Zen and their own practice. They wouldn’t accept some of what the teachers were teaching us, and the feeling in the group was not cohesive. But as time passed, new students came as old ones left, and for those of us who stayed, the group dynamics changed for the better.

One day in winter, we were waiting for the teacher to arrive to give the dharma talk in the main Buddha hall. It was during winter Kyol Che, so the Monday meditation class was being held in the main Buddha hall instead of the Zen hall. The heater was not working that day and we were quite cold, wearing our gray robes, waiting for Zen Master Dae Bong. Then he finally came, and once he sat down, he looked at us and said, “Wow, gray army!” We all laughed. My dharma friends looked like an army that day to me, too—a real solid team!

In 2014, five of my dharma friends received the ten precepts. At Mu Sang Sa, taking ten precepts is not a common thing, so five lay people taking ten precepts was considered quite unusual. Traditionally in Korea, only monks and nuns can teach the dharma. For ordinary laypeople, rather than practicing, it is common to be faith-based Buddhists, making prayers or reading sutras. Of course, now more people

are interested in meditation, but still, finding a lay teacher is unusual in Korean Buddhist society. Giving or taking ten precepts for laypeople is not something taken lightly. My dharma friends looked half pleased but also half worried with a shadow of burden. They began having DTIT training classes, and at times I was envious that I could not join them. We had all started about the same time in the Monday meditation classes, and had been practicing for about the same number of years, so I was forlorn that I was not included in the DTIT group. At the same time, I knew quite well, too, that I wasn’t ready for the ten precepts yet.

I was able to take the ten precepts one year later and began joining the classes. We learned from the *Compass of Zen*, trained in how to use the moktak, hit the chukpi, carry the walking stick and do the head dharma teacher’s job of leading practice. We learned how to share our own experiences and also how to skillfully answer various questions about practice. Last year, we went to Jeju Island for a trip with the teachers, and we learned how teachers respond to different situations, which was very precious. We did lots of together action. We prepare Buddha’s Birthday events together at Mu Sang Sa every year; we organize Monday and Sunday meditation classes; and we also lead practice at the Daejeon Zen Group. Yes! We do many things together.

Thanks to so much together action, I really trust my dharma friends. While we practice, sometimes we face some unexpected karma that hits us in the face. At those times it can be truly difficult, and at times, I want to quit practicing altogether. Of course, I then consult a teacher, and they say, “Yeah, better quit. More suffering necessary!” Dumbfounded and shocked, I turn around and complain behind the teacher’s back, only to continue to practice again. This has happened a few times so far, so now I don’t bother asking teachers the same questions anymore. Instead, I end up doing something stupid in front of my dharma friends, but they accept me no matter what. They recognize, “Oh, she’s having a rough time. She’ll get over it and come back to normal.” This way, they tolerate my difficult behavior without judgment, wishing me to come back to my senses. That has been a tremendous help for my continuing this practice. So, dear dharma friends, thank you! My being here is all because of you! And dear teachers, just wait—we are practicing very hard to hit you soon! ♦

Moon Sook Kim (dharma name: Hae Seong) started practicing at Mu Sang Sa in 2009. She took five precepts in 2011, and in 2015 she took ten precepts to become a dharma-teacher-in-training. She currently practices at Mu Sang Sa and the Kwan Um Daejeon Zen Group in Korea. A mother of two, Hae Seong also volunteers her time regularly to translate dharma talks at Mu Sang Sa.

Gingko

John Holland

Dharma talk given during a precepts ceremony, Providence Zen Center, August 4, 2018

Outside my local coffee shop in Manhattan stands a magnificent gingko tree that in the fall showers the pavement with golden-colored, fan-shaped leaves. These leaves with radiating veins are said to cure the sickness of forgetting.

The gingko tree species is reputed to be three hundred million years old and, like our roots here, comes out of China. It was nourished by Buddhist monks, who eventually took it to Korea, from whence comes our tradition.

The concept of linear time upon which this world relies so heavily does not account for the fact that time has no real beginning and no end. T. S. Eliot put it this way:

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in the future,
And time future contained in time past.

If we see everything in terms of hierarchy then we will see everything as existing separate from us. Thus, through our conceptual understanding, we will see the gingko tree as being completely different from ourselves. But the tree actually exists beyond our conceptual understanding. It exists in that place of equality with all beings.

Just as is said in the Avatamsaka Sutra: “If you wish to understand all buddhas of the past, present, and future, then you should view the nature of the whole universe as being created by mind alone.”

When you sit in meditation the tree has already returned home to its own place. But if you think that the tree is really separate from you—which I admit I often do while I am waiting for my skim latte—then the tree becomes just a concept.

I may see the tree in front of me, and conventionally I may call it a tree. In fact, it could be analyzed into individual molecules and atoms. The tree is simply an accumulation of all these atoms; it does not exist independently of them—and, of course, they do not exist independently of all the rest of the world and the way in which the universe is made up.

Thus we can say that name and form do not exist—they are created by mind alone. So they are empty. Human beings make names and forms for everything, and they—we—believe that these things exist. So we inevitably have suffering when these names and forms change—and when political demigods make outrageous statements.

Zen cuts all the mental constructs out from under you and you’ve got nothing, and in that nothing—emptiness—is profound wisdom. No meaning is profound meaning.

Everything is both form and emptiness. The tree is form, and emptiness is the fact that it does not exist in itself but

is only in an arrangement of constantly changing atoms. Neither exists without the other.

Near the beginning of my practice one statement, made by Huang Po, struck me and has stayed with me:

Men [and presumably women] are afraid to forget their minds, fearing to fall through the Void with nothing to stay their fall. They do not know that the Void is not really void, but the realm of the Dharma.

Zen Master Kosho Uchiyama spoke about meditative knowledge and daily living when he said, “We open the hand of thought and let all thoughts come and go freely.”

The process of opening, Uchiyama explained, is the



state of “No gaining, no knowing,” a state in which the mind is compared to an expansive sky that does not hinder floating clouds.

Tseng Ts’an, the Third Patriarch of Zen, put it more trenchantly:

Likes and dislikes
Are the mind’s disease.
If you miss the deep meaning,
It is useless to still your thoughts.

It is clear as vast space,
Nothing missing, nothing extra.
If you choose or reject,
You cannot see things as they are.

Outside, don’t get tangled in things
Inside, don’t get lost in emptiness.

Be still and become One,
And the confusion stops by itself.*

A little more than a hundred years ago in Korea there was a big ceremony at a monks' college. According to tradition, the senior monk ascended the high rostrum to deliver the commencement speech. After sitting down and adjusting his ceremonial robes, the senior monk said, "You must continue to study correctly and become like great trees, from which temples are built, and like large bowls, able to hold many good things. An ancient poet once wrote, 'Water takes the shape of its vessel. Human beings conform to the company they keep.' So today you are all graduating. That is very wonderful. If from now on you make friends with good and virtuous people, you will naturally become good and virtuous and fulfill your greatest obligation to heaven. But if you associate with bad people who follow a bad way, you will eventually become bad. Always keep the Buddha in mind and only keep good company. Then you will become like great trees and containers of the Dharma. This is my parting advice to you."

Just then the senior monk caught sight of a strange-looking figure sitting off to the side. Although his clothes were in tatters and his hair and beard were long, this monk was an imposing figure among the neat, shaven-headed monks. His appearance might seem unkempt but his eyes shone like diamonds. In fact, he was none other than Zen Master Kyong Ho (whose portrait is usually hung in our centers). He was already recognized in Korea as a great Zen master.

The commencement speaker asked him, "Please, Zen Master, give us a word."

Without looking up, Kyong Ho only shook his head. "No, no. I am only a wanderer, passing through. I have nothing to say."

But the senior monk persisted until Kyong Ho ascended the high rostrum.

Kyong Ho said, "All of you are monks. Monks are free of personal attachments and live only to serve all beings. Wanting to become a great tree or container of Dharma will prevent you from being a true teacher. Great trees have great uses, small trees have small uses. Good and bad bowls can all be used in their own way. None are to be discarded. Rather, you must become great carpenters. If you are a good carpenter, you never throw away big trees, or small trees, or good trees, or bad trees. A skilled carpenter can use any tree in his work. He never discards a single thing. Good and bad do not matter. If good things come, you must know their proper use; if bad things come, you must also know how to use them correctly. Don't attach to the good or push away the bad. You must use good and bad and make them correct. So keep good and bad friends, and never reject anything. This is true Buddhism. My only wish for you is that you free yourselves from all discriminating thoughts."

Goethe might have benefited from this advice (and so

might I have while waiting for my coffee) before he wrote his poem for his amour about the leaf of the Gingko:

This leaf from a tree in the East,
Has been given to my garden.
It reveals a certain secret . . .
Does it represent One living creature
Which has divided itself?

Or are these Two, which have divided
That should be One?
To reply to such a Question,
I have found the right answer:

Do you notice in my songs and verses
That I am One and Two?

Zen Master Man Gong, Zen Master Seung Sahn's grand-teacher, whose portrait also usually hangs in our centers, said:

Everything is impermanent, but there is truth,
You and I are not two, not one:
Only your stupid mind is non-stop.
Already alive in the Prajna ship.
[*Prajna means wisdom.*]

To which Zen Master Seung Sahn commented, "What do you see now, what do you hear now? Everything appears clearly in front of you."

"Already alive in the Prajna ship. What does this mean?"

You might agree with what Ta Hui, who lived in China in the ninth century, wrote in his letters and lectures known as *Swampland Flowers* (Shambhala, 1977; if I had the resources I would give a copy to everyone in Washington!) that this essencelessness "shines in the daily activities of everyone, appearing in everything. Though you try to grasp it, you cannot get it; though you try to abandon it, it always remains. It is vast and unobstructed, utterly empty."

Only, don't know!

Congratulations to each of you for being on board the Prajna ship. ♦

*The translation of the "Hsin Shin Ming" (Trust in Mind) is by Zen Master Hae Kwang.

John Holland is a long-time member of the Chogye International Center of New York. After training in the New Haven Zen Center, he became a dharma teacher in 1995. In 2008 he took the vows of a bodhisattva teacher. John has taught meditation at Union Theological Seminary of New York, Columbia University, and for extended periods at the Institute of Omega for Holistic Studies, as well as at New York Chogyesa. For many years he was an active member of the Buddhist Council of New York. John was the coeditor of *Don't-Know Mind: The Spirit of Korean Zen* and *Elegant Failure: A Guide to Zen Koans*, both by Zen Master Wu Kwang. In addition to Zen, John also practices tai chi and bird-watching.

Book Review

Buddhism beyond Gender: Liberation from Attachment to Identity

By Rita M. Gross

Shambhala Publications, 2018

Review by Zen Master Bon Hae (Judy Roitman)

There have been three stages in the Western Buddhist attitude toward gender in Buddhism. The first was what we now see as an embarrassing combination of ignorance and arrogance, best summarized by Gary Snyder's offhand remark in a newsletter that his sangha had just completed a retreat in which the majority of the participants were women. According to Snyder, this was the first time such a retreat had happened in all of Buddhist history. People actually went around saying that the West's contribution to Buddhism was going to be that women were going to be able to practice as seriously as men.

I hope you cringe hearing that.

Especially in light of the second (still ongoing) stage: the discovery by Western Buddhists that women have been practicing seriously from the beginning, despite patriarchal and downright misogynist attitudes. There is so much scholarship in this area that I couldn't begin to list it all, but one of the pioneering books is Rita Gross' *Buddhism after Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism*, published in 1993. *Buddhism after Patriarchy* illuminates Buddhist attitudes toward gender in a wide range of texts, from abstract philosophical discussions to narratives in which women or female beings appear as characters. Her chapter titles are provocative: "Do Innate Female Traits and Characteristics Exist?"; "The Feminine Principle"; "Androgynous Institutions." This book pays equal attention to the factual—for example, restrictive rules and customs—and the fantastic—Padmasambhava's consort, Yeshe Tsogyel, and the instant attainment of enlightenment by the eight-year-old Naga princess in the *Lotus Sutra*. *Buddhism after Patriarchy* is not primarily concerned with history but with images and theories about women within Buddhism. Gross argues that Buddhist texts themselves provide a firm basis for the conclusion that women have no more dharmic hindrances than men. But her egalitarian vision is still based on a notion, however attenuated, of gender distinction: men and women need to support each other's practice and dharmic aspirations, but even without conventional gender roles, men are still men and women are still women.

Buddhism beyond Gender belongs to (and perhaps inaugurates) the third stage, which seeks to abolish gender as a category of intrinsic interest while recognizing the profound effects of gender assignment on our actual lives. Here Gross goes beyond her earlier book to argue that clinging to our gender identities causes as much suffering as clinging to any other form of identity. We might say (she doesn't) that male and female have no self-nature.

This is a delicate balance. On the one hand, she is in-

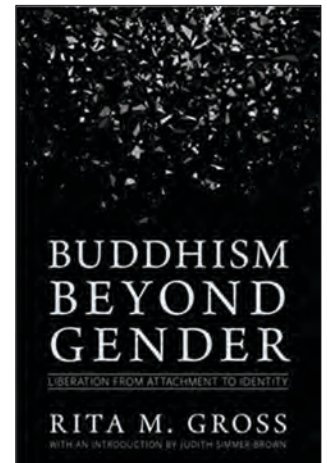
dignant at the smug assertion, whenever anyone complains about actual gender roles, that the enlightened mind is beyond gender, so why concern yourself with it? She recognizes this rightly as yet another self-righteous way to keep women down. On the other hand, she wants us to truly recognize the uselessness of gender as a category within a Buddhist context. She threads her way through this seeming conundrum by invoking Dogen's famous dictum: "To study the way of enlightenment is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by myriad things." The way to overcome the prison of gender roles (a phrase that permeates this book) is to meticulously examine gender and see how it is actually actualized. Only then can we shuck it off. Otherwise the dismissal of gender is just another example of the androcentrism (the notion that maleness is normative) that has warped our vision in so many ways for so very long.

The heart of Gross's argument that we should not cling to our gender identities is a careful inspection of texts—the earlier the better—to find formulations in which gender is irrelevant. For example, in the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, Buddha states the tasks that must be completed before he enters final nibbana (that is, nirvana). Here's the template, with a space for the key nouns.

I will not take final Nibbana till I have _____ who are accomplished, trained, skilled, learned, knowers of the Dhamma, trained in conformity with the Dhamma, correctly trained and walking in the path of the Dhamma, who will pass on what they have gained from their Teacher, teach it, declare it, establish it, expound it, analyse it, make it clear . . .

This template is repeated four times, where the blank is filled in by (1) monks and disciples, (2) nuns and female disciples, (3) laymen followers and (4) laywomen followers. This is the fourfold sangha, and its frequent invocation in Buddhist literature is an important piece of evidence. She cites the separate stories of Shakyamuni's wife, Yasodhara, and his stepmother, Pajapati, in which each woman enters nirvana before the Buddha, who declares their achievements equal to his own. She notes parallel passages in which men and women are described in the same way. Thus, the passage "I do not see even one other form that so obsesses the mind of a man as the form of a woman. The form of a woman obsesses the mind of a man" is paralleled by a passage in which the genders are simply switched. Androcentric language, she observes, is often avoided in traditional Buddhist texts—for example, the phrase "whether a man or woman" appears

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Book Review

Master Ma's Ordinary Mind: The Sayings of Zen Master Mazu Daoyi

By Fumio Yamada, translated by John Bellando

Wisdom, 2017, \$14.95

Review by Jess Row

There's a legend passed down in the Chinese Zen tradition that Mazu Daoyi, against Buddhist custom, was allowed to keep his family name—*Ma*馬, a very common surname meaning “horse”—because it suited him so well. (For clarification: “Mazu” is also written as “Ma-tzu,” “Ma Jo” or “Baso.”) In historical terms, Mazu is the essence of a founding father, the figure who bridges the early and mostly legendary era of transmission from Bodhidharma to Huineng with the era of “classical Chan,” that is, the Zen we still practice today, using teaching stories and practices attributed to him, his peers and his many descendants. This is why he's referred to as a “patriarch,” *zu* 祖 “Zen master,” *chanshi*, 禪師 the term used for other teachers of his era. The ideal of the Zen master who uses “strange words and extraordinary actions” begins with him.

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It's always struck me as a little odd that while many other Zen masters have had their recorded sayings—that is, their *yulu*, the traditional designation for an anthology of one master's teachings—published in English several times over, only one relatively hard-to-find (and now out of print) translation has ever appeared of the *Jiangxi Daoyi Chanshi Yulu*, the “Recorded Sayings of Master Daoyi of Jiangxi.” That translation is *Sun-Face Buddha*, by Cheng Chien Bhikshu. It may be that because Mazu is already well represented in the traditional Zen anthologies, none of the major translators or Buddhist publishers felt the need to produce a new version of his teachings; but it's been a major omission from the Zen texts available in English. Wisdom has recognized this by publishing *Master Ma's Ordinary Mind*, which is actually a translation of a translation: Professor Fumio Yamada's selection from Mazu's recorded sayings, with commentary, published originally in Japanese, then translated into English by John “Nick” Bellando, one of his students.

Bellando's translations of Yamada's translations are, in my reading, relatively accurate and a fair representation of the original. (The Chinese text is included in the book as well, which is a great help for those of us who can follow along.) It's impossible to “definitely” translate any text of this kind, because *yulu* stories—that is, kong-an—are so brief, pithy and sometimes ungrammatical, that even the reader in the original language has to engage in verbal as well as mental translation. Actual language-to-language translation has to be understood in the context of practice: this is why Zen Master Seung Sahn's commentary on the “Jōju's Dog” kong-an is crucial for understanding the meaning of Jōju's famous “Mu!” in our tradition. Other traditions—even other Korean Zen tradi-

tions—interpret and practice with the same kong-an very differently.

Since I've never read the entire *Jiangxi Daoyi Chanshi Yulu* in the original, and I never found a copy of Chien Bhikshu's book, some of these kong-an were new to me—and will be new to many English-language readers, as they're not preserved in Zen anthologies such as the *Gateless Gate (the Wumenguan or Mu Mun Kwan)* or the *Blue Cliff Record*. This is what makes Master Ma's Ordinary Mind so important. Here is one of the shorter ones:

One day while with Mazu, Zen Master Magu Baoche said, “What is the Great Nirvana like?”

“Sudden!”

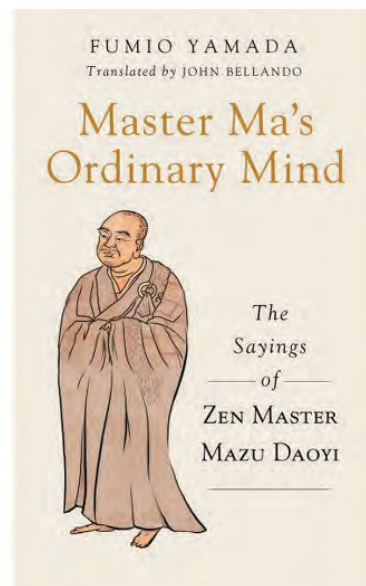
“Just what is ‘sudden?’”

“Look at water!”

This translation requires some explanation. The word “sudden” or *ji* 急 also means “urgent” or “impatient” or “fast, rapid and violent.” Colloquially, at least in modern Chinese, it specifically applies to water, as in a strong current or fast-moving river. When Mazu says 看水, “Look at water!” he could be saying, “Look at the rain!” or “Look at that stream over there!” or even, “Look out, you're about to get wet!” (Although there are definite and indefinite articles in classical Chinese, they're often not used). Each of these possibilities could be worked through in kong-an practice.

Unfortunately, Fumio Yamada interprets this kong-an not as a challenge to Zen Master Magu, or the student, but as an interpretive, pedagogical gesture: “The moment that flows into nirvana—the moment's *suddenness*—is most certainly what Mazu wants to teach,” he writes:

Water is constantly flowing. However, if you look at a fixed point, in a moment the water flows up to you, and in a moment it flows away. This flow is the same at any given moment, regardless of how fast the water is flowing. That moment is



(Continued from p. 23)

often in the Pali canon when human beings are referred to. One particularly convincing example she cites is a passage recommending that a man transcend his masculinity, which is paralleled by a passage recommending that a woman transcend her femininity. Gross also adopts a comparative view of Buddhist attitudes toward gender: she contrasts the unequal Western view of parenthood (for millennia, it was assumed that the woman who gave birth was a passive recipient of the male life force with no generative contribution) to the many Buddhist passages in which mothers and fathers are equally venerated and to whom the child owes equal debt. Western monotheistic religions, she argues, consider women to be literally the second sex, while the Buddhist description of humanity from the beginning consists of two sexes.

Gross was a pioneer at the intersection of women's studies and religious studies, with a deep knowledge of Buddhism both as scholarship and as practice: originally a student of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, she was ordained as a senior teacher in the Karma Kagyu tradition in 2005. The tense of the previous sentence is crucial here. She died of a massive stroke in 2015, leaving *Buddhism beyond Gender* far from finished. It was missing chapters that she had spoken about writing, in particular a chapter on gender fluidity and transsexuals. Her friend and colleague Judith Simmer-Brown did the final organizing and editing of the manuscripts that Gross left behind. Not knowing what Simmer-Brown faced, I can't comment on whether she could have done better. But many sections of this book are not worthy of the subtle and

important points that are embedded in it. When she moves into contemporary material, Gross loses focus, oversimplifies, and becomes a somewhat testy cultural critic. I wish this book had been edited with a heavier hand, although I can easily understand why Simmer-Brown was hesitant to do so.

And the organization seems strange. Smack in the middle come the most powerful lines, which should have been its conclusion.

What does all this “gender talk” have to do with “real dharma”? Everything! “Gender talk” is not fundamentally a project of social liberation, although it also facilitates social liberation. It is an extremely close and deep way of studying the self, which, we are told, is the only way to forget the self and thus attain “the way of enlightenment.” Therefore, I conclude that all the Buddhists who claimed they believed in egolessness but were better Buddhists than me because they had no issues with conventional gender arrangements simply had never taken seriously the Buddha's instruction about every conditioned phenomenon, “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.” “When you have abandoned it, that will lead to your welfare and happiness.”

To make this point, to extend this point past the individual and to the communal, and to base it in classical Buddhist texts, is a major contribution to contemporary Buddhist discourse. I hope we all heed it. ♦

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eternity, nirvana. It defies any attempt at human control. This is the moment to which Mazu is calling our attention.

Anyone who has much experience swimming or boating in moving water knows that, on a practical level, it's simply not true that “flow is the same . . . regardless of how fast the water is flowing.” Sometimes “flow” is a river at flood stage; sometimes it's a barely perceptible trickle in a tiny rivulet in the desert. Even if it were a helpful observation, however, Professor Yamada's commentary misses the point of kong-an practice, which is about realization, not explication. What does Magu see right now? How can you show it to me?

Here's another wonderful Mazu kong-an that was new to me:

Someone asked, “What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?”

Mazu responded, “What does this mean, here and now?”

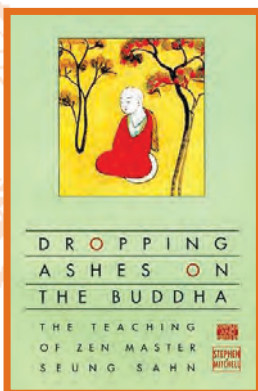
This is another instance where no single translation will suffice. Mazu's response is probably best translated literally as, “What is the meaning of this present moment?” or “What is the meaning of what's happening right now?”

Mazu's response is pure Zen teaching that really shouldn't require any commentary at all; and Yamada says, correctly but superfluously, “The meaning [of Bodhidharma's coming from the West] is not that of an event in the distant past; it's the meaning of your present state of being.”

Master Ma's Ordinary Mind is a much-needed book, in that it makes all of Mazu's kong-ans available in one place and in print; it also includes a brief biographical sketch by Andy Ferguson, author of the indispensable *Zen's Chinese Heritage* (Wisdom, 2011). (It doesn't contain Mazu's longer dharma discourses, which are translated in *Sun-Face Buddha*.) But it would be a more useful book for Zen students—obviously, the primary audience—if it had commentary from a contemporary Zen master, or more detailed material on the relationship between Mazu, his teachers, and his many dharma heirs. My advice to my fellow students is to stick with the kong-ans themselves—and bring them into the interview room, where Master Ma's mind is always at work. ♦

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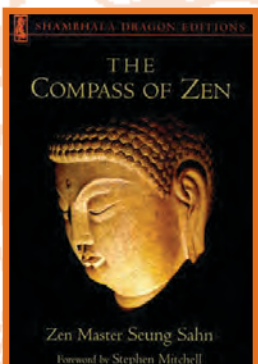
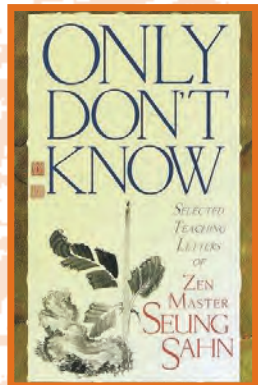
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