Dokusan with Dōgen

Timeless Lessons in Negotiating the Way

Dokusan with Dōgen

Timeless Lessons in Negotiating the Way

Barbara Verkuilen

Firethroat Press, LLC
Madison, Wisconsin

Published by Firethroat Press, LLC
2789 Marledge Street
Madison, WI 53711-5257
Web: www.firethroatpress.com
Email: info@firethroatpress.com

ISBN: 978-0-9830972-1-1

Library of Congress Cataloging Number: 2011935973

Publisher's Cataloging-In-Publication Data
(Prepared by The Donohue Group, Inc.)
Verkuilen, Barbara.
Dokusan with Dōgen : timeless lessons in negotiating the way / Barbara Verkuilen.
p. ; cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN: 978-0-9830972-1-1
1. Zen Buddhism. 2. Buddhist philosophy. 3. Dōgen, 1200-1253--Teachings. 4. Zen stories. I. Title.
BQ9286 .V47 2011
294.392/7 2011935973

Book design and layout:
Kira Henschel, www.HenschelHAUSBooks.com

Cover design:
Aaron Gilmore, www.gilmoreart.com

Back cover quote:
Leighton, Taigen Dan and Shohaku Okumura. *Dōgen's Extensive Record: A Translation of the Eihei Koroku*. (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004, pg. 91)

Printed in the United States of America.

With gratitude to my teachers:
Soyu Matsuoka Roshi,
Dainin Katagiri Roshi,
Shoken Winecoff Roshi

Contents

Introduction 1
The Secret in Our Hearts 9
Spiritual Practice 21
Shikantaza / Just Sitting 31
Staying on the Path 43
Taking Refuge in the Triple Treasure 57
Nonattachment / Vehicle of the Way 73
Ceaseless Practice 83
Miracles 95
Being Intimate with Our Life 107
Negotiating the Way 119

Glossary 131

Endnotes 135
Bibliography 143

About the Author 149

Note to the Reader

This book is the outcome of a series of dharma talks given over the years. Listeners were always aware that I had copious notes when speaking. It was not uncommon after a talk for a number of people to ask for my notes or suggest putting them together into a book. I've finally done just that. Thank you for your encouragement.

Also, as you will see, I am not shy about using italics, although writers are cautioned about doing so. Why and when they are used, I hope will be obvious. However, one instance needs a bit of explanation. Buddhist terms will appear in italics the first time they are used. They will be defined afterwards, usually in parentheses. Subsequent use of the terms will not be in italics. Each term originally appearing in italics can be found in the Glossary on page 131.

Introduction

Recently I was struck by the odd fact that I have spent 40 years of my adult life practicing Zen and studying the obscure writings of a thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master. Many interests have waxed and waned during those years, but Master Dōgen has remained a constant. From the perspective of an outside observer, I imagine, this might seem unfathomable. Why the enduring attraction?

This collection of essays is an attempt to answer that question. The title, *Dokusan With Dōgen: Timeless Lessons in Negotiating the Way*, I fear, may be misleading. The reader is advised that this is not the work of a Dōgen scholar, but rather the musing of an ordinary Zen student reflecting on the influence the master had on her life.

That said, it's fair to ask, how does a woman living in America in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century have *dokusan* (the private teaching encounter between master and disciple) with a thirteenth-century Zen master from medieval Japan? It hasn't been easy. But from my first encounter with Soto Zen, I have been profoundly moved by the writings of Master

Dōgen, despite the fact that I understood little of what he was saying. It was surprising how many times I would read a particular fascicle from his *Shobogenzo* (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye) with literally no comprehension, yet feel completely changed. It seems that Master Dōgen's powerful, poetic expression of his penetrating understanding whispers to the most silently receptive recesses of our nature, and teaches us to see the world through different eyes.

The study of the *Buddha-dharma* (Buddha's teaching) is relevant to any time period in which we may live. The problems that confront us today are not different from the problems any people at any previous time, living anywhere on Earth, have faced. Master Dōgen's writings, in particular, address the central difficulty of answering the spiritual question, "What does it really mean to be a human being?" It is in answering that question that Master Dōgen clearly defines how we are to "Negotiate our Way."

A key concern of Master Dōgen is helping the practitioner define what constitutes authentic practice. How are we to answer the deeper existential dilemmas of existence, as well as confront the numerous and seemingly mundane problems of living our lives day by day? Dōgen never allows us to favor one side of this question over the other. He assists us in holding that illusory duality, which we bravely embody until we achieve a state of equipoise where the apparent opposition of the two sides no longer contradict one another, because they are co-identical. This is done through his radical nonduality and compassionate counsel that we persist in living our life wholeheartedly, which means never valuing one side of our nature over the other.

There is urgency in Dōgen's teaching that it is unwise to waste precious time in learning to negotiate our Way. "You have gained the pivotal opportunity of human form. Do not use your time in vain."[1] Despite the difficulty one encounters when undertaking to study his writings, they are permeated with profound kindness and caring, by which we are nourished and encouraged.

Currently there are many books on Master Dōgen and what has come to be known as Dōgen's Zen. Recently, I have even seen quotes of Dōgen's writing on greeting cards in alternative book-stores. The first time I saw one I didn't know whether to be pleased or appalled. To be honest, I still don't.

In many ways, Master Dōgen has never been more widely read and studied than he is at this time. There is now a proliferation of excellent translations and commentary on his many works, making him available, if not necessarily accessible, to any interested person; whereas in the past his writings were the purview of a few dedicated scholars or practitioners. There have been generations when his writings collected dust. But today, "No other religious personality in the history of Japan has so stirred contemporary interest and admiration as Zen Master Dōgen."[2]

Interest in Dōgen is not limited to practitioners of Soto Zen, of which he is the acknowledged founder. Philosophers, physicists, psychologists, and linguists equally hold Dōgen's writings in high esteem.

The biographical sketch we can form of his life is similarly drawn in various texts. What interests me most is the thread of his spiritual quest throughout his short lifetime of fifty-three years

(1200–1253). Master Dōgen was orphaned by the time he was seven, losing his father first and then his mother. Having been born into an aristocratic family with economic means and social influence was not enough to spare him that grief. Reportedly, he had a significant spiritual awakening at his mother's funeral service. Upon seeing the smoke rising from an incense dish, he experienced profoundly, the nature of reality as impermanence.

Following his mother's death he lived with an uncle who planned for Dōgen to become his heir and successor. But the young Dōgen, only twelve at the time, had other plans. He ran away to a maternal uncle who was studying at Onjo-ji monastery at Mount Hiei. After some persistence this uncle gave him permission to enter the monastic life. He first studied as a Tendai monk whereupon he received the Buddhist name Dōgen—"Foundation of the Way." At age 17, he gained entrance to Kennin-ji monastery and met Myozen, the dharma heir of Eisai. Dōgen studied within the Rinzai Zen tradition under Myozen. In 1221, Myozen certified that Dōgen had completed his studies.

Although Dōgen held Myozen in high esteem, his own deepest spiritual question—If one is already Buddha, what is the need for practice?—remained unanswered. Reconciling this question of inherent versus realized enlightenment will later become the central theme of his teaching, encapsulated as "practice is enlightenment." In 1223, he and Myozen traveled to China to deepen their practice and understanding.

After arriving in China, Dōgen was required to stay on board the ship for three months until immigration issues could be

settled. Myozen, however, was recognized as Eisai's dharma heir and allowed to disembark.

It was while he waited aboard ship that Dōgen had his first shocking encounter with Chinese Zen. One day, the *tenzo* (head cook) of a monastery arrived on board looking for shiitake mushrooms. Dōgen and the cook struck up a conversation. In his youthful enthusiasm and no doubt loneliness, Dōgen invited the cook to stay for dinner so they might continue their discussion. The cook explained that the journey back was long, and that he needed to return to the monastery in time to prepare dinner. Dōgen found this incredulous. The cook was of advanced age, and Dōgen asked him why he needed to work so hard at his this time of his life. Wouldn't it be better to devote himself to meditation and the study of scriptures? The monk replied, "My good fellow from a foreign land, you do not yet know what practice means, nor do you yet understand words and scriptures."[3] The tenzo left shortly thereafter to return to the monastery.

One can only imagine the impact of this encounter on Dōgen, considering his anticipation of studying in China and the delay of that desire by needing to remain on board ship. Later in his travels Dōgen would again meet up with the tenzo, who would have a continuing influence on his understanding. Most biographers cite this encounter with the aging monk as a key event in Dōgen's education while in China. Indeed, Dōgen himself cites it as a point of transformation in his understanding of the meaning of practice. He elaborates on these events in great detail in his "Instructions to the Tenzo" in the *Eihei Shingi*, his writings on the pure standards for the monastic community.

After being granted permission to leave the ship and study in China, Dōgen proceeded to visit a number of different monasteries, none of which satisfied his deepest yearning. In early May of 1225, however, Dōgen met Rujing and would become his dharma heir by the time he returned to Japan in 1227.

There is a remarkable story told that at their first meeting, Rujing greeted Dōgen warmly and invited him to visit him at any time regardless of the usual regulations. This was an extraordinary gesture to a foreign monk, novice to that monastery. It would seem that Master Dōgen's attitude, toward the meaning of practice, experienced a significant shift between the time of his conversation with the old tenzo and meeting his true teacher.

It was also at the end of May during that same year, that Dōgen received news that his teacher and friend, Myozen, had died. Shortly thereafter, during an intensive training period, Master Dōgen experienced his enlightenment. Late one evening, Rujing saw that a monk seated next to Dōgen had fallen asleep during the meditation. He said, "In Zen, body and mind are cast off. Why do you sleep?"[4] Upon hearing those words Master Dōgen awakened. Rujing validated his experience as authentic and provided Dōgen with a seal of succession. He practiced with Rujing two more years before returning to Japan.

Upon arriving home, Dōgen exclaimed that he returned "empty-handed," carrying with him only Myozen's ashes, a portrait of Rujing, and the answer to the question of a lifetime.

For the interested reader, there are many wonderful sources, outlining Master Dōgen's career after returning to Japan. But what interests me most is "the answer to the question of a lifetime." I

mean not only what Dōgen understood by the phrase, "body and mind are cast off," or what it was about those words that elicited his awakening, but studying how to awaken. When we read the story of an ancient master's awakening experience, it eludes us because we are, in a sense, eavesdropping on one glorious moment that is the culmination of long years of effort and practice.

Stories of the ancient masters' enlightenment experiences are intriguing but can also be misleading. They cannot be understood apart from the context and history of the individual's entire life experience. For Dōgen it was hearing Rujing's comment. But why did another master achieve his awakening by hearing a pebble strike a bamboo stalk, and a third experience it in response to being pushed off a porch by his master? It's not such "trigger events" that should be the focus of our attention, however unique and idiosyncratic they may be. What is important to understand is this: the moment we are glimpsing as a master's enlightenment experience is the result of a lifetime of effort to resolve that individual's spiritual dilemma. What we can learn from the ancient masters is the manner in which we must care for our own spiritual questions.

We can study Dōgen's life and analyze his exchange with Rujing, thereby gaining some intellectual understanding. But the point of Zen practice is to answer our own question of a lifetime. How does that question manifest in your life? That is your natural *koan*. (A question that cannot be answered by analysis alone.)

Formal koans are the intriguing and spiritually potent anecdotes of enlightenment encounters between masters and disciples. Some schools of Zen concentrate on these ancient stories

as a meditative practice. In my training they were revered and discussed in dharma talks but were not used as the focus of meditation. Many times Matsuoka Roshi, my first Zen teacher, would say, "Your life is your koan."

The best definition of a koan I've heard is a metaphor given by the late Jiyu Kennett Roshi. She likened a koan to a fish with a hot iron ball in its mouth that it could neither swallow nor spit out. If we're lucky, our life will be gripped by such a question. It will become the driving force of our inquiry and the ground of our awakening.

While we grapple for the answer to the unanswerable, Master Dōgen's eloquent writings echo assistance from the thirteenth century. And they are no less relevant today than they were then. As we practice his method and study his teachings, the growth in our discernment and confidence in "Negotiating the Way" is the result of our dokusan with Dōgen.

If you as reader sustain a burgeoning interest in the Dharma or find renewed encouragement for your practice by engaging with any part of this book, my intention as writer will be fulfilled.

The Secret in Our Hearts

When you first seek dharma you imagine
you are far away from its environs.
—Zen Master Dōgen

Years ago, I attended a seven-day retreat at Hokyoji Zen Monastery in southeastern Minnesota. Each day of the retreat our teacher, Katagiri Roshi, would give a dharma talk. At the end of every talk he would answer questions. About the third day of this particular retreat, a young man I did not know raised his hand and asked, "Why should we do this practice?" Katagiri Roshi sat silently for what seemed like a long time. Then he looked directly at the young man and answered gently, "We should do this practice so we can hear the secret in our hearts."

I don't know if that answer satisfied the young man who asked the question, but I remember being very moved by it. It served as encouragement at many other long retreats when I too questioned, "What are we really doing here?"

Hanging in my home office is a print by the artist Brian Andreas. In his art, Andreas creates what he calls "Story People."

Each work consists of a childlike drawing accompanied by a poetic statement. The one I own has two figures in it—one large person holding out an object that looks like a ball or a sun to a smaller person seated in a carriage. The caption reads:

The secret is not in your hand or your eye or your
voice, my aunt told me once.
The secret is in your heart.
Of course, she said,
knowing that doesn't make it any easier.

What is interesting is that we all know what "it" the aunt is referring to. The secret is in your heart; of course, knowing that doesn't make [life] any easier. Katagiri Roshi, a Zen priest from Japan, and Brian Andreas, an artist from Iowa, both seem to be telling us the same thing: there is an unseen element we must discern to better understand our life.

Many years ago, when I first encountered the Buddha's teaching, I happened on the following Zen depiction of life. Picture, if you will, a person in the act of climbing a huge mountain. The climber is about halfway up and exhausted. At this moment he or she is dangling off the edge of the mountain, just managing to cling to a small vine. On each side of the vine there is a tiny mouse—one white and one black—and both are chewing through the vine. The climber notices a wild strawberry growing out of a crevice. It is picked and eaten. And, it's delicious.

My relationship to this metaphor has changed many times in the years since first reading it. But I still remember that my initial response was one of intense intrigue. I resonated with the struggle

to climb a mountain. There was great familiarity with how it felt to be hanging there, exhausted, and the two mice chewing through the vine was as good an explanation as any for all the anxiety I experienced. The part that escaped me though was "It's delicious." That indeed seemed like a well-kept secret.

Since then I've learned that the secret is not separate from the mountain, the vine, the mice, the strawberry or even the anxiety. In fact, the anxiety is the secret trying to get our attention.

Zen Master Dōgen said, "When you first seek dharma you imagine you are far away from its environs."[5] For our purposes, we can substitute the words "truth," "answers," or "secret," for dharma. When you first seek truth, when you first seek answers, when you first seek the secret in your heart, you imagine you are far away from "its environs." But what causes our seeking is already intimate with the secret. The cause might be loneliness, anxiety, confusion, or doubt. Or it may be deep dissatisfaction, a dull nagging feeling that something is missing.

Whatever it is that causes us trouble is the gift that begins the search. In the beginning, we don't see it as a gift. We experience it more as a burden, something we'd rather not have to deal with. But the problem drives us to seek an answer, and that is the secret calling to us. This was true even for the Buddha. His search took the form of answering the question, "What is the cause of suffering in the world?"

Siddhartha Gautama—the Buddha—was born a prince of the Shakya kingdom in Northern India. Shortly after his birth, the sage Asita predicted that Siddhartha would become a great world leader or a great religious figure. King Suddhodana, Siddhartha's father, feared the second prediction. We are told that he

over-protected his son, lavishing him with all the material comforts he could provide.

Despite the king's efforts he was unable to protect Siddhartha from witnessing four occurrences that changed the course of his life. While traveling outside of the palace, Siddhartha saw an old person, a sick person, a funeral procession, and a religious mendicant. Those events caused him to question most deeply the inescapable realities of human life. Siddhartha experienced intense conflict over the life he was living, and felt an urgent need to seek an answer to the distress these sights aroused in him. Legend tells us that one night he snuck out of the palace while everyone was sleeping to become a mendicant. His search was arduous and he came close to dying in his effort. He studied under several great religious masters of his time. Each of them recognized his aptitude and genius. They taught him all they knew; yet his question remained unanswered. After six years of study he resolved to sit alone under a tree, where he at last achieved his great awakening.

It is told that he debated with himself for seven weeks about whether or not to teach what he had learned to others. Eventually he decided to do so, and spent the next 45 years—until his death—transmitting what he had realized under the Bodhi tree.

In his book, *Alone With Others* [6], Stephen Batchelor relates the Buddha's experience to everyone's life. He suggests that the value of the Buddha's story lies in its symbolic representation of a universal process. How does this story reflect a universal process?

We are all born into particular circumstances that define when and where we live, and what kind of family experience we have. What is our genetic, physical, and emotional makeup? What

is the political structure of the time and place in which we live? What do we have to do to provide for the basic necessities of survival? These conditions determine where we find ourselves on the mountain.

The king in the story can be viewed as the cultural expectations that are placed on us, whatever the answers to the questions above might be. King Suddhodana represents the point of view that satisfaction in life can be achieved through power and material comforts. Not that different from our own view today, really.

Our culture tells us that in order to be happy, we need things. This can be anything and everything: cars, relationships, the right job, a new couch—it doesn't matter. The palace represents all the things that we think we need in order to be happy. These cultural expectations for happiness are the vine we cling to. Eventually we may become exhausted from trying to be happy in this way. Finding satisfaction through "things" is not long lasting. We may get suspicious that what we have been taught by our culture isn't going to work. We can spend a long time thinking that this means there must be something wrong with us, and for a while we try even harder, getting more exhausted.

In spite of all our busyness there still lurks old age, sickness, and death. Those pesky mice are continuously chewing, chewing, chewing. If we are lucky, the exhaustion may force us to seek other avenues for solving the deeper problem of our life. Maybe there's not something wrong with us. And even if there is, we have to find another way. That is when we, too, sneak out of the palace while everyone is sleeping. By that I do not mean literally running

away from our responsibilities, but seeing through the limitations of certain cultural values and expectations. That is when we metaphorically don the robe of a mendicant.

There are teachers and teachings, but eventually we all have to sit under the Bodhi tree alone. When we do, there is a great turning. A personal revolution is set in motion. This turning is a choice we make about how we will live and on what values we will base our life. Do we continue to strive for things that we think will make us happy—things we hope will leave us feeling better about ourselves—or do we take a deeper look into the nature of what the problem really is?

We can continue trying to alleviate our dissatisfaction by endlessly seeking new things and never question our insatiable grasping. When our energy is engaged with grasping there are no limits to the commodities on which it can operate. We can become possessed by a desire for money and goods, but grasping can also seek power, praise, fame, or even self-esteem as the goal. Needing something from the outside to fill up emptiness on the inside leaves us feeling insecure and apprehensive.

In contrast to grasping, we can turn our attention inward and experience a more vibrant, satisfying connection with our life, our sense of "being." Being is awareness: an intimate relatedness to the dynamic flow of existence. The choice we each need to make between "grasping" and "being" is a way to understand the meaning of Asita's prophecy at Siddhartha's birth.

There is a word in Japanese: *shin*, which is often translated as heart-mind. Every Japanese person I have heard use this translation was dissatisfied with it. Each one struggled to clarify it

but only ended up saying, "There is no word for this (shin—heart-mind), in English." Perhaps Antoine de Saint-Exupery comes closest to the meaning when his little prince says (in French), "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."[7] When we learn to see the secret in our hearts, it leads to a different way of being in and being with the world: it leads to being a part of the world instead of feeling apart from the world.

It is also part of the universal process that this shift in focus from grasping to being is not easy. There is not something wrong with us because we find it difficult. Considering our circumstance, it is possible to go a long, long time and never even notice a strawberry. Proof of this can be found in the reason the Buddha hesitated for seven weeks before deciding to teach. This is what the Buddha said about that time:

> With difficulty have I comprehended. This dharma is subtle and profound, not easily understood. It is difficult to perceive, difficult to comprehend, not within the sphere of logic and goes against the stream. If I were to teach this Dharma, others would not understand. That would be tiresome to me. As I reflected thus, my mind turned to inaction and not to the teaching of the Dharma.[8]

I find this statement of the Buddha's very moving, because it is such a human response even after his enlightenment. Of course, he went beyond his disinclination to teach and that, I guess, is the response of a Buddha.

What did he teach, you may be wondering? He taught a method of inquiry so we might experience what he did, and his profound teachings serve as a guide in our study of the Way. He once told his disciple Subhuti that what he understood as the result of his awakening was comparable to all the leaves on all the trees in the forest. What he taught was but one leaf. That one leaf has been enough to keep the rest of us busy for 2,500 years.

Zen Master Dōgen said, "To study the Buddha way 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."[9]

"To study the Buddha way is to study the self."

Zen Master Dōgen urges us to listen for the secret in our hearts. Studying the self from the Buddhist perspective leads to a surprising understanding of the nature of self. The heart of the Buddha's teaching is based on meditation practice. That is how we study the self.

"To study the self is to forget the self."

To understand this statement, we must first explore the meaning of the Buddhist terms, "dependent co-origination" and "selflessness" or "no self-nature." However, this does not mean that we need to be self-denying, or that we must try hard in a self-hating way to be unselfish. We "forget the self" naturally as the result of learning to see the whole world in a different way.

Dependent co-origination means that all things and all phenomena arise dependent on causes and conditions. No single thing exists alone, by and of itself. This includes the birth and death of galaxies or our next thought.

The Buddha taught:

> Because there is this, therefore there is that.
> Because this arises, therefore that arises,
> If this is not, then that will not be.[10]

A Buddhist Sutra states: "There is not one thing from beginning to end in all of the universe that is not determined by the two words 'cause' and 'condition.'"[11]

Causes and conditions themselves are phenomena produced by other causes and conditions. For example, a number of years ago we planted a catalpa tree in our back yard. One of the causes for that planting was my love of catalpa trees stemming from childhood memories of them. The nursery where we bought the tree started it from a seed; that seed is also a cause. If you plant a catalpa seed you won't get a rose bush. For our catalpa tree to prosper, other conditions were also necessary: soil, air, sunlight, the right temperatures and amounts of rain. It needed to not be eaten by a deer. Many, many things had to occur for us to be able to grow that particular tree. And today it is the cause of a big clean-up job in the fall after it has shed all its cigars.

Seen this way "dependent co-origination" seems obvious and logical, but such understanding contradicts our usual way of seeing and relating to the world as "things" that are separate and independent of each other.

A deep recognition of dependent co-origination supports our understanding of what is meant by the teaching of "selflessness" or "no self-nature." No self-nature in Buddhism simply means that nothing has a permanent and independent existence. No self-nature

is often misunderstood to mean that things don't exist. That's not correct. The things we encounter are what they are, but they are also more than what we usually take them to be. In our usual way of perceiving the world, which is sometimes called relative reality, the catalpa tree is just a catalpa tree. And it is. However, in absolute reality, the tree cannot be separated from the seed, the sunshine, the earth, rain it received, the care of the person who grew it, the people who planted it, etc.

When we consciously witness the truth of dependent co-origination—causes and conditions—we recognize that "things" (any activity of the phenomenal world) do not have an independent existence. We must also recognize the law of impermanence. Here is a big secret: everything changes. Obvious? Yes. But then, why doesn't this understanding underlie everything we do?

Moment after moment nothing is the same; there is nothing that does not change. In the Buddha-dharma, for something to be said to have a self-nature, it must be permanent and unchanging. If everything changes, how can we define the "self-nature" of anything? For these reasons—nothing is permanent and unchanging, and every existence is dependent on causes and conditions—the Buddha-dharma teaches the doctrine of no self-nature (Yun, Hsing 2000).

"To study the self is to forget the self."

By that, Dōgen means to go beyond our old notion of self as a separate and independent being. What we forget is this false notion of self.

"To forget the self is to be actualized by all things."

With this statement, Dōgen intimates the vastest and deepest understanding of being. It means understanding and experiencing our life as interdependent and interconnected with all phenomena. To be actualized is to be given life by all that exists or has ever existed. Stephen Batchelor personalizes this for us when he says: "To have become a person means … to have emerged contingently from a unique and unrepeatable set of conditions."[12]

Let's take a closer look at that. The "unique and unrepeatable set of conditions" necessary for anything to have its existence is inseparable from the entire history of the universe. Every material phenomenon we take for granted in this world is recycled dust from the death of stars. Over galactic periods of time this dust is blown throughout the cosmos. The complexity of causes and conditions leading to the formation of an entire solar system, from one of these dust clouds—yielding a planet that supports life "as we know it"—is incalculable. Hannah Holmes states it precisely in her captivating book, *The Secret Life of Dust: From the Cosmos to the Kitchen Counter, The Big Consequences of Little Things*:

> Had the growing cloud of dust grains been exposed to a wisp of galactic wind, they would have been stripped of their chemical coatings and set adrift. It's a common occurrence. It has been calculated that any given speck of dust may join ten different dust clouds over a billion years, before it is finally swept to the center of a cold cloud and caught up in the whirl of star birth. But this time the dust hung together. And every atom of everyone and everything on Earth was preserved.[13]

That is how to begin to contemplate dependent co-origination. There is no place and no time by which we can separate now from all that has occurred throughout the entire universe. The whole history of the universe is present each moment. That is the mountain we find ourselves upon.

The secret in our hearts is that on the deepest level, we already know the truth of our unlikely and precarious existence. Until we fully acknowledge the reality of our situation we are driven by anxiety and insecurity to make real what cannot be made real, real meaning permanent. The irony is that by fully accepting that we are forever dangling off the edge of the mountain, we gain an attitude of fierce attention that brings us fully alive. When we recognize impermanence and dependent co-origination as the nature of reality, things are no longer just what we thought they were. They are so much more, and our experience is informed with appreciation and gratitude. It is this shift in how we see and experience our relationship to the world that makes our life delicious. And that's the strawberry.

Spiritual Practice

Enlightenment is like the moon reflected on the water.
—Zen Master Dōgen

Zen Master Dōgen said:

Enlightenment is like the moon reflected on the water.
The moon does not get wet, nor is the water broken.
Although its light is wide and great,
the moon is reflected even in a puddle an inch wide.
The whole moon and the entire sky are reflected in dewdrops
on the grass, or even in one drop of water.

Enlightenment does not divide you,
just as the moon does not break the water.
You cannot hinder enlightenment,
just as a drop of water does not hinder the moon in the sky.
Each reflection, however long or short its duration, manifests the
vastness of the dewdrop, and realizes the limitlessness of the
moonlight in the sky.[14]

Each time I read Zen Master Dōgen's description of enlightenment as the "moon in a dewdrop," I experience two simultaneous responses. First, there is the recognition that I don't really understand it. Second, I find myself moved to tears. There have been times when reading it has induced a period of literal weeping. I don't know why that is, but I have learned to trust and listen intently to the voice of that weeping. There is a phrase from the Zohar, a sacred Hebrew text, that reads, "There is a palace that only opens to tears."

What is the nature of spiritual practice from a Zen Buddhist perspective?

Years ago, I read many works by Maurice Nicoll, a student of G.I. Gurdjieff, and prolific author in his own right. His observation that man himself is not changed by discoveries in phenomena has always stuck with me. We have made many advances into the nature and mysteries of phenomena. We can travel to the moon, perform heart transplants, and communicate with someone anywhere in the world in seconds, but I wonder if there is anyone who can listen to a half-hour world news report and not be overwhelmed?

Many times when I listen to the news it reminds me of the opening scene from the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. When that movie came out in 1967, I was 22 years old and the year 2001 felt unimaginably distant. At that time the movie's content was still science fiction. There had been no space moon landing yet. The opening scene, for those who may not have seen it, or have forgotten it, depicts two bands of apes gesturing aggressively toward one another across a small stream. The aggressive

encounters are repeated over a series of days. Then an ape from one band picks up a large bone and discovers how to use it as a club. With the club as a weapon, his band becomes dominant over the other one. One night, the victorious ape tosses the bone high into the air a few times. The scene shifts and the bone does not come back down to Earth, but is transformed into a spacecraft in the year 2001. Point taken. We are left to ask ourselves, "What else has changed beside the technology?" Later when we got those first beautiful pictures of Earth from space, I was young enough and naïve enough to think, *Now there will be no more wars*. I should have been right.

Bones to bombs, and the ability to watch it all on TV are the result of "discoveries in phenomena."

Katagiri Roshi once said that we don't come to a practice such as Zen training until we have been backed into a corner, and that when our life seems "stuck" that is a great opportunity. When the "ways of the world" make us weary, when we have no place to turn and we are brought to a halt, that can be the beginning of real spiritual practice.

There is a famous Zen story of a student seeking an interview with a teacher. He informs the teacher that he really wants to study Zen, and proceeds to tell the teacher about all he has read and learned. The teacher invites him to tea. While serving the student he continues to pour until tea is overflowing the cup. The student exclaims, "What are you doing, the cup is already full!" The teacher responds, "How can you learn anything about Zen if your cup is already full? If you really want to study Zen, first you must empty your cup."

When I was first introduced to Zen practice, it was a great shock for my life; I mean that in a totally positive way. Never had I encountered anything that was as interesting, intriguing, or indecipherable as some of the Zen literature I first read. I was already in the corner and then I was forced to empty my cup. Understanding Zen couldn't be approached in the usual way. Nothing in my life prepared me to answer a question like, "What did your face look like before your parents were born?" It seems we must come to the limits of what we think we know, and be willing to suspend that knowing in a search for truth.

We can search for truth in many ways. Being able to land a person on the moon reflects the accomplishment of understanding many truths about our world. Performing a heart transplant demonstrates the same. But how do we transform a heart? By transform a heart, I mean, how do we release it from its longing?

Spiritual practice is how "man himself" is changed. Truth about the natural laws of the universe is knowledge. Many wonderful benefits can come from that knowledge. But spiritual truth is wisdom. Knowledge doesn't necessarily change us, wisdom does. Really, it is the other way around; wisdom is how that change becomes evident. In the Buddha-dharma, wisdom is not just seeing with clarity; it is always co-joined with compassion. With wisdom, clarity and compassionate action are one. Knowledge represents what we understand about the world. Wisdom is how that knowledge and understanding changes our relationship to the world.

When we meet a wise person, that individual moves us in some way. He or she is different, and we are attracted to that

difference. Spiritual practice requires a conscious choice on the part of an individual to undertake that change. This is a most important aspect of spiritual practice. Other developmental stages we experience as human beings happen to us. We sit at about six months of age, walk between eleven to thirteen months, begin talking by two years, go through puberty between the ages eleven to fifteen, etc. Wisdom is not something that will just occur. It requires an active participation on our part, one that we must consciously seek.

Consciously undertaking a spiritual practice is making a vow to go beyond knowledge and seek wisdom. Master Hsing Yun says, "A vow is an act of consciousness that alters the nature of the consciousness that makes it."[15] The importance of understanding intention is central to the teachings of the Buddha. A vow or a commitment is one of the purest forms of intention. Just seeking a spiritual practice, or making a commitment to a particular discipline, is a first step toward making significant change in our life.

When the depth of the change required seems daunting, I try to remember what the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra* tells us: "When we shoot an arrow at a target, sometimes we hit it and sometimes we miss it. When we shoot an arrow at the ground, however, we never miss. Committing ourselves to becoming a Buddha is like shooting an arrow at the ground. There is no one who cannot do it."[16] Spiritual practice in the Buddhist sense means taking all the experiences in our life—good times and difficult times—and learning to use each one of them as an instrument of our awakening.

Years ago, I read the following story in a therapy journal. A young man in his early twenties had been in a very serious accident that left him severely and permanently injured. Along with his physical rehabilitation, he received psychotherapy to help with the emotional adjustments he needed to make. In one of the early sessions his therapist asked him to draw a picture of himself as an object. After some time, he drew a beautiful vase with elaborate designs on it, filled with a bouquet of flowers. Then he took a black marker and made a wide, jagged line in the vase, going over and over and over the space of its brokenness. They discussed it at the time, and then the therapist put the drawing in the young man's file. At the end of his therapy, the therapist took out the drawing and asked if he remembered it, and what he thought of it now. He looked at it for a long time. With one finger he gently stroked the thick dark line he had previously made and said, "Oh, the crack, that's where the light came in." Any experience can be the threshold of awakening.

When the first thought of changing arises it is common to strive to become a better person. We see what we don't like in ourselves. We may focus on that and try really hard to be different. That can bring some good results, and many spiritual practices are based on that approach. Spiritual practice in the Buddha-dharma, however, is much more radical and revolutionary than that. The Buddha's understanding is that the whole notion of the "self" that we are trying to perfect *is* the problem; not just our faults and the things we don't particularly like, but our enduring sense of self as a separate, independent, and permanent entity.

Zen Master Dōgen tells us, "Enlightenment does not divide you, just as the moon does not break the water." He is telling us

something that goes to the heart of our task. From the view of ultimate reality (the nondual world), we are not separate in the way that we experience ourselves to be. The moon in Zen literature often symbolizes *Prajna* wisdom. Prajna wisdom is the recognition of emptiness—the nature of existence as impermanence and the arising of phenomena through dependent co-origination.

Master Dōgen continues, "You cannot hinder enlightenment, just as a drop of water does not hinder the moon in the sky." Ultimate reality is not hindered, changed, or reduced by our misunderstanding or our inability to discern it. Enlightenment does not divide us. We divide enlightenment.

Dividing enlightenment—seeing things dualistically—is how we initially make sense of the world. This does not make us inherently bad or evil, it is just how we are. We sort out sensory information so we can relate to the world. This process leads to our dualistic view of reality—subject/object, self/other, pleasure/pain, like/dislike. Being able to do this is totally necessary. If we were unable to sort through all the sensory data we receive, we'd all be staring at a dust mote in a light beam for a couple of eons. It only becomes a great hindrance when we attach to this dualistic view as the complete picture of reality.

The ego function of mind assists in this attachment. Ego is the dynamic that clings to the notion of being real. (In this context "real" means separate and permanent.) The ego performs a useful and important function by holding the continuity of our experience, resulting in the sense of self that we call "I," or "me." The problem arises when we confuse function with existence. Realization of this fundamental misperception, or delusion as it is called in the dharma, is the task of the Buddhist practitioner.

Master Hsing Yun says: "When the Buddha says that sentient beings are "deluded," he means that they accept "false appearances" as being wholly real."[17]

What we are deluded about is the illusion of having an independent and permanent existence. Illusion is defined in any standard dictionary as "a mistaken perception of reality; a false belief; a misconception." To be a real illusion it must be convincing, and it is. This fundamental misperception or illusion is what the dharma calls *ignorance*.

Ignorance is not recognizing impermanence as the nature of reality. The Dalai Lama suggests, "Suffering is nothing but existence enslaved to ignorance."[18] Ironically, this is hopeful. If the problem is that we do not see correctly, it is within our ability to change that. If this were not the case, our situation would truly be hopeless. And it is not even that we see incorrectly, but incompletely.

In Buddhism there are levels of understanding. Our usual way of perceiving the world is called relative truth. Relative truth has its own specific order of natural laws, and we must understand them and operate within their level of truth in our relationship with relative reality. But the Buddha's enlightenment informs us that there is another, more comprehensive truth that leads to a wider view of reality, referred to as ultimate, or absolute reality. Experiencing this other truth releases us from the bondage of the illusion.

Spiritual practice in the Buddhist sense means acquiring this more comprehensive understanding, and meditation is the key activity for doing so. Through the meditation practice we begin to see how our attachment to the illusion of separateness and permanence generates the afflictive emotions of anger and greed.

Anger and greed naturally result from the insecurity that is inherent to the illusion. Buddhism calls anger, greed, and self-delusion the three poisons of mind. All negative mental and emotional states can be traced back to the root ignorance of believing in a separate and permanent self.

The Buddha's teaching does not deny the "sense of self" that we experience within the logic of relative truth. But from the Buddhist view of ultimate reality, it is an illusion. It is essential to understand the distinction between "sense of self" and "no self-nature." Understanding the meaning of no self-nature is liberation from the root ignorance of "self delusion." "In Buddhism it is not liberation *of* the self, but *from* the self."[19] (Italics added.)

If "ignorance" creates the three poisons of greed, anger, and self-delusion, then spiritual practice is learning how to handle poison. We can try to avoid it. That is what we do when we try to "be better," when hating and rejecting certain aspects of ourselves. But that approach keeps us dualistically enmeshed with "self." Please do not misunderstand and take this too far. We can and should make many changes within ourselves that can result in very real and positive changes for our life. But perfecting ourselves as a "project" is not liberation.

Unfortunately for us, it is quite impossible to avoid the three poisons of mind because of the "jolly good" illusion we are under. Mental afflictions (anger, greed, and self-delusion) are part and parcel of our experience. If avoiding poison is not possible, another choice would to be to develop immunity to it. To become immune to it, we have to be able to separate from the notion that the poison is who we are.

The dharma tells us that our true buddha-nature can be compared to a beautiful clear blue sky. (Wow! When have we ever been told that? I like that so much better than the concept of Original Sin.) Our usual experience, infused with the poisons of the fundamental misperception, is likened to clouds that obscure the view, and hamper the recognition of our "clear sky nature." Katagiri Roshi observes:

> In Zen we often compare the thoughts in our heads to clouds in the vast openness of the sky. Clouds come and go, often in fascinating ways. Sometimes black clouds run wild in the sky and heavy storms, even tornadoes, appear. Other times the clouds rise to lofty heights and shine in dazzling brightness. Occasionally our thoughts are so wonderful that they put all the buddhas and bodhisattvas to shame. The sky embraces any kind of cloud and is never carried away by the clouds. So put yourself in the vast openness of the sky. Don't be tossed away by thoughts of enlightenment or delusion. To live our lives fully from moment to moment, we must learn to settle into the vast openness of the sky. This is zazen.[20]

Spiritual practice in Zen is learning to settle into "the vast openness of the sky." It is experiencing the dynamic relationship between the Buddhist and conventional views of reality. When we can do that, we become one drop of water that reflects the whole moon and the entire sky.

Shikantaza / Just Sitting

The Way is not a means to an end; the Way is exactly the same as the end itself.
—Zen Master Dōgen

Once a Zen master was walking on the grounds
of the temple with a student. Hanging from a corner
of the temple roof was a wind chime swaying in the breeze.
The master asked, "What is ringing, the wind or the chime?"
The student replied, "The wind is not ringing, the chime is not ringing, the mind is ringing."
The master asked, "What is the mind?"
The student answered, "Tranquility, imperturbability."
The master was pleased.

The mind is tranquility and imperturbability—can we honestly say that is our experience? In his book, *Returning to Silence*, Katagiri Roshi stated that the purpose of religion is to "offer perfect security to human beings."[21] It was startling to re-read that

recently. Reflecting on it, all my attention became focused on the word "perfect." The purpose of religion is to offer perfect security to human beings. That is a very interesting statement juxtaposed with a teaching that emphasizes impermanence. How are we to find perfect security when the nature of existence is impermanence?

In Soto Zen, we practice what is called *Shikantaza*, or "Just Sitting." The instructions are simple enough. Sit down facing the wall, adjust your posture, keep your eyes open, breath gently through your nose, and be present with everything that arises. We are instructed to, "Just sit." We don't have to practice very long before realizing that the instructions may be simple, but it is not easy to do. The difficulty lies in the word "just" which means: being wholeheartedly one with the activity of sitting. Katagiri Roshi would frequently say, "The practice of zazen is like trying to get a snake into a bamboo tube." Imagine the contortions of a snake if you are holding it at the middle of its body and trying to insert its head into a bamboo tube.

At one retreat where he used this metaphor, someone said to him, "I've seen those bamboo tubes and they are way too small and narrow to get a snake into." Katagiri Roshi answered, "Oh no, the tube is just the right size. Please get in." This person missed the point. The posture of zazen is the bamboo tube. The mind is the snake. When Katagiri Roshi tells us, "The practice of zazen is like trying to get a snake into a bamboo tube," he is pointing out the essential difficulty we encounter in the practice of "just sitting." I have come to understand this difficulty as a habitual resistance to "what is." Ultimately, this resistance to what is separates *samsara* (the world of suffering) from *nirvana* (cessation of suffering).

Shikantaza—just sitting—is also called goalless practice. We have to really want to understand what is meant by "goallessness," not just form some quick judgments, thinking, *This is stupid. This is just a waste of time*. It is this goallessness that we need to approach with curiosity and eventually come to understand. Understanding goalless practice and our ability to just sit are intimately linked. The difficulty with the instruction to "just sit" is that it runs contrary to our usual way of doing things. Ordinarily, our activities are assigned a purpose that we believe makes our actions meaningful.

For the sake of this discussion I'd like to call this way of doing things "striving." Striving occurs when we are engaged in an activity for the purpose of gaining some result or outcome. By that definition it is hard to imagine many activities that do not fall under the category of striving. Striving works the same in small or great endeavors. We may decide to do the dishes now and then relax, or go to school and get a degree in order to work in a particular profession. The purpose and the outcome of our activity is always something to be realized in the future. The future can be a long or short time: it can be the few minutes it takes to do the dishes, or the years needed to get a Ph.D. Whatever the duration, our attention and desire is focused on the future.

The dictionary defines "striving" as: to struggle against. What we struggle against when we are focused on the future is our present circumstance—what is here, now. This struggle can be subtle. Striving is a very slippery business. At times it is almost undetectable because it is so intrinsic to how we do things. If we pay close attention, though, we can begin to observe it and see the enormous influence it casts over our entire life.

We can set a goal, and setting this goal makes us happy in the beginning. It appears to us that it gives our activity meaning. Let's say we intend to save a certain amount of money and take a really nice vacation. That seems harmless enough; in fact, it's absolutely invigorating. What a good idea! And it is, unless we get into a skewed relationship with that goal. Originally, the goal serves us. It makes us happy to save for this trip. We go to the library or bookstore and research exciting places we want to visit. There is nothing wrong with that. It makes going to work very pleasant. It assists us in our desire to save money.

Then what tends to happen is, we begin to desire and wait for that trip. Pretty soon planning the trip alone doesn't keep us happy. But we will be happy when we get to take the trip, or so we think, until the weather isn't perfect or the accommodations aren't all we had imagined. Or perhaps some aspect of our life circumstance changes. We have to spend some unplanned money to repair the car. That puts our saving schedule behind. We decide to take an extra job temporarily and make up the money so we don't have to delay the trip. One of our good friends, whom we haven't seen in two years, is going to meet us there, and the time we've planned to meet is the only time she can go. Taking the extra job leaves us exhausted, frustrated, and irritable. When this happens, the goal is no longer serving us; we are serving it.

I can hear your objections: "But that is how things get done. That is how we accomplish what we want." Yes, it is. And there is nothing wrong with that unless we get into this reversed relationship with the goal. There is nothing wrong with setting and achieving goals. It is our relationship to the goal that counts. Does

the goal serve us, or are we serving it? If the goal serves us, then there is no problem. Once we begin to serve the goal, however, we experience frustration, irritation, and unhappiness. Our life is then defined by striving characterized by dissatisfaction in the present. Our life is dukkha.

In the condition of *dukkha* (dissatisfaction) we cannot experience "perfect security" as human beings. It is possible to turn any well-intentioned endeavor into striving, including spiritual practice. We may think, *I will practice zazen very hard and become enlightened*. Katagiri Roshi states that if this is our attitude "zazen is still considered a means to an end."[22] According to him, zazen is not a means to reach some peak state; "zazen is exactly that we are buddha. … This is a big difference from the usual understanding of zazen. … Zen Master Dōgen emphasized that, the Way is not a means to an end; the Way is exactly the same as the end itself."[23] Practice is awakening to this truth. "If we live our life in this way, there is stability and perfect security."[24]

Zen Master Dōgen taught: "practice is enlightenment." This is the Soto Zen koan. This is what must be realized. And it is realized through the goalless practice of just sitting. Great Masters of the past have all told us that zazen is the "gateless gate" through which they passed to achieve their awakening. Is this just more Zen double talk? "Gateless gate." What does that mean? If we do not understand, there is a gate. When we understand, we recognize there never was a gate. Whether or not there is a gate depends entirely on our understanding. Do you want to understand? Please "just sit."

When we sit down and take the posture of zazen we must make an effort. Effort is definitely required. Making an effort is

very different from striving. In making an effort, we wholeheartedly engage in whatever activity we are doing just for the sake of doing that very activity, without concern for result or gain. "Just sitting," means becoming one with the activity of sitting; just wholeheartedly maintaining this posture for the time we have set aside to practice zazen. It takes great effort to do this, as you well know. It does not happen without our directed intention.

When engaged in the practice of shikantaza, we should not do so to achieve relaxation, to gain insight, or become enlightened. All of that may be the result of zazen but don't become confused by that and strive for it. Once we've slipped into striving, our attention is diverted to the future. This implies lack in our present experience, and then we are not one with the activity of just sitting. I can guarantee that you will never become enlightened in the future. All your moments of awakening will occur in the present.

As I was writing this last segment, I sensed the strong presence of two important Zen teachers in my life, Matsuoka Roshi and Katagiri Roshi. (Both of them, I am sorry to say, are now deceased.) I felt a great deal of mirth and amusement coming from them, which at first was quite disconcerting. It was like they were together having a good laugh, each thinking, *She talks a lot about enlightenment but she doesn't really know what it is*. I told them, "It's OK, I may not know what it is. But I have learned some things about what it isn't." They were reassured and left.

Their brief presence reminded me that the Japanese Soto priests I've known rarely, if ever, mention the "E" word. The only thing I ever heard Matsuoka Roshi say was, "Enlightenment is nothing. Forget about enlightenment." But don't take this to mean that he thought it was unimportant for practitioners to experience

for themselves the truth of the Buddha's understanding. He was always strict and focused his teaching on the heart of goalless practice.

Once someone came to the Zen Center and told Matsuoka Roshi about an extraordinary experience he had at an intensive Zen retreat. It sounded very intriguing to me. I had never experienced anything like this person was describing so I was very curious about what Matsuoka would have to say about it. He listened to the man politely and then said with deadly earnestness, "Don't worry, that will pass shortly." He discouraged people from becoming inflated or attached to any experience no matter how compelling it might momentarily be. "Never leave your cushion," he would instruct. That meant, keep your zazen mind when you get up from meditation.

When we think in terms of enlightenment, it tends to imply that there is one experience that changes everything, and after that moment it is blue skies forever. I'm certain that's not how it works. "Awakening" seems a better term, to me, than "enlightenment." "Enlightenment" implies an event, an occurrence, whereas "Awakening" is a process. The gerund form or use of "ing" indicates something that is ongoing, continuous, occurring in this moment. We can eat; we may have eaten. But when we are eating, it is our present experience. We may intend to sit. We may have just sat for 30 or 40 minutes. But when we are sitting, it is our direct experience.

Awakening is the activity we do moment after moment in the present, by making an effort here and now, not striving to attain something in the future. Striving for enlightenment is like

getting in your car and making your destination the horizon. No matter how long you drive, you never arrive; the horizon is always the same distance away.

Non-striving can be a difficult change to make. It is not easy to stay engaged in an activity with the attitude of just making an effort. Perhaps that is why it is called the practice of zazen—the practice of shikantaza. Non-striving does not mean we avoid setting goals and making plans for our future. We have to do those things. The question is with what attitude will our goals be achieved?

We may see the futility of driving to reach the horizon. But let's say we just need to drive across town and meet a friend for dinner. Even though that is doable, we still have to pay attention to the drive the whole way. We can't be so focused on getting to the restaurant that we aren't paying attention to the road, to stoplights, to the turns we must take to get there. When we make right effort in our driving, we are doing all we can to drive safely for the sake of all by being present and attentive for the whole ride. Because we are attentive we are able to stop the car in time to avoid hitting a child chasing a ball into the street.

In zazen, "making effort" means maintaining the posture. When we are able to maintain the posture by being actively engaged with just sitting, it allows the bamboo tube to settle into being a bamboo tube. The bamboo tube is not concerned about catching a snake. We do not try to control or stop our thoughts. However, in zazen, we are not engaging or getting involved with them either.

Katagiri Roshi said, "You cannot daydream in zazen; you have to sit in zazen physically and mentally. If your body is sitting, but your mind is drifting away, it is not shikantaza."[25] The instruction is: when thoughts arise let them pass. The deeper meaning of this is that we let go of everything that arises—memory, fantasy, sensation, feelings, sounds that we hear, and whatever else presents itself to our awareness. When we are aware that a passing thought has seduced us, we let it go without judgment. Letting go without judgment is an important part of the practice. Judgment is just another thought form. We let it go as quickly as possible. Then we check and adjust our posture and realign with our intention to "just sit."

Now, here's the tricky part. To just sit includes being aware of everything that arises. There can be no resistance to *what is* for the time that we are *just sitting*. And we do this moment after moment, countless times. By doing this, the bamboo tube settles itself into being the bamboo tube and becomes one with the whole universe; that is already the place where the snake resides. The snake of itself will come to rest in the perfect environment of that bamboo tube. Matsuoka Roshi used to say, "Straighten the body and the mind settles itself." When we actually engage in just sitting, we have let go of anxiety, anger, insecurity, prejudice, and judgment, and we begin to savor the sweet flavor of freedom. There is nothing else we have to do. There is no other way we need to be. It's enough to make a grown man or woman weep.

Although we engage in goalless practice, we must pay attention to the actual results of doing so. David Loy explains it most eloquently:

> When I do not attempt to get anything from my zazen, then it can be realized as the complete, lacking-nothing manifestation of "my" buddha-nature. … Done in such a fashion—not seeking or anticipating any effects—zazen in itself gradually transforms my character, and eventually I am able to realize clearly that the true nature of my mind and that of the universe are non-dual. … And since there is no "there," no final resting point, no-seeking mind is "there" at every moment and always has been.[26]

A monk once asked Master Tung-shan, "When the heat of summer and cold of winter arrive, what can we do about it?" Tung-shan answered, "Find the place that is beyond hot or cold." The monk asked, "Where is this place where there is no heat or cold?" Tung-shan said: "When it's hot, be thoroughly hot; when it's cold, be thoroughly cold."

In other words, just hot, just cold, just sad, just happy. How do we do that? By learning to "just sit." When we can just sit, we can "just" anything. If we are seeking the perfect situation free from conditions such as hot or cold, it cannot be found.

We can attempt to create the perfect conditions to support our striving. But even if we create them, the result may not be what we expected. In one of his talks, Jack Kornfield tells an amusing true story. He knew a man who tried to create the perfect circumstance for achieving enlightenment. He worked until he could

afford to create these conditions. He found a small piece of property. He built a tiny hut near a stream. He saved enough money to be able to support himself for a long time. Finally, he quit his job and moved into the hut. Perfect!

After just a short time, though, the sound of the stream started to get on his nerves. Then it began to really irritate him. It interfered with his concentration and meditation, and became the biggest obstruction to his accomplishing the Way. It became such an obstacle that he once spent an entire day rearranging the rocks in the stream in an attempt to get the water to sound different.[27] Now, don't you think that's really crazy?

We do not gain perfect security by striving to control and manipulate conditions. Our freedom comes in the relationship we have to the conditions as they arise. Our life is not our life apart from these conditions. Liberation is not freedom from conditions, but freedom within conditions, and this is accomplished by the attitude we take toward them.

The master asked the student, "What is ringing the wind or the chime?" The student answered, "The wind is not ringing. The chime is not ringing. The mind is ringing." Still, that answer does not satisfy until the Master asks, "What is the mind?" It doesn't satisfy because there is the wind, and there is a chime. When the student answers that the mind is "tranquility, imperturbability," that is a mind that is one with the wind, the chime, and the ringing. There is no separation—no gap. That is why the master is pleased. The student was "just there," walking, talking, hearing the ringing. The mind is tranquility, imperturbability. Where else but within our own minds do we expect to find perfect security as human beings?

One year, Katagiri Roshi enclosed the following poem in a New Year's card:

Peaceful Life

From my human eyes,
I feel it's really impossible to become a Buddha.
But this "I", regarding what the Buddha does,
Vows to practice,
To be resolute,
And tells myself, "Yes, I will."
Just practice right here, now,
And achieve continuity,
Endlessly,
Forever.
This is living in vow.
Herein is one's peaceful life found.

Staying on the Path

Zen practice is one continuous mistake.
—Zen Master Dōgen

Zen Master Hakuin said:

> Cherish the great mantra of your own nature.
> It turns a hot iron ball into finest, sweetest manna.
> Heaven, hell and the world right here on earth,
> A snowflake disappearing into a glowing furnace.[28]

Frequently people ask, "How do you stay committed to the practice? How do you stay on the path? There are so many distractions." This is an important question. Many people speak of their efforts at Zen practice disparagingly. There seems to be an ideal of what they think they should be doing, and then this ideal becomes a harsh judge that always finds them lacking.

As Wallace Stevens said, "The way through the world is more difficult to find than the way beyond it." When we want to be the embodiment of some spiritual ideal, we are really seeking the way beyond it. This can be viewed as a type of "spiritual

bypassing" (Welwood, 2000). We don't want to deal with the messier aspects of our life. We want to jump to some pristine experience where there is no doubt or confusion.

According to psychologist and Buddhist teacher, John Welwood, "spiritual bypassing" can be defined as the tendency to avoid certain aspects of one's self. We judge them as wrong. Then there is an attempt to prematurely transcend those characteristics with the judgment, "I shouldn't be this way." We label a trait "undesirable" and try to override it with spiritual ambition, imagining that will rid us of it. Spiritual bypassing can become a long, slow detour that inevitably leads us back to the necessity of finding our way through the world. Spiritual practice does not make us immune to the developmental process we need to go through to mature.

As human beings we need to find our way not only in the external world but also through our unique and complex interior world. It is easy to become lost in either realm. Buddhist practice is the study of the interior world—and a most powerful world it is. In the *Dhammapada* (v1), the Buddha tells us, "All that we are is the results of our thoughts; it is founded on our thoughts and made up of our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world."[29] What greater power could we want? What greater freedom could we desire?

If we could only direct our energy to understanding the true nature of our own mind, instead of exerting power and needing control over things we perceive to be "out there," the world would be a very different place. In the Buddha's teaching there is no outside authority or creator apart from our own mind. What greater

responsibility is there then to realize the true nature of mind? "With our thoughts we make the world."

Some time ago I had a disturbing dream. It was one of those dreams where you can never accomplish something you are trying hard to do. In the dream, I have to attend a special event and despite all my efforts to get there, I never make it. Along the way, I realize I don't have the right clothes with me, either. It's very upsetting in the dream to realize that I'm so disorganized and unprepared. I keep trying to find a way to attend the event but every action seems to lead me astray. The feeling-tone of the dream becomes more and more distressed.

Eventually I find myself in a huge building where, no matter what door I go through, it literally leads nowhere. There's only empty space. Yet, if I turn around I don't find myself back where I just was. I spend a lot of time in different parts of a series of long hallways. Feeling quite frantic, I finally meet someone in the hall and tell him my dilemma. He tells me, "Just go through that door." I start to relax. *That was easy. All I had to do was ask for help.* I go through the door and find myself in a completely different place, but still not where I think I'm supposed to be…

Now I'm in what appears to be a great hotel lobby. It's a huge room. I can't take it all in but I can tell it's a circular room with vaulted ceilings, very ornately decorated. There are many people in small groups gathered all around. The entire perimeter of the room is made up of doors. I wonder if there's a different door for every person in the room…

At this point I'm so upset that I say to no one in particular, "Where am I? I don't know how I got here." The people closest to

me turn and look at me in a way that tells me that I should not have said that out loud. The dream just goes on and on that way. There's no resolution, no way out, except to wake up. Oh, and waking up was sweet!

We've all had that kind of dream. You wake up and feel enormous relief. *It was just a dream. It wasn't real.* All the attending emotions you experienced in the dream vanish. Where do they go?

Just as a loved one may reach over and touch us gently in the night saying, "Darling, wake up. You're having a bad dream," the Buddha and great masters tell us that there is liberation from the trouble, dissatisfaction, and worry we experience in this "*saha* world," the world of our usual waking existence. It requires another kind of waking up, one where we've learn how to be "a snowflake disappearing in a glowing furnace."

Do you want to wake up? That "want" is finding the path. And as long as we stay connected to that aspiration there is no straying from it, no matter what happens. Spiritual practice is not apart from the world of distractions. When we say, "I'm having trouble staying on the path," we are experiencing our life dualistically, as if our self and our life were two different things. There is me, and then there is life as I think it should be. We put a little gap between our self and our life when we insert the notion of life as we think it should be. We are each our own path. The path is the life we are living and is never separate from it. And on this path everything counts. By that I mean everything can serve as the instrument of awakening.

"Cherish the great mantra of your own nature," instructs Master Hakuin. Cherish, nurture, and protect your desire to awaken. "It turns a hot iron ball into finest, sweetest manna." Manna is defined as spiritual nourishment or something of value that a person receives unexpectedly. The hot iron ball can be seen as those rejected parts of ourself, the parts we'd like to bypass. But if used to awaken they become a gift from an unexpected source—the sweetest manna—of which Master Hakuin says, "One bellyful eliminates hunger till the end of time."[30]

The hot iron ball can only be used for awakening if we have the right relationship to it. To hate and reject it won't transform it into manna. But neither will denying that it's a problem. Can we find true compassion for the weakest, meanest, greediest, angriest aspects of our own nature—the parts we long to bypass? How else will we ever disarm them?

There is a legend about the great Tibetan poet/sage Milarepa. After traveling for many years he longed to return home. When he finally reached his humble hut he entered and found his small abode filled with demons of every imaginable kind. Although they were terrifying, Milarepa did not flinch. He centered his intention on learning what they needed. Looking each one in the eye he said, "You are in my home now. Please tell me what you want me to know."

Having uttered these words, all but five of the demons disappeared. The ones that were left were the scariest and grisliest of them. Again he looked each one in the eye. He bowed and began to sing a lullaby. It was a sweet tune full of caring and understanding for the way these demons had suffered. How could

he help them? As he finished the song, four of them vanished. That left only the worst one of all. This creature was truly incomprehensible. Ugly and malevolent, it had a huge gaping mouth with dripping fangs. Milarepa studied this last one for a long time. The creature, used to instilling fear, became confused as a single tear fell from Milarepa's left eye. The sage whispered softly. The creature had to lean down to be close enough to hear him say, "I'm so sorry for your pain." Then Milarepa did an unbelievable thing. He put his head into the foul dark throat of the creature. In that instant, the demon disappeared (Markova, 2000).

Milarepa did not encounter the demons as enemies. If he had the story would have a different ending. To cherish the great mantra of your own nature is to have no enemies within. Allow your discerning eye to transform hot iron into finest, sweetest manna.

> One morning, Porcupine came to Raven privately and asked, "What is Raven Roshi?"
> Raven said, "I have this urge to prey on newborn lambs."
> Porcupine asked, "How do you deal with it?"
> Raven said, "I'd be disoriented without it."[31]

This is a wonderful little *mondo* from Robert Aitken's book, *Zen Master Raven*. In Zen literature, a *mondo* is the record of an exchange between a Zen master and a student. The student approaches the teacher to ask a question, and the teacher responds. Most often the response doesn't answer the question but provides direction to the student on how to work with it. For the student it can just feel like muddying the water.

Here we have our student Porcupine asking her teacher, "What is Raven Roshi?" That in itself is very interesting. The question is not, "Who is Raven Roshi?" In an ordinary exchange we ask, "Who is that?" or "Who are you?" We don't generally ask, "What are you?" For Porcupine to ask, "Who is Raven Roshi?" is to invite all sorts of attachments to personality or ideas that Raven may have of himself. "What is Raven Roshi," is a much more direct inquiry into the true nature of Raven. Also implied in the question is, "What is a Zen Master?" How is Raven different from Porcupine, apart from the obvious?

Raven answers, "I have this urge to prey on newborn lambs." No spiritual bypassing for him. He knows what lurks beneath dark feathers. And because he does, he has an urge to prey on newborn lambs instead of the urge having him. Porcupine asks, "How do you deal with it?" Raven answers, "I'd be disoriented without it." A Zen master is not afraid of his own nature. He can stick his head into the mouth of any urge.

> On another day, Porcupine came by looking troubled. Raven called down to her from the tall spruce.
>
> "What's up, Porcupine?"
>
> Porcupine said, "I'm hearing rumors from my old friends that Coyote Roshi is violating even ordinary morality."
>
> Raven flew down to her side and said, "She has this urge to prey on newborn lambs."
>
> Porcupine said, "You said that you have that same urge. Is it that you don't follow through?"
>
> Raven said, "I am following through at this moment."

> Porcupine asked, "How is talking to me following through with your urge to eat baby lambs?"
> Raven said, "Use the urge."[32]

"Use the urge," does not mean act on the urge nor to deny it. It means being fully present and aware of the urge to the completion of the urge. It means melting it through the beacon of your impartial attention. Zen Master Raven does not identify himself as the snowflake of an urge. He's become one with the glowing furnace. Through his refined attention, he experiences the urge and melts it like a snowflake in a glowing furnace.

A snowflake in a glowing furnace is a common Zen metaphor. It is a depiction of emptiness. Snowflakes are all the myriad things of the phenomenal world. Snowflakes are our encounter with relative reality—the world of people, trees, houses, or cats and our emotional responses to them, whether it is love, hate, kindness or indifference. The glowing furnace is absolute reality—the deepest and purest understanding of emptiness.

Katagiri Roshi said:

> The world as we usually experience it is filled with trouble, suffering and pain. Through ignorance we constantly create the three poisons of the mind, anger, greed, and self-delusion. We refuse to let our emotions and experiences melt away. We put our snowflake in the freezer, and then we keep checking on it to see how it is doing. To find the way through the world means to live free of these poisons. The person who experiences such freedom is like a snowflake in a red-hot furnace. Each action melts away in the next moment.[33]

How do we go about understanding this? What exactly is this freezer that keeps our snowflakes from melting and keeps us from finding our way through the world? I've been giving that question a lot of thought, and have begun to understand that the problem is that we confuse judgment and opinion with discernment. If you look up the words "judgment" and "discernment" in the dictionary, they are defined in an equivalent manner for the first couple of definitions. Under "judgment" you will find, to determine or declare after careful consideration as in, "she showed good judgment in that decision." "Discernment" is defined as the process of exhibiting good judgment. If you read the entire selection of definitions though, you can begin to glean a slight difference that I think is the source of the confusion. Under "judgment," you will find, *the act or process of judging*; *the formation of an opinion*; and most importantly, *the assertion of something believed*. Under "discernment," we find, *to differentiate, to see*. I am proposing for your consideration that there can be a great difference in our experience between *the assertion of something believed* and *to see*.

Our judging as defined in this last way—*the assertion of something believed*—follows our *seeing*, and is the freezer in which we store our snowflakes. Judgment follows seeing so quickly that we become confused and take our judgment *for* seeing. An example may clarify this more fully.

Let's say that we have not been completely open or honest in a transaction with another individual. Later we may have some regret or remorse over our action. Recognizing our discomfort is paying attention. We are "seeing" the results of our actions.

Almost instantaneously, upon that seeing, a judgment will arise about "what" we see. This takes the form of thoughts like, *You know, I'm just a liar. I'm really bad.* This judgment now becomes the focus of our attention. We squirm under its harshness and then we're off chasing a rabbit down a hole. We get busy defending ourselves against an *assertion of something believed*. That becomes really hard to do because there's no room to move under our instant label or judgment. It's such a definitive conclusion! We can check on that snowflake forever, and it never melts as long as we believe it.

But what if, at the first knowledge that the transaction left us feeling uncomfortable we reflected on it without that judgment? What action might we be free to take? It is unlimited because it then becomes just what it is—a situation we need to respond to.

There is a story about the late contemporary Korean Zen Master, Seung Sahn founder of the Kwan Um School. Once after a public talk a man asked him, "What is the difference between you and me?" Like Porcupine asking Raven, "What is Raven Roshi?" the man was asking, "What is a Zen Master?" Master Seung Sahn answered, "I correct my mistakes faster."

What if, in order to really wake up, you had let go of your self-hatred? Could you do it? Giving up self-hatred doesn't mean putting on blinders and thinking everything we do is OK. I'm not saying that. There are always things we could do better. So just do them! Resolve not to make that mistake again. Zen Master Dōgen said, "Zen practice is one continuous mistake."[34] In other words, "[Life] is one continuous mistake."

"Discernment" or "seeing," as I'd like to define it here, is neutral, impartial knowing even in the face of feeling discomfort about our own behavior. That is possible to do only if we do not complicate matters by imposing judgment. How do you separate discernment from judgment once judgments arise? That's the real question because there seems to be nothing quite so addicting as our own opinions.

If we see first and then formulate a judgment, we can ask ourselves, "What did I know before I felt this way? What did I see just before getting angry? What was I experiencing before behaving that way?" Keep pulling it back until there is no doubt or confusion about what you know. When there is no judgment, it will feel neutral in a way that leaves you feeling strong and alive. When it's neutral, you've stuck your head into the mouth of it and it disappears. Of course, it isn't as easy as it sounds. That is why the practice of zazen is so important. Through zazen we gain experience with the talent of impartial knowing, discernment, seeing without judgment.

We can practice "seeing" on and off the cushion. Notice everything you can about a situation. Stay impartial to what you see for as long as possible. When opinions and strong feelings do arise, treat them as just another aspect of the whole landscape. They become powerful only when we attach to them by believing in them. Put all your energy into staying with your impartial attention, and do not become distracted by a desire to control what you see.

Impartial attention means being informed by our emotional reactions without being overwhelmed by them. This is not the

same as being passive or non-responsive to a situation. When we carry heavy judgments about ourselves or project other judgments onto the world we create the gap that separates us from life, *as it is*—"the glowing furnace of emptiness."

After having the dream I told you about, it occurred to me sometime later that in a way the dream was a better understanding of reality than my usual "waking" understanding of it. In the dream I'm busy trying to go somewhere, to accomplish something I think is important to do. Wherever I am doesn't feel like where I'm supposed to be. Does that sound familiar? And like "waking" reality, when I try to go back to where I've just been, I can't do that, either.

In the dream, I end up in a palatial hotel lobby. Why a hotel, of all places? Could it be because a hotel is just a temporary residence, a not-so-subtle reminder of impermanence? And we are all milling around in a huge lobby. There are no separate rooms in this hotel. Every door I go through until I get to the lobby is a door that doesn't lead anywhere … interdependence perhaps?

Isn't the unconscious clever? It also seems, at times, to have unlimited patience. Must it not wonder, "When will she ever get it?" The grand lobby seems obviously symbolic of the whole luxurious universe that supports my life. Instead of saying to others, "Wow! Just look at where we are!" my response to it is, "Where am I? I don't know how I got here." It's pitiful, really. Hmmm, was that seeing or judgment? Tricky, isn't it?

We have to pay very close attention. In fact, paying close attention is what practice is really about. Perhaps the only way to stray from the path is to stop paying attention. But once we find

the path, life moves too quickly for us to stay distracted for too long, because that's when we end up in a red-hot furnace without having learned how to melt like a snowflake. Katagiri Roshi said, "It is difficult for us to become a snowflake in a red-hot furnace. But to do this is very important. We must do this because even though we don't understand emptiness, we cannot ignore it. It is where we actually live."[35]

"Heaven, hell and the world right here on earth." There's no straying from the path no matter where we find ourselves, no matter what happens. There's no way out, except to wake up.

Taking Refuge in the Triple Treasure

The whole-heartedness described here is not the
whole-heartedness discussed by the common man.
It is the whole-hearted state of meeting buddha.
—Zen Master Dōgen

Within Buddhist practice there is something known as the Triple Treasure. The three treasures are composed of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Buddha, of course, refers to the historical personage of Siddhartha Gautama, who lived around 500 B.C.E. When we take refuge in the Buddha we are accepting the Buddha Shakyamuni as our teacher. Dharma refers to the teachings of the Buddha, which are based on his insight and skillful means for teaching beings how to be free from suffering. The understanding of Dharma can also be expanded to include any experiences we have that assist us in awakening (Hsing Yun, 2000). Sangha is defined as the community of Buddhist practitioners.

Taking refuge in the Triple Treasure is an integral part of our commitment to study and practice of the Buddha Way.

When we first encounter the Buddha's teaching we may be drawn to it out of necessity, or from curiosity, or for a variety of other reasons. In any case, if we persevere with our inquiry, we learn that we can rely on the Buddha to tell us the truth about the nature of existence. We come to experience the truth of his teachings directly in our own life. This acts as great encouragement for us to continue our practice, which in turn deepens our understanding. There is a natural rhythm to practice, insight, and transformation that has no limit as long as we approach the Dharma sincerely.

In the Soto Zen lay and priest ordination ceremony, the ordainee is asked, "Do you vow to practice and uphold the precepts even after acquiring Buddhahood?" This vow indicates that even after achieving Buddhahood our practice and effort are still required. Enlightenment will not mean the elimination of delusion, but the ability to see beyond it.

The Buddha's path assists us in negotiating our way right in the middle of the turmoil of our lives. It is a path that teaches the wisdom required for living harmoniously in the world. After sufficient inquiry, there may come a time when a practitioner accepts the Buddha's teaching as his or her path. Accepting it as one's path means the Buddha-dharma has become the lens through which life is viewed, and through which problems are resolved. That is when we begin to take refuge in the Triple Treasure.

Taking refuge can be an internal understanding or a formal public acknowledgment of this acceptance. For the formal acknowledgment there is a service, a ritual. While writing this I imagine people bracing themselves at the mention of the "r" word.

The vociferous resistance toward ritual always surprises me, when ritual, properly undertaken, is the vehicle for profound transformation. It can be the real medicine for what ails us: our existential dis-ease. As author Leslie Marmon Silko writes, "The only cure I know is a good ceremony ..."[36]

The ceremony for Taking Refuge is an ancient practice done since the time of the Buddha. All schools of Buddhism have some formal manner for taking refuge. Within the Soto Zen tradition the ceremony consists of three parts. It begins with the recitation of Formless Repentance, followed by verses for Taking Refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and ends with the Bodhisattva Vows. The Formless Repentance states:

> All the karma ever created by me,
> Since of old through greed, anger, and self-delusion,
> Which has no beginning born of my body, speech,
> and thought,
> I now fully avow.

Katagiri Roshi had this to say about repentance:

> In Buddhism, repentance does not mean to apologize for an error or a mistake. The ritual of repentance is not to ask forgiveness from someone for what one has done. … Repentance in Buddhism is to lead us to be present right in the middle of peace and harmony. It is the perfect openness of our hearts that allows us to hear the voice of the universe beyond the irritation of our consciousness. Repentance, itself, makes our life peaceful.[37]

For myself, I find a requisite beauty in the Formless Repentance and in Katagiri Roshi's commentary. I am always moved by his statement, "It is the perfect openness of our hearts that allows us to hear the voice of the universe beyond the irritation of our consciousness." What is the voice of the universe beyond the irritation of our consciousness? We can travel a good distance down our spiritual path with a question like that.

Our usual way of experiencing the world enhances our natural tendency to see things as "other" and "outside" of ourselves. We are experts at separating, dissecting, and analyzing. Scientific and technical progress is based on that ability. Within scientific investigation we can all share in the knowledge and discovery of others. We don't each have to invent the wheel. But the inner science of Buddhism is different in this regard. The Buddha's enlightenment is his. We can't share in it, other than to be encouraged that the possibility of enlightenment exists. Sorry to say, I can't do it for you. Even sorrier to say, you can't do it for me. But that is not how spiritual practice works. We each have to tread our path alone.

Refuge is defined in Webster's Expanded Dictionary as: 1. The state of being protected. 2. A place providing protection; a haven, sanctuary, or shelter. But can we contemplate what refuge truly means without including the person who seeks protection, sanctuary, or shelter? That question brings to mind a line from a Leonard Cohen song, *Every heart to love will come, but like a refugee*.[38] It may just be poetic license and Cohen's ability to turn a phrase, but how it ends—with the word refugee—seems poignant. It leaves one with a visceral resonance with existence as

a "refugee." It is the heart that must do the work and come to love. Experiencing existence as a refugee is something I think the Buddha understood well. The place providing protection, and the state of being protected comprise the Buddha's entire teaching. Buddha said, "I teach only one thing, I teach dukkha and the cessation of dukkha." He taught the nature of suffering and the cessation of suffering. What greater refuge could be offered?

The Buddha's first teaching encompasses the Four Noble Truths. Simply stated the Four Noble Truths are the truth that life is dukkha (that suffering or dissatisfaction arises); the truth about the cause of dukkha (desire and grasping); the truth that there can be an end to dukkha (nirvana); and the truth that leads to the end of dukkha (the Eightfold Path).

The Buddha's teaching of the Four Noble Truths is elegant. He first defines the problem as "life is suffering." He then tells us that the cause of our suffering is the habitual desire for the world to be other than how it is. Next he tells us that there can be an end to suffering. And finally he outlines the path for ending suffering.

Many people do not like to hear that "life is suffering." They judge the Buddha-dharma as pessimistic, and this can present a danger to those who first encounter the Buddha's teaching. But, as Walpola Rahula states in *What the Buddha Taught*, "Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. If anything it is realistic. ... It tells you exactly what you are and what the world around you is, and shows you the way to perfect freedom, peace, tranquility, and happiness."[39]

Buddhist practice is a thorough examination into the nature of dukkha—the nature and causes of suffering. The study of

dukkha must expand to the subtlest levels and penetrate to the deepest strata of our being. We are like fish trying to understand water; dukkha is our water.

Dukkha can be studied from three aspects—dukkha as ordinary suffering, dukkha as impermanence, and dukkha as conditioned states.

Dukkha as ordinary suffering refers to what we all would agree is pain. If we get a toothache, it hurts. We can do something about it. We can take two aspirin and call a dentist, but we don't have the choice of not experiencing the pain. It arises beyond our control. The first aspect of dukkha as ordinary suffering is:

> …[B]irth, old age, sickness, death, association with unpleasant persons or conditions, separation from loved ones and pleasant conditions, not getting what one desires, grief and all such forms of physical and mental suffering, which are universally accepted as suffering or pain, are included in dukkha as ordinary suffering.[40]

The Buddha understood that dukkha is not all there is to life. He did not deny there is happiness. But he recognized that when happy circumstances change, suffering arises. The second aspect of dukkha is impermanence.

Through the study of dukkha as impermanence we can gain an understanding of the doctrine of *anatta*, the Buddha's teaching of "no self-nature" or "selflessness." Buddha taught that in order for a thing to be said to have a self it must be permanent and unchanging. Dukkha as impermanence addresses the insubstantiality of the ultimate nature of all things. In the dharma,

insubstantiality, the truth that everything changes and nothing exists in and of itself, is called emptiness. We will come back to this aspect of dukkha as impermanence because it is the interplay between dukkha as impermanence (emptiness) and dukkha as conditioned states that is the source of confusion and the chief obstacle to freeing oneself from suffering.

The third aspect of dukkha is dukkha as conditioned states. Conditioned states are complex and difficult to discuss or reduce to a few key paragraphs. To begin with, we need to understand that for the most part, those attributes we identify as our "self" ("that's just how I am") are the result of conditioned states. "Self" is our identification with conceptions, memory, feelings, habits, and lessons we have come to think of as "me." It is the product of the capacity of consciousness we call ego.

Many spiritual practices demean the ego, but ultimately there is no benefit in demonizing the ego, which plays an essential role in our development. We need the managerial, functional aspect of ego to learn how to navigate in the world. Our ego provides the filter through which we make sense of the enormous amount of sensory data we take in from the world. So it performs a crucial function, and I use the word function deliberately. Because the ego does its job so well, it provides us with a sense of continuity of experience. Unfortunately, we identify with this continuity of experience as "me"—making it a "thing" and then assign it permanent resident status. This is the self-delusion referred to in the Formless Repentance—All the karma ever created by me, since of old through greed, anger, and self-delusion.

The Formless Repentance also speaks of greed and anger. I have often wondered why the dharma doesn't talk more about fear. Fear is what must be understood. If you investigate greed thoroughly, I think you will find that underlying it, there is fear. The same holds true for anger. Once you are satisfied that is the case, undertake the study of fear and see its relationship to self-delusion—the attachment to the idea of a permanent self. Therein lies our inherent problem: the more we identify with the function and process of ego as a "thing," the more insecure and anxious we become, and the more extreme measures we will endure to bolster "it." In the end the effort will exhaust us; it cannot be successful because ego is not real in the way in which we attach to it.

On a deeper level, we all suspect this "sense of self" is insubstantial. We experience this realization as a pernicious lack in ourselves, which leads to insecurity, anxiety, shame, and a whole host of other afflictive emotions. No amount of so-called success in the external world seems to satisfy this tenacious sense of lack. Our belief that the continuity of experience afforded us by the functioning of the ego is the same as a permanent self is the cause of our experience of existence as "refugee." And at the same time is what we seek refuge from.

Zen Monk Mu Soeng writes,

> The Buddha's diagnosis of the causes of dukkha are (essentially) of a relational quality. …The existentially painful human condition, in the Buddha's observation, is a case of misperception on the part of the perceiver. … The cure then is to find the corrective lens through which to perceive the world without distortion…and has (everything

> to do) with the relational quality one establishes with things that are impermanent and insubstantial.[41]

The misperception Mu Soeng talks about is the fundamental issue of Buddhist practice. Seeing through this illusion is the task of the practitioner, and the tools for the task are meditation and study. The Buddha's path enables us to see and relate to reality in a different way. Here, I feel the need to stress that this misperception is an innocent mistake: there is no blame in it. We can't help but make this mistake; it is how we initially see the world. Without it we wouldn't know our own experience.

What is the solution to the misperception? What is the "corrective lens"? Again, it lies in learning to see the world without distortion. Recognizing the misperception requires seeing beyond the limitations of the dualistic mind (where ego resides) without minimizing the necessary role the ego plays in our interactions with the relative world. Paradoxically, having a healthy "sense of self," a mature relationship to the ego function of mind is a prerequisite for recognizing "no self-nature."

Meditation allows us to see past or through the trappings of dualism and introduces us to the nondual or wisdom mind, which in Buddhism is called our true nature. The irony is that we are never apart from our true nature. We suffer only from the illusion of separation that is the result of the misperception. The illusion of separation is our exile and the cause of our status as "refugee."

Part of the difficulty is that, because of the misperception of self, we misperceive the problem.

What if, instead of the feeling that somehow we are not enough, we are sensing our wisdom mind alerting us to the fact that how we are seeing and interpreting the world is incomplete? What if it is a calling from our true nature that we need to recognize the greater seamless reality of which we are a part?

Seeing it in that light could change everything, because then we could stand in a different relationship to the problem. Our understanding that there *is* something more that is needed becomes our greatest ally. But it is not that we have to *be* something more but that we have to *realize* something more. Coming to this understanding does not occur without our courageous participation.

Remember the story *The Emperor's New Clothes*? Some con men come to town and pretend to sew clothes out of exceptionally fine cloth. Only the purest and most intelligent people, they say, can see these beautiful garments. No one will admit they don't see anything. The emperor is fitted numerous times for a "special" outfit to wear in a festival parade. The day of the festival arrives and the emperor rides in the parade wearing only his underwear. It takes a child to expose the scam when she innocently asks, "Why isn't the emperor wearing any clothes?"

Our relationship to "self" in many ways is a reversal of the Emperor's story. The clothes are here; there just isn't an emperor! The clothes we wear are the various roles we need to play to take care of our life. Now, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, wrong with playing our roles; this is required of us as human beings. Instead, it is our relationship to the role that makes the difference. When the personality of the individual needs the role to bolster a

sense of inadequacy, there will always be a problem. If we consciously take on necessary roles as the correct way to respond to the conditions of our lives, without identifying with the role as "me" then we begin to "be." Me-ing is life trapped in self-delusion. Be-ing is living in harmony with our true nature.

Let us say that we know a person who is a professional clown. This person is very good at what she does. Everyone thinks she's exceptionally funny and can see why she makes a good living at clowning. Now what would you think if I told you that when she goes home at the end of the day she doesn't take off her clown costume? She doesn't wash off the make-up, or take off the crazy hat with the feather, or her oversized clown shoes. That would seem strange, wouldn't it? We'd think to ourselves, What is she doing? Doesn't she know she's not really a clown?

Sometime ago a friend gave me a tape of a dharma talk by the Zen teacher Adyashanti. During his talk he described a cartoon one of his students gave him—a drawing of a clown sitting on a rock near a pond. The image of the clown is not reflected in the water of the pond. What the clown would see, if he or she looked in the water, is the image of a Buddha. Adyashanti goes on to point out that, if you turn the cartoon around, what the Buddha sees when he or she looks into the pond, is the image of a clown. Such is the nature of the relationship between self and selflessness; they are inseparable. But there is a world of difference between a Buddha who takes on the role of a clown, and a clown who doesn't yet know he or she is Buddha.

There is another Zen story that illustrates our confusion about roles. A Zen master traveling in his work clothes stops at a

home to ask for a drink of water. He's kicked off the premises as a beggar. Weeks later the same master is invited to that very house for dinner. He wears his best robes and is treated with great deference. Just as everyone is preparing to eat dinner, the master stands up and starts removing his outer robes. The host protests, "What are you doing?" The master responds, "Not long ago I stopped at your home and asked for a drink of water. I was rudely treated, my request ignored. Today I am an honored guest. It is obvious to me you invited my robes to dinner."

The consequence of our belief in a permanent and independent self is not only an internal error. It is much more complicated than that, because our belief is then projected onto the world, with results you can see for yourself.

An individual who is not confused by the roles she and others need to play is called in Zen a "person of no rank." A person of no rank does not lose her personality, or sense of individuality, or even her quirkiness. In fact, a person of no rank often tends to be quite the character. Ironically, we find ourselves attracted to such individuals because they know how to truly be themselves. They seem able to dance at the juncture of relative truth (the sense of self) and absolute truth (selflessness). They have seen through self-delusion, thereby gaining the world. Gaining the world means being released from the illusion of our separateness—the end of our exile.

Wholeheartedly participating in the Refuge Ceremony can build a foundation for liberation. The repetition of the verses, and the formal bowing that are part of the ceremony, become gestures of receptivity: we are open to the truth that is greater than our

opinion. This receptivity is "the perfect openness of our hearts" that Katagiri Roshi is speaking of. The truth that is greater than our opinion is "the voice of the universe beyond the irritation of our consciousness."

The verses for taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are written from the perspective of the awakened mind. When we participate in the Refuge Ceremony we place ourselves in the position of seeing the reflection as Buddha.

I take refuge in the Buddha,
Vowing with all beings,
Acquiring the Great Way,
Awakening the unsurpassable mind.

Taking refuge in the Buddha is allowing oneself to be encouraged by the exemplary life of Shakyamuni Buddha. Simultaneously we are taking refuge in and finding connection with our own buddha nature. Through our wholehearted participation the unsurpassable mind penetrates through the illusion of "self." Awakening the unsurpassable mind IS acquiring the Great Way.

I take refuge in the Dharma,
Vowing with all beings,
Deeply entering the teaching
Wisdom like the sea.

Taking refuge in the Dharma reaffirms our intention to deeply study the wisdom of Buddha's teaching. We gain trust and confidence in our spiritual insight. Like a vast and unfathomable sea, this is not a static knowing but a vibrant, flowing wisdom that

with time acts as an internal compass anchoring our responses to the path of liberation.

> I take refuge in the Sangha,
> Vowing with all beings
> Bringing harmony to all
> Completely without hindrance.

In the *Dhammapada* (v376), the Buddha tells us, "The seeker should try to find good friends along the path and learn to put an end to sorrows."[42] From the previous discussion, we see that "sorrows" (dukkha) arise from our misperception (incomplete view) of reality. Connecting with the Sangha has the capacity to act as a mirror for our aspiration to awaken beyond the misperception. It can be difficult from the perspective of relative truth to maintain the intention to penetrate the deepest aspects of human life. Spending time with others engaged in their own efforts to understand provides great support to our practice.

At the start of many intensive retreats, Katagiri Roshi would frequently say that we were sharing "the rare opportunity of religious freedom," a precious commodity scarcely available in the history of the world, down to the present time. It is not something one should ever take for granted.

So we practice taking refuge in the community of Buddhist practitioners. However, that is only the beginning. Each verse of the Refuge Ceremony contains the phrase, "with all beings." Through practice we are immersed in the understanding of our interdependence.

The deepening perspective of the intimate relationship of all beings in the universe (a view supported by quantum physics) eventually redefines Sangha to include all beings. Correspondingly, our behavior is modified to match the understanding that any action affects everything. "Bringing harmony to all completely without hindrance," is the behavior that results from that recognition.

The Refuge Ceremony closes with the recitation of the Bodhisattva Vows:

Sentient beings are numberless;
I vow to save them.
Desires are inexhaustible;
I vow to put an end to them.
The dharmas are boundless;
I vow to master them.
The Buddha's Way is unsurpassable;
I vow to attain it.

The Bodhisattva vows are beautiful, yet daunting and seemingly impossible. Reciting them frequently reminds me of a statement by the English sculptor Henry Moore (1898-1986). When Moore was asked, in his later years, if he had a secret to life, he replied, "The secret to life is to have a task, something you devote your entire life to, something you bring everything to, every minute of the day for your whole life. And the most important thing is, it must be something you cannot possibly do."[43]

Many vows are recited during the Refuge Ceremony. Each one is an intention held consciously in mind and becomes a mirror reflecting our relationship with the world. We cannot wait for

enlightenment to achieve mastery of these vows. We fulfill them through our wholehearted commitment honoring them moment by moment, through the countless and seemingly insignificant choices we make day after day. Master Dōgen says, "[This] whole-heartedness is not the whole-heartedness discussed by the common man. … It is the whole-hearted state of meeting buddha."[44]

Nonattachment / Vehicle of the Way

If you want to attain suchness
you should practice suchness without delay.
—Zen Master Dōgen

In Southeast Asia they have a unique way of catching monkeys. People take a coconut and drill a small hole into it. A sweetened piece of coconut meat is then inserted. The monkey smells the sweet coconut and puts a hand through the hole to get it. But the hole isn't large enough to allow the monkey to retrieve its fist, when clutching the coconut. That's it, that's the entire trap. All the monkey needs to do to get free is let go of the coconut and pull its hand out. But it doesn't let go.

It's true we don't know how many monkeys have decided to let go because they're not there when the traps are checked. But when there is a monkey attached to a coconut, we know it desires what it wants more than it values its freedom. Anyway, I hear they're very successful in catching monkeys this way. It's an interesting story, and more than mildly distressing on several levels. In addition to being a fact in itself—that this is how monkeys are

caught—the story serves as a compelling metaphor for attachment. Once viewed from this perspective, it's not much of a leap to ask oneself, "In what ways do I trap myself by the inability to let go?"

Buddhist practice can be seen as the process of ever deepening our understanding of what is meant in the Dharma by nonattachment. In the Diamond Sutra the Buddha tells his disciple Subhuti, "A bodhisattva should give rise to a mind that is not based on anything."[45] Commenting on this line Zen Master Hsing Yun said, "Enlightenment is full realization of the truth contained in this line, while delusion is nothing more than an endless misunderstanding of it."[46] That, I think, speaks to the importance of correctly understanding nonattachment as the heart of Buddha's teaching.

Traps take on many designs. In the monkey realm, a trap comes in the form of a craving for coconuts. In the human realm, the trap of attachment is multilayered, from the obvious to the extremely subtle. There is attachment to material possessions and things we may want from the external world. That is perhaps the easiest level to recognize and work with. A more difficult level is our attachment to ideas, beliefs, and opinions. It is pretty easy to spot when someone else is invested in his or her opinion. But our own opinions feel more like the truth than just an opinion. The subtlest and most difficult level of attachment is our enduring sense of self as an independent and permanent entity.

Recently, I was in line at a bookstore behind a woman with a young child. This little girl wasn't talking yet, but she was old enough to understand what was said to her. She was holding a soft toy animal. Her mother was explaining that she needed to give it to the cashier to be paid for and that she would get it right back. She

wasn't convinced. The mother gently took it out of the child's hand and gave it to the cashier. The ensuing racket was truly startling. The little one was utterly broken-hearted to be separated from the object of her desire. I thought to myself, *So young and already she suffers so well*.

What happens to our mood when we don't get what we want? Who are we when things don't go the way we think they should? How do we work with the inevitable negative mental and emotional states that accompany our entanglement with attachments? It's easy to recognize attachment because it is always accompanied by a negative mental or emotional state—worry, irritation, anxiety, anger, jealousy, hatred—to name just a few possibilities. Learning to work with these states is the key to our freedom. It is how we take our hand out of the coconut. In the *Dhammapada* (v33, v34, v35, v42 and v43), the Buddha tells us this about the mind:

> As the bowman makes straight his arrows, so the wise man [or woman] straightens his [her] unsteady mind. This mind is like a fish out of water that thrashes and throws itself about, when thoughts try to shake off their cravings. … How good it is to control it and know the happiness of freedom. … Whatever an enemy may do, he cannot harm you as much as your own wrongly directed thoughts. But once you understand, no one—neither your father nor mother—can do as much good for you as your own well-directed thoughts.[47]

When the Buddha tells us how good it is to control the mind that "thrashes itself like a fish out of water," he is talking about our usual state of mind, the mind that is never satisfied. First it wants this, and then it wants that. This is the mind that has an opinion about everything. Taking control of this mind does not mean imposing rigid restrictions on oneself. Taking control does not come from negative self-judgments once we recognize the dubious condition of our usual mental state. It means observing and becoming aware of the *process* of the mind, instead of being caught up in the *content* of the mind.

In the first of the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha tells us, "Life is dukkha." Dukkha is translated as dissatisfaction and suffering. "Life is suffering." The doctrine of the Four Noble Truths was the Buddha's first teaching. It is also one of the first things we learn in our initial encounter with the Dharma. I remember the first time I read the statement, "Life is suffering," I thought, *Finally, someone who will tell me the truth. I wonder what else this Buddha person has to say*. The next thing the Buddha tells us in the Second Noble Truth is, "Suffering is caused by desire." It didn't take too much reflection to see how that was true. But I also noticed, when I paid attention, that the stream of desire seemed to be never-ending. Desire occurs whenever we want something to be different from what it is.

One day early in my practice, I asked my first Zen teacher, Matsuoka Roshi, "Does the human heart ever stop desiring?" He answered, "No, the human heart is the human heart." That answer surprised me. I expected him to say, "Of course." Being reassured that we could end desire I would then double, triple, and quadruple

my efforts, whatever it took to accomplish that. So I asked him what I thought was the next logical question. "Well, if the human heart never stops desiring and desire is the source of suffering, then how do we cease suffering, which the Buddha tells us we can do?" Roshi answered, "Through the practice of zazen you will learn to suffer in another way." I wasn't happy with that answer. I tried to pursue the conversation but all he said was, "More tea, Barbara?"

This mondo (the exchange between a student and a teacher) became my first real practice koan. You see, I went to him with a question and I thought I knew how he would answer it. But his answer only left me with a different question. What did it mean to learn to suffer in another way? The first lesson I learned working with that koan was that it is infinitely better in Zen practice to have a good question than to have what you think is an answer. Cherish the questions that drive you to seek. Learning to suffer in another way means learning nonattachment even to our own suffering.

It is easy to confuse nonattachment with cold indifference, being uninvolved, or distancing ourselves from our feelings. That is not a correct understanding of nonattachment. Nonattachment is not synonymous with detachment. Detachment is the state of separating from, disconnecting, being aloof, or standing apart. Proper understanding of nonattachment is really the opposite of detachment. It is a radical acceptance of the circumstances of our life before our opinions arise. Katagiri Roshi called it: "Knowing the world before you measure it."[48]

One day, a Zen Master was outside with two young monks. In the courtyard there were two trees. One tree was dry and

bare; the other was full-leafed and very green. The Master decided to test the monks. He turned to one and asked, "Do you see the two trees over there? One is leafless and one has leaves. Which do you think is better?" The monk replied, "The one with leaves, of course." He then asked the second monk what he thought. The second monk knew it was some sort of test, and he didn't want to give what he thought was the usual answer. He responded, "I think the dry one is better." At that moment a senior monk was passing by. The Master called him over and asked him which tree he thought was better. He answered, "The dry one has to live with its dryness and the leafy one has to live with its leaves, and that is all" (Yun, 2001).

The first two monks answered with minds cluttered with opinions—attachment to preferences. The third monk answered from nonattachment. When we hear the third monk's answer it's easy to see the difference. The third monk had no opinion about the condition of either tree. The key to the third monk's answer is: "that is all."

I think that is why Zen literature can appear so arcane at times. We read it and think, what are we supposed to understand about this story? That's just a statement of the obvious. But how often are we able to understand the obvious before our opinions intrude? That is what Katagiri Roshi meant by, "Know the world before you measure it." What is the truth of a situation before we get swept away by whether we like it or not? Does thinking the bare or the leafy tree is better change reality for either tree, or for us?

It can be very useful to study just how much we "measure the world." Try dedicating an hour a day for a week to noticing how often judgment arises. Anytime you are experiencing something negative, pay more attention to what you are thinking than to how you feel. That in itself can be difficult, and a lesson in nonattachment. Nonattachment does not mean repressing feelings. It means acknowledging what they are without being taken over by them. One might ask, "What am I telling myself about this situation?" "What judgment do I have about it?" "How does this judgment influence my experience?" Once the answer to any of those questions presents itself, ask: "Just for this moment can I let go of needing it to be different?" The key here is in "needing" something to be other than how it is in this moment. Or ask yourself: "What is more important to me right now, my opinion or my freedom?" Can you let go of that piece of coconut?

Letting go of our judgment about a given situation does not mean we can't or shouldn't take action. We constantly need to make decisions. That is our responsibility as human beings. In order to arrive at a decision, we must decide what we think is the best course of action. Opinions in themselves are not the problem. It is the attachment to our opinion that creates the difficulty. It is in our "needing" things to be how we "think" they should be, that our opinion becomes attachment and is identical with our suffering.

Years ago, I became quite ill. I was in a lot of pain and frightened by what I was going through. I didn't know what was wrong, and my biggest fear was that the pain would get so bad that I wouldn't be able to stand it. My husband was very helpful to me through this difficult time. He was able to help me see that in not

wanting the pain to be there, I was working against myself and adding more layers of suffering to the experience.

The truth of the situation was that the pain was there. The moments when I was able to let go of the fear were qualitatively different from when I was gripped by it. I found I could be with the pain and it actually hurt less than when I got swept away by my anxiety about what was wrong, or what would happen if it got worse. I didn't just let go once and then sail through the whole experience. I had to let go over and over and over again. Accepting the pain did not mean that I shouldn't be concerned about my condition. There were many difficult decisions to make before getting well.

It's also interesting to note how much of the time we have opinions about things that are really not our business. Sometime back, I used to take morning walks a couple of times a week with a neighbor. One day she said to me, "I used to like blue jays but now I know they're not a nice bird." I asked her, "What do you mean, they're not a nice bird?" She said, "The other day I saw a blue jay eating a dead squirrel in the street. I didn't know they did that. I thought they just ate berries and seeds."

My neighbor learned something about blue jays she hadn't previously known. It is in the blue jay's nature to eat a little carrion now and again. In her opinion, that made it "not a nice bird," and she no longer "liked" blue jays. Does that judgment change the nature of blue jays, or just limit my neighbor's experience? That question, itself, reflects a judgment on my part that very probably is none of my business.

When we are really free and respond from a state of nonattachment, it might surprise us what decisions we make and what

actions we are capable of. The best evidence of this is a true story related by Jack Kornfield.

A young boy of about eight or nine had a younger sister who developed a life-threatening illness. She needed blood transfusions. The best match for her was her brother. His parents asked if he would be willing to donate blood for her. They explained that she could die without it. He asked if he could think about it overnight. His parents said, "Of course." The next morning he told them that he would do it. Later when he was at the hospital and the blood was being drawn he asked the doctor, "How soon before I start to die?"[49] Can we even begin to imagine what the previous night had been like for this young boy? And he said, "Yes, I'll do it," thinking it meant his life! Bodhisattvas come in all sizes.

The *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra* states, "Great bodhisattvas are able to cross from this shore to the other shore by virtue of their ability not to cling to [anything whatsoever]. If there is the slightest clinging … it is not possible to cross to the other shore."[50] Master Hsing Yun comments on this passage:

> The "other shore" is a metaphor for liberation; it does not mean that one leaves this world or goes somewhere when one is liberated. … [I]f one can be perfectly non-attached for just a moment, the world will suddenly look different. This change is both the source and the beginning of the enlightened consciousness of an awakened being. … The Buddha taught non-attachment not as a means of escaping reality, but as a means of dealing with the fundamental nature of reality.[51]

Cultivating an attitude of nonattachment will invigorate our life with openness and spaciousness. We enter into a delicate relationship of intrigue with the unknown. And the "unknown" is really at the base of our life. Nonattachment allows us to see life and be one with life as it unfolds, instead of responding to life through the foggy lens of our expectations and habits. Nonattachment is the doorway to seeing reality *as it is*. In Zen practice, when we see reality *as it is*, we experience suchness. Zen Master Dōgen said, "If you want to attain suchness you should practice suchness without delay."[52] Nonattachment is the key to practicing suchness. Nonattachment means living in harmony with impermanence. Living in harmony with impermanence means finding peace, freedom, and the ability to embrace the mystery of each moment.

After having lunch together, Tom asked Frank the best way to get to Freelance and Fifth Avenue. Frank told him in great detail. Tom said, "That's crazy, there must be a quicker way." Frank said, "You're right; there are quicker ways. But I thought you wanted to know the best way. One of the most beautiful women in the world lives on Finley Street. If you go the way I suggest, you just might see her as you pass by" (Heifetz, 1978).

Ceaseless Practice

The assertion that after becoming a Buddha,
one should discontinue spiritual discipline and engage
in no further endeavor, is due to an ordinary person's view that
does not yet understand the way of Buddhas and ancestors.
—Zen Master Dōgen

Taped to my refrigerator at home, wedged between photos of children, postcards from friends traveling to exotic places around the world, and cartoons that once were funny, is an Ojibwa saying I like very much. Sometimes it disappears amid the clutter for months at a time. But it has a history of reappearing just when I need it most. The magnetic clip holding too many recipe cards needing to be refiled falls off, and there it is. It reads:

Sometimes I go about in a pity for myself
And all the while a great wind is carrying me across the sky.

This saying has served for many years because it captures in one simple sentence the major dichotomy of human experience. It

starts out with our connection to what Suzuki Roshi called "small mind." Small mind is the way we usually perceive the world—life as it is filtered through the reflective lens of our notion of "me." It is our dualistic view of the world permeated by likes and dislikes, judgments and opinions. Then it reminds us of our connection with something greater than this limited, self-oriented view. This connection with something greater offers another way of experiencing the moment. It breaks through the lens of the small mind and brings an open, spacious, and more intimate relationship with the present by eloquently reminding us of the mystery of existence.

I don't know why it is so easy for us, as human beings, to disconnect from that mystery. I tend to think the world would be in much better shape if we weren't quite so good at that. I remember the impact of seeing the first pictures of Earth from space [1968], our beautiful blue planet spinning and whirling through the star-studded landscape of incomprehensibility. I told you previously that when I first saw it, I thought it would mean the end of war. What I didn't tell you, at that time, was that I also had a fantasy of always carrying a copy of that photo with me. Then, whenever I'd encounter disharmony, quarreling, and strife, I would whip out the picture and whisper, "See"? It was to be my "superhero power" and in my fantasy that would settle things. The quarrelers would recognize the pettiness of their argument in light of the "great wind carrying them across the sky." I was only 23 years old at that time, so my naiveté, I guess, can be forgiven.

But I don't know what to make of the fact that the fantasy has resurfaced lately.

I want to take all the, so-called, leaders of the world and put them in a small room with a mural-size picture of the Earth and say: "Now you boys are going to sit here and look at this until you get it." I'm much older now, and was dumbstruck that millions of people around the world could demonstrate peacefully for UN inspectors to have more time in Iraq, and that they could be so totally ignored. The year now is 2011 and the war(s) continues.

During the Vietnam War, Suzuki Roshi was once asked, "How do we stop the war?" He replied, "Seek the cause of war in yourself." The person who told me that story said he was there when the question was asked. He hated that answer, but it he still thinks of it.

I guess, eventually, we would all find ourselves in the mural room with someone. Now whenever I feel irritated or angry, or am going about in a pity for myself, some part of me eventually remembers to say, "Barbara, you're starting a war." And when I'm starting a war, it's because I'm trapped in the small room of myself.

People frequently ask, "If we are already Buddha, why don't we know it?" That question is very similar to the question Zen Master Dōgen traveled to China seeking to answer. His question was, "If we are already Buddha, why do we need to practice?"

Although these can feel like important questions, I think we also need to consider an inherent danger in them. The danger lies in the power of asking *why* to act as a stopper. We can get hooked into needing to know *why* things are the way they are before we take care of *how* they are. Asking "why" has the potential to keep us stuck, unable to move forward until "why" has been answered

to our personal satisfaction. When I reflect on the times in my life when I've been stuck in needing to know why, they are invariably the times when I had the least acceptance or ability for dealing with how things actually were.

The Buddha once said of certain types of questions that they are like a man who is shot and critically wounded by an arrow. A doctor comes to remove it. But the man won't let the doctor take the arrow out until the doctor can tell him why he was shot, who shot the arrow, where it was shot from, what kind of feather it had, where was the bird the feather came from, etc. There is not much mystery about what will happen to this man. Getting stuck in why can be a fatal arrow. We certainly need to respect our questioning. Something has caught our attention and that's good—if we use it to invigorate our inquiry and it doesn't become a barrier that keeps us stuck when the circumstance calls for constructive change.

Sogyal Rinpoche, author of *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* answered this "Why are things the way they are?" question by saying, "We've all had an accident with samsara."[53] Samsara is the world we create through the small mind. Its major characteristics are ignorance, grasping, and dissatisfaction. The use of the term small is not intended to be judgmental or derogatory, simply descriptive. It is small in comparison to the qualities of Buddha mind, which are openness, receptivity, recognition of nonduality, and wisdom—the cessation of clinging.

It is also important to recognize that "why" is usually asked from the small room of the self, the part that doesn't recognize being Buddha. Even if we are able to set "why" aside, other questions come up from that small room. The next questions

usually go something like this: “What if this is all just a bunch of hooey? What if it isn’t really true?” The Zen answer to that question may surprise you. Zen practice is not about believing something to be true. It is about seeing and experiencing our life differently. A better question might be, does it serve our inquiry into the true nature of reality? Does it help us deal with the moment *as it is*? An old Zen adage cautions, today’s enlightenment is tomorrow’s mistake. What is true in this moment or circumstance is not necessarily true in the circumstances of the next moment.

One time while traveling the Buddha encountered a group of people known as the Kalamas. A spokesperson for the group said to Buddha, “Many teachers pass through our town. They all expound their own doctrines. They disparage the teachings of others. One teacher says one thing. The next teacher says the opposite with equal conviction. Who are we to trust and believe?”

The Buddha answered that it is appropriate to be confused, and uncertain, and to be filled with doubt. He advised the Kalamas that they needed to decide by knowing the truth for themselves. He instructed that it was not helpful to decide by hearsay, by following convention, by making assumptions, or by relying on texts. They were to avoid decisions based on reasoning or logic alone, and to be careful of formulating explanations that reflected how they’d like things to be.

Also, they were to guard against accepting things as true just out of respect for a teacher. The Buddha instructed that when we know for ourselves that a practice is good and beneficial, when undertaken, then it is wise to continue that practice. And when we

know for ourselves that a practice is harmful and causes suffering, we should cease from that.

The Buddha's answer is very interesting. It is completely devoid of exhortations of what to believe. Instead, his answer is focused on paying attention to the results of what we do. When what we are doing is beneficial, continue. When what we are doing is harmful, stop. As long as we are discussing "whys," why do we need a Buddha to tell us that?

The Buddha's answer to the Kalamas is also very encouraging. It expresses confidence in each of us to know for ourselves based on our own experience. The question is what kind of experience should we base our knowing on? The Buddha tells us, don't base it on what we've heard. Don't base it on following convention or assuming something is so. Don't base it on what we read in texts. Do not decide by reasoning or logic, or by thinking of explanations, or by acquiescing to what we'd like to believe. It should not be based on what appears likely. And certainly not out of respect for a teacher. Eliminating all of the above, what kind of knowing is he talking about? Answering that question is exactly what the study of the Buddha-dharma is about.

Zen Master Dōgen did find the answer to his question in China. This answer became the heart of his teaching, "practice is enlightenment." Nowhere does he tell us, "Already Buddha, no need to practice."

Master Dōgen was only 27 years old when he returned to Japan from China after receiving transmission from his teacher, Rujing. The record of his first teaching upon his return is known as the *Fukanzazengi* (The Universal Recommendation for the Practice of Zazen). The opening paragraph of the Fukanzazengi reads:

> The Way is basically perfect and all-pervading. How can it be contingent upon practice or realization? The Dharma vehicle is free and untrammeled. What need is there for people's concentrated effort? Indeed, the whole body is far beyond the world's dust. Who could believe in a means to brush it clean? It is never apart from one, right where one is. What is the use of going off here and there to practice?[54]

Zen Master Dōgen lived from 1200 to 1253 C.E. and had the same questions as you or me. The opening paragraph restates the perennial dilemma. If we are already Buddha, then why don't we know it? But Master Dōgen wrote The Universal Recommendation for the Practice of Zazen after he resolved the great question of his lifetime.

The next thing he tells us in the *Fukanzazengi* is: "And yet, if there is the slightest discrepancy the way is as distant as heaven from earth."[55] If there is not recognition of the way as "perfect and all pervading," then the Way is as distant as heaven from earth. Already being Buddha is not the same as realizing being Buddha. I'm sorry, I don't know why that is so. Personally, I consider it a serious design flaw in reality. Just kidding, well at least partly. But where does my opinion about there being a serious design flaw in reality leave me at the end of the day? Unfortunately, it doesn't change my predicament. Zen Master Hui-neng defined a Buddha as a sentient being who realizes being Buddha, and a sentient being as a Buddha who hasn't realized this yet.

"The Way is basically perfect and all-pervading." When Dōgen speaks of the Way, he means the total dynamic activity of

the universe. The dynamic activity of the universe is beyond our ability to conceptualize. Of course we can and do investigate the workings of the universe. We've learned many things. We use what we've learned to enhance and endanger our lives.

I don't think this kind of investigation is what the Buddha meant when he said, "When you know for yourself." Knowing in the Buddha Way is seeing and experiencing the interconnectedness of all things and living in harmony with all beings. Perhaps one way we can begin to experience this kind of knowing is through the cultivation of wonder and awe. The awe I speak of is not the "shock and awe phase" euphemism used at the start of the Iraq war. The usurping of the term awe for the engagement of war disturbed me, even though one definition of awe is, "the power to inspire dread." Let us reserve awe as a threshold to realization, not terror!

Awe has power to introduce us to a different way of knowing. To experience awe we must let go of what we think we know. It is standing awakened to the mystery of the dynamic activity of the universe, free of our conceptualizations. Awe is beyond our thinking, reason, or logic. It cannot be grasped through hearing or reading of another's experience of it. It must be our direct experience, and we all have moments when we awaken to it. For me, it is seeing any photo of Earth from space. Oh yes, I forgot again, the great wind.

Maybe you experience awe when you go outside and smell the earth again for the first time after a very long, hard winter. What is there to understand? The question "why" is absent. Really, when you know how to cultivate wonder and awe, anything can be

used to take you there. Say, the intricacy of a dragonfly's wings. Utterly unbelievable, yet there they are. Or perhaps you experience awe on one of those thoroughly gray winter days when the mist has frozen and the world appears encased in crystal. Then the sun peeks out briefly and the beauty of all the light of that shimmering world cracks your heart open.

Awe is a good example of what the Buddha meant when he instructs us to "know for yourself." Knowing in the Buddha Way is visceral, direct, beyond doubt, vibrant, and intimately yours. We are already part of the dynamic activity of the universe; we are already "in the Way" so to speak. How can it be contingent upon practice or realization? Because how we are, is also "in the way" of our recognizing it, even though how we are is also completely part of the Way.

Zen Masters repeatedly tell us that we cannot approach Zen practice from our usual perspective or a simple conceptual understanding. The practice of Zen begins after we suspend our usual ways of thinking. The experience of awe fulfills that requirement, and that is why it can serve as a threshold to realization. Sherry Weber Nicholsen, in her book *Love of Nature and the End of the World,* said:

> Awe … in its depth is not simply unspoken, it is speechless. … Awe is the sense of an encounter with some presence larger than ourselves, mysterious, wonderful, numinous, sacred. …. It suggests a blow to one's normal mental functioning, losing one's normal orientation. … The key to the speechlessness of awe is that it is not the end of our experiencing but the beginning.[56]

In Zen there is a term that describes the entry into this world: *senjutsu yura*—the understanding beyond words.

Zen Master Uchiyama said, "Abstract thinking and living reality are entirely different. The Buddhist view is completely different from our ordinary thinking."[57] In our ordinary view of the world, we are born into an existing world. We live our part of the play until the curtain call and then exit stage left. From the Buddhist view the entire world is born and dies with each being. Our life is the life of the universal self of the whole world totally interdependent with all beings. Seeing ourselves as separate from all beings is the source of our suffering, and in the dharma this is called delusion. But that is how the world appears to us. That is why we practice: to see beyond how things appear, to see beyond how we prefer it to be, to see beyond what reason or logic suggest. That is what Dōgen means when he says, "Indeed, the whole body is far beyond the world's dust." The world's dust is our delusive understanding, seeing ourselves as separate and apart from the world. The "whole body" refers to the understanding that our experience is not just our personal experience but also the universal life of the whole world.

Uchiyama Roshi helps us understand that Master Dōgen taught zazen as a true religion. "There is no failure or success in zazen as a true religion. … However, the reality of life is not manifested without practicing zazen. The reality of life is not attained without realization. If you do not actualize the reality of life, it is not attained."[58]

Carl Bielefeldt, Professor of Religious Studies at Stanford University and author of *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*, clarifies Uchiyama Roshi's point.

> … [Z]azen is not merely a utilitarian device for producing a perfected state of enlightenment but the expression of a more fundamental perfection inherent in all things. When we understand it in this way, the practice of zazen itself becomes the actualization of the ultimate truth, and the practitioner, just as he is, becomes the embodiment of perfect enlightenment. … In this experience we recognize that our own zazen is nothing but the primordial activity of all things—always present even before we recognize it, always perfected even in our most benighted states, always functioning throughout the world around us.[59]

That is what Zen Master Dōgen means when he says, "practice is enlightenment." We practice ceaselessly to actualize the reality of life moment after moment, even after attaining Buddhahood. "The assertion that after becoming a Buddha one should discontinue spiritual discipline and engage in no further endeavor is due to an ordinary person's view that does not yet understand the way of Buddhas and ancestors."[60] Zazen is the foundational activity of the Buddha, which he continued to practice daily even after his enlightenment.

Zazen serves as the threshold between the two rooms of the self. Through the practice of zazen our inherent wisdom penetrates the small room. As it does, we shed the veil of our separateness,

and become one with the reality of the full life of the self which includes the whole world.

This is not all the practice of zazen does. Master Dōgen tells us:

> [Zazen] covers infinite time and pervades past, present and future while simultaneously working ceaselessly for the enlightenment of all sentient beings. … Even if all the innumerable Buddhas of the entire universe combined their wisdom and attempted to measure the merit of one person's zazen, they could not fathom it.[61]

Miracles

Those who see and hear the inconceivable function of miracles do not fail to attain the Way.
—Zen Master Dōgen

One Zen story tells us that the Buddha and his disciples once camped near another teacher and his students. A student of the other teacher noticed the Buddha's encampment. He came over and inquired of one of the Buddha's disciples, "Can your master perform any miracles?" He went on to proudly state that his master was quite talented. "My master can stand on one side of a river and make brush strokes in the air and they will appear on a blank page being held by a person on the other side of the river." The Buddha's disciple listened politely. Then he stated that his teacher was also capable of performing amazing feats. "When he wants to go somewhere, he just walks. When he's hungry he just eats, and when he's tired he just sleeps." The first student was humbled. As he left he vowed to himself to attain such miraculous powers even if it took him 10,000 lifetimes (Larkin, 1997).

I like to imagine that if Master Dōgen were to hear that story he might say, "That other teacher's disciple was no ordinary fellow. He understood the difference between a greater and lesser miracle."

If we look up the word miracle in the dictionary we'll find several definitions. The first one, I believe, is our usual understanding: "a rare, inexplicable event attributed to supernatural powers." Like a person making marks on one side of a river and having them appear on the other side. The last definition given is from the Latin root word *miraculum*, "miracle—to wonder at." It is from this definition, I think, that we need to explore Master Dōgen's meaning when he talks about miracles. This is what Zen Master Dōgen had to say about the difference between a greater and lesser miracle.

> Encompassed by the power of great miracles, lesser miracles occur. Great miracles include lesser miracles but lesser miracles do not know great miracles. Lesser miracles are a tuft of hair breathing in the vast ocean, a mustard seed storing Mt. Sumeru, the top of the head spouting water, or the feet spreading fire. Miracles like these are lesser miracles. Those who practice them never dream of buddha miracles. The reason I call them lesser miracles is that they are limited by circumstance and depend on special practice and realizations. They may occur in this lifetime but not in another lifetime. They may be available to some people but not to others. They may appear in this land but not elsewhere. They may appear at times other than the present moment but not at the present moment. Great miracles are not like that.[62]

"Great miracles are not like that." Dōgen does not define great miracles but we can infer that great miracles are not limited by circumstance, do not depend upon special practice and realizations, occur in all lifetimes, are available to all people in all lands, and appear at every moment. "The miracles I am speaking of are the daily activities of buddhas, which they do not neglect to practice."[63] The daily activities of buddhas—walking, eating, sleeping. Dōgen cautions us, "Do not think that miracles sometimes do and sometimes do not happen. Buddhas always abide in miracles."[64]

In his fascicle on "Miracles" Dōgen relates the famous pronouncement by Layman Pangyan, "Miracles are nothing other than fetching water and carrying firewood."[65] Dōgen comments:

> You should thoroughly investigate the meaning of these words. … Those who practice this are all miracle buddhas. [Those who fetch water and carry firewood.] Although miracles are noticed once in a while, miracles are miracles. It is not that things are eliminated or perish when they are unnoticed. Things are just as they are even when unnoticed. Even when people do not know that fetching water is a miracle, the fact that fetching water is a miracle is undeniable.[66]

I am taken by the statement, "Things are just as they are even when unnoticed." I have to ask myself, *how is it that miracles go unnoticed*? The answer, in my case at least, is that I become habituated by thought to my experience. My attention wanes, things are done by rote, I cease to "wonder at" and therefore do not experience miracles. "Buddhas always abide in miracles," because

Buddhas are awake and "things" don't go unnoticed. The next question then seems to be, "How do we cultivate wonder so we can awaken?"

Part of the answer, I think, lies in learning to stand in "I don't know." This "I don't know" is not our usual experience of not knowing. It is not confusion or perplexity. What is meant by "I don't know" here is beyond knowing or not knowing. It is Bodhidharma's answer to the emperor.[67] What I mean by "standing in I don't know" is this: it is to witness, unperturbed, the unlimited experience of the present, and in our absolute aloneness find physical connection with the vastness of the universe, which is ourself.

I remember Katagiri Roshi once saying, "What causes us problems in our lives is not that we don't understand our limitations. It is that we don't recognize our vastness."

Terms like the Truth, the Absolute, Ultimate Reality, and Emptiness are always associated with words like unthinkable, indescribable, ungraspable, inconceivable, indecipherable, or unknowable. Yet in Zen we are told Truth can and must be experienced. To experience it is to realize *Suchness*. The gateway to Suchness is to stand in "I don't know" and wonder.

We have all experienced stolen moments of Suchness, particularly after zazen, when the flimsy film of self—that tenacious sense of separateness—cracks open and for a moment we see the world through different eyes. And accompanying that seeing is a wellspring of gratitude and a fierce tenderness for the world.

Zen Master Hongzhi instructs: "With thoughts clear, sitting silently, wander into the center of the circle of wonder. This is how you must penetrate and study."[68]

There are times when we are shocked into "not knowing." Sometime back I had just such an experience. The following quotation from a New York Times article was cited in a book I was reading. The subject of the article was the discovery of the largest galaxy ever detected by astronomers at Kitt Peak National Observatory, and it reminded me of something out of an Arthur C. Clarke novel. It reads:

> [The galaxy includes] more than 100 trillion stars and measures more than six million light years in diameter, the galaxy is 60 times the size of Earth's own galaxy, the Milky Way. … The new found galaxy is located in the center of an even larger clump, a cluster of some 1,000 galaxies called Abell 2029…[69]

The Abell 2029 is the Arthur C. Clarke association. I stopped reading there because I realized I just couldn't get my mind around "100 trillion." I had no way of relating to how big even one trillion really is. My frame of reference is big, bigger and biggest. I know "a trillion" is beyond my conception of biggest, but I had no real grasp of it.

After making this point to my husband, he helped me by asking, "If you counted one number per second, how long would it take you to count to a trillion?"

Give up? I did. How does 32,000 years strike you? And remember, that's only one trillion and the galaxy has 100 trillion stars. Now the article got really interesting.

> Since there doesn't appear to be enough ordinary matter in the universe to account for the huge gravitational forces that would seem necessary to cause all the clumping, scientists propose the existence of vast amounts of invisible matter that eludes detection because it emits no radiation. According to the prevailing wisdom, some 99 percent of the universe consists of this missing mass, which means that what is generally thought of as astronomy actually concerns only a tiny subset of particles that happen to be detectable by the human nervous system.[70]

Well! I don't know about you, but that bit of information stops me in my tracks every time I think of it. The first time I read it I was immediately reminded of something I hadn't thought of in years. Do you remember the Dr. Seuss story, *Horton Hears a Who*?

> On the fifteenth of May, in the Jungle of Nool,
> In the heat of the day, in the cool of the pool,
> He was splashing…enjoying the jungle's great joys…
> When Horton the elephant heard a small noise.
>
> So Horton stopped splashing.
> He looked toward the sound.
> "That's funny," thought Horton.
> "There's no one around."

Then he heard it again!
Just a very faint yelp
As if some tiny person
Were calling for help.

"I'll help you," said Horton.
"But who are you? Where?"
He looked and he looked. He could see nothing there
But a small speck of dust
Blowing past in the air.[71]

Our hero Horton has no designs on becoming a Buddha, yet into his field of awareness floats a world of beings on a speck of dust, and he is filled with compassion for them. He recognizes that their world is totally out of their control. They are the Who from Whoville, and he vows to save them. This vow becomes a problem for Horton because the other animals make fun of him for guarding a speck of dust. They keep snatching it away! Horton has a terrible time chasing after them in order to protect the Who. Still, he is resolute in his vow and repeatedly triumphs over the mischief of the other animals.

But now instead of taunting him, the other animals begin to worry about Horton. They decide his efforts to protect this speck of dust are nonsense, and they devise a plan to save him from himself. They combine their efforts to capture him, tie him up, and grab the dandelion tuft that holds the Who. They warn Horton that if he doesn't stop talking to this dust mote they'll drop it into a pot of boiling "Beezelnut Oil." Horton admonishes that they can't do that because there are tiny beings living on it and "after all, a person's a person, no matter how small."

Horton turns to the Who. He tells the Mayor of Whoville that the Who have to make a lot of noise so the other animals will know they're there; otherwise they're literally in the soup.

So the mayor of Whoville gets out the alarm, and everyone starts making noise. They bang on drums and pot lids, play all their musical instruments, yell and holler. They make quite a racket but the other animals still don't hear them.

In desperation, Horton asks the mayor to check and see if everybody's doing all they can. So the mayor runs around checking, making sure no one is shirking. Just when he's about to give up hope, there in apartment 12J is little Jojo, playing with a yoyo, not making a sound. The mayor grabs him imploring, "Laddie, what are you doing? It's Whoville's darkest hour," and spirits him to the top of the highest building in Whoville. Little Jojo makes his little beep, or peep, or chirp, and of course, it puts them over the top. The other animals hear the Who and all vow to protect them.

It is a satisfying ending, I suppose, if you don't happen to be a Zen student. You see, if you are a Zen student, you're left with a dilemma. Did little Jojo save all beings or not? Well, we can't really say *he* saved all beings. After all, he had help from myriad sources—other Whos, drums and pot lids, and some beings he couldn't even see or begin to imagine, such as Horton. But then again, we can't say he didn't, now can we? So there you have it! The story brings home the meaning of one of my favorite statements by Gandhi: "What you do will be insignificant, *and* it is very important that you do it."

I have to admit that when I was reading this story to my children years ago, I wasn't aware of these deeper implications. If anything, I guess, I would have identified with Horton. Today, I see I'm really more like Jojo. Metaphorically, I spend a great deal of time playing with a yoyo, and I ignore the great matter of Birth and Death.

Now I am going to tell you something that feels risky to say out loud and might sound a little crazy. But I haven't been the same since reading that galaxy quote. That sub-particle business got to me. Ninety-nine percent of the universe is made up of a mass undetectable by the human nervous system. Geez, it's even bigger than I didn't understand before! Through that article I touched again the real meaning of "inconceivable." By doing that, in an inexplicable, paradoxical way, I found my place. I know without a doubt, in fact, I cannot escape knowing that I'm a "Who."

And that's OK! I'm not diminished in the slightest because "after all, a person's a person, no matter how small." But it does make this Who wonder. What have we gotten ourselves into here? I mean really, what is this "experience" we call human life? Can there be any response other than, "I don't know?" It comforts me to know that the Buddha and all the ancestors found themselves in the exact same predicament.

Stories of the ancient masters offer clues for solving the koan of human experience. In his fascicle on "Miracles" Dōgen relates the following public case regarding Master Guishan and his two disciples, Yangshan Huiji and Xiangyan.

> One day, while Guishan was lying down, Yangshan Huiji came to see him. Guishan turned to face the wall.
>
> Yangshan said, "I am your student. Please don't be formal."
>
> Guishan started to get up. Yangshan rose to leave.
>
> Guishan said, "Huiji."
>
> Yangshan returned. Guishan said, "Let me tell you about my dream."
>
> Yangshan leaned forward to listen.
>
> Guishan said simply, "Would you interpret my dream for me? I want to see how you do it."
>
> In response Yangshan brought a basin of water and a towel. Guishan washed his face and sat up.
>
> Then Xiangyan came in.
>
> Guishan said, "Huiji and I have been communicating intimately. This is no small matter."
>
> Xiangyan said, "I was next door and heard you."
>
> Guishan said to him, "Why don't you try now?"
>
> Xiangyan made a bowl of tea and brought it to him.
>
> Guishan praised them saying, "You two students surpass even Shariputra and Maudgalyayana with your miraculous activity."[72]

Now, what are we to make of that? Guishan tells them that they surpass the chief disciples of the Buddha with their "miraculous activity." Shariputra and Maudgalyayana [the Buddha's chief disciples] were reputed to have had great miraculous powers, including those of the "lesser" variety. But according to Dōgen,

Guishan seems to define lesser miracles by the definitions covered earlier.

Dōgen informs us that, "If you want to understand buddhas' miracles, you should study Guishan words. As 'this is no small matter,' to practice miracles is to study the buddha way. Not practicing miracles is not studying the buddha way."[73] I take that to mean that letting miracles go unnoticed is not practicing the buddha way. Dōgen tells us that all the actions of Guishan are miracles, and that they are unsurpassable. They include lying down, turning to face the wall, getting up, calling Huiji, talking about the dream, washing his face, and sitting up. Guishan describes their interaction as "communicating intimately."

Dōgen comments:

> You should study these miracles. The ancestors who correctly transmitted buddha-dharma talked this way. Do not merely interpret it as Guishan expressing his dream by washing his face. You should regard their interaction as a series of miracles.[74]

"The miracles I am speaking of are the daily activities of buddhas, which they do not neglect to practice." Not neglecting to practice means not taking the "miracles of daily activities" for granted. Guishan and his disciples are awake to each other in the moment and each recognizes the other as being so. That is why Guishan says they have been communicating intimately.

To awaken is to wonder. To wonder is to awaken. To awaken is to be fully open to the present. To be fully open to the

present is to be intimate with our life. To be intimate with our life is "no small matter."

Can we learn to practice buddha miracles? Do we understand the difference between greater and lesser miracles, to make Guishan proud of our "miraculous activity"? Can we become disciples of Guishan and "communicate intimately"? Can we appreciate that taking our life for granted and missing the fact that our daily activities are buddha miracles is "no small matter?"

There is a line from a beautiful Mary Oliver poem where she is considering her life and states, "When it's over, I want to say: all my life I was a bride married to amazement."[75] As many times as I read that line it never fails to move me. A little voice within says, "Ah! Me, too, Mary. Me, too." Another voice then asks, "So, what's stopping you?" Then Master Dōgen comes and whispers, "If you want to attain suchness you should practice suchness without delay."[76] And then I think, what if we could all be brides and grooms married to amazement? What if we really lived our lives from the understanding that everything we experience is a Greater Miracle? Zen Master Dōgen says, "Those who see and hear the inconceivable function of miracles … do not fail to attain the way."[77]

Being Intimate With Our Life

When intimate language encounters an intimate person, the buddha eye sees the unseen.
—Zen Master Dōgen

According to Soto Zen tradition, the eighth transmission of the stream of enlightenment after the Buddha between master and disciple occurred when Vashumitsu met Butsudanandai. The story goes like this: At their first meeting, Butsudanandai entered the Master's quarters and announces, "Venerable Sir, I have come to debate the nature of truth with you." Vashumitsu immediately recognizes Butsudanandai as his successor and replies, "Dear Friend, if we can debate it, it will not be truth." Upon hearing these words Butsudanandai attained his great awakening (Hixon, 1995).

Butsudanandai was a well-respected teacher in his own right, with many followers. He was renowned for his deep philosophical understanding and debating prowess. Vashumitsu totally disarmed him with his simple statement and demeanor. In essence Vashumitsu tells him to stop thinking about the truth,

which only reduces our experience to the realm of conceptualization, and just be it.

But is there not more to the story?

Indeed there is. Vashumitsu gives Butsudanandai one more great gift during their first encounter, and consequently to us also. He tells him, "Simply be truth! But do not imagine you are going to become a still pond or a stainless sky!"[78]

How wonderful! This statement is a gift because it disabuses us of any notion that enlightenment is a cure for delusion. If we do not become a "still pond or a stainless sky" then awakening must mean that we learn to recognize delusion for what it is. Awakening is not being trapped in delusion by believing in it. Therein, lies our freedom.

In the encounter between Vashumitsu and Butsudanandai, debating about the truth is ordinary thinking, seeing the world dualistically, whereas "Simply being truth" is dwelling in nonduality. Similarly, the first transmission occurred when Shakyamuni Buddha held up the flower to the assembly and Mahakashyapa smiled. Shakyamuni Buddha responded to his smile with the words: "I am wonderful mind. I am Nirvana … the Eye of Nonduality. Now this light is manifest as you, as Mahakashyapa."[79] With that pronouncement Shakyamuni Buddha authenticated Mahakashyapa's awakening. What I would like for us to hold in mind as the backdrop for the rest of this discussion is Shakyamuni's statement, "I am Nirvana … the Eye of Nonduality."

In his fascicle on "Intimate Language," Master Dōgen comments on the following public case, which relates to an old

koan and has direct reference to the transmission between Shakyamuni Buddha and Mahakashyapa.

An imperial minister asks Master Yunju a question, and the following exchanged ensued:

> The World-honored One had intimate language and Mahakashyapa did not conceal it. What was the World-honored One's language?
> Yunju said, "Your Excellency."
> "Yes," he responded.
> Yunju asked, "Do you understand it?"
> The minister said, "No, I don't."
> Yunju said, "If you don't understand it, the World-honored One had intimate language. If you understand it, Mahakashyapa did not conceal it."[80]

Sometimes when I first read these stories, I think, *What?* They make me feel like those cardboard dolls with button eyes where the little black pupils spin around. Then I think, *There's something going on here and I want to know what it is*.

Zen Master Dōgen tells us, "You should aspire to investigate these words for many eons.[81] You should study this … as if cutting through what is impossible to cut through. Investigate it in detail little by little, hundreds and thousands of times, instead of trying to understand it all at once."[82] I don't know why, but those statements encourage me, so then I read it again and again. "You should aspire to investigate these words for many eons," refers to the encounter between Yunju and the minister rather than to the original koan regarding Shakyamuni Buddha and Mahakashyapa. When Zen Master Dōgen instructs us to investigate it "as if cutting through what is impossible to cut through," he is telling us that

what we must cut through is our usual dualistic way of relating to our experience.

Master Dōgen clarifies the meaning of Yunju's statement, "If you don't understand it, the World-honored One had intimate language," by telling us that, "not understanding is not the same as going blank. Not understanding does not mean that you don't know. Zen Mater Dōgen is cautioning us that if we misread what Yunju means by "not understanding" that we may … "mistakenly think that what cannot be seen or heard is intimate language."[83]

In other words, we might mistake intimate language as referring to things that are hidden or exclusive, as in the private encounter between Shakyamuni Buddha and Mahakashyapa. What made it "private" was that no on else in the assembly (or those reading about it for that matter) understood exactly what was exchanged between them. Master Dōgen tells us that this is not the correct understanding of "intimate language." "Among the gates to the study of buddha-dharma, there is a key to understanding buddha-dharma. … Do not think that the realm you don't know is intimate language. At the very moment when you do not understand buddha-dharma, that is a moment of intimate language."[84] When Master Dōgen says, "At the very moment when you do not understand," he is talking about a moment that we experience through the "eye of nonduality." Only when we leap clear of dualistic thinking can we experience a moment of "intimate language."

The difficulty in understanding this koan is that the minister and Master Yunju are using the same words but their words have very different meanings based on each speaker's understanding.

The minister is speaking from the usual understanding of reality and Yunju is speaking from the reality of nonduality.

When Yunju tells the minister, "If you don't understand it, the World-honored One had intimate language," his meaning of not understanding goes beyond "thinking" about it. If we get caught in "understanding" in our usual way, we limit our experience to a conceptualization. Yunju's meaning of "don't understand" is not devoid of knowing—it means not thinking about truth but rather, "simply being truth." But the minister's response of, "No, I don't," is the usual meaning of "No, I don't understand," because he is the one asking, "What does it mean? What was the World-honored One's language?"

Master Dōgen then comments on the second part of Yunju's statement, "If you understand it, Mahakashyapa did not conceal it." Regarding this he says, "Not concealing is already present. Not concealing can happen with not understanding. Do not think anyone can see and hear not concealing."[85] "Not concealing is already present," means that the reality of the activity of the whole universe is already present. "Not concealing can happen with not understanding" because nothing about the true nature of reality is ever hidden but depends on whether or not one can see it. Reality exists regardless of whether or not we see it. "Do not think anyone can see and hear not concealing" means do not assume that we see the nondual truth of reality. To "see and hear not concealing," one must see through the eye of nonduality and "cut through what is impossible to cut through."

Dōgen's statement, "Do not think anyone can see and hear not concealing," can be quite misleading. He does not mean that *no*

one can see and hear not concealing. He means, "Do not think [just] anyone can see and hear not concealing"; do not think everyone sees not concealing or reality at its fullest. However, "anyone" who develops the "eye of nonduality" will clearly see and hear "not concealing."

Since we are already buddha, glimpsing the world through the "eye of nonduality" can occur naturally for us from time to time. If we do not recognize it for what it is, we will be unable to sustain that vision for very long. One important feature of practice is learning to recognize those glimpses for what they are. That way we can actively cultivate *seeing* the world as a buddha. The key to seeing the world as a buddha is to "not understand" in the way that Yunju means it.

We all experience this way of seeing from time to time. There are moments when our "understanding" and notions about how things are drop away. Perhaps we get lost in the beauty of a flower. We gaze at it for a long time and all of a sudden the name "flower" or "rose" or "iris" is meaningless. The flower just *is*, and we simply behold it! The flower's being there and our seeing it are one complete experience. Or maybe the shimmering light on the surface of a windblown lake mesmerizes us. When we *really see it*, we don't understand it. And then, there are the times when we are looking into the face of someone we love and all of a sudden what we thought we knew about him or her drops away, and they are a complete and utter mystery. We are very present in these moments, but we don't "understand" it. But the experience is accompanied by a deep stillness, a peace and joy that permeate us with a vibrant

knowing that we cannot explain. This is what Yunju means by: "If you don't understand it."

Zen Master Dōgen informs us that the "World-honored One has intimate language, intimate practice and intimate realization."[86] The Buddha-dharma leads us to experience the intimacy of language, heart, and action. "When you encounter a person, you invariably hear intimate language and speak intimate language."[87]

Master Dōgen is telling us that even when we experience an encounter with another in our "usual" way, the reality of the nondual world is still manifesting. The reality of the nondual world is that of unity. Not recognizing this is "concealing." When we are able to recognize the interconnectedness of all things—the seamless whole of existence—then there is "intimate language, intimate heart and intimate action" in the Buddha-dharma. It is seeing (not concealing) that makes it Buddha-dharma.

Dōgen tells us, "You should know that where there are buddha ancestors, intimate language and intimate action are immediately manifest. 'Intimate' means close and inseparable. There is no gap."[88] Now we have come to the heart of it. "Intimate means close and inseparable. There is no gap."

Katagiri Roshi would frequently say, "In reality there is no gap." He would hold his right hand up when saying this. His fingers would be closed except for the thumb and forefinger. He'd hold those two fingers as far apart as possible. When he said "no gap" he would pinch them closed.

In Zen practice, all our chants use the phrase "with all beings."

> This morning as I wake, I vow with all beings to realize all things without exception, embracing the Ten Directions.
>
> This evening as I sleep, I vow with all beings to calm all things, leaving the mind clear and pure.
>
> We take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha vowing with all sentient beings. We end chanting services with: May the merit of this penetrate into each thing and all places so that we and every sentient being together can realize the Buddha Way.

The Buddha-dharma always immerses us in unity. Ordinary reality is cradled in unity. The subject of this chapter is "Being Intimate With Our Life." Being intimate with our life means shedding the illusion of our separateness.

In the 1960s, Mr. Cleve Backster learned firsthand what that really means. Mr. Backster was a polygraph expert. One day he acquired several new plants. After giving a large plant a thorough watering he wondered how long it would take for water to reach the top leaves. He decided to put the galvanic-skin-response detector of a polygraph machine at the end of a leaf. He thought there would be a drop in the resistance recorded on the polygraph paper when moisture arrived between the electrodes. Sometime later he checked the chart. "I noticed something resembling a human response on a polygraph: not at all what I would expect from water entering a leaf."[89] Understandably, this peaked his interest. The sensitivity of a lie detector is based on the fact that when a person is threatened they will have a physiological

response. During a lie detector test, if you are guilty and someone is asking you about the crime, you will feel threatened and will not want the truth to come out. The physiological reaction to the threat of being found out is what the polygraph will reflect.

Mr. Backster began thinking of ways to threaten the "subject." The plant was still hooked up to the detector and was sending out an even signal of its normal state.

> Then at thirteen minutes, fifty-five seconds of chart time, the imagery entered my mind of burning the leaf. I didn't verbalize; I didn't touch the plant; I didn't touch the equipment. Yet the plant went wild. The pen jumped right off the top of the chart. The only thing the plant could have reacted to was the mental image.[90]

Backster then went to get some matches but since the graph could not record any increase in stress as it was already at the top of the graph, he put the matches back and decided not to burn a leaf.

> I removed the threat by returning the matches to the secretary's desk. The plant calmed right back down. … From that split second my consciousness hasn't been the same. My whole life has been devoted to looking into this.[91]

And that it has! Mr. Backster has since designed special equipment to examine what he calls "primary perception," and he has experimented with a variety of "subjects." He later states, "I've been amazed at the perception capability right down to the bacterial level."[92] One of the most interesting experiments

concerns white cell samples from the mouths of volunteers. He hooks them up. (It is not clear to me how this is done.) The person is sent home to watch a preselected television program likely to arouse a strong emotional response. The cells that have been left in the lab react simultaneously to the person's response.

> The greatest distance we've tested has been about 300 miles. Astronaut Brian O'Leary … left his white cells here in San Diego, then flew home to Phoenix. On the way, he kept track of events that aggravated him, carefully logging the time of each. The correlation remained, even over that distance.[93]

"Intimate means close and inseparable. There is no gap." Once I was at a meeting where people were discussing synchronicity. They debated whether or not it might really exist, whether or not to trust the perception of it when it seemed to occur. I found that most interesting because I think there is nothing but synchronicity. It's just that we don't usually perceive things on that level, and when we occasionally do, we don't know what to make of it.

In Master Shitou's poem, "The Merging of Difference and Unity," there is a line that reads, "Phenomena exist like box and cover joining." (Close and inseparable, without a gap.) When we take refuge in the Sangha, vowing with all sentient beings, bringing harmony to all completely without hindrance, the Sangha is really the whole universe. When we recite the Bodhisattva Vows, vowing to save all beings, I have come to understand that we are vowing to awaken to the truth that all beings are always present. We can only save all beings *with* all beings. Katagiri

Roshi used to say, "Whatever you are doing, perform each action like you are covering heaven and earth."

Zen Master Dōgen said, "When intimate language encounters an intimate person, the buddha eye sees the unseen. … Intimacy surrounds you …"[94]

Now that is a very interesting statement. He is not saying that when an intimate person encounters intimate language, then deep understanding occurs. No; intimate language is the subject that is being discussed. "When intimate language encounters an intimate person, the buddha eye sees the unseen." So what is intimate language? Intimate language is the voice of the universe. Intimate language is reality *as it is*—close and inseparable. When intimate language encounters an intimate person means: when reality *as it is* meets a person who can see it *as it is*—then the buddha eye, the eye of nonduality, sees the unseen. It sees what can't be seen through our usual experience, which separates and fragments reality.

We are intimate with our life when we have shed the illusion of our separateness. When we have shed the illusion of our separateness, we can "simply be truth." When we can "simply be truth," the Buddha-dharma has intimate language and read your name here does not conceal it.

Negotiating the Way

Assume your questions to be your own assertions,
or imagine them to be others' explanations.
Then examine them penetratingly, time after time,
and you will be free from doubt.
—Zen Master Dōgen

What attracts us to the Buddha's teaching? How is it that we become interested in Zen, anyway? Why spend hours and years sitting in front of a wall, when at any of those given times we could be watching a movie and eating popcorn, or sitting in a park reading a novel, or engaged in any other activity we might choose? For that matter, what about doing something "useful"? I've asked myself these questions on numerous occasions, during the inevitable, difficult moments of some retreat or another.

At those times I was looking for an easier way. But the answer was always the same, even when it wasn't what I wanted to be true. Zen practice is the only thing that has ever really satisfied

me. Without practice my experience felt barren. Eventually, those who follow the Zen path come to accept that, for them, it is the best method for negotiating the Way.

What does this mean? We are driven to search for a way to live in this difficult world. There is acceptance of the Buddha's First Noble Truth—suffering arises. Negotiating the Way is learning to cull what is the essential truth about the nature of human existence. It is dealing with fear and disappointment, looking death in the face—as well as one can before the final moment—stumbling and falling, and rising out of the ashes of each experience. It means finding release from the imprisonment of our ambitions and desires. It is also about the courage and effort it takes to embody the Buddha's teaching of anatta (no self-nature). Why just a list of the difficulties of life? Well, how much of a problem are the good times?

Through practice we are able to find a stability that allows us to participate fully in all the moments of our roller coaster lives. Practice can be likened to a seat belt you wear for the ride. It keeps you safe, with just the sort of solidity that Katagiri Roshi called "spiritual security." It is through spiritual security that one makes peace with the bittersweet truth of impermanence.

Negotiating the Way is not something that we do once, only to arrive at some exalted state where our effort will no longer be required. It is something that we do over and over and over again within the ever changing flow of conditions that are the events of our life. Negotiating the Way is the manner in which we meet those conditions. It is the work of understanding that our life is woven with a golden thread that binds delusion and enlightenment.

Master Dōgen's inclusive understanding of nonduality leaves nothing out. He invites us into a world where everything exists in harmony, even our delusions. "At the moment of seeing clearly [realization], you do not erase your [old] thinking."[95] Harmony includes the effort required of the practitioner. This takes us to the heart of Dōgen's teaching: practice is enlightenment. Practice is the loom on which the thread weaves the design of our life.

The nondual world cradles all phenomena of the seen and unseen realms, including our dualistic predilections. Our initial, dualistic understanding cannot approach the enlightened, unified vision of nonduality without "practice." We must commit ourselves to discerning it because our natural tendency is to separate and divide reality.

The dualistic view is sometimes called relative truth, the enlightened view or nonduality, is called absolute truth. This is just a way of talking about something that really can't be divided, but these terms provide assistance in approaching a vaster view then our dualistic perspective alone can offer.

In other words, there are not two realities, only a difference in how we perceive our experience.

Master Dōgen's radical view of nonduality embraces practice/enlightenment without "… nullification of differences between the two, nor is it a transformation of one into the other, or a fusion of one with the other. Practice and enlightenment are different, yet not two."[96] Dōgen does not reject duality; "… nonduality embraces duality rather than abandons it."[97]

The relationship of practice/enlightenment is not causal either. Enlightenment is not the result of practice. There is no hierarchal relationship where nonduality is viewed to be above duality. Difficulty in realizing the intimate relationship between duality/nonduality and practice/enlightenment stems from our inherently dualistic tendencies to compare and contrast, to formulate poles of opposition and contradiction. There is a leap one must make to move beyond the perspective of dualism, to embrace, or rather to be embraced by, a nondualistic understanding. This is the practice part of *practice is enlightenment*.

Nondual reality is experiencing the world in process and interrelatedness that is the result of causes and conditions. It requires us to learn a different language from the one we use in our experience with relative reality. The language of nonduality is seeing "before mention is made,"[98] because "mention," immediately returns us to duality. Understanding the language of nonduality is cultivated through goalless practice, nonattachment, nonjudgmental seeing, sustained effort, quieting the skeptic, and finding our way to and trusting the truth of intuitive knowing, to name just a few skills that are honed on the cushion in front of the wall.

None of the above necessitates the elimination of our intellect and reason. It is not a question of either/or but both/and—a mode beyond our usual manner of functioning. Through practice the wisdom of nonduality imperceptibly informs and transforms our experience and refines our "usual" manner of being.

The benefit of spiritual practice is insight that changes us at the core. The results of the changes can be seen in an increased sense of peace, joy, and freedom. But the work of spiritual practice

is not without its difficulty and pain, as exemplified by the Zen adage: "there is no *satori* [enlightenment] without tears."

Master Dōgen does not offer the easiest of paths. Significant effort is required. He demands a thorough and continuous inquiry be made in authentic practice—from a perpetual and sincere intention to realize truth. In authentic practice we must value and excavate our existential dilemmas. Dōgen calls this process "the koan realized in life."[99] "Assume your questions to be your own assertions, or imagine them to be other's explanations. Then examine them penetratingly, time after time, and you will be free from doubt."[100]

Easier said than done, you may be thinking. And you would be right. But Dōgen, through his tireless effort and kindness offers assistance at every turn of a word, and the 800 years that separate us is of no real consequence, because his lessons are timeless.

When we begin reading his work it makes no sense to our usual way of understanding the world. Yet, we may find ourselves touched in inexplicable ways. We want to know, *What is it that we are experiencing?* There can be a subtle, but startling alteration to our perception. We may think, *What is this?* And *What is this?* is the penetrating question often posed by great Zen masters. When you read something by Dōgen that makes you ask that question, your dokusan has begun. Once we are attracted to his teaching, a secret contract is enacted to meditate and study. Some part of us already knows that within his meticulous instruction and poetic expression, we will find the answer to our longing. The path we tread to that answer encompasses all that occurs in our practice. It includes our commitment and effort, our frustration, and even our periodic deficits of intention.

Throughout it all we maintain dedication to the practice—the force that grounds us. It is through practice that we learn to Negotiate the Way. Two major forms of practice in Zen are intensive retreats (*sesshins*) and training periods (*ango practice*). Sesshins are considered more intensive because they include more meditation periods each day and a stricter requirement for maintaining silence. A sesshin is usually held for a day, a weekend, or a week, although it can be longer. By contrast, ango practice is held for a month to three months and is slightly more relaxed, in the sense that there is less disruption in the normal activities of the monastery. These include study, work, formal and informal tea times, as well as a prescribed number of meditation periods each day. One is free to engage in some conversation.

It's amusing when you tell people you're going on retreat. Often they seem to imagine a relaxing time where you get to do what you want, maybe spend a brief part of each day in contemplation or reflection.

Zen training is more like boot camp. To the casual observer, it can appear monotonous as well as rigorous. Activity at an ango is prescribed from the time you get up in the predawn morning until you fall exhausted on your mat at the end of the day, in hopes of a few hours sleep. Day after day follows the same routine.

There are "correct" ways of doing everything—meaning you must adhere to the precise way that each activity is performed at that center or monastery. But every ritual has purpose and meaning. Everyone sharing the retreat learns the forms, which make living together harmonious, even with a large number of people. Except, of course, for the person who refuses to turn off his

watch alarm that beeps on the hour, even after numerous requests to do so. That's when our work really begins. Just how will we deal internally with circumstances that do not conform to what we think they are *supposed* to be?

Once the style of practice is learned there's no need to be anxious or insecure about what's happening or how the day will proceed. Each bell sounding is a form of communication reminding us to pay attention to the moment. There is freedom to *be* and a deep resonance with one's experience. Over time the schedule and ritual become a comfort. Cultivating presence in all we do is anything but monotonous. Even though we've done the same thing day after day, there is invigoration, not boredom.

When we are really paying attention, *nothing is the same*. Each activity is vibrant, and the nuance of our experience is not missed. At breakfast, the beauty of the steam rising from the golden cornmeal in a black lacquer bowl pierces the heart with gratitude. We come to experience no resistance to that precise (some may think fussy) way that things are done at Zen retreats.

Of course, it's arbitrary. Things can be done any number of ways. Would it really matter if the chopsticks were placed on the other side of the eating bowls from where they lie? The ritual is not really about what we are doing, but how we are doing it. The particular way that things are done serves as a barometer for our attentiveness and helps develop the *ritual of awareness*. It is through awareness that the wisdom of nonduality bathes and transforms our way of being with the world.

At Zen retreats, scheduled activities are done with everyone in attendance. This is immersion into the Buddha's truth of

interdependence as we literally practice with all beings. Practitioners impart energy and encouragement to one another, and through these subtle means we learn the deep meaning of Taking Refuge in the Sangha.

After just a few periods of meditation, the beeping watch can be an endearing manifestation of our humanness that evokes no resistance. Sitting without resistance leaves us open and transparent, with a liberating acceptance of all that is happening. The beeping watch becomes just another sound in our environment, intrinsically equal to the song of the wren but different from it. Thus the wren might move us to tears while the watch may evoke an internal giggle—or no response at all. Our being open, transparent, and accepting does not mean there are no differences in our responses.

No resistance is the key to experiencing the joy of Zen practice. If you have resistance, if you question why everything is done the way it is, if you become internally oppositional, you entirely miss the point of practice and will have a miserable time of it. Indeed, you will experience no difference between being on retreat and your ordinary life. But we come to retreat to learn another way of *being*. Once learned, that other way of being changes our entire life. As resistance drops away, we understand what Dōgen means when he tells us, "If you concentrate your effort single-mindedly, that in itself is Negotiating the Way. Practice-realization is naturally undefiled. Going forward in practice is a matter of everydayness."[101]

No resistance is the key to practice, on retreat and in our lives. Through the practice of zazen we learn the dance of self and selflessness and that "practice is enlightenment."

Nothing illustrates this more than the deeply felt response one may experience each morning to the ritual of "Breaking the Silence." During ango practice the last sitting period of the day initiates the Great Silence. This silence is maintained until after the second meditation period of the morning, at daybreak.

The day begins about two hours before dawn to the sound of a hand bell ringing throughout the compound. Soon the first sitting period will begin. There is no snooze button to hit. You rise quickly and silently dress for the *zendo* (meditation hall). After attending to your personal needs you walk a short distance from the bathhouse to the zendo.

At Hokyoji Monastery in southeastern Minnesota, where I practiced, facilities were sparse and we spent a lot of time outdoors. If you're like I was, you may still be groggy when the crisp morning air strikes you. On clear mornings the country sky is a star-studded dome over the valley. Sometimes there is such an incredible stillness that it is as if the world is conspiring to be quiet enough for you to hear something important. Other times, as anyone who has ever lived in the country knows, there is no such thing as silence; a dog is barking, a cow moos, the trees are busy chatting through the rustling of their leaves, the owls have not yet retired for the night…

When the moon is full, it lights your way. Other mornings when there is no moon or the cloud cover is thick, you witness the soft yellow glow of flashlights in the distance, as other people

make their way through the dewed field to the hall. You can tell, from the direction the light is coming, who they are. There is deep intimacy in that recognition and you are filled to the brim with happiness.

These are my remembrances of the zendo as it was before electricity was even installed. The warm flicker of candlelight beckons you as the last remnants of a dream you no longer remember, slip away. A few creaky stairs bring you to the shoe rack on the outdoor platform that surrounds the hall. Even if the weather is cold, you remove your socks because the boards are wet at that time of the morning, and they will get soaked before you enter the building.

As you enter the meditation hall appropriately, with your left foot first, your hands are in *gassho* (palm to palm and raised to the level of your lips.) You cross the threshold and a framed picture depicting Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, greets you. There is an oil lamp burning on his left and a vase of elegantly arranged wildflowers on his right. Below the picture in the center of the altar table is a readied incense dish. You bow to the altar and walk quietly to your sitting cushion.

Participants gradually assemble into the hall within 10 minutes of the start of the first meditation period of the day. The rustle of activity has hushed before you hear the soft crunch of sandals on the gravel path leading from the teacher's hut to the meditation hall. The teacher enters the room and does a series of formal bows at the altar, before circling the hall in gassho as a greeting. When he or she passes by your sitting place, you gassho "good morning" in return. There is more bowing at the altar and

the lighting of incense choreographed to the striking of a bell three times. That indicates the official start of the meditation period, as the teacher settles into position for zazen.

Two 40-minute periods of zazen follow, with 10 minutes of *kinhin* (walking meditation) between them. Before the end of the second meditation period, an attendant rises to leave the zendo. Familiar squeaks of the sliding door and soft footfalls on the platform mark her progress. A quiet moment passes while she slips on her shoes, before descending the stairs to cross the field to the bell tower that holds the *bansho*—a long cylindrical gong that is struck four times a day to announce the time. It takes approximately 10 minutes to strike the bansho the customary eighteen rings for that time of the day. Some mornings the first strike of the gong coordinates perfectly with the first notes of a bird's song. Whatever the weather (this can effect the sound) or the skill of the attendant on that particular morning, the voice of the bansho is a delight that never wanes. This is true whether you are sitting still in the zendo, or you are the person whose privelge it is to ring the time.

In response to the last strike of the bansho, the tenzo is standing ready on the porch of the kitchen building and begins the introduction to three roll downs that will take place on the *umpan* (another temple instrument). The umpan is made of metal, flat and ornately shaped like a cloud. Its greeting communicates that breakfast is ready to be served.

After the umpan "performance," the *han* that hangs from the deck of the zendo makes its solo in this ceremonial symphony. The han is a large piece of rectangular wood that hangs suspended by a

thick rope in the open space between the roof and the banister on the front side of the building. On the han is an inscription that you pass every time you enter the meditation hall. It reads:

Birth and Death are the Great Matter
Impermanence is Swift
Awaken to this Reality
Practice without Delay

The last hits of the han are echoed by the umpan in a lovely round of quickened strikes for the final roll-down. This is immediately followed by the *Doan* (zendo attendant) ringing the bell that ends the meditation period.

Practitioners break their silence by reciting the verse of the *okesa* (a monk's outer robe), the first lines of which are: "Great robe of liberation, virtuous field far beyond form and emptiness." Each morning is a renewal of the vow to awaken. There were times, at that precise moment of reciting the verse, when I actually felt the presence of Master Dōgen. In the timeless realm, 800 years and 10,000 miles of separation present no barrier. Through Zen training and steadfastly studying Master Dōgen's lessons for Negotiating the Way, one may come to realize that the whole world is our monastery, and every activity of the phenomenal world is "Breaking the Silence."

Glossary

Anatta—Sanskrit term for no self-nature. No self-nature is unique to the Buddha's teaching, and is the result of a penetrating understanding of impermanence and dependent co-origination.

Ango—Zen training period / 30 to 90 days

Bansho—A long cylindrical bell that hangs outdoors. The temple instrument that announces the time at a monastery

Bodhisattva—An awakened being, one on the path to awakening. The ideal of Mahayana Buddhism; a person dedicated to the liberation of all beings.

Buddha-dharma—The teachings of the Buddha—universal truths

Dependent Co-Origination — Also referred to as Interdependent Co-Origination or Co-dependent Origination. The teaching that all phenomena are dependent on causes and conditions and that no "thing" has an independent, permanent existence.

Dharma—See Buddha-dharma

Doan—Monastery officer responsible for taking care of the zendo, timing meditation, and leading chanting services

Dokusan—The private encounter between a Zen master and a student

Dukkha—Suffering, dissatisfaction, (ordinary pain, impermanence, and conditioned states.)

Emptiness—The nature of reality as impermanence and phenomena arising through dependent co-origination

Gassho—Bowing gesture of greeting and respect. Hands are held palm-to-palm and raised to the level of the lips.

Han—Monastery instrument that hangs outside the zendo

Kinhin—Walking meditation practiced between periods of zazen

Koan—A question that reason and analysis alone cannot resolve. Also called public cases (anecdotes of masters and students from ancient past to present) that some schools of Zen use to anchor meditation practice. **Natural koan**—the existential dilemma of a practitioner.

Mondo—The recorded exchange between a Zen master and student often reflecting the enlightenment experience of an individual

Nirvana—Freedom from suffering through overcoming the fundamental misperception of believing that things have an intrinsic nature

Okesa—The robe of Buddha depicting a rice field, and represents cultivation of mind. It is the outer robe worn by monks and nuns.

Prajna—Wisdom that comes with the recognition of nonduality

Saha world—This world of hardship

Samsara—The world of our usual dualistic understanding, the result of which is dukkha. Also, the cycle of birth and death (wheel of life) experienced until liberation.

Satori—Awakening

Sesshin—Intensive meditation retreat

Shikantaza—Meditation practice of Soto Zen, "just sitting." An objectless state of awareness

Shin—Japanese term meaning heart-mind

Shobogenzo—The Eye and Treasury of the True Law—The collected writings of Zen Master Dōgen written between 1231 and 1253.

Suchness—The direct perception of Emptiness as the true nature of reality

Tenzo—Monastery cook

Umpan—Monastery instrument that hangs outside the kitchen building.

Zazen—Zen meditation / Shikantaza in Soto Zen tradition

Zendo—Meditation hall

Endnotes

Introduction

[1] Eihei Dōgen, "Fukanzazengi" [1227], Hokyoji Monastery Chant Book

[2] Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History/Japan* (Boston: Tuttle Pub.1990 p. 51)

[3] Ibid. p. 53

[4] Ibid. p. 56

Chapter One: The Secret in Our Hearts

[5] Eihei Dōgen, "Actualizing the Fundamental Point" [1233], ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Enlightenment Unfolds: The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dōgen* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000, p. 36)

[6] I would like to acknowledge the influence Stephen Batchelor's work, *Alone With Others*, had on the evolution of this chapter. His work influenced my thinking on the subject of "grasping" versus "being" and the universality of the Buddha's story as everyone's story.

[7] Antoine de Saint-Exupery, *The Little Prince* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1943, p. 87)

[8] Mark Epstein, *Thoughts Without a Thinker* (New York: Perseus Books, 1995, p. 43)

[9] Eihei Dōgen, "Actualizing the Fundamental Point" [1233], ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Enlightenment Unfolds: The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dōgen* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000. p.36)

[10] Hsing Yun, trans. Tom Graham, *Lotus In A Stream* (New York: Weatherhill, Inc., 2000, p.75)

[11] Ibid. p.74

[12] Stephen Bachelor, *Verses From the Center: A Buddhist Vision of the Sublime* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2000, p. 69)

[13] Hannah Holmes, *The Secret Life of Dust* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001, p. 21)

Chapter Two: Spiritual Practice

[14] Eihei Dōgen, "Actualizing the Fundamental Point" [1233], ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Enlightenment Unfolds: The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dōgen* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000, p. 37)

[15] Hsing Yun, trans. Tom Graham, *Buddhism Pure and Simple* (New York: Weatherhill, Inc., 2001a, p.113)

[16] Hsing Yun, trans. Tom Graham, *Describing the Indescribable* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001b, p. 39)

[17] Hsing Yun, trans. Tom Graham, Buddhism Pure and Simple (New York: Weatherhill, Inc. 2001a, p. 40)

[18] Dalai Lama, *Essence of the Heart Sutra* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2002, p.35)

[19] Francesca Fremantle, *Luminous Emptiness* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2001, p. 37)

[20] Dainin Katagiri, ed. Steve Hagen, *You Have to Say Something* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998, pp. 7-8)

Chapter Three: Shikantaza/Just Sitting

[21] Dainin Katagiri, eds. Yuko Conniff and Willa Hathaway, *Returning to Silence* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1988, p. 97)

[22] Ibid. p. 97

[23] Ibid. p. 97

[24] Ibid. p. 98

[25] Ibid. p. 99

[26] David Loy, *Nonduality: A Study In Comparative Philosophy* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Book, 1988, p. 248)

[27] Jack Kornfield, *The Roots of Buddhist Psychology* (Sounds True Audio, 1995)

Chapter Four: Staying on the Path

[28] Norman Waddell, trans., *Zen Words for the Heart: Hakuin's Commentary on the Heart Sutra* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996, p.67)

[29] Anne Bancroft, ed., *The Dhammapada* (Rockport, MA: Element Books Limited, 1997, p.35)

[30] Norman Waddell, trans., *Zen Words for the Heart: Hakuin's Commentary on the Heart Sutra* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996, p. 1)

[31] Robert Aitken, *Zen Master Raven* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2002, p. 59)

[32] Ibid. p.63

[33] Dainin Katagiri, ed. Steve Hagen, *You Have to Say Something* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998, p. 144)

[34] Gail Sher, *One Continuous Mistake: The Four Noble Truths for Writers* (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1999 p. 54)

[35] Dainin Katagiri, ed. Steve Hagen, *You Have to Say Something* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998, p. 144)

Chapter Five: Taking Refuge in the Triple Treasure

[36] Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977, p. 3)

[37] Dainin Katagiri, eds. Yuko Conniff and Willa Hathaway, *Returning to Silence* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1988 p. 71-72)

[38] Leonard Cohen, *Anthem* (More Best of Leonard Cohen CD, 1983)

[39] Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (New York: Grove Press, 1959 rev. 1974, p. 17)

[40] Ibid p. 19

[41] Mu Soeng, *Trust In Mind* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004, p. 28)

[42] Anne Bancroft, ed., *Dhammapada* (Rockport: MA, 1997, p. 99)

[43] Donald Hall, *Life Work* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993, p. 54)

[44] Eihei Dōgen, "Meeting Buddha" [1243], trans. Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, *Master Dōgen's Shobogenzo Book 3* (USA: Booksurge, LLC, 1997-2006, p. 166

Chapter Six: Nonattachment / Vehicle of the Way

[45] Hsing Yun, trans. Tom Graham, *Describing the Indescribable* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001b, p. 88)

[46] Ibid. p. 88

[47] Anne Bancroft, ed., *The Dhammapada* (Rockport: MA, 1997, pp. 41-42)

[48] Dainin Katagiri, ed. Steve Hagen, *You Have to Say Something* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998, p. 77)

[49] Jack Kornfield, *The Roots of Buddhist Psychology* (Sounds True Audio, 1995)

[50] Hsing Yun, trans. Tom Graham, *Describing the Indescribable* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001b, p. 89)

[51] Ibid. p. 90

[52] Eihei Dōgen, "Fukanzazengi" [1227], Hokyoji Monastery Chant Book

Chapter Seven: Ceaseless Practice

[53] Sogyal Rinpoche, *Tibetan Wisdom for Living & Dying* (Sounds True Audio, 1993)

[54] Eihei Dōgen, "Fukanzazengi" [1227], Hokyoji Zen Monastery Chant Book

[55] Ibid.

[56] Shery Nickolson, *Love of Nature and the End of the World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002, pp. 16-17)

[57] Kosho Uchiyama, trans. Shohaku Okumura and Taigen Dan Leighton, *The Wholehearted Way: A Translation of Eihei Dōgen's Bendowa* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1997, p. 58)

[58] Ibid. p. 65

[59] Carl Bielefeldt, *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, p. 140)

[60] Hee-Jin Kim, *Eihei Dōgen Mystical Realist* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2004, p. 205)

[61] Eihei Dōgen, "Pursuing the Truth" [1231], trans. Kosen Nishiyama and John Stevens. *Shobogenzo: The Eye and Treasury of the True Law Vol. I* (Sendai, Japan: Daihokkaikaku Publishing Co., 1975, p.150)

Chapter Eight: Miracles

[62] Eihei Dōgen, "Miracles" [1241], ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Enlightenment Unfolds: The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dō*gen (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999, p. 106)

[63] Ibid. p. 104

[64] Ibid. p. 107

[65] Ibid. p. 107

[66] Ibid. p. 107

[67] Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History—India and China* (New York: McMillan Publishing Co., 1990, p. 91) There is a legend that the following conversation took place at the first meeting of Bodhidharma and Emperor Wu.

> The emperor asked, "Since ascending to the throne, I have had temples built, sutras transcribed, and monks ordained. What merit have I gained?"
>
> The master answered: "No merit at all."
>
> The emperor replied: "Why no merit at all?"
>
> The master said: "All these are but impure motives for merit; … They are like shadows that follow the form, having no reality of their own.
>
> The emperor said: "Then of what kind is true merit?"
>
> He answered: "It is pure knowing, wonderful and perfect. Its essence is emptiness. One cannot gain such merit by worldly means."
>
> Thereupon the emperor asked: "What is the sacred truth's first principle?"
>
> The master replied: "Vast emptiness, nothing sacred."
>
> The emperor said: "Who is this who faces me?"
>
> The master replied: "I don't know."

[68] Taigen Dan Leighton, *Cultivating the Empty Field: The Silent Illumination of Zen Master Hongzhi* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2000, p. 30)

[69] Cited in Mu Soeng, *The Diamond Sutra: Transforming The Way We Perceive the World* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000, pp. 96-97)

[70] Ibid. pp 96-97

[71] Dr. Seuss (Theodore Geisel), *Horton Hears A Who* (New York: Random House, 1954, pp. 1-2)

[72] Eihei Dōgen, "Miracles" [1241] ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Enlightenment Unfolds: The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dōgen* (Boston: Shambhala, 1999, pp. 104-105)

[73] Ibid, p. 105

[74] Ibid. p. 105

[75] Mary Oliver, *New and Selected Poems,* "When Death Comes" (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992, p. 10)

[76] Eihei Dōgen, "Fukanzazengi" [1227], Hokyoji Zen Monastery Chant Book

[77] Eihei Dōgen, "Miracles" [1241], ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Enlightenment Unfolds: The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dōgen* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999, p. 108)

Chapter Nine: Being Intimate With Our Life

[78] Lex Hixon, *Living Buddha Zen* (Burdett, NY: Larson Publications, 1995, p. 66)

[79] Ibid. p. 39

[80] Eihei Dōgen, "Intimate Language" [1243], ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Enlightenment Unfolds: The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dōgen* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999, p. 179)

[81] Ibid. p. 180

[82] Ibid. p. 180

[83] Ibid. p. 180

[84] Ibid. p. 180

[85] Ibid. p. 181

[86] Ibid. p. 183

[87] Ibid. pp. 182-183

[88] Ibid. p. 183

[89] Derrick Jensen, *A Language Older Than Words* (New York: Context Books, 2000 p. 292)

[90] Ibid. p. 293

[91] Ibid. p. 293

[92] Ibid. p. 295

[93] Ibid. p. 298

[94] Eihei Dōgen, "Intimate Language" [1243], ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Enlightenment Unfolds: The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dōgen* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999, p. 183)

Chapter Ten: Negotiating The Way

[95] Hee-Jin Kim, *Dōgen On Meditation and Thinking* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2007, p. 114)

[96] Ibid. p. 24

[97] Ibid. p. 33

[98] Thomas Cleary, *Secrets of the Blue Cliff Record* [Public Case #70 Mouth Shut (I) "If you want to become acquainted with direct perception, it is before mention is made."] (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000, p. 237)

[99] Hee-Jin Kim, *Eihei Dōgen: Mystical Realist* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2004, p. 64)

[100] Hee-Jin Kim. *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2007, p. 114)

[101] Master Dōgen, "Fukanzazengi" [1227], Hokyoji Monastery Chant Book

Bibliography

Aitken, Robert. *Zen Master Raven*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2002.

Bancroft, Anne Ed. *The Dhammapada*. Rockport, MA: Element Books Limited, 1997.

Batchelor, Stephen. *Alone with Others: An Existential Approach to Buddhism*. New York: Grover Press, 1983.

_____. *Verses From the Center: A Buddhist Vision of the Sublime.* New York: Riverhead Books, 2000.

Bielefeldt, Carl. *Dōgen's Manual of Zen Meditation.* Berkeley: University of Calif. Press, 1988.

Cleary, Thomas. *Secrets of the Blue Cliff Record.* Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000.

Dalai Lama. *Essence of the Heart Sutra.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2002.

De Saint-Exupery, Antoine. *The Little Prince.* New York**:** Harcourt Brace & Co, 1943.

Epstein, Mark. *Thoughts Without a Thinker.* New York: Perseus Books, 1995.

Dumoulin, Heinrich. *Zen Buddhism: A History Japan.* New York: McMillan Publishing Co, 1990.

_____. *Zen Buddhism: A History: India & China.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.

Ferguson, Andy. *Zen's Chinese Heritage.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000.

Fremantle, Francesca. *Luminous Emptiness.* Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2001.

Hall, Donald. *Life Work.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

Heifetz, Harold. *Zen and Hasidism.* Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1978.

Hershock, Peter. *Chan Buddhism.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004.

Hixon, Lex. *Living Buddha Zen.* Burdett, NY: Larson Publications, 1995.

Holmes, Hannah. *The Secret Life of Dust: From the Cosmos to the Kitchen Counter, The Big Consequences of Little Things.* Hoboken, NJ**:** John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2001.

Jensen, Derrick. *A Language Older Than Words.* New York: Context Books, 2000.

Katagiri, Dainin, Ed. Yuko Conniff and Willa Hathaway. *Returning to Silence.* Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1988.

_____. Ed. Steve Hagen. *You Have to Say Something.* Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998.

Kim, Hee-Jin. *Eihei Dōgen Mystical Realist.* Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2004.

_____. *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007.

Kornfield, Jack. *The Roots of Buddhist Psychology.* Boulder: Sounds True Audio, 1995.

Larkin, Geri. *Stumbling Toward Enlightenment.* Berkeley: Celestial Arts Publishing, 1997.

Leighton, Taigen Dan. *Cultivating the Empty Field: The Silent Illumination of Zen Master Hongzhi.* Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2000.

Leighton, Taigen Dan and Shohaku Okumura. *Dōgen's Extensive Record: A Translation of the Eihei Koroku.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004.

_____. *Dōgen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community: A Translation of Eihei Shingi.* Albany: State University of New York, 1996.

Loy, David. *Nonduality: A Study In Comparative Philosophy.* Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, Prometheus Books, 1988.

Markova, Dawna. *No Enemies Within: A Creative Process for Discovering What's Right About What's Wrong.* Newburyport, MA: Red Wheel Publishing, 1994.

Nicholsen, Shierry Weber. *Love of Nature and the End of The World.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.

Nicoll, Maurice. *Living Time and the Integration of Life.* London: A. Wheaton & Co, Ltd., 1952, 1981.

Nishiyama, Kosen and John Stevens. *Shobogenzo: The Eye and Treasury of the True Law Vol I.* Sendai, Japan: Daihokkaikaku Publishing Co, 1975.

Nishijima, Gudo and Chodo Cross. *Master Dōgen's Shobogenzo Book 1.* USA: Booksurge, LLC, 1994, 2006.

_____. *Master Dōgen's Shobogenzo Book 3.* USA: Booksurge, LLC, 1997, 2006.

Oliver, Mary. *New and Selected Poems.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.

Powell, William F. *The Record of Tung-shan.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986.

Rahula, Walpola. *What The Buddha Taught.* New York: Grove Press, 1959-rev.1974.

Seuss, Dr. *Horton Hears A Who.* New York: Random House, 1954.

Sher, Gail. *One Continuous Mistake: The Four Noble Truths for Writers.* New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 1999.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony.* New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 1977.

Soeng, Mu. *The Diamond Sutra: Transforming the Way We Perceive the World.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000.

_____. *Trust In Mind.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004.

Sogyal Rinpoche. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying.* Boulder: Sounds True Audio, 1993.

Stuart, Maurine. Ed. Roko Sherry Chayat. *Subtle Sound: The Zen Teachings of Maurine Stuart*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996.

Tanahashi, Kazuaki, Ed. *Enlightenment Unfolds: The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dōgen.* Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000.

Uchiyama, Kosho, Trans. Shohaku Okumura and Taigen Dan Leighton. *The Wholehearted Way: A Translation of Eihei Dōgen's Bendowa.* Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1997.

Waddell, Norman, Trans. *Zen Words for the Heart: Hakuin's Commentary on the Heart Sutra*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996.

Welwood, John. *Toward a Psychology of Awakening.* Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000.

Yun, Hsing, Trans. Tom Graham. *Buddhism Pure and Simple.* New York: Weatherhill, Inc. 2001a.

_____. *Describing the Indescribable.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001b.

_____. *Lotus In A Stream.* New York: Weatherhill, Inc. 2000.

About the Author

Barbara Verkuilen began Zen practice in 1971 at the Chicago Zen Buddhist Temple with Soyu Matsuoka Roshi. She then studied under the guidance of Dainin Katagiri Roshi for 15 years. Following Katagiri Roshi's death in1990, she continued formal training with his Dharma heir, Shoken Winecoff, by whom she was ordained in 1997.

Barbara and her husband Dale, also a Zen priest, co-founded the Midwest Soto Zen Community in 2001, based in Madison, Wisconsin. Barbara holds a BA in Education and an MS in Counselor Education. She is also the author of *The Tale of Zen Master Bho Li*, available at Firethroat Press, www.FirethroatPress.com