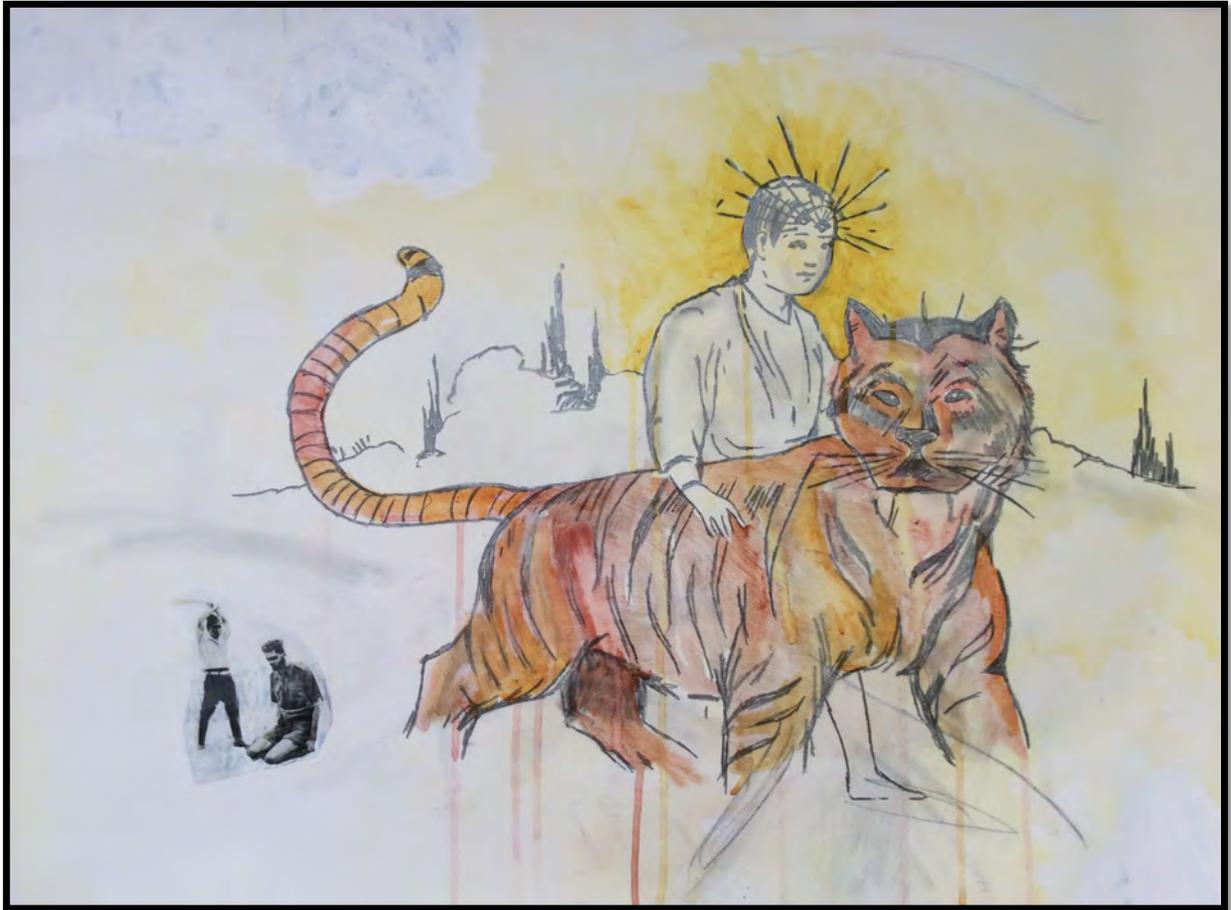


Mind Moon Circle

A journal of the Sydney Zen Centre



Teachings that can't be taught...

Spring/Summer 2015

About the Issue: Teachings that can't be taught...

Stuart Solzberg

Teachings that can't be taught...to me are the essence of the Zen teachings. These beginningless and endless teachings remain impossible to teach, and yet can be learned over and over and over again. From my most sorrowful sorrows to my most joyous of joys, these life experiences prevail to be the true teachings that I will not find in any book or from any teacher, and exemplify the Zen teachings in the deepest of ways and of the clarity found in the unclear mystery.

Many texts, maps, guides, and fingers pointing the way, this is good, crucial and very necessary. But these are not the teachings. To understand Zen intellectually is not the full understanding. I must feel it with every cell in my body, in every follicle of hair on my skin. It is the naturalism and experiential nature of our practice that always prevails in the end. The teachings of a life lived; the passing of time; the ebbs and flows; I am born, I grow, I learn, I live, I joy and I sorrow, I age, I get sick, I die; these cannot be fabricated or forced.

Gradually you purify yourself, eliminating mistaken knowledge and attitudes you have held from the past. Inside and outside become one. You're like a mute person who has had a dream – you know it for yourself alone.

Suddenly Mu breaks open. The heavens are astonished, the earth is shaken.
(Aitken, 1991, p.9)

In my most powerful and great effort I can never convince a wild flower to bloom before all conditions are ripe. The wild flower must realize this for itself and these moments may only unfold in natural due course. Am I not the same? Are we not the same as the wonderful wild flower? Is not the Ancient Way like this?

The Dao that can be expressed

is not the eternal Dao.

The name that can be named

is not the eternal name.

(Wilhelm, 1985, p.27)

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**Next Issue: 40 years of Zen Buddhism in Australia
– what does this mean for you?**

All submissions are welcome. Please send submissions by 1st February, 2016 to
Brendon Stewart at stewarts34@bigpond.com:

“Did the Master teach you ‘that which can not be taught?’”

Extract (permission granted) from *Natural awakening*, Tarchin Hearn 1995,

A long time ago, in the mountainous area near where present day Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia and China come together, there lived a loving father and talented son. At the age of ten, it was decided to send the boy to study with a great master who resided in the neighbouring valley. The father urged his son to apply himself to his studies and to absorb everything the master taught.

For Eight years, the boy was away. He developed into a brilliant student quickly outstripping all his peers. He learned Sanskrit and was able to translate any text. He memorised many tantras and shastras and became skilled in philosophical debate. He personally assisted the Master and received all the esoteric transmissions. By the age of 18, he was already quite well known and everyone thought he would be the Master’s successor. One day, the Master called him in and said he had nothing further to teach and that the young man should go back to his valley and begin to help others.

Returning home, he was greeted by his father who saw his now grown up son, very certain about his life and filled with a sense of his own importance. His book knowledge was formidable, but his pride prevented him from really seeing or hearing anyone else. The father was secretly dismayed. After a few days of listening to his son going on about his studies and accomplishments, he decided he would have to intervene. He asked, “Did the Master teach you ‘that which can not be taught?’”

Now it was the young man’s turn to be disturbed. He was sure he had received all the teachings but he hadn’t heard of this one. “This is a very important teaching” his father said. “You’d better go back and ask for it.” So the young man went and asked the Master to teach him that which can not be taught. The Master looked at him and asked, “Are you sure you are ready for such a lesson?” The young man insisted that he was.

“ All right,” said the Master. “You see that flock of two hundred sheep? Take them up the mountain and don’t come down until there are one thousand. Then I will give you the teaching.”

The young man climbed the slopes with the flock, puzzling over his teacher’s instruction. Wolves came in the very first week and ate a dozen sheep. Then the weather grew cold and killed even more.

During the first year he became frustrated and depressed. As the was gradually reduced, he despaired of ever accomplishing his master’s instructions. Each day he counted the sheep and each day he spent hours speculating on what a teaching that couldn’t be taught might be, and how people would be impressed by him after he had attained it.

The months passed, the years passed, and it became obvious that it would take time to raise one thousand sheep. The young man grew older and gradually forgot about his life in the valley. Out of necessity he became more and more attuned to the mountains. He eventually gave up counting his flock and began to marvel at the harmony and beauty of nature. He found himself actually putting into practice the teachings he had received.

Some years, the wolves would take more sheep. Some years the grass grew rich and green and many lambs played in the meadows. He began to relax and settle into a deepening appreciation

of his mountain world. Exploring the shrubs and flowers and the interweaving of creature's lives, he learned to love the world he was in.

One day, he was sitting in front of his hut enjoying the morning light when he remembered his teacher's parting instruction. More out of curiosity than any compulsion, he counted the sheep. There were now well over a thousand. That day he began to slowly make his way down the mountain. He walked with a vibrant awareness of everything around him. The sheep, the mountain, his body and mind, the streams and sky were one harmonious arising. It didn't even occur to him that he no longer cared if he received this special teaching or not.

As he entered the village, the Master came out and watched him approach. He spread his arms and warmly embraced the young man. "I see you have finally learned that which can not be taught."



Hearn, T 1995, Natural awakening, Wangapeka Books, New Zealand, (p.9-11)

No Teaching

Paul Maloney

Heikiganroku CASE 11: Huang Po and the Brewers' Lees

CASE

Huang Po addressed his assembled monks and said, "You are all gobblers of brewers' lees. If you go about on pilgrimage like this, where will you have Today? Do you know that there are no teachers of Ch'an in all of China?"

A monk stepped forward and said, "But surely there are those in all regions who reform monks and govern assemblies of disciples?"

Huang Po said, "I do not say that there is no Ch'an; it's just that there are no teachers."

COMMENT

This koan is interesting in its depth, and very challenging to both students of Zen, and those who would call themselves teachers of Zen.

As the scene opens, we find Huang Po addressing the monks in his assembly.

"All of you are gobblers of brewers' lees."

After the brewer has extracted the essential alcoholic ingredients, rice wine perhaps, the lees are the leftovers: a low-grade intoxicant, with little power to be effective. So quite a rebuke, one might say.

Now it may be assumed that Huang Po, in calling the monks "gobblers of dregs," was implying that they were going around listening to various leaders of assemblies, and picking up second-hand ideas, the writings and sayings of others. Yet, if that were the case, Huang Po would be devaluing the words of the Buddha Shakyamuni and the Ancestors of our lineage. This is something that he surely would not have done. Huang Po, like his predecessors and successors, was deeply learned in the Buddhist Tripitika: the Sutras, Vinaya, and Abhidharma, and he freely used references to them in his talks.

We should be careful when interpreting Bodhidharma's declaration that "Zen is a special teaching outside the sutras. No reliance on words and letters. A direct transmission from heart to heart." Note, he said "no reliance on words," not "no use for words." While experience comes first, words can follow.

In his preface to the Mumonkan, Mumon has this to say,

The Buddha mind and words point the way; the Gateless Barrier is the entry. There is no gate from the beginning, so how do you pass through it? Haven't you heard that things that come in through the gate are not the family treasure? Things gained from caused circumstances have a beginning and an end – formation and destruction.

Such talk raises waves where there is no wind, and gouges wounds in healthy flesh. How much more foolish are those who depend upon words and seek understanding by their

intellect! They try to hit the moon with a stick. They scratch their shoes when their feet itch.
(Aitken MMK p. 3)

Note that he states, “The Buddha mind and words POINT the way.” They work together for our salvation, and the salvation of others. The Buddha mind guides us, while words provide a map. But words are not the thing to which they point, and the map is not the territory.

Huang Po then asks,

“If you go about on pilgrimage like this, where will you have Today?”

We may well ask, “Going about like what?” What is Huang Po getting at? Is he being critical of the monks, or is he suggesting that they might be missing something important?

In his “Song of Zazen” Hakuin tells us that the human condition is one of wandering, and asks the question:

*Lost on dark paths of ignorance
we wander through the six worlds,
from dark path to dark path we wander,
when shall we be freed from birth and death?*

The monks of Huang Po’s time are really no different from people of today, no different from us. Are we not all pilgrims, wandering through the six worlds? And this is the import of Huang Po’s message to his monks. Like us, they are lost on dark paths of ignorance; ignorance of our Buddha Nature.

Then Huang Po asks the core question:

“Where will you have Today?”

Just like Huang Po’s monks, we are constantly looking beyond our present circumstances, seeking for something else. We believe that heaven, truth and nirvana lie elsewhere. So we keep searching. Our gaze is fixed on something beyond the horizon, never where we are. In doing so we don’t “have today.”

In Chapter 6 of the Shobogenzo Dōgen tells us:

“What every buddha and every patriarch has maintained and relied upon, without exception, is just “mind here and now is buddha.”

SOKU-SHIN-ZE-BUTSU 即 心 是 仏)

It is in the present that we find our Buddha Nature.
The Surangama Sutra tells us:

From the beginning-less past right up to your present existence you have mistakenly regarded a thief as your own son and your changeless original nature has thus been lost to you. Because of that you have been transmigrating through the cycle of birth and death.
(Quoted in Hakuin p. 67)

Think of that:

“your changeless original nature has thus been lost to you”

How can that be? How can we lose that which is fundamentally us, our self nature? Well, it is not so much that we lose it, as that we lose sight of it. While it is always there, we can't see it.

And it is this lack of knowledge that is of concern to Huang Po. Just wandering around gobbling brewer's lees will not save us. When we behave this way how can we find today? That is to say, how can we be present to reality, and realise the truth of the Buddhadharma?

So, how do we go about seeing our Buddha Nature?

In a sermon Szu-hsin Wu-hsin the 12th century Ch'an master of of Huanglung says,

Abandon all the workings of your relative consciousness, which you have been cherishing since eternity; retire within your inner being and see into the reason of it. As your self-reflection grows deeper and deeper, the moment will surely come upon you when the spiritual flower will suddenly burst into bloom, illuminating the entire universe. The experience is incommunicable, though you yourself know perfectly well what it is.

This is the moment when you can transform this great earth into solid gold, and the great rivers into an ocean of milk. What a satisfaction this is then to your daily life! Being so, do not waste your time with words and phrases, or by searching for the truth of Zen in books; for the truth is not to be found there.”

So where does a teacher fit in, if indeed they fit in at all? This tells us something, possibly unique, about the nature of the Zen school. Huang Po is not saying that the monks should not go on pilgrimage. What he is telling them is they should not expect to be taught anything useful.

Haven't you heard that things that come in through the gate are not the family treasure.

Why? Because there was no one in all T'ang China at the time who could teach the monks the essential matter. And it is true of Australia today. While it can be realised, it cannot be taught. As Huang Po well understood, the leaders of Zen assemblies can't talk us out of our deluded condition. Talk, for the most part, usually tends to reinforce it. The best they can do is to optimise the conditions for their students. But to truly learn, the student has to be ripe.

Regard.

Tung-shan came to see Yun-men. Yun-men asked him, “Where were you most recently?”

Tung-shan said, “At Ch'-tu.”

Yun-men said, “Where you during the summer?”

Tung-shan said, “At Pao-tzu Monastery in Hu-nan.”

Yun-men said, “When did you leave there?”

Tung-shan said, “August 25th.”

Yun-men said, “I spare you sixty blows.”

Basically, he is saying, “You are not worth the effort.” Tung-shan would not have slept well that night.

Next day, Tung-shan came again and said, “Yesterday you said you spared me sixty blows. I don’t know where I was at fault.”

Yun-men said, “You rice-bag! Do you go about in such a way, now west of the river, now south of the lake?”

With this, Tung-shan had great Awakening.

(Tung-shan’s Sixty Blows MMK Case 15)

Superficially, it would seem that Yun-men did not teach Tung-shan anything at all, and that is probably true. Nevertheless Tung-shan had a great awakening. So what went on between these two worthies that gave such a positive result? What was it that Tung-shan awakened to?

Can Yun-men be called a teacher? If so, what did he teach?

A monk asked Chao-cho, “Does a dog have Buddha Nature or not?”

Chao-cho said, “Mu.”

Mu? That’s it? That’s all he said? What kind of an answer is that? You may well ask. Is this a teaching? There is no record of what happened to the monk, but I am grateful for his question. That “Mu” of Joshu’s has been making trouble for students of Zen ever since.

Then there is the Buddha, Shakyamuni, himself.

When the World-Honored One twirled a flower and twinkled his eyes, Mahakasyapa broke into a broad smile. The World-Honored one said, “I have the treasure eye of true Dharma and the wonderful mind of Dharma. I entrust this to Mahakasyapa.”

The Buddha held up a flower and twirled it. The assembly was dumfounded, as well they might be. They would have been expecting some words of great profundity, instead they get a flower! Mahakasyapa alone smiled, or, as some reports have it, he cracked his face. And for that, he became the First Patriarch of Buddhism. How can the twirling a flower be the foundation of our lineage? And yet there has been an uninterrupted chain of transmissions for 2,500 years! So if there are exotic creatures that could be called “Zen teachers,” their method is very strange indeed.

Well, there is a problem here, you see, and it is this.

It is not possible to give a straight answer to a crooked question.

And most of the questions that people ask, when enquiring about the human condition, are crooked questions. While Zen teachers are unable to give straight answers to crooked questions, they can redirect their student’s enquiry by asking them to answer straight questions about reality. We should not expect too much from our teachers. The teacher may be able to give a peck in response to the student’s scratching, but it is up to the student to work her way out of the shell. As the Zen Master Ikkyu wrote,

“I’d like to offer something to help you; but in the Zen School we don’t have a single thing.”

In contemporary terms, this form of “teaching” can be regarded as problem-based learning. The student is given a question, and has to find the answer, not through the intellect but through practice. For example,

“What is Mu?” “What is the sound of a single hand?” “Who is hearing?”

“What is your original face, before your parents were born?”

Here is an example, given by Dōgen in Chapter 9 of the Shobogenzo, “The Voices of the River-Valley and the Form of the Mountains.” (Nishijima and Cross Tl.)

Kyogen Chikan was a member of the assembly of Zen Master Dai-I Dai-en. On one occasion, Dai-I said to Kyogen, “you are sharp and bright, and you have understanding. Without quoting from any text or commentary, speak a phrase for me in the state you had before your parents were born.”

After some years of striving, Kyogen went to Dai-i and pleaded, “*Chikan is dull in body-and-mind and cannot express the truth. Would the master say something for me?* Dai-I says, “*I would not mind saying something for you, [but if I did so,] perhaps you would bear a grudge against me later.*”

After more years of fruitless searching, Kyogen went to live by himself. He made a thatched hut on the remains of the late National master Daisho’s hermitage, and dwelt alone for some years. There planted a bamboo and made it his friend. One day, while sweeping the path, a piece of tile flew up and struck the bamboo with a Crack!! Hearing this sound, Kyogen’s Dharma eye suddenly opened.

He bathed and purified himself, and, facing Mount Dai-I, he burnt incense and did prostrations. Then, directing himself to [Master] Dai-I he says, “Great Master Dai-I! If you had explained it to me before, how would this thing here have been possible? The depth of your kindness surpasses that of a parent.’ Finally, he makes the following verse:

*At a single stroke I lost recognition.
No longer need I practice self-discipline.
[I am] manifesting behaviour in the way of the ancients,
Never falling into despondency.
There is no trace anywhere:
[The state] is dignified action beyond sound and form.
People everywhere who have realized the truth,
All will praise [these] supreme makings”*

Note the teacher’s role in Kyogen’s awakening. One might say that he just asked a question. But what a question, what a method, what a result.

“Great Master Dai-I! If you had explained it to me before, how would this thing here have been possible? The depth of your kindness surpasses that of a parent.’

When attending a funeral, you may demand to know, “Living or dead?” But the best answer you will ever get is, “I can’t say living, I can’t say dead.” And you may demand to know, “If you are a teacher, why can’t you say?”

Aren't teachers supposed to know the answers to questions such as these? I recall an event way back at a sesshin in the early 80's. At this sesshin we had sossan with Aitken Roshi for the first time. I went up and asked, "The Buddha said, 'All beings are from the beginning Buddha, only their ignorance and delusion prevent them from attesting to this fact.' So why is there ignorance rather than enlightenment?"

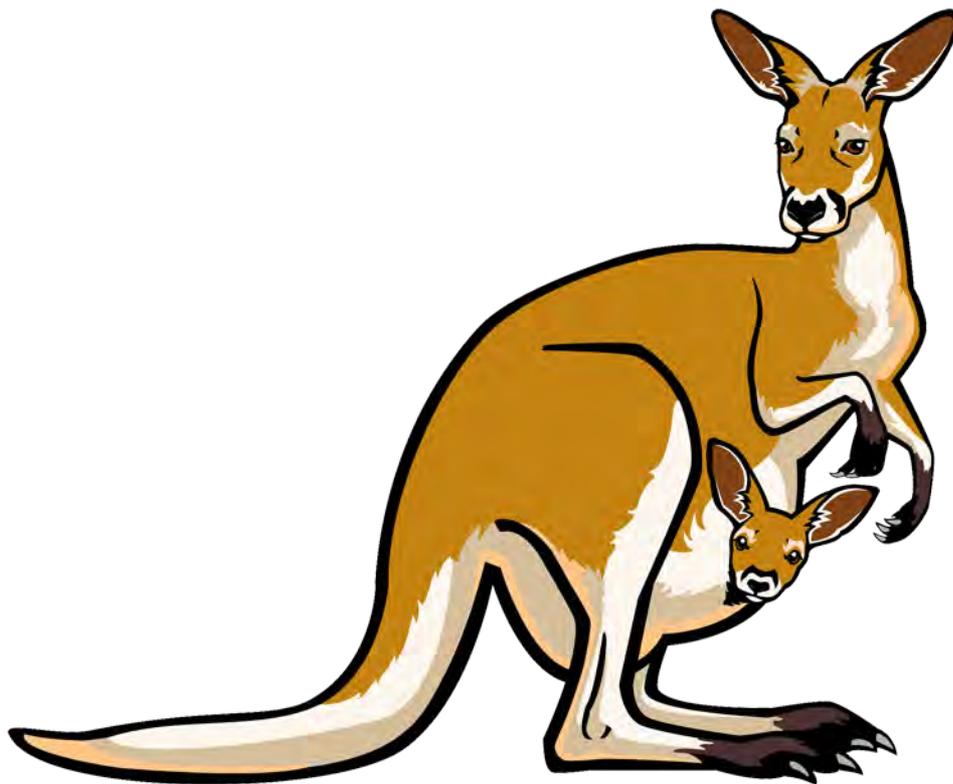
Aitken Roshi said, "I don't know."

I said, "If you don't know, why are you a Roshi?"

Aitken Roshi said, "Sometimes I feel inadequate for the task."

Reflecting of this later I appreciated Aitken Roshi's humanity as shown in his ignorance. It allowed me, in my ignorance, to identify with him, relate to him. Such relating would be impossible with the superhuman characters of other traditions.

So, if you are looking in a Zen centre for a guru to save you, you have come to the wrong place. The only gurus you will find at Gorricks Run are kangaroos!



GLOBAL WARMING, SUFFERING AND THE BODHISATTVA VOW

The many beings are numberless, I vow to serve them (1)

Gillian Coote

The more I learn about the impacts of global warming on all the many beings and their habitats, the more I mourn. Is it like that for you? I wonder if it's like that for climate scientists, regarded as being all logic, all rationality, no matter what they know of our planet's predicament, and rarely asked how they feel about what their work reveals? Dr Sarah Perkins, an Extreme Events climate scientist based in Sydney, writes:

My Dear Friend,

For sometime now I've been terribly worried. I wish I didn't have to acknowledge it, but everything I have feared is happening. I used to think I was paranoid, but it's true. She's slipping away from us. She's been showing signs of acute illness for quite a while, but no one has really done anything. Her increased erratic behaviour is something I've especially noticed. Certain behaviours that were only rare occurrences are starting to occur more often, and with heightened anger. I've tried to highlight these changes time and time again, as well as their speed of increase, but no one has paid attention.

It almost seems everyone has been ignoring me completely, and I'm not sure why. Is it easier to pretend there's no illness, hoping it will go away? Or because they've never had to live without her, so the thought of death is impossible? perhaps they cannot see they've done this to her. We all have.

To me this is all false logic. How can you ignore the severe sickness of someone you are so intricately connected to and dependent upon? How can you let your selfishness and greed take control, and not protect and nurture those who need it most? How can anyone not feel an overwhelming sense of care and responsibility when those so dear to us are so desperately ill? How can you push all this to the back of your mind? This is something I will never understand. Perhaps I'm the odd one out, the anomaly of the human race. The one who cares enough, who has the compassion, to want to help make her better.

The thing is we can make her better!! If we work together, we can cure this terrible illness and restore her to her old self before we exploited her. But we must act quickly, we must act together. Time is ticking, and we need to act now.

This is one of many statements by climate scientists from all over the world on *isthishowyoufeel?* website. (2)

For Zen students too, the persistence of grief and despair in the shadow of global warming raises many questions. Questions about the Buddha's teaching, about the Four Noble Truths: there is suffering, there is a cause of suffering, there is a way out of suffering, which is the Eightfold noble path. So, why am I suffering? Questions about the Heart Sutra's claim that wisdom removes all anguish: *Therefore know that Prajna Paramita is the great sacred mantra, which **completely** removes all anguish.* But it doesn't, not once and for all. There's always that little tail.

Recently at a Faith Ecology Network forum, Dr Haydn Washington spoke to the question, Healthy Earth, Endless Growth – are they compatible? He was pessimistic, although optimistic about opportunities to move to a sustainable economic model. Prior to the forum, and as one of five

who would respond to his presentation, I made a file of clippings collected over the years relating to climate outcomes, and read Naomi Klein's 'This Changes Everything' (3) - about how human beings are over-running the earth, outgrowing this planet's resources and stuffing up the atmosphere and oceans in the process. About how global temperature records were broken in June this year with land and sea surface temperatures the warmest in 136 years. And how, during those few hours we were at the seminar, Dr Washington told us that between 4 and 50 species had gone extinct. That we're going through the 6th greatest extinction on the planet, which scientists call the Holocene extinction because it's largely due to us. (Elizabeth Kolbert's book, The 6th Extinction (4), won this year's Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction, if you want to read more.)

How, in 2014, 19 million humans were displaced by natural disasters, mostly the result of typhoons, flooding and other weather-related events, which are becoming more frequent and intense. The UN doesn't recognise these displaced people as refugees under the 1951 definition, viz: A refugee is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.' There are now 50 million of these refugees without adding the global-warming refugees. Perhaps the UN is working on a newer, more relevant definition right now. I hope so as one million people are now homeless in Myanmar because of severe flooding.

Intentional confusion around whether global warming is man-made or not continues to minimise actions that could slow it down, which adds frustration to grief, which becomes despair. For some, the despair is so intense, they block hearing and seeing the many elements which point to the further destruction of life on earth. They stop watching the news, or reading the papers. They close off. This happened during the Cold War as well and was called psychic numbing, or psychic dissonance – on the surface people went about their business as usual, while underneath there was an awareness of impending doom. People built protective shields and retreated into apathy, aided by mass distractions like tv. Now there's nothing *but* distractions - Instagram, Twitter, Facebook – so this little joke may be apposite.

Q: What's the difference between ignorance and apathy?

A: I don't know and I don't care!

Apathia is a Greek word that literally means 'non-suffering' – it's the inability or refusal to experience pain. When Joanna Macy published 'Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age', in 1983 (5), the threat of nuclear war wasn't the only peril she was addressing. She wrote: 'The progressive destruction of our life-support system...toxic wastes, acid rain, loss of topsoil and forestland, spreading deserts, dying seas, expiring species of plant and animal life – these facts assail us through news reports and our own sensory experience in the air we breathe, the water we drink, and what we see happening to our environment. These developments, arising from our ways of consumption and production, prefigure yet larger-scale disasters.' Prescient words, Joanna.

And her concerns for the world included the growing misery of half the planet's people. She wrote: 'Prevailing economic patterns impoverish the Third World causing hunger, homelessness and disease. In no history has so large a proportion of humanity lacked the means for a decent and healthy life. With growing disparity between the 'haves' and 'have nots', the spread of totalitarian regimes and the use of detention and torture on an unprecedented scale, deep rage erupts, turning our planet into a tinder box.' Again, prescient words. Thomas Picketty confirmed

these growing inequalities with his highly-regarded book, Capital in the 21st Century (6).

Here is suffering writ large. Anguish writ large. The Buddha tells us that the origin or cause of *Duhkha*, suffering, is *tanha*, desire or craving, and that when we see into the provisionality of the self, and the impermanence and interdependence of all beings, we will be liberated from anguish. We will realise non-attachment. We will be free from suffering. Why then, when beholding the symptoms of a toxic planet, do grief and despair continue to arise? Is this because of my attachment to the planet? Should I become ‘non-attached’ somehow? Is this the meaning of equanimity? But then, aren’t we practising apathy while pretending equanimity? An ancient Chinese fishing expedition exposes this delusion.

An old woman had supported a monk for twenty years, letting him live in a hut on her land. After all this time she thought the monk might by now have experienced some realisation, so she decided to test him. Rather than taking him his daily meal herself, she asked her beautiful niece to deliver it, instructing the girl to embrace the monk and report back how he responded. When the girl returned, she said that the monk had simply stood stock still, as if frozen. The old woman then headed for the monk’s hut. ‘What was it like’, she asked him, ‘when you felt the girl’s warm body against yours?’ He answered, ‘Like a withering tree on a rock in winter, utterly without warmth.’ Furious, the old woman threw him out and burned down his hut, exclaiming, ‘How could I have wasted all these years on such a fraud?’

Along with the First Precept, to refrain from taking life – or inversely, to nurture all life - the first vow of the bodhisattva is to save the many beings, to give life to them, to suffer *with* them. *Suffering with* is the very definition of compassion – *com* – with, *passion* - suffer – and here is the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, hearing the sounds of the world’s suffering, responding to the world’s suffering, completely naturally, doing what needs to be done. This is the revelation of the Mahayana, nuancing the Four Noble Truths, expanding the field of practice and a long, long way from that withering tree on a rock in winter.

Aitken Roshi, writing in *The Practice of Perfection*: ‘Duhkha, Duhkha,’ the Buddha said ‘All is Duhkha,’ and he went on to teach the way of liberation from Duhkha. Usually Duhkha is translated as ‘suffering’ but *suffering* is an ambiguous word that can mean *permission*. ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me,’ Jesus said. Let them come. Let it happen. Suffering is what Issa and Basho experienced and they were not looking for liberation from it at all. The priest Issan Dorsey said, ‘To have AIDS is to be alive.’ The whole world is sick; the whole world suffers and its beings are constantly dying. ***Duhkha, on the other hand, is resistance to suffering. It is the anguish we feel when we don’t want to suffer. The Buddha taught the Eightfold Path as the liberation from this anguish of futile self-protection.*** (7)

Joanna Macy again: ‘The feelings that assail us now cannot be equated with dread of our own individual demise. Their source lies less in concerns for the personal self than in apprehensions of collective suffering – of what happens to others, to human life and fellow species, to the heritage we share, the unborn generations to come and our green planet herself. It is the distress we feel on behalf of, or more precisely in connection with the larger whole of which we are a part. It is our pain for the world.’ (8)

Here is the Net of Indra, each being in the vast web reflecting every other being, nothing separate. Here is wisdom. And here our responses arise. We respond from the heart of compassion and wisdom. From the heart of love. We do what we can, even though grief and despair remain. These feelings are intense *because* we realise the Net of Indra.

Mornings, my thought is Kanzeon, evenings my thought is Kanzeon.

And whether we write, take photos, make art to inspire others about the great beauty and wonder of the lives of other beings - whether we join an environment group, or pick up rubbish from the gutter or the beach as we walk along, so that at least that piece of plastic doesn't end up strangling pelicans or adding to the vast Pacific Gyre, or atone for the ways we've despoiled the bush and practise bush regeneration or work to support refugees, each of us *can* make a difference.

Watching the spider at work

I vow with all beings

To cherish the web of the universe

Touch one point and everything moves.

-Robert Aitken (9)

One Earth Sangha, a US based website, offers an online course for aspiring EcoSattvas – their word - with a range of teachers including Joanna Macy. On their website is a photo of people walking in Rome around the time when the Pope came out with his encyclical, *Laudate Si – Praise Be*, on the care of our common home. They were carrying a banner declaring: '*The earth is our body*'. The Australian Conservation Foundation is focussing on People's Climate Marches in cities across Australia in late November – why not find an old tee-shirt, write on it: *the earth is our body* – and join in?

Thich Nhat Hanh, in his refiguring of the Precepts for his Order of Interbeing has, as the Fourth Precept: 'Do not avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Find ways to be with those who are suffering by all means, including personal contact and visits, images and sounds. By such means, awaken yourself and others to the reality of suffering in the world.'⁽¹⁰⁾

But be aware that we need to take care of ourselves as well - if you can't bear another report, say, of starving orphaned sea-lion pups washing onto Californian shores because rising ocean temperatures are affecting the squid, sardines and other animals, their core diet, driving them ever deeper and further away so the mothers spend so much longer away foraging that their starving pups set out to find food before they're ready - then don't read it – not now anyway. Fix your oxygen mask first, then attend to the kids.

There *are* positive signs. The Hague recently ordered the Dutch government to cut its emissions by at least 25% within five years in a landmark ruling which is expected to cause ripples round the world. Jubilant campaigners from the group called Urgenda said governments preparing for the Paris climate summit later this year would now need to look over their shoulders for civil rights era-style legal challenges where emissions-cutting pledges are inadequate. Pittsburgh City Council passed a law recently banning all natural gas extraction and stating that nature has 'inalienable and fundamental rights to exist and flourish in the city'. Bolivia and Ecuador have enshrined the rights of Mother Earth into law, indeed, indigenous people show the way. Jeffrey Lee, Senior Traditional Owner and member of the Djok Clan, speaking at the World Parks Congress in Sydney last year:

I said 'no' to uranium mining at Koongarra because I believe that the land and my cultural beliefs are more important than mining and money. Money comes and goes, the land is always here, it always stays; if we look after it, it will look after us. (11)

Perhaps when enough of us move from supporting or believing in the extractivist point of view – (thanks, Naomi Klein, for this term) - dig it up, spew it out – to a regenerative point of view, more of us will find ways to live which will generate life – all of life – and maximise life’s creativity and generativity. Perhaps when enough people realise ‘the economy’ can’t be kept in a separate box from ‘the environment’, the earth will be seen as not merely a resource to be plundered but the very source of life, and the old ways will change.

Meanwhile, Dharma gates are countless, I vow to wake to them - including the Dharma gate of suffering – of grief, frustration and despair – remembering that Dukkha is resistance to suffering, the anguish we feel when we don’t want to suffer.

What Issa Heard

*Two hundred years ago Issa heard the morning birds
singing sutras to this suffering world.*

I heard them too, this morning, which must mean,

*Since we will always have a suffering world,
we must also always have a song.*

- David Budbill (12)



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- 2) isthisshowyoufeel.weebly.com/this-is-how-scientists-feel.html
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- 8) *ibid*, Joanna Macy
- 9) The Dragon That Never Sleeps, Robert Aitken, pub. Northpoint Press, 1992, p.42
- 10) Interbeing, Thich Nhat Hanh, pub. Parallax Press, 1987, p.35 *ibid* Joanna Macy
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ZEN AND CREATIVITY

Brigid Lowry

I have no bowl. I accept it with two hands. Ozaki Hosai

I don't really understand Zen, despite twenty-five years of practice. Koans mystify me, and sitting is often a struggle yet I have a deep and steadfast love of the Great Way. It seems my heart knows something my brain does not. The rigours of a seven day sesshin, with its early rising and long weary hours of meditation, are deeply challenging, yet afterwards I feel alive and at peace with myself and the world. Despite my restless mind and my strong resistance, the hard work of sitting takes me deeper into original mind. Everything opens up. Tastes and smells become more vivid, merriment finds its way into my life and my writing.

Zen and creativity have a long and ancient history. Haiku, ikebana or flower arranging, calligraphy, sumi-e or Japanese brush painting, the Zen garden aesthetic, all are manifestations of the Great Way. When Chinese Zen first travelled to Japan in the 13th century, the arts followed and became integrated into the culture. They included *chado* (tea ceremony), bamboo flute, landscape gardening, *Noh* (drama), ceramics, *kyudo* (archery) and most important, *shodo*, painting and poetry. Do means "way" and these areas are referred to as "ways" because they are all-encompassing disciplines, which polish the artist's understanding of him or herself and the nature of reality. Together, these disciplines became known as the artless arts of Zen. Many of these art forms have interconnections, for example, painting was regarded as 'silent poetry' and poetry was regarded as 'painting with sound.'

One might consider one's creative life and one's spiritual life to be separate but we have only have one life, and in it everything resides. Nothing is left out. No separation. All things are intimately linked, not just in ancient times but right here, right now, in our messy busy moments. As Clarissa Pinkola Estes points out, the creative life is a spiritual practice. How this evolves is different for each of us. For Diane Ackerman, writing is a form of inquiry, as well as a site of celebration and prayer. Natalie Goldberg used to ask her teacher endless questions about her Zen practice, not understanding his answers. "But Roshi..." she would reply, mystified. In the end he explained things to her by saying "Natalie, like in your writing," allowing her to see that at a profound level, her writing *was* her practice.

There is no map for the direction one's spiritual or artistic life will take. However hard we try to control or predict outcomes, things are far more dangerous and interesting than that. Zen requires us to trust the present moment, and respond to it from our depths. Creativity asks the same thing. Whether you are a painter, a sculptor, a musician or a writer, the road will involve mistakes, dry spells and total surrender to the way things are. You will have to stay current and give up your fantasies, your fancy notions, your preferences.

Zen demands you go deeper into everything, into the sounds around you, the wild landscape of your body. Can you be fully present for the passing moments: the comfort of a hug, the fragrance of a mango? How does fear taste when you read about someone running over their child? How does anger manifest when a driver yells abuse at you at the end of a hard day? Zen, like art, calls us to attention. It asks us to slow down, to allow, to be still. Gardens, kitchens, blank paper, coloured pencils, fabrics, piano keys, broken crockery... what might become of them, in your open hands?

Ram Dass says that every religion is the product of the conceptual mind attempting to describe the Mystery, and perhaps all art is the product of the conceptual mind responding to the Mystery but Zen is more enigmatic than that. It asks us to forget the conceptual mind and respond from a place beyond words. It demands a unique, personal response to this world of a thousand joys and a thousand sorrows and those thousand emails you don't feel like answering. Creativity, too, is a path you forge in ways entirely your own, whether it involves decorating a cake, drawing an elephant, or writing a song.

We are all sculptors and painters, and our material is our own flesh and bones, said Thoreau. In artistic life everything is useful; nothing is left out. Scraps of fabric from old clothing become a quilt, limp veggies in your fridge become a soup, the thought or image that haunts you becomes a haiku.

It's not about perfection. The door marked good sticks, as the Chinese proverb warns. I love this story of a young man learning the art of gardening from an old monk. The apprentice worked hard for many hours, weeding, clearing leaves and raking sand until the garden was immaculate, but when the old master came to inspect it, he frowned. Then he shook the tree so that the cherry blossoms fell on the path.

Like that!

We often think of Zen as a practice of stillness but the other half of mature spiritual practice is intimacy and expression. Neither Zen nor creativity need be a solitary path. Each can be practiced in community. The Sydney Zen Centre provides a fine example of this, each member contributing to the life of the group in their own way. Their magazine, *Mind Moon Circle*, contains poetry, calligraphy, drawings, cartoons, essays, photographs. Collectively they engage in art work together, such as making a mandala for a peace project – a mosaic composed of dried beans, seeds and other kitchen supplies. Each week, someone comes to arrange the flowers on the altar: a deceptively simple display of tall grasses, or a fat magnolia. Something strong flourishes here. Individual spiritual and artistic practice are offered for their own sake, and this blossoming also serves to illuminate fellow travellers.

Creativity can take many forms. Sometimes it is a form of protest, a personal response to the greed, hatred and ignorance arising endlessly in the world around us. A recent show by Ross Bolleter involved ruined pianos, tales of city life, vignettes gathered from his own world and from history. It was, amongst other things, a poignant and instructive response to what white Australians have done to the indigenous people of this land.

Photographer Michael Light reprints NASA's grainy images of moonscapes using a state-of-the-art digital process, producing disorientating images of empty ground, light and space. They are reminiscent of dry garden landscapes of classical Zen temples but they more than that. They are a contemporary response to today's pressing environmental issues. One striking photograph shows a footprint and a discarded plastic sample bag littering the moon's surface. This work is an ethical political response to the devastation we wreak on every corner of the universe we touch.

There are many surprising ways to speak out for social justice. Pedro Reyes, with other artists and sculptors, turned 6,700 decommissioned guns into musical instruments on which they played *Imagine*. Art can amuse, delight, inspire, challenge. Zen practice can be done alone on a black cushion; it can also be done on the streets, in community, in galleries and performance spaces.

Ecologist Paul Hawken writes, “My advice for people is to love the world they are in, in whatever way makes sense to them. It may be a devotional practice, it may be song or poetry, it may be by gardening, it may be as an activist, scientist, or community leader. The path to restoration extends from our heart to the heart of sentient beings, and that path will be different for every person.”

John Daido Looi says that the Zen arts were created to communicate the essential wordlessness of Zen. This is a paradox perhaps, but Zen and life are full of paradoxes. Hakuin, the great Zen master who revived the Rinzai tradition, stated that words are nothing but an overflow of delusion. Yet words express our deepest loves and deepest sorrows, so we line up letters into words and sentences, and set them free into the universe, where they belong to nobody and everyone.

I love haiku, the ancient and deceptively simple poetic form in which the use of so few words conveys so much. Seifu, a Zen nun, wrote this in the 16th century.

The faces of dolls / In unimaginable ways / I must have grown old

Basho, on death:

Dying cricket —

how full of / life, his song.

Haiku were traditionally bound by strict rules governing not only form but subject matter. For example, in renga, which are a series of linked haiku, a peony or a dragonfly could be mentioned only once in every hundred verses. The four seasons, the natural world, death and mountains were common topics but in modern times, haiku address more everyday affairs, like this one by Seiun.

At the ticket window / Our child becomes / One year younger.

Haiku are not easy to write. The more condensed the form, the more difficult the task. They are language squeezed tight, meaning written large. Here, as in all art forms, the Zen aesthetic avoids the phoney and the fancy. The aim is for what Gary Snyder calls “the weave that produces an elegant plainness.”

Seido Ray Ronci, an American Rinzai Zen monk and a poet, says that for him, poetry has always been a practice in and of itself. It’s not only the practice of using language. It’s the practice of being aware: of using all the senses and being absorbed by each moment. The main issue is getting out of the way. When he paints and when he plays piano, he tries to remove himself completely and let the painting paint itself, the song play itself, the poem write itself. It then becomes what the words want to say, not what he wants to say, which he believes comes from silence.

It’s late at night. What an earth was I thinking, taking on a topic this big? I drink camomile tea, muck around on the net, chance upon a video of Max Gimblett in his New York loft, his strong, hairy arms smudged with red and black paint. I love this guy, an internationally acclaimed painter whose Zen practice inform his work with great authenticity. He lays down a large sheet of rice paper, takes a huge brush, dips it in thick black ink. With one swift expressive stroke, he paints an

enzo, the circle symbolic of everything and nothing, the universe and the void. “Empty your mind and let it come from your body. Let it come,” he instructs. Serious political statement, talk of death, laughter and play, all have a place in that circle. When you treat life as a cosmic adventure, not a problem to be fixed, there is room for magic, for mischief, for the marvellous. As Kobi Yamada says, everything is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, or in Ross Bolleter’s words, all of this for a short time only. It’s now and one day it will be never. Zen and the creative life, each demand your original response to this moment. One chance, one encounter.

You don’t have to call yourself anything or stick with only one art form. We are dancers as well as writers, musicians as well as fathers. Life is richer and more wonderful than we can possibly imagine, once we venture beyond the known and into original mind, coming forth to delight in the fertility of existence, and its expression. Zazen, a lifelong sitting practice, is the foundation stone. From that solid ground, we learn to “rest in the place that the next line of the poem comes from, or the next note of the musical composition, or the next brush stroke” as Zen teacher John Tarrant suggests.

Along with writing, cooking is my Zen practice. I learned to cook when I was twelve years old. My mother didn’t get home from work until late so she gave me a small food budget and the job of preparing dinner. Clueless, I spent most of the money on magazines. At first my meals were dreadful. Lumpy mashed potatoes and burnt chops were the stars of my show, but I gradually improved, making it up as I went along. Later, living in a Buddhist community, I learned to cook for large numbers, transforming basic ingredients into tasty meals, working with what was to hand. These days I prepare food I like to eat, choosing the right plate or bowl, bringing joy to the task. On Mondays I’m a housekeeper, making meals for a wealthy family but it’s not merely a job, done by rote for money. In Dogen’s Instructions for the Cook he says that to cook for someone is not just to prepare food, it is to express your sincerity.

When shopping, I respond to the seasons, choosing vegetables carefully, considering flavours and textures. How about a fat shiny aubergine, to go with the basil from my garden and some feta, or perhaps haloumi?

Before I cook, I bow to those who planted and harvested the food, in gratitude to the people who drove the truck, packed the shelf, stood at the checkout all day. I bow in honour those who go hungry, remembering that 75% of the world’s population don’t have access to plentiful food, water or shelter. “There is a lot to be grateful for that takes place between the wheat field and the dumpling,” as Gary Thorp reminds us. I chop mindfully, breathing into my belly when I’m tired. Each part of the task is important. Taking out the rubbish, I savour the late afternoon breeze. It’s very simple. I love people. I love apricots and avocados and dill. Cooking nourishes me, as well as the world, and a kitchen offers endless opportunity for creativity and delight.

Ways to come forth, not just in our silent practice on the cushion but in our lives, are many and various. Why waste them? Why squander your precious time? By our efforts we bring relevance into our lives. We attend fully to this one moment that contains all moments. We allow the ordinary to enliven us.

It could be said that all poetry and art are offerings to the Buddha.

Perhaps the last word should go to Michael Leunig in his cartoon, The Deficit:

Mr Curly owes much to his teapot. It has given him a lot. He is in debt to the moon and the stars. His debt to the birds is huge. For the joy they have given them, he owes much to the trees and flowers. To the table, the chair, the cat, the dog, the vase, the mandolin, the duck, he owes a large debt. Can he ever repay? Well, of course he can. That's the whole point of his life.

"Before Zen, mountains are mountains and waters are waters; after insight into the truth of Zen through the instruction of a good master, mountains are not mountains and waters are not waters; but after this when one really attains to the abode of rest, mountains are once more mountains and waters are waters." (Suzuki, 1926, p. 24)

Sea Turtle Dreaming

Angela Neville

"For most of the wild things on earth the future must depend upon the conscience of mankind."

Dr Archie Carr, Jr. (1909 – 1987), an American herpetologist, ecologist and pioneering conservationist. He made an extraordinary contribution to sea turtle conservation.

At the back of a private residence which faces Melbourne Beach in Florida are steps leading down to the sand which have been decorated with retro-style deckchairs, hanging strands of shells and coconuts, and a cheery home-made sign which bears a simple greeting:

WELCOME BACK SEA TURTLES.



Unlike summer in Sydney, the beach is surprisingly quiet. There aren't many people around. Most of the northerners, affectionately known to locals as the "snowbirds" have gone home to New York or New Jersey or Michigan, having spent the winter here. The quiet is good news for the Great Blue Heron, who feeds peacefully in the shallows most evenings, and for turtles.

Melbourne Beach is part of a 32.2 km (20 mile) section of the coastline known as the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge. According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, it is the most important nesting area for Loggerhead turtles in the western hemisphere. It is also a nesting area for the Green turtle and a refuge for the rare Leatherback turtle. The Loggerhead is listed as threatened in the state of Florida; the Green and Leatherback are endangered.

On almost any night between May and November you can make your way here at dusk in the hope of spotting a turtle. Depending on conditions you might be lucky enough to see one, or many - Loggerheads are the most common - coming ashore to nest. Peering out at the Atlantic, their large, dark shapes can be seen bobbing around in the water. On warm, dry, dark nights you sometimes see them *en masse* - wave after wave, endlessly arriving.

This is part of an ancient, beautiful and mysterious ritual which has taken place on our planet for more than 100 million years.

To me, and many others who sit, stand or walk quietly on the beach on these long evenings, the Loggerheads' epic migration and homecoming to lay their eggs is nothing short of magical. It's not just that they have travelled for years along migratory routes spanning oceans to get here. It's that, *they have faithfully returned to nest on the very beach where they were born.*

How can this be? I often wondered. How does a she *know* this is her true home? How did she find the way back? Did she have a mother, a guide or teacher to show her? As far as I could tell from the little I'd read, from the time a Loggerhead hatches until the time she mates 35 or so years later, she is on a solitary journey.

With the help of Google I found an answer to this part of the reproductive mystery. Scientists say they have known for some time that Loggerheads navigate at sea by sensing the invisible lines of the Earth's magnetic field. They also rely on it to find their way home. However research published just this year supported a hypothesis that each part of the coastline has its own magnetic "signature". Loggerheads use this signature as an internal compass to return to the place where they hatched. The Earth's magnetic field shifts slightly over time, and the researchers found that the nests do too.

Another thing that fascinates me about turtles and their nesting is the importance of timing. A Loggerhead turtle will wait for *just* the right moment. If that moment does not arise, she will not come ashore. If she comes ashore and is disturbed, she will simply return to the sea without laying her eggs. She is easily scared away by bright lights, movement, and loud noises. Only when the coast is clear will she shuffle up the beach and, using her flippers and body, dig a pit into which she will lay about 100 eggs. When she is finished, she will cover the pit and return to the sea. She may return to make further nests - up to seven times in a season - but she will not return to tend the eggs she has already laid.

Approximately eight weeks later the baby turtles hatch in a delightful yet difficult process known as "emergence". Each hatchling must first break out of his or her egg using a small temporary tooth called a caruncle. Then they start digging their way out of the nest together. However, they will remain under the sand near the surface of the nest until it is cool. The cool temperature indicates that it is night-time, when they are less likely to be taken by predators or die from exposure to the heat.

At last! They burst out of the pit as a group. They must quickly learn to fend for themselves, as they receive no guidance or help in making the arduous, pell-mell journey from their nest to the sea. Nevertheless, in these first moments above ground, they somehow know to orient themselves to the brightest, open horizon - which in a natural beach environment is the direction of the sea - and make a run for it.

I haven't been fortunate enough to see hatchlings emerge, reading about the process lead me to wonder: how do they *know* which way to go once they burst out of the nest? Why do the vast majority of them run to the sea and not into the dunes or beach vegetation? As we know, they receive no guidance or help from their parents or other adults.

If it is not taught, then how is it known?

No-one can really explain, it seems, other than to say that hatchlings emerge with a natural instinct to orient themselves to the brightest open horizon and move towards it.

The very idea of this mystery fills me with joy. May all turtles, and all beings everywhere, emerge with that same instinct.

Threats and efforts to save sea turtles from extinction:

May we also take every step possible to protect these horizons for our turtles, who are critical to the health of our marine and beach ecosystems.

It is estimated that only one in 1000 turtles will make it to adulthood. Some of them are taken by raccoons or sea birds on the beach, or sharks and other sea predators once they reach the water. Artificial light is a large and growing threat, as nesting beach areas become more heavily populated. Hatchlings can become disoriented by bright lights and wander the wrong way onto the road instead of towards the sea. In the Melbourne Beach and surrounding area signs promote a "Keep Our Beaches Dark between May and November" campaign as well as a "Give Them A Brake" campaign to encourage drivers to slow down or stop to rescue turtles on the road.

Global warming, magnetic interference, fishing, poaching, oil spills and plastic are some of the other significant threats. A recent University of Queensland study reported that 52 per cent of the world's turtles had ingested some form of plastic.

Here in Florida a state senator recently tried to introduce a bill which would have allowed small communities (100,000 people or fewer) to ban or at least regulate the use of plastic bags. It was unsuccessful, however efforts are continuing at the grass-roots level. A national marine activist network called the Surfrider Foundation has launched a campaign in the Melbourne Beach area to encourage residents to reduce their use of plastic.

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My campfire

Diana Levy

I was leading a walk in the Blue Mountains on the first day of spring sesshin, so I was a “part-timer”. I slipped in as quietly as I could on a hot morning, just before lunch. When the bell rang, everyone gathered up their bowl sets, and holding the bowls as though they were a crown about to be placed on a monarch’s head, processed with great dignity into the cottage. The sesshin had dispensed with servers, and we sat around the table. After the first meal sutra, “*Buddha, born at Kapilavastu..*” the cook arose and served us our portions. Someone else took it upon themselves to serve the rice. And the salad was handed around the table just as you would at a dinner party, except without the verbal niceties. We chanted again ... bowed ... and ate.

On the samu the previous week, Will Moon had gone bush to try to find a long walk that would suit the sesshin. He found a cave with aboriginal (Dharkinjung) art in it, not far away. Wow! Not so long ago, he had also found some engravings up on a rock platform nearish. I had seen his photos, and one of them was a fish transected into five segments, with a line coming from its mouth.

It was stinking hot on my second (their fourth) day of sesshin - 40 degrees, our neighbour in the valley, Nola, told me later. We had a longer than scheduled midday break. The following day, we were going for the long kinhin, and we needed the cool change that was predicted. Lucky for us, in the evening the cool change tiptoed in, sweeping the sweat and fatigue before it.

The next day we assembled after breakfast with the requisite gear, and Will led us off up the hill. I patted a big stone as I went past, mentally addressing any ancient Dharkinjungs who might be around, something I learned from Uncle Max Durumunun. Will’s pace was slow and deliberate. Each step on the stony hillside needed to be very mindful, what with loose stones and piles of slippery leaves, and the surface tipping every which way. Our line wound around the hill, the easiest route he could devise for the steepness. Once we got past the first major rock climb, he stopped so we could all sit down.

***we stop for a rest
the flies are very interested
excited even***

We were quite high up already. We sat silently, enjoying the scenery, the hazy misty look of the valleys below.

***what the birds see
eye to eye with the cliffs
saying, “Good morning!”***

Off we went again, following the trail of pink ribbon which our leader had tied on the trees to mark the route. I was delighting in the various flowers I was seeing, while refraining if possible, in the interests of maintaining “don’t know mind”, from naming them. Nevertheless I do believe I saw *Hibbertia*, flannel flower, *Dampiera stricta*, an orchid. And the yellowbox trees!

***splotches of blossom
cream cones
good enough to lick***

When we neared the cave, Will called out, saying who we were and what our purpose was. I like that. There is an intersect between our zen practise and traditional aboriginal practise, “dadirri”, quiet sitting, openness to what is. Gilly talked about this before we left for our walk. Then Janet ululated and clapped her hands.

The cave was like a big curved sandstone hand, cupped protectively over the drawings done by the people who had found shelter there. Their drawings are done in charcoal, although the main drawing of a kangaroo had a white outline around it. This was tucked high up in a dark alcove. I was fascinated by the men drawn in a more visible position. They either had big dangling penises, or else they were morphing into lizards. They were very similar to the dancing men I saw recently at Kanangra in the southern Blue Mountains (Gundungurra country). The Kanangra men, or anthropomorphs, are dancing across a sandstone cliff and have bent wide-open legs and straight raised arms.

***footprints at the cave
after how many years?
the charcoal man rejoices***

These men appeared to hold up a large oblong object in each hand. We were all silent and in awe of the art works. There was an eel - and traces and fragments of drawings. I searched widely around the cave to see whether there was anything else, such as axe-grinding grooves on the sandstone above the cave, but found nothing. Will found a piece of quartz which was a core - the raw material for tool-making. People take a suitable piece of stone - the core - and chip sharp flakes off it. This can then be set into a hand axe or used in many other ways. I had a closer look at the place where he found it. It was definitely a campfire spot, though rather than an open circle of stones which one often finds in the bush, the stones were piled together. Beside it I spotted a shell stuck to a clod of dirt. I looked more closely still. We realised that this was the shell of a mollusc, and so would have been brought from either the Womerah creek or the Macdonald river - both far below. It was the remains of a long ago meal eaten by people. When I was a child in Aotearoa / New Zealand we used to boil up pipis that we’d dug out of the sand at the beach - that was dinner, with bread and butter. I placed the shell back where I had found it. We spent a long time at the cave and I really liked that. It meant there was time to feel - to just open right up to whatever comes through the sixth sense. There was time for “dadirri”.

On the way back down I noticed that a million flies had gathered on the back of Jason’s shirt - it was black - to hitch a lift. When we stopped to rest on a rock platform, they and a zillion other flies got busy.

***who is hearing the flies?
the clouds receive hum
a bird translates***



"Kangaroo Dreaming: Cave Above Gorricks Run" by: Janet Selby

Back at the cottage Sally had been laying out lunch for us. We gathered round for our “campfire” at Kodoji, ancient ground. It was a silent meal again punctuated by our expressions of thanks, in unison, and our determination to practise companionship with all things, a combination of well-rehearsed ritual and spontaneous gestures. And it seems to me that this might be a guiding principle for modern life. Do you have a campfire? Who do you eat with and share your food with? Who do you talk story with, relax with, invite to your house? And I don’t mean the mediated blue-screen of social media or TV. You can walk around a neighbourhood at night and see the lounge-rooms where one or maybe two people are having their brains lit up by a blue-glowing screen. If you invite people to your house do they invite you to theirs? Is there reciprocity? Does a café count as a campfire? I ask these questions as a person who lives in a commuter suburb, on the edge of a big city. How do you lay out the stones, find the firewood, hunt or gather the food that you want to share with the people in your ‘tribe’? How do you figure out who belongs in your ‘tribe’?

I’ve known some people who’ve come to a zen sesshin and absolutely hate the oryoki meal ritual. But for me it has been a great teaching and over the years my understanding of aspects of it has deepened. I came to zen as a young woman with an eating problem. There I was in a tightly choreographed meal, salivating, saying things like, “*I take this food to save my body from emaciation*” - that definitely wasn’t my problem!

I felt so at home with my tribe, at the campfire this spring sesshin.

NO

W!

There was once a woman who was arrogant and proud. She decided she wanted to attain enlightenment, so she asked all the authorities how to do that. One said, “Well, if you climb to the top of this very high mountain, you’ll find a cave there. Sitting inside that cave is a very wise old woman, and she will tell you.” So the woman thought, “Good, I’ll do that. Nothing but the best.” Having endured great hardships, she finally found this cave, and sure enough, sitting there was this very gentle, spiritual-looking old woman in white clothes who smile at her beatifically. Overcome with awe and respect, she prostrated at the feet of this woman and said, “I want to attain enlightenment. Show me how.” This woman looked at her with her beatific smile and asked, “Are you sure you want to attain enlightenment?” And the woman said, “Of course I’m sure.” Whereupon the smiling woman turned into a demon, stood up brandishing a great big stick, and started chasing her, saying, “Now! Now! Now!” For the rest of her life, that lady could never get away from the demon who was always saying, “Now!” (Chodron, 1991, p.29)

now! now! now!

Flat Out Like A Lizard Drinking

Janet Selby

I'm sitting in dappled shadow, feet dangling in the cool waters, almost ready to leave the magic billabong known as Crystal Pools in the Royal National Park.. The families have departed after their lunch. I am alone.

The low crunching steps came closer, a distinct four-foot rhythm. And there he is! Emerging from the scrub onto the rock right next to mine, a mere four-feet away. He doesn't see me. Sticking his long forked tongue out, he doesn't smell me. Must have covered by the smell of sausages cooked by previous picnickers. He casually ambles to the edge of the golden water. Leans over, sticks his head into it up to his eyes. He stays there like this for what seems a long time yet perhaps is only a few seconds. He drinks then withdraws, turns around, stretches his forearms lifting his head high. This action reveals a loose flap of skin extending from his chin down his chest. It is a warm pink colour, very healthy looking, almost shiny. He stays like this a while. There are polka dots on his knees, and wide bands of alternating cream and black on his long tapering tail. His claws look like they need a good clip. What's he doing now? He turns back to the water's edge then in a gesture familiar to dog owners, wipes his muzzle on the rock, one side then the other. Does he have an itch? Mites? Or just wiping off the dribbles?

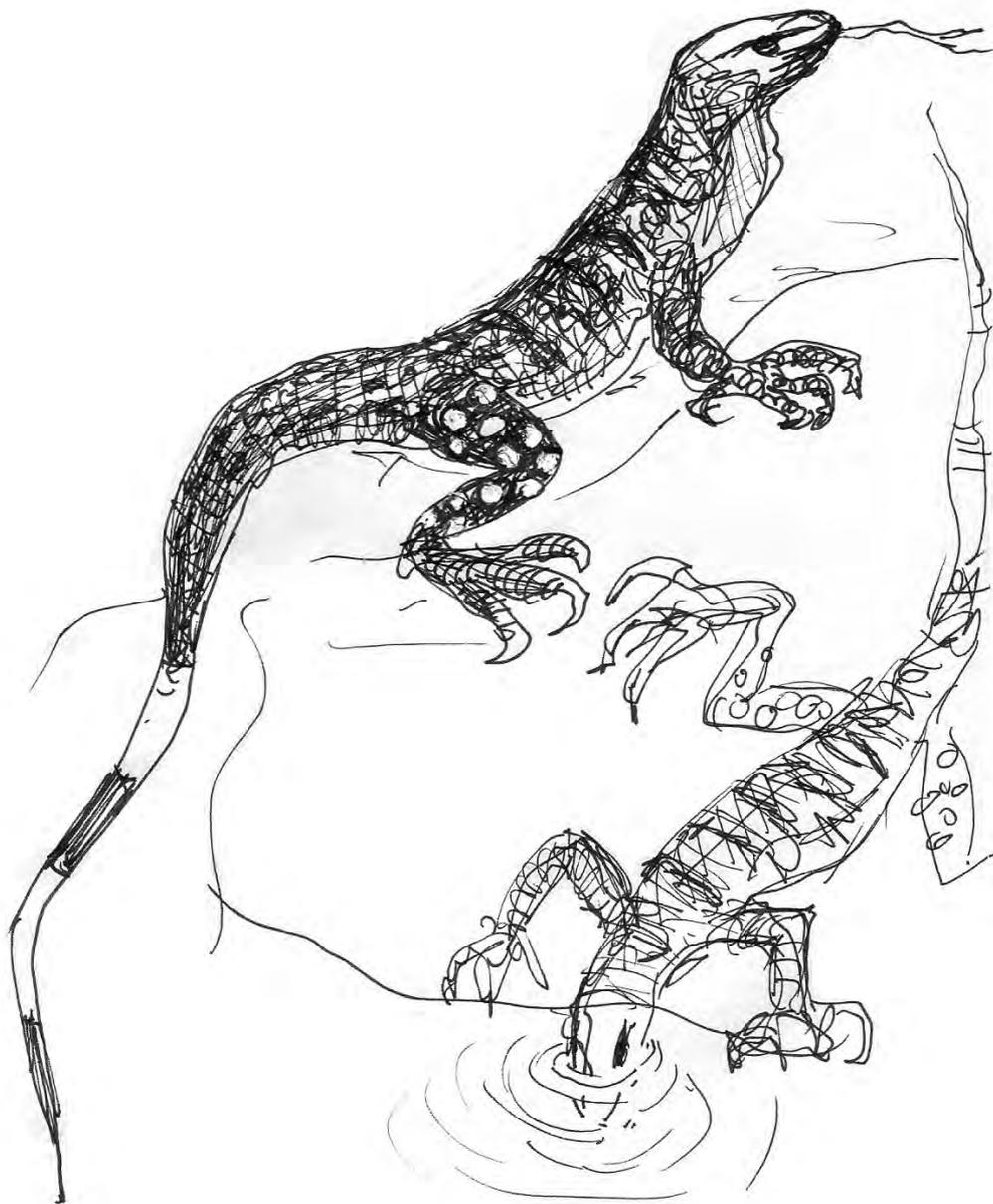
Now he's finished. He casts a slow glance around the area and although I am in plain sight and talking to myself in excited whispers about this current encounter, he still doesn't see me. Then he ambles off relaxed, the way he came.

Wow! Now I can move and reach for the sketch pad. I quickly sketch from memory. His dotted knees, his striped tail, his upright stance. What was his back like again?

But wait! Here he comes again, back down to the same rock, this time looking directly at me, sticking his out tongue for information. Now I can capture his markings in more detail. What's in his mind? A moment ago he was just drinking, fully in that moment. Maybe he did notice me and came back to check me out. Satisfied, off he goes again, returning to the track unperturbed, relaxed. I am now grinning from ear to ear. Such a graceful encounter puts to rest the fallacy of the saying that lizards are busy when they drink—

“I'm flat out like a lizard drinking!”

It can't be learnt in a book, you can't hear about it from someone else. By recording it with my own hand, this lesson imprints into my body. I now understand how a lizard drinks. Lessons come from experience: be flat out; be thirsty; just sit and draw. These lessons come from direct experience. And the learning of them imbues into my spirit.



"Kangaroo Dreaming: Cave Above Gorricks Run" by: Janet Selby

I take up the way of not killing

Brendon Stewart

I take up the way of not killing.

Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the everlasting Dharma, not giving rise to the idea of killing is called the Precept of Not Killing.

The Luck of Kokura

Sunday 20/12/42

8 & 9 plts. attacked at 8.30am

9 cut about badly,
good soldiers killed.

I led 2nd attack and
relieved 49th & the Americans on front line.

A bit bomb happy

(Harold Stewart)

In the gardens of what remains of Hiroshima castle there is a bridge crossing a classic moat. On diagonally opposite corners two trees flourish. One a willow, its companion a eucalypt. Only the castle's tower remains more or less intact. Scattered on the ground are pieces of masonry from which this castle was once constructed. Until August 6, 1945 this was the headquarters of the Japanese Imperial armed forces High Command.

Both trees survived the explosion of the first ever atomic bomb attack on an enemy. Both trees are more than 100 years old. Today the willow looks a little rickety while the eucalypt is thriving. How did this gum tree come to be planted in a Japanese castle garden? Photos taken only days after the first allied forces arrived in Hiroshima, show the trees badly broken. Follow up photos from 1947 show the trees, especially the gum full of new growth.

What survived the bomb?

The land, the river

And

A eucalyptus tree

We bow with deep humility

In order to understand the Japanese, especially Japanese people from before the Second World War, those living at the tail end of the Meiji period we must recognise the importance of their complex religious/social organization. Day by day life in Japan, and I suspect this remains the case today is fundamentally Confucian involving a tight and strict code of behaviour and honourable respect. As well, a Japanese person is born into a local Shinto temple associated with their family. They will marry there and at their death be guided into the next realm by way of an eosteric Buddhist ritual. Zen Buddhism, a minor Buddhist sangha tied its fortunes to this social arrangement.

During the Edo period (1600-1867) Zen priests such as Shidō Bunan (1603-1676), Hakuin (1685-1768), and Torei (1721-1792) promoted the unity of Zen and Shinto. The legacy of this remains today with all Shinto shrines having a Buddhist temple in the same grounds, many of these temples claim a Zen heritage (this could be a Japan Tourism ploy!). As a consequence Zen Buddhists were for many centuries assimilated into Japanese high society and its imperial system.

I have chosen to include in my soulful life a deep empathy to Zen Buddhism. So I am very inquisitive as to how come despite the importance of the sun goddess, Amaterasu who, according to Japanese mythology, ruled over the heavenly plain and established the imperial lineage, did a militaristic society prevail and cruelly instruct many of her people's worldview?

In his book *Zen at War* Brian Daizen Victoria, focuses on the history of Zen Buddhism and Japanese militarism from the time of the Meiji Restoration through the Second World War and on into the post-War period. He describes the influence of state policy on Japanese Buddhism, and in turn the influence of Zen philosophy on the Japanese military.

Victoria draws from his own study of original Japanese documents and uses the publications of Ichikawa Hakugen, a Rinzai priest and scholar at the Hanazono University in Tokyo. Ichikawa Hakugen suggests that a Zen Buddhist, as a loyal subject of Imperial Japan would endorse in all circumstances—including extreme ones, such as warfare—that one would separate oneself from the agitated mind, and accept one's place in life. A Zen Buddhist would cultivate "peace of mind" (anjin) and in so doing "accept things as they are."

Hakugen describes twelve characteristics of Zen that contributed to its support for the militarism that pervaded Japanese society.

1. Subservience of Buddhism to the state.
2. Buddhist views on humanity and society. Though "Buddhism emphasizes the equality of human beings based on their possession of a Buddha nature" the doctrine of Karma has also been used as a "moral justification for social inequality".
3. Protection of the state and the hierarchical social structures.
4. Emphasis on sunyata and selflessness, "leaving no room for the independence of the individual".
5. The concept of *on*, "the teaching that a debt of gratitude is owed to those from whom favours are received". In the case of Japanese Zen, this gratitude was owed to the Emperor, as "the head of the entire Japanese family".
6. The belief in mutual dependency, which "led in Japan to an organic view of the state coupled with a feeling of intimacy towards it".
7. The doctrine of the Middle Way, which "took the form of a constant search for compromise with the aim of avoiding confrontation before it occurred".
8. The tradition of ancestor veneration, in which "the entire nation came to be regarded as one large family in which loyalty between subject and sovereign was the chief virtue".
10. The value given to "old and mature things". Since society was based "on a set of ancient and immutable laws", opposition to this was unacceptable.
11. Emphasis on inner peace, which "contributed to its failure to encourage and justify the will to reorganize society".
12. The Buddhist logic of *Soku*, "just as it is", which leads to "a static, aesthetic perspective, a detached, subjective harmony with things"

Harada Daiun Sogaku (1871-1961) was an important teacher of great influence for many western Zen students including Robert Aitken Roshi. His portrait adorns our Annandale Dojo, Is it possible to comprehend (sadly) why he, as the Pacific and Chinese military offensives were waged, was able to instruct his Sangha with this teaching;

If ordered to march: tramp, tramp, or shoot: bang, bang. This is the manifestation of the highest Wisdom (of Enlightenment). The unity of Zen and war of which I speak extends to the farthest reaches of the holy war (now under way).

He may have been wiser to study the consequence of Holy wars; they are hard to quell.

So here we are, Kerry and I at the end of another extraordinarily exciting Shinkansen ride staying at Hotel Kikkawa in a very small room that reeks of tobacco smoke. Militaristic Japan is no more, the Emperor no longer a God and the post-war political and social constitution prohibit the country from having an offensive military capacity. This certainly doesn't mean that its self-defence capability is not sophisticated and highly trained. The pervasive threat of conflict with formidable China just across the sea is palpable. And as I write too, the current conservative Japanese government recently voted in a new clause to their constitution, which permits Japanese military forces to participate with her allies in offensive military action, referred to now as "collective self defence".

Kerry brought with her a small tape recorder hoping to record material for a post journey *Encounter* programme. We set off walking and come upon the Hiroshima Catholic Cathedral. It's not exactly gothic but rather a quiet, restrained brick and stone affair built sometime in the 1950s. It is the first real presence of Christianity we have come across on our travels and so there is a certain curiosity as to how this congregation works. As we walked around the building looking for the open door a rather spritely elderly women confronted us with a big smile and welcomed us to join them for holy communion which was just about to start.

Some surprise.

Out came the recorder and Kerry caught the singing, the missive in Japanese and the ritual of the Holy Eucharist.

**Mass in Hiroshima cathedral's crypt
gentle and simple.
Moving in a happy way,
the priest
smiling all the time as
his women assistants kept getting
the ritual tangled with their laughter.
Hymns in Japanese
the sacramental gifts; so sweet.**

Painted high on the ceiling a Phoenix bird in full flight and below large abstract stain glass windows bathing the church in coloured light. After mass the priest told us that as a young priest he'd been a missionary in Papua New Guinea.

Another circling.

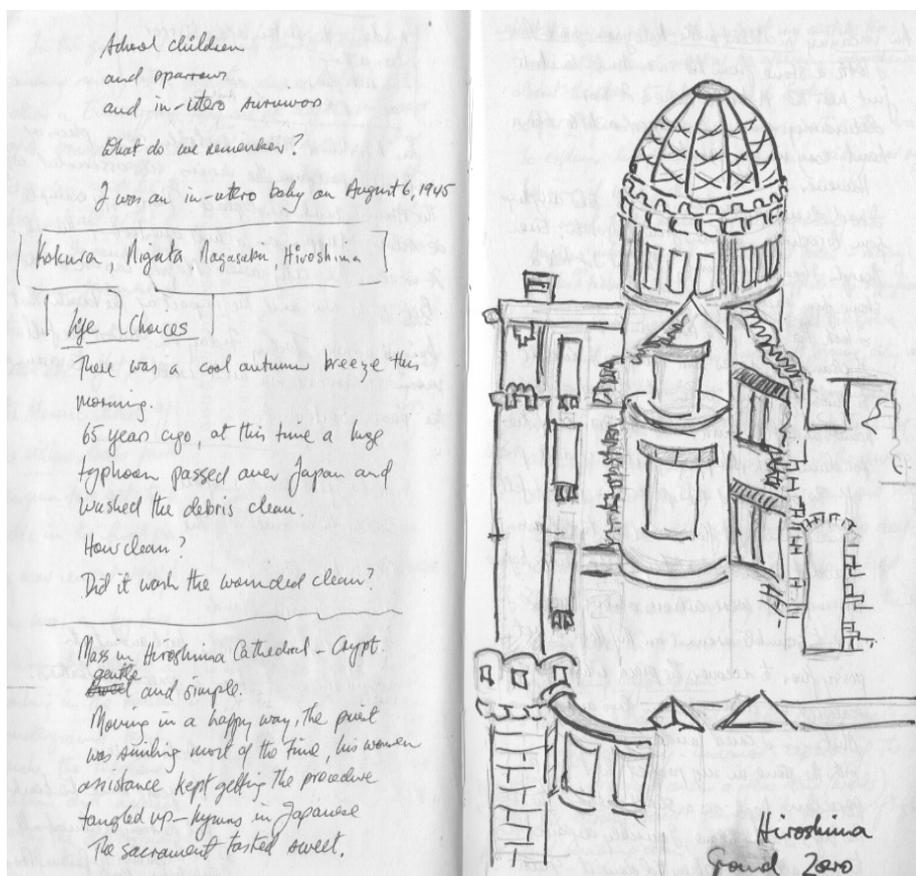
We took the tram a short distance from the cathedral to the Peace Park just across the river from Hiroshima castle. There, on August 6, 1945 at approximately 8.30 am (Japan time) ten school girls, recently summoned to help with the war effort, emerged from their work bunker. They were the first to witness the immediate aftermath of what we now call a nuclear holocaust.

The ten survived.

Hiroshima has five star tourist billing. The Peace Park, the draw card; there are tourists, both foreign and Japanese everywhere. School kids ushered along by their harassed teachers with some on their way to see the Flame of Peace. This is to be extinguished only when the last nuclear weapon on earth is peacefully destroyed. A long wait is expected.

The military headquarters was the bomb's target but it exploded a little to the west over the city's exhibition pavilion and a hospital. All that remains of that once beautiful art deco building is the skeletal Genbaku dome, known now as the peace dome.

**In an open window space
on the third level of
Genbaku dome
a grey crane stands.
The bird moves slowly back and forth
sometimes it stops and preens a feather.**



Every day since the late 1950's there have been people waiting nearby the dome; waiting to catch the attention of a passer-by, preferably a foreigner with whom they want to tell their story of survival. Most of these people are about my age born to parents who survived. The people we meet today were either very young or not yet born on August 6. The Japanese government pays different compensation pensions to the variously different claims people may have concerning the effects of the explosion. Kerry was able to interview two people, a man who was in-utero on August 6, 1945, and a woman who had only just been born to her young, 20 year old mother.

**School children walk by,
sparrows at my feet.
In-utero survivors
what do we remember?
I too was an in-utero baby on August 6, 1945.**

An incident

Hiroshima is known also for its meandering Motoyasu River with many bridges spanning the flow at different locations throughout the city. Photographs taken, soon after the explosion, show all the bridges in reasonably good repair. I made my way down to the river's edge, just below the peace dome and retrieved a smooth stone from along the low tide ebb. It was deliciously round and smooth, shaped a little like a heart and it felt easy in my hand.

I had mixed feelings about taking a souvenir from Hiroshima, nonetheless I chose to. I went to a nearby toilet block where I intended to wash the stone clean of the river mud so I could put it in my pocket as a touch stone. After washing it I shook the stone in my hand causing water to splash off and just as I did it flew out of my grasp and hit, very hard, the corner of the porcelain wash bowl breaking a piece clean off. The stone and the piece of porcelain fell loudly to the toilet floor and bounced in among the feet and school bags of a group of schoolboys who were standing there staring at me, and my antics.

Even before this strange act of vandalism the boys were curious about me, foreign men in toilets always seem to attract the attention of schoolboys – anything odd in that? But now I had to scramble about on the floor of this toilet and try to recover both my stone and the broken piece of the bowl. In Japanese homes and hotels you are expected to wear a special and different pair of indoor scuffs into the toilet, which afterwards you leave at the door. So crawling around on my hands and knees on a toilet floor scavenging for the culprit stone and the damaged ceramic in amongst the boys feet, must have confirmed plenty of stereotypical ideas about westerners.

‘Shit-shit-shit’ I cried pitifully.

With the stone back in my pocket and the piece of porcelain set on the shelf above the sink I quickly left the scene with the glare of the boys' accusation on my back. Who should I tell of this accident? There was no one obvious, no caretaker or gardener or official of any sort nearby. How could I admit my error and relieve in some small way my guilt?

I carried the stone for the rest of the afternoon as Kerry and I made our way alongside the river on a general sight seeing excursion. Superstition got the better of me eventually. What else could explain the feeling: the stone and me were in a risky relationship. We walked on and visited the

contemporary art museum, another monumental architectural extravagance celebrating late 20th century art with plenty of worthy works trying to make some sense of August 6, 1945.

Crossing the river once more on our way back to the hotel I turned to face the water and threw the stone way out into the deep middle. It left my hand with something of my body warmth to fall into the stream of Hiroshima again.

Interesting information

- Pumpkin bombs, both armed and unarmed replicas of the A bombs were dropped over the three preceding weeks on the chosen target zones. This was to test the flight guiding characteristics of the falling bombs and the bombardiers aiming skills. Pumpkin bombs killed 500 people.
- Radiation monitoring devices were also dropped the day before the raid.
- There is a large, quite amusing work of art in the shape of a big pumpkin on the island of Naoshima.
- The Hiroshima bomb exploded 600 metres above a hospital and the exhibition pavilion.
- About 120 American prisoners of war died in the blast.
- Morning glory grows wild almost everywhere in Japan with variegated colours of pink, blue-mauve and white.
- The Uranium 235 bomb was guided for the first 45 seconds by a radio controlled device with an antennae invented by a Japanese scientist in 1934.
- The Japanese government surrendered unconditionally on August 15, 1945

In Kamila Shamsie's beautiful novel *Burnt Shadows* we meet the storytelling heroine Hiroko Tanaka at the door of her home in north Nagasaki late on the morning of August 9, 1945. She is watching her lover depart after an evening together. She is a young schoolteacher turned munitions factory worker, assisting with the war effort. She has fallen in love with an idealist with whom she shares a love of languages. But their romance disappears with a flash of light that renders her lover as a shadow on the stone wall of the nearby Urakami Cathedral. The same flash burns the birds on Hiroko's kimono into her back as a fusion of "charred silk and seared flesh".

The northern precincts of Nagasaki, Urakami remains today as the centre of Catholic Christianity in what some people still call the Far East. Today there is a rather plain Cathedral standing on the same site immediately below the bomb's random ground zero target. Before August 9, 1945 Urakami Cathedral was the largest Christian church in East Asia.

An old Buddhist tradition tells us that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree on seeing the morning star in a clear sky after meditating all night. But late in a Japanese summer, August for example, the sky is usually so clouded over the constellations would be invisible at night and from above, in an aeroplane, cloud cover would be dense. Nonetheless Captain Sweeney at the controls of the B-29 bomber nicknamed *Bockscar* took off from Tinian's North Field on the Mariana Islands. After a mid-air rendezvous with another B-29, bizarrely nicknamed *The Great Artiste*, the two aircraft proceeded to their primary target: Kokura. Approaching the target area, the crew saw that heavy cloud covered most of the city and especially the industrial areas obscuring the targets. Three bomb runs were made over the next 50 minutes, burning fuel and exposing the aircraft repeatedly to heavy anti-aircraft defenses. By the time of the third bomb run, Japanese fighter aircraft were identified heading towards the bombers.

Sweeney decided to divert and approach Nagasaki, twenty minutes flying time away. *Bockscar's*

bombardier Captain Kermit Beahan, saw an opening in the clouds at the end of the three-minute bomb run permitting him to identify target features. The first plutonium nuclear bomb, shamefully nicknamed *Fat Man* was dropped at 10:58 local time, exploding 43 seconds later with a blast yield equivalent to 21 kilotons of TNT and approximately 1.5 miles (2.4 km) northwest of the planned strike point.

By 11 o'clock 74,000 people, not to know or mention how many chickens, pigs, donkeys, cows, horses, wild animals or pet cats and dogs, were dead or soon to be dead. Among these numbers were prisoners of war, including Australians.



For a few hundred years Nagasaki was the most cosmopolitan of all Japanese cities. First the Portuguese in the mid 1500's, then the Dutch, afterwards for a little time the English, American

buccaneers, Chinese of course, Philipinos and Koreans. For most of these centuries Nagasaki was the only import/export city that various Japanese governments would permit. Even today it doesn't feel quite the same as any other Japanese city. It still has an old worldly oriental charm characteristic of the way religion, architecture, language and aesthetics are bound into a hybridized port city.

It is a relatively small city, with a deep harbour and steep hills all around. Walking up and down those hills to and from the cathedral or in amongst the hillside cottages, was a wearing tourist task for these few days. Kerry wasn't very well by the time we got to Nagasaki, a heavy flu had taken hold and rain had settled in. It was cold. We went to the 9.30 morning mass, Sunday 24 August. It was the least we could do on this near to anniversary.

The Japanese are great at reclaiming land from the sea. The huge airport of Osaka occupies an ever-expanding manmade island. Some hundreds of years ago the island of Dejima, now land locked, in Nagasaki harbour was artificially made just off the quayside. This became the trading post concession for the Dutch East India Company. From this small and contained outpost trade in the materials of industry, science, medicine and ideas continued for more than three centuries linking the East Indies (Indonesia), continental Europe and Japan. There was once a bridge connecting Dejima Island to the mainland, now there's no separation and this area is known as Hollandia. Today, of course, it's a picturesque tourist attraction with beautifully restored buildings and gardens and the oldest church (1863) still standing in Japan. The bomb's explosion, because it was just around a bend in the harbour, did not excessively damage this part of the city. Many of the buildings show off an elegant and hybrid aesthetic that took shape here in Nagasaki. And, there is an exquisite tourist trap in the form of an eighteenth century Dutch coffee house, where we spent some time. And at last we found *Madame Butterfly* who continues to live on in concert after concert in the small opera house just down the road.

While Kerry rested up on our last day in Nagasaki I took some time to walk around in the late afternoon. It was still raining. It's hard to sense any legacy of the bomb and the devastation. While it was a monumental catastrophe it too has passed. Within days and weeks of August 9, 1945 Kasuo Ishiguro tells us in his simply beautiful novel, *A Pale View of Hills* that the Nagasaki people were rebuilding their houses and gardens, looking out for orphaned children and taking on new pets: it wasn't Armageddon – it never is!

And yes, a visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki must always leave one sensitive to our inhumanity with each other and at the same time witness to our extraordinary capacity to start again. We are creatures quick to forget, the lessons of history are obscure lessons indeed. The atomic arsenal around the world continues to grow in size and sophistication. People, as always, are prepared to risk war, caught so often in the double bind.

It would seem we have to curate a history if we want to keep the past alive in the present, meaning that curated history will always be ideological. The Peace Park in Hiroshima is a slick museum continuously being improved by interactive technologies and new artworks certainly for some purpose of maintaining tourist interest. There has been international diplomatic and academic pressure on Japan for some decades to reflect deeply on its stridently militaristic wartime culture and to recognize the terrible wartime crimes committed by its armed forces. The apology has been mixed and is still yet to be made concerning the cruel treatment of prisoners of war, the mistreatment of Chinese and Korean civilians in the occupied lands and the rape and brutality committed against women and children. The occupying allied authorities sought to suppress anything that smacked of "feudalism", wanting to unshackle the Japanese people from the burden of obedience to a tyrannical system. If the Japanese could be coached to become a peace loving

democracy with guidance from wise American knowhow then all might be forgiven. For a little time immediately after the war wooden kabuki swords were banned and images of Mount Fuji (a symbol of ultra-nationalism) were torn down. Many of those men, whose hands were bloodied by wartime crime, escaped consequences and some made brilliant careers for themselves in the postwar world. Kishi Nobusuke the commander in charge of Japanese slave labour operations in Manchuria became, in 1957, Prime Minister of Japan.

Drawing a contrast may seem trite, but it did seem to me that Nagasaki had converted its terrible experience into a different kind of memorial. Sure, there is a park with an incongruous sculpture of a preposterously large male figure looking as if he's trying to launch himself skywards, and there is too a relatively small museum. Here we learned more about the victims, including many conscripted Koreans forced into hard factory work. How Nagasaki appears to be telling its story is poetic, especially through novels that quietly reflect back into the moment.



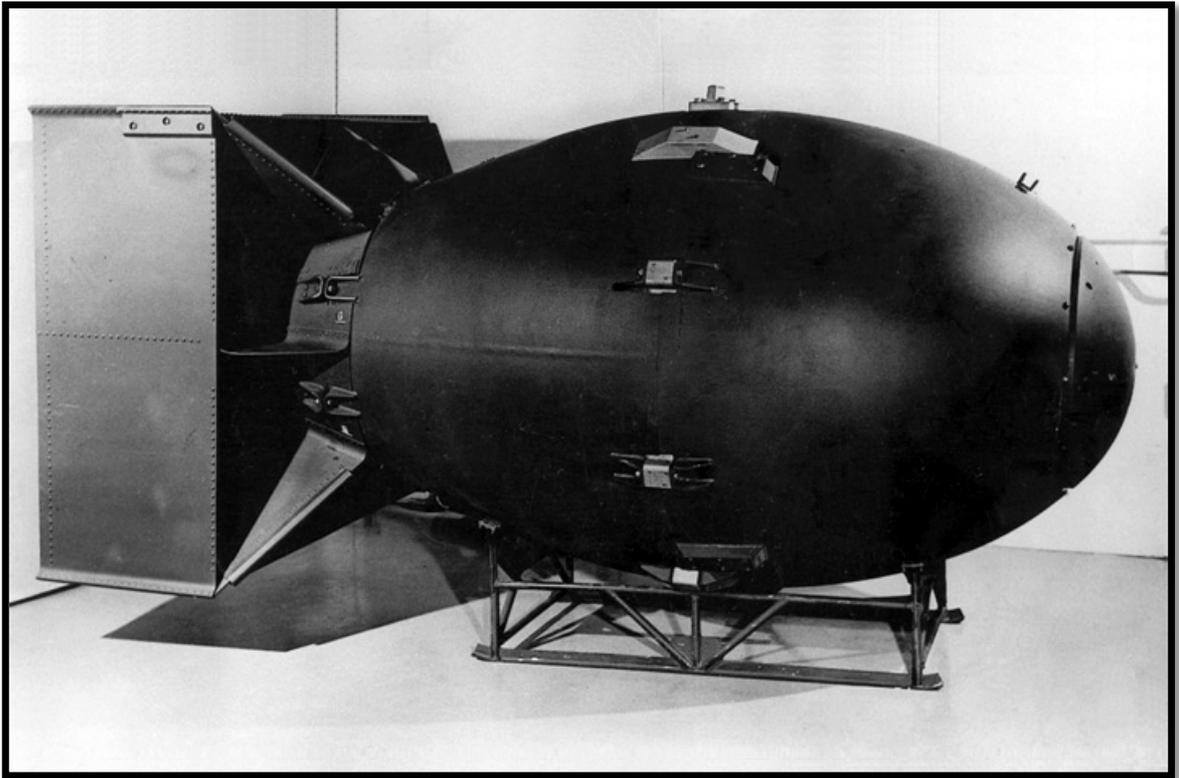
We turned around here at Nagasaki and headed home on board the 8.30am Limited Express back to Hakata. From there another Shinkansen Hikari 8 car Star Rail Super Express to Mount Fuji.

Seventy one years ago my father's diary says that today we boarded MV Duntroon. I was embarkation Sgt. and went to the ship before main troops but had nothing to do. Had a three course meal for lunch and a good loaf around. Left wharf at 6pm and pulled out into the main harbour and then anchored for the night. Stayed at anchor all day and then set sail from P.M. at 6.45pm bound for home. We hope!

Nagasaki remains the centre of the Far Eastern Catholic diocese, which includes Goa and Macau. There are about 60 churches in the city and its precincts include an eccentric group known as the

'the hidden Christians'. A hybridized Christian/Buddhist practice whereby Kanzeon, the bodhisattva of compassion, substitutes for Mother Mary.

Overlooking all of this on the hillside just beyond our hotel stands a very big, very beautiful figure of Kanzeon. She looks down with compassion on a city so unlucky when it comes to atom bombs.



Replica of the "Fat Man" nuclear bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, on August 9, 1945

BIG VOID; SMALL VOID

Ellen Davison

The Case:

One day a high official called upon the hermit Shanjue and remarked, “It must be very inconvenient to live by yourself in this way without an attendant.”

Shanjue said, “Not at all, for I have two attendants.” Turning his head, he called out, “Big Void! Small Void! In reply to his call, two tigers bounded into the room, roaring fiercely. The high official was frightened out of his wits. Shanjue spoke to the tigers saying, “This is an important guest. Be quiet and courteous.” The two tigers crouched at his feet and were gentle as kittens. (1)

Comment:

The high official was petrified. He thought the forest home of tigers had long been cleared, and the likes of Big Void and Small Void had retreated to Tibet. He didn’t dream that he too could cultivate such splendid attendants right there in the capital. Shanjue may have earned his attendants; but tell me, who awarded them?

Verse:

Big Void and Small Void-
Tigers exactly the same size;
There’s nothing scarier than nothing,
Except two of them, leaping and growling.

Teisho:

Shanjue (n.d.) was a contemporary and Dharma brother of Kuei-shan (771-853) who co-founded the Kuei-yang School of Ch’an. They were both senior disciples in Pai-Chang’s (720-814) assembly where Shanjue was the head monk and Kuei-shan the tenzo or head cook. The story of Shanjue begins to unfold in Case 40 of the Gateless Barrier (Wu-Men-Kuan)

Pai-chang, the abbot, wanted to choose a teacher to establish a monastery on Mount Ta-kuei. He had Kuei-shan in mind as the most suitable. But the head monk, hearing about this, approached Pai-chang and asked for the position. In order to choose the most outstanding one for this task Pai-chang invited both monks to make a presentation and devised the following test: He took a water jug, set it on the floor and said, ‘Don’t call this a water jug. What would you call it? The head monk, Shanjue, said “It can’t be called a wooden sandal”. When it was Kuei-shan’s turn he stepped forward and without saying a word, kicked over the water jug and left. ‘Pai-chang laughed and said, “the head monk loses”. Kuei-shan was then made founding teacher at Mount Ta-kuei. (2)

‘The head monk loses’. Even though the head monk had some realisation, had some clarity, his response showed that he was still caught up in some measure of reasoning, still caught up in duality.

In a similar vein to Pai-chang, Master Yunmen (864-949), whose teachings are still a major influence in Zen today, put forth the following question to his students:

Yunmen held up his staff and asked, “What is this? If you say it is a staff, you go to hell. If it isn’t a staff, what is it?” (3)

Master Yunmen kindly explained where the sticking point is when one cannot respond to such a question:

Master Yunmen once seized his staff, banged it down on the seat and said, “All sounds are the Buddha’s voice, and all forms are the Buddha’s shape. Yet when you hold your bowl and eat your food, you hold a ‘bowl-view’; when you walk you hold a ‘walk-view’; and when you sit you have a ‘sit-view’. The whole bunch of you behaves this way!”(4)

Shanjue’s presentation had a ‘water jug’ view while Kuei-shan’s response was beyond view, a pure expression of essential nature coming forth. To be head monk in a large monastery and lose in Dharma combat with anyone other than the teacher would be a great blow. Shanjue may have felt anger or envy or humiliation. The traditional yet speculative interpretation is that Shanjue left the assembly carrying envy and jealousy towards Kuei-shan.

When we look at how we are affected by an event such as failure or defeat, or loss, we find a range of reactions and responses. Envy is one. Shame is one. Even rage. Retreat and withdrawal are another. Yet another is to face our deepest fears and humiliations and then gather our courage and determination to meet the situation and transform it. And still another is to work with the doubt that arises, to use that doubt as the basis of penetrating inquiry.

There is some evidence that Shanjue’s practice included developing a compassionate heart, by invoking Avalokiteshvara. (5), the Bodhisattva of compassion. True compassion arises when self is forgotten, with the complete letting go of all thoughts of me and mine, of self and other. Then fear is replaced by openness and caring. Envy is transformed to joy for others successes and lack of courage is replaced by equanimity.

The process of deepening one’s realisation is infinite. Shanjue realised his insight was ‘not yet enough’ so he gathered his courage and determination, making the decision to practise unceasingly until this great matter of life and death was completely resolved.

Shanjue took up the life of a hermit on Mount Hua-lin. His solitary life was relieved by the company of two small motherless tiger cubs he found in the wild and raised, which were his only companions.

Shanjue’s quest was not just to deepen his practice and realisation but to shed the veil of illusion completely, to resolve all doubts.

There, in the wilderness, living in a bare stone hut he practised zazen assiduously until one day his doubts were laid to rest.

The Case begins with a high official calling upon the hermit.

This high official was the noted scholar, intellectual and calligrapher, P’ei Hsui (797-860) who rose to the rank of Chief Minister (Prime Minister) in 853. P’ei studied the teachings of the many streams of C’han or Zen that were emerging in this period of history and made a point of visiting famous Buddhist Ch’an teachers.

P’ei, for all his great learning and study was still seeking answers to his questions about this great mystery of life and death. In one translation of this case Shanjue asks “Have you comprehended the Mystery?” and P’ei answers, “No, I don’t see it”. (7)

The High Official's opening remark seemingly shows some concern for the hermit and his living conditions. "It must be very inconvenient to live by yourself in this way without an attendant". However, it is more likely he is asking what is it that you have discovered that makes your life here, without any attendants, without amenities, having to chop your own wood and carry your own water bearable. In other words, he is asking about his realisation.

Shanjue's response cuts sharply through all thoughts of convenience and inconvenience, of having and not having, of all duality.

He says, "not at all, for I have two attendants", and then calls out "Big Void! Small Void!" And two tigers came bounding into the room roaring fiercely and frightening the high official out of his wits. Superb! Breathtaking! What splendid attendants!

But who would not be petrified facing two leaping, roaring tigers?

Tigers speak to us of the untameable wilderness we yearn to touch in our own being. The tiger invites us to go beyond all duality and experience a freedom of pure intimacy with all of life. The tiger moves us in ways that go beyond the thinking mind. They have the power to evoke both fear and yearning.

And when you gaze directly into the face of the tiger, whether Big Void or Small Void, where do you find yourself at that moment?

Meeting that challenge is to drop into the untameable wilderness of our true home, of the very ground of being, which is nowhere other than where we are, right here and now.

When Shanjue spoke to the tigers and said, "This is an important guest. Be quiet and courteous ". P'ei was astounded that they became as gentle as kittens. How did he do it? How could he be so fearless? How could he tame the untameable?

P'ei had not yet realised that he too could tame the untameable. When the mystery reveals itself, and infinite infinity, the emptiness of all things is discovered, then tigers are there in attendance, crouching all around, now roaring and fierce, now gentle as kittens.

And when we return home, who is there to be afraid?

Who are these attendants? Big Void and Small Void, and can they really be measured? Can emptiness be measured as large, medium or small, like dress sizes? And who is going to be there to count those tigers and measure their size?

Is there anything that is not your attendant? With insight into emptiness everything becomes your attendant, everything advances and confirms the self. The tigers are waiting in attendance. They have been there all the time. Drinking tea and washing dishes, the rain falling softly on the tin roof, the mist in the valley, chopping wood and carrying water. Wherever you look, there they crouch, gentle and playful as kittens in this moment, leaping and growling in the next moment.

Aitken Roshi comments, "He didn't dream that he too could cultivate such splendid attendants right there in the capital".

Even today people travel to the far corners of the globe searching for answers to their deepest questions believing these answers can only be found in some exotic far away land. In a retreat some years ago in an Inquiry a woman came up with the question, where is the best place I can go to get enlightened? Where would it be? Melbourne? Sydney? Cairns? Lismore? India? Kyoto? Bellingham? Perhaps Byron.

Where can one cultivate such splendid attendants as Big Void and Small Void? Is there any place that they cannot be cultivated? As an old Zen master once said, "It is like seeking for an ox while you yourself are on it."

The high official had not yet discovered that what he was seeking for was right before his very eyes.

“Shanjue may have earned his attendants, but tell me, who awarded them?”

In our culture we get awarded for our talents and skills, for our cleverness and abilities, our courage and bravery, for coming first, second or third, but who awards Buddha Nature? Can emptiness be awarded? Can the void be bestowed? Is the void even a thing?

As Aitken Roshi says in his verse, “There’s nothing scarier than nothing”. But what is it that is so scary? Emptiness, the great infinite void evokes fears of annihilation and destruction. What will happen to me? And so people pull back in fear. But until it is experienced, it is only a thought, a concept or a view. Concepts are only wisps of smoke, clouds in an empty sky. When we meet the empty ground of being then as Dong shan said, it is like

“An old woman, oversleeping at daybreak, encounters the ancient mirror and clearly sees a face that is no other than her own. Don’t wander in your head and validate shadows any more.” (8)

The mystery reveals itself and tigers crouch at your feet.

The Verse:

‘Big Void and Small Void-
Tigers exactly the same size;
There’s nothing scarier than nothing,
Except two of them, leaping and growling.’

Two Voids, infinite in size,
Leaping and growling
Frightening everyone out of their wits
Nothing is pretty scary. The thought of facing great emptiness, of facing the void is a terrifying prospect. What will happen to you? Better not to think about it.
With one leap, we come face to face with the timelessness of no birth, no death, no self, no other, no thing at all.

Tigers leaping,
Brolgas dancing
Kookaburras laughing
Magpies warbling (9)
The Void coming forth: tigers and magpies, mountains and rivers, you and me.

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1. Zenkai Shibayama, *Zen Comments On The Mumonkan*, Harper & Row, 1974, p. 289
 2. Aitken, R. *The Gateless Barrier*, North Point Press, 1990, p.241
Zenkai Shibayama, *Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*, Harper & Row, 1974, p. 286
 3. App Urs, *Master Yunmen*, Kodansha International, 1994, p. 66
 4. Ibid, p. 66
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- Leighton, T.D. (ed), *Dogen’s Pure Standards for the Zen Community: A Translation of the Eihei Shinge*, State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 242
 6. Heine, S. & Wright, D.S., *The Zen Canon: Understanding the Classic Texts*, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 108-109
 7. Ogata, Sohaku, *The Transmission of the Lamp*, Longwood Academic, 1990, p. 284
 8. *The Five Ranks of Tung-Shan: The Universal within the Phenomenon*, Unpublished Translation, Diamond Sangha
 9. Brolgas are Australian stork like birds famous for their elegant and energetic mating dance. Kookaburras, an Australian bird of the Kingfisher family make a raucous laughing sound and Magpies are known for their warble like song.

Nor mouth had...

Sally Hopkins

‘Nor mouth had, nor mind expressed what heart heard of”

Gerard Manly Hopkins

‘All being by nature are Buddha as ice by nature is water.’

“Form is exactly emptiness, emptiness exactly form.”

“When I regard the many dharmas I find them all to be sacred forms of the never failing essence of the Tatagatha. Each particle of matter, each moment is no other than the Tatagatha’s inexpressible radiance. “

“Essential function of all the Buddhas/essential essence of all the Ancenstors, /It is present without thinking/It is completed without interacting”.

We chant many inspiring things. We read. We hear Dharma talks. We yet again discover,

“You can take a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink,” as the old saying goes.

We are born, we grow, we live ‘our story’ and die. A funny business really. I had wise counsel, fingers pointing from the beginning, yet so many dead ends, so many unnecessary tears, so many misunderstandings, wrongheaded ideas. It is not that I was not trying, was not well intentioned, didn’t have good teachers.

In a way you always have to find out for yourself, don’t you; discover the difference between good and poor advice, truth and falseness, the gap between theory, thinking you know, and actually embodying, actually seeing.

I was the oldest of five children and had a lot to do with caring for my baby brothers. Before I had my first child, I wondered what I would do with so much time now I was not working. My mother wrote, “Wait and see.” Indeed. What a shock I was in for! Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, always? I had not dreamed of it. That plunge from theory, scraps of experience, head knowledge, now seems the greatest gift. I then knew for myself, truly.

For ten years I was a teacher. Teaching poetry, much could be taught and learned; the history, the forms, the lives of poets, the gist of what they were trying to say. We could try our own hand at it-often helpful. But in reading the poetry, unless you could truly hear it, you did not begin to understand. You did not know. I taught mathematically inclined people who simply could not respond at all.

A deaf person can be extremely knowledgeable about music, know everything there is to know, but if I am deaf, can I really ‘know’ music? Something from within has to respond.

It is easier to stay with the words, the ideas, that are so inspirational and comforting, the people who make us feel good. “The things of the world are just as they are. The gates of emancipation are open,” we are told. Really. But that is so many words until our eyes open. We are shown how to practice, but it is we who have to do that practice. Beautiful stories, lovely feelings, great ideas wont do it. Breathing, this step, this step. And this step, this step. It can seem boring, irrelevant,

painful. Opening involves letting go of old pictures, old certainties, old wants- a scary business. Let go of who we are, or think we are? This seems mad. It is hard to be completely honest with yourself. I've found layer on layer of self-deception within myself.

This is where teachers can truly help. Maybe the heart of the matter cannot be taught, but they have been this way themselves, have experienced within themselves, 'know' and can encourage, nudge when we veer wildly out of focus, encourage by their presence, their words, their deeds. They can teach us to 'stay with it' – though it is we who have to DO the staying.

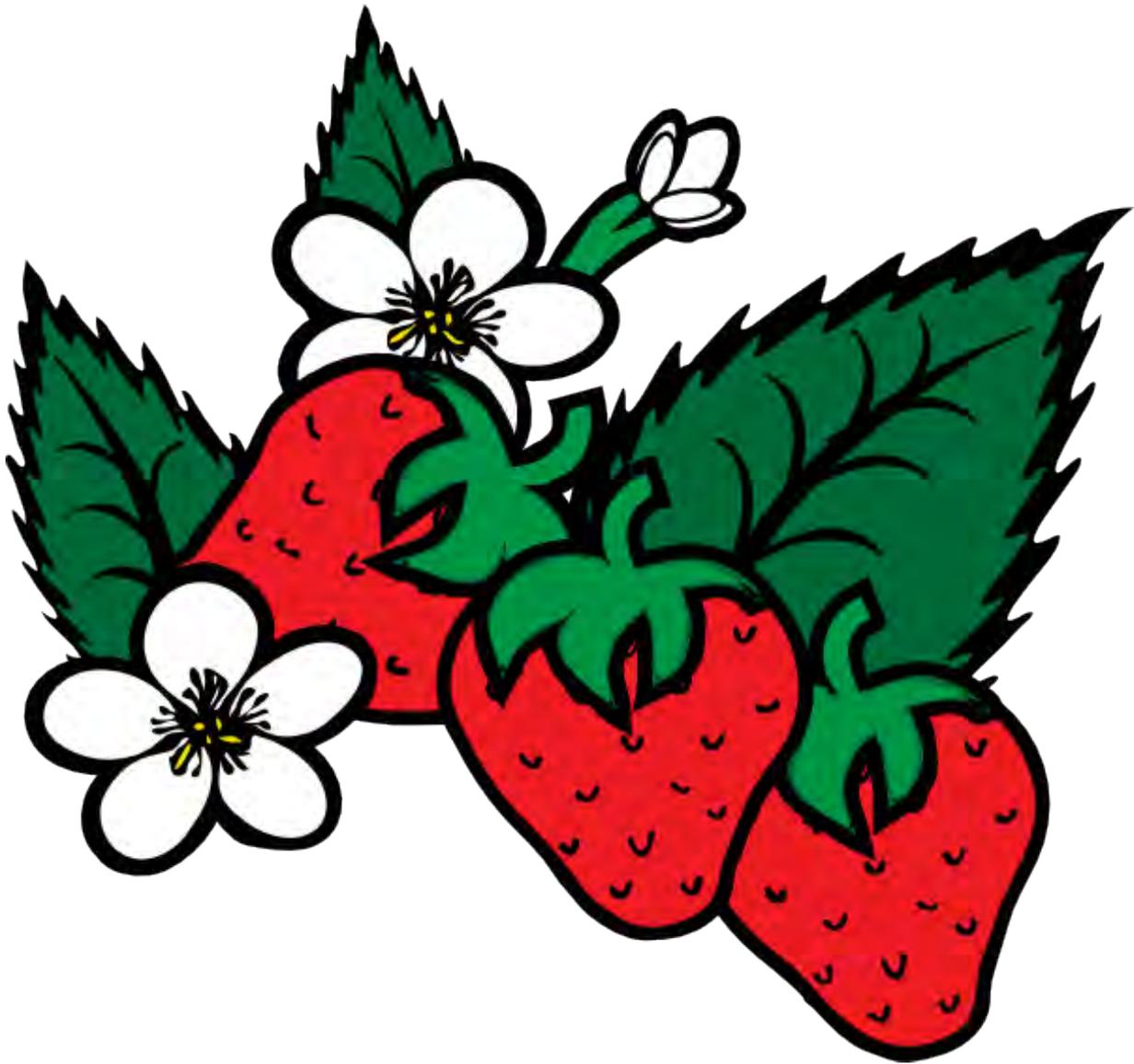
We alone have to truly experience 'the flowering peach tree' , have to respond from our whole being. We can thus experience the 'inexpressible radiance' for ourselves, we can truly hear, we can truly see, truly live our true selves. So we practice. And we practice. And we practice, to experience what can't be taught, though there is nothing to attain.



*** T h e * S t r a w b e r r y * P a r a b l e ***

*A man traveling across a field encountered a tiger.
He fled, the tiger after him.
Coming to a precipice,
He caught hold of the root of a wild vine
And swung himself down over the edge.
The tiger sniffed at him from above.
Trembling, the man looked down to where, far below,
Another tiger was waiting to eat him.
Only the vine sustained him.*

*Two mice, one white and one black,
Little by little started to gnaw away the vine.
The man saw a luscious strawberry near him.
Grasping the vine with one hand,
He plucked the strawberry with the other.
How sweet it tasted!*



Teachings that can not be taught...



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