Mind Moon Circle

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ZEN AND HUMOUR

SUMMER 2017 - 2018

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Zen and Humour

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The next issue of *Mind Moon Circle* (Autumn 2018) will be edited by Ameli Tanchitsa. His unique proposal for that issue is set out on page 39 of this issue. Please send all contributions in Word format to Ameli at ameli.tanchitsa@gmail.com by 31st March, 2018

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Revisiting Baizhang's Fox[1]

Allan Marett

It is no secret that I have a longstanding interest in the story of Baizhang's Fox, which has been an important life-koan for me. I've already given a number of dharma talks about it, and the koan also forms the basis of my Noh play, *Oppenheimer*, which I sometimes describe as 'a teisho, in the form of a Noh play, on Baizhang's Fox.'

What has prompted me to take up the story yet again? Well, some months ago I sent Nelson Foster—one of the senior teachers in the Diamond Sangha, and Resident Teacher at Ring of Bone Zendo—a copy of the DVD of *Oppenheimer*. Nelson responded by asking me some thought-provoking questions about the relationship of *Oppenheimer* to the story of Baizhang's Fox. Before I replied to his questions, however, I felt the need to come back to the case and look at it with fresh eyes—post-*Oppenheimer* as it were. In revisiting Baizhang's Fox, I'll focus on only the first part of the case; I intend to address the issues raised by Nelson in a later article.

> Once when Baizhang gave a series of talks, a certain old man was always there listening together with the monks. When they left, he would leave too. One day, however, he remained behind. Baizhang asked him, "Who are you, standing here before me?" The old man replied, "I am not a human being. In the far distant past, in the time of Kasyapa Buddha, I was head priest at this mountain. One day a monk asked me, 'Does an enlightened person fall under the law of cause and effect or not? I replied, ' Such a person does not fall under the law of cause and effect.' With this I was reborn five hundred times as a fox. Please say a turning word for me and release me from the body of a fox."
> He then asked Baizhang, "Does an enlightened person fall under the law of cause and effect of not?" Baizhang said, "Such a person does not evade the law of cause and effect." Hearing this, the old man was immediately enlightened and was released from the body of a fox.[2]

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When a student encounters a koan for the first time – whether in dokusan, or in a dharma study workshop perhaps – I often ask, "what do you think is the main point of this case?" "What is it that most interests you about this story?" I find this is a good way of allowing students to establish their own relationship with the case and to find out where in their life and practice the koan resonates. It's also a question I sometimes ask myself when encountering a new koan, or re-encountering a familiar koan. So when I decided to revisit Baizhang's Fox, this was precisely the question that I asked myself.

What jumped out for me in response was the question, "Does an enlightened person fall under the law of cause and effect of not?" This question is in fact asked twice and draws two different responses, each of which has different consequences.

When, in the distant past, a monk asked the old priest this question, his response was, "Such a person does not fall under the law of cause and effect." The consequence of this was that the old man was reborn five hundred times as a fox.

Eons later, after many fox-lives, the old man finally met Baizhang and in turn asked him the question. Baizhang's response was, "Such a person does not evade the law of cause and effect." The consequence, we learn, is that the old man was immediately enlightened and released from his fox-body.

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[1] This is an edited version of a teisho that I gave at the 2017 Rohatsu sesshin. A slightly truncated version of this talk can be heard at http://szc.org.au/the-fox/. It is intended as the first part of a two-part article that will reflect on the relationship of the story of Baizhang's Fox to my Noh play, *Oppenheimer*.

[2] Aitken, Robert, *The Gateless Barrier. The Wu-men kuan (Mumonkan).* San Francisco: North Point Press, p.19. This portion of the case also appears as Case 8 in the *Book of Serenity*.

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Budai under a pine tree

When, as students of Zen, we confront stories such as Baizhang's Fox, we need to do so with a clear dharma eye, with the eye of an awakened one. A common-sense reading of the story would suggest that the old man fell into 500 fox-lives as a result of making a mistake about cause and effect and that, when Baizhang corrected the mistake, he was released from his fox-body. But the problem with this line of thought is that it sets up a dichotomy of right and wrong—right answer versus wrong answer—and this immediately mires us in dualistic thinking.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that there is no wisdom in this common-sense reading—indeed, in his essay entitled 'Deep Belief in Cause and Effect,'[3] Dôgen Zenji is scathing about people who do not give due attention to this aspect of the case and its ethical ramifications—but nevertheless, thinking dualistically like this is inevitably only partial. We need to go deeper.

Shibayama Roshi in his teisho on this case also draws our attention to the limitations of such 'common-sense interpretations' of the koan and points beyond to a deeper understanding, where Zen is 'alive and active' … and where we can freely deal with dichotomies such as falling under the law of cause and effect versus not falling under the law of cause and effect.

> Often people say that the old man had to be turned into a fox because 'not falling into causation' denies the fact of cause and effect and thus forms a one-sided, mistaken view of equality [i.e. non-differentiation] that is not real equality. He was released from the fox body because 'not ignoring [or evading] causation' acknowledges the reality of cause and effect and knows the acceptance of differentiation. But the essence of this can never be found in such a common-sense interpretation. Neither am I saying that Zen denies causality. What I want you to know is that Zen is alive and active in quite another sphere where it makes free use of both "not falling" and "not ignoring."[4]

Why did the old man make his error? Dôgen suggests that it is the result of 'emptiness run wild,'[5] or what we might call, 'one-sided clinging to emptiness.' You might think that falling into this sort of error is a somewhat unusual problem. Ordinarily, people see only the world of form, and do not see the empty side at all.

The previous koan in the Wumenguan, Zhaozhou's Dog, is designed to address precisely that problem, by encouraging us to break free from a blinkered view that binds us to the world of form—the world of phenomena, the relative world— and to give us a first glimpse of our essential nature, of the world of empty oneness. We call this *satori* or 'awakening.' But after experiencing *satori*, it is not uncommon for practitioners to make the mistake of clinging to emptiness and becoming careless about the world of form—the world of phenomena—and when that happens, look out! 500 fox lives are coming your way.

And why was the old man freed from his fox lives? We might think that the old man was freed from the fox's body because he finally realises both perspectives—that of form and that of emptiness, but we need to be clear that seeing both form and emptiness is never a matter of *balancing* the world of form with the world of emptiness, or even seeing things now from the perspective of form and now from the perspective of emptiness.

This simply will not do. If we cannot see that form and emptiness are absolutely one and the same, then we're not seeing fully with a clear dharma eye, and we'll miss the deeper significance of this koan. After all, the Heart Sutra tells us quite unequivocally that, 'form is no other than emptiness, emptiness not other than form; form is exactly emptiness, emptiness exactly form,' and for Dôgen, the relationship between realisation and karma was similarly one of complete identity.[6]

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[3] Nishijima Gudo Wafu and Chodo Cross (translated and edited), Dôgen Kigen, 'Deep Belief In Cause and Effect (*Shinjin-inga*)', *Shôbô Genzô. The True Dharma Eye Treasury*. Berkeley: Numata Centre for Buddhist Translation and Research 2008, vol 4, pp.251-261.

[4] Shibayama Zenkei, *The Gateless Barrier: Zen Comments on the Mumonkan.* Boston: Shambala, 2000, p.38.

[5] Nishijima and Cross 2008, p.252

[6] Nearman, Hubert (translation), '*Daishugyô (The Great Practice), Shôbôgenzô, Eye of the True Teaching A Trainee's Translation of Great Master Dogen's Spiritual Masterpiece*, Mount Shasta, CA: Shasta Abbey Press 2007, p.825.

While talk of form and emptiness, or of karma and realisation, may be useful tools for teaching about, or discussing, the dharma, if there is one iota of separation between them, integrity will be lost. This is the deeper truth that lies at the heart of the story of Baizhang's Fox.

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The fox

Here is a story about precisely this matter: a story that underscores the complete identity of form and emptiness.[7] Yunyan is sweeping the courtyard, and along comes his brother monk, Daowu. Daowu says, "you're working hard," to which Yunyan replies, "but you need to recognise that there is one who does not work." That is: you see the form of the one sweeping the courtyard, but can you also see that there is also not one that is working; one that is completely empty and does not move at all? Here are two Zen worthies, testing each other's dharma eye. Daowu's "you're working hard," points to the everyday world of form, Yunyan's "you need to know that there is one who is not working hard," points in the direction of emptiness.

Daowu next response, "you mean there are two moons?" is a gentle admonishment of his brother monk for raising form and emptiness as if it was a matter of one or the other—the one who works hard as opposed to the one who doesn't.

In response Yunyan thrusts out his rake and says, "How many moons is this?" Complete unity of form and emptiness, right there. Rake and nothing but rake in the whole universe.

Daowu responds by sitting still, without a word.

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Shibayama Roshi writes, 'What I want you to know is that Zen is alive and active in quite another sphere [—from that of the common-sense understanding that he earlier outlined—] where it makes free use of both "not falling" and "not ignoring

[7] *Book of Serenity*, Case 21.

[not evading].”’ What is he saying here? Is he setting up a dichotomy between the world of form and the world of emptiness, or is he pointing to their complete identity? I think it is the latter, but in order to show why, I need to digress a little.

The ninth century Chan master Qingyuan Weixin had a saying that went something like this:

> Thirty years ago, when I began studying Zen, mountains were mountains and rivers were rivers. After I gained intimate knowledge of the truth of Zen, there were no mountains and no rivers. But now I have fully attained the way, I see that mountains are mountains, and rivers are rivers.

In the Genjô Koan, Dôgen makes a similar point:

> As all things are buddha-dharma, there are delusion, realization, practice, birth and death, buddhas and sentient beings. [This is the realm of mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers, karma is karma.]
> As myriad things are without an abiding self, there is no delusion, no realization, no buddha, no sentient being, no birth and death. [This is the realm of no mountains, no rivers, no karma.]
> The buddha way, in essence, is leaping clear of abundance and lack; thus there are birth and death, delusion and realization, sentient beings and buddhas. [This is the realm of mountains, rivers and karma that are liberated to be themselves, leaping clear of form (abundance) or emptiness (lack). Completely natural!][8]

Qingyuan and Dôgen both point us to the fact that that prior to realisation, before we experience emptiness, things are just things. All we see is form, perhaps with occasional intimations that this is not the full story. When we awaken, when we experience *satori*, we see for the first time that there is no thing at all. This is the territory of the koan Mu. And it is where the old man in our story is stuck. He has seen into the emptiness of things but he cannot yet fully embrace the truly natural way that lies beyond any separation of form and emptiness, where mountains are free to be mountains and rivers free to be rivers. This is what I think Shibayama Roshi is pointing to when he says that we can make free use of not falling into and not evading karma.

But the old man was not capable of this. Up until the point he experienced *satori,* he had known cause and effect only from the viewpoint of the world of form. After *satori*, cause and effect seemed to no longer function.

But that cannot possibly be the full story. No matter how enlightened you are, no matter how clear your dharma eye, if you drive your car off a thousand foot cliff you will surely die. The old man had yet to take that final step into the realm where mountains are free to be mountains, and where karma operates freely and without obstruction.

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The seriousness of this matter is powerfully expressed in the koan story: if you mislead an enquiring student about karma you will fall into 500 lives as a fox. Dôgen Zenji’s Shôbôgenzô includes two teishos on Baizhang’s Fox: ‘Deep Belief in Cause and Effect’ and ‘The Great Practice.’ As I’ve already mentioned, in the former, he makes it very clear that denial of cause and effect, as a result of what he calls ‘emptiness run wild,’[9] leads to disaster: ‘as a result of [the negation of cause and effect, the negator] falls into bad states.’[10] Bad states such as: ‘500 lives as a fox.’

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[8] Robert Aitken and Kazuaki Tanahashi (translated), Dôgen Kigen, ‘Genjo Koan,’ http://www.thezensite.com/ZenTeachings/Dôgen_Teachings/GenjoKoan8.htm (viewed 6 February 2018).

[9] Nishijima and Cross, *op.cit*, p.255

[10] Nishijima and Cross, *op.cit*, p. 252

Dôgen emphasizes that 'in learning to practice the Buddha-Dharma, the first priority is to clarify cause and effect. If cause and effect perished and became void, buddhas could not appear in the world and the ancestral master could not come from the west. In sum, it would be impossible for living beings to meet Buddha and to hear the Dharma.'[11]

Personally, I feel very strongly about the dangers of being blinded by emptiness and denying cause and effect. In our present age, there have been many instances of highly respected Zen masters and other Buddhist teachers – people who are highly respected for their dharma eye – doing unconscionable things, including sexual abuse and misconduct, bullying and justifying killing.

My Noh play, *Oppenheimer*, also reflects the seriousness of my own concerns about this matter. In the play, Robert Oppenheimer's obsession with the sub-atomic world is equated to the old man's obsession with emptiness. What the two domains have in common is that in both the law of cause and effect appears to break down. The play rests on the dramatic conceit that, just as the old man in the story of Baizhang's Fox was blinded by emptiness and became careless with regard to cause and effect, so too was Oppenheimer blinded by the beauty and fascination of the sub-atomic world and as a result lost sight of the effect that his actions would have in the world. The consequences of Oppenheimer's carelessness around cause and effect – the almost total destruction of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki together with many thousands of their inhabitants, not to mention the nuclear shadow that continues to hang over us to this day – led him into what Dôgen would call 'bad states' – into a succession of fox-lives. Bound to the world of the living by his unresolved pain and regret Oppenheimer's ghost returns obsessively to Hiroshima every year on the anniversary of the atomic bombing and suffers the agonies of those who perished there. Each time, he dies an agonizing death and is reborn to even greater pain upon his wheel of karma.

Oppenheimer's liberation from his ghostly existence and his cycle of agonies comes only when he, like the old man, sees into the true nature of karma – when he sees that he is not separate from the effects of his actions. Only then can he act to free himself, in the full understanding that the law of cause and effect can never be evaded.

After awakening there is much work to be done, as we learn to carry our realisation into the world. Teachers not only lead students to awakening, they also (with the help of the words and actions of the old masters enshrined in our koans) help them to integrate their realisation into their daily lives. Karma is one of the most difficult and confusing things to integrate, and this is why, perhaps, this koan is known as a *nanto* koan: because it deals with a particularly difficult matter.

Seeing into emptiness does not mean that you can evade the law of cause and effect. Dôgen is firm on this matter: 'In learning in practice the Buddha-Dharma, the first priority is to clarify cause and effect.'[12]

Dôgen's view of karma is both radical and subtle. It is in the other of his discourses on Baizhang's Fox – "The Great Practice" chapter in the *Shôbôgenzô* – that he draws our attention to the fact that the clear dharma eye sees the relationship between The Great Practice (that is, Full Awakening) and Cause and Effect as one of *identity*.

> When we search for and find the Great Practice, this will be the Great Practice of Cause and Effect. Because this Cause and Effect is invariably the full perfection of the cause and the complete fulfilment of the effect, there is nothing to debate concerning 'being subject to [falling

[11] Nishijima and Cross, op.cit, p. 257

[12] Nishijima and Cross, *op.cit.* p.257

under the law of]' or 'not being subject to [not falling under the law of]' and there is nothing to discuss concerning 'being blind to [evading]' or 'not being blind to [not evading].'[13]

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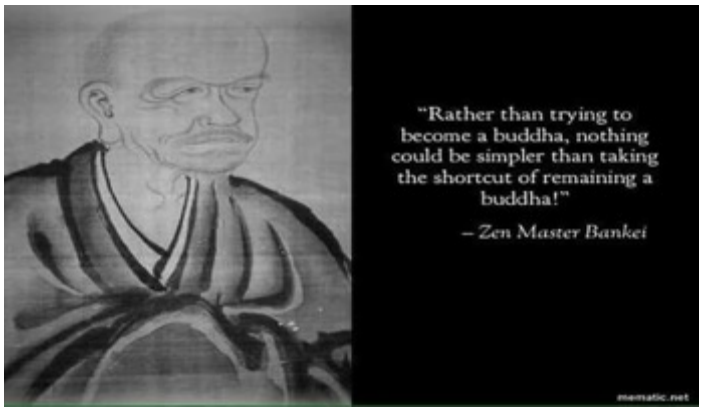
Just as Yunyan's thrust-out rake – how many moons is this? – presents the complete identity of emptiness and form, Dôgen's words point us towards the absolute non-separation of awakening and karma. As in Qingyuan's expression of full maturity, where there is no tension between the emptiness of mountains and rivers, and the form of mountains and rivers; everything, including the action of karma, is free to be itself.

For a more recent expression of this fundamental truth and its implications for how we lead our lives, I'd like to turn once again to Shibayama Roshi, and allow him the last word:

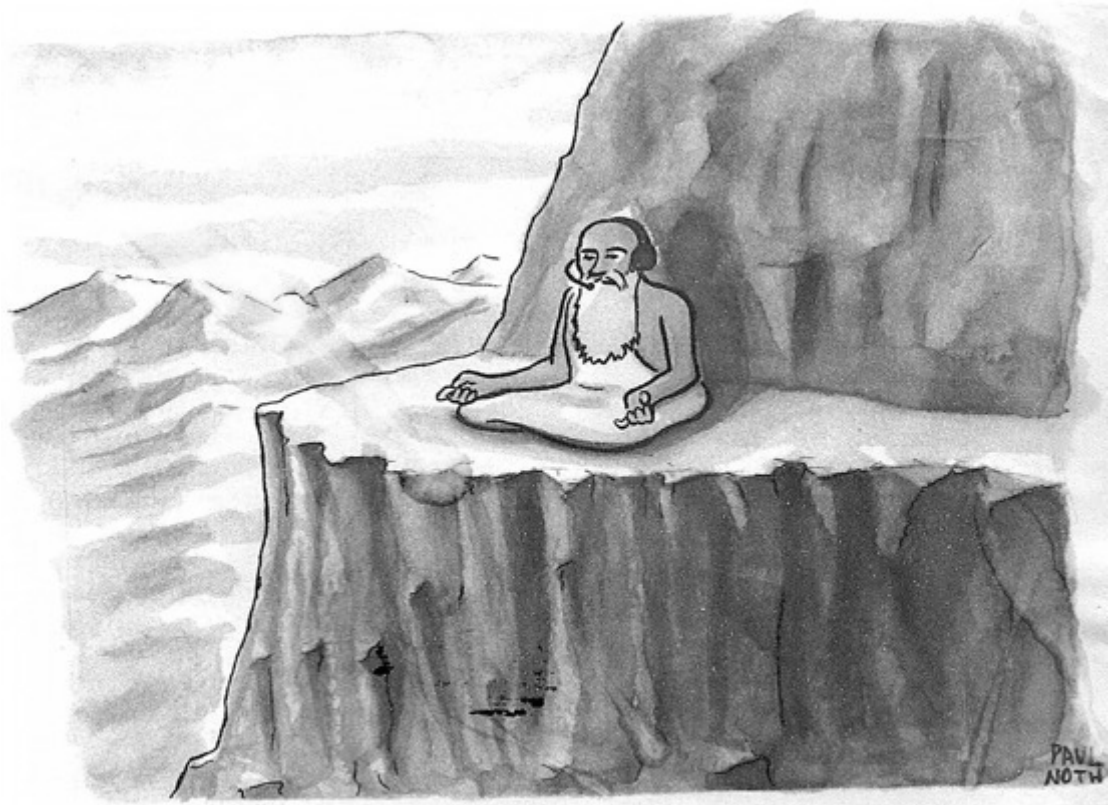
> The fact of cause and effect is so clear and undeniable! In all ages and places there can be nothing on this earth that does not exist through the action of cause and effect. Every moment, every existence is causation itself … This being the case, the [person] of real freedom would be the one who lives in peace in whatever circumstances cause and effect bring about. Whether the situation is favourable or adverse, he [or she] lives it as the absolute situation with [the] whole being – *that is he [or she] is causation itself* (my emphasis). [Such a person] never dualistically discriminates different aspects of the situation; [the] heart is never disturbed by any outside elements. [Living] like this, [such a person] is the master of cause and effect and everything is blessed as it is. The eternal peace is established here. This is the indescribably spiritual happiness a Zen [person] enjoys.[14]

Hotei



[13] Nearman, *op.cit*, p.825

[14] Shibayama, op.cit., p.34



"Have you tried turning off your conscious mind and then turning it back on again?"

In the not-too-distant past

Brendon Stewart

In the not-too-distant past Spike Jonze's film "Her', set at the time in the not-too-distant future, explored the romantic relationship between Samantha, a logarithm, and Theodore Twombly, a human being. As it would happen Samantha can feel the pangs of heartbreak, intermittently longs for a body and is bewildered by her own evolution. She has a rich inner life, complete with experiences and sensations. At some time in her bewildering evolution she actually worried about not having a body, "But now", she says, "I truly love not being tethered to time and space in the way that I would be if I was stuck inside a body that's inevitably going to die".

"Her" raises two questions that preoccupy some of us. Are non-biological creatures like Samantha capable of consciousness — at least in theory? And if so, does that mean we humans, some of us here in the Sydney Zen Centre, might one day be able to upload our own minds to computers and join in with a virtual sangha untethered from bodies that's inevitably ache and pain? Because right now, as I nobly writhe around on my zafu trying to let my mind float as a cloud and stilling my *hara* to be as the wooded glen, nonetheless my shoulders slump … will I ever meet the Buddha with such round shoulders?

Virginia Woolf reckons that sometime in the nineteenth century men (and in the main it was men) began to self-consciously describe their minds in confessions and autobiographies. One gathers, she says, from this enormous modern literature of confession and self-analysis that to be creative is always a feat of prodigious difficulty. Such difficulty is even harder to bear when it becomes clear that the world is notoriously indifferent. Is it any easier for Samantha or anyone else who could have flown off down some virtual vector to avoid the pangs of self-indulgence? In one of the many mystical realms can a community of untethered minds be done with autobiography?

On the other hand, if she had had one, Samantha can't self-consciously take all her clothes off and dive head long into a rolling wave. Her virtual imagination doesn't have a body that may shrug its shoulders at either meeting the Buddha or composing a poem.

Enough of Netflix and NBN speeds.

Meditation in movement has a thousand times more value than meditation in stillness. I read this in the delightful *Unsui: A Diary of Zen Monastic life.* A reminder again about chopping wood, or washing clothes, and not sitting there on the 100 foot pole. Taking our bodies along always offers one the chance for misadventure, for some comic mishap, some trip up. Falling over yourself is a sure way to dismantle, sometimes ever so briefly, the mind's preoccupation with self-analysis.

And, too, we touch each other's bodies, we cradle and caress, we hold hands and kiss another body – our bodies sooth and heal the sadness in another. Sangha relations are bodily relations; they are complete when we know each other in the flesh.

Some time ago I heard, by way of silliness, banter that caught up the strange Zen tale involving a dog and the cry of a frustrated Mu (Or was it a moocow?) and the purging

value of red-hot iron balls. In the end, however, or at the beginning maybe, it all amounted to nothing anyhow. My memory has it that at the time it wasn't very funny and today, with these words on a page the world's indifference is weighty. But, still, can this tale point to something amusing at least, let alone down right funny, in the way this body sits at zazen?

Samantha could never sit on a dokusan line fidgeting with the seam of the zabuton. She would never be furtive and ever so cautious moving her aching hips while chitchatting away to herself in preparation for yet another curious and circular dialogue that we call dokusan. That's because she doesn't have a body; she's lucky like that. Mu doesn't catch her in the knees nor wheedle its nothingness just there as occipital hindrances.

Bodies are our blessing; they are our essential reality; our bodies are Bodhi. It is with our bodies that we bow before the Buddha and touch foreheads to the floor. Hands lift away fantasy and delusion, bodies walk delicately one behind each other in kinhin. Bodies sleep and wake up; they can laugh and cry. They change before the very eyes that are noticing. Remarkable.

Breathe in breathe out and with each breath count one…two…three… breathe in breathe out; forget to do this and you'll get nowhere.

The Enlito Hat

Uncle Max (Dulumunmun, Yuin Elder) is telling a story…

Caroline Josephs

26th January, 2018…
Uncle Max (Dulumunmun, Yuin Elder) is telling a story…
At Barangaroo the story is being told to a great crowd of people, sitting on the grassy slope with families, friends – Sydney Harbour as wondrous backdrop. It isn't the usual 'Australia Day' celebration.
A liner sails by – a mighty cruise ship with many people lining the decks, green and yellow ferries scud along, police launches with foam flying, an old sailing yacht with Aboriginal flag flapping together with the Aussie one – vessels of all shapes and sizes...
Uncle Max is leading a line of men with his 10-year-old great-grandson in front of him (whose task is to learn by leading). Uncle Max marks the rhythm with his clapsticks. Uncle Max's grandson, Wayne, tends the sacred fire. The men come in, painted up with ochre, red threads around their heads … in a circle. Behind Uncle Max as Elder, the Aboriginal dancers (male, and then female) are waiting to enter the circle of sand on the ground. The fire is burning in a huge metal cauldron … brought from the island offshore (Goat Island) where it has been kept burning for a day and a night. Its 'smoking' offers cleansing.
We are being invited to celebrate being *one mob*… being welcomed as *one* tribe – to help in the healing and unification that is much required between our cultures …
We notice people from Asian countries, Middle East, India, Europe and beyond…
Uncle Max begins to speak:

I am seven years old and I meet my grandfather.
'How are you, Dulumunmun?' My grandfather asks.
'Pop, I am having a *bad* day!' I say.
'Listen Dulumunmun – you sit on your *mon* [bum] there, and listen to this story….One you will never forget, eh?'
Pop goes on, 'Grandfather Sun only has *sunny* days… *cold* days… *frosty* days… *rainy* days…*cloudy* days… *snowy* days… *misty* days…*windy* days!
There are no bad days!
And with that, my grandfather turns, and walks away.

I wonder whether this story speaks to you?
It speaks to me, as a Zen student.
It is a story, Uncle Max's story…and perhaps our story too, eh?
It may make you laugh.
It makes me laugh, especially when I hear the tones and inflexions, the immediacy and the spontaneity of the voice right there, in the moment.
Simple? Profound?
Laughter can demonstrate that two things have been brought together -- previously separate in our perception, in our mind….
Humour surprises. Humour informs us – perhaps, of something important…
'Bad' days, 'good' days…. moral judgments? Psychological aspects?
Zen offers something beyond.
Culture of First Nations people offers something else also – Is it congruent with Zen?

During the ceremonies at Barangaroo, a choir of people of all ages sings – all backgrounds, all interested in knowing about Indigenous culture…

They have learned 'Bayala—Baraya: Sing Up Country'
(Let's Sing Good Dreaming)
Written by Jacinta Tobin and Nardi Simpson – Both Indigenous women are passionate leaders of this part of ceremony.

Here are the words and their English translation.

Do they resonate with you as a Zen person?

Is the wind simply your breath expanded?
Do we all inhabit one earth, one ocean?
Are we all human beings?
With the same sun rising – a new beginning each day, as Uncle Max has reminded us.
Are sea eagle, whale, Port Jackson fig and Sydney cockle all part of our 'One Big Family'?
Do these ideas make a connection? Is it like laughter that gusts in to change perception? I wonder….?

Listen. 150 voices sing:

Buruwi guwi	East wind
Buruwan guwi	North Wind
Bayinmarri guwi	West wind
Badjayalang guwi	South wind
Gurugal wirri galgala guwi	Long ago bad sickness come
Biyal marri iyora booni	No more big people
Yugu-na baraya-la	Today let's sing
Banga budjari gunyalungalung	Make good dreaming
Gurugal wirri galgala guwi	Long ago bad sickness come
Biyal marri iyora booni	No more big people
Yugu-no baraya-la	Today let's sing
Banga budjari gunyalungalung	Make good dreaming
Gunyalungalung	Dreaming
Gunyalungalung	Dreaming
Wugul-ora	One people
Wugul bemul	One earth
Wugul coe-wing	One Sun
Wugul garrigarang	One ocean
Ngulla-wal	We care
Ngubadi-la	Let's love
Wugul marri	One big
Mudjin	Family
Wugul-ora	One people
Wugul bemul	One earth
Wugul coe-wing	One sun
Wugul garrigarang	One ocean

Burumerring	Sea Eagle
Gawura	Whale
Damun	Port Jackson fig
Gadyan	Sydney cockle
Guwayana	Wind
Guwayana	Wind
Guwayana	Wind
Burumerring	Sea eagle
Gawura	Whale
Damun	Port Jackson fig
Gadyan	Sydney cockle
Ngulla-wal	We care
Ngubadi-la	Let's love
Wugul marri	One big
Mudjin	Family
Guwayana	Wind
Guwayana	Wind
Guwayana	Wind
Buruwi dharrook	East wind
Buruwan dharrook	North wind
Bayinmarri dharrook	West wind
Badjayalang dharrook	South wind
Gurugal wirri galgala guwi	Long ago bad sickness come
Biyal marri iyora booni	No more big people
Yugu-na baraya-la	Today let's sing
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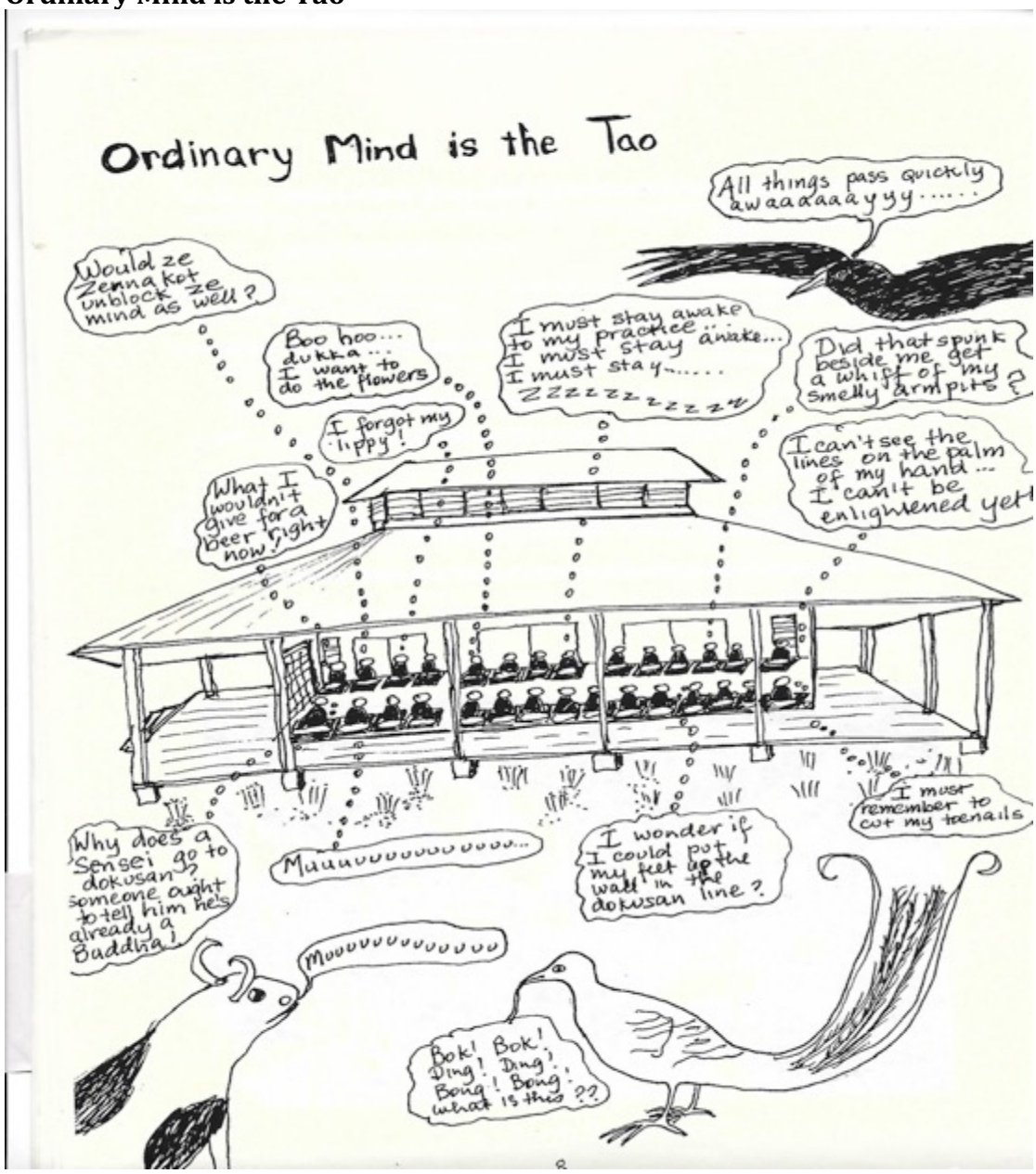
Biyal marri iyora booni	No more big people
Yugu-na baraya-la	Today let's sing
Banga budhari gunyalungalung	Make good dreaming
Gunyalungalung	Dreaming
Gunyalungalung	Dreaming

After, at Barangaroo, the Governor-General of New South Wales, and the Premier of NSW, both speak…

At the end of the ceremony, the Aboriginal flag is hoisted on the Harbour Bridge for the first
time…ever…. time…ever….time…ever…

Caroline Josephs
6th Feb, 2018

Ordinary Mind is the Tao



SHOWERHOUSE SOLILOQUY
Diana Levy

for Peter Bunting

Preamble

Back in the day, when we were building the cottage, the hojo and the dunnies at Gorrick's Run, we didn't care to expend extra energy on fancy washing facilities. So the showerhouse contained a common area where two buckets could be hoisted over two sweaty bodies, be they male or female. There was one private shower cubicle, and this all worked fine for a number of years. Throwing away notions of dignity seem to me to support the work of throwing away small self. They are just bodies, washing! Yes, but....

Poem

How those ladies love me
they are lustful for cleanliness,
every two days they
throw off their blacks
cavort naked in my wooden embrace,
loving my washboard stomach
and thrusting smokestack
Hot water runs down their rounded limbs
the ladies open their mouths
and close their eyes as they
grope me for the soap,
shampoo slides down their wet
pink or brown skins, slithers down
between my cracks and
they are just their bodies.

A slight breeze on wet skins,
Peter adds another stick
my fire roars
he averts his eyes
and mumbles jealously.

Afterwards I lie back contented
exhale a long plume of blue smoke
to the heavens –
tomorrow, the men.

Diana Levy

Roshi's Sense of Humour

Kim Bagot

Roshi Robert Aitken and Ann Aitken

Roshi had a ready sense of humour

Robert Aitken Roshi had a remarkable and sparkling sense of humour. When I call him to mind my impression is of - as well as his shining integrity with his deep, expansive wisdom - his witty, ready sense of humour.

A few examples: one evening at a public question-and-answer session in the early years someone asked him about his views on reincarnation. Roshi replied straight away, " can I get back to you on that!"... (it was late in the evening, and it seemed to me that that person was hung up about it and a long discussion could ensue).

I think Robert Aitken felt at home in Australia. Michael Keiran, now the resident teacher in Hawaii, said he was "different" when he was in Australia. Roshi joked more than once that he wanted to be re-born as an Australian...

Finally, 30 years after his first visit to Australia, in Hawaii at the 50th anniversary celebration of the diamond sangha, he was mentioning things about each of the many countries he had visited. He said, "...and I came to Australia to "learn a sense of humour!...", then retold the following anecdote, (retelling a joke can often kill it, but the old boss did so I will have a go too).

In the first week in 1979 on the first car trip, to the Blue Mountains, Roshi had offered, fairly insistently, three times, to pay for the petrol. At the third time one of us in the back of the car straight away piped up in mock sotto voce, "Typical Yank...he comes down here and tries to throw his money around!" Led by Aitken Roshi we all laughed joyously.

Roshi Robert Aitken and Anne Aitken

.ssssssssdss

Seriously though

One vivid word has its uses but one picture can also be worth a lot of words; these photos of Roshi and Anne were missing from the article honouring the centenary of our founding teacher, appearing in the latest MMC. None of the six who responded to an email extract and photos seemed to be aware of the article so I have included the original photos above with an extract for some context, below.

I simply want to say that Robert Aitken was the wisest and kindest person I have ever met ... with the possible exception of Ann Aitken, who had a natural serenity about her character. Indeed, there was a joke in the Hawaii sangha that Roshi was just a front man and the real teacher was Ann Aitken!

Robert Aitken showed that the way of nobleness of character (recall our vow to embody the noble eightfold path) is the way of humility and the way of not knowing. Personally, I felt completely safe with him, as with no other person, to unburden myself of the most painful and intimate things.

Although he was very erudite and had a big intellect, Roshi didn't have a "big head", or big ego. He said casually once that he had resigned himself for a long time to being a kind of junior leader in Zen because he didn't seem to be progressing in the koan curriculum; bear in mind that he had first encountered Zen with R. H. Blyth in 1941, and was sitting at monasteries in Japan from 1950.

In the end he became a doyen of American Zen teachers, “the one referred to in times of crisis”. Tears welled up in his eyes spontaneously when he told us in a teisho at the first sesshin in 1979, about his debt to Yamada Roshi who had inspired him to move along the path after his decades of faithful practice. I never tire of re-reading Robert Aitken's writings and still find something fresh within a page or two.

His integrity and high standards extended to his own work and writings. In his last published Teisho for the 50th anniversary of the Diamond Sangha in Hawaii, he made a point of correcting something that he had written 30 years before! This was not unusual for the old boss.

Roshi "walked his talk" and early on told us that a good Zen teacher will go out of their way to discourage a guru relationship and "transference"; he was quite frank about his personal foibles.

At Riley Lee’s recent concert for SZC the first shakuhachi piece was, "Yearning for the Bell". I still yearn deeply to hear Roshi's bell-like wisdom, always ringing true, awakening me to the truth and bringing me home.

Lost on Dark Paths at Kodoji

Sally Hopkins

A dark night with heavy fog,
us chanting the closing ceremony.
“I urge you everyone,
Life and Death is a grave matter”.
The final bell. Silence. We bow and go to bed,

I towards the Old Tree stump
to check – someone had gone early.
“Are you alright?” “Yes”. No more.

Yet now dark, dark, dark.
All the lights turned off.
Fog thick like old London fog,
a few feet ahead scarcely visible.

Off I go to my tent undaunted
… … … land in the scrub.
Head for the dojo …..... more scrub..
Try again, …. … …. and again, …
… and again.
Darkness, fog, black fog.
Sense of direction totally gone.
Dojo, hojo, cottage, my little tent,
where? Silence. Fog, fog, fog.

” Not knowing, most intimate.”
“Everything right Here.”

Dad jokes are the seventh paramita?!

Sean Loughman

Why do cows belong to the Rinzai school?

Because they use cow-ans.

Believe it or not, dad jokes are some of the finest examples of the seventh paramita in action. You thought there were only six paramitas in the Mahayana tradition, didn't you? But there are seven. At least, Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo believes that humour should be the seventh paramita[15] and I do too. And you didn't think dad jokes are funny, right? Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche translates "paramita" as "transcendent action"[16]. So if I am right, those of you who groan or roll your eyes at dad jokes have simply been blind to the deeper significance of Zen Master Dad's transcendent action. Let me explain.

Like koans, jokes are "turning words". Their intention is to jolt you out of your daze by turning your world upside down or inside out with an entirely unexpected perspective. But unlike head-scratching koans, side-splitting jokes actually work. Everyone "gets" them. For a brief moment, through a spasm of insanity, even in the darkest of hours, the world is sane again, your eyes are cleared and your heart lightened.

One of the first kinds of joke involving language that children understand and create is punning. Not only that, but dad jokes are found throughout the world. The Japanese word for “dad joke” is directly equivalent to ours.

Issey Miyake, Japan's most famous fashion designer, was once asked by an exhibition designer how his clothes should be displayed. Miyake replied that the exhibition should be playful and fun, such that even children would enjoy it. If you have seen his clothing, you can see that this is a guiding principle in his work. My point is that what delights children delights everyone. Therefore dad jokes are the highest form of the seventh paramita.

Zen is not in the habit of ranking things, but humour, at least in my mind, although a paramita, does not stand quite as high as the original six. There is a reason, that I know, but cannot fully explain, why it is not included. Nor can I explain why I know

[15] Palmo, J. (2017). *Lighten Up*. [online] Lion's Roar. Available at: https://www.lionsroar.com/lighten-up/ [Accessed 28 Nov. 2017].

[16] Pāramitā. (2017, October 14). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 06:07, November 28, 2017, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=P%C4%81ramit%C4%81&oldid=805348842

this. Nonetheless, humour is a path to the other six paramitas. It is also an outcome of them. If the happiness of all beings is the ultimate goal, then humour is the shortest road to that goal.

One thing that does beat finding humour in puns is finding humour in the mundane. For a while, my daughter would hop in to the bath and burst in to infectious laughter for no apparent reason. More than just happy to be in the bath, there was something hilarious about bathing.

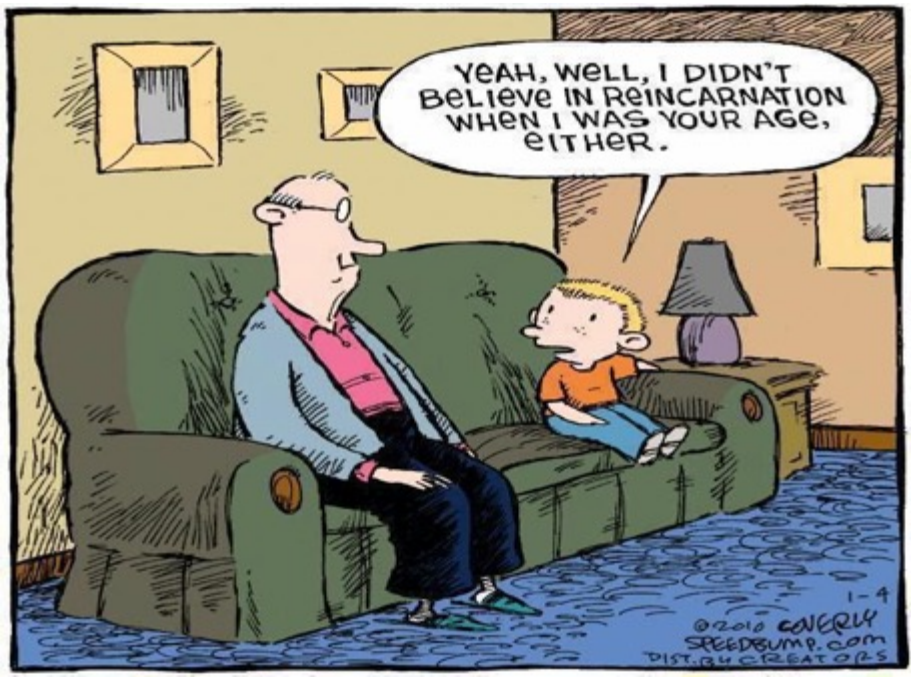
Humour is not just laugh-out-loud humour; it is seeing just how small we are in the world and being comfortable with our insignificance and significance! It is that light-hearted reaction to all the inevitable conclusions that are drawn from that insight.

Regardless of what the rest of the family thinks, dad jokes, or more correctly dad koans are the most accessible yet best disguised dharma gates of the highest order. To paraphrase Gandhi, "first they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they laugh with you, then everybody wins."

Here's a final cow-an from the Moomon-kan for you. Working on the timeless Mu koan, this was all I could think of, for a while.

> *A monk asked Zhao Zhou (Jōshū), "Does a cow have buddha-nature?"*
>
> *"Moooooooo!"*

Thanks to Allan Marett for his input (although I take full responsibility for the jokes!).



The Storehouse Opens

Stuart Solzberg

The storehouse opens
The treasure flows
The Tao flows
Life and death flows
All things flow
Endlessly...

The choice is yours,
to use it as support on the path towards realization or not ...

Every step is a treasure;
Every breath is a treasure;
Every joy, every ache and pain,
Every birdsong, every breeze
Nothing left out
All included...
Treasure

Bodhidharma

Pu-tai (Hotei)
The Laughing Buddha

Philip Long

Many of you will be familiar with Ho-tei (Japan) also known as Budai or Pu-Tai (China). He is sometimes taken in the West for *the* Buddha, that is, Shakyamuni Buddha. He is portrayed in the many statues and images of him that abound, particularly in popular Buddhism, as being fat with a very large and prominent tummy, bald and smiling or laughing (He is also known as the Laughing Buddha) and with a cloth sack (Ho-tei means "cloth sack") over his shoulder in which he keeps all his possessions and all sorts of good things, including sweets for the many children who are said to have flocked around him and with whom he played often and freely.

In China he is called the Loving or Friendly One. He is seen as Buddha or bodhisattva and in particular as an incarnation of Maitreya, the future Buddha, and his image is one of the main forms in which Maitreya is depicted in China. In this respect his name became Mi-Lo-Fu. He is sometimes depicted in the tenth of the Ten Bulls (the Ten Oxherding Pictures) (See Opposite.)

Chinese history tells us that he was an eccentric Ch'an monk who lived in China during the Later Liang period (907 – 923). He was from Zhejiang and his Buddhist name was Qieci (Chinese, literally: "Promise this"). Some times he is portrayed as carrying prayer beads. He is seen to be a loving person of good character and to be poor but content. It is said that he spoke rarely.

Devotion to him is said to bring love and enlightenment and rubbing his stomach to bring happiness and prosperity. In relation to the latter he is often shown as holding gold nuggets (see the front cover image) as a sign of the promised prosperity. Statues and images of him are a big part of popular culture and are readily available in souvenir shops and the like.

There is even a koan featuring Pu-tai which runs as follows:

> Budai travelled about giving candy to poor children, only asking a penny from monks or lay practitioners he met.
>
> One day a monk walked up to him and asked, "What is the meaning of Chan?"
>
> Budai dropped his bag.
>
> The monk said, "How does one realise Chan?"
>
> Budai took up his bag and continued on his way.[17]

I have five Pu-tai's in my home. A white one, a red ceramic one, presents from my partner, Peter. Another cast in cement I have had for many years and it sits in proud position in our lounge room (on top of the sub-woofer). I have in the past had conversations with this last one and, although I am not superstitious, I have on occasion rubbed his tummy. When I

Ten Bulls

[17] Taigen Daniel Leighton, Bodhisattva Archetypes. Penguin Arkana, 1998, p. 261.

did use to do this I would often experience feelings of comfort and compassion. I have another green one which is actually a candle. It is used as a door stop at our front door. I read recently that this is completely against feng-shui so that may have to change.

My interest in Pu-tai over the years is as an eccentric and friendly Buddha, as a welcoming, warm and free face of Buddhism, of comfort when perhaps the old man himself at times seems a little elevated, detached and remote. Latterly, this rather exaggerated dualism has fallen away and I have come to see all Buddhas and sentient beings as an intimate mixture of both these archetypal aspects. So must we be guided by those eternal aspects of our realisation, Love and Reason, intimacy and detachment, kick-arse Zen and grandmother Zen.

Hotei - God of Contentment and Happiness

The Tax Man and the Master

Courtesy of Tony Long

Jack Kornfield tells the story of the Buddhist Master was doing his rounds of a Northern Indian village. It was the monsoon season and all the rivers were swollen and running very strongly.

It just so happened that a taxman was also traveling the region to collect taxes from the poor villagers. As he was crossing the rickety bridge to the village he stumbled and fell into the torrent.

Luckily he was able to cling to a rock near the shore and not be swept away.

The villagers, who were not particularly fond of the man, were good Buddhists and tried to save him.

"Give us your hand", they implored, but he clung on for dear life and refused their help.

The master arrived and enquired what all the fuss was about.

"The taxman refuses our help and he is surely going to die."

The master waded a few steps into the raging river.

"TAKE MY HAND", he commanded.

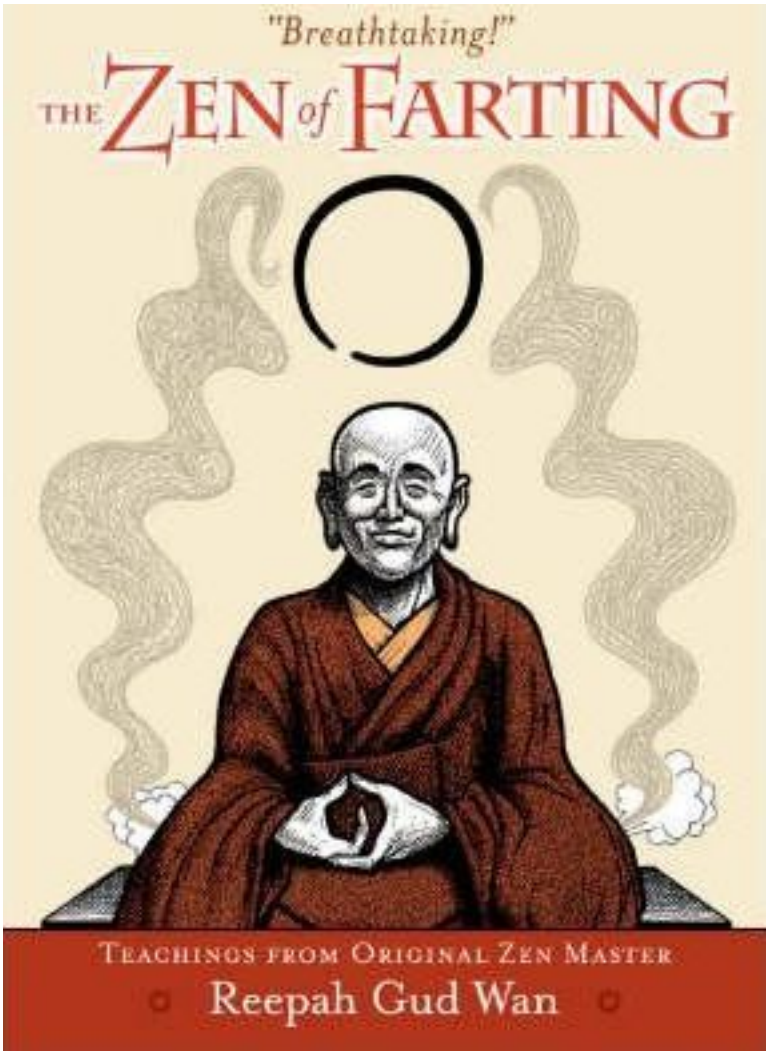
The taxman immediately took one hand from the rock and grabbed the Master's hand. He was pulled free of the river and the villagers were amazed.

"It's a miracle. You must have magical powers! How did you do that?"

"One must be careful to use correct speech. Never ask a taxman to GIVE you anything!"

Book Review

The following book comes hightly recommended by a wide range of Buddhist academics, teachers and seasoned Zen practitioners for its brilliant yet practical insights into an ancient and effective tradition.



In 1993, a Taiwanese fisherman opened a chest that had been in his family for centuries. Inside, he found a manuscript which may be as significant as the Dead Sea scrolls – a manuscript which will revolutionize our thinking about the origins of Zen. Written on a rice paper scroll, the manuscript records the teachings of the founder of Zen, the Master Reepah Gud Wan. It makes it quite clear that Reepah, a legitimate teacher of Buddhism, was frustrated by the inability of his students to grasp the abstract concepts of the Buddha. In desperation, he decided to play a joke on them. He invented the Zen of Farting, confident that even the densest pupil would realize that he was making a joke and laugh at his excessive seriousness – not to mention his farts. The joke went over like a stale air biscuit. Soon, the Master had thousands of students eager to learn this brave new spiritual teaching, the Zen of Farting. Thus was Zen born, not of heaven, but of the 'ethereal child of earth'.

Image and text care of The Book Depository.com.

[Editor: I am reminded of a story concerning another great Zen Master:

**A monk asked Yun-men, “What is Buddha?”
Yun-men said, “Dried shitstick!”]**

Yun-men Wen-yan

Gaki zōshi 餓鬼草紙 "Scroll of Hungry Ghosts", a gaki condemned to shit-eating watches a child wearing geta and holding a chūgi, c. 12th century.

Serenity Prayer

Reinhold Niebuhr

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference.

Desiderata

The gift of Laughter

Waltzing the Dhamma with Bhante Jason

Diana Levy

Bhante Jason, the barefoot monk, walks everywhere with his bowl, his razor, a water bottle, a blanket and three robes. That's all he owns, just like the followers of the Buddha 2,500 years ago. He is conducting a great experiment: Can the earliest teachings of the Buddha be applied to Australia in these times? He's been everywhere, man - walking. He receives food gifts in his bowl, which must be consumed before 12 noon. In this simple life he has met and talked with many, many people.

Some of us have met him, hosted him, and in 2016 he settled in a cave in Springwood for a long 'rains' retreat. He's been back and forth and I bumped into him again in Springwood recently with a guy called Brian from New York who is studying The Way of the Barefoot Monk. So I went over one morning to sit with them on the property which is hosting him again - John and Emily's place. Instead of sitting in the round, rammed earth building where John's drumming group practices, I headed for the giant tipi beside the dam. One of Jason's experiments was to create a Buddhist 'tent village' in the Hunter valley in 2016. The tipi was used for this venture.

I stepped in to a round canvas space where the huge poles opened to a little space of sky in the middle and settled myself on one of the coffee sacks placed on the floor. After a while, some more people came, including Bupil Sa Nim, the Korean nun from Woodford. We chanted, and sat. Outside the morning birds chanted their claim to their territory. Peace. Then Jason began a final chant, which began to sound quite familiar. Half way through, I finally recognised it - Waltzing Matilda!

The author of "Walk in the Dhamma" is Bhante Sujato, who was asked to write a Buddhist national anthem for Australia, and here is Jason's slightly modified version: sing it up!

Once a jolly Buddha camped by a running stream
Under the shade of a Bodhi tree
And he sat and meditated 'till his mind was free
Who'll come and walk in the Dhamma with me?

Walk in the Dhamma
Walk in the Dhamma
Who'll come and walk in the Dhamma with me?
And he sat and meditated 'till his mind was free
Who'll come and walk in the Dhamma with me?

He walked that dusty road down to Benares
To see the five monks staying in the Deer Park
And he taught the four noble truths, the Dhamma he himself had seen:
Suffering, its origin, cessation, the path.

Walk in the Dhamma
Walk in the Dhamma

Who'll come and walk in the Dhamma with me?

And he taught the four noble truths, the Dhamma he himself had seen
Who'll come and walk in the Dhamma with me?

When Kondannya heard about the middle way
The noble eightfold path that leads to peace of mind
The vision of the Dhamma arose in him plain to see
And so the Buddha said: 'Kondannya understands!'

Walk in the Dhamma
Walk in the Dhamma
Who'll come and walk in the Dhamma with me?
The vision of the Dhamma arose within him clear to see
Who'll come and walk in the Dhamma with me?

And now the Buddha's teaching has come to this vast spacious land
With waratah and wallabies and scribbly-bark trees
And the ghost of the Buddha may be heard beneath the lonely trees:
'Who'll come and walk in the Dhamma with me?'

Walk in the Dhamma
Walk in the Dhamma
Who'll come and walk in the Dhamma with me?
And the ghost of the Buddha may be heard beneath the lonely trees:
'Who'll come and walk in the Dhamma with me?'

Diana Levy

Bhante Jason

Our family's two cats contemplating New Year's resolutions

The Uses of Humour in Zen

Philip Long

Nagarjuna's Dilemna

"How many Buddhist's does it take to change a light bulb?
"4. One to change it, one not to change it, one to both change it and not change it and one to neither change it nor not change it."

Experiencing Laughter and Humour in Life and in Zen

One of the great gifts I received from my parents was a sense of humour. They could both see the funny side of life and enjoyed using humour to deflate the pretensions of those who took themselves too seriously. At a recent family gathering all five of us siblings enjoyed losing control and laughing till our sides split.

At a Bodhi Zendo sesshin some years ago Ama Samy was telling a story (I regret to say I can't remember the story) and began to laugh at how funny the story was. He laughed and laughed and laughed and soon became hysterical, swaying back and forth in his sitting position, totally out of control. Then, suddenly, he stopped and sat bolt upright. "Oh, my goodness me," he said, "I am hysterical." Then he promptly began laughing and swaying again, as much out of control as before.

Beginner students in Zen may be confused or concerned by the peals of uproarious laughter coming from the hojo during dokusan. They may feel: "What are they laughing at? This is serious." Old timers know just how hilarious it can be when the inevitable tension around working with a koan suddenly bursts open and the truth turns out to be just what was obvious all along.

Or the person sitting next to you in zazen may start shaking uncontrollably with laughter. Aitken Roshi warned against getting concerned about this. He reminded us that that person might be experiencing kensho.

Once we have been doing zazen for a while, however, we all become familiar with the experience of the kind of humour that seems to be evinced by the Practice. So often one sees people emerging from the zendo or the hojo with wide smiles on their faces. Aitken Roshi said that he could tell when a student entering dokusan had seen through a koan by the broad smile on the student's face.

Humour like realisation is essentially unanalyzable. If you pick it apart it is not longer funny. It is a wise person who never explains a joke. If its funny, just laugh. However, it may be useful to reflect in a general sense on the kind of humour that Zen uses and on its effects.

Humour as Upaya

Not only is humour a product of the Practice it is also upaya or skilful means leading us on to deeper realisation. One of the principle effects of humour is to release tension and stress. Nowadays, there are even classes in laughing where people gather together to laugh as a deliberate exercise. Tension is a part of everyday life and of the Practice. Some issue or other is causing a kind of blockage in our practice; it often presents itself as an anomaly, an inconsistency, a paradox, a logical impasse. The whole thing seems impossible; suddenly it gives way and we can see clearly. Then we laugh. What is so funny? Perhaps it is that we realise the futility of the way we have been looking at things or conducting ourselves; perhaps we laugh at the quixotic absurdity of our delusions and our attempts to resolve them and at the simplicity of the resolution.

Then again humour is built into the Practice in the iconoclastic approach Zen takes to the standard logic of propositional truths:

> The priest Nan-chuan found monks of the eastern and western halls arguing about a cat. He held up the cat and said: "Everyone! If you can say something, I will spare the cat. If you cannot say anything, I will cut off its head." No one could say a word, so Nan-chuan cut the cat in two.
>
> That evening Chao-chou returned from outside and Nan-chuan told him what happened (sic). Chao-chou removed a sandal from his foot, put it on his head and walked out.
>
> Nan-chuan said: "If you had been there, the cat would have been spared."[18]

And then there are the many examples of koans where the Master directly uses laughter as an upaya to wake the student up or where in response to a "turning word" the student finds himself laughing as he experiences realisation.

> Chao-chou asked Master Huan-chung, "What is the essence of wisdom?" the Master repeated the question, as if in echo. Chao-chou burst into peals of laughter and went out. The next day, finding Chao-chou sweeping the yard, the Master demanded, "What is the essence of wisdom?" Chao-chou dropped his broom, burst out with a great guffaw, and clapped his hands in delight.[19]

Overcoming dualism, ego and pride with Humour

In a more general sense laughter is instrumental in helping us to let go of our "knowing ego" and our pride in our intellectual acuity. It often accompanies the realisation that clinging to dualistic distinctions and seeking an ultimate propositional truth is useless. Conrad Hyers puts it this way:

> Laughter leads toward the debunking of pride and deflating the ego. It mocks grasping and clinging, and cools desire. It cuts through ignorance and precipitates insight. It turns hierarchies upside down as a prelude to collapsing them, and overcomes dualities and conflicts by embracing and uniting opposites. The whole intellectual and valuational structure of the discriminating mind is challenged, with a result that is enlightening and liberating.[20]

Humour in Zen is a way of prising us loose from our excessive reliance on intellection and reason and pointing the way to peace and joy:

> If the use of the term "absurdity" is acceptable in Zen as representing the inadequacy and final frustration of reason, and of the nonsensical methods employed to effect a leap beyond intellection, it is not a category implying despair or alienation or anxiety as in Western existentialism. If anything, it is a perception of absurdity that precipitates laughter, not despair, and that moves beyond alienation and anxiety into a joyful wonder.[21]

The clown fool is central to the Zen method of overcoming our excessive attachment to the sharpness of intellectual distinctions and to absolute propositional truths:

> The mystical goal of bringing about a collapse of categories, curious as it may seem at first sight, is also the intent of the comic spirit. In some respects it intensifies the categories and contrasts as a mock prelude to collapsing them. … The mystical *coincidentia oppositorum* is symbolically achieved in the motley figure and the *punctum indifferens* of the clown fool. His is an amorphousness and an ambiguity that represents

[18] Case 14 of the Mumonkan. Nan-chuan Kills the Cat. Aitken, 1990, p. 94.
[19] Conrad Hyers, The Laughing Buddha: Zen and the Comic Spirit, Wipf & Stock, 2004, p. 33.
[20] Ibid, p. 17.
[21] Ibid, p. 104.

> an order of being and knowing that lies before and beyond all duality and hierarchy, in that region of freedom and innocence and playful spontaneity attained only by little children and great sages.[22]

The kind of humour that Zen uses has a superior purpose and effect to ordinary humour; it is a means of realising the "foolishness" inherent in the Dharma:

> Zen folly is the other side of human folly: the comic reflection of ego, ignorance, desire, and attachment. Foolishness is sometimes best overcome, not by a grand display of wisdom and sage spiritual counsel, but by a higher foolishness – which is one of the reasons religions need not only masters and seers, but clowns and fools, or masters and seers who are both.[23]

The Two Sets of Images in Zen

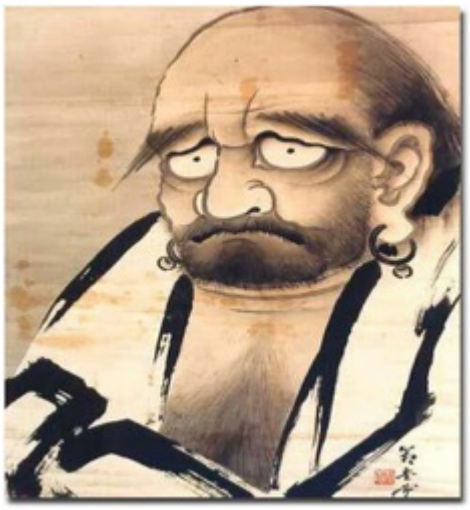
Conrad Hyers alludes to two basic kinds of images in Zen:

> Insofar as one can speak of fundamental images in a tradition that is so strongly non-symbolic and iconoclastic, there may be said to be two basic types of images in Zen, most noticeable at first in Zen paintings where they are constantly recurring, as if each calls forth and counterbalances the other. One is the epitome of resolute seriousness; the other of buoyant laughter. One is seated in the placid stillness of meditation; the other is airily dancing a folk-dance. One suggests the extremities of earnestness and commitment; the other a light-hearted and carefree playfulness. One presents the visage of the master or sage; the other of the child or clown or fool.[24]

He goes on to describe the fierceness and determination portrayed in the first of these two kinds of image:

> The first set of images in Zen is typified by the figure of Bodhidharma, determinedly facing the wall of a cave for nine years in intense meditation until, according to the legend, his legs rotted off. Or Bodhidharma, accepting Hui-k'o as a disciple after the latter had cut off his arm to demonstrate his absolute sincerity and utter seriousness. Or Bodhidharma confronting all would-be seekers of enlightenment like some fierce and formidable giant whose sheer presence overwhelms the staunchest defences of the ego. Or Bodhidharma, whose piercing eyes shoot forth like daggers from beneath shaggy brows set in a great craggy forehead, seeing through all the schemes of desire and fortresses of ignorance.[25]

Bodhidharma



[22] Ibid, p. 81.
[23] Ibid, p. 109.
[24] Ibid, p. 25 – 26.
[25] Ibid, p. 17.

The other set of images Hyers refers to is of the clown or fool and its freedom and looseness contrasts with the determination and discipline of the first set:

> The other set of images in Zen is typified by the figure of Pu-tai, the semi-legendary monk of the 10th Century, who is even larger in bulk than Bodhidharma, yet more like an overgrown child, and no more awesome and fearsome than the pot-bellied "laughing Buddha" which he becomes. Pu-tai, who refuses to enter a monastery on any basis of permanence, and instead wanders freely without attachment even to the securities of cloistered walls and the forms of monkish discipline. Pu-tai who, like a carefree vagabond, carries a large linen sack from place to place as his only home. Pu-tai, whose jolly, roly-poly figure is to be seen dancing merrily, as if (as in Liang-k'ai's sketch, 13th Century) floating gracefully in the air despite his size, seeming barely to touch the earth or leave a trace. Pu-tai, whose religious life consists of playing with village children, as if life had now come full circle, as if the end were in some way a return to the beginning, as if even children and fools knew what priests and monks did not.[26]

Pu-tai

> In consort with the herculean image of Bodhidharma is an impressive train of like figures, such as Lin-chi with his lion's roar, snarling face and clenched fist, shouting and frightening monks directly into Nirvana, as it were. Or Te-shan sitting almost menacingly with his oak-stick poised in his lap, intently awaiting the precise moment when it will be needed for the collapsing of all categories (e.g., the Bodhidharma triptych by Soga Shohaku, 15th Century). …
>
> Yet Pu-tai also has his retinue of attendant "Bodhisattvas" and "totems". And a strange retinue it is. There are the two poet-recluses and monastery fools of the seventh century, Han-shan and Shih-te, with their boisterous, almost mad, and seemingly near-demonic laughter. And there are the three laughing sages of Hu-hsi, overcome with mirth in every painting, as if a Zen trinity were enjoying some eternal joke. Or there is the hermit Ryokan (1758 – 1831) of the Japanese Soto tradition who, like his Chinese predecessor and counterpart, delighted in playing games with children, or folk-dancing in the village. In fact, so absorbed would Ryokan become in this kind of "zazen" that in

[26] Ibid, p. 26.

one game of hide-and-seek he is reputed to have hid himself with such success under a haystack as not to be discovered until the next morning by a farmer![27]

Hanshan (left), Fenggan (center), and Shide (right). Ueno Jakugen, 18th century, Japan

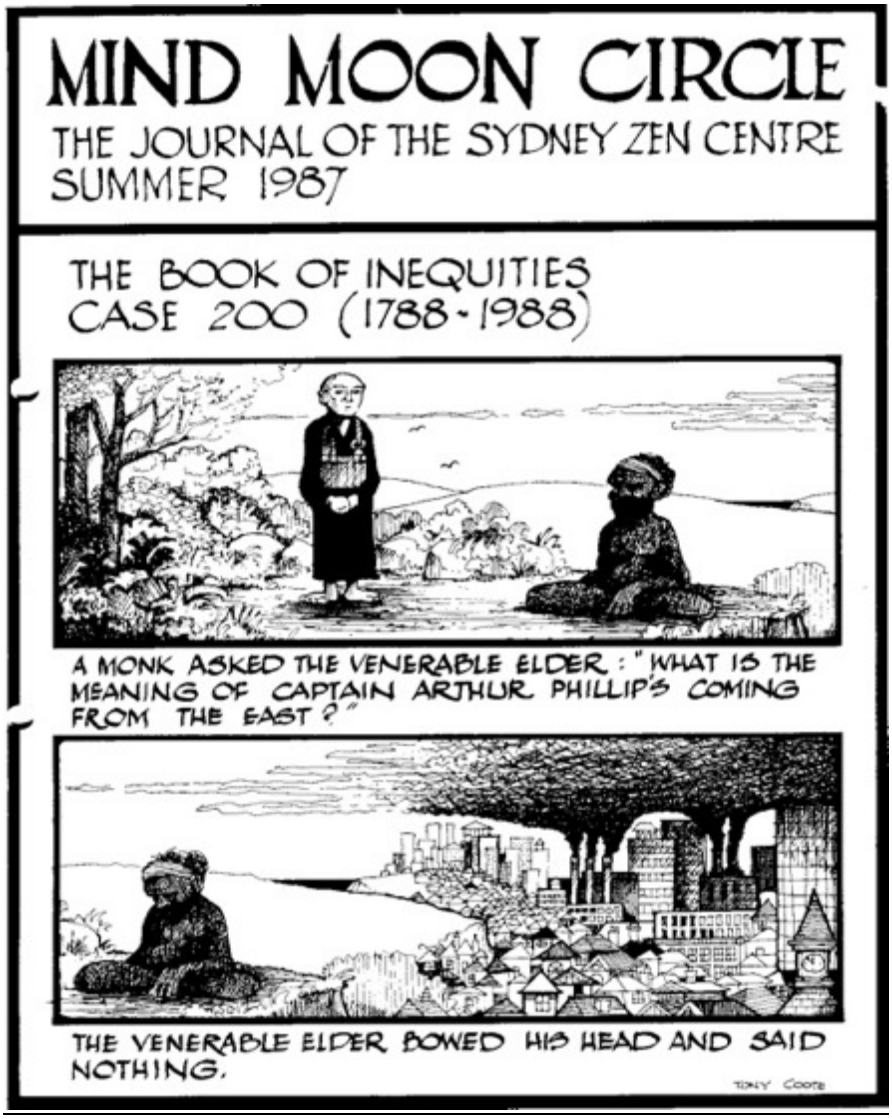
Hyers sees that there is a dynamic and transcendent relationship between the two sets of images:

> In Zen iconoclasm the relationship between the sacred and the comic is really the same as in all polarities that stand in dialectical relationship. It is a dialectic which both heightens the tension and annuls it, bringing it into a higher and profounder unity on that plane of experience in which both elements are transcended and brought to fulfilment.[28]

Carry On Laughing

The Australian poet Robert Gray once said to me when he heard that I was interested in Zen that he was attracted to Zen by virtue of the fact that it did not take itself too seriously and could laugh at itself. D. T. Suzuki, Alan Watts, Hyers himself and many others make the same point. This self-deprecatory aspect in Zen invites us to take Zen doctrine and even the Zen method lightly for fear of finding yet another set of bars with which to imprison ourselves.

[27] Ibid, p. 26.
[28] Ibid, p. 67 – 68.



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Page 1 Pu-tai: https://goo.gl/images/LwtJ4n. Accessed 11 March 2018. Author unknown.
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Page 37. Hanshan, Fenggan and Shide. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fengkan_Hanshan_and_Shade_Ueno_Jakugen_Triptych_hanging_scrolls_coloe_on_silk.jpg. Accessed 12 March 2018. Public Domain.
Page 38. Mind Moon Circle Summer 1987 front cover. Printed with permission of the artist, Tony Coote.

*Where an image listed above is described as "Author unknown" I was not able to find the author through the usual online channels. Every reasonable effort was made to contact the author of each of the works.

Dear Beginner

A letter to beginners everywhere - including ourselves.

Ameli Tanchitsa

Theme for the next Mind Moon Circle may appear somewhat experimental. But as we are making a collective effort to welcome more Bodhisattvas to our Sangha I thought this experiment may give us a practical and encouraging edition.

I would like to dedicate the Autumn edition of MMC to all beginners everywhere, past, present, future, embarking on the path of liberation.

Our Sangha is so rich. All of us have been drawn to the practice in some unique way and all of us walk the path in our own individual way. Sometimes the path is clear and other times not so. Let us share our reflections.

I invite you to write a letter to a beginner who perhaps is considering to register for the orientation in our City Zendo. Tell them about your practice and how it has affected your life. Share your most ordinary and your most intimate experiences.

It doesn't matter if your practice is one day old or one century long. Every breath taken with beginner's mind. By taking up the practice of perfection, we recognise the parts of ourselves which are not yet in accord with the Law. We recognise it and accept it. Recognising and accepting it is in accord with the Law. Wholesomeness and unwholesomeness are equal in Buddhadharma.

There is no outside of Buddhadharma. There is only this thought, this word, this action, this way. Naturally we seek affinity with the Budhamind. Our practice removes the gate. The practice helps us sharpen our pencils so we can draw an invisible line right in the middle. It gives us confidence to walk along this line, just like the tightrope artist does. Step by step, balancing life and death with every breath.

I offer with gratitude, for inspiration, the following lines:

The river flows tranquilly on and the flowers are red.[29]
Cicada's call is quieter than yesterday.
Autumn rides on the backs of ten bulls.

I was always drawn to "*10 Bulls"* - the series of beautiful drawings by Kuòān Shīyuǎn. Ten images illustrate Bodhisattva's path (wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Bulls). When reflecting upon these images I find them to be most skillful. Please take a moment and savor the images and verses if you like. Please use the reflections of your own bull as the starting point for your letter to a beginner if you find it inspiring.

As an editor of MMC Autumn 2018 I thank you for your contribution. With gratitude and gasho,
Ame.

[29] Verse by Kuòān Shīyuǎn (translation by Senzaki Nyogen). At our place by the river there is a tree with red flowers. Two succeeding lines are my own.

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