

Mind Moon Circle

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ZEN AND PHILOSOPHY

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Zen and Philosophy

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Heidegger, Technology and the Buddhadharma

Paul Maloney

In this essay I look at Heidegger's criticism of the development of mechanistic science in the 17th Century, particularly as it relates to Descartes. Following this, I present a possible response to Descartes' metaphysics from the point of view of the Buddhadharma, one that may provide a new perspective on climate change and the Anthropocene.

Heidegger is critical of what he sees as a tradition of humanistic metaphysics in Western philosophy that, starting with Plato, was taken up by Christianity and, in a modified form, passed down to Descartes. In "The Age of the World Picture" Heidegger accuses Descartes of corrupting the pristine Greek notion of truth and, in so doing, providing mechanistic science with its humanistic metaphysical foundations. Metaphysics is essentially nihilism because it is a process in which man becomes the measure of all things. Thereby, man assumes the role of arbiter of truth, and the position of centre of the universe. (AWP p.127) This can only occur when the notion of what is as a whole changes. (AWP p.128) As a consequence of this change, both man and the world become worthless. (HBT p.73) It is against this sense of worthlessness that Heidegger is writing in an attempt to return man and the world to what he considers their proper state.

Technology and Truth

Although allowing that technology may be correctly defined instrumentally, Heidegger maintains that, unless we understand what it is to be an instrument, the essence of technology will remain obscure. This question about the nature of instrumentality is intimately involved with the notions of cause and effect. Heidegger maintains that for Greek thought the word *aition* (Latin, *causa*) means "that to which something is indebted" and has nothing to do with bringing about or effecting. (QT p.7) So Aristotle's four causes should be regarded as interdependent ways of being responsible for something else. (Ibid.) Their responsibility is that they are ways of letting something, that is not yet present, "arrive into presencing" - bringing into appearance. Here Heidegger quotes Plato in the Symposium (205b):

Every occasion for whatever passes over and goes forward into presencing from that which is not presencing is poiesis, is bringing-forth.

While this bringing-forth occurs in artistic production and the manufacturing of crafts, it is not limited to these fields, for the arising of something from out of itself, *physis* (nature), is also *poiesis*. This bringing-forth only occurs when that which is concealed is revealed - what the Greeks called *aletheia*. (QT p.12) This is translated by the Romans as *veritas* which comes to be "truth" in English. So, technology is to be regarded as a way of revealing and the realm for the essence of technology is that of revealing - of truth. It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *techne* is a bringing forth of that which does not bring itself forth before us. Technology, as a mode of revealing, comes to presence where *aletheia*, truth, happens. (QT p.13) According to Heidegger, to say that a proposition is true means that the proposition discovers what is, as it is. (BT p. 261) He uses the example of the proposition "The picture on the wall (behind me) is hanging askew". When the one making the

assertion turns around, and sees the picture, the assertion demonstrates itself. The entity that one had in mind, the picture, reveals itself.

To say that an assertion is true signifies that it uncovers the entity as it is in itself. (BT p. 261)

And so to define truth as disclosure, rather than correspondence, is to return to the earliest traditions of Western thought. (BT p. 269).

Heidegger maintains the process that changed the notion of truth started with Plato when appearance was declared to be mere appearance, and thus devalued. Concurrently, being as idea was exalted to the realm of the transcendent. In the cave metaphor in the Republic (514A-517A) Plato gives an account of the process of education (*paideia*) which consists of a series of dynamic transitions in each of which there is a transformation in what is disclosed to the soul and the manner of this disclosure. But in that disclosure is *aletheia*; there is a close relationship between transition, *paideia* and *aletheia*. It is Heidegger's contention that what Plato means by that which is disclosed is whatever is present and apparent in a given situation. (HBT p.55)



Martin Heidegger: "The most thought-provoking thing in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking."

Now, although Plato deals with both what is disclosed and the manner of its disclosure, his treatment of the truth is but a means to something else. The importance of disclosure to Plato is, that it lays the appearance (*eidos*) of what appears open to sight. What is sought by Plato is the appearance of the Forms in the light of discourse. Plato believes that, because of the ever-changing nature of sensible phenomena, true knowledge (*episteme*) would be impossible, unless there is an eternally stable reality behind the sensible. So, he argues that the *eide* (ideas) are that transcendent reality which is the cause of *episteme* and the condition of all philosophical discourse. (Phaedo 65d-e, Rep. 508c ff.) Thus, with Plato, truth (the disclosure of the idea) is relative to the sight of the knower. The ground of the relationship between the knower and the knowable is the idea of the Good. (Republic 508A) So in making the idea of the Good the ground of all disclosure Plato weakens the original character of truth by subordinating truth to the idea. With the idea dominant over *aletheia*, truth becomes

orthotes, correctness of perception and judgment, guaranteeing a correspondence of intellect and thing. (HBT p.58) It was this transformation of the essence of truth by Plato that made philosophy a humanism and the shift of emphasis from *aletheia* to idea affected the whole of Western metaphysics from Aristotle through Aquinas to Descartes.

Human Being and Early Christianity

Concurrently with Plato's revised notion of truth, being as idea was exalted to the realm of the transcendent. This resulted in a chasm between what Heidegger describes as,

the merely apparent here below and real being somewhere on high. (M p. 89)

And it was in this gap that Christianity made its abode, while reinterpreting the below as the created and the above as the creator. Whereas in the Old Testament God absolutely transcends man and there exists between them no inner identity, with the advent of Christianity the relationship between God and man becomes more intimate as, in Christ, God becomes man. The idea of divine immanence, God-manhood, of the in-dwelling of God in the creature, led to the statement emanating from the Council of Chalcedon in 451 that the two natures - the divine and the human - are united in Christ "without division or confusion". That is to say, in Christ human nature, including the body, is indissolubly one with God's eternal nature. (Sherrard, p 25) This is a basically Platonic understanding of the relationship between universal and particular with its focus on the idea of the participation of the one in the other whereby it is possible to envisage a substance - which is a unity - as consisting of more than one substance actually present in it. This unity was not something to be explained in philosophical terms. Rather it had to be verified through prayer and contemplative practices that would bring one to the realization of one's dignity as the image of God. However, the personal God of St. Augustine is at once close and yet remains, for all that, other. "Thou wert more inward to me than my most inward part"(Conf. III, 6).

The comfortable coexistence of man and God was shaken by Aquinas when he chose to follow the philosophy of Aristotle when presenting Christian doctrine. Aristotle rejected Plato's conception of universals and also the notion of participation, either of substance in substance, or of particular in universal. (Ross p.157 ff.) For Aquinas man is a twofold being, a soul-body composite, the soul being by definition the rational soul and its knowledge is a purely rational knowledge. This move set the ground for Descartes' radical dualism which not only de-sanctified nature by removing God to the absolute elsewhere but also had the effect of dividing man from himself. Whereas early Christian thought could not conceive of the soul as existing apart from body, with Descartes the opposite is the case. For Descartes the distinction between soul and body is real and absolute. The dualism of soul and body proposed by Aquinas is consolidated by Descartes' belief in his reality as "a thinking thing" (Descartes p. 214), a complete substance quite apart from the body. Descartes defines substance as that which exists in such a way that it has no need of any other thing in order to exist. So, if anything can be conceived as existing without any other thing, then it can be perceived to be a substance. (Descartes p. 272) As we can conceive the soul as existing independently of body then it is a substance.

Thus, Descartes is quite unequivocal in his belief in the possibility of a disembodied mind thereby setting up the Mind-Body Problem that has been of concern to Western philosophy ever since.

I rightly concluded that my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing....and it is certain that this I is entirely and absolutely distinct from my body and can exist without it.
(Meditation VI)



Rene Descartes: "Je pense donc je suis."

The soul is entirely a *res cogitans*, a *mens*. It is a substance whose whole nature or essence is rational thought. The I, as "I think," is reason in its fundamental act and the ground upon which hereafter all certainty and truth are based. Pure reason becomes the guideline and standard of metaphysics, i.e. the court of appeal for the determination of the Being of beings, the thingness of things. Through the certainty of subjectivity, given by Descartes, man becomes the determiner of what is in regard to "the manner of its Being and its truth." (AWP p. 128) And when this occurs:

There begins that way of being human which mans the realm of human capability as a domain given over to measuring and executing, for the purpose of gaining mastery over that which is as a whole. (AWP p. 132)

When this happens, the world becomes an object, absolutely other than man, the subject. Knowledge no longer refers to any sacred or qualitative reality. In so far as it refers to anything at all, knowledge refers only to a nature that is seen as alien and purely functional and quantitative.

Furthermore, Descartes regarded mathematical ideas as the most important of the clear and distinct ideas that are true apprehensions of, and truly applicable to, the real world. In Rule V of his Rules for the Direction of the Mind, Descartes states:

Method consists entirely in the order and disposition of the objects towards which our mental vision must be directed if we would find out any truth. (Descartes p. 50)

And this order is given by what he terms "Universal Mathematics", a method for finding the truth and arriving at a knowledge of all things, including the material as well as the mental (Descartes p. 45). And, if mathematical knowledge was held to be the most perfect form of knowledge, it was precisely because it was thought to correspond to, or was correlated with, the phenomenal world of change and time, the world of sense-data.

Mathematics and the Modern World

The special feature of Descartes' method, according to Heidegger, is that it constitutes:

the primary component out of which is first determined what can become object and how it becomes object. (p. 277)

It is the mathematical that establishes in advance what constitutes a being and how the thingness of things is determined. The entirety of that which is is only in being to the extent that it is set up by man; the one who represents the world as a picture. It is by thus producing that man becomes,

that particular being who gives the measure and draws up the guidelines for everything that is. (AWP p. 134)

Heidegger regards the mathematical as a fundamental trait of modern (post 17th century) thought and as such is only a consequence of the position taken by modern man

toward Being and toward the way in which beings are manifested as such, i.e. toward truth. (MSMMP, p. 271)

Truth is understood as a "correctness of representation" (QT, p. 294) and the representation of modern science involves pursuing and entrapping nature as a calculable coherence of forces. (QT p. 303) Truth is to be found through measurement. The real world (of science) is that place in which facts are found, measured, determined and structured. With the Newtonian, mechanical, synthesis the new attitude is virtually achieved. The world-picture, with man in it, is flattened and neutralized, stripped of all sacred or spiritual qualities, of all hierarchical differentiation, and spread out before the human observer like a blank chart on which nothing can be registered except what is capable of being measured.

Technology

Because modern technology is based on physics as an exact science, its essence is that which Heidegger terms "*Ge-stell*" (Enframing) (QT p. 19). Enframing reveals itself through man taking up the technological project of ordering nature by investigation, observation and ensnaring as an area of his own conceiving. This Enframing is, like *poiesis*, a way of revealing, of *aletheia*, but whereas *poiesis* allows what presences to freely come forth into unconcealment. Enframing is a revealing that challenges nature. This challenging is a demand that the things of the world be ordered as a "standing reserve", so as to be at hand for efficient consumption.

Enframing reveals itself through man taking up the technological project of ordering nature by investigation, observation and ensnaring as an area of his own conceiving. And this ordering attitude of man first shows itself in the rise of modern physics as an exact science. Nature is represented by modern science as a coherence of forces that can be calculated in advance of experiment. Because Enframing requires that nature be orderable as standing reserve, nature must always show itself to physics as something calculable and orderable, as a system of information. And, while it is man who accomplishes the overcoming of nature, man is, at the same time, caught up by the challenge to exploit the energies of nature. With the advent of modern technology, man too belongs to the standing reserve, a resource waiting to be employed in productive work, the end of which is beyond him. As the possibilities of what is real are reduced to the singular status of standing reserve, then man's possibilities are also diminished.

It is to be noted that Heidegger does not deny the correctness of making a determination of nature as a calculable complex of forces and effects, for Enframing is a way of revealing (*aletheia*). What concerns Heidegger is not technology as such. His concern is that the very success of this way of revealing (technology's conquest and mastery of the world) places severe limits on the ways the world is allowed to reveal itself to human beings, the way truth can show itself, and so will lead to a withdrawal of the true. (QT p. 26) As a destining, Enframing commits man to revealing as ordering and, when this ordering holds sway, all other ways of revealing are cut off. In particular Enframing cuts off *poiesis* and thereby prevents the shining forth of truth. Enframing reduces nature's complexity and variety to mere energy and resources. A forest is no longer a place where animals roam; it is a stand of timber, a source of wood chips. A mountain range is not a majestic skyline; it is a pile of iron ore and coal. The river, that for millennia has been at the heart of a broad, and complex, ecological system, is no longer allowed to flow freely. Rather, it is harnessed to yield its energy as hydroelectricity and its water reserved for monocultures, such as almond orchards and cotton plantations. The goal of all human endeavour is the efficient employment of natural resources, including the labour of human beings, to produce quantitatively measurable profit statements. Modern life is enmeshed in the mathematical with algorithms controlling so much of our technological environment. The accumulation of data about how we live our lives now dominates the concerns of government entities, educational entities and the IT industry.

When Descartes made man the determiner of what it is to be anything, he also radically transformed the nature of human being itself. By regarding himself as other than the world, man must become divided in himself and, necessarily, transcend that part of himself that partakes of the being of the world. The result is a world deprived of human values, precisely because it describes a world in which whole human beings have no place, only "thinking substances". The features of this world are such that, like truth, they remain independent of who is observing it. But it is also indifferent to who is observing it, and the observer indifferent to the world. This indifference has become a characteristic of the technological world. As such, there is something inherently nihilistic in a view that places the nature of man in a realm that is other than the world in which he finds himself born, acting and dying. Human beings do care for one another, and they also care for their world. This sense of caring cannot be accounted for by Descartes' ontological dualism.

Conclusion

At this point, I think it is appropriate to introduce a quote from Dōgen Zenji that sums up everything that is wrong with modern technology, as interpreted by Heidegger.

*That the self advances and confirms the ten thousand things/ is called delusion.
That the ten thousand things advance and confirm the self/ is called Enlightenment*

For Heidegger man's existence has the character of being-in-the-midst-of-the-world, such that there exists a relationship of interdependence between man and the world. But Enframing has hidden this interdependence from man and in so doing cut him off from an insight into his true nature. It is here that Heidegger's thought finds common cause with the Buddhadharma.



At the heart of the Buddhadharma is the Buddha's insight into the structure of reality that is revealed as "interdependent arising," (pratitya-samutpāda). Interdependent arising describes a world that consists of an infinite web of interacting causes and conditions in which there are no permanently existing, self-sustaining substances, such as Descartes asserted must exist. And it would follow that the whole edifice of Descartes' ontological dualism collapses. Phenomena are internally related such that, when they interact, they mutually determine each other, thereby determining the form of the world. And this world is, in turn, both impermanent and insubstantial. The Buddhadharma presents a world consisting of infinitely complex processes of events not substantial beings. Being and becoming are not two separate metaphysical realities, but one and the same in the process of impermanence. Dōgen is hereby able to uphold the truth that the mind and body are one and the non-duality of reality and appearance. That is why he says that it is against reason to assert that the mind survives the disintegration of the body. (SBZ Vol. 1 p. 156 "*Bendowa*")

This is why Dōgen rejects the conventional idea that Buddha-nature is permanent ground of being. Rather, he asserts that impermanence is Buddha-nature, and vice versa.

On this account, plants, trees, and woods are impermanent, and hence the Buddha-nature. Human bodies and minds are transient - such is the Buddha-nature. Countries, mountains, and rivers are evanescent, because they are the Buddha-nature.

Buddha-nature actualizes itself as coeval and co-essential with what we act out and give expression to. Prior to this the Buddha-nature cannot be said to exist or subsist. That is to say, Plato's notion of there being a transcendental world where Being holds sway, is quite contrary to the Buddhadharma.

In the modern world technology is so ubiquitous because it both answers needs and produces needs, such that people feel they cannot live satisfactorily without it. Dukkha is the sense of existential unsatisfactoriness that pervades our lives. The core of Dukkha is Tanhā. Tanhā has two aspects, craving and aversion. Craving arises when I am in a state of wanting what I don't have. Aversion arises when I am in a state of having what I don't want. Common to both craving and aversion in the narrative of "I am", that makes sense of the resulting dukkha. And, according to the Buddha, this "I am" is a delusion that arises from a mistaken notion about the nature of who or what I am. Basically, the great delusion is to consider the self as a detached observer, residing in some notional transcendental realm beyond change. So the Buddhadharma fundamentally contradicts Descartes' basic assertion as to what he believes himself to be, a "thinking thing." Furthermore, the Buddha declares,

"When you develop the perception of impermanence, then the conceit of 'I AM' will be abandoned."

Then one can face the world with the eye of Wisdom, as neither subject nor object.

Paul Maloney

Abbreviations for Notes

AWP	Age of the World Picture
BT	Being and Time
HBT	Heidegger Being and Time
MSMM	Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics
QT	The Question Concerning Technology





To Study the self is to forget the self; to forget the self is to be enlightened by the ten thousand things; to be enlightened by the ten thousand things is to drop off one's body and mind as well as the body and mind of others. No trace of this enlightenment remains and this no-trace continues forever.

REMARKS ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE OF KŌAN ZEN.

Carl Hooper (Mysterious Cloud)

The practice of Zen is a philosophical practice and its kōans constitute one of the significant ways in which Zen goes about its philosophical investigations. What is meant by these two claims – and how they can be substantiated, might be 'approached in a thousand ways', to borrow Master Mumon's words from the preface to his *Mumonkan*. Here I draw on a number of inquiries into the nature of Zen and its practice, inquiries that issue in a series of remarks that bear on, illustrate and, I believe, support the view that Zen is a philosophical practice in which the use of kōans is an important and illuminating feature. With these remarks, my strategy is not so much to argue in support of a thesis but rather to offer suggestions and hints and elucidations that should bring into focus certain views of Zen and philosophy that are not alien to either the tradition of Western philosophy or the self-understanding of Zen.

1. Wittgenstein once suggested the possibility of writing 'a serious philosophical work consisting solely of jokes' (Creegan, 1989: 43). Why not one consisting solely of kōans? Might we approach such kōan collections as the *Mumonkan* and the *Hekiganroku* as serious works of philosophy? An immediate objection would be that such works do not go in for argument or explanation. But neither would a philosophical book that consisted solely of jokes. The appropriate response to both joke and kōan serves as a demonstration of insight. The spontaneity of the appropriate response (laughter) to a joke is sufficient evidence that the required insight has occurred. Any demand for explanation or argument demonstrates the opposite. Similarly, in the language-game of kōan, any demand for either explanation or argument shows not only that the point has been missed but that the rules of the game have not been learnt.

2. In the preface to his celebrated kōan collection, Mumon Ekai relates how he used 'the cases of the ancient masters as brickbats to batter the gate' (*Mk*, Preface) of Zen, the gate that is 'no-gate' (*Mk*, Preface). Anyone who would enter upon the Way of Zen must somehow or other pass through the paradox of this gate that is no-gate. This is especially so for someone who, seemingly against all the odds, sets out to show not only that Zen is a philosophy but also that the practice of this philosophy is Zen. Here I will let a motley collection of kōan inspired remarks serve as brickbats to batter at the paradox of the no-gate-gate that functions as both barrier and entry point to the philosophical practice of what many regard as Zen's anti-philosophy.

3. 'Brickbats' – the word suggests: rough and ready tools; improvising with whatever is to hand; things that can be picked up and thrown; not specialist tools carefully fashioned according to exact measurement; carry no guarantee of success; not designed for use in the fashioning of sophisticated metaphysical theories or of a systematic philosophy ... not an altogether inexact description of kōans (and the philosophical remarks that they might inspire).

4. Brickbats are perhaps used not so much to teach as to awaken. Following this line of thought, the philosophy of Zen is about waking up to the way things are. Such a philosophy is not concerned with teaching anything new. Rather, it is about showing what is already in plain view but which we somehow are unable to see. Zen is about shaking the practitioner out of his or her slumber, whether that slumber be dogmatic, conceptual, linguistic or customary, so that things can be encountered just as they present themselves. This might sound like a version of phenomenology, a philosophy 'whose primary concern is with what is immediately given in one's experience' (Park, 1998: vii). Perhaps a surprising parallel with Wittgenstein presents itself here if Byong-Chul Park is correct when he says: 'Wittgenstein's main attention throughout his entire philosophical career is directed to one's immediate experience' (Park, 1998: vii). Wittgenstein himself remarks: 'We want to *understand* something that is already in plain view' (*PI*, §89).

Brickbats that are designed to awaken, though not to teach as such, are not about providing information or imparting doctrines. The Zen master puts the emphasis on training the disciple in a practical skill that is to be applied in everyday living, and not on the acquisition of a body of theoretical knowledge.

5. The discipline of Zen is directed towards what is usually referred to as 'enlightenment'. Some masters, however, tend to prefer to use some other term, such as realization or awakening. The word 'awakening', it is said, is 'a more felicitous rendering of the Sanskrit *bodhi*' (Mohr, 2000: 267). A fairly typical experience for practitioners working with kōans is one of being rudely awakened. And Mumon's use of kōans as brickbats suggests that he aimed to provoke such rude awakenings among the monks in his care. Something similar has been noted about Wittgenstein's practice. Thorsten Botz-Bornstein mentions Russell Goodman's description of Wittgenstein's aim of 'bumping the reader into a new awareness' (Betz-Bornstein, 2003: 53) through the use of 'discontinuity and paradox'.

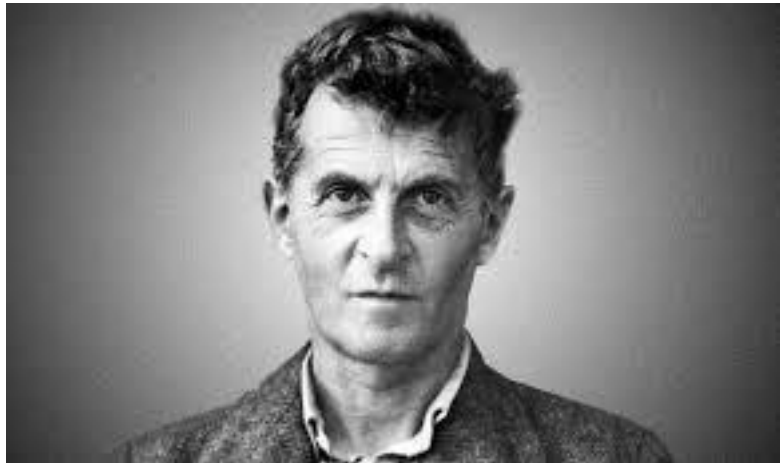
6. Mumon says of his kōan collection: 'The text was written down not according to any scheme' (*Mk*, Preface). And Wittgenstein tells us that in his *Philosophical Investigations* he wrote down his 'thoughts as *remarks*, short paragraphs, of which there is sometimes a fairly long chain about the same subject ... sometimes ... jumping from one topic to another' (*PI*, Preface), for he did not want 'to spare other people the trouble of thinking' (*PI*, Preface). Zen masters do not spare their disciples the trouble of finding out for themselves, of seeing for themselves.

7. The preface to the *Mumonkan* makes it clear that the practice of Zen is no mere academic exercise, still less a hobby. It is perceived to involve a serious, even risky, existential commitment. This parallels Wittgenstein's philosophical practice, as O.K. Bouwsma writes:

Wittgenstein was not thinking of what he was doing as correcting mistakes. It was not mistakes, but an urge, a bewitchment, a fascination, a deep disquietude, a captivity, a disorientation, illusions, confusions – these, the troubles of the mixed up intelligence, that Wittgenstein sought to relieve ... [His] interest was not in any particular problem but in the bothered individual, particularly in the hot and bothered. (Is this perhaps what distinguishes Wittgenstein as a European, a Viennese, a man who read Kierkegaard and Dostoevski?) He sought to bring relief, control, calm, quiet, peace, release, certain powers, the skill required to show one who is lost in the labyrinth the way to go home (Bouwsma, 1982: 28; Bearn, 1997: 170).

There is little wonder that a number of philosophers have likened Wittgenstein to a Zen master. Paul Wienpahl, for one, writes that he 'had attained a state of mind resembling that which a Zen master calls satori and he had worked out a method of

inducing it in others which resembles the methods of the mondos and koans' (Wienpahl, 1958: 69). This European philosopher's way of teaching calls to mind the use that Mumon made of the cases of the ancient masters, hurling them like so many brickbats 'to batter the gate' (*Mk*, Preface) and so lead his disciples on 'according to their respective capacities' (*Mk*, Preface). Wittgenstein saw, as did Mumon, that 'it was possible for the sickness of philosophical problems to get cured only through a changed mode of thought and life' (Wittgenstein, 1978b: 132).



Ludwig Wittgenstein

8. Mumon's description of kōans as 'brickbats' and his claim that he used them in no particular order bring to mind what Dale S. Wright says about 'the provisional and expedient nature of the Bodhisattva's teaching methods' (Wright, 2000: 207). Such teaching, in striving to be sensitive to the 'respective capacities' (*Mk*, Preface) of the individual students, appears 'provisional and expedient' – and so perhaps not 'a teaching' at all.

9. What are kōans? A Zen master, unlike the scholar, will respond to this question in a way that must appear 'provisional and expedient'. This is because the master aims not to inform but to transform the questioner, and no two questioners are the same. The master's response is to the questioning and questing individual and will be tailored to fit the needs and capacities of the individual. Some examples: 'the cases of the ancient masters' (*Mk*, Preface); 'sayings left by Zen Masters to show their own Zen experience' (Shibayama, 1975: 43); 'puzzling dialogues' that 'involve an apparently nonsensical exchange between two people, usually seeker and master' (Samy, 2002: 43); 'stories and verses that present fundamental perspectives on life and no-life, the nature of the self, the relationship of the self to the earth – and how these interweave' (Aitken, 1990: xiii). These working definitions can be modified and expanded as the need arises. Scholars, by contrast, produce learned volumes which provide much useful information about how difficult it is to define the kōan, about its origin, its history and its development. But all this learning is not enough to 'solve' a single kōan, as Dale S. Wright admits at the end of an interesting study of kōan history where he says, 'we would still like to learn how to hear “the sound of one hand clapping”' (Wright, 2000: 211).

10. Kōan texts aim not to inform but to transform. They open out onto a realm of experience and understanding that cannot be captured in the propositions of a scholarly text. Hence, they do not trade in factual statements. Neither arguing nor explaining, their language is one of 'showing' rather than 'saying' (an important

distinction in the philosophy of Wittgenstein for whom 'the doctrine of showing was the "cardinal problem of philosophy," because unless there were things that could be shown, but not said, there would have been no philosophy at all – only science' (Bearn, 1997: 44).

11. An important task for Wittgenstein's philosopher is to police the border between the factual and the non-factual, between the sayable and the non-sayable, between the empirical and the metaphysical. The Zen master's task, however, cannot be reduced to just policing. He or she must somehow point the disciple to the realm of the non-sayable. And so, when questioned about the Buddha nature of a dog, Joshu shouts 'Mu!' (*Mk*, Case 1).

12. John R. McRae draws attention to the fact that so much of Zen literature, whether medieval or modern, is dominated by 'the use of story as explanatory device' (McRae, 2000: 46). McRae suggests that this preference for storytelling is not unrelated to what he calls Zen's 'profoundly "peculiar" use of language' (McRae, 2000: 47), a language use that is directed towards an enlightenment that defies explanation. But, we might ask, is narrative meant to explain? Would it not be more accurate to say that storytelling in Zen represents a strategy, not of explaining but of showing that which cannot be said?

13. What is meant by a philosophical practice? Given that there is no universally accepted definition of philosophy – just think, for example, of the divide between Continental and Anglo-American philosophy – I should give some pointers to how I am using the word 'philosophy'. Firstly, I have been strongly influenced by Pierre Hadot's account of how philosophy was understood and practiced in the Greco-Roman world and how this understanding and practice is part of a tradition that can be traced from Socrates to Foucault. Secondly, I owe a great deal to Wittgenstein's view of philosophy as an activity rather than a body of doctrine (*TLP*, §4.112), an activity that would at times find expression in the use of riddles, enigmatic statements and paradox. But neither Hadot nor Wittgenstein is taken as an authority. They simply serve as indicators of the existence of a tradition in Western philosophy that would be open to the view that Zen is a philosophical practice and that provides the tools for recognising this practice as philosophical. Graham Parkes is a contemporary philosopher whose believes that it would be worthwhile 'to draw attention to some figures in early Western philosophy (between the third century BCE and the second CE) whose ideas and practices seem interestingly comparable with Zen thought' (Parkes, 1998: 142).

14. The Stoics can serve as an example of philosophy as a practice that utilizes what Hadot calls '*exercices spirituels*'. Hadot writes that the Stoics

declared explicitly that philosophy, for them, was an 'exercise.' In their view, philosophy did not consist in teaching an abstract theory – much less in the exegesis of texts – but rather in the art of living. It is a concrete attitude and determinate lifestyle, which engages the whole of existence. The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being. It is a progress which causes us to *be* more fully and makes us better. It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom (Hadot, 2002: 82-83).

15. When philosophy and Zen are spoken of as two very different phenomena – whether compatible or incompatible – it would be instructive to examine the

preconceptions of the speakers, both those of the philosopher and those of the Zen master.

16. The philosophical practice of kōan Zen constitutes 'a concrete attitude and determinate lifestyle, which engages the whole of existence'. This view of Zen philosophy should not be confused with other approaches that are intent on spelling out the metaphysics that is said to be implicit in Zen practices and discourse, still less with the view that sees it as a body of Buddhist philosophical doctrines. When Zen first arose in China early in the T'ang dynasty, it represented a deliberate and rigorous turning away from the metaphysical speculations of the Mahāyāna and the Yogacāra. Indeed, Zen does not have to deck itself out in the disputed doctrines of metaphysics in order to establish its philosophical credentials. Still, this is not a refusal of the metaphysical. Rather it is a case of letting the metaphysical manifest itself in whatever concrete individual act or thing is to hand. Careful attention to the kōan and how it works will show that this is so. 'A monk asked Ummon, "What is Buddha?" Ummon replied, "A dried shit-stick!"' (*Mk*, Case 21).

17. While Zen philosophy is not concerned with offering propositional answers to metaphysical questions, it does attempt to create conditions that will allow answers to emerge. Metaphysical questioning is fundamental to the Zen enterprise. There is a sense in which we might present Zen as a philosophy that doesn't answer questions. Wittgenstein held that 'a philosophical treatise might contain nothing but questions (without answers)' (Sorensen, 2003: 340).

18. The apparently nonsensical character of the kōan might seem to disqualify it from being part of the discourse of philosophy. However, Roy Sorensen in his *A Brief History of the Paradox* demonstrates that paradoxes and riddles have a place within the history of Western philosophy. The Western philosophical tradition embraces the paradoxes of Zeno, the '*insolubilia*' of Ockham, the 'sophisms' of Buridan, the 'improbable calculations' of Pascal, the 'antinomies' of Kant, the 'contradictions' of Hegel, and the 'grammatical jokes' of Wittgenstein.

19. Kōans fits nicely into the tradition that Sorensen traces from Zeno to Wittgenstein. Some have the familiar form of riddles, others look more like paradoxical statements, while many are short (and apparently) nonsensical dialogues. Some examples:

Shuzan Osho held up a *shippei* before his disciples and said, 'You monks! If you call this a *shippei*, you oppose its reality. If you do not call it a *shippei*, you ignore the fact. Tell me, you monks, what will you call it?' (*Mk*, Case 43).

Basho Osho said to his disciples, 'If you have a staff, I will give you a staff. If you have no staff, I will take it from you' (*Mk*, Case 44).

A monk said to Jōshū, 'I have just arrived in this monastery; may the master please teach me something.' Jōshū asked, 'Have you eaten your rice gruel yet?' The monk said, 'I have eaten my rice gruel.' Jōshū said, 'Go and wash your bowl.' The monk comprehended (*Mk*, Case 7).

20. What is the popular image of Zen? Thomas Cleary puts it in a nutshell: 'A common fallacy about Zen, both in the East and in the West, is that it involves destruction of the capacity of thought and reason' (Cleary, 1997: 9). Is respect for reason undermined by the use of paradoxes, riddles and enigmatic statements? Sorensen says that paradoxes are 'the atoms of philosophy because they constitute the basic points of departure for disciplined speculation' (Sorensen, 2003: xi). But the Zen paradox is not used as a springboard for speculation, disciplined or otherwise. Rather,

it serves to hold the line between what can, and cannot, be said in the concrete reality of the present moment. It keeps the Zen practitioner from speaking nonsense.

21. Many find it difficult to avoid the conclusion that kōans are not only paradoxical but also irrational. Thus Toshihiko Izutsu speaks of the kōan as 'an expression in paradoxical, shocking or baffling language, of ultimate Reality as Zen understands it' (Izutsu, 1977: 168). He adds that 'it is, in the majority of cases, deliberately meaningless' (Izutsu, 1977: 168). Thomas Cleary, however, takes a different view, writing:

In contrast to the obscure and often obtuse comments on koans made by latter-day cultists of the irrationalist persuasion, classical Zen masters of China made lucid structural analyses and analogical explanations of the koans as early as the ninth century. A koan, meaning an 'objective example,' is like a technical formula, a design, representing Buddhist teaching in a highly concentrated form (Cleary, 1997: xi-xii).

But perhaps the case is more complex than Cleary suggests with his stark contrast between the rationality of the 'classical Zen masters of China' and the 'latter-day cultists of the irrationalist persuasion'. For, some would say, there is a problem in the very heart of Zen, given its syncretistic character. That is, Zen draws on the rationalism of the Mādhyamika and the intuitionism of the Yogacāra but fails to resolve the tension between these opposing influences in a higher synthesis (cf. Magliola, 1984). However, such a critique is telling only if we take Zen philosophy to be a body of doctrine rather than a practice.



Nagarjuna

22. 'Philosophising' and 'practising Zen': are these two different activities? The position taken here is that 'doing Zen' is 'doing philosophy', at least in the case of kōan Zen, in which the central and characteristic practice is meditation on the kōan in *zazen*, and this in the context of the master/disciple relationship. We might say that as philosophy investigates Zen, Zen investigates philosophy. Each is a questioning (and questing) practice. And each is questionable – and answerable – in terms of a practice that is 'not one, not two' (Nagatomo, 2006: 1).

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Huike thinking

Zen and Philosophy...

Scavenging at the Littoral

Caroline Josephs

Without metaphor, there is no Zen.
Robert Aitken Roshi

The Littoral

I scavenge at the littoral to find the pieces that catch my eye, adding to an unfolding and multi-dimensioned mosaic. I walk the coastal tide lines to find, through washed-up seaweed, seagull feathers, tiny pearl-shell, pieces of children's plastic toys ... (Today a bright pink hand reaches out – separated from the rest of its toy), straws, bottle tops, plastic bags and other debris. I choose and don't choose, not knowing exactly why. I am in the zone of the liminal, immersed in my own 'initiation', where all is in messy paradoxical collision - gestating¹...

Stepping Stones on the Way ...

It began like this ...

A simple quote in the weekly newsletter of Sydney Zen Centre:

God whose love and joy are present everywhere, can't come to visit you unless you aren't there.

Angelus Silesius.

I was startled.

"God" turning up in a Zen bulletin?

Were there some in the Zen community who were there because that 'concept' was problematic?

I write to Maggie, Zen Roshi and friend.

"Do we need to re-phrase this in Zen terms?"

Maggie writes back:

*I must say it didn't worry me at all. It was a good quote, illustrating a truth which is very much "Zen", as well as truth of other religions, at mystical core. One that has been said in Zen terms many times. Whatever Zen terms are!
But I am pretty ecumenical...bear in mind I am at mass once a fortnight.
Depends how you understand "God", I guess.*

I write back:

Yes ... I get all that.

Glad to hear your musings.

It is my resistant feelings about all the different interpretations that are ascribed to 'G-d'!

¹ Caroline Josephs, 2001

I had same strong response when in Diamond Essence practice – when the talk turned to ‘God’. But it was useful to hear people unpack their many and profound emotional responses around that word ... in my genes I guess. Anyway, no worries.

I am interested in the Kabbalah terms ...where *G-d* may have 99 meanings ... and not the fundamentalist aspects of a number of practices, where ‘God’ can be invoked to mean something quite different – sometimes even leading to death and destruction.

Maggie writes:

You’re right in writing ‘G-d’, i.e. what cannot really be said or described or imaged (or is the hyphen to do with Hebrew script?) ... I often think at St Ben’s that if you looked into people’s minds, everyone would have a different idea or understanding of God. Did a tour of Gallipoli Mosque last year. They had a leaflet with all the many names of God. Interested in what you find.

[After receiving this email, I look up Sufi names for God/Allah to find it is similar ... Sufism, the mystical end of spectrum of Islam practice. The names are also termed ‘attributes’. Allah has 99 names – 100 less one.

(Sufism and Kabbalah, like Zen, are mystical practices.)

I read somewhere (can’t find it again!) In the ‘one less than 100’ –‘one’ is to indicate the ‘Mystery’. This accords with my view on what I term "the Unknown" in Zen.

Obviously, there are different emphases, tonal qualities, nuances, in different cultures.

I ask Maggie if our conversation on this topic can be part of my searching for some way into ‘Zen and Philosophy’. She agrees, adding she will send the pertinent words of a story that Phil Long tells ...

Maggie finds Phil’s words, writes postscript:

Hi Caro,

Phil Long tells this story:

Fr. Samy had given a talk at the zendo. There was a Q and A period afterwards. One person commented that that person had very much enjoyed his talk but noted that he had mentioned God several times and that she could not accept this.

Fr Ama Samy’s response: “If you don’t want God, don’t go for God”.

I have heard Ama Samy (a Tamil, based in India, and one of few Roshis who is *also* a Catholic priest) speak in Sydney years ago. I was impressed. This statement of his seems to resolve this part of the issue for me quite neatly, together with the preliminary wise words from Maggie leading to a punctuation ... a pause ...

Next Stepping Stone

However, there are many other words/ideas that seem to cascade when attempting to write about ‘Zen and Philosophy’!

I wake to find words are emerging from my fingers as I type. Words that seem intrinsic in describing Zen practice. For example:

essence, compassion, emptiness, *koan*, relationship, community, spontaneity, mutual causality (Joanna Macey), action, silence, meditation, dream, Japanese sensibility, paradox, ambiguity, threshold, searching, *mu*, ‘Does the dog have Buddha-nature?’ ineffable, mutual interdependence, transformation, story/no story
wisdom, Unknown/Mystery, wonder ...

What to choose? What to emphasise? I begin with something I discovered after years of having a negative bodily response when anyone ascribed 'transcendence' to spiritual practice ... Finally, I found out why. I will try and explain...

Next Stepping Stone -- Immanence

If we place *emphasis* on 'transcendence' – this leads to hierarchies, and ultimately an absolute divine being. [Which could be fine for some.]

'Transcendence', although it implies a 'beyond' - creates immediate *binaries* and hierarchies (divine versus matter/material/ body versus spirit -- as separate entities. This is not mere quibbling. The split leads in turn to *judgment* of one and not the other, or one more important than the other, or one even more *sacred* than the other. The notion of immanence, however, infuses each particle of matter and each moment with the sacred. *A shift of emphasis and the universe shifts.*²

W.E.H. Stanner sums up:

*The search for the unambiguous was the triumph of the quest for **certainty** over the quest for **wisdom**.*³

Zen is a wisdom practice, not an intellectual practice, though it can be written as Buddhist philosophy.

On contemplating this, I note that we deal with hierarchies in our everyday lives...bureaucracies, businesses; any institution has hierarchies of power and influence. However, this is not to forget - an underlying immanence – for humans, animals, trees, Nature and non-living matter (tables, houses, pots and pans, etc).

Just, to state again, with a riff - *a shift of emphasis, and the universe shifts.*

Another Stepping Stone ... Metaphor

There are many in Zen.

As Roshi Robert Aitken remarked, "*Without metaphor, there is no Zen.*"

Let's take just one...Buddhist, not originating in Zen, but compatible with Zen.

The Net of Indra.

(I have done a painting of it 2.5m X 3m ... including a net of yellow light I witness most sunny days, under the surface of the ocean pool where I swim. Of course it cannot be visualized in this way.)

At each node of the 'net' - a jewel.

In *Hua-Yen* Buddhism, the Net symbolises immanence. It is metaphor.

Reality is a great infinite Net with each intersecting knot a jewel.

Each jewel reflects everything else as well as reflecting itself:

² Alfred North Whitehead suggests the acme of consciousness is emphasis -- in *Process and Reality, An Essay in Cosmology*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1929.

³ WEH Stanner, *After the Dreaming*, Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1968 Boyer Lectures, 1973 printing.

*Each jewel contains an image not only of every other jewel but of itself reflected in every other jewel, and so on ad infinitum. Each jewel's reflections are what makes it a jewel, so that without them it would not exist. Every jewel is part of every other and contains every other. When any jewel in the net is touched, all other jewels are affected.*⁴

A Net such as this is a delicate web, a shimmering ecology of inter-connections.

Another Stepping Stone

“Singing and dancing are the voice of the Law”

Hakuin Zenji’s *Song of Zazen*.

We chant it often. Here is a short excerpt,

The Way is neither two nor three.
With form that is no-form,
Going and coming, we are never astray,
With thought that is no-thought,
Singing and dancing are the voice of the Law.
Boundless and free is the sky of Samādhi!
Bright the full moon of wisdom!⁵

Experiencing the 'Ever-Present Origin' and looking at the experience interiorly - I spent some seven years investigating sacred oral storytelling, including in Zen ...

Sacred oral storytelling invites personal individual experience, cultural experience, as well as a shared human universal experience. It is the situated experience which can lend a sense of wonder, as David Abram in his glorious book describes Merleau-Ponty's philosophy:

*Merleau-Ponty opens, at last, the possibility of a truly authentic phenomenology, a philosophy which would strive, not to explain the world as if from outside, but to give voice to the world from **our experienced situation** within it, recalling us to our participation in the **here-and-now**, rejuvenating our **sense of wonder at the fathomless things**, events and powers that surround us on every hand.*⁶ [my emphases]

And Merleau-Ponty is not inconsistent with Buddhist philosophy - each affirming and reflecting the other.

Zen philosopher, Dogen says,

*At the very moment when you **do not understand** buddha-dharma, that is a moment of intimate language...That is when the World-honored One has intimate language. That is when the World-honored One is present.*⁷

Not knowing throws me into a place where all is possible.

Enough of words...back to meditating!

Just the breath! Here and now.

Caroline Josephs 13th October 2019.

4 Neville, Bernie, 'Being Alive: Education and the Transformation Process', Conference Presentation, at National Conference of the Australian Association for Process Studies, Melbourne, October 2001, p. 4.

5 Hakuin's *Song of Zazen*, Translated by Normal Waddell.

6 Abram, David, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, op. cit., 1996, p. 47.

7 Dogen, in Tanahashi, *Enlightenment Unfolds*, op. cit., 2000, p. 181.

What the fork

Brendon Stewart

After Eleanor Shellstrop died she found herself welcomed into heaven: "the Good Place". Michael, her heavenly host introduced her to some of his friends including Janet, an artificial intelligent being; apparently, we still need artificial intelligence in heaven. Here in the good place Elenore also met her eternal soul-mate a philosophy professor from Sydney University named Chidi Anagonye.

After a heavenly moment of time Eleanor confides in Chidi that she must have been sent to the Good Place by mistake because she wasn't exactly moral, virtuous, tidy and neat or for that matter concerned in the least for her neighbours and friends. Chidi, a man unable to complete a sentence without doubting his own sense of integrity and moral faith agrees, with many provisos, to teach Eleanor the fundamentals of Nichomachean Ethics using Aristotle's second book on Virtue. 'What the fork are you suggesting' exclaims Eleanor, 'not this time round buster'. In the Good Place a profanity cannot pass your lips.

Because of the way this particular heaven works Eleanor and Chidi are teamed-up with new best friends, Tahani Al-Jamil a wealthy socialite and her soulmate, a silent Buddhist monk named Jianyu Li. Back in the real world on earth Jianyu is actually a DJ from Florida named Jason Mendoza. He also knows that this is a big error.

I could go on, giggling as I recall each episode but in short, all four dead ones have been sent to the good place because it's actually hell and the heavenly demons, Michael and his friends, just want to play with these vain, inept and frail humans. But goodness and virtue can be learnt as Eleanor discovers. Indeed, as Aristotle would have it, we are not innately good (Is that a problem for a Buddhist?), and as he may have said once upon o'time; virtue both intellectual and moral can be taught; in fact it's the consequence of good teaching.

Even in heaven the great dilemmas of knowing the implications of good and bad or how choice and acceptance works and what about understanding and ignorance; they all just keep on keeping on. The Socratic command to 'Know thyself' might be more usefully understood by way of knowing yourself before others get to know you.

Case 48 is the last story in The Gateless Barrier. It's about directions and roads and whether to go high or deep. The story is that two ancient worthies set off in different directions *One goes deep - deep to the bottom of the sea- and winnows the mud and pumps up the sand. The other goes high - high to the top of the mountains and raises foaming waves that spread over the entire sky.*

But even though this work both high and low safeguards the vehicle of the Tao *these two ancient worthies apparently do not know the road.*

What the fork!

Some years later and a good distance along the way philosopher and phenomenologist Roland Barthes points out that whether it's high or low it is still a road, not necessarily a highway, maybe just a track. But by just setting off along a path we create for ourselves a complex mix of experiences and questions. Walking the road,

high or low takes us through communities, through time, through localities and into transformation.

When walking I often reflect on what do I know and what can I know about others or about my place or my existence? What is the nature of the distance that separates one person from another, how provisional is it to know someone anyway or some circumstance and what does it mean to care?

Simone Weil (French 1909-1943) philosopher and brilliant essayist and to mention also mystic, social philosopher and activist in the French Resistance during World War II wrote shortly before she died in 1943, that she *may lose, at any moment, through the play of circumstances over which I have no control, anything whatsoever that I possess, including things that are so intimately mine*; Simone seems to be touching on the difficult truth that we run on luck and hope and chance much of the time.

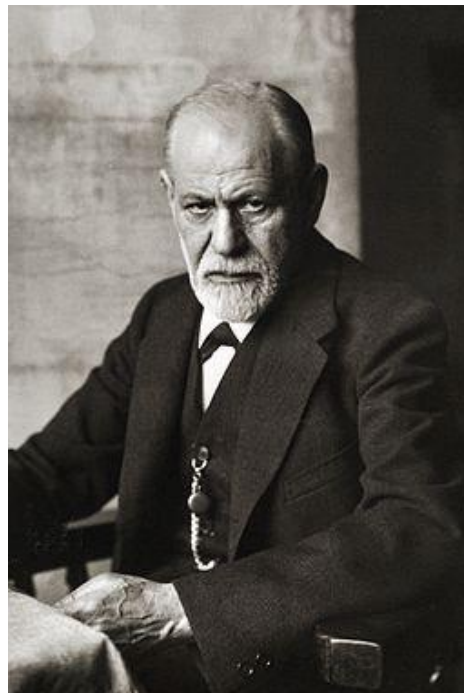
Another old worthy Sigmund Freud welcomed the different ways people are alive to life; lives that constantly attend to the transience of things. The impermanence of phenomena insists that a good life is all about working compassionately with what's left. Since our worlds (including all Good Places) are continuously changing they are, more often than not open to opportunity. What's fascinating about impermanence is that we temporally survive it, the evidence of life being lived.

Here perhaps is how we might live comfortable with impermanence by imbuing it with sympathy, interest and excitement.

Singing and dancing are the voice of the law.



Simone Weil



Sigmund Freud



MORNING HAS BROKEN

Sally Hopkins

"Morning has broken like the first morning. Blackbird has spoken like the first bird."

Cat Stevens

"In the midst of life I found myself in a dark wood where the straight way was lost".

Dante

Even before we arrive from the womb some of our senses are working, gathering information about how things are. From birth we are offered, or obliged to accept, other peoples' interpretation, spoken or unspoken, of how life is: their ideas, philosophies, their interpretations. If we are lucky, we gradually learn to ask our own questions, come to our own conclusions but this is often far from a painless business. We can't really function in chaos and we deeply wish for the secure ropes of our parents' or teachers' views, religious dogma, political certainties, cultural certainties. Life is very confusing, contradictory, ungraspable.

My newly acquired enthusiastic Christianity fell away after a year studying Linguistic philosophy with our enthusiastic 30-year-old professor from Cambridge. Lots of questions, lots of voices pointing to answers in many different directions. Interesting, exciting, but nothing was clear. I couldn't even understand myself.

"Myself when young did eagerly frequent

Doctor and saint, and heard great Argument

About and about, but evermore

Came out by the same Door as in I went" as Omar Khayyam , the great 11th C Iranian mathematician, astronomer and poet wrote.

What is a good life? What is beauty? What is truth? What is important and what unimportant? Is there a god? What does it mean to know? Who am I?

Philosophy sets a verbal pattern on the chaos that is our real experience of life: sets rules for our earnest enquiries: offers helpful maps for the way.

Yet Mumon Ekai (1143-1260) said , “Some say whatever is produced by the help of others is likely to dissolve and perish. The great path has no gates/thousands of roads enter it ...”

Zen practice says: ”Breathe! Look! Listen! Let thoughts and feelings go, just open to what arises right now”.

Scientific investigations have given glimpses of the vastness, the minuteness, the whirling world of atoms and energy and light in the universe, complex

beyond our comprehension. Our ideas of solidity and permanence are revealed as dreams. We can talk about this, create philosophies about this, but

actually experiencing this life, our life, living it, moment to moment, is something utterly different. Beyond knowing.

Colin brought home a CD of the Venezuelan pianist Gabriela Montero playing “Improvisations on themes of J S Bach”. Glorious. Spontaneous outpourings.

It made me wonder – are our lives more like musical improvisations, arising out of the world and disappearing back into it? (like bubbles on the ocean?)

We can philosophize about music, theorize, put it into categories, dissect it. We can record, notate. But that is all something else. Essentially music is music, just what it is, and nothing else.

Ideas about love are not love.

Zen philosophy, without the practice, is quite possible. Possible though too for ideas in the head never to reach the heart. True actions have to flow, like an improvisation, from beyond thought, whole hearted, spontaneous. The ideas and understandings of others that philosophy, Zen or otherwise, can offer, can be like lifesavers when we think we are drowning, or nutcrackers when we are sure we know. But genuine living requires living, not cogitating; requires throwing everything away into this moment, into what arises now. This we learn if we practice Zen sincerely. Life becomes vividly alive, and fresh. We can live the life we actually have. Just this koel shouting on and on - this breeze - just that baby magpie squawking to be fed. This homeless man. This laughing baby. This dry, dry earth. These tears.

Scrambled Eggs

Ameli Tanchitsa

Philosophy is words. Language is words. Zen is a word. Zen is spacetime beyond words. Zen gives rise to words. Words give rise to Space and Time.

Language is the finger. Zen is the Moon. Zen is the finger. Zen is the sword that cuts off the finger. Zen is the sword that carves the moon. Zen is the sword that cuts the sword. Sword kills. Sword births.

*Stiff shoulders
Empty head
Waiting for the bell*

...

*Stiff shoulders
empty bell
waiting for the head*

...

*Single tear rolls over fresh beard
Mark on the black cloth
Wind erases all the words*

There is a room full of philosophers (wisdom lovers) wearing black clothes. All of them are sitting quietly all day long.



One might ask: “what are they doing?”.

One might answer: “They are laying eggs.”

One: “Eggs?”

One: "Yes. Eggs."

One: "What kind of eggs?"

One: "These eggs are so precious – money can not buy them. These eggs cannot be found on public display. These eggs are in private collections. No one has ever seen one. They are as rare as the most precious of jewels."

One: "Invisible eggs?"

One: "How do you suppose you would philosophise about these invisible eggs? How do you know they are real?"

One: "You have to sit."



PLATO AND ARISTOTLE'S TAKE ON ZAZEN

Words, words, words

Philip Long

This is simply the toes wiggling in the sandals of active buddhas
Dogen Zenji

A feather on the breath of God.
Hildegard of Bingen

When I first considered writing an article for this issue of Mind Moon Circle on the theme “Zen and Philosophy”, I had no idea where it would lead me. I *thought* I knew how it would go. Like articles I have written in the past, it would be intensely logical but would also point away from logic to pass over into the wordless realm by a series of self-overcoming and self-negating linguistic steps. I can do this and have done this, drawing on the writings of Nagarjuna and Dogen. I even have a name for it: “The Logic of Transcendence”.

However, as I sat down to write, I found that my writing took on an odd quality. Yes, there was the logic but, try as I might, I could not find the way out toward wordlessness. Instead, topics to be covered kept proliferating and I could not find a way to bring the piece to a conclusion.

Further, as I sat down for the second and subsequent sessions of writing I found the process of endless proliferation of starting points and new ideas continued in each new draft and I could not draw these ideas together into a whole. There were myriad places to begin and after beginning endless paths to discover and pursue. I felt as if I were trying to make a map with words – words upon words upon words until the page was black with ink and no place of exit was available for the words were substantial and everywhere.

Breath in
Breath out

A world beyond this wordy dependence seemed scary. One must have one’s anchors or chaos will be let loose. Is it not amazing, though, how hard they made it to let go of our obsessions? But, surrounded by the vast blue sky of wordlessness, the dense unmoveable lump as hard and as black as coal begins to shift like everything around it, *as* everything about it. Indeed, I was being asked to abandon just a little my resistance to the blackness of words and lumps of coal, notwithstanding my horror and uncertainty. What word is it that holds all the words together?

I don’t know
I don’t know

What is this blue sky like? Here we go again. Endless proliferation. But wait. Endless proliferation is blue sky through and through. Dense black coal is just dense black coal. No need to “work it”. Just be yourself, just let yourself be. Are you struggling to express your inexpressibility? Be that struggle. Let loose that struggle. Black coal is beautiful in itself. What is the relationship between words and directly touching the infinite openness? No relationship whatsoever.

Let it be.
Let it be.

How am I doing? What next? Trying to find the point at which words touch reality, the exit point from endless proliferation.

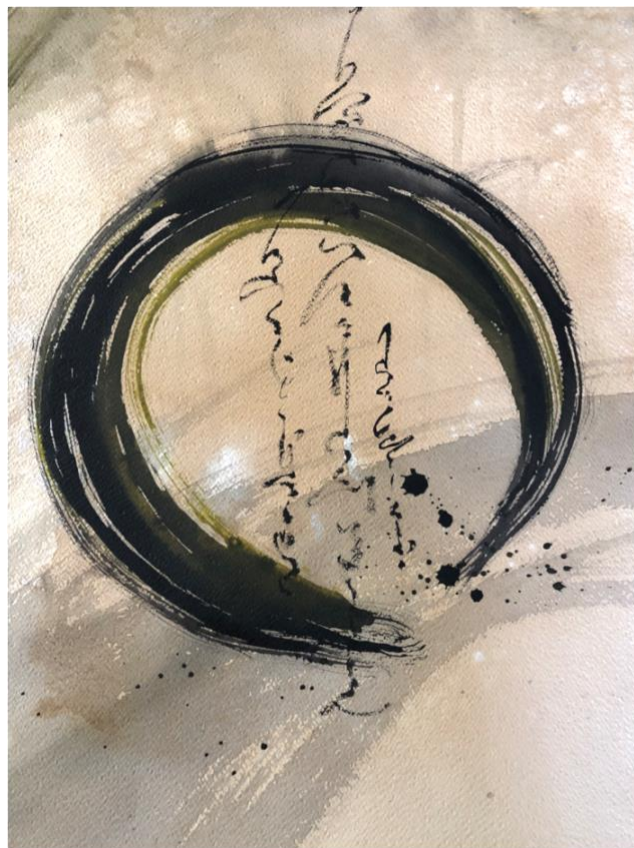
*Case 3 of the Mumonkan. Chu-chih Raises One Finger.
The Case.*

Whenever Chu-chih was asked a question, he simply raised one finger. One day a visitor asked Chu-chih's attendant what his master preached. The boy raised a finger. Hearing of this, Chu-chih cut off the boy's finger with a knife. As he ran from the room, screaming with pain, Chu-chih called to him. When he turned his head, Chu-chih raised a finger. The boy was immediately enlightened.

When Chu-chih was about to die, he said to his assembled monks: "I received this one-finger Zen from T'ien-lung. I used it all my life but never used it up. With this he entered into his eternal rest.

Nothing is next
Nothing is next

You are ok. You are loved. You are approved.



Glenys Jackson

During our recent Spring Sesshin at Kodoji, it was an honour to sit with the sangha and experience that ceremony for lay Zen Buddhists known as Jukai, where the student, after much reflection, vows to live by the Precepts, sharing their insights with the community. The student was Will Moon, whose Dharma name is *Spring Mountain Breeze*, and whom I have now authorised to teach within the DS tradition.

Deep gassho. Gilly Coote.

Jukai Ceremony Spring Sesshin 2019

Will Moon

Three Vows of Refuge

I take refuge in the Buddha.

I am Buddha. In Buddha I am in no doubt. I take refuge in the Buddha.

I take refuge in the Dharma.

With faith in the Dharma the path is put right. Taking refuge in the dharma there is no doubt. The middle path is clear.

I take refuge in the Sangha.

Taking refuge in the Sangha the buddha potential of all comes to fruition. The Sangha is no other than myself. The Sangha is where our kindred spirits connect. Where we are deeply nurtured and held. I remind myself, we are sangha.

Three Pure Precepts

I vow to keep all precepts.

The precepts live and breath through my every action. They support and guide and are no other than each action. The precepts are the guideposts that support me along the way. I acknowledge the importance of committing to keep them. They help me to stay straight on the path.

I vow to practice all good Dharma.

The practice of all good Dharmas is the practice of joy. In every moment, all good Dharmas are present. When hungry I eat, when thirsty I drink, when tired sleep. In this way I practice all good dharmas. Nothing is left out.

I follow the path handed down by the ancient teachers and our elders. The guideposts they have left are my example to stay straight on the path and practice all good dharma.

I vow to save the many beings.

I vow to save the many beings. The many beings are no other than myself. To love and save the many beings is to love and save all things. Essentially all beings are already saved. I vow to remind myself of this and bring this to the attention of others where I can. And in the midst of this “already saved”, I will respond to the many being in need of saving wherever I have the capacity to respond.

Ten Grave Precepts

I take up the way of not killing.

To kill another is to kill myself. To take a life is to take my own life, there is no separation. Hatred and violence lead to more hatred and violence. Love and compassion lead to more love and compassion.

I take up the way of not stealing.

Every day I take more than my share as a person living in a wealthy country, whilst the poor go from day to day trying to survive. I vow to be mindful of what I take and how this impacts upon others. Do I really need to take that cheap flight? When I feel the need to seek things elsewhere, I will remind myself that I already have everything right here. Nothing else is needed; there is nothing to steal.

I take up the way of not misusing sex.

From the beginning there is nothing other to be desired. Though it is easy realise this, it is hard to practice. Sex is a deep expression of our interconnectedness with the world and I must be conscious of the ripples that radiate out as a result of my actions and the affect it has on others. When I feel the power of sexual attraction, I vow to notice those primitive urges, have a chuckle and let them fade away and not pursue the fantasies of the mind road.

I take up the way of not speaking falsely.

Speaking falsely or lying is in disharmony with the natural order of things. Entangling myself in the mind road of endless concepts is perhaps the worst lie, speaking falsely to myself. I take up the way of not speaking falsely to myself. When I tell myself I am not enough, I will recognise the untruth of this and recognise it as an old way of trying to protect myself. I will refrain from participating in discussions that are filled with assumption and emotion and ask myself: "Is it true?"

I take up the way of not giving or taking drugs.

Drugs take many forms. My addiction can be my obsessions. Obsessions can mask an underlying feeling of a need to fill the space. I vow to see through my obsessive behaviour and ask: "What is this about?" "What would it be to stand still?"

I take up the way of not discussing faults of others.

I remind myself that the faults of others are no other than my own faults. Discussing the faults of others is to try to mask my own sense of inadequacy and create the sense of I against you, the world of separation.

I take up the way of not praising myself or abusing others.

When self and other dissolve there is no self to praise, no other to abuse. The one contains all, all is contained in this one. Nothing is lacking. When I am tempted to abuse others, I will ask myself: "From what place am I coming?" "Are my actions in accord with the buddha way?"

I take up the way of not sparing the Dharma assets.

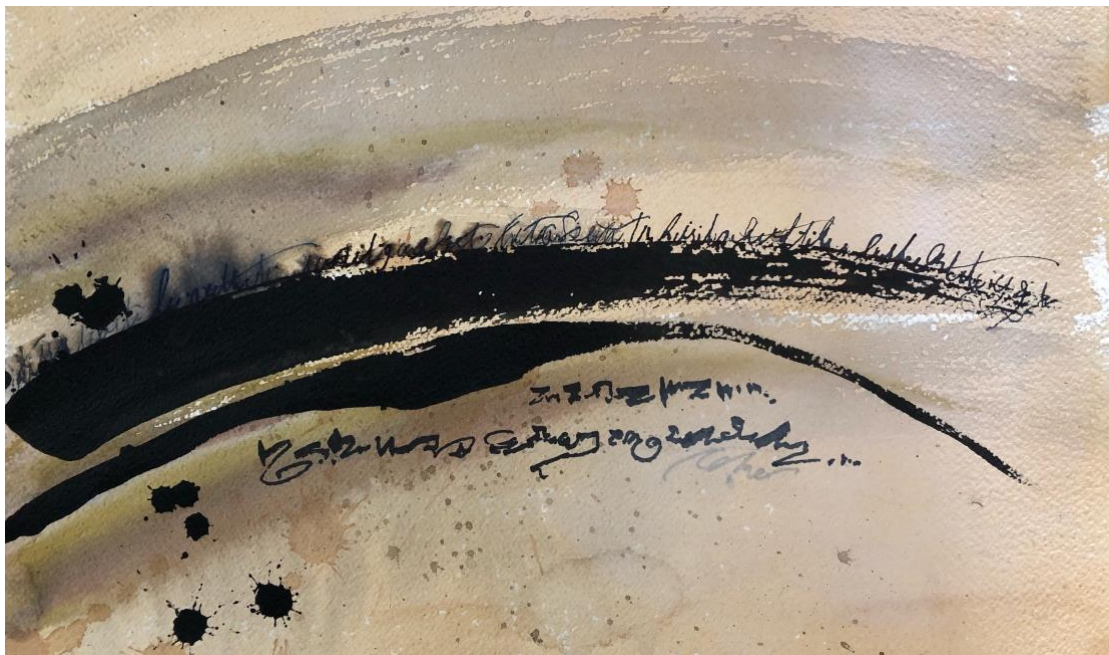
The Dharma assets are ripe and ready to harvest at any time. When I tell myself I have nothing to say, or nothing to offer, I will ask myself if this is true and vow to become intimate with this precept.

I take up the way of not indulging in anger.

When I get angry with others, I remind myself that my thoughts and assumptions are usually somewhat off the mark. I don't know the other person's full story. I am willing to recognise and release the need to believe in the constructions of the mind, of the mind road, the root of delusion and suffering, anger and hatred.

I take up the way of not defaming the Three Treasures.

We embody the three treasures. I vow to speak and act from this place of embodiment, conscious that I am the face of the three treasures.



Glenys Jackson



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