

Mind Moon Circle

Journal of the Sydney Zen Centre



LOVE IN ZEN

SUMMER 2017

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Love in Zen

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Editor: Philip Long.

Cover image and images on pp. 9, 26, 33 provided by: Glenys Jackson.

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The next issue of *Mind Moon Circle* (Autumn 2017) still awaits an editor and a theme. Perhaps you would like to volunteer to take up the yoke. It is a very informative and rewarding job.

Mind Moon Circle is published quarterly by the
Sydney Zen Centre, 251 Young Street Annandale, NSW 2038, Australia.
On the web at www.szc.org.au

Love is a path, a practice, a way of being in the World

Subhana Barzaghi

I was often branded a hippie Zen teacher and now I am going to confirm everyone's worse fears and speak about love. For me 'Love' is one of the great primary Koans that stands alongside MU and What is your Original Face? Embodying love is my life-long Koan.

Love is a path, a practice and way of being in the world. It has nothing to do with clinging, trying to hang onto or possess some thing or someone. Attachment keeps you in the cycle of grief where love sets you free. Spiritual practice asks us to keep our hearts open even to the pain and adversity to see our inter-connected one face.

An open heart has the power to heal and transform our lives from the inside out and give deep meaning to our lives. There are four practices in Buddhism that cultivate the way of the open heart, they are; Love, Compassion, Altruistic Joy, and Equanimity.

They are known as the 'Four Immeasurables' in the Zen and Mahayana traditions. The qualities of the heart are considered immeasurable because you cannot quantify them, there is no end to their cultivation and if you practice them they will grow, expand and embrace your life and the world. These four qualities of the heart are said to be the most beautiful, powerful and sublime states we can experience. With consistent dedicated practice they can become our natural abiding place our true home. These qualities are also natural expressions of an awakened heart-mind.

The first immeasurable quality of the boundless heart is love. The Pali word for loving-kindness is *Metta*, which has two root meanings. One is "gentle", like the gentle rain that moistens the earth and nourishes all beings. The other root meaning of *Metta* is 'friend'. The Buddha extolled the virtues of spiritual friendship. A good wise spiritual friend, a *kalyana-mitra* is one who is consistent through times of difficulty and hardship that will support you when you are lonely, sick or depressed. They provide refuge for you when you are afraid and rejoice in your successes and achievements as well as challenge you when you stray and deviate into harmful behaviour. The healing power and art of *Metta* is to be such a good friend to oneself and others.

It is unfortunate that it is so difficult in our western culture to speak about love. Love has become so commercialized, romanticised and erotized. Sadly, the word love has been blurred with desire and appetite and exploited to the hilt in advertising to sell all manner of products. We tend to use the word love in a very generalised sense. For example, we will say, I love strawberries and chocolate or I love my partner, my house, car and country without distinguishing it from desire and sticky attachment.

In bringing clarity to the whole process, definition and experience of love, first we need to differentiate love - *Metta* from sensual desire and attachment. *Metta* is a love and veneration for all of life that knows no bounds; it is an unconditional positive regard and kindness.

In further defining each of the four Immeasurables the Buddha described the ‘near enemy’ and the ‘far enemy’ to each immeasurable. The near enemy to love is something that masquerades as love, is similar to love, but isn’t the divine abiding that the Buddha was referring to. Sensual desire and clinging attachment is the near enemy to loving-kindness.

To open the heart-mind is our deep inner work. We must peel away the layers around the heart, peel back the false identifications and entanglements, and simply return to our natural state of being, the heart-mind’s original dwelling place; that is open, spacious, unencumbered and free.

The ‘far enemy’ is easier to recognise, it is the opposite of love, which is hatred and ill will. The Buddha enumerated several reasons for us to let go of anger. (Anguttara Nikaya, Sutta Nipata 60):

*Anger makes us suffer; it sears the heart physically and emotionally.
Anger inhibits our capacity to flourish materially or spiritually.
Anger disturbs our peace of mind and happiness.
Anger easily disrupts friendship and creates distance.
Anger erodes away ones joyful happy nature.*

The release of anger and its transformation is further reiterated in a beautiful timeless verse in the Dharmapada.

*Hatred never ceases by hatred
But by love alone is healed
This is an ancient and eternal law*

Nagarjuna, the second-century Buddhist philosopher outlined the benefits of practicing the four Immeasurable in his Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom. Practicing the immeasurable mind of love extinguishes anger and hostility in the hearts of living beings, practicing compassion extinguishes all sorrows and anxieties. Practicing joy extinguishes sadness and joylessness in the heart. Practicing equanimity extinguishes aversion and attachment.

*The Buddha taught that, “A peaceful heart gives birth to love
When love meets suffering it turns to compassion
When love meets happiness it turns to joy”. (cited in Kornfield, 2009: 387)*

There are four dimensions to cultivating the loving heart: learning to love and care for others, learning to receive love, learning to love oneself and learning to embody unconditional love in its fullest measure. If the wise teachings don’t go down below the neck and engage the heart then it is of little value.

The Art of loving oneself

Learning to love oneself and to receive and take in the nourishment from others is often very challenging for some people. To receive is to touch into all the aspects of ourselves that don’t feel so deserving and worthy of love and such tenderness. To love and accept ourselves

fully can confront us with how much we long and want love but don't quite trust it when it is offered.



It can remind us of the times when we have opened the door of our heart, how much pain and hurt equally flowed through that same opening only to recoil from loves offering the next time.

The Buddha once said to King Prasenajit that the mind will travel in a thousand directions but it will find no one else more beloved and deserving of love than oneself. To open your heart to receive what is given, to trust and let it flow, to not fear love's wounding, to not cling too tightly and not fear love's inevitable ebbs and flows but to hold open the door of your heart to life's fierce grace is to engage with love at a deep level. To receive love means we must get out of our own small way, let go of all the non-deserving thoughts, drop your fears, let the heart soften and melt through this radiance.

I sat my first Zen retreat with Robert Aitken Roshi at the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Burradoo in 1978. I entered the sesshin in a terribly angst and vulnerable state yet determined to explore and understanding the deeper truths of Buddhism. After hearing Roshi's teachings I felt

an overwhelming sense of trust, that here was a wise teacher who could help me. In the private interviews Aitken Roshi was a man of few words but those words were poignant and potent. After a few days I realised that I found it difficult to look Roshi in the eye. His gaze was penetrating and I felt he could see right through me and that he would see all my faults, so I avoided his gaze. I had felt ashamed of myself, unworthy and remorseful for causing pain to others. I realised I did not love and accept myself. I was capable of loving others generously, but it had never occurred to me to love myself, fully and completely. I sat with this intention to love and forgive myself unconditionally. The softening of the heart towards myself was the forerunner of a much deeper and more profound awakening experience.

The power of metta directed towards oneself becomes a radiant light that burns away all our inadequacies, resistances, anger and fears. With Metta we uncover the possibility of truly respecting and valuing ourselves as an equal part of this universe of flowers, ants, stones and clouds.

The art of loving others

We are relational beings, we are constantly in relationship to others, whether it is friends, loved ones, family, work colleagues, strangers, the local bus driver, the café barista. Metta is a loving-kindness that extends beyond the preferential kind of love that is reserved for our loved ones. It is to be able to cultivate and open heartedness to all beings, the stranger and even the enemy.

“Being deeply loved by someone gives your strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage”. – Lao-tzu

If you have an intimate relationship then it can be a powerful vehicle for practicing metta. An intimate relationship can be a great gift, not because it always provides happiness, pleasure and delight but because, if we view relationship as a place of practice, it is a brilliant mirror that reflects back to us our state of being.

Other than our formal sitting practice of sublime silence, inter-personal relationships equally help us to see where we are stuck. The relationship mirror instantly reveals equally those painful valleys as well as the peaks of exhilaration. There is nothing like intimacy to reveal to us where we hold back, contract and avoid loves steady gaze. Loves steady gaze can easily be hijacked by our fears, insecurity, our irritableness, our unrealistic expectations, projections, arguments, excessive neediness, defensiveness and the lack of forgiveness.

The spiritual dimension of an intimate relationship provides a wider container, a stronger and deeper foundation to work through the inevitable changes and difficulties that arise. A spiritual practice allows the heart to become broader; it cultivates a greater capacity to heal our own pain, to clear up misunderstanding and grievances, to forgive each other and let go.

Of course there is the broken-heartedness that we can experience when we open that door of love and it goes awry. A dear friend Lindy Lee reminded me that our Zen teacher John Tarrant Roshi said, ‘The Tao breaks our hearts so that we may know our own depths’. ‘I’ve always treasured that especially when things are not easy’, she said.

At the deepest level an intimate relationship is a wide open challenging and joyful gateway to our true self or selfless nature. A union of love is also an act of stepping beyond one's small self. To truly meet and surrender to the other is also to meet the great mystery in your heart which is vast and fathomless. In the deepest sense relationship can be a pathway for polishing the radiant heart, an opportunity to recognise and honour your personal beloved as a spark of the boundless heart or, as the Sufi's refer to it, the universal great Beloved. Then the personal love is like a window that opens out into a greater interconnected embrace as one with all beings.

Rainer M. Rilke also said, "For one human being to love another human being: that is perhaps the most difficult task that has been entrusted to us, the ultimate task, the final test and proof, the work for which all other work is merely preparation".(Rilke, 1984, letter 7)

Embodying unconditional love

"The way of love will dissolve the dream that something is missing. However, you must look carefully and see if this is what you truly want. For the price to pay for holy reorganization is the willingness, finally, to be no one. In the meadow of the beloved, the delusion of specialness is removed". Matt Licata – A Healing Space.

In order to cultivate the boundless heart to its fullest measure it needs to be combined with wisdom, seeing into the deeper truths of who we are. Wisdom and love are simply different sides of the same coin. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, a Vedanta Non-dual Wisdom teacher from India, in one of my favourite quotes encapsulated the essence of an awakened heart-mind.

*"Wisdom teaches me I am nothing,
Love teaches me I am everything,
between these two poles my life flows"* (Frydman, 1973)

My practice is to find our mirror in the world where we see each being and each thing as none other than our true interconnected self. This mirroring has no barrier, no judgment; it is radiant, free, open and responsive. It is a love that teaches me I am everything. All people of whatever race, creed, colour or age are welcome in the spacious mirror of the wise heart. It's only our harsh judgments of ourselves and others that divide, stain and cloud this mirror. Our judgments and prejudices make our world dark and we are then thrown back into the pain of separation and alienation. Let's stop, pause, listen a while, look deeply and find our mirror in the world each moment and know that the beloved is always, already inside you. The love within and without is our deeper truth.

In the Aksayamati Sutra it says: *"At first...love has beings as its object. For bodhisattvas who have practiced on the path, love has dharmas (ie., all phenomena) as its object. And for bodhisattvas who have attained receptivity to the truth of non-origination (i.e. Voidness), love has no object."* (Burbea, (2014) p. 279)

Love is a practice, a choice, a path. No one can take away your freedom to choose. I choose *The Way of love*. It is not a matter of 'falling in love' because if you fall in love you can fall out of love, it is a matter of 'standing in love'. I choose to keep my heart open even in the face of adversity and challenges. With this opening I feel a joyful inter-connectedness to the

water dragon lounging by my pond, the wild summer storms and the flock of white cockatoos heading north, to the blood stained baby who was revived after the bombing in Syria.

Awakening is often referred to as true intimacy. In the light of true intimacy, I am my partner, friend, stranger and even the enemy. I am the gum blossoms, the light and shadow. This is the timeless place where words cannot describe; it is a way of life that embraces the fullness of the world, celebrating the mind of oneness that has no bounds.

This natural radiance was here before time began; it is only our desires, our anger and defilements that obscure it's warmth and light. Acting with heart in the world requires us to reach out and touch the immense diversity of the human condition. The open heart is the way of inclusion. As Walt Whitman once said, "I contain multitudes". I contain this, I am this.

Wisdom teaches us that we are nothing; this is the self-less dimension to our being. Our essential nature is free from dualistic divisions of self and other; it is vast, fathomless and ageless. The highest level of love is born from this non-dual awareness that recognises the seamless totality without division. When you practice *Metta* you are directly seeing and experiencing your own natural radiance of heart and mind.

The Buddha's words on loving-kindness from the Metta Sutta:

*So with a boundless heart
Should one cherish all living beings,
Radiating kindness over the entire world,
Spreading upward to the skies,
And downward to the depths,
Outward and unbounded,
Freed from hatred and ill-will,
Whether standing, seated or lying down,
Free from drowsiness,
One should sustain this recollection.
This is said to be the sublime abiding.*

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LOVE ACTUALLY

Maggie Gluek

I don't consider myself a romantic. I have no favourite rom-coms or love songs (well, perhaps "Lay Lady Lay" and "I Threw It All Away" from Dylan's Nashville Skyline). I'm not drawn to tales of passion. But it occurs to me (as I sit on my cushion) that love in the most profound sense, religious sense let's say, is the perfect word. It resonates vastness, encompassing everything—a ne plus ultra, nothing beyond. God is love seems to be the ultimate statement of what is. I am struck too by the fundamental mutuality love implies. It describes a whole and also relationships within the whole. It's an embrace where two become one or wherein many are one, with no hierarchy. Mystics have spoken of the "beloved" in representing union with the divine. The metaphor is powerful and apprehensible precisely because most of us humans have experienced love as union—within friendship, within sexual relationships, within community—where self and other disappear. Perhaps a case in point ... My husband Tony has a practice of praying for people who are sick. He recently realized that he had never thought to pray for me when I was unwell, because on some level I was not someone "else."

Was love ever not present in Zen Buddhist teaching and practice? If it hadn't been, I can't imagine having stuck around! To risk translating in terms of the Buddhadharmā, isn't love that which is realised when the self is really forgotten? Isn't it that first fundamental Bodhisattva vow—your commitment to the many beings, to including every one? You rarely come across the word "love" in Zen texts, in the classic literature anyway. But does that matter? Words are words! Isn't the proof in the pudding? Does practice enable you to love more readily? Have walls come down? Can you smile at other people's foibles, can you see through? In the midst of the swirl, in difficulty, does your heart stay steady and open?

Still, still, the languaging is different to what we're used to in the canon of Western literature and in the theistic traditions, and that makes for a different flavour. (Hurray for difference! It's illuminating.) In the context of traditional Ch'an literature, a different context and idiom, how is love presented? I'm wary of venturing into a thicket of linguistic equivalences. That could amount to a violation in a school that emphasises the limits of definition, the risk of creating substantives. One can only provisionally name the unnameable! But I did venture to wander through the Blue Cliff Record—a collection of koans compiled in the 12th century—thinking about these matters. I offer some observations. And apologies if I say too much.

First, and maybe most importantly, all of the Ch'an teachings are expressions of love as compassion. If not, they don't qualify as true teachings. Like love, compassion is universal and is embodied in relationship but it is differently nuanced and imaged. Compassion is never "alone" but itself understood to be inseparably in relationship with wisdom. It is the functioning of wisdom in the world. Look at our Heart Sutra, the perfect expression of prajna/wisdom, conveyed by Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. This is strikingly represented in Vajrayana Buddhism iconography as the yab yum, where prajna and upaya (skilful means) are figures locked in blissful sexual union.

Seeing and hearing the suffering of the world, compassion responds in fellow feeling. There is no end to this. It might be perceived as an attribute (classically, of the bodhisattva and

specifically of the Bodhisattva Kuan Yin) but in fact it's a way of being in the world. It may also be perceived as "do-goody," calling up a subject and "object" of compassion. But the thing is, it's exactly not that—rather it's natural and undeliberate, moment by moment action not clouded by self ... literally un-self-conscious. And being unbounded, it's everywhere! Like love. Tao Wu in case 89 in the Blue Cliff Record uses a memorable metaphor to describe this movement.

Yun Yen asked Tao Wu, "How does the Bodhisattva Kanzeon use all those hands and eyes?"

Tao Wu answered, "It is like a man in the middle of the night reaching behind his head for his pillow."

Reaching out thus, the old teachers were generous. They forgot themselves in relationship. I am struck by the fact that most Zen stories involve one-on-one encounters. Intimacy is a word Zen has in common with the lexicon of love. It appears not infrequently in Zen texts as a synonym for realisation, the realisation of "not separate". And this context for intimacy continues today, with dokusan as a kind of template. While this face-to-face meeting might look hierarchical, finally it is meeting on the same ground. Accomplishments and titles and versions of self are left behind. There is trust and surrender. Each individual informs the other and mutual understanding is revealed. When the barriers are down, who is who?

Yang Shan asked San Sheng "What's your name?" (he well knows his San Sheng's name)

Sheng replied, "Hui Chi." (this is Yang Shan's name!)

Yang Shan said "Hui Chi? That's my name."

Sheng said, "My name is Hui Jan. (This is mine!)"

Yang Shan roared with laughter. (Blue Cliff Record, case 68)

Love shines in the Zen tradition in the form of friendship in the Dharma. Teachers and students and old friends alike can find their home here. We are all companions of the Way, sharing the Way.

The intimate one-on-one encounter may of course be with a non-human. You may meet yourself as a rabbit, a drum, a statement, a bow. Dharma gates are countless, after all. Stay awake! That's the deal.

But Zen style, at least in linguistic expression, tends not to the "warm and fuzzy." Clear and clean and sparing is more the go. "It" is like a cool wind circling the earth. The old teachers tend to steer clear of affective discourse, sticky statements that might be appropriated by the ego. Let's not entangle how things are with our feelings about them, is the sense I get. In any case, affection is understated. Sometimes scorn is ironic praise. Sometimes what you might hear as insults are encouragements, not to be taken personally. Who's hearing, after all? Years down the track now I can appreciate: "You ricebag!!" These strong words were Yun Men's gift to Tungshan. They said it fully and he received them fully. I wonder if I could?? Again and again you see this kind of uncompromising "tough love." One person holding another to the flame in an attempt to help burn through those blockheaded delusions that create suffering. I can't realise it for you but I'll stay with you and do my utmost. What is it??

In a similar vein, there is a fierce refusal to sentimentalise. If you layer an experience with personal emotion, opinions or flowery language, you may be stepping away from the fact itself. Love, for example, is a word that can be cheaply and dangerously overused. Often the truth rings most clearly in what is not said.

When Pao Fu and Ch'ang Ch'ing went on a picnic in the hills, Fu lifted his head and pointed to the top of a hill, saying, "Just this is the top of Myo Peak (the centre of paradise, according to Avatamsaka Sutra)!"
"That's true, you are right," said Ch'ing, "But a pity," he added. (Blue Cliff Record, Case 23.)

Love for the natural world is salient in Zen prose and poetry. Unlike love focused primarily on human experience, here the perspective is universal. It's cognate with Chinese landscape painting which does not exclude human beings. But in the vast scheme of things they are tiny. The human does not dominate, does not intrude. In speaking of mountains and rivers the old teachers kindly show us who we are.

A monk said to Ta Lung, "The physical body decomposes. What is the immutable reality body?"
Ta Lung replied, "The mountain flowers bloom like brocade. The valley streams brim blue as indigo." (Blue Cliff Record, case 82).

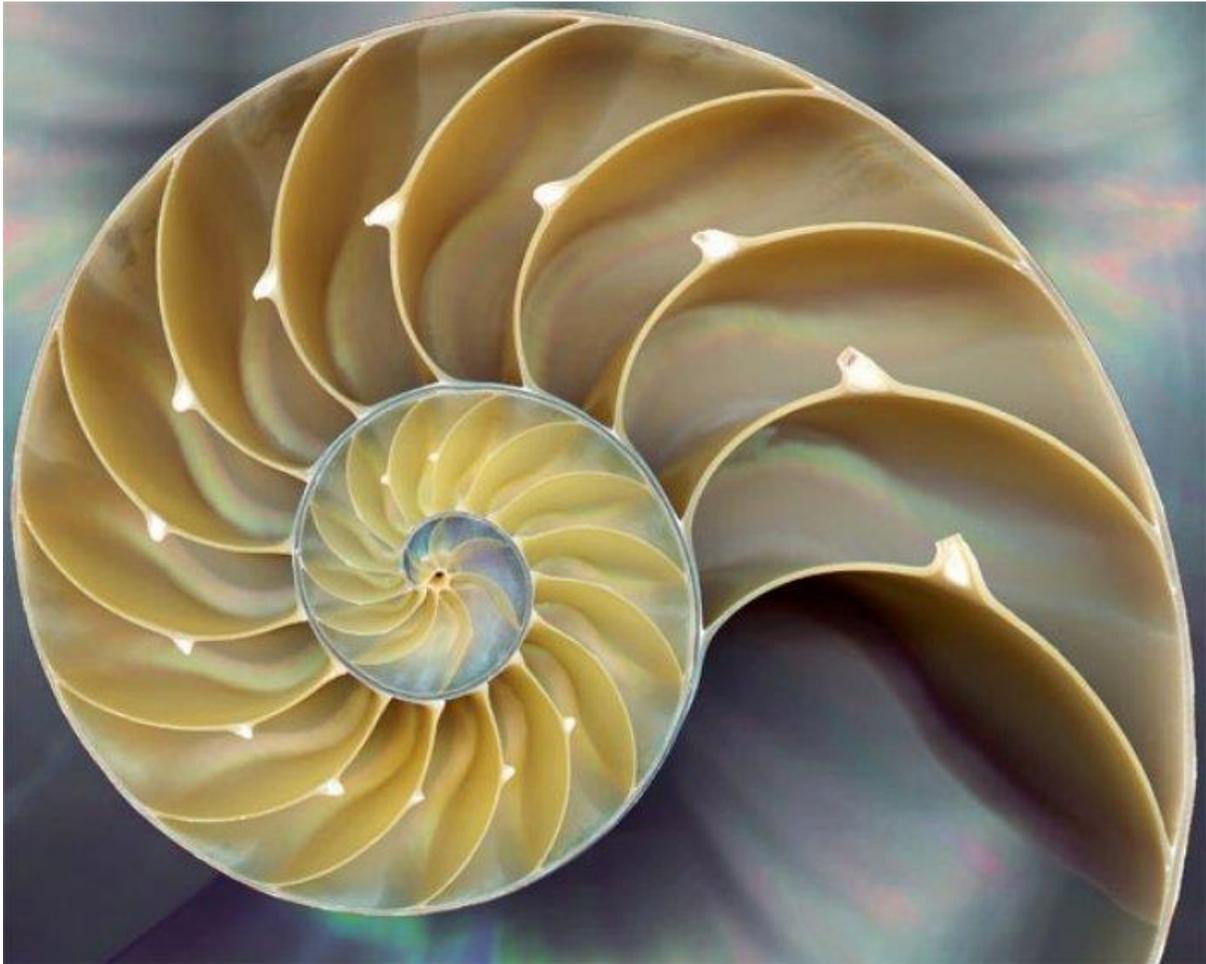
Whatever I went looking for in this text, I came away feeling a love for the tradition itself, for individuals who extend themselves so creatively to help others. They're still around today, of course. Yet again, I was delighted by the ingenuity, the play—including language play—that Zen employs. And by the humour, so often implicit. This is where warmth comes through, for me. It is the power of the unexpected, of inversion, that punctures self-importance, delivers lightness of being. When laughter destroys the barriers, then naturally there is intimacy. You can put down those preoccupations. We're in it together, friends. Here we are. Ha ha! The absurdity of it all!

This sometimes solitary, singular and peculiar Zen way opens doors to the world. How vivid and amazing are the details of your ordinary life. How perfect and particular each thing. Ultimately there's no hierarchy. Practice frees you to realise the seamless whole, the unseen that's in front of your eyes.

A monk said, to Chao-chou, "I have heard about the stone bridge of Chao-chou for a long time, but I have come and found just a simple log bridge."
Chao-chou said, "You see only the simple log bridge and you don't see the stone bridge."
The monk asked, "What is the stone bridge?"
Chao-chou replied, "Donkeys cross, horses cross." And as Hakuin adds, "Lay folk as well as clergy, the cat as well as the ladle." Or in the words of James Joyce, "Here comes everybody!" What, and where, is that stone bridge?

On Climbing the Sierra Matterhorn Again After Thirty-One Years
Range after range of mountain
Year after year after year
I am still in love. (Gary Snyder)

A bow of gratitude to the poet—himself a lifetime student of the Way-- who says it well.
Range after range. Year after year. Day after day. Breath after breath. Moment after moment. I
am still in love.



Some Questions about Love (Zen and the Way of the Heart) Caroline Josephs

Is Love an unfurling, like petals of a flower bloom?
Or the excitement of a waterfall?
Is Love like a huge wave?
Is this the heart opening?
When the body's cells wish to receive?
Is receiving and giving what Love is about?
Or is Love a yearning made replete?
Complete, like the honey bee
bringing the nectar?
Or is Love just listening --
For words, but also for a feeling for
an experience underlying the words?
Or sometimes the contradictions,
between words and sensing?
Is Love co-creating a world – to be
like a cradle for all Beings?
Or is it patience? A waiting in stillness
for a lover's call when things do not
go as expected, or wanting, but
waiting anyway?
Is Love compassion
feeling with another – a person being,
or a tree, a fish, a bird?
Seeing the world through another Being's eyes?
Sensing from inside another's skin? From inside
a Fish's scales, a bird's feathers?
Sensing from inside another's skin?
From inside the fish? Or inside
the bones and feathers of a bird,
or fur and skin of an animal?

Is love re-member-ing the greatest
warmth -- the womb-like engulfment?
Nourishing, flourishing?
Or its beginning's inadequacy?

Is Love a growing like the nautilus
...ever expanding in a spiral?

Does Love grow out of
Silence? A breathing into
body-mind-spirit --
to relax, expand, into an
embrace of all, in the
the Uni-verse?
Is Love just merely Presence --
In Emptiness, a-being-with
whatever presents itself
Now? Or is it protecting –

the small, the insignificant, the
vulnerable, the homeless,
the forgotten, the disappeared,
Including even the hated? The feared?
Or no?

Is Love 'maitri', a kind of self-love,
acknowledging one's own yearnings, history, matrix
of Being? As well as another's?

Or is Love like a spiralling galaxy –
shooting outwards from
a Centre – a Fibonacci sequence
over time – over a long long time....
almost eternal?

Like pinecones and sunflowers,
like the fiddlehead of fern or
a cresting wave, like a snail shell,
perhaps like your fingerprint?
Is Love no more, no less
than this?

A constant emerging, growing,
allowing the other their choice,
a recognising some boundaries?
(Or letting the other depart and go
if need be?)

Or is Love just holding another,
Supporting, protecting
Like a mother with a newborn?
Or a Being with an anguished friend?

Is Love fulfilling in itself –
needing nothing?
Is Love for a tree like
Love for a person,
a fish, a cat, a dog?
a tree's love of its offspring,
or a cat for its kittens,
Or an octopus mother for its 20,000 eggs –

Is Love intimacy?
Is it Knowing someone
in all their many shades of
light and dark, in many moods,
and circumstance?

What is 'being intimate'?
Does commitment grow from
intimacy (not obsession, not lust,

not idealism, not dependence, not
possession)?
Does romantic idealising arise from
desire and imagination....
without an intimate knowing of a person?
Is Love just a verb? Actions small and large...
Is it choice and action for another's wellbeing?
Does it take effort? Patience? Perseverance?
Does it mean both giving and receiving?
Does it rest on a belief in one's own worth?
Does Love between two people
celebrate wholeness?
Honour a fair and equal partnership?
Does Love know how to say 'NO' appropriately?
When love hurts?
Does love share? Is love accountable?
Can Love work to negotiate
Difference, shared goals?
Is Love about mutual respect?

Or is Love, all this...and more?
Is Love -- *The Great Mystery*?

Caroline Josephs March 2017



“A Many Splendoured Thing”

Sally Hopkins

Is it any wonder the world is so full of disagreements and conflicts when even English speakers don't agree on the exact meaning of so many English words? We all see, hear, smell and taste in our own individual way, all affected by the ideas in our heads, the make up of our bodies, our past experiences. No one the same. Experience reduced to words for us all is a very different thing from experience itself. Yet for the most part it is words we are left with to share our experiences and insights. Thirty years ago on the farm I wrote:

*All poems are poses,
word statues,
swallows dead on the ground.
In truth
nothing stays long enough
to be distorted into words.
Everything complex
beyond all word weaving-
our wits too slow
to comprehend-
and while we try
the next moment of LIFE is flowing by
and we have missed it.*

A problem unsolved. Yet sharing experiences can shed bright lights into huge areas I have mistaken for absolute darkness.

Truth? Beauty? Crime? Punishment? Endless misunderstandings and disagreements, unnecessary fights. “Love” is just such a puzzling word. Experience so often interpreted so very differently.

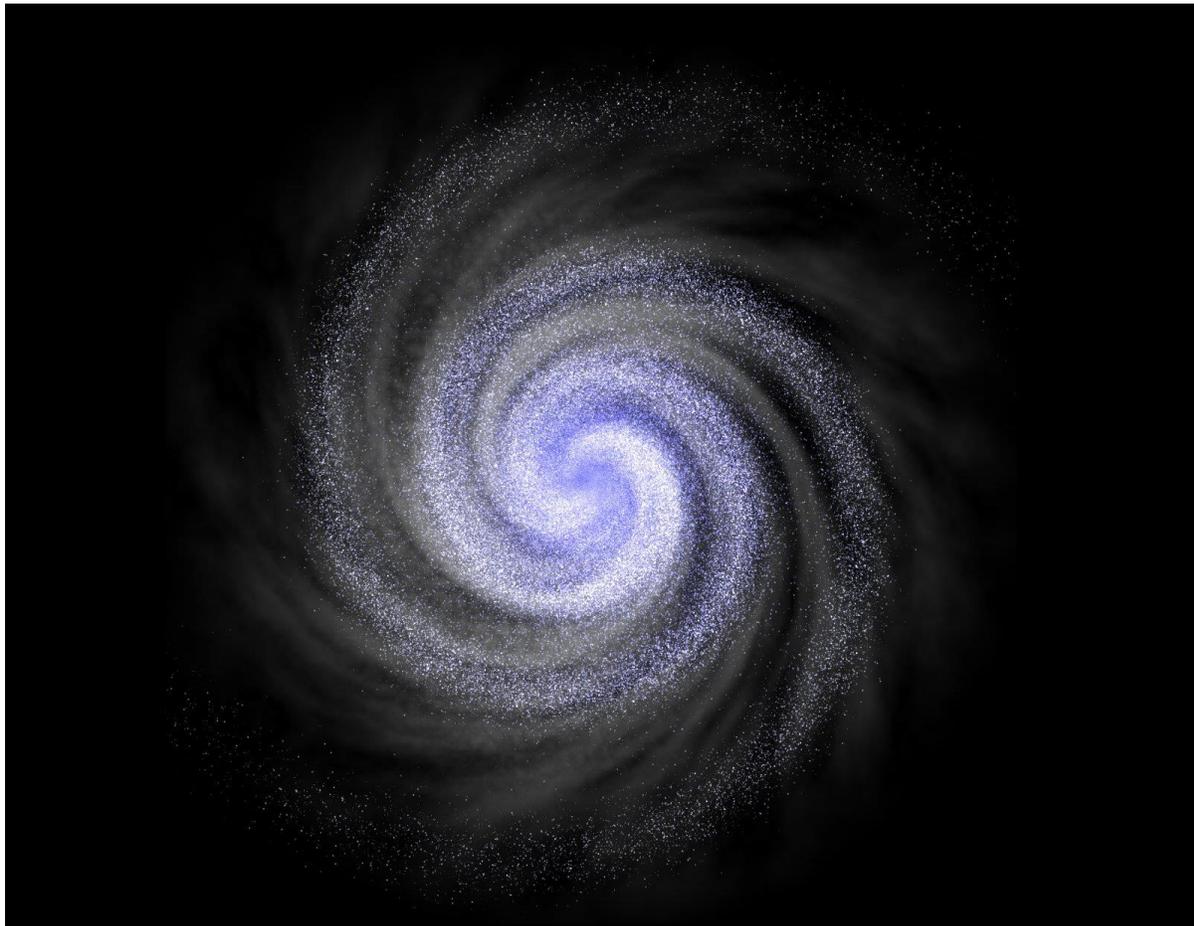
Much LOVE in literature and song is about desire and need. Desire and need are very real human experiences. Where would we be without sexual desire? Physical beauty? Wanting can seem like the air we breathe, essential for all life. We are animals after all, and like all animals we have to desire and need to survive and pass life on. There is great joy in just this embrace. Just this voice. Heart to heart. Yet if I say I love you because I need you, or I desire you, can't live without you, I would not call that LOVE. Control and manipulation are not justified by being called LOVE. These things turn everything back onto the cramped little world of ‘me’. “I want”. True LOVE cannot be about me. LOVE is for the other, and best when shared.

I have desired and needed Colin, but very much more. There has been delight and respect for him as he is, different from me in many ways. There has been looking honestly, beyond clouds of my likes, dislikes, and judgements. I don't need him to tell me I'm wonderful (often that is not true.) We can learn from each other, not trying to change or control or claim as ‘mine’, or see the other as our reflection. We can trust. Be ourselves. We can truly share the moment, be together or apart, whatever arises, joy, suffering, companionship in all that LIFE brings. Doors wide open.

Are there hiccoughs? Of course. We are human. Nothing perfect. We endlessly vow to abandon all that 'stuff' that endlessly arises- stuff that mostly does not bother animals. We need to be awake to what is arising in ourselves, in others.

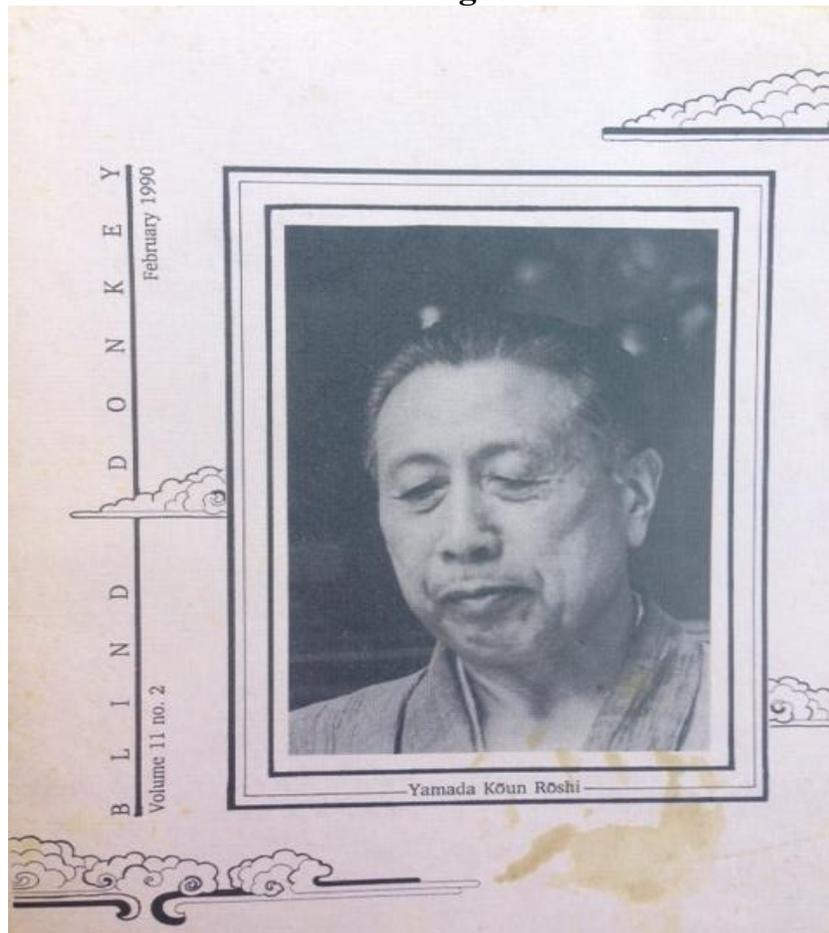
Opening doors lets the world enter. Allows Compassion. Allows Loving Kindness for all beings. Not knowing, we can be intimate with the tree, the flower, the person on the bus. Delight or tears, but ALIVE! The intimacy of loving a particular person includes these things, but also mutual openness, shared respect, delight in the well-being of each other, with all our human failings- a shared forgiveness for when we fail. Friendship. A shared experience of warmth and skin, linked hands: looking in the same direction, living the moment, day by day, and year by year.

Sitting, we can feel utterly alone, then that everything is interconnected, then that there is nothing permanent, everything fleeting. When these aspects of Being become integrated, each moment arrives FRESH- the bird call, the fragrance of the frangipani, the little child at the shopping centre. For friends, real warmth and strong, strong ties. For the one I most deeply love? Mutual intimacy and warm heart, beyond need of many words. The shared richness of this endlessly fleeting, challenging LIFE.



RECALLING YAMADA KOUN ROSHI

Kim Bagot



People might like to know that Yamada Koun's gracious and thorough Teisho, 'On the matter of life and death' published in the most recent edition of Mind Moon Circle was also published in 1989, in the Hawaii Diamond Sangha's journal, Blind Donkey, Volume 11, No. 2 to mark the occasion of Yamada Roshi's death along with the following obituary by Robert Aitken.

One personal testament to Yamada Roshi is that I recall that at Aitken Roshi's first sesshin in Australia, in 1979, with tears welling up, he told us about his great debt to Yamada Roshi. It was very helpful and inspiring to hear our beloved teacher describing Yamada's practical wisdom and grandmotherly kindness in helping Robert Aitken to open his heart and his eye for the Dharma, when he had felt that he had been "stuck for years" and resigned himself "to being some sort of junior leader". He would go out of his way to evoke Yamada's "living presence". I understood this not to be some sort of superstitious whim but a deep motion of the spirit. What a great service to the Dharma by these two devoted and dedicated old teachers.

Robert Aitken is closer to our time, and left an extensive body of teachings and writings. He regularly led sesshin in Australia for ten years from 1979.

There is also a large collection of Yamada's teishos, dating from an earlier time but which I never tire of reading. They shine with his very personal wisdom and kindness, as well as his deep knowledge of

the intricacies of the history of Chan/Zen in China and Japan. To aid our understanding, he also quotes regularly from the relevant teishos of all the teachers immediately preceding in his lineage, as well as from the respective teishos of Hakuin and Dogen. They are available at:

http://www.sanbo-zen.org/forum_e.html#08

Yamada Roshi left over 15 successors including David Loy, who is visiting soon, and AMA Samy who has been leading sesshin in Australia for many years.

YAMADA KOUN ROSHI

(Obituary, 1989)

Robert Aitken Roshi

Koun Yamada, Roshi, of the Sanun Zendo and the leader of the Sanbo Kyodan School of Zen Buddhism, died at his home in Kamakura on September 11 after a long illness. He was 82.

Yamada Roshi was born Kyozo Yamada in northern Japan. He was graduated from high school in Tokyo, and from the Tokyo Imperial University, majoring in German law. His roommate in high school was Soen Nakagawa, later Roshi of Ryutaku Monastery and an important figure in the early years of Western Zen. They became lifetime friends.

After graduation the young Kyozo Yamada was employed in the insurance business in Tokyo. He married, and shortly before the war moved with his family to Manchuria. There he met Soen Nakagawa again, who was by this time a monk, attending his teacher Gempo Yamamoto Roshi of Ryutaku Monastery and abbot pro-tem of the Manchurian branch of Myoshin Monastery of Kyoto.

In the course of discussions with his old friend, Kyozo Yamada was persuaded to take up the practice of zazen. On his return to Japan after the war with his family, he began Zen practice with Asahina Sogen Roshi, Roshi of Enkaju Monastery in North Kamakura, the temple where D. T. Suzuki and Nyogen Senzaki had trained 40 years earlier. He did Jukai with Asahina Roshi, and received the dharma name Zenshin (“Zen Mind”).

He was not able to have the daily dokusan he sought with Asahina Roshi, however, so took up practice with Tanzen Hamamoto, a Roshi in the city of Ofuna, just north of Kamakura. He practiced with Hamamoto Roshi for two years, seeing him every morning, on his way from Kamakura to Tokyo to work. He then got together with a friend and sought to establish a lay Zen group in Kamakura, but Hamamoto Roshi was not able to give the time that leading such a group would entail.

It was then that he met the Roshi Haku’un Yasutani who agreed to serve as teacher of such a group. Members then met in a rented temple in Kamakura for several years. He had begun work in koan study with Asahina Roshi and continued with Hamamoto Roshi, but it was with Yasutani Roshi that he had his great kensho, described in *The Three Pillars of Zen*. He continued his koan study with Yasutani Roshi, and was acknowledged his successor, receiving the teacher name Koun Ken (“House of Cultivating Clouds”).

Ultimately Yamada Roshi retired from business, and accepted a position as Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kenbikyoin, a large clinic in Tokyo, where his wife was medical director. He held this position until his death. In 1969, Yasutani Roshi retired, and with his wife Yamada Roshi set about establishing the Sanun Zendo (Zendo of the Three Clouds), named for the roshis Dai’un (Great Cloud) Harada, Haku’un (White Cloud), and himself. He then gave himself to the teaching of Zen during evenings, weekends, and frequent sesshins, serving several hundred students, including large numbers of Europeans and Americans. All this while maintaining a full schedule of work at the Clinic, with a daily commute of well over two hours.

With Yasutani Roshi’s retirement, the Diamond Sangha was left without a visiting teacher, and Yamada Roshi agreed to take his place. He made annual trips to lead sesshins at Koko An and at the Maui Zendo from 1971 until 1984, when Robert Aitken received transmission. As Aitken Roshi’s

teacher, and as head teacher of the Diamond Sangha for 13 years, Yamada Roshi is largely responsible for the vitality and direction of the Diamond Sangha today.

Yamada Roshi is survived by his wife, Dr. Kazue Yamada, and by three children and several grandchildren.

R. A.



Dark Night, Bright Day

Sean Loughman

*On a dark night,
Kindled in love with yearnings – oh, happy
chance! – I went forth without being observed,
My house being now at rest.*

Dark Night of the Soul – first stanza

By San Juan De La Cruz (St John of the Cross)

Translated by E. Allison Peers

Until I read the theme for this edition of MMC, I had never considered the intersection of Zen and 'Love ... in the West'. However, it got me thinking, something incompatible with both Zen and love. Nor am I an expert in either. All good reasons to stop right there. But reason takes a back seat in Zen, and love too¹. Furthermore, *Prajna* offers wisdom via the high road, but experience (better known as learning from your mistakes) also offers insight via a slightly more circuitous road. And so it percolated in my mind until an insight arose that led me on a journey through Zen, love and Renaissance art.

Besides being beyond the purview of reason, Zen and 'love' share other similarities that I would like to explore. Here, I have chosen to interpret 'Love ... in the West' to mean intimate and personal forms of love, as opposed to the more expansive and indiscriminating forms of love as described in so many religions.

Parents will know how important it is to ensure that siblings understand that they are equally loved and treasured. This can be hard to grasp as a child, if they see a parent spend more time with a baby and come to view love in the same way and see it as a finite pie to be cut and shared among people. Fortunately, I suspect most children intuitively understand that love is more like the Magic Pudding. Likewise, most adults understand the boundless and unifying nature of love. Perhaps we can more easily grasp the boundless and non-dual nature of Buddha-mind in the more identifiable experience of love.

And if we view love more as a commitment, and less as a feeling, it begins to look very much like the Path of Zen. How often I have fallen in to the trap of not sitting because it's just too hard, I don't have time and I don't feel like it. What is most frustrating is that these are the times when I most need the restoring powers of clear-headedness and presence. Funnily enough, it is aspiring to Zen before we find it that requires commitment (or faith as it is known in matters of the spirit) while it is staying in love after we have found it that requires commitment.

But when things are easy, *My house² being now at rest*, sitting is easy, love is easy. We don't need commitment to carry us along. It is at times like this that the boundaries of I and Zen, I and love dissolve, there is no easy or hard, this or that, you or me, no commitment, no thought of Zen or love.

This brings to mind the happiest moment of my life. It was not a moment of personal achievement or enjoyment. It was seeing my wife look into the eyes of our daughter and she looking back as she was being breast fed. Though it was a daily routine that I had seen many times before, this one time the stars aligned and I was graced with the ability to see something that had always been there but rarely reveals itself except in shadows. It was and is a connection beyond words. I could say that it was a connection of trust laid bare, security and contentment, even a connection of love, although my daughter probably had no such experience as we understand the term. But that does not convey the wonder or purity of that particular eye-to-soul connection. As my English teacher liked to say in front of a room full of pubescent boys, "It's like sex. You had to be there." Masterful English teacher that he was, he too understood some things defy description.

I like to think that my personal relationship with them had little to do with my surreptitious sharing of happiness. I had tapped in to a richer happiness of a different quality to the your-my-his variety of happiness. How do I know that? Because it felt different, like an ocean, with great depth and strength hidden beneath a quiet, deceptive stillness³.

Delighting in the happiness of others is a whole other kind of happiness. Without a love for others such happiness cannot be experienced. Likewise, discovering the love for those beyond your immediate acquaintance is a whole other kind of love. Undiscriminating love is an inevitable response to the connection with the wider universe. Above all else, it is about *being* the connection. We are all interconnected but sometimes we fail to see that connection and our actions do not embody that connection.

On the other hand, discriminating love is about choosing to make a personal connection. Look closely and you will see that these two kinds of love can be the same or different, depending on how you love. Is your love for yourself, or for all beings? Does it illuminate or blind? Do you hold it or does it have a hold on you? When they are the same, they are not incompatible. Like separate strands, they intertwine and strengthen each other, forming one rope. Greater depths of love open up when you discover that, at its heart, the difference between discriminating love and indiscriminating love is illusory.

At the beginning, I wrote that Zen and love are similar, but I hope you can see, as I now see, that, though they may seem different, Zen and love are one and the same. Zen offers clarity, while love is the human response to what we see in moments of clarity. But love can also offer clarity. Zen is also the human response to what we see in moments of love. Compassion and love walk hand in hand. And, when we realise this, then it is time to let go of Zen and love and go out in to the light of the noonday sun.

*I remained, lost in oblivion;
My face reclined on the Beloved.
All ceased and I abandoned myself,
Leaving my cares forgotten among the lilies.*

Dark Night of the Soul -last stanza

Thanks to Allan Marett for proofreading this article.

Footnotes

1. "Love has reasons that reason cannot understand." - Blaise Pascal

2. Byung-Chul Han, author and cultural theorist, points out (on an entirely unrelated subject) that the German word, *wesen*, which means *a being* or the essential nature of something, had the meaning of dwelling or house in earlier times. It was also related to the verb *to be* in Old English (*wesan* became *was*). He also points out that the Greek word *ousia*, which Aristotle used to mean *being* had similar ties to dwelling or house.



Botticelli's Madonna with child ⁴

3. Through a strange series of leaps across the internet, involving lactation in Renaissance art, pseudo-zygodactylism, El Greco and St John of the Cross, I discovered while writing this journey that breast feeding and breast milk have symbolised spiritual salvation and the transmission of divinity at various times in some Western cultures. This is most clearly illustrated by the story of the 'Lactation of St Bernard', in which Mary gives her milk to St Bernard (not discriminating between family and stranger) and confers divine wisdom upon him. Perhaps it is no surprise that I should have seen the divine in such an act of love.

4. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BotticelliMadonnaConBambinoAvignone.jpg>
Note that Botticelli's Madonna adopts the 'pseudo-zygodactylous' gesture. The symbolism (if any) is unclear, but makes for a mystery worthy of a Dan Brown novel. Renaissance art historians please step forward!

5. I wanted to include *Dark Night of the Soul* in its entirety, but realised that it would eclipse (!) anything that I could write. If you have not experienced it, please do. Pithier than even the Heart Sutra, yet more intense, it describes (ultimately) the same experience in an entirely different mood using the simplest of imagery and language to great effect.

For the curious:

Dark Night of the Soul translation, with original Spanish
<http://josvg.home.xs4all.nl/cits/lm/stjohn01.html>

Dark Night of the Soul with commentary
[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Dark_Night_of_the_Soul_\(Peers_translation\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Dark_Night_of_the_Soul_(Peers_translation))

Chapter 1: the Hand of "El caballero de la mano al pecho" (Pseudo-zygodactylism and symbolism of lactation)
<http://www.darkfiber.com/pz/chapter1.html>

El Greco – Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Greco

Art history, symbolism and legends: Divine Mothers, part 1: breastfeeding Madonna
<https://artelisaart.blogspot.com.au/2013/07/divine-mothers-part-1-breastfeeding.html>

The Hidden Meaning of the Strangely Beautiful "Lactation of St. Bernard" | ChurchPOP
<https://churchpop.com/2016/08/26/hidden-meaning-strangely-beautiful-lactation-st-bernard/>

TRANSCENDING LOVE

Philip Long

“... It is like swallowing a red-hot iron ball. You try to vomit it out, but you can't.”

Wu-Men Kuan. Case No. 1. Wu-Men's Comment.

“Put a bullet that has been heated red-hot into your mouth, you cannot swallow it and you cannot spit it out. ... when you finally reach that place where ahead there is no advance and behind there is no retreat, then for the first time you will find that a living path appears.”

Shaku Soen. Teisho On Joshu's Dog.

The Book of MU. Wisdom Publications, 2011.

Each of us has a place where we are stuck, where we hurt. This place appears too painful to open up and too painful to keep closed. We were hurt. Unable to deal with the hurt we shut down our love, our need, in order to protect ourselves and we left our love behind on the other side of the door. I can remember thinking as a child about my parents: “I will never love you unless you *first* love me.” This left behind love is of course here in the present but it is immature; it has not been forged stronger by the experience of rejection or abandonment. As a result it is over-romanticised and overly needy. Others sense this and are wary. We say: “You see. I knew you didn't love me.” Everyone we encounter feels paralysed by this, reflecting the paralysis we feel inside. No one can make the first move.

Associated with this place is a dark cavern of loneliness, despair, rage, resentment, hatred, contempt, disgust, revulsion, dread, terror and so on. It is a no-go zone that we must avoid at all costs. We are locked in to a frozen move coming forth from out of our past. A psychiatrist once said to me: “We will do anything, anything at all, to avoid our pain”. I feel this place in my upper chest and throat every time I do zazen and lately it appears more insistently. I fear that if I go there I will die, REALLY die! How are we to love well and gain the love we need?

In the process of attempting to work through these issues, I have become interested in the relationship of our Western notion of Love to the Buddhist notions of loving-kindness and compassion. This interest is part of a broader interest in the relationship of Christianity, which emphasises God's Love, and Buddhism, which I am inclined to see as emphasising Emptiness and Wisdom but it also encompasses my own path of love as I find it in and around my personal relationships. Of course Buddhism also refers to loving-kindness but this seems on first glance more like a moral principle than the emotion we know as love.

Christianity refers to three kinds of love – eros, philia and agape. Eros is “love” of a sexual nature. Philia is brotherly or sisterly love or friendship or more generally any love of a non-sexual nature. Agape is the highest form of love, charity, unconditional love, the love of God. Interestingly “the love of God” is an ambiguous expression which could mean the love I have for God or the love God has for me. In non-dualistic terms it means both for they are not apart from one another. As Meister Eckhart said: “The eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me; my eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing, one love.”¹

¹ Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons* (Paulist Press: 1981).

Bringing this to the level of the interpersonal we can say: “The love with which I love the other is the love with which the other loves me.”

The love of a child is necessarily tinged with selfishness. It takes time, a lot of suffering and hard work to grow up and find a love that is truly altruistic. While it is true that love is natural, its proper expression has also to be learnt. In immature love I love you only for what I can get from you – your love, affirmation, acceptance. This love is likely to react aggressively to hurt because the ego is not getting what it wants. As our love matures we become more focused on the Other and without expectation accept whatever, if anything, comes back to us. We empty ourselves of our attachment to the egoic facets of the self. But this is not a perverse passivity in which we make the Other do all the work. We act and speak as if we were already affirmed and accepted. This sets the Other at ease and enables the Other to come forth with confidence. In Christianity this process is called “kenosis”, that is, self-emptying. In this process we totally accept the other. Atticus Finch in *To Kill A Mockingbird* in talking to his daughter Jean Louise (Scout) about the difficult time she is having at school with her teacher says:

"If you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it."

Case 68 of the Hekiganroku, approaches this point directly:

Yang Shan asked San Sheng, "What's your name?"

Sheng replied, "Hui Chi."

Yang Shan said, "Hui Chi? That's my name."

Sheng said, "My name is Hui Jan." Yang Shan roared with laughter.

To truly know the other we must lose ourselves to the extent that we become (at least temporarily) the Other. Thus we empty ourselves of our reactivity and when we come face to face with the Other we can *do no other* than love.

This kind of love does not discriminate between people who give us pleasure and people who give us pain, that is, between people we like and people we do not like. It is not simply an emotion; because it is empty it is more like a disposition. It is disinterested (but not uninterested) benevolence. However, allowing for the fact that this love takes a long time to perfect (more than a lifetime), we were better off not to castigate ourselves for slipping up occasionally. We can trust that it is ultimately rewarding. It does not mean not correcting or reprimanding the Other but only that when we do this we do it with a “background” of the love of which I now speak. This love eschews treating the Other with an excessive and unbalanced sweetness; true love for the Other will be balanced with “hatred” for those aspects of the Other which are immature and hurtful. Or it may be preferable to say that this love wishes to encourage the Other along the path to integrity and maturity. For this love we may have to endure hurt or pain and not react when this happens. To truly love we need to hurl ourselves onto the pile that is love-and-suffering like plunging into bitterly cold water or a boiling cauldron. Along with the pain comes a transcendent joy that is the joy of truly living and loving. And when we are in the field of true Love, that is agape, the hurt does not go to the bottom; it is eminently bearable. It is the intricate and unfathomable Dharma.

Suffering the hurt or pain that comes with abandonment or rejection without reacting may involve remaining silent or stepping over the Other’s provocation or it

may require an active response. How do we decide which to do? Saint Augustine said: “Love God and do what you will”. In Zen we are asked to transform our egoic tendencies and thus to be open and naturally responsive to the Other. What results is appropriate speech or action, appropriate, that is, to time, person and place. This is not the world of the Kantian categorical imperative. There are no fixed rules here but only



guidelines which act like goal posts between which we need to kick the ball. Often in the particular situation the moral guidelines which seem applicable contradict each other. We may have to abandon our desire for certainty and intellectual resolution and *feel* our way through the amorphous, shifting atmosphere. We may slip and make mistakes but in the end this approach will lead to a more satisfactory resolution and one that does not leave a nasty taste in everyone’s mouth.

What of loving kindness as taught in Vipassana and compassion in Zen? Fr. Ama Samy (Gen Un Ken Roshi) was once asked about Zen by an elderly priest in Germany where Ama was leading sesshin: “Does it help you to love people better?” Ama replied simply: “Yes.” “Then do it,” he said. In studying Buddhism we learn that everything is characterized by Emptiness, even Emptiness itself. Then, is love empty? This to our Western ears seems pathological. If there is no substance to our love then of what worth is it? But as students of the Way we know that when something is

empty of substance it is also full of creative possibility; its insubstantiality is its freedom, its flexibility. It is open to change; it is responsive and not hamstrung by inappropriate constraints from the past. What then is the relationship between Emptiness and Agape?

It is this, that, when I empty myself of my attachment to egoic tendencies I jettison the impediments to seeing the world as it is, in its Suchness. Responding to this is appropriate responding, beneficial responding.

The Book of Genesis has the following passages:

*Then God said: "Let there be light"; and there was light. **And God saw that the light was good ...***

*God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. ... **And God saw that it was good.***

*So God created ... every living creature that moves ... **And God saw that it was good.***

*God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. **And God saw that it was good.***

Then God said: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness ..."²

When we see with the eye of God by realising that we *are* God, we are the Buddha Nature, we love. *This is not in doubt.*

This is Agape, the Love of God, God's Love, which is no other than Emptiness itself. Emptiness is Impermanence and thus Openness. Emptiness is the field in which Love arises, which arises as Love. Love is the form of Emptiness, arising in the space between us. Emptiness is the condition of our Love and our Love is the expression of Emptiness. Love is Emptiness in action. This is our love raised to the level of the perfected archetype; it is Love based on Understanding what is. Thus, love is essentially a mystery, we can even say *The Mystery*. It is empty, expansive, indefinable.

Zen is a wisdom tradition which on the surface appears to emphasise Prajna or Understanding. But what we know unconditionally we love unconditionally. They are one. Zen's emphasis on wisdom belongs to its culturally conditioned aspect and does not go very deep into the heart of Zen.

Thich Nhat Hahn speaks of "Understanding" and "Love" as translations of Prajna (Wisdom) and Karuna (Compassion). Thich in his book *How To Love* says: "Understanding someone's suffering is the best gift you can give another person. Understanding is love's other name. If you don't understand, you can't love."³ To love another means to fully understand his or her suffering. "But when our hearts expand," (in Emptiness) "these same things [others' shortcomings] don't make us suffer anymore. We have a lot of understanding and compassion and can embrace others. We accept others as they are, and then they have a chance to transform."⁴ The way through to this frame of heart/mind is to first practice acceptance of oneself and our own suffering.

² The Harper Collins Study Bible, p. 6-7. Genesis 1.1 to 1.26.

³ Thich Nhat Hanh. *How To Love*. Parallax Press, 2015, p. 10.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 8.

Our own teacher, Subhana, frequently refers to the opening of the heart being as necessary in Zen as the opening of the mind. One can have had a deep opening and be extremely clear about Emptiness but not love deeply. Of course such Emptiness is tinged with ego and is not yet true Emptiness but this is not always easy to see. John Tarrant once described this cul-de-sac as digging a deep hole, deep, deep down only to find that on looking around one finds that the hole is only one metre wide.

The picture we have of others tends to focus on their karma, their suffering. We see this as an annoying limitation. (If only he would ...) One practitioner I know used to refer to it as “weirdness”. It appears to us like a dark amorphous shadow that hangs over them. (Apologies to Paul McCartney.) We can spend a lot of time trying to figure out how to fix this, turn it into a loveable pleasance or simply eliminate it altogether. We never think that this picture may be distorted by our own karma, our own bias. With just a flick of a switch we can learn to accept others’ shortcomings just as they are – as they *really* are. In truth they are one with the ubiquitous, eternal Buddha-nature. Then something magic happens: the cloud ceases to be a problem. It is transformed and no longer appears dark and foreboding. Both self and other are liberated, freed up to join in the mysterious dance that always escapes our desire to fix it. Even the attempt to fix it is part of the dance.

The notions of Love that prevail in the West may at one level fit into a different conceptual scheme than Prajna and Karuna but, whatever conceptual scheme we feel comfortable with, our response to the World and to the Other will be the same if at another level it proceeds from the depth of our inherent Emptiness. Once again action (*wei wu wei*) resolves the conceptual impasse *as one heart touches another*. Genjokoan is lived out, the problem of the red-hot iron ball is resolved and we can get on with our engagement with the ever-appearing ever-opening Gateless Gate.

The good news about Love is that we already love enough and perfectly – simply by existing. As Thay says we *can only* inter-be. It is simply a question of paying attention to that inter-being aspect of ourselves and the rest – love and understanding, wisdom and compassion – flow freely. Don’t try too hard; trust your heart and let it open as it will.

As for the knot where I get stuck, it is gradually revealing itself as the place of my death and rebirth. A place where I can slough off my stuckness in past pain and start over again. Fr. Ama Samy constantly urges his students as follows: “We must go through all these things; but don’t be caught by these things.” This is alright as far as it goes but when we approach this place in the right way (that is, by not approaching it, by not separating ourselves from it in the first place) we can in fact allow ourselves to be “caught” even to the point where we feel in despair that the pain will never end and will be the end of us. Keep breathing; don’t withdraw. The pain then reveals itself to be accompanied by the deep satisfaction of accepting what we are at that moment and further reveals itself to be like the pain of childbirth, excruciating and deadly but followed by the ecstatic joy of new life. *This* is love.

*The priest Shih-shuang said, “How do you step from the top of a hundred-foot pole?”
Another eminent master of former times said:
You who sit on the top of a hundred-foot pole,
although you have entered the Way, it is not genuine.
Take a step from the top of the pole
And the worlds of the Ten Directions are your total body.*

Case 46 of the Mumonkan: Shih-shuang: “Step from the Top of the Pole”

One last thing. Love as an emotion, as a need, may be immature or mature but in either case when considered under the rubric of Emptiness we find that there is no line that can be drawn between ordinary personal love and absolute unconditional love. They are one and the same love. We are all on the never ending path of realising this love. Go straight ahead!

*All the Precepts and Teachings come to this ONE:
Love your neighbour as your self
Love all beings
Love is your self-nature.*

From Ama Samy's Bodhi Zendo sutra service.



There's Lots of Room in Here

Alex Budlevskis

What does love have to do with my Zen practice? Initially it had nothing to do with it. I was searching for "something greater", leaving a huge blind spot that caused me to discount all of the beauty within any present moment. What is already here always. Later realizing the suchness of things was oh so sweet, but it led to an inexplicit rejection of the whole subjective side of being human. Very little love in that too.

This all changed after having a very unexpected experience working with the koan "Who's hearing?". I couldn't find anyone who was hearing, thinking, feeling, sitting, there was just sounds, emotional tone, thoughts coming and going. I was still expecting an answer to the question, and a certain intensity was building over several days of sitting with the koan.

All of a sudden, out of the complete silence within sitting, my heart broke open. I found myself crying while doing zazen. The aftermath of each crying spell rather than being sadness or grief, came as an overwhelming feeling of love. A boundless love including everything that was within my senses. Everywhere I looked, everything I touched, everything I heard, was love. It was beyond explanation, and still is to me today, but the lesson has never left me.

For me love is a test for the inclusiveness of my practice. Whenever I find myself in resistance to something within myself, or happening in life, I notice something I haven't let into my heart yet. It shows me something I'm attached to also, something that needs to be brought to light, healed and transcended. The love becomes the felt sense of the connection that is already there once I get out of the way.

To me love is also the only thing that can embrace opposites and forge a Middle Way that includes everything. How can one be very imperfect, and also whole and complete in this moment, simultaneously? How can both of these be true at once? This isn't a simple balance of opposites, but a radical embrace. My intellect can't do that (maybe other's can?), only love can for me. I'm okay, your okay; I'm not okay, you're not okay; and all of that is okay. That's all love.

I read Aitken Roshi say that the realization of "the other is no other than myself" is the foundation for all of our precepts. This is beyond simple good intentions. It is intimacy so close that someone else's baby crying, their solemn look towards the path as they walk, their feeling of unworthiness in life, are no other than mine too. Love in the practice is an intimate embrace to me. Acceptance and tolerance is one step into this embrace, but embracing another as myself is another entirely. The sense of separation falls away. This is the most intimate love. I can love the rain falling outside, the street side tree, the car whooshing past, the Trump on the news, the toothless poor soul walking past on the street. They're all me.

On reflection of my earlier time in practice, a nihilist experience of no-mind did wipe away all distinctions and discriminations, but it couldn't embrace everything everywhere in front me and laboriously start picking them up. Nihilism will just stand and watch and find something interesting about it. Nihilism will just say "ah well, that's life."

Here is a poem I wrote and polished up a little over a few days about love and Zen practice. It was inspired by the conundrum of embracing Trump. I hope you enjoy it:

There's lots of room in here...
There's space for everything.
Look around, stay for a while.
There's lots of room in here...
Even for those grasping for any moment of love with clumsy and blinded eyes.
They're missed and missing, I love them too.
There's lots of room in here. Even for their fear of not finding it out there.
Come and stay for a while, sit down, it can hold everything.
You don't need all that, all that more than you need. Taking taking taking... trump
trump trump.
The last place to look - within.
There's lots of room in here.
Welcome!
It's here even if you don't want it right now.
It'll wait.
There's lots of room in here...
There are no walls, no floor, no roof, no bounds.
The mind makes the bounds, but there's room in here for the mind-bounds too.
Brother tree, mother sun, sister ocean, cousin ant, father forest.
There's room for all in here.
There's so much room there's even room for "me".
The mind that thinks, self talk, images, fantasies, river of emotions. This body vessel.
Even the shadows swirling in the dark wanting to be held.
I love them too.
There's lots of room in here.
There's so much room they can all stay.
There's so much room....
Because...
This is not my heart.



ANXIETY

Philip Long

In the movie *As Good as It Gets* Melvin Udall (Jack Nicholson), a misanthropic author with obsessive-compulsive disorder, is explaining to Simon Bishop (Greg Kinnear), a gay artist, how he got on pursuing his interest in Carol Connelly (Helen Hunt), a waitress:

Melvin Udall: Are you gonna talk to me or not?

Simon Bishop: I'm coming.

[He enters the room.]

Simon Bishop: What'd she say?

Melvin Udall: That I'm a great guy, extraordinary, and she doesn't want contact with me.

[There is a beat.]

Melvin Udall: I'm dying here.

Simon Bishop: Because . . .

[He speaks gently.]

Simon Bishop: . . . you love her.

Melvin Udall: No! And you people are supposed to be sensitive and sharp?

Simon Bishop: Then you tell me why! You're the one who's "dying here."

Melvin Udall: I don't know. Let me sleep on it.

Simon Bishop: Oh, come on.

Melvin Udall: I'll figure it out.

Simon Bishop: Oh, please.

Melvin Udall: It's, uh . . . I'm - I'm stuck. I can't get back to my old life. She - She's evicted me from my life.

Simon Bishop: Did you really like it that much?

[Melvin is furious.]

Melvin Udall: Well, it's better than this. Look, you, I'm very intelligent. If you're gonna give me hope, you gotta do better than you're doing. I mean, if you can't be at least mildly interesting, then shut the hell up. I mean, I'm drowning here, and you're describing the water!

Who can be anxious as to whether birth and death are or are not the bright pearl? Even if there is doubt and anxiety, they are the bright pearl. There is not a single activity or thought that is not the bright pearl, and consequently, both advancing and retreating in the Black Mountain Cave of demons is nothing but the one bright pearl.

Dogen Zenji: Shobogenzo: One Bright Pearl.⁵

Go straight on a mountain road with ninety-nine curves.

Miscellaneous Koan, Diamond Sangha.

Bête noir

There are few feelings which cause as much suffering for people as anxiety. Anxiety is an important feeling to get to grips with in meditation practice. When we are suffering from anxiety, it can be impossible to see what else is happening to us as our attachment to the anxiety blocks everything else out. Melvin experienced this.

⁵ Foster, Nelson, and Jack Shoemaker. *The Roaring Stream: A New Zen Reader*. The Eco Press, 1996, p. 217.

Anxiety is an old friend of mine. Over the years I have had to deal with this fierce and insistent companion. At times I have been overwhelmed by it and at others it has felt like a very unwanted houseguest who simply won't leave. It has almost certainly been around continuously since very early in my life but often I was not conscious of it, using avoidance strategies to repress it and get on with my life. Over the last 30 years or so it has emerged from its hiding place and I have simply had to deal with it. I have made great strides, and have developed effective ways of dealing with it, particularly recently, and it has been suggested that it might be helpful to others if I were to share my story with you.



A crooked path

I began Zen practice in 1989 in order to deal with high levels of anxiety and depression associated with the gradual onset of a condition now known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. As with many beginner meditation practitioners I experienced early a complete transformation in my life and my levels of anxiety and depression were reduced considerably. Gradually, however, I found myself dealing with deeper and more intransigent causes of anxiety and depression. For a time there was great struggle and my practice, although I remained committed, became more difficult and inconsistent. In 2012 I was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. Oddly enough this did not lead to any great increase in my levels of anxiety or depression. Moreover, around the middle of 2013 there was a pronounced change in my practice. Instead of my *zazen* simply helping me to *cope* with my "negative" (unwanted) feelings, I began to experience strong "*positive*" (desirable) feelings and to explore the relationship between these two sets of feelings. (These two sets of feelings had hitherto seemed quite divorced from each other like two different people.)

Working with these feelings over time I have come to see that the fact that the negative feelings are unwanted is what makes them unpleasant. As Dogen Zenji says: "Nevertheless, flowers fall with our attachment and weeds spring up with our aversion."⁶ As my attitude towards them has changed, they have changed in the process and have begun to break up into their constituent "parts". Anxiety and depression are no longer satisfactory labels for these areas of feeling. Those old feelings have become less unpleasant or painful, are more diffuse, gentler and infinitely more bearable. On occasion I can even enjoy them! More recently, I have begun to see that the strong desirable states are not the end of the journey for the unwanted feelings inevitably return. In my *zazen* now, when desirable states arise, I find myself moving on to a more neutral and freer space, which includes unwanted feelings and reminds me that there is nothing to do and no special state (positive, negative or neutral) to achieve. What next, eh?

How can I help?

When, because of my long struggle with anxiety, I was asked to write of my own experience of anxiety and of how I have come to deal with it, I was at first perplexed. How, indeed, have I learnt to deal with it? I couldn't say. Where should I start to describe a process which has taken a lifetime and which is so shot through with mystery at every point? A large part of the process then has to do with the Don't Know Mind and also with the mysterious involvement of others and their generous and gracious instruction. In the end I decided that I should emulate that instruction and put it out there in the hope that it is of benefit to someone. Who can tell if this will be so? Any advice I give in this article should be taken as a prompting for a dialogue with your own inner processes such that in the end no-one person can lay claim to having solved the "problem".

The main purpose of this article, then, is to encourage you and to say that that which seems so impossible to do can indeed happen. I certainly do not claim

⁶ Dogen Zenji. *Shobogenzo*: Genjokoan. Talk given to the Chapel Hill Zen Center, November, 1993. www.chzc.org/mell15.htm

perfection in this or in anything but I have indeed learnt a great deal about dealing with anxiety and depression in my long experience with these troublesome feelings.



What is the problem?

When we first approach the Practice we come bound up in all our “preoccupations and delusions”. So much is this the case that we feel unable to be rid of them even though this is something we desire with all our might. They are alien invaders over which we have no control and we feel besieged by them. They have been around so long that dealing with them appropriately seems like “pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps”. When they have been the ground on which we stand, on what ground will we stand on once we are “rid of them”. Further, when we go to deal with something like anxiety we may be inadvertently anxious about doing that so that we are *anxious about dealing with anxiety*. I “may be” anxious about writing this article. Advice such as just accept your feelings of anxiety, “let it come and let it go”, may not help. It doesn’t

bloodywell go. *That is the problem.* What we are most in need of here is faith in the process of Zen, a love of the Way. We need faith in our practicing selves. Even if we do not have much faith to start with, we have our intention for faith and with time and practice faith will grow. Constantly giving ourselves over to the factuality of the breath and the associated reality behind the curtain of our “preoccupations and delusions” works in a mysterious way to transform our anxiety and our attitude to it. The process is not linear and there may be setbacks; at such times we must persist even though nothing seems to be working. Over time our anxiety comes to assume a less dominant role and is relegated to subordinate and ephemeral eddies in the stream. The process of Zen has changed our point of view and from there things look much different. The anxiety becomes bearable and manageable. We acquire time to check out the promptings of our worrying mind and see how accurate they are.

A mysterious practice

In this context, the solution to dealing with anxiety turns out to be nothing other than the way we need to approach any thought/feeling, any experience, in our practice generally. How is it that we should relate to our experiences? The first thing to say is that the Zen process is mysterious and significantly different for each practitioner. No one can give you a perfect description or set of techniques. Ultimately, we must forget all the techniques and advice and “follow our nose”. Zen practice, and life itself, is unpredictable. We may be travelling along entirely obsessed with unwanted feelings of hatred and evil and suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, there arrives a feeling of joy and peace, of release and relief. It is gift and grace; it is the ten thousand things coming forth and confirming the self. It is spontaneous; it is Other. It is Love. Having said that I am reminded of something John Tarrant Roshi once said: “Enlightenment is an accident; however, zazen will make you accident prone.” With this in mind I will say a few things in general about how I have approached anxiety in the hope that this may help you to deal with it when you meet it in your practice.

Working with the ego

We must start with the way we habitually relate to our experience, that is, from the aspect of the ego. The ego is our ordinary, limited, rigid, dualistic thinking/feeling. The ego in its unreconstructed form relates to experience by way of greed, hatred and ignorance, that is grasping the experience if we like it, rejecting or repressing the experience if we don't and avoiding altogether a large amount of what we experience. This is a child-like and literal (black and white) way of approaching things. Feeling x – good – grasp. Feeling y – bad – reject. Because the ego tends to work in black and white dualities we end up with the aforesaid formulae. This constitutes a duality (good/bad) applied to another duality (feeling x/feeling not-x). In the Practice we work a lot with our attachment to the ego and with paying attention to sensations, memories, fantasies, feelings and thinking in order to break down our attachment to ego-driven approaches. Anxiety is no different.

Wanting and not wanting

So, one of the first things we do when we experience anxiety is to want to be rid of it (not to have it) and re-establish a state of non-anxiety. There! Straight

away, we are caught. “Ok,” says the ego, “I will have the anxiety.” There! Straight away, we are caught. If we try to get rid of the anxiety we are caught by it and it will seem to hang around as long as our resistance continues. If we try to grasp and keep the anxiety we are again caught and it will hang around as long as we continue to want it. What actually hangs around in both these cases is our attitude to the presence of anxiety. This attitude persists over time and creates the illusion that the anxiety is still there, whereas in fact it is long gone. Dogen Zenji said: “Yet in attachment blossoms fall and in aversion weeds spread.”⁷

The Illusion of Impossibility

For many years I have relegated certain feelings, not only anxiety, to the impossible basket. Why impossible? Because they are too “evil” and “harmful”. Because they are too painful to bear. Because I will be rejected by others, if I allow them. Because it simply can’t be done. Because I will die. And all this is made harder because we are trained to think in a way that is bound up with feelings of distrust around our rejected feelings. As an example, we may be approaching anxiety from the point of view of anxiety. How do we get out of a situation we are bound up in? How do we step out of this point of view which is our point of view? Is it, indeed, like “pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps”?

There are two main things to realise here. The first is that these impossible feelings can be dealt with effectively. The message that they can’t, for whatever reason, is WRONG. With continued dedicated practice we will come to know this as firmly as we know the sun rises every morning. Nothing I have experienced so far in my life negates this. The second is that “pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps” is not impossible because you already possess the bodhicitta, the empty reality which is your true self, the pivot point on which everything, including ignorance and enlightenment, turns. With a secure focus on this, turning over a lifetime’s pre-occupation with anxiety can indeed be accomplished.

The open field

Our spiritual practice and the Buddhist doctrine of non-duality attempt to lead us into the open field of meaning which does not force us to make an arbitrary, absolute and once a for all dualistic choice between the two opposite poles in dualities such as “Anxiety is good” and “Anxiety is bad” and “I want this anxiety” and “I don’t want this anxiety”. We are advised not to become attached, either by grasping or rejecting, to anything even to detachment itself. This field then becomes a place of freedom and intimacy rather than a place that forces us to make arbitrary and permanent choices between the two dichotomised poles. In this field we neither accept nor reject our aversive feelings, such as anxiety, no matter how intense or unpleasant they may be. In this field we can indeed follow the advice: “When anxiety comes, let it come; when anxiety goes, let it go”. We avoid being caught by it. This approach is the Buddha’s middle path and should be a guide for all our practice. We need to trust ourselves and the Other by

⁷ Dogen Zenji. *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo. Actualising the Fundamental Point*. Shambala, 2010, p. 29.

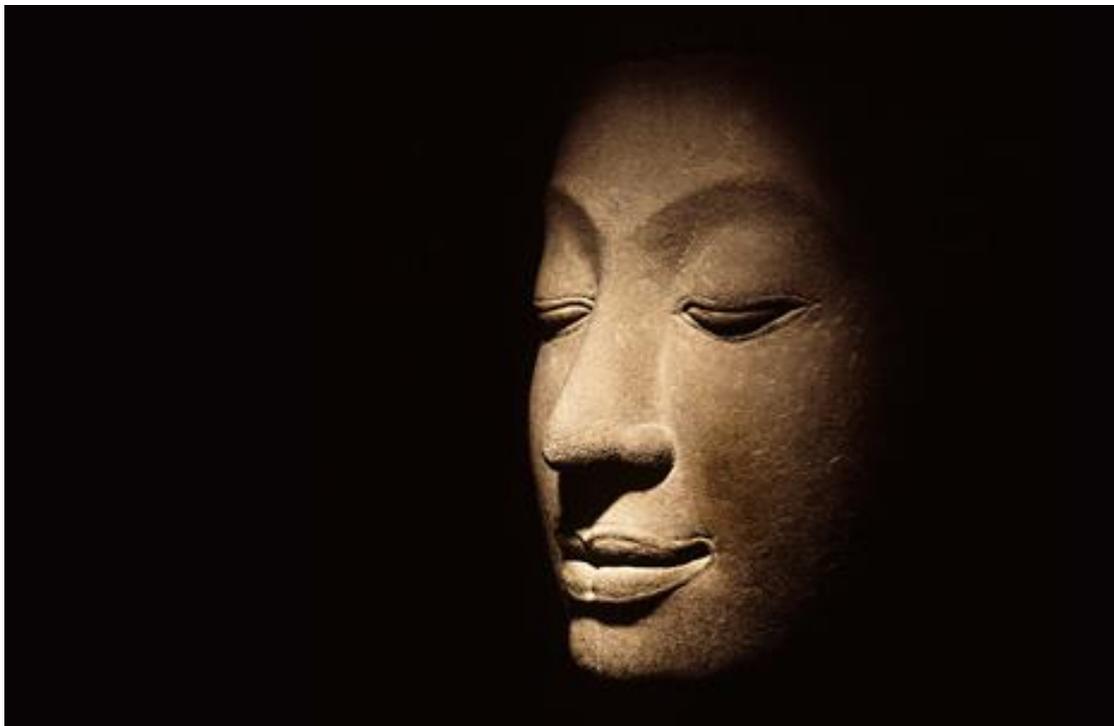
surrendering ourselves to the Tao. Hildegard of Bingen put it this way: “I am a feather on the breath of God.” This is wei-wu-wei.

A warning.

A note of warning must be struck about severe anxiety. The vigour with which we cling to our illusions means that particularly, but not only, in the beginning of practice, there are many traps into which we may fall. It is important to have a guide and with severe anxiety or depression it may be necessary, for a time at least, to take medication. Beware of bravado or unrealistic expectations. Some things on the Way take a long time and a lot of help to work through. However, do not be disheartened by this warning; you will find your way through, particularly because you have at your disposal the most beautiful practice available to anyone – the practice of Unconditional Love.

The Breath

Lastly, remember to come back to the breath, again and again, and again and again.





To study the way of enlightenment is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualised by myriad things. When actualised by myriad things, your body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others drop away. No trace of this enlightenment remains, and this no-trace continues endlessly.

When you first seek dharma, you imagine you are far away from its environs. At the moment when dharma is authentically transmitted, you are immediately your original self.

Dogen Zenji. Shobogenzo: Genjokoan.



Mind Moon Circle, Journal
of the Sydney Zen Centre
251 Young Street
Annandale NSW 2038
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