

ZEN GONGI

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*J'ai jeté cette petite chose
qu'on appelle "Moi" et je suis
devenu le monde immense.*

(MUSO SOSEKI)

*Le désir possède une
efficacité dans le domaine
spirituel qu'il ne possède
dans aucun autre domaine.*

SIMONE WEIL

*The desire of your mind
should become the desire of
your heart.*

GURDJIEFF

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Le Bouddha tient une fleur

Un nouveau livre d'Albert Low doit paraître très bientôt en anglais. Intitulé *The World: A Gateway*, il présente les 48 koans du *Mumonkan*, ce célèbre recueil de koans compilés par Mumon au 13^{ième} siècle, ainsi que les commentaires de M.Low sur ces koans. Nous vous offrons ici la traduction d'un chapitre de ce livre, celui où il est question du fameux sourire de Mahâkâshyapa. Une traduction française du livre sera publiée l'année prochaine.

Le cas

Un jour, alors que le Bienheureux se trouvait au Pic des Vautours pour prêcher, il tint simplement une fleur devant l'assemblée. Tous ceux présents demeurèrent silencieux ne sachant que faire, sauf le vénérable Mahâkâshyapa qui sourit. Le Bienheureux alors dit: "Je détiens le trésor de l'oeil de la Vraie Loi, l'esprit profond du Nirvâna, l'enseignement exquis de la forme sans forme, la porte subtile du Dharma. Ils ne dépendent pas des mots et des lettres. C'est une transmission spéciale en dehors des Ecritures. Je les confère maintenant à Mahâkâshyapa.

Commentaire de Mumon

Le Gautama au visage jaune est certainement insolent. Il dédaigne sa noble assistance; il lui annonce de la tête de mouton et lui vend de la viande de chien. Mais il faut admettre qu'il ne le fait pas sans génie. Seulement, si tout le monde avait souri à ce moment-là, à qui aurait-il transmis la Vraie Loi? Ou, si Mahâkâshyapa n'avait pas souri, comment la Vraie Loi aurait-elle été transmise? Si vous dites que l'oeil de la Vraie Loi peut être transmis, alors le vieux maître au visage jaune et à la voix forte a trompé les simples villageois. Si vous dites que cela ne peut pas être transmis, alors pourquoi seul Mahâkâshyapa a-t-il été approuvé?

Poème de Mumon

En tenant une fleur,
Le secret est révélé.
Mahâkâshyapa sourit.
Qui d'autre sait que faire?

On nous dit que ce koan marque les débuts du bouddhisme Zen. Les érudits en doutent et débattent la question. Quoiqu'il en soit, même si du point de vue historique ce n'est pas le début du Zen, d'un point de vue plus fondamental ce l'est sûrement.

Le Bouddha devait être un homme doué de beaucoup de charisme et attirer une grande foule autour de lui partout où il allait. Les prêcheurs itinérants formaient un élément essentiel du paysage social à cette époque; ils prenaient la place que prend la télévision aujourd'hui, transmettant les nouvelles et l'information et offrant une certaine forme de divertissement. L'arrivée de l'un d'entre eux dans une ville était comme l'apparition d'une star du hit-parade de nos jours. On peut donc facilement imaginer le genre d'excitation que le Bouddha pouvait provoquer. Les gens se déplaçaient probablement des kilomètres à la ronde pour venir l'entendre. On peut voir la foule se rassembler, des gens partis depuis la matin très tôt, apportant de la nourriture, se cherchant une place confortable à l'abri du soleil, des gens accompagnés de leurs enfants, des femmes allaitant leurs bébés. On peut imaginer l'excitation, le brouhaha, la tension qui montait au fur et à mesure que le moment de la rencontre avec ce grand maître célèbre s'approchait.

On peut voir le Bouddha, probablement assis sur un siège surélevé préparé par un dignitaire local, entouré de sa suite et de ses disciples, et peut-être de gens qui lui apportent des fleurs en hommage. Et tout à coup tout se calme, le silence se fait, même les chiens cessent de japper. Tous attendent que le grand homme commence son discours.

Et le Bouddha tient seulement une fleur.

Voyez-vous la scène? Les gens regardent la fleur, regardent le Bouddha, attendent. Ensuite, curieux de leurs réactions, ils jettent un regard furtif vers leurs voisins. Le regard de nouveau tourné vers la fleur, ils se demandent ce qui se passe au juste. Tous, excepté un seul, Mahākāshyapa. Il sourit.

Au Centre Zen de Montréal nous offrons des cours aux débutants pour les aider à amorcer leur pratique. Les cours se tiennent quatre mercredi soirs d'affilée, et à la fin de chaque cours je donne à mes élèves un petit exercice à faire durant la semaine pour les aider à rester attentifs. Au début du cours suivant, nous discutons sur ce qu'ils ont découvert durant la semaine en faisant l'exercice. Un de ces exercices est introduit par ce koan. Je le raconte au groupe et je dis : "Si vous voulez voir dans ce koan vous devez voir dans le sourire de Mahākāshyapa. La seule façon de le faire est de *devenir* Mahākāshyapa. Donc, durant la prochaine semaine, je voudrais que vous laissiez le sourire de Mahākāshyapa apparaître sur vos lèvres et dans votre coeur. Mais, laissez-moi vous avertir, il y a plusieurs sortes de sourire. Je ne vous demande surtout pas d'afficher le sourire "Pepsodent". Quel sourire avait Mahākāshyapa?"

Une des choses dont nous discutons c'est, bien entendu, des différentes sortes de sourire. La première distinction évidente est celle qui se fait entre les sourires sincères et les non sincères. Mais on peut aussi distinguer d'autres façons d'envisager les sourires. Pour les aider à se faire une idée d'une de celles-là, je demande à mes élèves de s'imaginer qu'ils sont dans la salle des arrivées d'un aéroport. Disséminés un peu partout, de petits groupes de gens vont et viennent en attendant d'accueillir les voyageurs. Là, on voit un homme seul qui fait les cent pas, regarde attentivement la porte à chaque fois qu'elle s'ouvre, et se réabsorbe ensuite dans sa marche, le regard fixé au sol. La porte s'ouvre encore et l'homme regarde. Un large sourire illumine soudainement son visage, il se précipite les bras tendus vers une personne qui arrive, l'embrasse et la serre dans ses bras. Cette étreinte est une extension du sourire, elle lui donne une autre dimension. Embrasser quelque chose, c'est faire un avec cette chose. On le voit très bien à Noël, par exemple, lorsqu'on donne un jouet à un enfant et qu'il le prend et le serre dans ses bras, un sourire resplendissant sur le visage.

Cette unité est unité avec ce qui est extérieur. Dans un autre type de sourire, l'unité est unité intérieure. Par exemple, vous donnez un test écrit à un groupe d'enfants. Ils sont assis, froncent les sourcils, se regardent furtivement, bougent,



soupirent et, tout à coup, vous en voyez un qui sourit. Vous savez qu'il a trouvé la solution. C'est un sourire de compréhension et de satisfaction. Avant ce moment, il était inquiet, tendu et agité. Avec la compréhension, l'unité s'est refaite.

Le premier type de sourire a son double aberrant : le sourire du vendeur de voitures d'occasion. Comme le dit Hamlet : "Un homme peut sourire, sourire, sourire et être aussi un infâme scélérat!" Nous avons appris à utiliser le sourire, à le faire travailler pour nous. Nous l'avons commercialisé. Le deuxième type de sourire a lui aussi son frère répugnant. C'est le sourire de supériorité, le sourire sardonique, celui qui nous coupe des autres, qui fait de nous une île déserte.

Le sourire de Mahākāshyapa, de quel type est-il? Est-ce un sourire de communication, un sourire avec lequel on embrasse ceux qui sont présents, on fait l'unité avec le monde extérieur? Ou est-ce un sourire de compréhension : "Je l'ai eu!" On pourrait croire qu'en portant le regard vers l'intérieur et vers l'extérieur nous avons fait le tour des possibilités. Si ce n'est pas l'un, ce doit être l'autre. Mais il y a un troisième type de sourire possible : le sourire de Mahākāshyapa. Quel type de sourire peut-il bien être?

Je me souviens d'un jour où je revenais chez-moi en métro. Le wagon était passablement plein et c'était à cette heure de l'après-midi où tous les gens ont l'air las; une atmosphère terne, pesante et irréelle s'était abattue sur nous tous. Chaque passager était en contact intime avec les autres, mais évitait soigneusement tout contact visuel et évitait donc toute reconnaissance de la présence des autres.

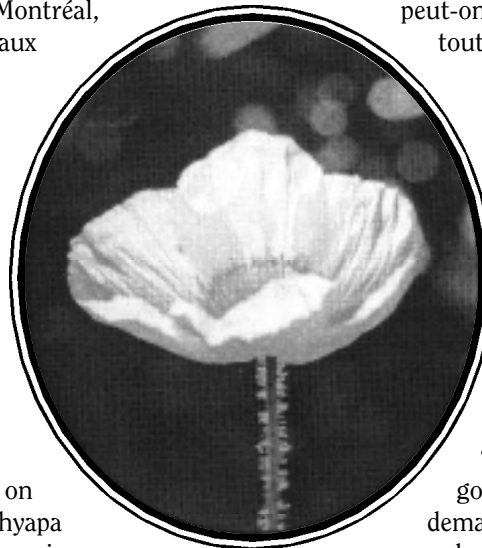
Il y avait un tout petit enfant noir dans le wagon, un petit enfant de deux ans environ. Il trônait dans sa poussette, le dos droit, la tête haute. Et tout à coup, avec ses grands yeux écarquillés, il jeta un regard circulaire autour de lui et il sourit. Alors l'inattendu, pour ne pas dire l'impossible, se produisit. Nous avons tous souri. Non seulement avons-nous souri avec le bébé mais, et ceci se passe dans le métro de Montréal, nous nous sommes souri les uns aux autres! Le sourire s'est propagé partout dans le wagon, léger comme un papillon. Les gens se sont regardés dans les yeux et ont souri. Ce qui fut aussi très surprenant, c'est que lorsque le métro s'est arrêté à la station suivante, les gens qui entraient dans le wagon souriaient aussi et qu'ils pouvaient difficilement savoir à quoi ou pourquoi ils souriaient. On pourrait dire que quand l'enfant a souri, le monde entier a souri. De la même façon, on pourrait dire que quand Mahākāshyapa a souri, non seulement la fleur a souri, mais le monde entier était une fleur souriante.

C'est à travers le sourire que la lumière de l'amour, l'Un, transparait. On parle de quelqu'un dont le visage rayonne de bonheur, d'un sourire qui illumine un visage, on dit qu'il a le visage radieux ou resplendissant pour dire qu'il sourit. Dans le livre de l'Exode, lorsque Moïse descendit de la montagne de Sinai après sa rencontre avec l'Un, il est écrit : "Les fils d'Israël voyaient la face de Moïse, il voyaient que la peau de son visage rayonnait." Cette lumière est dans tous les sourires. Mais la lumière de l'unité dans le sourire que nous dirigeons vers les autres et la lumière de l'unité dans le sourire de la compréhension est réfléchi par la situation dans

laquelle elle se trouve. Avec Mahākāshyapa, la lumière n'est pas réfléchi, elle émane directement de la source. Comme le petit enfant, il sourit, tout simplement. Si on peut sourire avec Mahākāshyapa, on peut sourire comme Mahākāshyapa, on ne sourit pas à quelque chose ou à cause de quelque chose. C'est une non-obstruction qui est transmise de coeur à coeur. L'esprit profond du Nirvāna, l'enseignement exquis de la forme sans forme, la porte subtile du Dharma sont tous dans le sourire.



Mais quel type de sourire est-ce? Le même sourire se retrouve dans l'ironie de Mumon quand il traite le Bouddha de faiseur de boniments vendant de la viande de chien au lieu de la tête de mouton. Au lieu de servir aux gens un savoureux morceau d'éloquence, il a tenu une fleur seule. Mais quelle nourriture peut-on donner à des gens qui ont déjà tout à satiété?



Avant de quitter ce koan, demandons-nous encore ce qui a été transmis exactement. Un gouverneur demanda au maître Ungo : "Il est dit que le Bienheureux transmis un message secret en tenant la fleur et que Kāshyapa en souriant ne l'a pas caché. Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire?" "Gouverneur!", s'écria Ungo. "Oui, maître", répondit le gouverneur. "Avez-vous compris?" demanda Ungo. Le gouverneur répondit non, alors Ungo lui dit : "Si vous ne comprenez pas, cela montre que le Bienheureux a transmis un message secret. Si vous comprenez, cela veut dire que Kāshyapa ne l'a pas caché."

Dogen a écrit : "Chaque pays possède la vraie fleur : la pure et belle vérité. Même si cette vérité regorge de paix et de tranquillité, une personne ordinaire ne peut pas le comprendre." Il a dit aussi : "La vraie fleur montre la vérité en même temps que la vérité montre la vraie fleur." ❀

Four Magazine Resources

Most of us read as part of our practice, using the experiences of others as a reminder to practice or as guidance along the way. Besides *Zen Gong*, several other magazines have been useful to this writer: *Zen Bow*, *Blind Donkey*, *Tricycle* and *Parabola*.

Zen Bow is the quarterly publication of the Rochester Zen Center, which is part of our own lineage and similar in outlook to the Montreal Zen Center. Subtle differences in practice are evident in the articles but none strong enough to cause a barrier. The format is similar to *Zen Gong*'s. It is interesting to read the essays by students, just as it is helpful to read those by our own sangha in *Zen Gong*.

One difference between *Zen Gong* and *Zen Bow* is that the Rochester publication focuses on a theme each issue. Themes have included male and female ways of practice, sesshin, death, animals, student and teacher. The upcoming issues will be "Racism and the Dharma" and "Lightness". Though there are some disadvantages to a thematic approach, it allows the thoughts of a number of practitioners on the same issue to be explored at the same time and the reader can see the variety of people's experience.

Also, at times interest in a particular aspect of practice may resurface for the reader and then it is nice to pull out an issue relating to it. *Zen Bow* subscriptions are \$12 U.S. a year (4 issues) or \$20 for two years. There may be a charge for Canadian mailing. Write to *Zen Bow* Subscriptions Desk/Rochester Zen Center/7 Arnold Park/Rochester, NY 14607/ USA.

Another practitioner - based magazine is *Blind Donkey*, sponsored by the Diamond Sangha, Honolulu, a residential center associated with Robert Aitken, also in the Harada - Yasutani line. The title refers to the dying words of Rinzai to his disciple Sansho: "Who would suppose that the essence of my true dharma would be destroyed by this blind donkey?" The essays by Robert Aitken bring out ideas

useful to practice, and those by his students are strong and varied. The Diamond Sangha is well established, and its practitioners reveal a wealth of experience. The magazine is in its fifteenth year.

Looking in an older copy, I found two essays by Robert Aitken, one on morality and emptiness, the other an explanation of the pure Viharas, attitudes of "unconstrained" kindness, compassion, delight in the joy of others and equanimity. Articles by practitioners and priests concerned right livelihood, women and Buddhism, Zen from Jewish background and beginning to teach. *Blind Donkey* is especially rich in poetry and creative productions such as fables.

Members of the Diamond Sangha and the greater group of Aitken's students include many poets, even well-known ones like Gary Snyder and W.S.Merwin. Occasionally *Blind Donkey* produces an issue totally devoted to poetry. Many issues of the quarterly are thematic. To subscribe, write to *Blind Donkey*/ 2119 Kaloa Way/Honolulu, ...96822/USA. Cost is \$16 (\$24 international, including Canadian) in U.S. dollars.

A third Buddhist magazine is *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*. *Tricycle*, in its third year, is a large quarterly (over 100 pages), slickly produced for a mass audience, which covers Buddhism in the broad spectrum. Its articles are useful in developing a feel for the variety of Buddhist practices in North America and for the larger Buddhist sangha that includes all these groups. Articles or survey responses reflect Tibetan and Vipassana practices as frequently as Zen. *Tricycle* also gives some information on ethnic Buddhist groups and sects like Nichiren Shoshu but considerably less.

Tricycle almost always has one or two useful in-depth articles; a recent series in which teachers from a variety of traditions comment on key concepts like compassion comes to mind. Some articles are helpful in a practical way, such as recent one on Buddhism in the electronic networks, complete with e-mail addresses for a number of Buddhists electronic

discussion lists and networks like Tiger Team. Some covers are very beautiful, worth framing. Over time, however, there has been a change in the tone of the magazine. It seems shallower, with more articles which gossip about controversies or focus on Buddhist celebrities. Other articles are helpful, however. You may want to look at a copy and decide for yourself. To subscribe, write *Tricycle*/163 West 22nd St./New York, Ny 1011/USA. Subscriptions are \$20 (U.S) per year with an additional \$5 for international surface mail.

The last magazine is further afield. Dedicated to an exploration of the sacred, *Parabola: The Magazine of Myth and Tradition*, draws from many spiritual traditions in its exploration of “universal human themes”. Some issues more oriented than others to mythology or to psychological traditions like the Jungian but all relate to the sacred. The magazine reflects the tradition Joseph Campbell was a part of, a tradition which looks at the myths and teachings of many cultures to see what we can learn from them. There is no timeliness to the issues, and a five year old issue reads as if it were current.

Each issue presents material on a basic theme: inner alchemy, animals, theft, music sound silence, questions, the tree of life, androgyny. The magazine combines reflective essays, transcribed talks, parables and tales, interviews, articles on the beliefs of various groups, implications of traditional texts (Jonah, The Ten Oxherding Pictures). The magazine is helpful if the reader want enrichment or a jolt from seeing how other traditions approach basic questions which we may consider our own province.

Contributors or sources excerpted are strong and varied and include such people as Suyyed Hossein Nasr, Thich Nhat Hanh, Robert Aitken, Elie Wiesel, P.L. Travers and Isaac Singer. Back issues can be purchased and might be a useful alternative to subscription because of their thematic focus. If you have a special interest such as dance or architecture,

you will find issues devoted to these themes. To subscribe, write *Parabola*/Subscription Dept./656 Broadway/New York NY 10012-9824. Cost is \$20 (U.S) for one year for 4 issues. Add \$6 a year for surface mail outside the U.S.

At one time or another each of these magazines has been helpful to me. There is a place for reading in practice. For me the biggest gain from these magazines is the sense of being part of a much bigger Buddhist sangha than is visible. Also there are times when I feel like relaxing in a quiet way but would rather be reminded of practice than lose myself in a novel. When you find yourself in such a mood, try one of these magazines. ☸



Photo Christine Back

Having To Is Freedom

The new headmaster of my old prep school was on the phone from California accepting my suggestion that I come back and begin research on a history of the school and biography of its founder, Paul Squibb. In the 20s, Paul had sailed a 28-foot yawl from New England through the Caribbean, spent three years exploring of the Colombian jungle, contracted malaria, and gone on to a sister's home in Pasadena to recover. To support himself, he took teaching jobs at several of the "best," which is to say expensive, boarding schools and, being appalled by the "slackness" and waste, decided in 1932 to open a high-quality low-cost school devoted to simplicity and self-reliance. For its location he found a remote 3,000-acre stretch of chaparral bordering on the Los Padres National Forest, northeast of Santa Barbara, in one of California's "midland" counties.

An important element of Midland School's economy is the absence of maintenance staff; the kids do all the work, except for cooking. For most parents, this is a bargain: tuition varies with income and those who can are expected to contribute to scholarships for children whose parents couldn't otherwise afford a boarding school. I'd long felt that someone should write a book about the school and especially its founder — one of the most decent and thoughtful educators I've known, and certainly the most felicitously eccentric Episcopalian — before all of us who knew him are extinct.

On the phone the headmaster seemed enthusiastic but oddly diffident. "There's just one thing," he said. "We've got no place to put you except the old infirmary. I'm afraid there'll be some... discomfort...." He paused while I wondered what that could mean. "But then, you're a Midland boy, you won't mind that." "Won't mind" was perhaps an exaggeration, but I scarcely expected luxury. "Comfort," as Paul Squibb used to explain to doting and doubtful parents, "is not a requirement for doing good work." There was no electricity at the school

when I was there in the early forties; meals for about 80 of us, including faculty families, were cooked on a stove fueled with wood we sawed, chopped, and transported from windfalls in nearby canyons. Most of the wood not needed for cooking was used to heat water for showers. But our round-wick kerosene lamps took the edge of the chill (morning temperatures in inland California valleys can hover around freezing for much of the year). Since the installation of electric lights in 1947, the cabins would be marginally more uncomfortable, but I supposed my Canadian clothing would compensate for that.

Cold, however, was not what was giving the headmaster pause. What he could not bring himself to explain turned out to be a bizarre Orwellian torture that paralysed me with panic and shook the foundations of my inchoate, one-year-old Zen practice.

As the headmaster had suggested, I arrived in time for Alumni Weekend in May, when the kids were away on Spring Break. The grassy valley, stretching out to the foot of the mountains between gently rolling hills, was still green from late rains, and even prettier than I remembered. Except for one or two school buildings erected in exaggerated obedience to a new generation of county bureaucrats bent on preventing students from living and working, as they had for generations, in simple board-and-batten shacks they built themselves. The "old infirmary" — the very concept of which was new to me; we'd had a one-room "Pest House" where the headmaster's wife would appear with jovial infrequency bearing fruit juice until the patient got hungry enough to start doing his work again — had been constructed in such an up-to-code way that its plumbing system required more elaborate and esoteric maintenance than students or faculty could give. After providing a temporary shelter for girls during the transition to coeducation in the late 70s, it

had been more or less abandoned, and was used now, I gathered, for the storage of musical instruments. There were drums and electric guitars and amplifiers in the room next to mine.

The class of '44 arrived, reminisced, and departed, and I nestled into a bucolic and rather monastic life of making notes on the thousands of documents stored in the archives, located in what used to be the kitchen of the Main House, about a hundred yards from the infirmary. And then the kids came back. I was in my room, just settling into my evening zazen, perched on a folding chair I'd found down the hall, beginning to locate the flow of breath to my hara, when something took the top of my head off. The first thing you notice about pan-systemic shock is that it seems to be happening in the past, subtracting your present and you with it.

I was being attacked, I finally understood, by noise. Not just *a* noise, but all noise from everywhere, funnelled through the drums and guitar amps in the next room and focussed on my wall, which was bowing and blurring with each concussion. In addition to being unnaturally loud it was unnaturally unmusical: the guitars were out of tune not only with each other but with themselves.

I threw back the wooden bolt on the door and staggered into the night. Alarmed coyotes were yelping in the pasture across the creek. It was beginning to rain. I made my way to the archive and waited. The mossy granite smell of the rain reminded me of my first winter here, when the county had been unable to clear a needed firebreak and we'd spent three afternoons a week for three months up in the hills, working alongside Paul Squibb, in the bitter drizzle, pulling up manzanita bushes with our bare hands (and felt prouder of that than of winning the league championship in soccer).

Always before when crises like this had

occurred I had been able either to force my new neighbours to modify their behaviours or, if that didn't work, simply go away, to some other neighbourhood or town or country. But I couldn't tell these kids to be quiet; it was their school. Nor could I leave. I was determined to do my job. And I wasn't about to admit to the headmaster or myself that I couldn't do it because of "discomfort." It would have been a betrayal of the very principles I was here to celebrate.

After about twenty minutes, just before last bell, the noise came to a ragged, ominous halt. I would be safe now until morning. I went back to my room and lay down on the futon under some blankets I'd found in the "new" infirmary on the other side of the Lower Yard. Before going to sleep I read some more of a biography of Paul's grandfather, E.R. Squibb, a naval doctor who'd founded a pharmaceutical lab to produce badly needed pure drugs at low cost for U.S. servicemen, and had refused to accept patents on any of the manufacturing processes he invented, publishing details freely both at home and abroad. After I turned out the light I listened to a taped teisho, as I often do before, during, and after falling asleep.

I got up early for my morning zazen. So did the drummer. I was amazed he could play in this cold. Then the guitars plugged in and together they detonated my day. I started toward the door and stopped. What would I find on the other side? Just a repetition of this same thing, over and over, like the last scene in "Dead of Night," which turns into the first scene and the movie never ends. But I had to go somewhere; here in my room the percussive effect of the sound waves breaking on my skin and ear drums was physically disorienting. I went out into the hall and around next door to the toilet, folded the seat down and sat. My heart was pounding, adrenalin pumping, pulse racing; but the hairs on my body were no longer flattening with each bass note.

At my age, in this sort of crisis, you tend to assume that if there is a solution, you already know it and have only forgotten (an idea Plato used to comfort himself with) — otherwise you couldn't have lasted this long. So the best thing to do is wait. Until you remember.

I sat there trying to clear my mind so my memory would come back. Which reminded me of something I'd read, or maybe heard, about problems in practice being overcome by practice. I also remembered hearing that people whose practice has matured are not bothered by any sort of noise, not because they can shut it out but because they can take it in, accept it. At any other time this would have seemed far beyond my capabilities. But now everything else was too. Hesitantly, I moved up to the front of the toilet seat, flattened both feet on the concrete, curved my back straight, apposed my thumbs, and began to follow my breath.

The noise was stabbing at my nerves. I decided to let it do that. But also began to invite it into my breathing. It was hard work. Perspiration dripped off my ears. There was a long stretch when I wasn't there. And then it was all right. My heart and respiration had slowed. Breath flowed freely. I listened for the noise and it was there with me, sort of under me, hardly separate. I went back to just following my breath. Ordinary zazen.

I had no more trouble with noise during the six weeks the band continued its eruptions (practicing, I was told, for graduation), and have none since. Hard rock, howling dogs, crying babies and other aversive auditory stimuli which had routinely produced in me a response that now seems near dementia, are only almost welcome reminders to follow my breath. I am sorry that the dogs and babies and everyone's aesthetic sensibilities have to suffer, but that's a condition of being alive. Not something I can change (or even imagine being otherwise).

I did try to make friends with the drummer so that I could explain the reciprocal relation between *forte* and *pianissimo*, but he became disarmingly polite and helpful, as Midland boys are taught to do with strangers who appear on campus.

Graduation ceremonies came (the unamplified part revealing the band members to be well-spoken and even reflective) and the parents took the kids away. It was several months later, when I'd finished my work at the school and was travelling around the San Francisco Bay area interviewing alumni and board members, that I began to understand, or at least interpret, what had happened in my practice. Riding the Greyhound bus between Palo Alto, San Rafael, Inverness, and Napa, I listened to the three teishos I had brought, one after the other. Two were on commentaries from Nisargadatta and one on Ummon's "Medicine and Sickness." I thought I'd just listen to each one all the way through, while I was awake, and then read the *New York Review*. But I discovered that I was hearing something new and different each time I listened to each teisho. So I went on listening to them, one after another.

About the third time through, "Medicine and Sickness" began to ring a gong. "Medicine and sickness cure each other... The whole world is medicine... Your enemy is your friend." It described my experience exactly. The medicine of my practice had cured my sickness about noise at the same time that the medicine of the noise was curing a sickness or fragility in my practice. The whole world is noise. The noisemakers are my friends. I didn't suppose, just because I'd found a practical application for one segment of one circle of its constellation of meaning, that I had in some sense "understood" the koan. But it did take a while to get over feeling special for understanding that I hadn't understood it. Now, if I can only figure out what to do with the silence... ❀

Un bout de chemin avec Maître Eckhart

J'ai gardé des mes années d'enfance, que très peu de souvenirs. Des impressions, des images et la fraîcheur de certaines intuitions qui me sont encore présentes à l'esprit, comme on garde en mémoire l'odeur des tilleuls au printemps. Mon éducation a été formelle, religieuse à souhait. Aujourd'hui encore, j'entends l'écho de bribes d'oraisons latines dont la signification réelle semblait, autant alors que maintenant, attachée davantage au caractère sacré des formules qu'à leurs sens littéral. Des livres à caractère religieux ont trainé sur les tables de notre maison et il m'est arrivé, même lorsque l'inspiration me venait davantage de Jim Morrison que de ces lectures, d'y cueillir des moments de grand calme et d'angoisse. Calme en ceci que certains de ces écrits d'une profonde sérénité, touchaient à une vérité première, évidente presque, mais angoisse à la fois provoquée par le caractère inatteignable de cette vérité, inatteignable par les voies habituelles de la raison.

Je veux partager un peu de cette réflexion sur quelques unes de ces lectures en m'arrêtant d'abord à Eckhart. Mais n'étant ni spécialiste, ni tenté d'orienter la lecture d'autres personnes, encore moins de "récupérer" un auteur en fonction d'une tradition qui n'est pas la sienne, mon but est d'encourager la lecture de Maître Eckhart et non d'expliquer ou de discuter d'interprétations diverses. Il est sans doute important de commencer par parler d'une façon de lire de tels auteurs puisqu'ils ne se livrent pas nécessairement avec toute la limpidité que l'on voudrait. J'offrirai ensuite une courte note sur la vie de Maître Eckhart. Enfin, deux textes de Eckhart nous permettront d'effleurer sa réflexion. D'abord pour nous rappeler ce qu'est la voie contemplative, puis ce qu'elle requiert comme engagement.

On a tendance, en bon sceptique averti, d'aborder de tels textes du bout des lèvres, sans y mordre vraiment, de peur de se laisser "embarquer"

par la tradition dans laquelle ils s'inscrivent. Dépaysement, vocabulaire de sacristie, ton exalté, on ne se sent pas chez soi. Ainsi en est-il des citations du Coran chez Rumi, des exercices de mortifications chez certains mystiques chrétiens, ou de simples mots comme la *grâce*, *l'éternité*, *le royaume du ciel*, *la volonté* ou *l'essence divine* chez Eckhart. Pourtant, s'attacher à de telles appréhensions nous fait manquer la beauté du texte dont la vérité n'émerge pas des mots, des images, des concepts eux-mêmes. Nous devons plutôt chercher à saisir ce vers quoi ces textes pointent plus que l'expression elle-même, un peu comme dans notre tradition Zen, on rappelle de ne pas confondre le doigt qui pointe vers la lune avec la lune elle-même.

Les écrits des grands mystiques expriment, par leur forme, une tension remarquable, émouvante. Dans plusieurs des textes d'Ibn 'Arabi ou de Rumi, de Saint Jean de la Croix ou de Eckhart, l'abstraction est menée à un tel degré qu'elle touche au coeur, à la source de tout ce qui est, au point où on revient au concret, où l'abstraction a été poussée à sa limite. L'imagerie (religieuse, animale, ou même érotique) fait appel au coeur plus qu'à l'imaginaire, à une tradition qui raccroche le discours à des balises claires quoiqu'en apparence arbitraires. Or, c'est là la grandeur et la misère de la langue d'être issue d'une époque, d'une culture, de conditions que même par l'imaginaire, on ne peut aspirer à comprendre. C'est précisément de cet arbitraire qu'il faut s'affranchir. Eckhart transcende ces structures de l'arbitraire pour montrer une voie. Nous ne devons pas considérer ces structures pour autres choses que ce qu'elles sont en réalité, soit des moyens d'articuler la réflexion, des moyens transparents qui n'ont en eux-mêmes aucune signification.

Je relis Eckhart aujourd'hui moins tenté de comprendre par le menu détail, gardant à l'esprit l'exhortation de monsieur Low qui nous invite à nous laisser pénétrer par le texte (que ce soit les quatorze

rappels ou un teisho) pour être entier, disponible face à la parole plutôt que sur nos gardes pour discuter, décortiquer, expliquer. Il me semble que notre pratique se nourrit de la pratique elle-même, plus que de sources extérieures. Nous puisons cependant de telles lectures un encadrement, un encouragement, une certaine direction aussi pour notre pratique.

Deux textes de Maître Eckhart m'ont paru de plus en plus familiers, à mesure que ma pratique gagnait en ferveur. D'abord son *Instruction pour la vie contemplative*¹ (pp.30 à 35) puis son *traité Du Détachement* (pp.19 à 29).

La voie de Eckhart en est une qui favorise la connaissance et en ce sens est appelée, dans certains recueils, voie gnostique. Il me semble cependant que cette voie fasse davantage appel à l'importance de cultiver la veille comme source de connaissance plutôt que sur une architecture comparable à celle que nous offre Saint Thomas d'Aquin dans la *Somme théologique*.

L'instruction pour la vie contemplative nous remet dans cet esprit de quête de la connaissance qui me rappelle notre propre démarche visant à trouver en soi "la vérité originelle", notre vraie nature:

L'homme qui est touché par l'action de la première cause, il n'a pas besoin de chercher conseil auprès de l'intelligence humaine; il doit suivre ce qui est au-dessus de toute intelligence, car il est touché par la vérité originelle, la vérité cachée.

Or qu'en est-il de ce que Eckhart appelle "la contemplation du merveilleux miroir divin" - expression qui rappelle le poème de Huineng²? Une condition est nécessaire qui ne peut être fournie que par nous-même: c'est d'avoir un "coeur exempt de souci". En allant encore au-delà du vocabulaire issu de la scholastique ainsi qu'aux allusions aux textes sacrés, nous retrouvons les conditions qui sont celles

Qui est Maître Eckhart?

Né au 13^{ème} siècle (vers 1260 dit-on) il fut admis au couvent des Dominicains d'Erfurt en Thuringe ou il aurait reçu une formation "classique" en lettres latines. Sa véritable formation lui a sans doute été donnée chez les Dominicains de Cologne. On peut en saisir l'importance lorsque que l'on comprend que Eckhart a étudié là où enseignait, à la fin de sa vie, Albert le Grand qui avait eu Thomas d'Aquin comme étudiant à Paris. Par la suite, reconnu d'évidence pour son envergure, il se retrouve à Paris où les Dominicains possèdent deux chaires. Il y fut nommé Maître de théologie au début du 14^{ème} siècle et y fit quelques séjours entrecoupés, comme le voulait la pratique d'alors, avec des responsabilités telles le supériorat de sa communauté pour certaines provinces d'Allemagne.

Le centre de l'effervescence intellectuelle était à cette époque l'Université de Paris. Eckhart dès ses débuts y fut reconnu pour la force de son enseignement qui souvent bousculait l'orthodoxie cléricale du temps. De retour en Allemagne en 1312, après plusieurs séjours à Paris, on lui confia un certain nombre de fonctions tant administratives que d'enseignement à Strasbourg et à Cologne.

La renommée de ses sermons va s'accroissant et l'enthousiasme de ses fidèles a sans doute participé à interpréter certains de ses discours comme allant à l'encontre des doctrines orthodoxes. Les détracteurs d'Eckhart obtinrent du Pape Jean XXII que l'on enquête sur ses écrits mais cet examen ne fit que confirmer la conformité de sa pensée avec la doctrine officielle. Néanmoins, l'année suivante (1326) on lui intenta un procès en inquisition et malgré un appel au Pape (refusé en 1327) par lequel il fait valoir son orthodoxie et sa volonté de se conformer aux préceptes essentiels, le Pape condamne 17 de ses sentences (1329). Il semble que Maître Eckhart soit déjà mort au moment de la publication de cette condamnation; aucune trace de lui n'a été relevée après que son appel au Pape ait été rejeté quelques années plus tôt.

Maître Eckhart a vécu à un moment de changement réel où l'ordre établi et les doctrines officielles furent remis en question. Un peu plus d'un siècle plus tôt, avec les percées arabes en terre chrétienne, en Andalousie, et de fait jusqu'en Occitanie, l'occident découvrait un système de pensée et une science (grecs et arabes) qui influencèrent de façon déterminante l'évolution des activités scientifiques, artistiques, philosophiques et religieuses, entre autres la scholastique développée par Albert le Grand et Thomas d'Aquin. L'influence de ces mouvements sur la pensée universitaire ne pouvait que rendre plus nerveuse une lignée de papes dont la suprémacie était remise en question. Il en découle que tout mouvement populaire derrière une pensée novatrice et libre (puisque dans le débat universitaire Maître Eckhart affichait une grande indépendance) devient source d'inquiétude pour l'ordre établi et fatalement, raison suffisante d'intervention.

Malgré une certaine notoriété acquise de son vivant, et la diffusion limitée des écrits de Maître Eckhart après sa mort, il fallut attendre la fin du 19^{ème} et début du 20^{ème} siècle pour que ses sermons et traités ne soient publiés et plus largement diffusés.

du zazen: “un lieu solitaire [...] le corps dégagé de toute occupation [...] l’homme ne peut éprouver sa pureté que par le silence”.

Si le message est prometteur, il n’en est pas moins ancré dans la réalité: le ton n’est ni exhalté, ni méprisant à l’endroit des activités humaines. Pourtant l’effort est nécessaire à chaque instant pour éviter de tomber dans la facilité de se perdre à s’occuper l’esprit de tout ce qui l’attire naturellement. Il ne suffit pas d’une “abnégation de soi-même” mais bien d’aller vers “la liberté plus haute: ne tenir à rien de ce qui a un nom, ni ceci à elle”. Et citant Saint Bernard, Maître Eckhart rappelle qu’il “ne sait rien qui prépare si bien au royaume du ciel que de ne pas avoir sa patrie parmi les choses extérieures”.

Or comment ne pas entendre avec toute l’énergie possible, la plus poignante des exhortations en fin de journée, un cinquième jour de sesshin, pour aller plus loin avec la pratique, dans une confiance sans limite: “celui qui veut posséder la vie contemplative, il doit être enflammé dans le Saint-Esprit par l’amour le plus brûlant”. Encore ici, il importe peu que ce soit le Saint-Esprit ou quelqu’autre charnière de la structure religieuse, mais bien que l’on se laisse guider par la force même de l’exhortation, par sa direction et son objet:

Devant ces merveilles on doit rester interdit, car l’intelligence ne peut tenter de les expliquer. Qui veut néanmoins scruter la merveille de Dieu, il tire facilement sa science - de lui-même!

La réflexion de Maître Eckhart sur la contemplation rappelle singulièrement celle que nous livre Nisargadatta sur la méditation: “C’est dans la mesure où l’homme se connaît lui-même qu’il peut en venir à la connaissance de Dieu” de dire Eckhart. Doit-on se surprendre que Nisargadatta, nourri à une source semblable, nous rappelle que:

Le premier but de la méditation est de devenir conscient de notre vie intérieure et de nous la rendre familière. Le but ultime est d’atteindre la source de la vie et de la conscience.

Tout dans cette réflexion sur la voie contemplative pointe vers la libération des entraves qui restreignent notre habileté à nous pencher sur notre compréhension de la réalité et donc sur notre véritable nature, ou la nature originale, c’est à dire inaltérée.

Cet “affranchissement de toute mobilité” dont Eckhart nous parle n’est pas un état de passivité mais bien l’effort de tous les instants que requiert le détachement. Et c’est pourquoi ce deuxième texte (*Du Détachement*) sur lequel je penche ma réflexion trouve à m’émouvoir:

... si cette contemplation t’est retirée, et si tu es un homme bon (sic) cela doit t’être comme si on te prenait ta béatitude éternelle. Alors reviens-y bientôt pour qu’elle [la contemplation] redevienne tienne; et tiens-toi toujours fermement sur tes gardes...

Écrit en Allemand, destiné sans doute à un auditoire plus large que son nombre de sermons et écrits en latin sur certains passages des Évangiles, le traité *Du Détachement* se termine sur ces lignes: “et tiens-toi toujours fermement sur tes gardes et que ce soit là-haut, dans la mesure où c’est possible, que tu aies ton but et ton refuge”.

L’image de la contemplation coupée du monde n’a rien à voir avec ce que Maître Eckhart nous offre: il se fonde sur la personne même du Christ où il y avait un homme extérieur autant qu’un homme intérieur exprimant les choses extérieures du point de vue de l’homme extérieur “et ainsi l’homme intérieur persistait en un détachement impassible”. Aussi est-ce dans cette perspective que se développe l’inévitable tension source de cette nuit obscure dont parle Saint-Jean de la Croix. “Dépouillez-vous donc,

de dire le Christ à ses disciples, de tout ce qui est image et unissez-vous à l'essence sans image et sans forme". Or cette tension constante entre le besoin de combler "toute joie corporelle ou charnelle" et la nécessité de se "rendre réceptif" est source de souffrance et demande un choix de chaque instant, une détermination inébranlable:

Le vrai détachement signifie que l'esprit se tient impassible dans tout ce qui lui arrive, que ce soit agréable ou douloureux, un honneur ou une honte, comme une montagne se tient impassible sous un vent léger. [...] Tiens-le toi pour dit: être vide de tout le créé, cela veut dire être plein de Dieu, et être rempli du créé, cela veut dire être vide de Dieu.

Rien de cela ne vient gratuitement, ne nous est donné. "Le coursier le plus rapide qui vous porte vers la perfection est la souffrance."

Mais cette réflexion sur le détachement en lui-même, Maître Eckhart l'illustre de façon percutante en précisant les motifs pour lesquels le détachement constitue pour lui la première des vertus, au-dessus de l'amour, de l'humilité et de la compassion. Au départ, ce raisonnement peut laisser sceptique (la compassion n'est-elle pas l'expression de ceux et celles qui font ce vœu merveilleux: Tous les êtres innombrables, je fais vœu de libérer.)

Ici encore, Eckhart met en avant de tout la pratique du détachement: l'amour, l'humilité, la compassion accompagnent de façon inévitable le détachement parfait.

tout être se tient volontiers dans le lieu naturel qui lui est propre. Le lieu naturel de Dieu [...] est l'unité et la pureté, or celles-ci reposent sur le détachement. [...] le détachement m'amène à n'être plus réceptif que pour Dieu. [...] quand je considère toutes les vertus, je n'en trouve aucune qui soit aussi parfaite et qui nous fasse autant ressembler à Dieu.

Et voilà l'objectif: non pas de devenir telle personne, assumer telle position, de vouloir autre chose "qu'être un avec soi-même". Tout le cheminement revient inexorablement pour chacun et chacune, à cette aspiration ultime de "redevenir autant que possible pareil à son modèle original" qu'il s'agisse de retrouver l'union avec Dieu, dans la tradition de Maître Eckhart, ou notre visage originel dans notre tradition.

Il y a des voix que l'on ne peut étouffer. Peu important les couleurs locales, l'empreinte que le temps a laissée sur les écrits de Maître Eckhart, si on se nourrit à sa source plutôt que de s'arrêter aux détails de l'expression religieuse, l'empreinte que le temps a laissé, s'évanouit en nous engageant à aller au-delà du temps pour regarder, les yeux libres de tout filtre, de tout conditionnement, pour regarder et saisir ce que nous connaissons déjà. Comment ne pas être émerveillé par le fait qu'à des époques voisines dans le temps mais combien éloignées dans l'espace, Dogen (1200-1253), Ibn 'Arabi (mort en 1240) et Eckhart (1260-1327) pointent la lune du doigt. ❁

¹ Toutes nos citations de ces textes sont tirées de: Maître Eckhart, *Sermons et traités*, Gallimard, édition Tel, Paris, 1991, 324 pages.

² Il n'y a pas d'arbre de bodhi
Pas plus que de miroir éclatant
Puisque depuis le début, tout est vide
Où donc la poussière pourrait-elle se déposer?

The World: a Gateway

Commentaries on the *Mumonkan*

This is the title of Albert Low's new book, our very prolific teacher, which should be released in April or May. It consists of commentaries on the *Mumonkan*, the collection of koans compiled by the Zen master Mumon and first published in China in the thirteenth century. We present here the commentary of Albert Low on the first koan: Joshu's Mu. Many of us have been struggling with this koan for many years, so reading Albert's comment will help to freshen the outlook and deepen our understanding of it.

Joshu's Mu!

The Case

A monk once asked Joshu, "Does a dog have the Buddha-Nature?" Joshu answered, "Mu!"

Mumon's Comment

To practice Zen you must pass the barriers set up by the patriarchs. To know the subtlety of true awakening you must let go of your ordinary, habitual ways of thought. If you do not pass these barriers and do not let go of habitual ways of thought, you are like a ghost clinging to grasses and weeds. Now, what is the barrier of the patriarchs? It is simply "Mu!" "Mu!" is the main gate of Zen and this is why it is called the "Gateless Barrier of the Zen tradition."

If you pass through not only will you see Joshu face to face but you will also go hand in hand with the whole line of masters and be in intimate communion with them, seeing everything with the same eyes and hearing everything with the same ears. How wonderful! Who would not want to pass this barrier?

Arouse your entire body with its three hundred and sixty bones and its eighty four thousand pores; summon up a great mass of doubt and pour it into this question day and night without ceasing. Question it day and night.

Do not take it as nothingness, or as a relative no of "yes and no," "is and is not." It is like swallowing a red hot iron ball; you try to spit it out but cannot.

All the delusive and useless knowledge that you have collected up to the present — throw it away. After a period of time this striving will come to fruition naturally, spontaneously giving way to a condition of internal and external unity. You will know this, but for yourself only, like a dumb person who has had a dream.

Then suddenly it will all give way in an explosion and you will astonish the heavens and shake the earth. It will be as if you have seized the great sword of Kan-u. If you meet the Buddha you kill the Buddha; when you meet the patriarchs and masters you will kill the patriarchs and masters. On the brink of life and death you have the Great Freedom. In the four modes of existence of the six rebirths you enjoy a samadhi of innocent delight

Once more how are you concentrate on this "Mu"? Every ounce of energy you have must be expended on it; and if you do not give up on the way another Lamp of the Law will be lit.

Mumon's verse

The dog! Buddha-Nature!
The perfect manifestation, the command of truth.
If for a moment you fall into relativity,
You are dead as a doornail.

Comment

To work on this koan one must *be* the monk asking the question. So we must sure we know what kind of question he is asking? Is it about doctrine? Does the first monk want to confirm that indeed the

dog does have the Buddha Nature? Buddhist teaching is that all beings are Buddha. Is the monk concerned about the dog, or about Buddhist theories about dogs? Mumon worked on this koan for six years. He would hit his head against a pillar in the zendo, (meditation hall) when he felt drowsy or his mind was wandered too much. He and thousands upon thousands of others have struggled and wept for long hours trying to resolve the koan. It is hardly likely that he or they would have worked so hard for just a theory.

In a way this is a tragic koan calling up, as it does, the anguish of humanity's most haunting questions. Is there life after death? Is there a meaning to my life? "Am I all alone in a world that cares nothing for me?" Therefore each of us must be the monk because, at heart each of us already is the monk. We all have this feeling of vulnerability in the face of sickness, old age and death, a feeling of fundamental insecurity which, though it may be buried under work, hidden by projects and goals, ignored in the rush of existence, is never absent. In a way the whole human race is blessed and cursed at the same time. We all hunger for our true home and this hunger, if we heed it, can lead us there, but only across the desert of confusion, doubt and dismay; this is the curse, because the first thing we encounter on our way home is our own insecurity. If, however, someone is unable to heed the call, is not aware of a longing for perfection, a yearning for unconditional love, a conviction of something, some other way of being, some happiness or peace that passes all understanding, and if that person is not prepared to pay the price of wandering in the desert of insecurity and anguish, then Zen is not for him or her.

Most often, before I give this or any other breakthrough koan to students, I have them spend some time asking themselves, "What is my fundamental question, what is of utmost concern to me?" Sometimes I say, "Imagine you have the wisest person possible in front of you, Buddha, Jesus, even

God, and you have but one question you can ask. What would your question be?" Sometimes they ask, "What is the meaning of my life?" or "What is a good life?" or, more often, "Why must I and others suffer so much?" or "What is death and why do I have to die?" But I press them and say, "Is this really your question?" Very often, after some prompting they will say, "No, but it is the nearest I can get to what *is* the real question." What T S Eliot calls the overwhelming question, cannot really be put into words, it is an ache tinged with dread, a bewilderment mixed with a feeling of the injustice of the situation, a wishing, a longing, an "I don't know what."

We have to see the monk as wandering in the wilderness of doubt and confusion. He hears of a Zen master reputed to be wise and compassionate, and decides to visit him. All the monk's yearning and fears come to the surface. As a human being he is vulnerable, fragile, facing certain death at an uncertain time, threatened with sickness, and inexorably going toward old age. He has been told that all beings are Buddha, they are whole and complete, but this has no reality for him. He decides to ask the Zen master for reassurance; this will give him something to hold on to, something secure in the stormy ocean of insecurity. And so he asks whether a dog has Buddha-Nature. A dog at that time was at about the level of a rat in our own time. It was the lowest of the low. The implication is that if a dog has Buddha-Nature then I too must have Buddha-Nature. If it has Buddha-Nature then I am saved, I have a life saver to support me in the storms of life.

And Joshu says, "No!"

This koan has a counterpart in Koan no. 29 in a collection called the *Hekiganroku*. A monk asks a Zen master Daizui, "At the time of the great conflagration does 'it' go too?" Buddhist cosmology says that at the end of an eon the world is destroyed by a great conflagration and the monk is asking whether, at this time, "it," Buddha-Nature or true



Photo: Jacques Lespérance

nature is also destroyed. The master says, "Yes! It goes too." The monk doesn't quite know what to say and stammers, still hoping,

"So it will go with the rest?" And the master, without mercy, agrees, "It will be gone with the rest." Again one has to imagine the monk anxiously asking this question; better still one must *be* the monk anxiously asking this question. Does anything survive death? Is anything permanent, indestructible? We are told a human being is Buddha-Nature, or, if one prefers, a spirit. At the time of the great conflagration, at the time of Armageddon, the Buddha-Nature, the spirit, does it go too?

The master says yes! it goes too, it will go with the rest.

Most people have bouts of anxiety or depression. Some also have had an all too fleeting taste of what it means to be whole and complete, and, when faced with the confusion, conflicts and complexities of life, they have a sense of the unreality, even of the absurdity of the human condition that goes far beyond anxiety. Because of the anxiety, the unreality, the absurdity, so it is said, we all need something or someone on whom we can rely. Once upon a time it was the priest, nowadays it is the doctor or psychiatrist, or even Ann Landers. We look for someone we feel can give support, succor, and spiritual nourishment in these times of dread. The monk felt Joshu was such a one. Joshu was over eighty at the time, and from about age of eighteen had worked on himself under the guidance of Nansen, and then after Nansen's death went on pilgrimage for twenty long years. He was one of the great masters of the time. No wonder the monk turned to him, full of hope and expectation.

But then Joshu says, "Mu!"

I remember a similar occasion when I was a younger man. Troubled by the fear of death, feeling

the meaningless of my life, desperate for some help, I went to see a priest who was recommended to me by the family

doctor. I told my fears and longings to the priest and he advised me, "Young man, you are trying to find the impossible. My advice to you is to look after your wife and family, forget all about all this, get yourself a television, and live without all this worry about things no human being can ever understand. This is the sort of thing you should leave to the saints." I was crushed.

Was Joshu as lost as this priest?

Here is the bite of the koan, the contradiction. The practice of Zen is the practice of wisdom and compassion. With wisdom come responsiveness, flexibility, and sensitivity to the situation. With compassion come the need and ability to share with others in their suffering, to wish ardently to find some way to relieve others of their burden. Not only this, but Buddhist teaching is that all beings are Buddha. Thus on both accounts, as a wise and compassionate man, and as one well versed in Buddhist doctrine, why does Joshu say "No!?" This answer is like snatching a crust of bread from the grasp of a starving man. The monk, like a blind man, is feeling his way along the edge of a precipice of insecurity and Joshu whirls him around and throws him to the ground after depriving him of his last means of support. Why does Joshu do this? Why does a wise, compassionate, and knowledgeable man take away the last hope of a monk in distress?

The same question must be asked of Daizui. He must have known that Buddhist doctrine specifically states that "it" cannot be destroyed, even by the great conflagration. Furthermore in the verse about that Etcho wrote about this latter koan it is said,

Blocked by a double barrier,
The monk asked from the heart of the kalpa fire.

That the monk asked “from the heart of the kalpa fire” means he was burning in the fires of purgatory. Out of this burning came the question, “Is there something above, beyond, outside of this terrible anxiety, something that cannot be burned up in the fires of purgatory?” Why did Daizui not soothe him, not give him balm?

Mumon points to the answer when, in his commentary he warns that you must cut off ordinary ways of thought, because if you don’t “then you will be like a ghost clinging to grasses and weeds.” A ghost is without substance, the grasses and weeds are worn out phrases and beliefs. Beliefs in God, in Buddha, in an afterlife, in a heaven or pure land, as well as in nothing, annihilation, nothing after death, are just and only that, *beliefs*. The belief that we need something to hold on to when the going gets rough is itself a belief and untrue. The belief that we can ignore these questions, that we can simply get on with the business of living is also untrue. It is precisely *because* we cling to something, even if that something is negation, that the going does get rough. By clinging to the weeds, by building up idols with words and phrases, we turn our back on our own true nature that is not dependent on affirmation, belief, or the blessings of any master or priest. This is why Mumon says that after you have seen into your true nature, “If you meet the Buddha, you kill the Buddha; when you meet the patriarchs and masters, you will kill the patriarchs and masters. To kill is to purge one’s mind of Buddha, of Jesus, of any and all kinds of saviors. Mumon goes on, “On the brink of life and death you have the great freedom.” Notice that where formerly great anxiety burned now all is at peace.

Mu is the main gate of Zen, it is the royal entrance, and yet, as Mumon says, it is the barrier of the patriarchs. Our conscious mind turns everything upside down. In place of untrammelled freedom, the mind makes a frozen wasteland; instead of

immutability, the mind creates great agitation; whereas each one of us is reality itself, the mind confers this reality upon illusions and makes of us ghosts in the weeds. Consciousness is a stage on which the drama of life and death is enacted, but it is also a barrier to the truth. But we can pass through this barrier, we can walk through the wall of the mind. We need not be deterred by the “trespassers will be prosecuted” notices that litter the mind. And when we do pass through we are one with the intelligence that is Buddha, Joshu, the patriarchs, and the long line of masters. This means we are one also with the intelligence that is the poor, miserable dog slinking along, muddy, moth-eaten, and lost.

But to do this we must work with all our hearts and with all our soul. As Mumon tells us, we must work with the entire body, “with its three hundred and sixty bones and its eighty four thousand pores.” We must “summon up a great mass of doubt and pour it into this question day and night without ceasing. Question it day and night.” One does this anyway. One is always questioning in this way. We are always filled with a great mass of doubt. We call it stress or confusion or worry, but, fundamentally, we are always face to face with this one overwhelming question. The trouble is that we try to respond to the question in a wrong way. We look to success, or to the love of another, to possessions, to knowledge, to goodness to resolve our insecurity. *We look outside ourselves. We look for something.* Every desire we have is the desire for oneness, for wholeness. The problem is we try to pin oneness down, we try to make something of it and we suffer the frustration of failure.

Hakuin says in his famous Chant in praise of Zazen” “If we turn inward and prove our true Nature/That true self is no-self our own self is no-self.” This is seeing into Mu! seeing our original face before our parents were born. *True self is no self.* To see this is to pass the barrier of the patriarchs.



Photo Jacques Lespérance

Basho says in one of his haiku:

No one walks along this path
This autumn evening.

When working with Mu! one must ask who is this no-one? What is this no-self? But heed Mumon's warning: "Do not take it as nothingness, nor as a relative no of 'yes and no,' 'is and is not.'" It is not negation. It is "like swallowing a red hot iron ball; you try to spit it out but cannot." Hakuin too says something similar when he describes it is as a rat in a bamboo tube that cannot go forward, cannot go back, but cannot stay where it is.' One is damned if one does, damned if one doesn't, forever caught in the primordial double bind. We try to use all our previous strategies and methods. We try to cheat, seduce; we get angry, indulge in self-pity. We try to use logic, reason, we read scriptures, we attend seminars. We fret and fume. But, as Mumon declares we must eventually throw away all the delusive and useless knowledge that we have collected up to the present. Then after a period of time, this striving will come to fruition naturally, spontaneously giving way to a condition of internal and external unity.

Those who have not practiced with koans do not understand this striving. They think that the striving is to *attain* something. At first, of course, it is. To attain something, to be something, to know something are the principle strategies we use when faced with the primordial double bind. *But this is only at first.* When at last we have exhausted all the resources of our being and have let go of all the delusive and useless knowledge, then the striving is quite different. It is more of a yearning to be at one with a beloved, a yearning that finally becomes its own consummation.

"Suddenly," as Mumon describes, "it will all give way in an explosion and you will astonish the heavens and shake the earth." How can one describe

such an explosion. What joy, what relief. One way of getting a feel for this is as follows. Suppose you are going on a journey and you have

looked forward to it for a whole year. The night before you cannot sleep because of excitement. You are all ready. Packed. Waiting for the taxi. And then someone asks, "Do you have your tickets?" Tickets, where are the tickets? They are not in your purse. They are not in your pocket. Where are the tickets? You run into the bedroom. Did you leave them on the table? No they are not there. The taxi sounds its horn. But where are the tickets? They must be in the living room. You run into the living room. No, they are not there. Oh! what have you done with them? Again the taxi. You feel like weeping in desperation. You'll be late for the plane. Perhaps, who knows, they won't let you on without tickets. You run back into the bedroom again, no not there. Back into the living room. Search through your purse. Empty your pockets. The taxi driver comes in. "Are you ready?" You hate the taxi driver. "I can't find the tickets! I've lost the tickets! Oh! what will I do?" The taxi driver strides over to the small table and picks up the novel that you are taking on the plane with you. Pulls out an envelope. "Is this what you are looking for?" Wow! the tickets, the lovely tickets. Oh what a wonderful taxi driver, what a wonderful world, what a wonderful moment! In that explosion of finding, the world is turned upside down. What joy, what relief. But the tickets were never lost. They were always there, waiting patiently until you stopped running around and picked up the book.

At last I've broken Unmon's barrier,
There's exit everywhere - East, West, North, South,
In at morning, out at evening neither host nor guest.
My every step stirs up a little breeze. ☸

Zen and Judaism

“When can one see a little light?” asked Rabbi Shelomo and answered his own question: “If one keeps oneself quite lowly, as it is written: “If I make my bed in the nether world, behold Thou art there!”

Back in the late 1960's and early 1970's, there was a great influx of North American youth into Zen Centres. Many of these people were young Jews, disillusioned by what orthodox and conservative Judaism had to offer, and still questing for spiritual fulfillment. So many young Jews took up Zen practice at this time, that the movement caused quite a stir among the rabbinate. Rabbi's of all stripes became concerned with the loss of young people from their flocks, and the rabbinical journals of the time reflect heartfelt concern that young Jews were leaving the synagogues to engage in idol worship. This led to a kind of literary barroom brawl between Hasidic rabbis, who saw Zen as idol worship, because one does, after all, bow before a statue of Buddha at sesshin; and the more liberal Reform rabbis who saw Zen as a culturally harmless way Jews could be more spiritually attuned to life; and even involved the likes of philosopher Martin Buber, who saw the ways Zen and Judaism complement each other and convey the same message.

Rabbi Zusya and his brother Rabbi Elimelekh were once discussing the subject of humility. Elimelekh said: If a man contemplates the greatness of the Creator, he will arrive at true humility.” But Zusya said: “No! A man must begin by being truly humble. Only then will he recognize the greatness of his Creator.” They asked their teacher, the maggid, who was right. He decided it in this way. “These and those are the words of the living God. But the inner grace is his who begins with himself.”

Both Judaism and Zen have roots in antiquity, perhaps the beginnings of humankind. Both have an unchanging message, and somewhat unchanging methods of conveying that message. There is a certain steadfastness in both. And when two steadfast systems collide, there might be sparks.

What happened eventually was that most young Jews, like most of young everybody else, drifted away from Zen, leaving only the most committed and zealous behind. Yet I have always been intrigued by the thought of what might have become of Zen, had this large-scale Jewish influence persisted.

For instance, I'd be willing to bet that the whole koan system would have changed. First, let's look at the spelling of the word. That's C-O-H-E-N, thank you very much. Oy. And then let's look at this dog-with-a-Buddha-nature thing. Here's how it goes:

A young rabbinical student asks Rabbi Yeyoshua, “Does a dog have Buddha nature?” Rabbi Yehoshua replies “Nu?”

And we'd all be sitting for years asking ourselves “What's Nu?”

And then there's the one where Buddha held up the flower and one disciple smiled. If he'd held up a bowl of chicken soup, *everybody* would have smiled. And of course we all know that Bodhidharma came to China so he could find a nice-girl-he-should-get-married. Some cohen's would be little longer. They end too soon, and it is the Jewish way to answer a question with a question:

What is the sound of one hand?
Which hand?

The truth is that main-stream orthodox

Zen in a “Mixed” Marriage

Judaism has little in common with Zen. It is primarily an intellectual pursuit, and one must be more concerned with following 613 commandments than spiritual seeking. It is much more difficult to do nothing, to just sit, than to follow 613 commandments.

It is in the Hassidic sect, at least in theory, that one finds the similarities. Founded in the 17th century, the Hasidim celebrate the Oneness of all creation, and seek through prayer and contemplation to understand the mysteries of God's words, and to be one with themselves. The liturgy itself becomes one long mantra, as do singing and dancing, as the hasid works to move beyond the assumed sense of self. Simplicity and ordinariness are taught as virtues.

On one of the days of heart-searching, the days between New Year and the Day of Atonement, Rabbi Zusya sat in his chair, and his hasidim stood around him from morning until evening. He had lifted his eyes and heart to heaven, and loosed himself from all bodily bonds. While looking at him, one of his hasidim was overcome with the desire to turn to God, and the tears streamed over his face. And just as a burning coal kindles those beside it, so man by man was lit with the flame of turning. Then the zaddik looked around and fixed them with his gaze. Again he lifted his eyes and said to God: Lord of the world, this is, indeed, the right time for turning. But you know that I have not the strength to do penance — so accept as penance my love and my shame.” ❁

I've always been struck by the families who come to sesshin together. There aren't, perhaps, a lot of them, but enough to pique my interest. I was raised in a rather orthodox and devout Catholic family, and I remember us praying the Rosary together at Lent, and always going together to church. In my mid-20's, on a spiritual quest, I converted to Orthodox Judaism, and found myself in another family-centred religion. But when I began to practice zazen, I did so alone.

I began practicing zazen after a long period of spiritual aridity in my own and my family's life. My husband and oldest daughter had rebelled against the strictures of Judaism, and no longer even wanted to celebrate Sabbath. My husband was angry, very angry, with all organized religion, and wanted nothing to do with any of it. And so, it seemed, not only was my practice to begin alone, but possibly in a somewhat hostile environment. And yet, I was surprised by what happened.

I went about my practice quietly. Often I sat in the morning after the children went to school. In the evenings I would sit after they went to bed, or when they were busy with other things. Within a year, I began to make changes in my life. I became quieter and less desperate in my approach to life. I was, as my husband said, easier to live with. I was also becoming more reliable, and finding ways to make life simpler rather than more complicated.

My children were aware that I was sitting. For three years they never asked any questions about it. They just assumed it was something some people did, and they had friends at school who told them their parents “did meditation”, so it was no big deal to them. And yet it did have an effect on them. I've never had to ask my children to be quiet when I'm meditating. Now I tell them “I'm going upstairs to meditate for an hour”, and the house is miraculously quiet for an hour. Perhaps it is the posture that has

this effect on them. The odd time one or the other of them has come upstairs into the room where I sit, not realizing I'm there, and as soon as she sees me she quickly and quietly leaves without disturbing me.

I invited my husband along to meet Albert Low a couple years ago at a workshop he gave. It was my first and last attempt to proselytise Zen. He was very impressed with Albert, and thinks all this business of Oneness makes perfect scientific sense. He enjoyed the 20 minutes of sitting at the workshop. When we got home, he sat twice for ten minutes and decided he did not need Zen. Well, there you go. Zen isn't for everyone. And yet, he has always, from the beginning, supported me taking time to sit.

My husband has always been a man who sat still while I ran around in all directions at once. Zazen has slowed me down, and now we walk together more often than not. In doing something so very different from what he does, just by sitting a couple hours a day, our marriage has grown beyond any former bounds.

Initially my husband also supported me in going to sesshin. When I went to the first he expressed some concern that I might come back in pieces, which was, of course my concern. Going to sesshin always feels like such a huge risk, and it is that way for my family, too, even though they don't

go. After one sesshin I returned angry and depressed, and it took me months to work my way out of it. And it took a great deal of presence not to be grumpy with them all, especially during the time when I didn't know what I really was angry about.

My family expresses regret when I go to sesshin. The children say they miss me, and are pleased and excited when I return. My husband also misses me, and the second time I went he hoped I would change my mind. The last time I went, he recognized, the day before I left, when I complained of a headache and nausea, that I was "coming down a sesshin". It is clear that he is ambivalent about this part of my practice.

And yet... and yet...

I returned from my last sesshin a day before my husband went away for a week to visit his mother in Vancouver. The night he returned he said to me, "You know, I think we do not have enough spirituality in our family life. Let's see if the children would be interested in having a special Sabbath meal on fridays, where we can celebrate peace and talk about spiritual things, and maybe there's something from Zen you can bring to us." The children loved the idea, since the rituals and songs of the Sabbath appeal to them. Well, one step at a time. To be a Jewish family is to move towards oneness together. ❁



Sesshin du rohatsu à Hosshin-ji Sodo

Il existe actuellement au Brésil, où je demeure, plusieurs monastères et centres Zen de l'école Soto Zen. Un de ceux-ci, le monastère *Pico de Raios* de Ouro Preto, fondé par maître Ryotan Tokuda, missionnaire japonais venu au Brésil durant les années 60, envoie les moines brésiliens compléter leur formation au Japon en passant quelques années dans le temple Ionin à Nagoya et surtout au monastère de Eihei-ji, fondé par maître Dôgen Zenji au 13^{ème} siècle.

En 1994, j'ai passé une année sabbatique à l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) et surtout j'ai eu le privilège de demeurer au Centre Zen durant près de cinq mois et aussi de participer à plusieurs sesshins au cours de l'année. Avant mon retour au Brésil, je suis allé au Japon le 23 novembre dans l'unique but d'y faire le sesshin du rohatsu. Afin de m'y préparer, j'ai vécu initialement près d'une semaine dans le temple Zen Ionin avec les moines japonais et brésiliens, passant ensuite 10 jours au monastère de Hosshin-ji.

Hosshin-ji est un monastère international Soto Zen, situé à Obama, à trois heures de tram de Nagoya ou Kyoto. Plus de 25 moines, moitié japonais et de sept autres nationalités, y résident, dont un Canadien de Vancouver, G.Martin, qui vit là-bas depuis 18 ans. Il y a aussi quelques laïques, surtout allemands. Philip Kapleau y a vécu à l'époque où Roshi Harada Sogaku était l'Abbé du monastère; aujourd'hui c'est Harada Sekkei.

Comment se déroule un sesshin du rohatsu au Japon, du point de vue formel? A Hosshin-ji, où nous étions environ 60 participants, moitié laïques et moitié moines, femmes et hommes, nous nous levions à 3hres du matin et nous couchions à 10hrs du soir. Il y avait 14 séances de zazen de 50 minutes chacune, ce qui est assez "musclé", ainsi qu'une période de samu, dokusan, teisho, sutras, yaza, etc.; aucun bain ou douche durant le rohatsu, mais un



Photo Christine Bock

Yves Chaloult face au temple Zen Ionin.

froid humide qui pénètre dans les os. L'emploi du kyosaku y est très modéré, contrairement à l'époque où Philip Kapleau y vivait. Roshi Sekkei croit profondément que le silence externe favorise le silence interne.

Les conditions externes ci-haut mentionnées permettent évidemment les cheminements intérieurs les plus variés. Comme répondait un jour Thomas Merton, moine catholique, à quelqu'un qui lui demandait ce qui se passe dans un monastère : "absolument rien", pour le moins, si l'on s'en tient aux apparences. Le sentiment de "rien" et de vide est

certainement favorisé durant un rohatsu au Japon. Cela est dû, entre autres, à la sensation de vulnérabilité et de fragilité que divers facteurs produisent, comme la langue par exemple. En effet, pour qui ne parle pas le japonais, les dokusans, même avec un interprète parlant anglais ou allemand, sont laborieux et ils engendrent une certaine frustration face à une communication complexe et, conséquemment, aident à percevoir l'ego sous un autre angle et possiblement à le minimiser.

Les différences culturelles et sociales entre l'Orient et l'Occident — même dans notre monde globalisé et “informatisé” ou pour quelqu'un qui, comme moi, a deux nationalités et a vécu dans plusieurs pays — sont énormes et font naître en soi un sentiment de vulnérabilité. Un koan d'origine chrétienne n'est pas toujours compris — même si l'usage des koans est usuel dans ce monastère Soto Zen — surtout quand le tout est expliqué à l'aide d'un interprète. Le rituel des repas, qui se tiennent dans le zendo, est très détaillé et exige que l'on soit en constant état d'alerte afin de ne pas oublier tel petit geste ou encore la façon de placer l'*oryoki* et autres bols ou les baguettes à un moment précis du repas. Le danger de manger de façon “mécanique” diminue. Face à une culture étrangère et méticuleuse, le “ici et maintenant” devient presque une nécessité. Plus d'une fois je me suis rappelé durant mon sesshin le célèbre rappel d'Albert Low à la fin des séances de *zazen* : *Be present*. Combine c'est important et surtout difficile. Le froid peut être utilisé comme un facteur favorisant la présence constante.

En résumé, durant ce rohatsu, le contexte favorise la lucidité et la prise de conscience. Certains de nos comportements occidentaux et mécanismes de défense, devenus routiniers, sont plus facilement détectés et situés dans un contexte plus ample. L'illusion et l'absence sont plus difficiles. Une accumulation de petits détails donne l'opportunité, pour qui le veut, de faire un peu le vide ou, en

d'autres mots, de “nettoyer le terrain” et de diminuer, ne serait-ce que de façon imperceptible, la présence de l'ego. Dans cette ligne, Saint Jean de la Croix aime utiliser l'image de la fenêtre et du soleil. Une fenêtre totalement sale ne laisse passer aucun rayon de soleil. Toutefois, si on la nettoie (si on élimine l'ego), la luminosité et la transparence du soleil (la vraie nature) apparaîtra et rayonnera dans toute sa splendeur.

Chaque sesshin est unique et ne peut pas être comparé à un autre. Tous les sesshins que j'ai vécu au Centre Zen de Montréal en 1994 ont laissé leurs marques et ont géré un espace rendant possible un cheminement intérieur, ce qui m'amènera sans doute à retourner à Montréal en 1996 avec l'objectif exclusif d'y faire un autre sesshin de sept jours.

Ceci étant dit et sachant que notre Centre Zen de Montréal n'a absolument rien à envier à la pratique du Japon, j'encouragerais toutefois les pratiquants à faire un sesshin de sept jours à Hosshin-ji ou encore, comme le font des laïques brésiliens, à vivre un *ango* au monastère international de Shogoji-Hogan Dojo, dans l'île Kyushu, qui a lieu durant les mois de mai-juin-juillet chaque année. Comme dit maître Dôgen dans le *Shobogenzo Ango* : “Whenever, therefore, monks, nuns, pious laymen or laywomen make the *ango* for three months, they practice the important matter of the highest enlightenment alone with the Tathagatas and the great bodhisattvas in all directions. We must know that pious laymen and laywomen should also make the *ango*.”

Gassho ☸

Humour

Who's dragging that corpse around?

Apparently I am. I say apparently because I'm not so sure of it anymore. After a talk I had with a friend of mine recently, I cannot take me for granted as I used to do. I'm not obvious anymore. It all began in the bistro where I meet her regularly since University, but this time we were not to have the usual friendly talk. It all turned sour I don't know how, but at the end of our meeting, the coffee was cold and the friendship highly improbable. She had made both of us disappear. I left her with the feeling of my being quite problematic and more or less the result of a bad habit taken since my youth. I was deeply shaken but I managed to put myself together enough to be able to walk and leave the place. The proof that I succeeded in maintaining a certain amount of existence is that the waiter brought me the bill as usual. It gave me a warm feeling to see that he wouldn't let me disappear like a nobody.

But my naive existence didn't evaporate in one shot. It proceeded by steps and the first one was to take part, powerless, in the disappearance of my friend before my very eyes. If she was the first of us to disappear it is not because she is still a chain smoker. No. It is more the result of her extremely logical-minded disposition and besides, she had always been quicker than me. Anyway, can you imagine the shock? You think you have a friend and then...

We were at the usual bistro, sitting at the usual place, my friend had just lighted her first cigarette (you are shortening your life, I told her - was it a premonition?) we had ordered our usual coffee. The conversation began with my telling her that I had done a foolish thing in front of people and that I was feeling ashamed about it. "I wonder what

people will think of me", I said to her. "Don't worry", she answered, "people don't think often about you. They are too busy thinking about themselves." This is my friend. She can be very rude sometimes but always honest. "Be honest", continued my friend, "how many times did you think about me recently?" Well, I must confess that it was not often. I had even forgotten her anniversary this year. "And you are a good friend", she said, "imagine what it is for people for whom you are not. You simply don't exist!"

- Ok, now let's start it all over again, I said dumfounded. I forgot you. But you still exist even when I don't think of you.

- How can you prove it? she said.
- The proof is that I remember you.
- The only thing that it proves, is that you have memory. It doesn't prove that I exist.
- What do you mean?
- I mean that I can be dead when you remember me, dummy.

Last time she called me dummy I remembered her a longer time than usual. It is at these moments that I tend to forget her anniversary. But let's go back to the discussion. "Ok", I told her, "but I didn't invent you. Even if you are dead, the fact of remembering you proves that you have existed." That was a good point, I thought.

- When, she asked.
- Well the last time I saw you.
- You are seeing me now. Does it prove that I exist?
- Yes because I am seeing and speaking to you, dummy.

Well it was my turn to be remembered. "It just proves that you can see and speak", she said. "You manage to make my existence dependant on your seeing and speaking. You are a very egotistical person anyway. Everything is always boomeranging

on you. You, you, you.” I guess she was remembering me a little bit too much. I’ve gone too far. “Ok, let’s say that you exist because I like you very much”, I said. “You you you again. Do you think that my existence depends on you? And besides, I have always hated your sentimentality”. She looked very angry. Now wait a minute. Am I on the way of losing a good friend here? But do I have a good friend anyway. Was she trying to tell me that she doesn’t exist? How can I prove to her that she exists? She doesn’t seem to like my proofs anyway.

That was the first step. The other ones were to come real quick. After having realised that I exist intermittently for people, I soon discovered that I exist intermittently for myself too. What happens when I don’t remember myself? When I sleep, for example. Or when I don’t think about myself. That happens sometimes. Where am I? Do I exist when I am not there to prove it? And if I was totally amnesic, not knowing that I exist? And if I was totally amnesic on a totally desert island, nobody knowing that I exist? Would I exist? “Prove it”, said my friend, I mean my ex-friend, before disappearing like the Cheschire cat behind her smoke-screen.

I left dragging what was left of me. Existence is like friendship, I told myself, the more you think of it the less you have it. My French cartesian upbringing didn’t protect me any more against doubt. But that was not the end of my day. Believe it or not, I had just walked a few blocks, when I met another friend of mine! This one was not the logical type. She was the natural one - you know never wearing high heels shoes, baking her bread etc.- well anyway, I noticed that she had plenty of grey hairs. She looks very old I told myself. She must have felt the friendly commiserative feeling in my heart because she told me, looking very natural and spontaneous, “we have the same age, haven’t we?” Why have we invented civilization if it is not to hide that kind of truth?

To discover in a same day that I have the amount of existence of a corpse is one thing, but to discover also that this corpse is getting old... it is unbearable! I have not yet resolve the problem as to whom is dragging this corpse around but I am sure that I will meet some day another friend who will be kind enough to tell it to me. I have so many good friends! ❁



1995

March

Wednesday 1	Beginners' Course
Saturday 4	Workshop
Sunday 5	One day sitting
Wednesday 8, 15, 22, 29	Beginners' Course
Thursday evening 16/19	Three day sesshin

April

Saturday 1	Workshop
Sunday 2	One day sitting
Thursday evening 13/17	Four day sesshin
Wednesday 5, 12, 19, 26	Beginners' Course

May

Saturday 6	Workshop
Sunday 7	One day sitting followed by Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 10, 24, 31	Beginners' Course
Saturday 27	Workday

June

Wednesday 6	Beginners' Course
Thursday evening 8/13	Three day sesshin
Friday evening 23/25	Two day sesshin
Thursday 29 / Sunday 1	Kingston

Albert Low donnera une conférence sur le Zen dimanche le 9 avril, à 14h00, à l'École Vincent-d'Indy, sise au 628 du Chemin de la Côte Sainte-Catherine, Outremont. Coût d'entrée : 15\$. Vous êtes tous cordialement invités à y assister.

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Quand Mâra, le Tentateur, essaie de supplanter le Bouddha, celui-ci lui dit entre autres : “De quel droit prétends-tu régner sur les hommes et sur l’univers? Est-ce que tu as souffert pour la connaissance?” C’est la question capitale, peut-être unique, que l’on devrait se poser lorsqu’on s’interroge sur n’importe qui, principalement sur un penseur. On ne saurait assez faire le départ entre ceux qui ont payé pour le moindre pas vers la connaissance et ceux, incomparablement plus nombreux, à qui fut départi un savoir commode, indifférent, un savoir *sans épreuves*.

(EMILE CIORAN)
