

ZEN GONGI

VOLUME 6, NUMÉRO

MARS 1997

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*Words do not make a man
understand;
You must get the man, to
understand them.*

*To be able to trample upon
the Great Void,
The iron cow must sweat.*

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Volume 6, Numéro 1
Mars 1997

Comité de rédaction

Louis Bricault, Monique Dumont (éditrice)

Collaborateurs pour ce numéro

Ovid Avarmaa, Fred Bloom, David Booth, Louis Bricault, Roger Brouillette, Karen Kimmett, Francis Lawless, Janine Lévesque, Albert Low, Louise Panneton.

Calligraphie de la page couverture

Michèle Guérette

Mise en page

Albert Low

Abonnements

Janine Lévesque

Distribution dans les librairies

Pierre Laroche

Le Zen Gong est une publication du Centre Zen de Montréal
Directeur du Centre : Albert Low
Adresse : 824, rue Parc Stanley, H2C 1A2
Téléphone : (514) 388-4518

Abonnement annuel : 15\$ (Regular subscription)
Abonnement de soutien : 20\$ et plus (Supporting subscription)
Abonnement outre-mer : 20\$ (Overseas)

Dépôt légal - Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 1997

Ungan's "The Whole Body is Hands and Eyes."

Introduction

When the entire body is the eye, while seeing you do not see. When the entire body is the ear, while hearing you do not hear. When the entire body is the mouth, while speaking you do not speak. When the entire body is the mind, when thinking you do not think.

Putting aside the entire body, if there are no eyes, how do you see? If there are no ears, how do you hear? If there is no mouth, how do you speak? If there is no mind, how do you think? If you can unfold a single pathway, you are a fellow student with the ancient Buddhas. However, putting studying aside for the moment, with whom should you study Zen?

Case

Ungan asked Dogo, "What use does the great Bodhisattva of Compassion make of all those hands and eyes?" Dogo said, "It is like a person straightening the pillow with outstretched hands in the middle of the night." Ungan said, "I have understood." Dogo said, "How do you understand?" Ungan said, "All over the whole body is hands and eyes." Dogo said, "You have had your say, but you have only given eight tenth of the truth." Ungan said, "How would you put it?" Dogo said, "Throughout the whole body is hands and eyes."

Verse

To say 'all over the body' is alright;
'Throughout the body' is well said.
If you take it conceptually,
You're a million miles away.

When the great Phoenix spreads its wings,
The clouds of six compounds vanish.
Its wing beats lash the seas of the four realms.
This is raising a speck of dust.
Much bleating but little wool.

Don't you see!
The net of jewels reflect each other!
Where does the eye of the staff come from?
I cry, "Tut! tut!"

General comments about koans

Before discussing the koan let us say something about koans in general. A koan is, one could say, a window on to the truth, or, if you prefer something more personal, on to our 'true nature.' Koans come straight out of the true nature of a master, a Patriarch or Buddha. Therefore to really enter into a koan we have to *become* the Zen master, the Patriarch or the Buddha; become one with him. As Mumon says in his commentary on the koan Mu, "One sees Joshu eyeball to eyeball." In so far as 'from the beginning all beings are Buddha' this is not difficult, to become one with Buddha is to return home. What is difficult is maintaining the illusion of separation and it is because we continue to uphold the illusion and search in reflections for the source of light that our practice is difficult. What is this true nature. The koans "Who am I?" (What is my face before my parents were born?), Joshu's Mu! and the Sound of One Hand Clapping are all addressed to this question.

Inherent to all koans is a contradiction, a bite, or what one might call a twist. This contradiction is the way into the koan. For example, if one is working on the koan 'Who am I?', the I who seeks is the I who is sought. In other words I is reflected back on to itself. And yet that which is sought as well as that which seeks is beyond all reflection. They are not two but one. This means that if one is working on a koan, then the first thing that one must do is to ask 'what is the contradiction? What is the point of leverage? How does one enter into this koan? So often people try to work with the koan Who am I in the same way that they would ask "What is two plus two?" or "Where did I leave the keys?" or "What is the time?" One of the ways in which one

can arrive at the essence of a koan is by saying, we know this koan is talking about true nature; how does the koan give voice to that which, up till now, has had no voice?

Knowing is all; but once we've said that, we've made something of knowing; made it something rather small, something among other things, an experience among other experiences. And if we repeat 'knowing is all', each time we do so the statement has less and less value. On the other hand, when one sees into a koan, which 'says' the same thing as 'knowing is all', then each time one takes the koan up again, it becomes richer and richer. Thus we might say that the basic contradiction is speaking without speaking, speaking without opening the mouth. "A non Buddhist asked Buddha, Please do not give me words, do not give me silence. What is the truth?"

The koan Mu is inexhaustible. In our tradition one sees into the koan Mu and then goes on to other koans in the Mumonkan and then on to the Hekiganroku and so on.. But every koan in the Mumonkan and in the Hekiganroku is a commentary on Mu. In fact the seventeen hundred koans are all commentaries on the koan Mu. Mu is inexhaustible in the same way that true nature is inexhaustible because Mu is true nature. And the bite of Mu, the twist of Mu comes with : if it is a dead word to say true nature is knowing, why isn't it a dead word to say that Mu is true nature? How does Mu enable us to talk about true nature without talking about true nature?

Background to the Koan

This koan is one which is so appropriate to our day. One of the sad things about our civilization is that we have built cities which are not made for human beings. But a sadder story still is that we have made a universe that excludes human beings. Every age has its myth and ours is no exception. With a myth we try to explain the origin and meaning of the

universe. Generally speaking, the myths of other civilizations have always found a central place for the human being. But according to our myth the world does not come from a creative act but from an accident. It is all without meaning. And, according to this same myth, the human being is just a by-product, a by-play of blind forces. The irony is that it is human beings who affirm this. We human beings have shut ourselves out into a universe that is mindless, cold and meaningless. And whether we are philosophers, scientists, or simply people who just get along as best we can, this chilling philosophy freezes us all to our marrow's.

The Great Bodhisattva of Compassion, who is the chief protagonist of our koan, had her origin with the beginning of the Prajna Paramita school. The Prajna Paramita school, as you know, was itself a revolt against another cold and dead interpretation that saw the world simply as a place to get out of as quickly as you could: life, in other words, was simply a process by which one suffered in order to escape from it. Monasteries were created where people incarcerated themselves in order to be able to do this with a minimum of distraction. Naturally many people would say that this is a poor picture of the Theravada or the Hinayana school. And indeed, the Theravada school, in its own way, is magnificent. But we human beings have to take everything to extremes and monks left the Middle Way to wander far into the ways of self and world abnegation. Just in the same way that we've done it today. Science in itself is a most glorious and wonderful creation of the human mind. But we have to constantly overstep our limits and blunder into areas where we've got no right to go; at least not as scientists or philosophers. Instead of saying, "How far can we get in studying human beings by assuming that they are simply patterns of behavior, or how far can we get if we assume that matter and energy are the only components of the Universe," we take the unwarranted and unscientific step of saying that behavior patterns *are* all, matter

and energy *is* all there is.

One of the problems that came with the Theravada school was that Buddha became an extremely remote figure and the Arhat became the Olympic champion of the day. The Arhat was concerned with simply living through this last life so that he could get off the wheel of birth and death and so go on his way to extinction. The Prajna Paramita revolted against this cold, dead view of things. Originally it was the Prajna Paramita icon itself that was venerated but as this was too abstract, it broke down into two aspects. On the one hand was Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of wisdom; and on the other was the remarkable discovery of Kannon, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Many people have likened the Bodhisattva of Compassion to the Virgin Mary. And indeed, one can see many similarities; but also many differences. Kannon is often pictured as a graceful, gentle, loving kind of person, She is also depicted with many hands and eyes. An example of the former is the Kannon that we have in the down stairs zendo, and an example of the latter is the Kannon in the dokusan room.

The Jesuits, when they went to Japan and China, were very upset by the armed and many eyed Kannon because they thought that the Buddhists were worshipping idols, demons. To them this depiction was grotesque. However in our age we are more used to nonrepresentational art and are no so affronted by it.

But what is this figure with many arms and many eyes? This is Ugan's question and it introduces us to a living and loving world.

Before we go into this, let us just recount a few mondo.

Mondo

There're two protagonists here; there's Dogo, the teacher and Ugan. First let us say a word or two

about Dogo.

Dogo's teacher said, "It's better not to speak where your wisdom does not reach." (That's a wonderful precept). And his teacher said, "If you do, then horns will sprout out of your head. What do you think?" And Dogo immediately left the room. What would you have done?

Someone asked Dogo "What is the place to apply effort in these times?" in other words what is the real work nowadays? What is real Zen work?

And the reply, "If a thousand people call you and you do not turn your head, only then will you have some portion of attainment."

One does not accept any acclaim, any admiration or attention. It's not that one does not accept it; that is not quite the right expression, but there is no one to receive it.

"A thousand people calling one..." just imagine that you had a thousand people calling your name.

"If you do not turn your head, only then will you have some portion of attainment."

On another occasion Ugan said, "There's a son of someone's family; when questioned, there's nothing he cannot explain." And someone asked Ugan, "How many scriptures were in his room?" Ugan said, "Not even a single word." "Then, how did he have such knowledge?" "Day and night he never slept." "Could I still ask him about something?" "If he could he would not say."

Who is this one? What is this eye that never sleeps? What does it mean, 'day and night he never slept?' And how one does that get knowledge? Does it mean that knowledge was pouring in day and night? Or does it mean that not sleeping itself is what real wisdom is all about? This 'not sleeping' of course,

has nothing to do with not going to bed. If we only slept when we're in bed, we'd be very well off.

Once when Ungan was making shoes he was asked by a monk, "If I came to you master and asked for eyes, I wonder, would I get them or not?" This question about asking for eyes, will lead us into our koan. What does it mean to have eyes? There was a master that was beating a monk and the monk turned around and said, "If your stick had an eye it would not beat me." What does that mean?

"If I came to you master and asked for eyes, I wonder, would I get them or not?" And the master asked, "Who did you give yours to?" It's a very clever question really but it's a very good answer. And the monk came back and said, "I haven't any." And the master said, "If you had, where would you put them?" The monk didn't know what to say. And Ungan went on and asked, "Is the one asking for eyes an eye or not?" And the monk said, "He is not an eye." and Ungan laughed at him.

Comments on the introduction.

Before going on it might be as well to say a few words about the introduction as they provide an essential background against which to view the koan. The introduction starts by saying "When the entire body is the eye, while seeing you do not see." When the entire body is the eye... What body is this? This is really one of the points about this koan. If one's whole body is an eye it means to say that one is totally one with the seeing. We have the expression in English, 'I was all eyes.' "When she came into the room I was all eyes!" It means that I only had eyes for her - I was completely one with her alone.

But there's another body which is entirely the eye. For example when one looks at the world as it is at the moment, one can imagine it surrounded, engulfed by empty, chilling, dead space. But another way of seeing the world is possible which is entirely different. I'm not saying that we should make up another myth. But what I am saying is that we

should open our eye. We laugh at the ancients because they were all so superstitious. We laugh at them because they animated the world. They animated trees and thought trees were alive. They animated rocks and worshiped them. They animated rivers and heard elfs chuckling. Everywhere, for the ancients, these foolish people, was life and laughter even though there was sometimes, indeed often, danger. But it was danger that came from another life form. This, of course, is foolishness as we now know. With our objectivity, we have turned everything into an object. We've turned God into an object, we've turned mind into an object, we've turned life into an object, D.N.A., R.N.A., nucleic acids and what not. Objects! Objects alone exist. Subjectivity is an unprovable postulate.

What is this other way of seeing. It is, "When the entire body is the eye (when the entire universe is the eye) while seeing you do not see." This is not the subjective world of the ancients nor the objective world of the moderns. When you are all eyes, there is no differentiation. "There is nothing that I hate", said Rinzai. There is no dirt in the world.

"When the entire body is the ear, while hearing you do not hear." It's said that Avalokitesvara who was the original Bodhisattva of compassion came to awakening through hearing. At the moment of awakening Avalokitesvara was just sound. There is a koan, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" The sound of one hand clapping is the sound of sounds. It's the light of lights. And when you hear the sound of sounds, you don't hear the sounds. "The entire body is the mouth. While speaking you do not speak. When the entire body is the mind, when thinking you do not think."

This is the problem that the entire body is rarely the mind. What happens is the mind is focused on one thing or another and the entire body, the entire dharma body, is concentrated within that narrow focus.

When you're working on "Who am I?" you're working to awaken to the whole body as mind. But

this is like the ass looking at a well. We're always in samadhi. Our true state is a state of samadhi. We never leave samadhi. The whole body is always the mind.

"Putting aside the entire body, if there are no eyes, how do you see?" This is the well looking at the ass.

Do you see with the eyes? If there are no ears, if there is no mouth, if there is no mind? What then? When did you ever use the eyes to see? When did you ever use the mouth to speak? Whenever did you use the ears to hear? You must look. We're not saying that looking in this way is the only way to look. But if you do look this way, if you do see that you don't speak with the mouth, you don't hear with the ears, you don't see with the eyes. Indeed there is no seeing, there is no hearing, there is no speaking or acting. The whole body is always the mind; see this and you can free yourself from the prison that you are stuck in.

"If you can unfold a single pathway you are a fellow student with the ancient Buddhas." What is that one way? In the Mumonkan there is a koan, #48, in which the questioner asks, "There are Buddhas in the ten directions, Bhagavats in the ten directions, but only one way to Nirvana. What is that way?"

What is that way? Do you think it's zazen? Do you think it's asking "Who am I?", "What is Mu?", following the breath? Do you think it is Zen? What is that one way? When you're working, you're working to unfold that one way. Unfold that single pathway.

"However, putting studying aside for the moment, with whom should you study Zen?" It is like the haiku says,

"No-one
walks this path
this autumn evening

The koan

Traditionally the Bodhisattva of Compassion is said to hear the cries of the world and with the hands and

eyes responded to the suffering of the world. Instead of the Arhat whose aim was to move out of the cycle of birth and death, the Bodhisattva remains in the world to help the suffering. The vow of the Bodhisattva is that she will not go into Nirvana until every single suffering being has entered Nirvana. One has to understand what this means. Our awakening is not a personal triumph. We do not have to win a spiritual sprint. We are one mind. Awakening is to penetrate more and more deeply into this truth. The world is alive. And as long as there is suffering then this living whole is shattered. Whether it is my suffering or the suffering of another, when seen from the perspective of the Bodhisattva makes no difference, because, seen from this perspective there is no 'me' or 'another.' In the Diamond Sutra, "Although the Bodhisattva saves all sentient beings, there are no sentient beings to save."

Traditionally, the eyes and arms of the Bodhisattva were eyes and arms of compassion. And yet Dogo said, "It is like a person straightening the pillow with outstretched hands in the middle of the night." What has that got to do with the salvation of the world? What has that got to do with succoring others in their misery. This is the point on which this koan turns.

"It's like a person straightening the pillow with outstretched hands in the middle of the night."

It has everything to do with the salvation of the world and succoring others in their suffering. We have an expression "as cold as charity". Charity at one time meant love; the kind of love in which you gave others when they needed it, where you helped others when they needed it. But helping others became a duty, a way of earning a ticket to heaven. Because it was a duty we performed for others who were so inept and incapable, so stupid that they could not do things for themselves. And out of our superiority, we brushed a few crumbs off the table for them to eat. This involved a separation. It was 'me' helping 'others.' When helping or loving others becomes a duty, becomes a way of salvation in itself, when loving

others bestows merit, it then ceases to be the action of the Bodhisattva of Compassion. It simply becomes the action of a merchant buying and selling.

What is it like when you're in the middle of the night, you're comfortable, warm, but you wake up and to find you have got a crick in the neck and the pillow is all awry. You reach out and you straighten the pillow. Could you help someone with that same kind of self disinterest? Without any kind of separation between you, the pillow, the warmth, the sleep? Could you do that? So natural? So right? So necessary? So at one?

One must enter into the complete ordinariness, the complete naturalness, the complete mindlessness of this act and then see it as the Bodhisattva of Compassion saving all sentient beings, with exactly the same naturalness, the same mindlessness, exactly the same spontaneity.

Ungan said, "I have understood" and Dogo said, "How do you understand?" And Ungan said, "All over the whole body is hands and eyes."

Eighty percent right

Ungan said "All over the whole body is hands and eyes." Dogo said, "You have had your say, but you have only given eight tenth of the truth." Ungan said, "How would you put it?" Dogo said, "Throughout the whole body is hands and eyes. "Why does Zen Master Dogo say to Ungan, "You're eighty percent right"

A mondo might help shed some light on this. A monk asks "How is it when the Dharmakaya is manifesting form in accordance with beings?" The Dharmakaya is wholeness, the whole body [kaya], the dharma body. It is the body of the master who said "my body is so big there is nowhere to put it." The Dharmakaya is one's own body. It is this that is revealed with the first kensho, provided it is a real kensho.

"How is it when the Dharmakaya is manifesting form in accordance with beings?" means what does the Dharmakaya look like as a form? And the answer is, "It's like the moon reflected in the water; like an ass

looking at a well."

"Like the moon reflected in the water..." Everything is the Dharmakaya manifesting form in accordance with beings: this computer, this table, this window... Everything is like the moon reflected in the water. It is like an ass looking at a well; if an ass looks at a well, all that the ass is going to see is himself; all that you ever know is yourself.

And then the master says, "You have said quite a lot but you've only said eighty percent. And the monk said, "Well what do you say master?" And the master said, "It's like the well looking at the ass."

We are the Dharmakaya. How can the Dharmakaya be like the moon reflected on the water under any circumstances, whether it's manifesting form or not manifesting form? It is not the moon that is reflected in the water; it is the water reflecting the moon.

All over the body! And this body is the physical body. This is the person who is all arms, all eyes; who is one with the situation; totally one with the situation. But as Dogo says, this is not quite it. There's still another step. You're there but there's just another step. And he says, what is that step?

"Throughout the whole body is hands and eyes." With this there is just no situation. With this, it is not the Bodhisattva who is saving all sentient beings. It is the universe which is a universe of salvation. It is one world, a living loving world. It is one mind.

When we're working on ourselves, one often asks, what happens if I work all my life and never come to awakening? Our practice is not a practice we do in order to come to awakening. It is not even a practice to save all sentient beings. We practice because 'throughout the whole body is hands and eyes.'

There's a story that Shibayama told. It was about a dove that was flying and she look down and saw the whole forest was aflame. It was a blazing, roaring fire. Huge fire. And she saw all of the animals rushing around in panic, trying to get away from the fire. She flew and flew and eventually came to the ocean. She scooped a few drops of water on her back and then she flew back. She flew and flew until she

came to this huge, roaring fire and she just sprinkled the few drops of water from her back onto the fire. And then she flew again and got more water, a few more drops and back again she went and again and again and again until eventually she was so exhausted she plunged into the fury of the fire.

You say, "What a waste!"

No! "Throughout the whole body is hands and eyes."

The verse

"To say all over the body is alright.
Throughout the body also is well said.
If you take it conceptually,
you are a million miles away."

If you take anything conceptually, you're a million miles away. The question, what happens if I work all my life and I don't come to awakening, is a question which is asked with the mind. It's not a question that's asked with the heart.

"When the great giant Phoenix spreads its wings, the clouds of six compounds vanish."

The six compounds of course, are the six senses, and the great giant Phoenix, the mystic bird of rejuvenation, was reputed, with one flap of his wings, to fly ninety thousand miles. This great Phoenix is a metaphor for the true mind, the opened eye. Just one blink of the eye, and the dust of the six compounds vanish. It's enough just to wake up; this is enough just wake up.

The verse goes on to say,

"When its wing beats lash the seas of the four realms, this is raising a speck of dust."

Note well it says a "A speck of dust," not "A drop of water!" The whole oceans of the world lashed by the wing beat of the Phoenix raises but a speck of dust. There's a koan in which it says, "I take the universe as a grain of rice between my finger and my thumb and flick it away." When we see the world as an object we are crushed by its vast immensity, when the entire body is the eye, the world is but a speck of

dust, no not even so much!

"All of this is much bleating but little wool."
Bleating, of course is the sound that sheep and lambs make. Much ado about noting.

Don't you see!
The net of jewels reflect each other!
Where does the eye of the staff come from?
I cry, "Tut! tut!"

The net of jewels is Indra's net and the jewels are the crystal balls that are at each interstice, each cross over, of the net. Just imagine a net spreading right throughout space as far as the eye can see and further. It's three dimensional. And where the strings of the net cross, a crystal ball is placed. And each ball is reflecting all the other balls and is reflected by the other balls and is reflecting this reflection.

Throughout the universe is just hands and eyes. Each is what one is, each one is oneself. Each one is the universe. Each one is reflected throughout the universe. The whole universe is reflected by oneself. This way of seeing the world in which each being, each sentient being and this means ants and fleas and bugs and bees is a crystal ball, and each crystal ball, each bug, each bee, is the whole and reflects the whole. This view that life is the world; the world is life. The entire body is hands and eyes. As Christ said Each is the way, the truth and the life.

When you're practicing, you strive hard. You're driven by pain and it's natural that one wants to find some way by which one would no longer suffer. But as long as you do that, as long as that is the way that you're practicing, your practice is the practice of the Arhat. Don't ever let the question come in your mind, "What happens if I practice all my life and never come to awakening?" All that matters is the practice you're doing right here and now. Do that well and you'll see that "All over the whole body is hands and eyes. Throughout the whole body is hands and eyes."

Jouer le Han

Lentement, les respirations deviennent plus calmes et comme cela se produit souvent avant une séance de zazen, un silence ouvert et profond comme celui que l'on entend parfois au fond des averses de pluie envahit peu à peu tout l'espace du zendo.

TAC, tac-tac: le han claque tout à coup ! Zazen commence ...

Le han est une sorte d'enclume de bois que l'on frappe au moyen d'un maillet au début des séances de zazen, teishos et périodes de chants. Au centre Zen de Montréal, le han est suspendu tout près de l'entrée du zendo. Dans cette entrevue, Ovid Avarmaa, membre de longue date du centre nous parle de cet "appel au zazen" si particulier.

Le han vous est très familier, n'est-ce-pas?

Oui. J'ai appris à jouer le han il y a maintenant plus de vingt ans, c'est-à-dire à l'époque où le centre Zen logeait encore sur la rue Marlowe, avant même que monsieur Low en assume la direction. Un membre du centre Zen de Rochester, venu en visite, m'a à cette époque enseigné le jeu du han, tel qu'on le pratiquait à Rochester. Avec le temps, j'ai bien sûr adapté ce jeu en fonction de ce que l'on pourrait appeler mes propres idiosyncrasies personnelles.

Vous l'avez donc modifié?

Pas fondamentalement. Non, je suis dans l'ensemble resté fidèle à ce que j'ai appris initialement. Seulement, comme vous le savez, j'ai une formation musicale et il était presque inévitable que celle-ci vienne colorer mon approche de cet instrument, car le han est avant tout un instrument de percussion. J'ai donc, pourrait-on dire, structuré mon jeu du han d'une façon particulière. Je remarque d'ailleurs qu'au Centre, tous ceux qui sont appelés à utiliser le han ont tendance à y apporter leurs propres couleurs: il y a tant de nuances possibles.

Le han est utilisé à différents moments, n'est-ce-pas?

Oui. Avant les séances de zazen, bien sûr, mais également avant les teishos et les périodes de chants. La façon d'en jouer varie évidemment selon le moment où il est utilisé.

Par exemple?

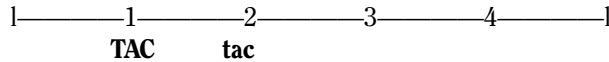
Eh bien, avant les séances de zazen, le han est frappé de la manière suivante: TAC (coup fort) tac-tac (deux coups rapprochés plus faibles): c'est l'ouverture; ensuite, c'est TAC (coup fort) tac (coup faible en écho), cette séquence étant répétée cinq fois; le septième coup fort - TAC - est suivi de deux coups faibles - tac-tac - puis d'un dernier coup fort - TAC - plus "relevé". Cette dernière partie est la fermeture. C'est là la séquence complète qui est jouée avant le zazen et, comme vous le savez, elle est suivie par le claquement vif et sonore des claquoirs et par les trois coups cristallins de la cloche inkin. Avant les teishos, le jeu est très différent: sept coups fermes également espacés suivis d'un premier *accelerando-diminuendo* très court et léger et d'un second plus lent et plus fort qui se perd graduellement; ensuite, cinq coups fermes également espacés eux aussi suivis du même groupement des deux *accelerando-diminuendo*; et enfin, trois coups fermes égaux suivis encore une fois de ce groupement. Si, à ce moment, les préparatifs du teisho ne sont pas terminés dans le zendo, l'une ou l'autre des deux dernières séquences de coups peut être reprise un certain nombre de fois. Cela se termine ensuite par deux coups faibles - tac-tac -, suivis d'un coup fort - TAC. A ce stade, avant les teishos, le gong commence à se faire entendre. Pour avoir une bonne idée de ce qu'est un *accelerando-diminuendo*, il suffit d'imaginer le son produit par une balle de ping-pong qui rebondit: peu à peu, le son s'accélère et diminue tout à la fois jusqu'à cesser complètement. Le jeu du han avant les périodes de chants lors des sesshins est une variante de ceci. Lorsque c'est présenté comme ça, avec des mots et sans pouvoir entendre le han, j'ai bien peur que ça paraisse un peu compliqué.

Comment mesurez-vous le temps de silence entre les coups que vous donnez sur le han, par exemple, lorsque vous jouez la séquence qui précède les rondes de zazen? Est-ce une question d'intuition personnelle, de spontanéité ou disposez-vous d'une méthode ?

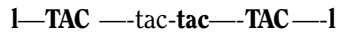
Personnellement, je suis une méthode bien précise. Je préfère cela. Mais c'est sans doute là ce qui distingue le plus le jeu d'une personne à l'autre. Certains y vont, comme vous le dites, par intuition ou selon ce qu'ils ressentent juste au moment de jouer: pour ma part, je préfère suivre une structure bien définie. C'est sans doute là l'une des couleurs de ma formation musicale. Je ne prétends d'aucune façon qu'il s'agisse là de la meilleure approche face au han, mais c'est définitivement celle que je préfère.

Pouvez-vous nous en donner une idée?

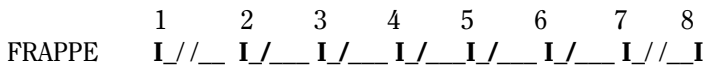
Bien sûr. Ce sera peut-être plus simple si j'utilise un petit dessin. (A ce moment, Ovid trace sur papier une portée qu'il divise en quatre espaces égaux.) Voilà la base de mon jeu avant le zazen. Oublions pour l'instant les coups d'ouverture et de fermeture - nous en reparlerons plus tard - et voyons seulement comment cela s'applique au reste, c'est-à-dire aux cinq répétitions de: TAC (coup fort) - tac(coup faible en écho). Eh bien, ça se dessine comme suit:



Donc, je compte lentement jusqu'à quatre. À un, c'est le coup fort. A deux, c'est le coup faible en écho. Trois et quatre sont des silences. Puis une deuxième séquence commence. Le tout répété cinq fois. Vous me suivez? Ce sera peut-être plus simple si je vous le fais entendre directement. Je vais ajouter les coups d'ouverture et de fermeture pour que ce soit complet. (Ovid se lève alors et cherche du regard un endroit qui pourra lui servir de "han de service". Comme nous nous trouvons dans le grand salon du Centre, il opte finalement pour le manteau de la cheminée au-dessus de l'âtre du foyer. Et comptant lentement jusqu'à cinq, il commence à frapper légèrement du doigt la pièce de bois. Très tôt, son jeu s'emmêle, devient imprécis. L'étonnement d'Ovid est évident. Il recommence. Même résultat. "Qu'est-ce qui se passe?", dit-il. Il essaie de nouveau et encore une fois, son jeu reste hésitant. "Ah! Je comprends!" Il mime alors la position debout et le mouvement du bras qui habituellement accompagnent le jeu du han. "C'est très différent de le faire comme ça. Si j'étais devant le han, tout cela se ferait spontanément! C'est vraiment étonnant!" (Me revient alors en mémoire la vieille histoire du mille-pattes dont la danse merveilleuse faisait l'envie d'une tortue lente et maladroite. Cette dernière conçut un plan diabolique. Elle écrivit une lettre au mille-pattes, se présentant comme une fervente admiratrice et lui demandant si, lorsqu'il dansait, il levait d'abord la patte n°228 puis la droite n°59 ou s'il attaquait plutôt la danse en levant d'abord la patte droite n°26, puis la patte gauche n°499. En recevant la lettre, le mille-pattes s'interrogea sur-le-champ de la même manière: quelle patte levait-il en premier? Puis quelle patte levait-il ensuite? Vous devinez la suite: il n'arriva plus jamais à danser!) Ce ne fut évidemment pas le cas d'Ovid qui, bientôt, joua la séquence complète qui précède les séances de zazen. Il me fit ensuite remarquer certaines nuances qu'il apportait aux coups faibles donnés en ouverture et en fermeture. "La plupart de ceux qui jouent le han donnent ces coups faibles et rapides à un volume égal. Pour ma part, j'ai pris l'habitude d'accentuer légèrement le second coup. C'est particulièrement important à la fin. Regardez! (Encore ici, Ovid esquisse rapidement le dessin suivant:



"C'est la séquence de fermeture. Le premier TAC est le septième coup fort. Il est suivi après un court silence des deux coups faibles "tac-tac", le second coup étant un peu plus marqué, de manière à "monter" jusqu'au dernier coup fort "relevé", TAC, qui, lui, ouvre la voie aux claquoirs. Si maintenant l'on reporte en dessin la séquence complète qui est jouée avant les séances de zazen, cela ressemble à ceci:



D'une certaine façon, tout cela est très simple. Il suffit d'être attentif aux petits détails."

J'ai souvent remarqué cette qualité d'attention que vous apportez à votre jeu du han. Par exemple, les accelerando-diminuendo que vous jouez avant les teishos et les périodes de chants ont une qualité sonore très particulière. On croirait entendre des cailloux que l'on frapperait les uns contre les autres de plus en plus délicatement...

Encore ici, ma formation musicale est un atout précieux. Je joue du piano. Mes poignets sont donc plutôt souples et déliés. Cela m'aide à frapper ces coups délicats de façon précise. Il faut dire également qu'avec le temps, j'ai pris l'habitude de frapper différentes parties du han afin d'obtenir des sonorités plus diversifiées, ce qui contribue à

donner un certain relief au jeu d'ensemble. Enfin, il appartient à chacun de développer sa propre expérience, n'est-ce-pas?

Le han a-t-il une fonction symbolique? Renvoie-t-il, par exemple, au temps qui passe, aux battements du coeur humain ou encore à autre chose selon vous?

Non, je ne le crois pas. Cela relève selon moi de la tendance naturelle des êtres humains à “donner forme”, c'est-à-dire à créer des formes simplement. Cette façon d'appeler au zazen plonge ses racines dans une longue tradition et si, encore aujourd'hui, nous jouons du han, c'est avant tout pour honorer cette tradition.

Please remember....

1. Don't wish for perfect health. In perfect health there is greed and wanting. So an ancient said «Make good medicine from the suffering of sickness.»

2. Don't hope for a life without problems. An easy life results in a judgmental and lazy mind. So an ancient once said «Accept the anxieties and difficulties of this life.»

3. Don't expect your practice to be always clear of obstacles. Without hindrances the mind that seeks enlightenment may be burnt out. So an ancient once said «Attain deliverance in disturbance.»

4. Don't expect to practice hard and not experience the weird. Hard practice that evades the unknown makes for a weak commitment. So an ancient once said «Help hard practice by befriending every demon.»

5. Don't expect to finish doing something easily. If you happen to acquire something easily the will is made weaker. So an ancient once said «Try again and again to complete what you're doing.»

6. Make friends, but don't expect any benefit for yourself. Friendship only for oneself harms trust. So an ancient once said «Have an enduring friendship with purity in heart.»

7. Don't expect others to follow your direction. When it happens that others go along with you it results in pride. So an ancient once said «Use your will to bring peace between people.»

8. Expect no reward for an act of charity. Expecting something in return leads to a scheming mind. So an ancient once said «Throw false spirituality away like a pair of old shoes.»

9. Don't seek profit over and above what your work is worth. Acquiring false profit makes a fool of oneself. So an ancient once said «Be rich in honesty.»

10. Don't try to make clarity of mind with severe practice. Every mind comes to hate severity, and where is clarity in mortification? So an ancient once said «Clear a passageway through severe practice.»

11. Be equal to every hindrance. Buddha attained Supreme Enlightenment without hindrance. Seekers after truth are schooled in adversity. When they are confronted by a hindrance, they can't be overcome. Then cutting free their treasure is great!

taken from:
THOUSAND PEAKS
Korean Zen
Tradition and Teachers

À propos d'un certain rituel du souvenir

J' ai eu l'occasion d'entendre parler d'une coutume funéraire remontant à plusieurs milliers d'années.

En ce temps-là, quand quelqu'un mourait, pendant les trois premiers jours personne, sauf les prêtres et leurs assistants, ne s'approchait de la maison du défunt.

Le quatrième jour seulement, tous les parents du mort, proches ou éloignés, se réunissaient, ainsi que ses voisins, ses amis, et même les étrangers qui le désiraient.

En présence de tous, sur le seuil de la maison, les prêtres commençaient par célébrer une cérémonie religieuse; puis le cortège se formait derrière le corps pour se rendre au cimetière, où, après un rite spécial, avait lieu l'inhumation.

Après quoi, si le défunt était un homme, tous les hommes - et si c'était une femme, toutes les femmes - retournaient à sa demeure, tandis que les autres rentraient chez eux.

Ceux qui revenaient à la maison du mort commençaient par manger et boire, mais leur repas était uniquement composé d'une nourriture dont les ingrédients avaient été préparés à cette intention, tout au long de sa vie, par le défunt lui-même.

Après avoir pris ce repas, ils s'assemblaient dans la plus grande pièce de la maison et là, participant à ce que l'on nomme un "rituel du souvenir", ils s'appliquaient à se rappeler et à se raconter entre eux, à l'exclusion du reste, toutes les actions mauvaises et pernicieuses qu'avait commises le défunt au cours de sa vie.

Cela durait trois jours entiers.

Après cette originale procédure de trois jours, qui consistait à "ne pas lui laisser un seul cheveu sur la tête", ou, comme ils le disaient eux-mêmes, à "lessiver les os du mort jusqu'au blanc de l'ivoire", tous les participants s'assemblaient à nouveau les sept jours suivants dans la maison du mort, mais cette fois le soir seulement, après avoir rempli leurs obligations quotidiennes.

Durant ces sept veillées, il n'était plus d'usage d'offrir de la nourriture, mais dans la grande pièce où se tenait l'assemblée brûlaient en permanence des encens de toutes sortes, aux frais du défunt ou de ses

héritiers.

Calmement assis, ou agenouillés, dans l'atmosphère particulière créée par les encens, les assistants commençaient par choisir parmi eux celui qui, par son âge et sa réputation, était le plus digne d'être doyen. Après quoi ils se consacraient à la contemplation de l'inévitabilité de leur propre mort.

A certains moments, le doyen prononçait à haute voix les paroles suivantes :

N'oubliez pas comment il a vécu, celui dont le souffle n'a pas encore disparu de ce lieu, comment il s'est comporté d'une manière qui n'était pas digne d'un homme, et n'a pas su accepter le fait que, tout comme les autres, lui aussi devait mourir.

Après cette exhortation du doyen, toute l'assistance devait chanter ce qui suit :

O forces saintes, forces suprêmes, ô esprits immortels de nos ancêtres, aidez-nous à garder toujours la mort devant nos yeux, et à ne pas succomber à la tentation!

Je n'en dirai pas davantage, mais je laisserai à chacun de vous le soin de décider par lui-même de quel profit pourrait être cette coutume "barbare" si elle était rétablie de nos jours.

Il serait désirable pour tous, pour Dieu, pour le défunt, pour vous et pour moi, et même pour l'humanité entière, que, devant la mort de quelqu'un, au lieu du processus qui consiste à prononcer des paroles vides de sens, s'accomplisse en vous celui qui vous permettrait de vous mettre en face de votre propre mort à venir.

Seule une pleine réalisation de l'inévitabilité de notre propre mort peut détruire les facteurs qui se sont implantés en nous du fait de notre vie anormale, et qui sont les sources de manifestation des différents aspects de notre égoïsme, racine de tout mal dans nos relations réciproques.

Et seule cette réalisation peut ressusciter, chez les hommes, les données divines jadis présentes en eux pour les vraies impulsions de Foi, d'Amour et d'Espérance.

Georges Gurdjieff. *La vie n'est réelle que lorsque "Je suis"*. Editions Du Rocher, 1983. p. 181.

A Long Way Home

*I*l neigeait quand je m'y suis rendu la première fois. Les légers flocons ondoyant comme les pétales de quelque fleur immense offraient un contraste frappant avec les murs sinistres et la tour d'observation. J'avais déjà été dans plusieurs prisons, mais c'était ma première visite à une prison à sécurité maximale. L'atmosphère à Archambault était rendue encore plus menaçante par le souvenir d'une terrible émeute survenue dans ses murs quelques années auparavant.

Entrer dans cette prison était presque aussi difficile que d'en sortir. Ce n'était pas le meilleur endroit pour aller méditer. Quand je réussis finalement à franchir les différents obstacles - y compris les questions à moitié posées et à moitié persiflées, les nombreuses portes et barrières verrouillées et déverrouillées, les longs corridors où mes pas résonnaient - je me suis retrouvé dans une chapelle où environ une dizaine d'hommes, assis en cercle, m'attendaient. Certains d'entre eux avaient l'air mal à l'aise, se demandant de toute évidence ce qui les attendait, tandis que d'autres affichaient des airs de dur à cuire. En revanche, il y avait, chez un ou deux d'entre eux, quelque chose qui me frappa. Ils étaient différents. Non seulement il était évident qu'ils savaient s'asseoir en zazen, et qu'ils avaient déjà pratiqué pendant un certain temps, mais aussi il émanait d'eux un air de sincérité. L'un des deux me regardait sans broncher, ni embarrassé, ni hostile, ni dur. Depuis, j'ai appris à connaître et à admirer cet homme et je ressens beaucoup d'affection pour lui. Quand je l'ai rencontré la première fois, en 1988 je crois, il avait déjà pratiqué pendant plusieurs années et il avait, de toute évidence, bien pratiqué. Il faisait partie d'un groupe que j'ai aidé pendant deux ans. Il a ensuite été transféré ailleurs et ce n'est que récemment qu'il est revenu à Laval. Dans l'article que vous allez lire, il raconte son histoire avec une franchise et une absence de sentimentalité qui va droit au but comme une flèche. Avoir survécu, comme il l'a fait, aux rigueurs, aux dangers, aux humiliations et aux désappointements de la vie qu'il

a eu à vivre, l'avoir fait avec la dignité et l'humour qu'il possède, révèle chez-lui une force d'esprit dont bien peu peuvent se vanter. Pour moi, il est une source d'inspiration. Ceux d'entre vous qui se plaignent de la difficulté de la pratique, qui souhaiterait avoir une vie plus facile, je vous invite à réfléchir soigneusement à cet article.

Albert Low

A la suite d'une enfance difficile, à seize ans j'ai quitté le toit familial, prenant la décision de ne plus y remettre les pieds. J'ai commencé alors ma vie d'adulte en travaillant à différents endroits comme soudeur. Vers l'âge de vingt ans, j'ai eu une relation amoureuse tumultueuse qui se solda par une rupture douloureuse. Ce fut alors le ras-le-bol et je décidai de me joindre à un club de motards hors-la-loi. Violence, sexe, drogue et rock and roll seront désormais ma loi.

Quelques années plus tard, la mort d'un frère motard dans un stupide accident de moto fut le premier d'une série de coups du destin qui m'amènèrent à remettre bien des choses en question. Et cela même si auparavant j'avais perdu beaucoup d'autres frères dans une guerre avec une autre bande rivale. Mourir par balles est en effet plus naturel dans ce milieu que toute autre mort. De plus, il existe toujours une possibilité de vengeance pour oublier sa souffrance.

Alors les événements se bousculèrent : maladie, angoisse, désarroi total devant l'absurdité de la vie. Guerre à l'intérieur du clan, rencontres sanglantes, plusieurs morts. Arrestation, trahison, condamnation à la prison à vie sans possibilité de libération avant vingt-cinq ans. Mon petit monde s'écroule.

Au pénitencier, ma question existentielle continuait de me harceler: «Pourquoi la vie, pourquoi la mort?»

Feu éternel

Ton coeur laisse pénétrer la lumière
Lumière qui devient feu ardent
Qui au passage de la vie
Sait raviver le brasier dormant

De celui-ci s'élève une flamme timide
Qui au contact de ce feu, grandit et devient feu
Puis jaillissent de folles étincelles
Pour créer cette chaîne éternelle

On se laisse surprendre par cette magie
On en confond le début et la fin
Pourtant tout est là, dans sa densité
La VIE, la MORT, dans toute sa plénitude.

Louise Panneton

Je cherchais alors désespérément une bouée de sauvetage. Je me mis alors à la lecture sur la spiritualité, surtout celle qui avait inspiré tant de courage dans l'adversité à des guerriers tels que Miyamoto Musashi et Sitting Bull.

Il y avait un groupe de méditation Zen à l'intérieur des murs. Je m'y rendis et dès le premier soir, je ressentis une paix intérieure, une paix que jamais je n'avais ressentie de toute mon existence. Le groupe était guidé à l'époque par un moine Soto et par la suite Albert en a pris la relève.

Depuis, Albert, même à distance, est mon guide. Ses visites me sont précieuses, de vrais cadeaux inestimables de la vie.

Après bientôt douze années d'incarcération, la pratique en solitaire de la méditation m'a fait réaliser beaucoup sur moi-même et surtout de ne pas perdre de vue que la véritable liberté doit se conquérir de l'intérieur de soi. Que malgré le fait de mes trois pas devant et de mes deux pas derrière, le Bouddha nous a clairement indiqué la clé de la liberté pour retourner à la maison...

Merci Albert...
Merci à toute la Sangha.

Tokusan's Corner

Tokusan has visited other kitchens with his bowls. He went back often to the Rochester Zen Centre because their Sweet and Sour Lentils were positively spiritual!

4 cups large brown lentils
8 cups water
2-3 bay leaves
1/8 cup tamari
1 clove garlic
1 chopped onion
1/2 tsp. cloves
1/2 tsp. nutmeg
3/4 cup safflower oil
3/4 cup cider vinegar
3/4 cup honey

Wash lentils and make sure there are no stones. Soak lentils in plenty of water overnight.

Cook lentils with bay leaves and tamari for one half hour. Add remaining ingredients and simmer for a few hours. This recipe freezes very well.

Serve with cottage cheese, a steamed vegetable and a salad. It's worth going to sesshin for! Ask Tokusan!

Anita Décarie

Qu'est-ce que je fais ici?

“**T**he world is vast and wide, why do you put on your seven piece robe at the sound of the bell?”

Yes, why. What am I doing here?...

Qu'est-ce que je fais ici avec ma robe brune, agenouillé sur le tan à écouter un teisho de M.Low?

Montréal 1970, rue Ste-Catherine. J'erre un peu comme d'habitude après une session d'étude, avant d'aller travailler. Je ne peux m'en souvenir précisément, mais je crois que la question était déjà là à ce moment. Qu'est-ce que je fais ici à me promener, n'y a-t-il pas un but à la vie? Cette impression profonde qu'il doit y avoir une réponse à cette inquiétude qui gruge sans cesse. À ce moment pourtant, seule la recherche d'une profession importante semblait répondre à cette question.

Puis un jour où je bouquine chez Classic Book Shop, il y a un livre qui m'attire : *The Three Pillars of Zen* de Philip Kapleau. Le Zen, un nom que j'ai déjà entendu mais dont je ne connais absolument rien. Je feuillette et la curiosité aidant, j'achète le livre. Je l'ai lu d'un bout à l'autre. Puis je l'ai relu. Il y avait là quelque chose de très important, d'intrigant. Certaines personnes auraient, semble-t-il, cherché à répondre à cette même question «Qui suis-je?», et auraient même trouvé une réponse.

Voilà quelque chose d'extraordinaire. Ce livre ouvre un monde tout à fait différent, mystérieux et merveilleux. Deux parties me retiennent plus que les autres. D'abord la Prajna Paramita, texte qui me semble si obscur, mais possédant pourtant une clarté subtile et profonde, une sorte de “oui c'est ça” qui m'accroche profondément. Puis il y a les «Dix tableaux du bouvier». Encore là, quelque chose de spécial que je ne peux définir mais qui m'arrête, me retient. Il y avait à ce moment-là un groupe de méditation Zen affilié à l'université McGill. J'essaie un zazen de deux jours (sorte de sesshin de deux jours). Ouf, c'est très difficile... Il doit bien y avoir un moyen plus facile de se trouver une raison de vivre.

Puis, pendant une vingtaine d'années, je réussis à contourner la question. Notre fils, une maison, le travail qui prend plus de place, les concerts, le vélo,

une plus grande maison, le travail qui prend encore plus de place, le ski, et tout et tout. Pendant ce temps, un sentiment de plus en plus profond que non, ce n'est pas ça la vie, pas ça du tout. Mais le cirque continue, on ne débarque pas si facilement d'une hypothèque ou d'une plus belle auto. Alors je repousse le tout à plus tard. Parfois ça devient trop fort, alors quelques tentatives de méditation, vite abandonnées dans le quotidien. Puis le travail qui prend tout, absolument tout. Si j'y arrive, alors j'aurai enfin accompli quelque chose de valable; j'aurai réussi le grand projet, enfin quelque chose d'important. Mais évidemment, tout s'effrite, se désagrège; ça se cancelle toujours un grand projet dans une grande compagnie.

Après bien des années à me raconter des histoires et à ne pas y croire, je finis par ne plus savoir ce qui est important. Le travail fait de cette façon ne nourrit pas le coeur. Alors c'est le krach, la catastrophe, la débâcle; aucune raison pour me retenir à la vie. La maudite question qui me saute alors à la gorge. Mais qu'est-ce que je fous ici? Une question avec bien des tours dans son sac, une conviction profonde que je ne pourrai jamais la résoudre cette question, qu'il n'y a rien à faire.

Il fallait bien faire quelque chose pourtant, je coulais. Le quelque chose fut trois ans de thérapie pour trouver le courage de partir à la recherche de mes racines. Tout le temps cependant, cette conviction, souvent mise en doute par contre, que c'est dans le spirituel que je trouverai la réponse. Mais il y a une résistance énorme, j'ai rejeté tout ça il y a bien longtemps. Bon, refaire le chemin à l'envers. Pourquoi ai-je rejeté toute cette partie de moi? Puis, à travers les hauts et les bas de cette thérapie, je retrouve *The Three Pillars of Zen*. Je relis le livre au complet, mais une partie toute spéciale me retient, les «Dix tableaux du bouvier», et en particulier le dixième, ce sourire, cette liberté, peut-être que c'est possible...

Finalement, j'en suis venu à trouver ce qu'il fallait pour venir voir M.Low au Centre Zen de Montréal. Et c'est là que le travail a commencé, euh... continué.

“Today, we will take up and comment on Koan number 32 of the Mumonkan...”

...seen from youth

Recently the long lost 8mm home movie of my bar mitzvah party at the Kingsway Hotel in St. Louis in 1957 appeared mysteriously among the reels of old home movies at my aunt's house. I had to sound pleased with the news of its discovery, since my old father has bewailed its disappearance for years. We had all assumed that the film was discarded with many other precious family artifacts, abandoned by my mother and father both, when the house was sold at the time of their divorce in the mid-sixties.

I entered adolescence, the true terror of a middle west Jewish American fifties adolescence, as I lay in bed the night of my older cousin Bill's bar mitzvah party, and was suddenly seized with dread that when the time arrived in two years I would not be ready. There had been boys and girls at Bill's party, while I, I suddenly realized, had no friends to invite to mine, other than perhaps Irwin Veden, an old childhood playmate. How could I have been so oblivious to my situation?

Resolving to take my life in hand, the next day at school I «made friends» with Steve Zlutnick and went to his house that Saturday. He had made us chocolate pudding - had taken the trouble to do that - which seemed to indicate that he also wanted to be friends with me. In the end though, it was not a successful day. Manny Friedman came from next door with Jerry Sherp who was visiting him. We played basketball, two on two, but as I had no real experience or skill at the game, I only succeeded in humiliating myself.

Life became an ongoing self-conscious struggle, often on basketball courts, to be part of something I could only hate and fail at. At best I could maintain the facade of an acceptable self, a self that had friends and that fit in. And it was with that self-constructed self that I entered into the preparations for my bar mitzvah as my thirteenth birthday approached.

I was able to come up with an invitation list. Jerry Sherp, Manny Friedman, and Steve Zlutnick were on it, along with a respectable number of others, Bobby Seigelbaum, Aaron Lubin, Stevie Fischer, and girls: Linda Singleton, Roberta Kravitz, Andrea Licht, Martha Singer. As it turns out you don't need friends to send out an invitation list. These names were simply the usual roster of Hanley Junior High School luminaries. Enough showed up that night at the Kingsway ballroom that I was not embarrassed. They arrived, so it appeared to me, composed and comfortable, unlike myself, because these were the ones who were invited to all the bar mitzvahs. They were the popular kids.

At the time I first viewed the movies of my bar mitzvah party, I saw, and assumed everyone could see, that self-constructed self, pathetically trying to look as though I were having a good time, as though everything were normal. For two more years after that I held on, reading T.S. Eliot late into the insomniac nights and writing into a diary my interminable obsessive preoccupations with suicide and the meaninglessness of life, until finally I was admitted to Steinberg five, the psychiatric wing of the St. Louis Jewish Hospital at fifteen for a four month stay - years before pothead teenagers began filling up the psychiatric wards of U.S. hospitals in the sixties.

I considered just telling my dad that I really enjoyed seeing the video and thanks for sending it. I did not want to look again into that abyss.

Fortunately, though, I did look at it. My parents and relatives all look just as I remember them. I recognize Irwin Veden coming through the reception line with his mother, but the faces of the other kids are totally anonymous to me, except for Jerry Sherp, whom I recognize by his very high-bridged nose. The surprise to me was myself. I see a young, guileless, innocent kid, electric with energy. No sign of a facade, a false self, or the abyss.

Behind the jitterbugging couples, sit a row of girls waiting to be asked to dance. The boy, who was me, appears for just a moment in this scene, as though he were going to ask a girl to dance. He makes a quick movement of his head slightly to the side as the tip of his thumb reaches up to touch his forehead just at the hairline. He then turns and disappears out of the shot.

This sudden, reflexive gesture is graceful, in the way that young people can have a kind of exuberant awkward grace. Maybe at that moment I just couldn't face it. Whatever it was, in that particular gesture of putting my thumb to my forehead, I recognize myself, unmistakably.

So, fundamentally, I was there all along, without doing anything, and in everything I did. And yet, although I was always there, intact, what a struggle it was, and how necessary.

This sun in my eye

They tell me that this sun
is no sun,
this star but a star
of refracted light
many miles old, many years away.

old, old star of the universe
with your unreal light begging
the question of existence
your own life a mirage in the pupil of my mind.

tell me!
why then these vacuous clouds of doubt
to blot the final beauty of serene chaos?
tell me!
where to go when the going is a stopping!
show me!
what to do with these hot, killing questions?

this sun in my eye
your silent life and death trickery but
a call to walk the walk of the dead
in a life of now.

Karen Michèle Kimmett
sept. 1996

Musical Invitation

The sound of one bell
clapping, tapping
inviting three against two
or is it one within the all?

This kinhin beats a coda,
begins an overture of rounds
melting into spare movement.

Swirling, the dancing sensations beckon;
so seductively vibrant
but gone, quite gone in a flash
of the pre-dawn robin
singing in my ear.

Bow to him: that ear
that goes to live in the tree
where there is no song
of recognizable rhythm
beyond the counterpoint of death.

Look at it, he cries
Look! Wake up!
dance with your tongue
taste the fire in your eye.

The sound of one bell
crying an eternal invitation
to the soundless dance of suffering
few will dare to hear.

Karen Michèle Kimmett

Lessons from the Sea

The west coast of Scotland is a sailor's paradise. With hundreds of islands and numerous long sea-lochs that penetrate deep between the mountains, the coast offers a life-time of exploration. After a day of working through the Atlantic swell, a sailor in a small boat can find anchorage in a tiny bay. There a seal will eye you as you drop sails and early next morning you will wake to the imperceptible sound of a deer on the pebble beach.

I felt at home here, particularly in a small boat. You have to stay alert as navigation is sometimes tricky and the weather can change fast, but you are there among mountains, waves, and clouds. The mountains seem to drift. The clouds mutate. In a small boat, you have to accept the weather. If it blows, you reef down the sails and plunge through the waves. If it's calm, you wait and drift with the tide.

Waves bring action. The boat pitches and rolls. Jammed in the cockpit, hand on the tiller, I watch the waves. Although the sea is chaotic, some waves are large enough to have an identity at least for a short while. You can follow them by eye. Waves don't last long though. A wave grows, advances, and then fades as the wave behind takes over. (This is true for most sea waves. Small ripples, on the other hand, die in favour of a new ripple in front rather than behind.) A wave has a crest and a trough. It exists because of an exchange of energy, but the energy is not associated with that one wave. Any one wave is but a temporary manifestation of a shared energy.

Although sometimes exhausting, rough weather seems to bring life to the boat. When the wind dies to a dead calm, however, the atmosphere becomes unreal. The surface of the water takes on a glassy grey, half reflecting the vista of clouds above. I feel uneasy. The sails hang limp. No sound, just a creak in the woodwork of the boat. Nothing moves. I wait for sometime. I would not be surprised if the sea opened

up to engulf the boat. It is a relief when a breeze scurries across the surface and the sails tug the ropes.

Employed at a small marine laboratory, I studied the sea, and in particular currents, the movement of water. Little did I realize then that I was in fact searching for myself.

Sea currents transport heat, salts, plankton, fish larvae, and whatever is in the water. They are to the sea what the wind is to the air. There are two ways of studying sea currents. To get a feeling for this, imagine yourself as a scuba diver in the water. Now hang on to the anchor cable under the boat. The current drags your legs away. You have to hold on tight. If you stay there long enough, you notice that as the tide changes, the current slows and then reverses. You are, in a way, measuring the current at the anchor cable. To measure the current at any one place is the first approach. It gives us a temporal history of the current. It does not, however, tell us where the water comes from or goes to. To learn that, you have to let go the anchor cable and, without swimming, drift with the current. If the water is clear enough, you can now see the sea bottom moving under you. After a few hours, you may be several kilometers from where you started. You have moved but you have remained within the same body of water, at least in theory. This is the second approach.

Mathematically, the two approaches are different. Although each describes the same thing, the movement of water, the information available through each approach is different. Transferring from one to the other in mathematical terms is difficult and requires knowledge of both small and large scales at the same time. This is usually done numerically on a computer and each new computer that comes on the market offers the possibility of a better and more exact solution. The scientist can resolve a wider range of scales. But in fact, a complete solution cannot be had without, at the same time, resolving the smallest

detail and the whole ocean. This is an impossible task. No model can fully represent the sea except the sea itself. And this is the crux of the problem. A full understanding of what is happening around any one point cannot be had without knowing what is happening everywhere else in the ocean.

This was not just a theoretical problem. Looking back, I see now that much of my field work was an attempt to reconcile the two approaches. To understand the coastal currents, I needed both. To put them together, however, seemed beyond me. The two points-of-view were as two different worlds. I could work in one or the other, but not in both at the same time. Yet the more I concentrated on one, the more the other seemed attractive.

This problem frustrated me. Scientific ways, with techniques and reasoning, seemed to me useless. Now at a new federal research laboratory on the shores of the St. Lawrence estuary, I struggled to work but produced little. I no longer knew what science was all about. The sophisticated and expensive instrumentation required for research left me ill at ease. The laboratory took on the appearance of a prison. I had difficulty communicating with colleagues. At lunch time, I walked the deserted pier to watch the water. But even there, I found little peace. Why do science? What is it that science is trying to do? Is the aim simply to understand nature? But that seemed incomplete. There was something missing. An approximate understanding of the sea was interesting but not satisfying.

At about this time, a dedicated zen monk showed me how to sit on a zafu.

I tried directing my work towards the needs of a small coastal community, but my science brought no solution. Is it necessary to understand how nature works? Or can we live according to the way of nature by simply appreciating our environment?

For a while, I thought that just observing the water was sufficient. And indeed, it turns out that the behaviour of small waves is very sensitive to changes of water movement underneath. Simply watching the water can bring insights that no measuring device can give. By sitting on the water in a kayak, I was able to understand the currents, at least in part. This was it. Or was it? But no. The frustration did not disappear. I didn't even know what was niggling me. I was just struggling with the notion that my view of nature was not objective but rather very much a part of myself. This went against the grain of traditional "every-day" science which proposes that the matter

under study is outside and independent of the person.

I was then given the opportunity to teach. The new challenge and the human contact invigorated me. I had to relearn basic science and find ways of explaining in words notions that I had never really understood. Science took on a new meaning. It became a way of sharing an appreciation of nature. The more I taught, however, the more I became convinced that I had little or nothing to teach. I can show a student a few techniques, I can bring him down to the water, but it is the student himself that must touch the water.

Science is a disciplined way of studying the universe. We hope that the discipline leads to a certain coherence which in turn offers some confidence that our view of nature is reliable. We put our faith in the power of reasoning and observation. But this is only half the story. Science rarely works like that. It is more often a brief spark of understanding that must be reworked and reworked in order for it to become mature. As a student, I used to think that the meaning of science lay in the understanding attained. Now, it seems to me that its meaning lies as much in the practice itself as in the result. The science of a young student, hesitant and uncertain though it may be, is as valid and important as that of an seasoned expert. Both student and expert, by their study, participate intimately in nature itself.

Sometimes I want to give up science. I yearn to walk the shoreline without the obligations of working science, to admire the bubbles on the sea surface without having to explain the tides. Science is just one way of exploring nature. It can lead us to the most fundamental of questions, but there, even the most seasoned scientist is left in the lurch, abandoned.

The fundamental questions seem clearer now. I can pull them out from the others that haunt me. Or rather, the subsidiary questions seem to fall away. Why then do I continue to study the sea, modest though that study is? Why accompany young students on trips to sea? Why teach something that does not touch the essence? Why struggle with the confines of science when I want to be free? Can an artist go beyond the colours of the paints? Can a musician get his instrument to sing? Can an ordinary person open his being to the light of the world?

Recollections of Harada Roshi

excerpts from
The Autobiography of Daiun Sogaku

This article was first published in the Zen Bow, the magazine of the Rochester Zen Center, in 1975.

Introduction

Harada Roshi, whose Zen name is Daiun Sogaku, was Roshi Philip Kapleau's first teacher. He is recognized as one of the outstanding Zen masters of modern Japan. He died in December 1961, at the age of 91, after forty years as Master of Hosshinji monastery.

Harada Roshi entered a Soto temple at the age of seven and trained in that tradition throughout his school years. At twenty, he became a monk at Shogenji, in its time a great Rinzaï monastery. After more than two years of intense training there, he attained kensho. The first part of this article recalls this period at Shogenji.

Later, Harada Roshi became a student and then a professor at the Soto-sponsored Komazawa University. He continued his Zen training, coming to deep enlightenment under Dokutan Roshi at Nanzenji. Soon thereafter he accepted an invitation to become the Master of Hosshinji monastery. The second excerpt begins with the early days at Hosshinji.

First Kensho Experiences

I worked pretty hard to reach kensho. So my joy when I got it cannot be expressed through writing or talking. After being received by the Roshi in dokusan, I was so happy that on the way back I entered a bathroom and did a little dance by myself.

In those days everyone was working on the koan,

“What is the sound of one hand clapping?” (Sekishu) (1), and I also received this koan soon after I began the period of training at the temple. I felt I had put a lot of effort into it, for me, anyway. However, while Taigi Roshi was in charge I remained unable to resolve my koan; not until Doshu Roshi succeeded him did I finally do it. That was about two and a half years after I began my formal training.

As those who have practiced Zen in a monastery know, there are some who quickly come to kensho and others who just cannot get it. There are people who do it in one sesshin and people who can't do it even though they work hard for thirty or fifty years. There were even two laymen who awakened at the same time while listening to one of my lectures, when they saw me draw a circle on the blackboard. This was in the days when I lectured on Zen practice in Tokyo. Both were women, and one had done some zazen. But the other was a girl who had been urged by her parents to attend and had not once done zazen.

Even in former times there were those who attained satori at once and those who labored for dozens of years. This comes from the difference in the ripeness of everyone's karma of many lifetimes. Therefore, even if one cannot practice as strongly as one would wish in this life, being so fortunate as to have encountered the Great Dharma, one must strive to store up good Karma to the best of one's ability.

Although we make general statements about “kensho” or “satori”, there are, of course, great differences of depth. There are weak experiences of kensho which finally disappear if left as they are, and wonderful great satori that pierce to the bottom and open all barriers. Whatever kind of kensho it is, to reach that state in which one deeply knows that one knows, it is usual to experience hardships that another person could not know or be told.

As the expression “the great death and the great revival” signifies, thoroughly extinguishing the self which has craved and imagined since beginning-less time is not easily attained, and I went outside every night after bedtime to continue zazen. Sometimes I sat in the snow; sometimes I sat in the bamboo grove swarming with mosquitoes. I did zazen fiercely, and when I was giving it everything I had, neither the cold nor the bites of mosquitoes caused any difficulty.

I recall an interesting experience which occurred during zazen late one night (at Shogenji). It was a summer night before I had come to kensho. As usual, after bedtime I began to do zazen on a rock called the Imperial Messenger Rock in front of the main temple gate. Behind me four or five towering cedar trees rose into the darkness. In the dead of the night - it must have been around one or two a.m. - I was totally absorbed in my koan, “Sekishu, Sekishu...” Suddenly, from somewhere high up in the huge cedar trees, there was raucous laughter.

I started and thought to myself: “What on earth was that? Maybe it’s the *tengu* !” (2) They say that when the Dharma flourishes, evil spirits also flourish. I had previously heard that people practising at this temple had frequently had this experience, and that it was the work of the *tengu*. Though I was amazed it had come, I stayed calm and absorbed myself in zazen.

Some time passed, and then a thwacking sound began, as if trees were being cut with a large hatchet. I was still unconcerned, absorbed in “Sekishu”. However, the thwacking approached gradually, and then it began above my head. I didn’t care. I refused to deal with it. But the thwacking continued, became increasingly acute, and even I began to feel a bit eerie. “Hey you!” I shouted back. With this, I had become involved - it was a complete defeat for me. There was no choice but to fold my mat and go to a different place, where I began to sit again.

As described fully in my training manual, *Instructions for Correct Zazen*, when Zen

concentration advances various makyō occur. When everyone talks together after sesshin many tales of interesting makyō come out. No matter what kind of interesting, welcome, or terrifying thing appears, one should never become involved with it. It should not be a hindrance either. Neither becoming involved nor being disturbed, one should let nature take its course and just stay absorbed in regular zazen. Despite my weapon of zazen, I was totally defeated by that makyō.

As time passed after that first ecstatic kensho I became uncertain, and my peace of mind faltered. Aiming towards the second kensho, I once again decided to work hard. I had heard, “Practice amidst activity is a billion times greater than practice in quiet.” Whether I was quiet or active, awake or asleep, I allowed no separation from my koan.

One morning I set out early with four or five fellow monks to go on takuhatsu in the countryside. The first household we approached for takuhatsu was still asleep, so we gathered fallen leaves and made a fire in the precincts of a shrine on the way. As we warmed our bodies the morning light increased, and one by one we split up and went on. As I neared a farmer’s house, directly ahead of me I saw an old woman relieve herself by the front door and go back inside. I then approached and called out: “Takuhatsu from Shogenji.”

While I waited for the people from the house to get up and bring some rice, I couldn’t help glancing at the old woman’s urine. I saw the bubbles moving round and round and just then I had a second kensho. With these experiences I felt at ease for the first time. Long afterward, when I was practising in Kyoto, there were two or three more.

Hosshinji Monastery

The Hosshinji which I entered in those days was far smaller than it is now. Many of the present buildings did not exist: the study, the monks’ quarters, lecture hall, Founder’s hall, memorial tablet sanctuary, and

the main hall. These all grew up step by step after I became Master. Originally, Hosshinji had been set up as a training monastery for monks (within Hosshin temple). During the period of my predecessor Master Daiei and his predecessor Master Senrei, it appears there were always four or five monk trainees. But the temple family did not keep the place up and it was a monastery in name only, with just the sign that stands in the same place today. There was indeed a zendo, but because it was old and dilapidated we rebuilt it. When I became Master there were at first about twenty novice monks. I can't quite remember what brought them there. I had been a professor at Komazawa University for a long time, so possibly the majority had been my students there.

When Hosshinji was at its height, from 1931-2 to 1942-3, usually sixty or seventy novice monks lived there, so our residents alone filled the zendo. Nonetheless, at sesshin many monks and laymen would come from every province in the country, and for the Rohatsu sesshin of certain years the group exceeded 120. No matter how much we packed them in, there was no way to further partition the zendo, so we had the older people sit in the monks' quarters next door.

To meet the expense of building a zendo we solicited donations from the temple followers throughout the area. The fact that the leaders of the collection were our own monks surprised and deeply impressed me. The monks went on takuhatsu, brought back the offerings, and we built a splendid zendo with just 13,000 yen in the currency of those days. However, even then that was a lot of money. I considered this a very important undertaking and wanted to have much built, but for some reason I couldn't bring myself to tell people what I had in mind.

I am grateful even now for the representative of the temple supporters, Mr. Sugida Yoko, who tackled the work head on. "Never mind the cost", he said, adding in a Mahayana spirit, "If just one person comes out of

that zendo with kensho, the task will have been of immeasurable value." The head carpenter responsible for the construction was handling this kind of work for the first time, and he too worked hard. I remember with sadness how he became ill as soon as it was finished. Treatment was of no avail and he died, having exhausted all his energy, it seems.

Afterward, however, far more than just one person came to kensho. In rapid succession there were more kensho experiences than could be counted. If one adds the number of monks and laymen who practiced here to the number of novice monks in residence, the figure is immense. In any case, during the thirty-year period from the founding to the present (1960) six week-long sesshin were held each year in April, May, June, October, November and December. The practice there was fierce enough to draw blood. There is enormous significance in the existence of this zendo. This may sound like boasting, but it is no exaggeration.

The high reputation of this fierce zendo is widespread even today, though the number of novice monks has dwindled considerably owing to general trends in the contemporary world.

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- (1) Sekishu, literally "one hand", is the nub of the koan.
 - (2) A *tengu* is a winged spirit with a long beak or snout.

Parler avec le coeur...

Leonard Cohen, artiste d'origine canadienne, pratique le Zen depuis de nombreuses années. Cet article présente un extrait d'une entrevue publiée dans le journal La Presse en décembre 1994.

Vous êtes juif. Votre famille était-elle très engagée d'un point de vue religieux?

C'était une famille merveilleuse. Plus je vieillissais, plus je respecte et apprécie mon éducation religieuse. Personne ne m'a jamais dit qu'il y avait un dieu, ni ce qu'il voulait, ni ce que je devais faire pour ne pas le mécontenter. On m'a dit que mon oncle se mettrait en colère si je n'allais pas à la synagogue, mais pas que cela me vaudrait la fureur divine. Mon éducation religieuse comportait des traditions, de la chaleur, de la fraternité, une hiérarchie, de l'ordre, beaucoup de musique et de beauté, mais pas de théologie.

Que vous en reste-t-il?

C'est difficile à dire. Je nage dedans comme un poisson, je ne connais pas d'autre océan. Rien n'en a disparu, tout est intact - c'est mon corps spirituel. J'ai d'autres intérêts, d'autres recherches, je vis dans un monastère zen, mais rien de cette expérience n'a disparu.

Vous vivez dans un monastère zen?

Depuis quelques années, dans la montagne, à 2000 mètres d'altitude, à deux heures au sud-est de Los Angeles. Bien sûr, je redescends de temps à autre pour mes affaires en ville.

Quand, en Europe, on utilise le terme "monastère", on imagine une architecture magnifique, de la pierre vieille de plusieurs siècles. En fait, c'est une ancienne colonie de 25 ans. Ce sont des baraques de bois toutes simples. Quand j'y suis allé la première fois, il n'y avait que des dortoirs. Maintenant que je suis plus vieux, on me laisse utiliser la cabane des invités de passage, qui a une salle de bains. J'y suis seul, un peu à l'écart, ce qui me permet de brancher mon synthétiseur et de jouer. C'est grand comme ça. (D'un

geste, il désigne une petite portion de la suite d'hôtel où a lieu l'interview. L'espace qu'il indique fait à peu près trois mètres sur cinq.)

Ce qui surprend dans vos écrits comme dans vos chansons, c'est l'empreinte du christianisme et de Jésus. Comme si vous étiez un juif de foi chrétienne.

J'ai toujours aimé le Christ, du jour où je l'ai rencontré, le jour où j'ai ouvert l'autre partie du Livre, le Nouveau Testament. Mon cœur a aussitôt accepté ce personnage si radicalement différent de tous les leaders religieux qui l'ont précédé et suivi. Il s'est lié si intimement à ceux qui étaient vaincus - le criminel, la prostituée. Imaginons aujourd'hui un homme venant et proclamant: " Je suis avec les gosses qui fument du crack, je suis avec les gamins de gangs, je suis avec les délinquants." C'est une position d'un radicalisme qui, même de nos jours, est absolu. Prenez le Sermon sur la montagne: en deux mille ans, il n'y a aucun leader - religieux, politique, philosophique - qui a pu seulement commencer à pénétrer le mystère de ce sermon, à élucider le paradoxe de cette position qui est au-delà de notre compréhension.

Et du Christ au zen...

Le zen n'est pas une religion. Je suis né dans une religion qui me convient parfaitement, le judaïsme. Et je n'en cherche pas d'autre. Il n'y a pas de dieu, de cosmogonie, de prière dans le zen. C'est un entraînement qui peut illuminer le bouddhisme comme le christianisme ou le judaïsme. C'est une forme très particulière de transmission de maître à élève, qui n'est incompatible avec aucune forme de recherche spirituelle. (...) De toute façon, je sais peu de choses du zen. J'étudie avec mon maître depuis 25 ans, je ne sais pas à quel point il représente l'orthodoxie zen. D'ailleurs, je m'en fiche. Je ne sais même pas si je peux me qualifier de bouddhiste zen.

Ce que je sais, c'est qu'avec mon maître, j'ai appris un certain nombre de choses intéressantes, qui m'ont permis de rester en vie à certains moments où je craignais le pire.

Vous avez beaucoup cité la Bible dans vos chansons. Est-ce dans une perspective purement spirituelle ou est-ce une source pratique de métaphores sur l'homme et la société?

A une époque, c'était pratique, jusqu'à ce que la société se désintègre jusqu'à l'état dans lequel elle est aujourd'hui. Dans ces années-là, on pouvait utiliser les derniers râles d'un langage commun à tous. Aujourd'hui, (...) le niveau d'ignorance est tel que l'essentiel de la culture du passé a disparu. (...) La vitesse à laquelle nous avons détruit le passé est hallucinante.

Vous le regrettez?

Non. Les cultures humaines changent, et l'on peut trouver que cela va trop vite, que l'on a plus rien à quoi se raccrocher. Mais il faut accepter la désintégration de ce sur quoi on fondait sa vie. C'est l'obligation première de l'âge mûr: à partir d'un certain moment, on ne peut plus dépendre d'une culture, et il faut affronter l'effondrement avec nos propres possibilités. C'est ce que j'encouragerais à faire si je n'avais une complète réticence à donner des conseils. (...)

Avez-vous le sentiment que vos chansons aient été comprises comme vous le souhaitez?

Les choses s'effondraient et personne ne me croyait. Pendant longtemps, on m'a traité d'aberration, de monomane, de militant de la dépression. Dans la période la plus optimiste qui soit, seul parmi tous les chanteurs, Leonard Cohen disait tout ne va pas si bien, tout n'est pas merveilleux. Dans les années 60, lorsque l'on découvrait toutes libertés, je disais que nos psychismes ne supporteraient pas tant de libertés, que les hôpitaux psychiatriques allaient se remplir. Je sentais que venait le Déluge, qu'il nous serait impossible de survivre.

Quelque chose agissait, comme un cercle mystérieux, qui lorsqu'il s'est brisé a produit une énorme angoisse, cette immense catastrophe dans laquelle nous sommes aujourd'hui. Dès que je l'ai senti, je l'ai écrit. J'étais riche, je ne souffrais d'aucune maladie, j'avais une famille, mais j'étais submergé par l'angoisse. (...)

À la chute du Mur de Berlin, j'ai dit : nous entrons dans une incroyable période de chaos, chacun se jettera à la gorge de l'autre. On a dit : «Qu'est-ce qui arrive à ce type? Il n'est jamais heureux?», parce que je chantais «J'ai vu le futur, baby, c'est un massacre».

Aujourd'hui, le massacre est là, et il va encore s'étendre. Si le Mur est tombé, c'est qu'il n'était pas assez haut pour nous protéger de ce qui allait arriver. Ce n'était qu'un mur enfant : on pouvait voir au-dessus. Nous allons maintenant construire des murs encore plus hauts, électroniques. Et nous ne verrons plus ce qui se passe en Yougoslavie, et même ce qui se passe à l'autre bout de Paris. Voici ma nouvelle prophétie (silence, sourire). (...)

Vous êtes pour le moins « politically incorrect »...

Quand on est au milieu d'un déluge - et ce n'est pas une métaphore, nous vivons ce Déluge -, on s'accroche tous à un morceau de bois qui flotte. Quelle est alors l'attitude appropriée quand quelqu'un passe près de vous, sur un autre bout de bois? Décider de l'existence de Dieu ou de sa non-existence? Parler de la supériorité supposée de l'homme sur la femme? Savoir si l'on est conservateur ou libéral?

Vous avez 60 ans cette année. Quel effet cela fait-il?

Les gens aiment ce genre de symbole. Tant qu'on est en bonne santé, vieillir est une expérience intéressante - bien sûr, si vous déclinez, que vous mourrez, cela n'a rien d'excitant. On vous traite avec plus de respect, les femmes n'attendent pas de vous autant qu'avant, on vous écoute en tenant compte du fait que vous devez quand même savoir une ou deux choses.

Justement, que savez-vous?

La seule chose qui vaille la peine d'être apprise, c'est de parler avec le cœur. Comme le dit mon vieux maître, «plus l'on est vieux, plus l'amour que l'on réclame doit être profond».

Et recevez-vous ce que vous réclamez?

Oui. Toutes les relations s'approfondissent, même pour acheter des cigarettes au kiosque du coin de la rue.

Vous sentez-vous toujours seul?

De plus en plus seul. Et c'est pourquoi à mon âge on a besoin, pour survivre, d'un amour plus profond encore.

Seriez-vous devenu plus sage?

Non. Quand on vieillit, l'éventail s'élargit ; on devient plus sage et plus stupide, plus sobre et plus ivre, plus amoureux et plus seul. Tout est pour moi si ouvert, si vaste.

Une Première sesshin de trois jours

Chers amis, lecteurs pratiquants de zazen, j'espère vous aider en vous démontrant ici qu'il y a plus mal pris et plus fou que vous dans notre démarche commune et que, par conséquent, tous les espoirs vous sont permis.

J'appréhendais terriblement la première sesshin car, bien que je me fusse pratiqué pendant des tonnes de sable au sablier, je n'avais jamais fait trois jours consécutifs. Déjà que les dimanches j'utilisais tout mon petit change, je me disais alors que pour trois jours, il me faudrait bien une carte de crédit.

C'est que chez-moi aussi et surtout, tous les symptômes névrotiques se sont donnés rendez-vous. Et sans vouloir me distinguer, je vous en donne des exemples : lordose-cyphose au dos, système osseux arthritique, foie dérégulé avec crises d'hyperventilation, asthme, claustrophobie et hypocondrie. Des genoux et un dos en perpétuelle convalescence d'accidents antérieurs. Je suis aussi l'exemple type du parfait distrait, caractère évaporé, inattentif et lunatique à l'imagination débordante et franchement incompatible à tout zendo.

Après ce bref constat médical qui doit vous faire penser à du Woody Allen, vous comprendrez que je dûsse faire quelques exercices de préparation pour la sesshin qui approchait à grands pas et où je m'étais inscrit dans un moment de grande foi.

En fait, mon naturel craintif m'a donné suffisamment d'adrénaline pour entamer un programme à la Rocky Balboa. "Push-up", "Set-up", assouplissements dans tous les sens, deux heures de zazen tôt le matin, quelques séances prolongées durant la soirée et deux nuits blanches en zazen solitaire dont une, dans une maison hantée et reconnue comme telle par plusieurs! Car, dans mon zèle à affronter mes peurs, il me semblait utile de joindre l'utile à l'agréable, et de me pointer à minuit dans une maison où la nuit les houlements, sillements et craquements suffisent à ne pas faire de bravades inutiles.

J'en ai retenu la loi suivante : dans un corps donné, les "fantômes" disparaissent inversement-proportionnellement à la croissance de la douleur aux jambes et au dos. Ces douleurs sont, pour ainsi dire, parmi nos meilleurs alliées anti-fantasmagoriques. Alors, pendant trois jours, je m'en suis souvenu.

Cette sesshin fut franchie physiquement avec succès! Et pour la pratique? Comment oserais-je écrire, un seul mot et tout est faux. Mettre ou commettre sur papier une idée, un sentiment, c'est poser par manque son contraire. Amis lecteurs, mon avis est que nous sommes silence et tous ces mots sont encre et stylo. Rien ne nous distingue plus qu'un seul mot. Pardonnez-moi d'en avoir écrit quand même. J'espère que vous ne les avez pas lus. Amitié.

Thank You!

Dear Sangha,
A big thankyou for the wonderful surprise birthday party - the candles, the cakes, the presents, and all the smiling faces. Thank you for all the hugs and kisses, the cards you sent and all the good wishes. It will be a birthday to remember.

We had a luxurious week at the Blue Roof Hotel - with ten dalmations to keep us company! I have already spent some happy hours at Chapters among the art books and am looking forward to more such visits. And to say I am looking forward to using my gardening bench under a warm sun, amidst the flowers, would be a major understatement! Thank you all for your kindness and generosity,
Jean.

Merci à la Sangha

Un gros merci pour le magnifique party d'anniversaire - les chandelles, les gâteaux, les cadeaux et toutes les figures souriantes. Merci pour les étreintes, les baisers, les cartes et tous les bons souhaits. C'est un anniversaire dont je me souviendrai.

Nous avons eu une semaine somptueuse à l'hôtel Blue Roof - avec 10 dalmatiens pour nous tenir compagnie! J'ai déjà passé plusieurs heures plaisantes à bouquiner parmi les livres d'art à la librairie Chapters et je compte bien y retourner encore plusieurs fois. Et si je vous disais que j'attends avec impatience le moment d'utiliser mon banc de jardinage sous un soleil chaud, au milieu des fleurs, ce serait là bien au-dessous de la vérité! Merci à tous et à toutes pour votre gentillesse et votre générosité,
Jean

1997

Février

Samedi 8	Atelier
Dimanche 9	Séance d'une journée
Mercredi 12, 19	Cours pour les débutants
Vendredi 14 - 21	Sesshin de sept jours

Mars

Mercredi 5, 12	Cours pour les débutants
Samedi 15	Atelier
Dimanche 16	Séance d'une journée
Mercredi 19, 26	Cours pour les débutants
Jeudi 27 - 31	Sesshin de quatre jours

Avril

Mercredi 2, 9	Cours pour les débutants
Vendredi 17 - 20	Sesshin de trois jours
Samedi 26	Journée de travail
Dimanche 27	L'assemblée générale

Mai

Samedi 3	Atelier
Dimanche 4	Séance d'une journée
Mercredi 7, 14, 28	Cours pour les débutants
Vendredi 16 - 23	Sesshin de sept jours

Juin

Mercredi 4	Cours pour les débutants
Vendredi 6 - 8	Sesshin de deux jours
Jeudi 19 - 22	Sesshin de trois jours

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September

Thurs eve 28 -1 sept	Four day sesshin
Saturday 13	Workshop
Sunday 14	One day sitting
Wednesday 17, 24	Beginners' Course

October

Wednesday 1, 15	Beginners' Course
Friday eve 3 - 10	Seven day sesshin
Saturday 18	Workday
Saturday 25	Workshop
Sunday 26	One day sitting
Wednesday 29	Beginners' Course

November

Wednesday 5, 12, 19	Beginners' Course
Thursday eve 6 - 9	Three day sesshin
Saturday 22	Workshop
Sunday 23	One day sitting
Thursday 27 - 30	Kingston

December

Friday eve 5 - 12	Seven day sesshin
Wednesday 31 (8pm - midnight)	New Year's Eve ceremony

Les jours et les mois sont les voyageurs de l'éternité. De même les années qui passent... J'ai moi-même été longtemps tenté par le vent qui entraîne les nuages, pénétré d'un immense désir d'errance... J'ai marché à travers brumes et nuées, respiré l'air raréfié des hautes altitudes, glissé sur la neige et la glace jusqu'à ce qu'enfin, à travers ce qui semblait être une arche de nuages jusqu'aux chemins mêmes du soleil et de la lune, j'atteigne enfin le sommet, hors d'haleine et presque mort de froid. Bientôt le soleil se coucha et la lune apparut, scintillante, dans le ciel.

Basho
(La route étroite vers le Grand Nord)
