

ZEN GONG

Volume 13, Numéro 1

Mai 2005



« L'homme est visiblement fait pour penser ; c'est toute sa dignité et tout son mérite, et tout son devoir est de penser comme il faut. Or l'ordre de la pensée est de commencer par soi, et par son auteur et sa fin. »

« Les hommes n'ayant pu guérir la mort, la misère, l'ignorance, ils se sont avisés, pour se rendre heureux, de n'y point penser. »

« La seule chose qui nous console de nos misères est le divertissement, et cependant c'est la plus grande de nos misères. Car c'est cela qui nous empêche principalement de songer à nous... Sans cela nous serions dans l'ennui, et cet ennui nous pousserait à chercher un moyen plus solide d'en sortir. »
(Pascal)

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À NOTER : LE ZEN GONG NE PREND PLUS D'ABONNEMENTS.

La revue est disponible dans certaines librairies de Montréal, entre autres, aux librairies Boule de Neige et Nouvel Âge, rue Saint-Denis.

Éditorial

Nous revoici après plus d'un an d'absence. Au cours de cette dernière année, s'il n'y a pas eu de revue, il y a eu toutefois la publication de deux brochures de teishos d'Albert Low, l'une en français et l'autre en anglais, et il y en aura d'autres dans l'avenir. Nous avons aussi l'intention de continuer à réaliser d'autres projets spéciaux.

Ainsi donc, la publication de la revue se poursuit. Nous ne garantissons pas la régularité qu'elle a eue par le passé, mais il y aura certainement un numéro par année. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous mettons un terme aux abonnements. Les personnes de l'extérieur du Centre qui désireront se procurer le Zen Gong pourront le faire se rendant à certaines librairies où la revue est déposée.

Quant au contenu, nous allons tenter, dans la mesure du possible, de privilégier les numéros thématiques. Nous croyons que c'est un moyen efficace pour permettre aux membres d'approfondir la réflexion sur leur pratique, ce qui constitue une des raisons d'être de notre revue. L'autre raison étant d'offrir un lieu de rencontre et d'expression. En particulier pour les membres qui vivent loin de Montréal, la revue est une occasion de maintenir le contact et de sentir qu'ils font partie d'une communauté.

Nous sommes ouverts aux suggestions. Ceux ou celles qui désirent offrir leur collaboration à la revue, qui ont des talents particuliers pour la photographie, l'illustration, la traduction ou l'écriture, ou encore qui seraient prêts à transcrire des teishos pour nous, n'hésitez pas à nous le faire savoir. Nous souhaitons la bienvenue à notre nouveau collaborateur à la mise en page, Djamel Kacel. À tous, bonne lecture. ✽

From the Editor

Here we are, back again after more than a year. Although the journal has not appeared during the last year, two brochures of Albert Low's teishos have been published - one in English and one in French - and more will be published in the future. In addition, we have other special projects under way.

So the journal will continue to be published, and although we do not guarantee the journal will appear with the same regularity as in the past, at least one issue will come out each year. Subscriptions are therefore no longer available. People who are not members of the Centre have access to issues of the Zen Gong at certain bookshops to which issues of the journal are sent.

Our aim in future issues is to organise content around specific themes. We consider this to be useful to members to encourage reflection on their practice. This is, in fact, one of the reasons the journal exists. The other reason is to offer members an opportunity to express themselves and exchange views, especially for those of us who live outside Montreal and for whom the journal is a way of maintaining contact and feeling part of the community.

We welcome your ideas and suggestions. You wish to help with the magazine and are skillfull in photography, illustration, translation or writing? Or you could offer a few hours to transcribe teishos? Please, let us know. We are pleased to have a new helper for the layout. Welcome to Djamel Kacel. And to everyone of you, welcome back! ✽

Creative thinking

By Albert Low

One often hears people say, «I wish I were a creative person,» «How can I be more creative.» Or even, «She is lucky, she is very creative.» The implication seems to be that creativity is a special faculty or aptitude that some people have but the rest of us lack. I would like to show that life is a creative process and that we are always faced with creative possibilities. Unfortunately the way we think obscures this truth and so we constantly miss these opportunities. The consequences of this are not simply that we live impoverished lives, but also that unless we learn to think creatively our very way of life may be put in jeopardy.

Creativity, choice and calculation

During the renovations of a building that we were going to use as a meditation hall at the Montreal Zen Center, we found that we had to rebuild the staircase as the dimensions of the existing one did not conform to the building code. Yet, if we built it according to the code, it would have to go through the facing wall, which was quite impractical. But, if we did not build it according to the code, the building inspector would not approve the construction. What could we do?

The first problem that we had to deal with when we were thinking about rebuilding the staircase was to calculate how high the stairs had to go, how many stairs would be needed to go that high and how much ground space would be necessary to accommodate that number of stairs. After deciding how to build the staircase we would then need to decide the materials that we would use, whether, for example, to use a hard wood, like oak, or a soft wood, like pine.

This meant that we had problems of three different kinds: the first called for a creative solution, the other two did not. One of these two was solved by a simple calculation; the other called for a choice. Why did the first require a creative solution while the others did not?

Calculation gives a right or wrong answer; a creative solution does not. We could have put in a spiral staircase, although this would have had to been made of metal and would not have been very aesthetic. We thought of putting the staircase in another part of the building altogether, but logistically this would have created a number of difficulties. We could have done away with the staircase altogether and put in a small elevator. This would have been too costly. All of these are creative suggestions and each could, at a stretch, have been used. So a creative solution cannot be judged according to whether it is right or wrong, but only according to how appropriate it is.

Another difference between arriving at a solution through calculation and creativity is that with calculation we follow a set procedures such as addition, multiplication, subtraction or division to reach the solution. We knew that the height of each stair must be eight inches, and the tread or depth of the stair must be ten inches. The code specifies these dimensions. To obtain the number of stairs that we needed to install, we simply measured how high the stairs had to go to reach the next floor and divide that height by eight inches. To calculate how deep the staircase had to be we multiplied the number of stairs we

needed by ten inches. This is a straight-forward calculation taught early in grade school. On the other hand, when I create I have no procedure by which to arrive at a solution, nor can anyone teach me such a procedure.

Choosing and creating are very similar, but again we find a crucial difference. No set procedure exists that I must follow in making the choice. When choosing some material for the stairs I do not try to make a right choice, but, once more, I try to make an appropriate one. I would use the same criteria in making the choice as I would use when considering a creative solution : cost, convenience, aesthetics, and durability, among others. So while the difference between a solution based on calculation and one based on creativity is quite obvious, the difference between choice and creativity is not so clear.

The dilemma

Perhaps the difference becomes more obvious if I say that creativity is required when we are confronted by a dilemma rather being faced by a problem. Choice, on the other hand, is more concerned with a problem. When I am confronted by a dilemma I am 'damned if I do, and damned if I do not.' If I built according to the code, I would be damned, because the staircase would have to go through the facing wall; if I did not build according to the code I would be damned, because the building inspector would not agree with what I have done. I have to choose between the two alternatives; but I cannot choose one alternative over the other. I do not encounter this dilemma when I make a choice. Suppose that oak or pine are the only kinds of wood available that I can use for making the stairs. Let us say that these two are all that the store has in stock. Again I have to choose between two alternatives -- oak instead of pine, or pine instead of oak. But this time

I can choose between the two; nothing stops me in the way that I am stopped by the other horn of a dilemma.

Gregory Bateson, who wrote on a variety of subjects, coined the expression a double bind. He used a Zen koan as an example of what he meant by that expression. Zen koans are those enigmatic sayings and doings of Zen masters that people practicing Zen use as a basis for their spiritual work. The koan that Bateson used was the following. A Zen master held up a stick and said to his disciples, «If you say this is a stick I will give you thirty blows; if you say it is not a stick I will give you thirty blows. Now, what is it?»

Perhaps the most obvious example of a double bind is a joke. The following announcements appeared on the bulletin boards of various churches.

- Tuesday at 4.00 pm there will be an ice cream social. All ladies giving milk will please come early.
- This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.
- This afternoon there will be a meeting in the South and North ends of the church. Children will be baptized at both ends.

Each of these statements can be read in two equally valid ways. You have to choose one over the other, but, initially at least, you cannot choose one over the other.

A dilemma that most adolescents encounter is the freedom/security dilemma. On the one hand the child wants to be free of restraint to do as he pleases; on the other hand he wants the security of the home. Another dilemma that we all face is both wanting to be unique, separate, distinct, yet we also

want to be part of a group, to fit in and go along with the crowd. Another set of dilemmas is given to us in this form. If you want A you have to give up B; yet B in its own way is as attractive as A. The young woman knows that if she gives her affection to this man, she will have to deny it to all the others. Yet among all the others there may be just the right man. If I take this job, then all the other jobs are denied me. We have a saying that sums this all up very well «He wants to have his cake and eat it.»

We often think that we are faced with choices when in fact we are faced with dilemmas, although the one horn of the dilemma may not be presented to us as clearly as the other. In this case only later, sometimes even after we have made a decision, do we realize that we in fact were faced with a dilemma and not a choice. One of the reasons that most of us do not trust politicians is that we believe that they are faced with choices when in fact they are caught up in dilemmas.

We are taught to choose good over bad and none of us has too much difficulty with this. And yet so often we are not faced with this choice but the dilemma: the good or the good. The arguments that rage over the question of abortion give a good example of what I mean. On the one hand are the people who advocate the right to life. Without a doubt their stand is ethically a very good one. On the other hand are those who advocate freedom of choice. Undoubtedly there are occasions when a woman feels that it were best if she aborted the baby. Good ethical arguments can be given for this stand also. A story is told of a judge who, after hearing the case for the prosecution, said, «You're right!» Then after hearing the case for the defense said, «You're right!» The clerk of the court leapt up and said, «M'lord, they both can't be right!» «You're right!» said the judge. What is interesting

is that people on each side of a dilemma so often deny that others on the other side have a good basis for their choice. In the Israeli–Palestine conflict both have right on their side. Yet the tendency is for the one to demonize the other. Why do we do this? Why do we fall back on calling the other side evil when the conflict arises out of the clash not of good and evil, but of good and good?

Thinking and creativity

Many sound sociological, psychological and religious reasons could be put forward to explain this tendency. Even so I believe that one single root feeds all of these other reasons. We are taught that we can only be faced with problems or choices. This means that dilemmas and ambiguities, a close relation of dilemmas, do not, or, perhaps, should not exist. A writer, Andrew Flew¹, in a classic book on thinking says, «to tolerate contradiction [ambiguity] is to be indifferent to truth... whenever and wherever I tolerate self-contradiction, then and there I make it evident, either that I do not care at all about truth, or that at any rate I do care about something else more.»

Flew is saying what almost any thinking person would say, because he and they all subscribe to what is often called classical logic. Although most everyone subscribes to this logic, few do so knowingly and consciously. Nevertheless the principles of this logic are all spelled out clearly in any elementary course in philosophy and logic, and they seem to be so self evident that they cannot possibly be doubted. The first of these is that everything is equal to itself. In other words an apple is an apple. From this comes -- as a natural consequence -- either it is or it is not an apple. This leads to a third principle: it cannot both be an apple and not an

apple. We all act, mostly unconsciously, on the basis of these principles and take them completely for granted, even though most of us would be surprised were we to be told that we do so. Yet, thinking or acting according to these principles severely inhibits creativity.

There are many ways of looking at and thinking about creativity. Let me state as simply as I can what I mean by the word. Creativity can occur when a single idea is held in two contradictory frames of reference. As an example of what I mean, let me return to the staircase. The two contradictory frames of reference are the building code and the available space in which the staircase can be built. The single idea is the idea of the built staircase. Let us remember what Flew said, «to tolerate contradiction is to be indifferent to truth.» Yet to be creative one must 'tolerate contradiction.' This is why I said that the way we think is a serious obstacle to creative thought. To be creative we have to put aside, or overcome our usual ways of thinking.

Not only does the way we think inhibit our creativity, but it also has us believe that confrontation and conflict are the real ways to resolve disagreements. While it is true that we do compromise or find creative ways to resolve our disagreement, we often do so in spite of the firm belief that either you have to be right or I have to be right. We frequently

have some feeling that our compromise and creative solutions are in some way a failure to really get at and resolve the real problem. Our way of thinking also pushes us into believing that all problems are capable of solution, even though not infrequently we are faced with dilemmas and not problems. The abortion argument is a case in point. We cannot resolve it by saying this is right and that is wrong.

Thinking things



Yet another serious consequence of the way we think is that as we think about the world so we see the world, and as we see the world so we think and speak about it in that way. I said that the first principle is an apple is an apple. From this we naturally infer that an apple is something. Yet, as is obvious, an apple at 8.00 in the morning is not the same as an apple a 5.00 in the afternoon, if for no other reason than it is nine hours older. The French philosopher, Henri Bergson, said that all

is change. He emphasized that he did not mean that things change, but that things are change. We somehow feel that it is the *same* apple, even if it is nine hours older, and yet this firm belief comes from the way we think, not the way the world is. *Thinking in this way* we see the world simply as a collection of things, and see ourselves as some of the things in the world.

The alternative, that there are no things, seems quite a weird idea. Yet the Israelites did not have a word for «thing,» the nearest that they got to what we mean by the word thing is *dabhar*, which is translated as «the power behind that drives forward.» One of the basic ideas of Buddhism is *anicca*, which means 'no-thing.' A Zen Buddhist master is famous for having said, «From the beginning not a thing is,» and Zen Buddhism is the practice of seeing 'things' as empty or seeing the no thingness of things.

One might wonder how seeing the world as a collection of things or believing that everything is what it is has to do with creativity. When I encountered the problem of the staircase I encountered something fixed, given to me to work with: stairs of a given dimension, and a given dimension of space into which the staircase must fit. I could definitely not do any thing about the dimensions of the stairs. Perhaps I could do something about the space. In a moment of inspiration I thought, «Why not bring the floor down to the height that the stairs could reach?» This seemed to be an absurd solution because I could not help thinking about the situation in terms of what was given. Then the next piece of the puzzle fell into place: build a landing, put in a couple of stairs down to the landing, and then the floor is, in a way, lowered. While it is true this is not a very profound example of creativity, nevertheless it makes the point that one way to be creative is to break up that first principle: everything is what it is which has

implicit in it everything *must be* as it is. When we say an apple is an apple we forget that that is the way we think about the apple. We then come to believe that that is how the apple is and must be; that too is how the world is and must be. People have come up with many ways to stimulate creativity such as 'thinking outside the box,' brainstorming, and lateral thinking, among others. Most of these encourage us to challenge the way we habitually think.



I believe that the way we think about the world, about each other and about ourselves profoundly affects the way we behave and respond to each other. Suppose I were to introduce you to a man but before doing so I should say, «Watch out for this guy. He is a shifty character and you have to be careful of him.»

Do you not feel that you would see him quite differently than if I were to say, «The man that I am introducing you to can be trusted. He is an old friend of the family and I have full faith in him»? If we think that we and others are things, objects in the world, then will we not also tend to behave toward others and ourselves in a particular way; if we see others and ourselves as sensitive, open, living beings, will we not behave quite differently. Centuries of conditioning and stereotyping in a negative way made the holocaust possible. If we see others as subhuman then we will tend to treat them as subhuman. But before we see them in this way we must first think of them this way.

Cloning, stem cell research, organ transplants, cyborgs, genetic engineering, artificial intelligence – in fact all of modern technology, seems to have created a world in which we only have a place in the world as objects, as things. With the recent success in mapping the human genome, and of genetic engineering generally, scientists now take it for granted that a material solution alone holds the promise of resolving the enigma of existence. I am told that that I am a machine, that I have no special place in the world. I am an accident, something that need never have been. Heaven is to be found in the imagination only, and God is long dead. Some leading scientists tell us that we are lumbering robots in the service of genes,² all our joys, hopes and fears are but the movement of molecules,³ that if we believe in a soul then it is time we grew up and became adults,⁴ that we are pure accidents that might well never have been,⁵ that we are but complicated computers destined to be surpassed by other more complicated computers,⁶ that when we die we die and that is the end of us.⁷

Modern theories of evolution are mainly responsible for our current attitude towards what it means to be human; that is to be machines. Before Darwin wrote his book, *The Origin of the Species*, we believed that each specie:-- cats, dogs, lions and tigers, whales and peacocks -- was created by God. It is not hard to see how our belief in the way we thought modified the way we saw creatures in the world. A dog is a dog in the same way that an apple is an apple. That is how it is, was and will be. It is not hard to see also that if that is how a dog is, it must have either sprung into being like that from nothing, or some power must have created it.

Beyond thought and things

We can now see that creativity is

not simply an attribute of some gifted human beings. We are all creative and our lives are suffused with creative possibilities. But even beyond that, all life is creative, and evolution a creative process. Darwin's genius was that he was able to look beyond things to see processes. Evolution is a process made possible because things are change, species are change, not things. Unfortunately those who have followed Darwin, with the exception of Henri Bergson, have reversed his revolution. Darwin wanted to change the way we think about life from a static, absolutist, fixed and thing-ridden way, to a dynamic, relative, flowing and process-dominated way. Now we are back again to a thing theory, the thing being the gene. While it is felt that change is possible, the change occurs to things, to genes. Moreover the change is wrought, not naturally in an orderly, systematic way, but by hazard, chance and luck. Mutations, which in a way are but diseases of the genes, interrupt the mechanical string of cause and effect, and this new disrupted state, if by chance it is able to survive, constitutes the new blueprint that a later organism has to comply with.

If an apple is an apple, change is only possible by something else making something happen to the apple. This is the principle of cause and effect. This principle is a direct result of the other principles of thought that we have been discussing, and indeed is sometimes looked upon as a fourth incontrovertible principle. This cause and effect principle led scientists to affirm, until quite recently, that the world was a vast interlocking set of causes and effects in the same way that a machine is a set of interlocking causes and effects.

One might object that the theory

of evolution has many dissenters and that alternatives are being offered all the time. While this may be true, the alternatives all seem to have a materialist foundation. This insistence upon materialism also comes from a failure to think creatively, a failure brought about again by the way we think. Two of the principles of thought say that it is either an apple or not an apple, and that it cannot both be an apple and not an apple. We must remember that these principles, for most scientists and philosophers, are not simply ways that we think about the world; they are also the way the world is. Because they are the way the world is, they cannot be changed or meddled with.

The materialist says that you are complicated matter. If you protest and say that you think, understand and experience, your protests will be brushed aside with assurances that neurologists can, or will one day be able to trace most of these activities to neural processes in the brain; your emotions are a question of chemistry and nothing more. Some computer technologists will concur and promise that within a fairly short while all of your conscious activities will be simulated by machines in such a way that no difference will be detected between your activity and the activity of the machine.

Why do I say that all this is an error based on the way we think? What is the alternative? The alternative is to introduce mind, consciousness, knowing, feeling, and the subjective. But our thinking does not permit this alternative. Life is either based on matter or is not. It cannot be based both on matter and mind. Scientists claim that this is so not because of the way we think; it is so because this is the way it is. Because of this claim we must abandon all that makes life worth living: our values, hopes, loves, our religion and spirituality. We have to do this because the

contribution made by all that scientists have discovered about the physical aspects of life is so convincing and seemingly incontrovertible.

Let us then re-introduce mind, consciousness, and feelings into the equation. When we do this we introduce just what prevented us from seeing that life is essentially creative. By excluding these we have been compelled to see it as simply a mechanical process conducted by elaborate machines. Let us now recall how I defined creativity: creativity can occur when a single idea is held in two contradictory frames of reference. The single idea is life; the two contradictory frames of reference are matter and mind. Before going on let me point out that I am not rejecting classical logic. Mind and matter are contradictory; mind is mind and matter is matter. The either/or principle is sustained. Creativity does not therefore deny but goes beyond classical logic. It says life is either mind or matter and yet life is both mind and matter. If you say that this is logically impossible, I will agree with you. But then life is logically impossible, that is why so many have thought that it to be a miracle.

Conclusion

Darwin's theory was one with a general awakening to a new view of the world that has been coming into being since the mid 19th century and which is still making itself known. Freudian theory gave us, in place of a static soul, a dynamic view of the personality. Marx saw history as a flow arising out of a dialectic process rather than the maintenance of the myth of the monarchy. This same movement from static to dynamic was evident in Maxwell's field theory, Einstein's theory of relativity, and in the recognition that mass can also be energy, in general

systems theory, as well as complexity and chaos theories. This same trend away from static absolutes was carried on in sub-atomic physics and eventually into quantum physics where the fixed «atom» became a probability wave, and where indeterminacy and uncertainty are the rule and no longer unwelcome exceptions.

This awakening saw the transition from what Oswald Spengler, in his *Decline of the West*, called the transition from Apollonian man to Faustian man. Even the Utopias of the late nineteenth century of communism, socialism and later fascism, have yielded to an uncertain and hazardous future. Many look to science and technology to help resolve what are seen as impending crises of resource depletion, overpopulation, pollution, declining medical and health services, and the increasing menace brought about by the proliferation of nuclear arms controlled by so many who have nothing to lose. Certainly science and technology can help, but so often the help that they give is offset by the problems they create. One thing is certain. We must learn to think differently, creatively, in a way that lets us look beyond things, beyond separation and identity, beyond the shattered parts, into a creative and living whole.

We must be wary of seeing the world just in terms of black and white, good and bad, right and wrong. I do not mean that we should live in a grey area of halfhearted compromise, but that we should see these polarizations as calls to go deeper into the situation. Although planning is necessary when we are working in concert with others, trying to plan our own life is often an attempt to live according to a blueprint, which is out of date the moment that it has been made. We ask ourselves what «Will happen if....?» in an attempt to forestall disappointment or disaster. Yet these times of indecision

and uncertainty, as painful as they may be while they last, are times of great creative opportunity and, by staying within the unresolved tension, we can act spontaneously and appropriately according to the demands of the moment. Indecision, uncertainty and anxiety are only pathological if they have become a way of life; they are necessary conditions to live a creative life. It has been said with justice that even cowards can endure hardship; only the brave can endure suspense.*

(1) *Flew, Andrew (1975) **Thinking about Thinking** (Fontana Glasgow)*

(2) *Dawkins, Richard, (1989) **The Selfish Gene**, 2nd edn. (Oxford University Press: Oxford)*

(3) *Francis Crick*

(4) *Stephen Pinker*

(5) *Jacques Monod quoted in Judson, Horace Freeland, **The Eighth Day Of Creation**, New York 1979 Simon and Schuster, p.217*

(6) *Frank Tipler*

(7) *Provine, William Quoted by Miller Kenneth R. p 171*

FINDING MANJUSRI

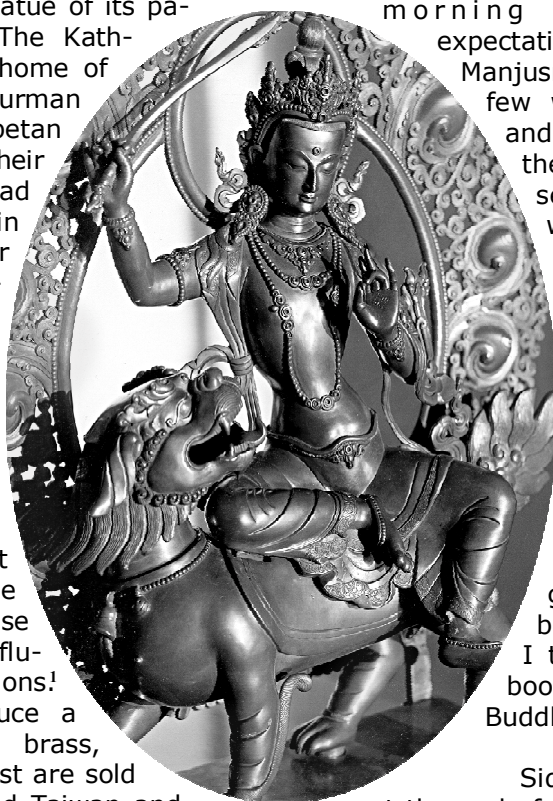
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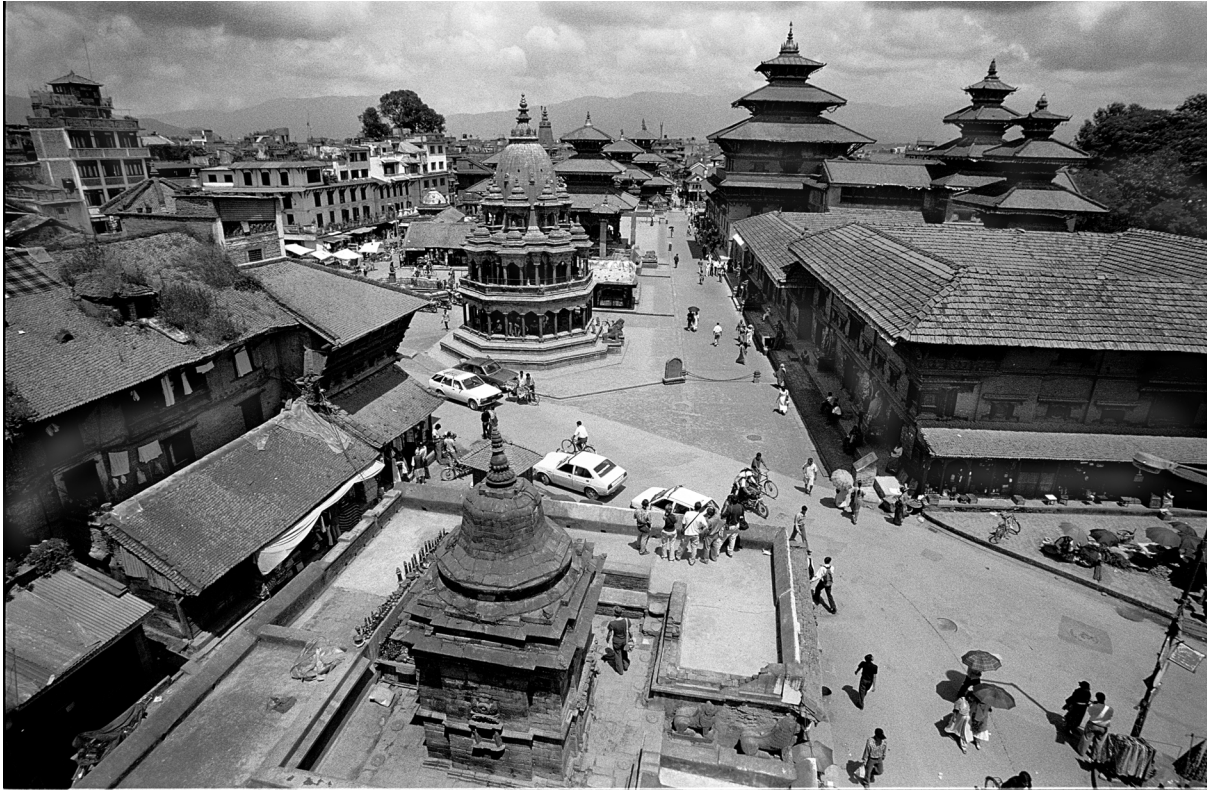
About three years ago Albert, on hearing that Sandy and I were going to Nepal, asked us to try to find a statue of a Manjusri on a lion for the zendo. Buddha was born in Nepal and a reincarnation of the Bodhi tree is still offering shade on the Nepal side of its current boarder with India. Given that the Kathmandu valley was drained by Manjusri cutting through the mountain dam that had kept it under water, the city was the ideal place to look for a statue of its patron saint so to speak. The Kathmandu valley is also the home of the Newars, a Tibeto-Burman people that bridge the Tibetan and Sanskrit cultures. Their reputation for sculptures had already been established in the fourth century and their artists have been a constant presence in the major religious and artistic centers in Tibet since the seventh century. Tang dynasty (618-906) records tell of a Chinese ambassador's marvel at Newari sculptures. Kublai Khan (1216-1294) brought a Newari artist to become the master of the Chinese imperial Atelier and his influence continued for generations! Today, the Newars produce a range of sculptures in brass, bronze and copper. The best are sold mostly in Japan, Korea and Taiwan and the very best are extremely difficult to obtain. The task of finding a Manjusri on a lion was to be a pleasant challenge.

Albert's request was made more interesting by my having read the book, *Shopping for Buddhas*,² that describes the

author's efforts in buying a statue made by Siddhi Raj Shakya who was reputed to be the best living Newari sculptor. Our quest started by emailing Diki, a Bhutanese and art dealer in Kathmandu and friend of over twenty years, about the prospects of finding a good Manjusri. She assured us that there would be many choices. Having been in Kathmandu many times, we knew the best galleries and we set out one morning to match our expectations. There were many Manjusris for sale but only a few were 16 inches high and none had lions. At the end of the day we seriously considered a well balanced Manjusri that would nicely fit the zendo's altar. The gallery owner beamed at us, "made by the second best sculptor in Nepal" whose work, he continued to tell us, was almost impossible to find. The statue was very good, but "second best", who wants that? I then remembered the book about shopping for Buddhas.

Siddhi's workshop was at the end of an encounter with the 15th century. Diki's brother-in-law knew well the backstreets of Patan, the neighbouring city with its remarkable Durbar square, and took us to the Newari workshops. Through a maze of alleys and courtyards, some with temples tightly ringed by sculpture shops, we squeezed





Durbar Square Patan

into a large room with a 15 foot reclining Buddha under an opening in the roof, a two month old baby on its back on a towel and a mother smoothing the thumb with a three inch square of emery cloth. In a room lit by an undersized window a toddler sat silently on the floor next to his father who was hammering out what looked like sausages but on closer inspection of the pile next to them turned out to be human sized fingers for some future Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. The cavernous storeroom at the back had among its many life-size statues a half dozen or so seated Manjusris that were totally unsuitable. Sensing my kindling impatience our guide returned us past the mother still stroking Buddha's thumb, the father still hammering out fingers, the baby still on its back and then through another maze of alleys into a spacious and pleasant courtyard enclosed by Siddhi's workshops that were spread through an elegant four-storey building.³ The building also housed the family, relatives and apprentices. Shakya, we learned after a Google search on the web, is the name of the Newari clan that has been reputed for generations for their statues

made with the lost wax process. A tall man with shoulder-length hair of about 35 years of age materialized wearing shorts, a tee-shirt, thong sandals and a neo-hippy-like countenance. This was Nuchhe Raj Shakya, the son of the famous Siddhi. He interrupted his greeting to answer a cell phone. Speaking in soft but perfect English, he led us to the roof, where three men were sitting cross-legged in front of small charcoal burners preparing a wax model that would eventually be covered in terra cotta. The wax would melt as molten copper was poured in through a small hole in the top. After the copper cools, the terra cotta is chipped away to uncover a crude form that is worked on directly before being burnished and coated. The exact alloys and chemical composition of the finishes have been clan secrets for generations.

The men we saw on the roof worked continuously but just watching them move their wax pieces over the burner to be softened and then back to



Rooftop workshop

their laps to be moulded one could not see changes taking place. The sculptures evolve at a grass growing rate. We were told that only ten apprentices were employed at any given time and that each can stay for 5 years. The method of teaching involves primarily demonstration. When Siddhi walks into a room all the apprentices have to stop what they are doing to watch Siddhi. The master moves around from piece to piece and sitting on the floor he adjusts them and works on all aspects of the process. Newari sculptures evolve as a group process with apprentices and family members participating in most stages of work. They seek a universal and idealized quality in their sculptures; they do not aim at uniqueness or personal expression. As a result, many Newari sculptures have a common feel to them, a kind of a Renaissance quality. They have no personality for us to empathize with or psychology to explore.

When we started to talk about commissioning the Manjusri, Nuchhe disappeared for a few minutes and returned with his father, Siddhi, a round and cheerful man who greeted us warmly but could speak no English. There would be no problem with the four small figures we also ordered but the Manjusri would take longer and Siddhi would be extensively involved because the composition of the statue was challenging and because lions were not common. For one of the small statues they asked if we wanted a green Tara or a white Tara. Since all we knew was that Tara was the beautiful young voluptuous but svelte Bodhisattva of compassion, Siddhi, himself short, round, cherub-like and about 75 years old simply dropped to the floor to demonstrate. Making the symbolic hand

gestures (mudra) with his chubby fingers and with a curve in his ample torso, with legs folded in a lotus and with a serene smile on a tilted head he transformed into a perfect white Tara and then by shifting his legs became a green Tara. He knew the Bodhisattvas. He embodied them. In response to Sandra's questions about their practice, yes they meditated, they had many-day retreats, and before Siddhi started a major piece he meditated on the deity at the local Temple for a day or two.



Siddhi

Business was conducted during that first visit in Siddhi's large bedroom that also served as a reception room. Its shelves and glass enclosed cabinets were full of superb copper figures waiting to be 'carved' or to be burnished or to be sent to their buyers. None were for sale and I tested this assertion on a beautiful statue of a sitting monk. It had been ordered by someone else and, really, "it was not for sale!" They do not do commercial work. Siddhi's main interest now is in teaching. Their clients are Temples and monasteries from around the world. The poster size

photographs on the walls of the room show Siddhi with the Dalai Lama.

Nuchhe brought out several drawings of Nepalese and Tibetan lions for the Manjusri, the main decision that we had to make, but when we could not see the difference between the two stylized lions, he said that he would mail us more pictures. Even after the pictures were faxed to Sandra (they had technology) neither we nor Albert could tell the difference and we still don't know if we have a Nepali or a Tibetan lion on the altar.

It all seemed very business like back then during that first visit. We put down a deposit for the little figures and would commission the large one after the OK from Montreal. Back home Sandra contacted the Kingston members of the Sanga who donated about half the money needed for the Manjusri and the Montreal committee agreed to go ahead. Albert wrote a one page specification for the Manjusri and I mailed four or five copies of it on separate days and enclosed it in as many e-mails in the hope of getting the message through. Eventually we reached Nuchhe and were told again that the statue would be ready in six months. It would take about sixty days of labour: half of the time would be spent making the wax model and the other half on 'carving' the copper to give the figure expression, detail and finishing touches. Only during our second meeting some two years later, after many phone calls that would mostly only amuse a chatty three year-old who spoke no English, did Nuchhe tell us, over a coke in a restaurant four floors above Durbar square, that their clients were usually pleased to wait three, five or even ten years just to have a work by Siddi.

A little more than a year after the first visit, a year of failed attempts to communicate, and after growing doubts, we picked up the four small statues in a warehouse near the Toronto airport. They were sent in a plywood box addressed to my name, Kingston and on the third and last line, "Kingdom of Ontario". Nuchhe's rather casual attitude toward geography did not inspire confidence. Nevertheless, our trust in the verbal contract for the Manjusri on a lion returned but then would start to dissipate again over the next two years

as direct communication appeared impossible.

In the end, it took three years, not five or ten, to bring the Manjusri to the zendo because of the tremendous efforts of Diki Wangmo and her husband Yeshe Phuntsok. They would not only try to reach Nuchhe on his cell phone repeatedly and unsuccessfully but would drive over to Patan to find him and ask about the statue, a rhetorical question as we all knew, "it will be ready in a week". Diki came from Bhutan and Heshey from Tibet and we are now helping their youngest daughter get into a Canadian university. Heshey is a devout Tibetan Buddhist who started his education in a Buddhist monastery and at the age of two was recognized as a Tulku, a re-incarnate lama. Heshey and Diki were already too Western in their outlook to accept with equanimity the years it took to get a statue that would always be finished "next week". The Newars have been sculpting for almost two thousand years and our impatience may appear to them as incomprehensible as their business practices appear unfathomable to us. Yes, the statue did arrive just before the December sesshin and yes we did send them the full payment later on in January. There was no deposit. It worked on trust. ✽

(1) Pratapaditya Pal (2003) *Himalayas: An Aesthetic Adventure*, the Art Institute of Chicago along with the University of California Press, Chicago and Berkeley.

(2) Jeff Greenwald (1996) *Shopping for Buddhas* Lonely Planet Publications, Singapore

(3) You can read about and see *Newari sculptures* by going to http://www.spinybabbler.org/traditional_arts/metal/process.php
The *New York Metropolitan Museum of Art* has a number of Newari sculptures that can be seen at http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/neps/hd_neps.htm

THE TWELVE STEPS AND ZEN PRACTICE

Jacqueline C. Vischer

Recently, I talked with Albert Low about the twelve steps of recovery from addiction. He suggested I write for the sangha about some of the ways in which they can be related to Zen practice. It is widely accepted nowadays that we all suffer from some kind of addiction; in some sense addiction is part of our culture and way of life. Since the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous were elaborated in the 1940's, our understanding of addictions, and our faith in therapies to help us deal with them, have become more pervasive and sophisticated. An awareness of what addiction means can help with our practice; our commitment to practice is one way of liberating ourselves from these 'slimy bonds'.

What is addiction? One definition of addiction is a psychological dependence on some self-defeating behavior that brings short-term gratification. This is not limited to substance addiction (alcohol, drugs) but can also be to work, to TV, to fitness and sports, to love and sex, and to food. In fact, behavior can be characterized as addictive when our need for and dependence on something outside ourselves is out of control and causes us to behave in self-destructive ways. How do we know it is destructive? It damages us or psychologically and physically. We rely on it to cover up negative feelings of inadequacy, pain and shame that we carry inside us but cannot or will not face.

Research into addiction and the development of 'shame' therapies are fast-growing areas of clinical psychology. Out of the original twelve steps of recovery, the co-dependency model has evolved. According to this theory, experiences of abuse, neglect and abandonment in early childhood cause feelings of almost intolerable

shame. The child grows up to develop compensatory behaviors such as failing to feel one's own wants and needs, taking control in relationships and trying to control others' behavior, and various forms of acting out. Addictions thrive on these compensatory ('co-dependent') behaviors. Some - like alcoholism - are more obviously destructive, while others - like work or exercise addiction - are encouraged by society and therefore harder to treat. Sooner or later, addictive behaviors fail to cover up pain and begin to wreak havoc in our lives, in the form of failed marriages and relationships, job problems, and chronic ill-health and feelings of alienation. The compulsion that drives addictive behaviour - whatever the addiction is to - is in some way the drive to hide or repress knowledge of fundamental truths. In Zen practice, we call this 'doubt' and it compels us to commit to our practice. It often seems to me, as a result of knowing and talking to addicts, that these are people who find the doubt intolerable, but, for whatever reason, have lost themselves in addiction rather than found the courage to face the need to know their true nature.

In the therapeutic process of working through the twelve steps, people aim to acquire a deeper understanding of themselves as well as a set of tools for managing their lives. They are also encouraged to explore and develop their spiritual nature by becoming aware of and believing in a power greater than themselves. Everyone is free to choose and define their definition of a higher power.

In Zen practice, we learn that we have a similar sort of 'addiction' to the self

or ego. Belief in our own importance masks fears of inadequacy, failure and, ultimately, death. While we recognize that our need to be something can be destructive to us, we depend on it. The twelve steps towards recovery can be applied to all forms of addiction, and shed light on our need to be something. Let's look at each of the twelve steps in terms of their relevance to Zen practice.



Step 1. We admitted we were powerless over [addiction], that our lives had become unmanageable.

The first of the four noble truths is that Life is suffering. One of the reasons we come into Zen practice is because we feel a profound malaise, as though something is missing in our lives, as though we are not coming to grips with a more fundamental reality. As we become more experienced in sitting, we become more aware of how dependent we are on our sense of self and how fearful we are of doing without it. In other words, we recognize how powerless we are in the face of this need to believe that we are something. We are dependent on the belief that we exist: this is our addiction.

Step 2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

The second of the four noble truths is that suffering is caused by selfish desires and

'craving'. Our addictive behavior feeds the self, and our daily life revolves around fulfilling selfish desires. Zen practice helps us to become aware of the limitations of self as the center of our existence, and on the stifling effect of living only to fulfill desires. Dimly, we recognize that we are part of something greater than this enclosing definition of self that we are used to living with. Slowly the urge or need grows in us to become aware of that which is greater than ourselves, to go 'beyond ego and past clever words'.

Step 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God (as we understand God).

Although the religious notion of God has no place in Zen practice, seeing into no-self, formlessness and no-thought are part of Zen practice. The decision to 'turn our will and our lives over' seems to me to parallel the decision to commit to Zen practice. The whole idea of turning our will and our lives over implies a renunciation and a simplification: we start to believe in the value of knowing, rather than of knowing something. And what a long journey this turns out to be. As Albert Low writes in his essay, "Thy Will Be Done", turning over our lives and wills is not a single act, but rather an ongoing decision to engage in a slow process of transformation that takes the rest of our lives. Many 12-step therapists consider Step 3 to be the crucial one in recovery from addiction.

Step 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

The fourth noble truth lays out the eightfold path to overcoming suffering and attaining enlightenment. The fourth through tenth steps of the 12-step program recall the precepts of the eightfold path. Through practice we become aware of our shortcomings and our failings in dealing with others, we feel remorse and shame,

we remember pain that others have caused us as well as pain that we have inflicted on others. However, the notion of an inventory means taking a balanced view and not simply getting mired in self-abnegation and guilt. Without a searching and fearless moral inventory, we cannot learn right speech, right conduct and right vocation. We need to spend some effort confronting who and what this self or ego really is in order to recognize its limitations and see a way past them.

Step 5. Admitted to [God], to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Zen practice does not require us to admit publicly the self-discoveries that come about during our journey; but practice clearly demands more than an analytical and intellectual self-understanding. In this sense, conventional psychotherapy, depending as it does on a rational conversation between you and your therapist, is not adequate. The fifth step says that making a moral inventory of ourselves is of limited value unless we externalize this knowledge and share it in some way. We are limited as human beings, and the full force of our insight into suffering may not be felt unless and until we do the work to make it explicit. Twelve-step groups require personal revelations and confessions in the group; co-dependency therapy has an experiential component, sessions in which participants relive some of the pain associated with the abuse, neglect, abandonment and shame of their childhoods. In Zen practice we have the opportunity to share our insights with our teacher. Our teacher in fact may prod and provoke us into self-realization that is not just intellectual, but which we re-live.



Step 6. Were entirely ready to have [God] remove all the defects of character.

Zen practice is a journey towards a fuller recognition of [God] or a higher power or Buddha nature. Learning to follow the eight-fold path brings us into touch with our true nature, and perhaps the weaknesses and faults of the ego-self drop away. This step speaks to the importance of recognizing our moral defects in order to move on and not to obsess over the self, its past and its pain (another common criticism of conventional psychotherapy). We have the power to

f o r g i v e
ourselves
for our moral
transgressions,
as Zen practitioners know from the repentance gatha: "All moral transgressions committed by me since time immemorial, stemming from greed, anger, and ignorance, of body, speech and
mind, I now repent having committed."

Step 7. Humbly asked [God] to remove our shortcomings.

This step invokes humility. In Zen we learn that humiliation of the self is 'that refining fire'. This step means that unless we are humble enough to trust in a power greater than ourselves, we cannot go forward. In Zen we learn that one does not happen without the other: that seeing into suffering and freeing ourselves from desires and fears does not happen without placing our trust in that which is not the self and is beyond the self. The self cannot bring us to enlightenment and sunder the bonds of suffering. Losing the self, and letting it drop away, seeing into no-self and

into formlessness, requires humility born of insight into our shortcomings.

Step 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Most addictions hurt the people around us. Spouses, children, friends and parents can be profoundly wounded by our addictive behaviors. Similarly, the human addiction to self and ego causes destructive behaviors such as fighting and wars, competitiveness and rivalry, cruelty and selfishness. Most of us have been addicted to ego too deeply and for too long to be able to list all the persons we have harmed, but this does not mean we are not willing to make amends. The notion of amends is interesting because it requires humility. Taking the step to make amends perhaps parallels the Zen view that seeing into and facing life's difficulties and tragedies are opportunities for spiritual growth. The willingness to make amends provides a positive and helpful impetus on the journey towards enlightenment.

Step 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

As in Step 5, we need to do more than think about who we have hurt – we need to actually make amends. This is similar to saying that we need to do more than become aware of our moral transgressions – we need to make them explicit and feel the remorse. As always, intellectual analysis is not the way to go. One of the reasons for the longevity and power of the 12-step approach is that it has this kind of simple and clear link to action. Just thinking things through (as occurs in psychotherapy) is not enough; this step says there are actions to be taken, but warns that they should not interfere with other people's lives. In Zen practice we learn to question the importance of 'taking action' – action, if there is any, takes us. This step reminds me

of the phrase from the Tao Te Ching: "Do nothing, but leave nothing undone".

Step 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

Whether following the eight-fold path or the 12-step program, there is a need for constant vigilance. Any addiction is powerful, and addiction to self is so pervasive that it carries us along without us being aware of it. Continuing to take personal inventory is a way of staying present: "Attention, attention, attention". In addiction recovery, nothing can be taken for granted. Taking personal inventory and admitting when we are wrong are ways of dethroning the almighty ego-self. Others have written that each time we admit we are wrong, in spite of our deep aversion to doing so, we come closer to awakening.

Step 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God (as we understand God), praying only for knowledge of [God]'s will for us and the power to carry that out.

What the 12 steps call prayer and meditation we call zazen or sitting. While not undertaking this with a conscious goal of improving contact with God, we sit in order to make the journey away from the self and back to our true nature. The last two steps of the 12-step program recall other precepts of the eight-fold way. Knowing means more to a Zen practitioner than 'knowledge of [God]'s will for us'; and right effort, right alertness and right concentration mean more than 'the power to carry that out'. Sitting and breathing and focusing the mind without resting it on anything culminate in the achieved power of absolute concentration, by which the mind can become free from the sudden promptings and unpredictable flights of thought caused by the self's desires and fears.

Step 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

For most addicts, true freedom from addiction does not occur without some kind of spiritual awakening, whether this is in the form of joining organized religion, or simply finding a belief in God. Similarly, for Zen practitioners seeking freedom from addiction to the self, spiritual enlightenment or liberation comes about as 'awakening', coming home, seeing into formlessness and what is Mu. How do practitioners of Zen carry this message to 'addicts', that is, all sentient beings? Although proselytizing is definitely not part of Zen practice, each one of us vows, "All beings without number I vow to liberate": making a difference simply by my way of being in the world. In fact, each one of the four vows is a pledge to 'practice these principles in all our affairs'. Implicit in these vows is the vow to stay present. Staying present helps liberate us from the desires and fears of the ego.

Like the Buddha's teachings, the 12 steps appear simpler than they are. Many groups and programs do not get past Steps 2 or 3. Numerous books have been published in addition to the official descriptions and discussions of the twelve steps and traditions, all of which offer routes to recovery from addictions and co-dependency. Most of these writings have a strong spiritual component. The huge popular appeal of the 12 steps indicates that in their simplicity, they are comprehensible to people, yet in their complexity, they are also real. The spiritual power they encourage addicts to discover is a power within themselves that is constant and accessible independently of changes in exterior circumstances. They encourage discovery of 'Buddha nature' that is in all of us from the beginning and needs work to uncover.

One well-known addiction treatment program states that: "Addiction is any process, or substance dependence, which relieves intolerable reality and becomes a

priority, taking time and attention away from other priorities, and creating harmful consequences which are ignored". Addicts are the most helpless and weak of people, just as addiction is the most vulnerable and weak part in each one of us. The harmful consequences are what cause us eventually to fully recognise that life is suffering. Therefore using Zen practice to become more conscious of one's addiction(s) - and of oneself as an addict - is a way towards [God], or, towards seeing into our true nature. Perhaps there is a way of putting our weaknesses to some good use.

The twelve steps to recovery, however they are understood, help open the door into who I am. ❁



Success and Failure

by Bill Byers

This began as another in a long line of notes from my (writing)-self to itself, trying to communicate that which the communicator cannot communicate and the receiver cannot receive. How much of our work is like this? How much of our writing, our speaking? Even our life itself is of this nature. We know! That is certain, we know and we know that we know. It is because we know that we feel bound to point this out, that is, point out to ourself and others what we know to be the case.

Yet the truth is a mystery, it can never be elucidated in words, in ideas or in theories. The impulse, then, produces the need to speak; not merely the need, the imperative, to speak. At the same time neither the words spoken nor the words as they are heard can capture truth. It is as though we are explaining some abstract notion to a child, "Look, it's like this." And the child doesn't get it. So we say, "No, it's really quite easy." And we repeat once again what is our understanding. The child doesn't get it and since the child has not yet developed the conceptual apparatus, she won't get it. However in this picture the adult and the child are the same person, they are both you! In fact, to press the analogy, the child actually gets it and the adult does not. The child does not have the words and concepts and so knows the thing directly. The adult has the words and concepts and must know the thing by means of these words and concepts. But strangely,

wonderfully, the adult is the child, the child is the adult.

In a sense what we do in what we call spiritual practice is stupid, really stupid. We wish to reveal to ourselves that we know. Here is the ultimate stupidity, the ultimate impossibility. It is a cosmic joke, really. It is suffering.

Yes it is suffering—that we know and we need to express it and cannot. And not only this form of suffering but possibly all suffering is of this kind. A double bind. When we demand from life what life simply cannot provide. Because we are intelligent and life is simple.

Because we are adults and life is, in some essential dimension, a child. A child that we have forgotten but who is everything that is most basic to who we are. Suffering is the result yet suffering is also the way.

So difficult is this practice, so brutal really. We go in with our demands and our arrogance. And we fail. We fail repeatedly and in that failure is pain and humiliation. We respond with anger or with anxiety or with depression. We respond with a feeling of our own worthlessness. Because those who have gotten as far as going on sesshin have acknowledged at this deeper level that it is true what the teachers say, "We know." Going to sesshin is an expression of that knowing. And yet this is not enough, it is not enough, we want something more.



As we said above, we fail; we suffer and we fail or we fail and we suffer. We are ground down, something in us is ground down. And the end of this suffering, this being ground down is a strange joy. It is a beautiful flower that brings tears. It is humility. The resolution to try to be just a bit kinder to ourselves and others. In failure the world is a bit kinder and gentler—we are a bit kinder and gentler. We and the world are less rigid, more liquid.

And in this success there is often the attempt to grab at it. To say, "I did this! Look at what I accomplished." And

this is failure. This leads directly to more pain and suffering and the next round in the great chain of birth and death.

When will it be over? Can this circle be ever broken through? Again and again and again. Failure and failure and failure. Suffering and suffering. Joy and joy.

How strange this is, how very peculiar, how ambiguous. To succeed by failure and to fail by success. What have we gotten into with this practice? How very subtle it is, how mysterious. How utterly surprising ! ❄

Lettre à une amie

Trois questions bien banales dans le fond... Ça fait quand même étrange de confier ça...

J'allais à ce sesshin (retraite) avec l'intention de trouver des réponses à mes questions entourant ma pratique qui devenait de plus en plus difficile. Comme... sèche? J'avais de plus en plus de mal à m'y mettre, sautant régulièrement les moments où j'aurais eu l'occasion de m'asseoir et quand je le faisais, j'étais de plus en plus agité, incapable de rester avec moi-même dans le silence, je rencontrais des démons que j'avais cru jusque-là apprivoisés... La solitude qui serre la gorge, des envies, des regrets, des trucs qui ressortent d'eux-mêmes quand on médite mais qui tout d'un coup, prenaient toute la place. Je cherchais plutôt à me divertir et ça m'inquiétait quand même assez pour que j'aie envie de me mettre à l'épreuve.

La manière dont ça se passe, c'est que pendant les périodes de méditation et deux fois par jour, il y a dokusan (rencontre privée avec le maître).

Alors voilà: À ma première rencontre, M. Low m'a demandé pourquoi je ne travaillais toujours pas sur un koan. Un peu désarçonné, je lui ai répondu que l'idée ne m'était jamais venue de poser la question. Et c'est vrai, après quatre ans de pratique, cette histoire des koans et du statut d'élève me semblait tenir de la stricte discrétion du maître, comme s'il fallait prouver une sorte de sagesse de base pour y avoir accès. Il m'a donc laissé comprendre que c'était entre mes mains, mais qu'avant il me fallait répondre à ces trois questions dont je t'ai parlé. La première: "Est-ce que je veux vraiment connaître ma vraie nature?" La seconde: "Suis-je disposé à y consacrer ma vie?" Et la troisième: "Est-ce que je fais confiance en la direction du maître?" Il m'a laissé là-dessus en sonnant la cloche, signe que l'entretien est terminé.

C'était le dokusan de l'après-midi. J'ai passé le reste de la journée à tourner tout ça dans ma tête. À la troisième question, la réponse me semblait claire. Oui je lui fais confiance, d'autant plus qu'il a le don de pointer exactement là où ça bloque. Un brin paradoxal parce que quand ça bloque, j'ai tendance à me sauver! À la première, il

me semblait évident que je ne me serais pas consacré à quatre ans de pratique difficile s'il n'y avait pas l'appel de quelque chose, le désir de savoir qui je suis. Depuis le tout premier aperçu que j'ai eu sur le bouddhisme en général et le zen en particulier, j'ai toujours eu l'impression d'une familiarité intime, de reconnaître l'expression juste d'une intuition que je n'avais toujours pas réussi à nommer correctement et ça m'a toujours semblé capital.

C'est la deuxième question qui me causait un grand malaise.

Tout d'un coup, ça a remis en perspective à la fois mes motivations et ma confiance. L'idée de prononcer devant quelqu'un le souhait d'y consacrer ma vie, donc de marquer mon engagement, m'a fait plonger dans le doute. Je voyais ça comme quelque chose d'immense et très sérieux et j'étais incapable de me prononcer là-dessus. J'ai été pris de peur et ça m'a donné l'impression qu'avec la réponse devait venir un sacrifice majeur, comme si je m'apprêtais à renoncer au monde et devenir moine, et même si j'avais conscience que ce n'est pas ce qui m'était demandé, j'ai eu le sentiment que c'est ma foi-- en la pratique ou en moi-même, peu importe-- qui était mise en question. Considérant que depuis un bon moment, je faisais n'importe quoi sauf ça, ça n'aidait pas. J'arrivais pas à concevoir que je puisse dire sérieusement que j'y mettrais ma vie, pressentant que quelque chose ne collait pas, comme si l'engagement dans la pratique signifiait l'obligation d'abandonner des désirs auxquels je tiens toujours, comme par exemple vivre une relation amoureuse... J'ai pas été capable de faire face au malaise et j'ai passé le reste de la journée à esquiver en essayant de creuser la question par la bande...

C'est comme ça que je me suis pointé devant lui au dokusan du soir, avec plein

de questions brillantes sur le sens de ses trois questions et patati patata. Il a immédiatement désamorcé ma tentative et reposé les questions. À la première j'ai dit oui. À la seconde, j'ai gelé totalement. J'étais dans un genre de tourbillon où les mots et les émotions prenaient du flou à toute vitesse et j'ai fini par m'arracher un "Je sais pas".

Il m'a souri et renvoyé à ma pratique et c'était tout.

Je suis remonté au zendo avec l'impression d'avoir commis un suicide spirituel. C'est plutôt cocasse quand on le raconte avec du recul mais sur le coup je te jure que c'est douloureux. C'était l'avant-dernière journée de ma retraite et j'ai pensé qu'il me restait ce temps pour refaire le tour de la question mais quand je me suis assis, quelque chose s'est effondré en moi et j'ai abandonné l'effort, plus capable d'en trouver la volonté. J'ai essayé quand même de pousser un peu pour la forme, pour moins m'en vouloir, mais très vite le désespoir m'a repris et je suis allé me coucher. Le lendemain s'est passé comme un supplice. Je me voyais là, assis avec des gens qui à mon sens faisaient un effort immense et terriblement honorable pendant que je tentais seulement de me rendre au bout, un peu mécaniquement et avec l'impression d'être complètement étranger à mon coeur, alors qu'en fait ça me rendait extrêmement triste. Le doute était si fort que je n'étais plus capable de prononcer les trois voeux de peur de commettre une imposture.

Au cours de la journée, il y a teisho (un genre d'entretien sur un thème donné par le maître pendant la méditation) et M. Low a parlé de ce que j'appelle maintenant le syndrome de Kafka, relatant dans une anecdote sur l'écrivain son incapacité malade de se commettre à faire même les choix les plus simples et qui le maintenait dans une inertie très angoissante. J'ai reçu ça

à la fois comme un appel, comme si le teisho avait été dit pour moi et m'indiquait d'une étrange manière le moyen de m'en sortir, et en même temps comme une déchirure parce que justement, je me sentais coincé dans mon état de crise et que c'était atroce. À la fin de la journée, alors que j'étais prêt à quitter, on m'a demandé de rester pour la période de travail parce qu'il y avait eu une erreur dans l'horaire, alors j'ai accompli ma tâche et je crois que ça m'a aidé à ne pas flipper davantage. Je constatais qu'au moins je pouvais encore faire ma part d'aide avec soin et jusqu'au bout. J'étais incapable de dire si je croyais encore assez au zen, à la méditation, pour continuer à y consacrer du temps et de l'énergie mais j'étais quand même toujours dans le réel, une part du monde en mouvement.

Hier je t'aurais dit que je n'ai toujours pas de réponses à mes questions mais j'ai le sentiment que les choses changent d'axe rapidement. Simplement parce que je vis un apprentissage sérieux de l'acceptation, de l'appréciation de moi-même. Petit à petit, j'ai commencé à comprendre que j'avais surimposé des tas de demandes personnelles, de désirs de sur-humanité sur ce que je faisais. Autrement dit, je me demandais l'absolu, je voulais être plus que ce que je suis et j'étais incapable de faire face à la peur du manquement que ça produit ni à ma propre déception face à l'échec répété et inévitable. J'avais déjà entendu tout ça des dizaines de fois mais ça n'a pris de sens que dans l'expérience... Je vois aussi comment le désir de me ménager une porte de sortie dans la pratique cachait mon manque de confiance. C'est parce que je m'étais convaincu de mon échec inévitable qu'il m'était impossible d'envisager une pratique liée au reste de ma vie. Je ne m'étais tout simplement jamais donné la permission. Permission de la réussite mais aussi permission des ratées, des hésitations, des erreurs.

Je ne suis toujours pas retourné au Centre, mais presque ironiquement je continue à porter la pratique en moi continuellement et à m'asseoir à tous moments... J'ai encore la crainte que poursuivre sur ce chemin va entraîner des grands sacrifices mais on dirait que la peur laisse du terrain. C'est peut-être que de toutes manières, l'esquive demande de grands sacrifices aussi! J'en reviens donc régulièrement à l'instant de choisir.

C'est aussi comme si je mesurais encore mon sérieux, à un rythme lent mais qui est le mien pour le moment... et en retrouvant l'humour salubre avec lequel tout ça se pimente. Je vois que j'ai peur... de me connaître en aval des idéaux, et que j'appivoise la peur. Au moins, mon regard a changé sur les choses au cours de ces quatre ans et je ne peux pas revenir en arrière, c'est comme pour la bicyclette! Ça devient naturel.

Je remercie souvent spontanément pour les expériences difficiles, sachant dans le fond qu'elles m'indiquent le chemin. Il demeure quand même qu'une honnêteté minimale avec soi demande beaucoup plus de courage qu'on veut bien le croire. Un courage du silence et de la discrétion, sans spectacle, sans témoins pour t'exhorter à avancer et s'émouvoir des réussites, donc vécu dans la solitude à soi et avec de longs moments sans rien pour s'encourager...

Aujourd'hui au cours d'une rencontre, j'ai comme saisi de l'intérieur un vieux précepte. Il est souvent dit comme ça : « Si tu ne m'avais pas déjà trouvé, tu ne me chercherais pas .» C'est bouleversant, la simplicité et la profondeur de cet énoncé quand on commence à le saisir. Mais là-dessus, je ne peux pas en dire plus. ✨

Practice, Posture, and Suffering

by Albert Low

*If you knew how to suffer,
You would have the power not to suffer*

The Hymn of Jesus.

*The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre —
To be redeemed from fire by fire.*

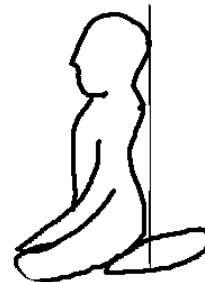
T.S.Eliot

You have sent me questions concerning the zazen posture and suffering, but before I can address your questions, it is necessary to first ask ourselves why it is that we practice. Why do we practice? Zen masters have replied to this question in various ways: "To see with your own eyes and walk on your own feet," "To have horizontal eyes and a vertical nose," "To see that everyday mind is the Way," "To sit long and get tired." One master burst out laughing, another said he had a headache, a third said, "There's no reason" and a fourth exclaimed, "Stop barking like a dog!"

The very difficulty of this question points to its answer. I sometimes say that one practices Zen to discover why one practices Zen. In other words, the practice involves a deep questioning; a questioning that is without a specific object, a questioning that questions the questioning. In Zen this is called the doubt sensation, or the Great Doubt. Koans arouse this deep questioning and this deep questioning arouses the mind without resting on anything.

This questioning must be a sustained questioning. The mind is lazy. It is easily satisfied with ready-made answers that fit

like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. It loves formatory thinking and shies away from thinking without form. Not only is the mind lazy, but it is as restless as a mad monkey. Hence, the Buddha said it is easier to tame a herd of wild elephants than to tame one's mind. This is why a sustained questioning without object or form, what Yangshan called "thinking the unthinkable" is so necessary. But because it runs counter to the usual flow of the mind, it is anything but easy and one needs all the help that one can get. This is why we sit for long periods of time on cushions in the zazen posture.



The zazen posture requires that our back is held straight, our head is in line with the spine, our two knees are placed firmly on the ground, and that our hands

are held in the meditation mudra. By a straight back I mean a back that follows the natural curve of the spine. This is a slightly concave curve. If the back has a convex curve, then the diaphragm will be constricted, the muscles of the neck, shoulders and stomach, in trying to support the body, will become tense and one's attention will be fragmented. But if the back is straight, the spine will do most of the work and the natural unity of attention will be allowed to return.



The value of this posture lies in the fact that with a straight back, the diaphragm is freed and one can use the abdominal and thoracic muscles to breathe. If the diaphragm is constricted, thoracic breathing alone is possible. When one is anxious, angry, afraid or impatient one breathes with the chest. This is the breathing of emergency, this is thoracic breathing. It is short, irregular and shallow as opposed to abdominal breathing which is naturally long, smooth and rhythmic. It is said that most people breathe 12 to 14 times per minute. This is panting. I normally breathe about six times per minute although in zazen the breathing will slow down by itself to about thrice or even twice per minute.

However, the true reason for sitting in the zazen posture is that one can question in a much deeper and more sustained fashion

than if one were to sit on a chair. This is not to say that one cannot question sitting in a chair. Of course one can, particularly once the question has really "taken hold." By this I mean that the question is no longer induced in an intentional way, but becomes the way the mind naturally works. Even so, in general it could be said that the lower the center of gravity, the deeper and more sustained the questioning and the deeper the questioning the slower the breathing.

Between the full lotus posture and sitting on a chair there are a variety of zazen postures that one can take including different ways to kneel. One of the difficulties with sitting in the lotus posture is that most Westerners find it very painful to do. If one can do it at all, one can normally do it only for a fairly short period of time. After that, the legs get sore and the back and head begin to ache. I am under the impression that the Japanese and Chinese did not traditionally have these difficulties. It is significant that master Korin, when asked the reason for zazen, replied "sitting long, getting tired," and not "sitting long, achy legs." Furthermore, I have not read of any traditional Zen Master telling his students how to cope with leg pains.

Nevertheless, if the Westerner perseveres, he can get to the point where the legs will no longer be a distraction and will cease to ache, unless, of course, one sits for several hours. My own experience is that when I first began practicing on a regular basis, after about a quarter of an hour's sitting, the posture was utter agony. I had played a great deal of soccer when I was young and I had a tendency to be muscle bound. Now I can usually sit for 45 minutes without any difficulty. I say "usually" because I am 75 years old and have a tendency to an arthritic condition in the hip and knee.

In your second question you ask,

"With the zazen posture, it seems that a pain exists only because we don't have the ability to accept it and thus we refuse it." In a way this is true, but also quite false. It is false because the pain in the leg is quite natural and will be there whether one refuses it or not. I cannot give the medical reason for the pain, but I am sure that any competent medical doctor could do so.

However, with a pain in the leg, there are two kinds of pain: physical pain and the pain of "I hurt". As I said above, the physical pain is natural. As for the pain of "I hurt" it could be said that it arises because the physical pain is automatically refused.

The "I hurt" comes from the claim to be omnipotent. When one sees one's self as the cause of situations and not their effect, this claim is met. A British poet proclaimed, "I am the master of my fate / I am the captain of my soul." But pain threatens this omnipotence and therefore the "I" denies it. However, this rejection leads to the "I" separating itself from the pain and causing its own kind of suffering.

Pain and "I hurt," stand in relation to one another like a microphone placed next to a loud speaker. As you know, if this occurs the noise grows progressively louder until all that remains is an unbearable screech. Hence, when "I hurt" is held up against the physical pain, the physical pain denies the claim of "I" and perpetuates the suffering. This, in turn, further denies the claim of omnipotence and increases the need to reject the pain which then aggravates the suffering. Thus one could say that suffering "only exists in terms of refusal," as your question declares. The way out of the vicious circle is to let go of the claim of omnipotence. In doing this one becomes one with the pain.

The second way in which your question's implications are true is the following. If one no longer rejects the pain and does become one with it, eventually it is no longer pain as we usually know it. Instead

the pain is transmuted into a white, hot energy of concentration. Thus, many spiritual disciplines deliberately use pain as part of the spiritual practice in order to generate this intense concentration. Self flagellation of the Jesuits is one way, asceticism is another, and the pilgrimage is yet another.

Here in Montréal we have an Oratoire, whose steps lead up to a grand entrance. Many people pilgrimage to the Oratoire, although nowadays most come in coaches or cars. Some, however, make the last leg of the journey up the Oratoire's steps, on their knees. In the past, pilgrims would do their whole journey on their knees. For example, one Zen master performed three full prostrations for each step he took during a thousand mile journey. In a way one could say that the value of a pilgrimage increases in direct proportion to the difficulties that were overcome on the way. It is, no doubt, as a consequence of the powerful concentration that develops in overcoming these difficulties that miracles are possible during or at the end of a pilgrimage.

You also ask, "One often engages in a spiritual pursuit in the hope of liberation from suffering, in the search for well being. Does not this attitude participate in the suffering itself? How can a new understanding arise in this situation? In this context, could one say that suffering leads to a more authentic understanding of oneself?"

One of the most controversial of all Buddha's statements is the third noble truth in which he said that an end of suffering is possible. One of the factors that separate Hinayana Buddhism from Mahayana Buddhism is the attitude that their respective followers have towards suffering. The goal of the Hinayanist could be said to be escape from pain. The arhat is the one who has achieved this goal. Escape from suffering is not a goal for the

Mahayanist. Edward Conze, the celebrated Buddhologist says, "the Bodhisattva, when he comprehends the dharmas as he should, does not retire into nirvrti (Blessed Rest). In Wisdom then he dwells." He goes on to explain that nirvrti is the Nirvana that excludes the world of suffering.

The second koan of the famous collection of koans called the Mumonkan deals head on with this same question. A fox, who had been a Zen Master in an earlier life, asked Zen Master Hyakujo, "Is an awakened person subject to the law of causation not?" Master Hyakujo answered, "No one can escape the law of karma." On hearing this, the old man was awakened. Thus, the person who "engages in a spiritual pursuit in the hope of liberation from suffering, in the search for well being" is like the person who believes that an awakened person is no longer subject to the law of causation. As you rightly point out, this attitude contributes to the suffering. As long as I seek to free myself from suffering I endeavor to separate myself from it, and, as I've stated, the basis of all suffering is to separate ourselves from what is. In the koan, the reason the Zen Master had been reborn as a fox for 500 years was because he had said that we can be free of suffering.

You then ask whether "suffering leads to a more authentic understanding of oneself?" No, because the problem is that "oneself" that you want to understand. Many people ask what is the cause or point of suffering? Among the answers normally given to this question are: that the self must pay retribution for past wrong-doing or that it is a way by which self can gain greater access to

the truth about itself or that suffering is in some way good for the self. However none of these will do because they all presuppose an "I" a "self" a "one" who is punished, gains insight or benefits.



The quote I gave above says that the Bodhisattva does not retire to Blessed Rest but dwells in wisdom. I had also stated earlier that, "the way out of the vicious circle is to let go of the claim of omnipotence. In doing this one becomes one with the pain." I can now refine that because to dwell in wisdom is to let go of the claim of omnipotence. In other words one does not become the pain, but pain is all there is; the self is all there is. This is what the quotation means by "dwelling in wisdom." Roughly speaking, wisdom, prajna, is 'no separation' "form is only emptiness; emptiness only form."

When he was asked whether a dog has the Buddha nature, Joshu said, "Mu!" (No) On another occasion, after he gave the same response a monk asked "Why not?" Joshu replied, "Because he is his karma." Pain is not the punishment for karma; karma is pain, and karma is Mu! "I" do not have good or bad karma;

"I" am karma.

In many people's minds the ultimate is a kind of vacuous bliss, a Pure Land of nothing, some kind of radiant, loving emptiness; a condition of perpetual bliss. In short, this is Nirvana, or, if one is a Christian, Heaven. According to this point of view, spiritual work is a path that leads out of this world of toil and trouble into ultimate freedom. Roses, roses,

as Gurdjieff would say. This point of view nullifies all that humans suffer, all that humans create. Life, those holding this point of view would imply, is but a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. It is the great achievement of the Mahayana school of Buddhism, and in particular Zen Buddhism, that it shows the error of this point of view. According to Zen, "Everyday mind is the Way."

Awakening is awakening to the dream, not from it. One awakens from the dream that the dream is real.

Your last question asks, "Is there a way to accepting suffering? What is this way?" Just find who wants to accept the suffering. *

Les dix préceptes

1. Ne pas tuer, mais plutôt chérir toutes les formes de vie.
2. Ne pas s'approprier ce qui n'est pas donné et respecter la propriété d'autrui.
3. Ne pas abuser de la sexualité, mais plutôt être aimant et responsable.
4. Ne pas mentir, mais bien plutôt dire la vérité.
5. Ne pas abuser de l'alcool ou des drogues et ne pas entraîner les autres à le faire. Garder l'esprit clair.
6. Ne pas dénoncer ou commenter les erreurs d'autrui, mais bien plutôt faire preuve de compréhension et d'empathie.
7. Ne pas se vanter et dénigrer les autres, mais s'efforcer de surmonter ses défauts.
8. Ne pas refuser une aide matérielle ou spirituelle à autrui et donner généreusement lorsque cela est requis.
9. Ne pas se complaire dans la colère, mais plutôt faire preuve de tolérance.
10. Ne pas souiller les trois Trésors (Bouddha, Dharma, Sangha), mais les chérir et en témoigner.

The Ten Precepts

1. Not to kill but to cherish all life.
2. Not to take what is not given but to respect the things of others.
3. Not to misuse sexuality but to be caring and responsible.
4. Not to lie but to speak the truth.
5. Not to cause others to abuse drugs or alcohol, nor to do so yourself, but to keep the mind clear.
6. Not to speak of the faults of others but to be understanding and sympathetic.
7. Not to praise yourself and disparage others but to overcome your own shortcomings.
8. Not to withhold spiritual or material aid but to give them freely where needed.
9. Not to indulge in anger but to practice forbearance.
10. Not to revile the Three Treasures (i.e., Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) but to cherish and uphold them.

Commentaire sur Nisargadatta

par Albert Low



Traduit par Louis Bricault

Le visiteur de Nisargadatta s'exclame : « Quand je me regarde, je découvre que je suis plusieurs individus qui se disputent l'usage de mon corps. »

Ah, combien vrai! Il y a tous ces différents « soi » : il y a le soi social et le soi sexuel, très différents l'un de l'autre, le soi qui souhaite s'engager dans le travail spirituel, le soi qui aspire au confort, celui qui cherche à se distinguer, à être unique, spécial et cet autre soi qui veut être aimé, accepté et faire partie d'un groupe. Tous ces différents « soi » sont en conflit les uns avec les autres : chacun a ses propres désirs, ses propres souvenirs, son propre système de valeurs. Cela me rappelle le koan « Sei et son âme sont séparées. Où trouver la vraie Sei ? » Lorsque nous regardons en nous-même, nous constatons bien que nous sommes une sorte d'assemblée parlementaire sans président. Et c'est presque toujours le même problème : chaque voix qui s'exprime annule celle qui l'a précédée. Nous sommes paralysés, incapables d'agir. Je me souviens d'avoir lu quelque part que Kafka pouvait

rester ainsi complètement immobile, paralysé par des désirs contradictoires. Dans ses livres, dans « Le Château », par exemple, ce conflit et cette contradiction sont partout présents. Gurdjieff parle lui aussi de ces différents « Je » à l'intérieur d'une même personne. Parfois, il s'agit d'individus complètement distincts. Il arrive souvent qu'en regardant la photographie d'une personne on s'aperçoive qu'une moitié de son visage exprime la douceur, la délicatesse, l'ouverture, alors qu'à l'inverse, l'autre moitié paraît cruelle, dure, distante. C'est au milieu de tout cela que notre pratique doit s'établir. Il y a un Je qui désire ardemment venir en sesshin et un autre Je qui désire tout, sauf cela.

Nisargadatta répond : « Ils correspondent aux diverses tendances de votre mental. » Son visiteur ajoute : « Puis-je faire la paix entre elles ? », et Nisargadatta dit alors : « Comment le pourriez-vous? Elles sont si contradictoires! »

Sur la natte, chacun de nous voit défilier la parade de ces différentes person-

nes, personnalités ou de ces différents « soi ». Au début, on s'assoit et on se sent très bien. La pratique va bien aller. Puis en voici un qui s'amène en chicanant et critiquant avec un rire narquois, puis un autre qui, lui, se plaint et s'apitoie, pendant qu'un troisième déboule avec rage et colère, alors que le tout premier d'entre eux se présente à nouveau, quelque peu ébranlé, disant vouloir poursuivre le travail. Il en va ainsi.

Nisargadatta reprend :
« Considérez-les pour ce qu'elles sont : simples habitudes de penser et de sentir, faisceaux de souvenirs et de pulsions. »

Jung les appelle des complexes. Il n'y a aucun doute à ce sujet : il y a bien une cacophonie de voix dans ce que nous appelons notre esprit.

Le visiteur de Nisargadatta poursuit : « Pourtant, elles disent toutes 'je suis'. »

En fait, aucune ne dit « je suis ».
« Je suis » est dit à propos d'elles. Pour vraiment saisir le koan « Sei et son âme sont séparées. Où trouver la vraie Sei ? », il nous faut aller au-delà des deux Sei. De la même façon, si nous voyons clairement cette foule que nous appelons « moi-même », si nous reconnaissons vraiment toutes ces personnalités embryonnaires, souvent peu esquissées et mal définies, mais que nous pouvons tout de même distinguer les unes des autres dans notre esprit, et ensuite si nous pouvons voir qu'aucune d'elles n'est « Je suis ».

Il y a quelque temps, c'est sans doute moins vrai aujourd'hui, on s'est beaucoup intéressé aux « personnalités multiples » et de nombreux livres ont été écrits sur le sujet. Fait remarquable, certaines des personnalités présentes chez un homme se révélaient être des personnalités féminines, certaines personnalités voulaient fumer la cigarette, d'autres non, et parmi celles qui désiraient fumer, l'une préférait une certaine marque de cigarettes alors qu'une autre en préférait

une autre. Le cas suivant est particulièrement frappant : l'analyste d'une femme possédant de multiples personnalités avait entrepris de fusionner ces diverses personnalités et de les soumettre à une personnalité dominante, centrale, mais l'une des personnalités s'objecta, disant qu'avant de donner son accord, elle souhaitait consulter un prêtre afin de s'assurer que son âme immortelle n'allait pas pâtir du processus. Chacune dit « Je suis ». Chacune est investie du plein pouvoir et de la pleine autorité de « Je suis ».

Comme je l'ai déjà dit, si vous dites « cela » est, « cela » est comme vous le dites. Je ne dis pas que vous pouvez le dire autrement. Le « dire » se produit à un niveau profond que l'esprit conscient ne peut atteindre, et pourtant vous le dites. C'est pourquoi je vous exhorte constamment, lorsque quelque chose se présente, à « être un avec » plutôt qu'à vous y identifier et à conférer un « Je suis » à ce quelque chose, à « être un avec » jusqu'à ce que, éventuellement, vous puissiez voir que vous n'êtes pas cela. C'est une façon, si vous voulez, de fusionner vos différentes personnalités, mais le véritable résultat de cette simple ouverture à ce qui est - par exemple, si c'est un soi colérique qui s'exprime, alors soyez en colère, autant que vous le pouvez, sur la natte, bien sûr, pas avec les autres, « soyez un avec » cela - le véritable résultat de cette ouverture est que le conflit inhérent à cette colère sera résolu. Il en va de même pour tout le reste, le chagrin, l'irritation, la dépression et il vous faut être un avec tout cela d'une façon aimante. Nous devons aimer ces diverses personnalités. Chez beaucoup de gens, il y a un enfant en colère, recroquevillé dans un coin, qui crie et on l'ignore, il passe inaperçu, comme si on l'avait supprimé. Il n'est pas là. Et, évidemment, il crie de plus en plus fort. Tout comme on le ferait avec un enfant, s'il était contrarié, nerveux, terrifié, il vaut mieux ne pas chercher à le saisir. On l'approchera plutôt en le cajolant,

en le traitant avec douceur, en s'ouvrant à lui.

Voilà comment il est possible de travailler avec ces diverses personnalités. Tenter de les dominer, de les écarter ou de les contraindre à l'obéissance va simplement à l'encontre du but recherché. Ultimement, cela revient à leur conférer « Je suis ». Dire « je suis en colère », « je suis malheureux », « je suis déprimé », « je suis confus », signifie que nous accordons constamment ce « Je suis », ce sceau d'autorité royale, à quiconque se présente à nous.

Nisargadatta continue : « C'est uniquement parce que vous vous identifiez à elles. Quand vous saisirez que rien de ce qui apparaît devant vous ne peut être vous-même et ne peut dire 'Je suis', vous serez libéré de toutes vos 'personnes' et de leurs exigences. »

La seule façon de vraiment comprendre ceci est d'être complètement « un avec » ce qui apparaît. Tant que vous en restez séparé, cela a une réalité, une existence, indépendante de vous. Voilà pourquoi je dis que si votre pratique est de suivre la respiration, vous ne devez pas observer la respiration. Si vous le faites, alors la respiration devient « quelque chose » et vous « autre chose ». Voilà précisément ce qui maintient l'illusion d'une existence objective. Voilà précisément ce qui maintient l'illusion que le monde est là, solide, à l'extérieur de moi, puisque je l'observe. Comment devenir « un avec » ce monde? Voilà ce que plusieurs demandent. La seule façon est d'éprouver la douleur de la séparation.

Nisargadatta poursuit : « La sensation 'Je suis' est vôtre; vous ne pouvez pas vous en séparer, mais vous pouvez la communiquer à n'importe quoi, comme quand vous dites : 'Je suis jeune, je suis riche, etc.' De telles identifications du soi sont manifestement fausses et sont causes d'attachement. »

On ne peut même pas dire « Je suis le tout. » De la même façon, certaines personnes demandent parfois : « Êtes-vous éveillé ? » On ne peut pas répondre : « Je suis éveillé. » Dès que l'on dit « Je suis ceci » ou « Je suis cela », cela même établit une fausse identité. Voilà pourquoi « Je suis » n'est lui-même qu'une porte d'entrée. Voilà pourquoi je dis que si vous comptez de quelque façon travailler avec cela, alors il vous faut le faire au niveau du « connaître » lui-même et non à celui des mots et formules. Il faut beaucoup de temps avant d'évaluer avec justesse le rôle du langage dans notre vie. À un certain niveau, le langage semble n'être qu'un instrument parmi d'autres, quelque chose que nous utilisons comme nous le faisons avec tant d'autres choses. Mais de voir ainsi le langage, comme quelque chose que nous utilisons, comme quelque chose qui aurait évolué au sein de la vie, est une méprise. D'une certaine façon, on peut dire que le monde tout entier est un mot.

Le monde tout entier est langage et nous n'entrons plus en relation avec le monde, mais bien plutôt avec les mots que nous employons au sujet du monde. Nous parlons ainsi d'oiseaux qui chantent ou d'une fleur qui éclôt et ces mots eux-mêmes, le fait même de parler de ces choses nous éloignent de l'expérience. Lorsque nous pratiquons, il nous faut devenir conscient de cette tyrannie. Nous devons savoir ce qu'est cette tyrannie. J'ai souvent dit ceci, mais parfois en dokusan, je constate que les gens ne saisissent toujours pas clairement certaines choses dont j'ai parlé mille et une fois. Prenez un mot, n'importe lequel : table, oiseau, chien et répétez-le intérieurement, calmement, lentement, savourez-le, goûtez-le, ressentez-le. Vous allez découvrir que ce mot acquiert une certaine existence qui lui est propre, une certaine qualité que l'on pourrait dire absolue. Le langage possède le pouvoir de fixer, de maintenir statique une situation intensément dynamique et vivante.

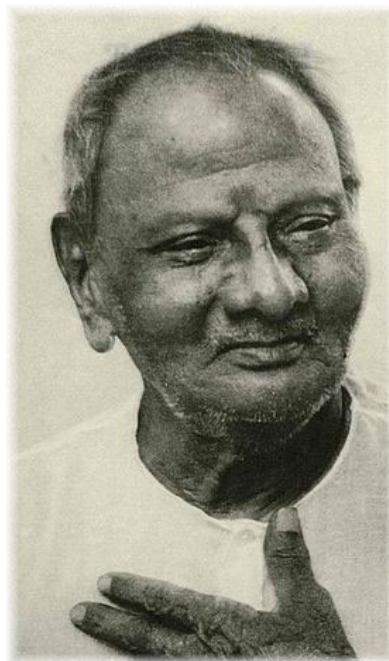
Et le mot « Je » est un mot-clé dans ce monde des mots. Ce mot maintient ensemble tous les autres mots. Sans ce « Je », le monde des mots perd son emprise et sa force. Encore ici, on peut expérimenter ceci. Je vous suggère de vous abstenir d'utiliser le mot « Je » pendant un certain temps, une demi-journée ou peut-être même pendant toute une journée. Si vous y travaillez sincèrement, si vous y travaillez vraiment, vous commencerez à bafouiller et à devenir maladroit dans votre façon d'utiliser les mots. Cela ressemble à une sensation d'engourdissement en rapport avec les mots. Vous verrez alors que ce mot « Je » possède le pouvoir d'unir et de conférer du sens au reste du monde verbal. En n'utilisant pas le « Je », on dirait que la vie perd une certaine saveur. Tout comme lorsque l'on met fin à une habitude. C'est comme éprouver le sentiment que la vie manque de saveur. Et, désespérément, on veut revenir au « Je ».

Le visiteur demande : « Je peux comprendre que je ne suis pas la personne, mais ce qui, quand il se reflète dans la personne, lui donne le sentiment d'être. Et maintenant, qu'en est-il du Suprême ? De quelle façon puis-je me connaître comme Suprême ? »

La source, l'absolu. Chacun de nous est le tout. Chacun de nous est le Suprême. Comment pouvons-nous le savoir? Voilà ce que demande le visiteur. C'est la même question que celle posée au sujet du « connaître ». Les gens me disent : « Qu'entendez-vous par 'connaître' ? Comment puis-je connaître ce 'connaître'? » De toute évidence, vous ne le pouvez pas. 'Connaître' ne peut être le sujet d'une expérience. Il n'est pas possible d'expérimenter le 'connaître'. Les gens disent alors : « Que sommes-nous censés faire alors ? » Lorsque vous demandez « Qui suis-je ? », vous ne pouvez connaître ce « Je suis ».

« Je suis » est inconnaissable. Tout ce dont vous pouvez faire l'expérience n'est pas vous. Et c'est là le véritable sens de la

question posée par le visiteur : « De quelle façon puis-je me connaître moi-même ? »



Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj 1897-1981

Nisargadatta dit alors : « La source de la conscience ne peut pas être un objet de la conscience. »

Lorsque vous êtes en quête de Mu, anticipant une expérience quelconque, alors votre recherche est vaine. Il en va de même avec « Qui suis-je ? » Certains s'exclament alors : « Je suis complètement désorienté. Je ne sais plus dans quelle direction aller, dans quelle direction regarder et ce qu'il faut que je fasse. » Précisément! Il vous faut arriver là, à ce stade où vous êtes complètement perdu et confus, et vous devez être honnête à ce propos. L'on ne peut générer ou créer ce sentiment. Parfois, certains se troublent émotionnellement de façon intense à ce sujet. Je ne parle pas ici de frustration émotionnelle. C'est là une perte d'énergie et de temps. C'est même une façon de démissionner et de prétendre que l'on travaille alors qu'on ne le fait pas. Lorsque l'on est totalement frustré, c'est sans

émotion. De toute évidence, l'on en vient à être ainsi paralysé, stoppé et bloqué précisément parce que l'on a exploré toutes les avenues possibles de l'expérience. Dans les mots du Zen, on a épuisé toutes les ressources de notre être et, bien sûr, à ce stade, la plupart des gens reculent. Ils se blâment alors eux-mêmes, ce qui est très souvent le cas - « Je ne suis pas à la hauteur. Je ne suis pas le genre de personne qui peut réussir ce genre de travail » - , ou ils dénigrent la pratique - « C'est une pratique stupide. J'ai tout essayé et rien n'a marché » -, ou encore ils blâment le maître - « Il devrait être capable de m'aider, là, tout de suite. Il peut sûrement dire quelque chose, un mot magique pour me sortir de cette impasse. Dans les livres, tous les maîtres le font, pourquoi ne peut-il pas le faire ? » Mais non, cette étape est cruciale dans votre pratique. Toute votre pratique a été conçue afin de vous amener là, à ce point précis où vous reconnaissez enfin et complètement que l'expérience, la connaissance, la compréhension, la perspicacité, les sentiments, émotions et sensations, que tout cela ne mène à rien. Et que vous en êtes bien là. En pleine obscurité. Je disais qu'il n'y a pas d'émotion à ce moment, mais cela ressemble à une affliction totale, à une déception qui envahit tout, à une faillite complète. C'est rendu là que l'on doit avoir le courage de ne pas reculer.

La source de la conscience ne peut pas être un objet de la conscience. La source de la conscience est Mu ou Qui ? Cela ne peut être expérimenté. Vous ne pouvez pas vous expérimenter vous-même. Voilà pourquoi nous disons : « Aucun chemin ne mène à l'éveil ». Il n'y a ni voie, ni méthode, ni technique pouvant vous mener à l'éveil. Rappelez-vous Joshu demandant à Nansen : « Si l'esprit ordinaire est la voie, comment y accéder ? » et Nansen de répondre : « Si vous tentez de l'atteindre, vous la repoussez ». Et il poursuit en disant : « Connaître la source, c'est être la source ». C'est cela. La réponse au koan « Qui suis-je ? », c'est vous-même. La résolution du koan « Qu'est-ce que Mu ? », c'est vous-même. Et

c'est cela qui sommeille en vous en ce moment même. Voilà pourquoi je dis que vous ne le voyez pas. Cela ne peut s'éveiller que par l'intelligence. Non pas par une activité ou une pensée intelligente, mais par l'intelligence elle-même. La vie est intelligente ou, si vous préférez, créative, mais elle n'est aucun de ces mots, ni même tous. Mais de la même manière que vous éveillez l'intelligence pour résoudre un problème, vous éveillez l'intelligence pour résoudre ceci. Si vous êtes mathématicien et que vous voulez résoudre un problème mathématique particulier, alors c'est avec votre intelligence que vous le faites et vous savez ce que je veux dire. Il y a un certain type de lumière. Il y a une brillance. Si vous êtes médecin et que vous butez sur un problème avec un patient sans savoir comment le résoudre, alors vous y réfléchissez, vous y appliquez votre intelligence; ou si vous êtes un analyste de systèmes et que vous voulez mettre au point un nouveau système, alors vous y appliquez votre intelligence. Constamment, nous appliquons notre intelligence de cette façon, mais nous l'appliquons toujours à quelque chose. Une autre façon de dire cela, c'est « Je pense à quelque chose ». Quelqu'un a dit : « Peu de gens pensent vraiment. La plupart remanient plutôt leurs préjugés ». C'est tout à fait comme ça. Mais, de temps en temps, on est forcé de réfléchir. Et quand on le fait, c'est comme si on allumait une lampe en soi-même. Il y a une brillance qui est au-delà des mots, vous savez sûrement de quoi je parle. Si, par exemple, vous tentez de vous rappeler le nom d'un auteur que vous avez oublié, alors cette intelligence est mise à contribution et elle continue à chercher même lorsque vous n'en êtes pas conscient. Un exemple célèbre de ce phénomène est celui du mathématicien français Poincaré qui, après avoir lutté pendant des mois afin de résoudre un problème mathématique, était parti en excursion, laissant derrière lui les mathématiques, souhaitant simplement se détendre. Alors qu'il montait dans un

autobus, la solution du problème lui apparut! Il dit plus tard : « Je savais que je n'avais pas à vérifier les détails. Je savais que j'avais trouvé la solution. »

Il en va de même si vous appliquez votre intelligence à la question « Qui suis-je ? ». Vous appliquez votre intelligence à la question, vous y réfléchissez jusqu'à ce que vous en veniez à y penser sans pensées, c'est-à-dire sans expériences, concepts, idées, métaphores ou analogies, sans souvenirs, intuitions ou projections. En d'autres mots, vous atteignez un point d'arrêt. Mais vous persistez néanmoins à y penser. C'est là un point crucial dans cette pratique. C'est pourquoi nous avons les koans. Les koans sont conçus de manière à vous précipiter dans un cul-de-sac. Il y a toujours un oui et un non dans un koan. « Si vous dites que ceci est un bâton, trente coups; si vous dites que ce n'est pas un bâton, trente coups. » C'est le paradigme de tous les koans. Si vous répondez « oui », trente coups; si vous dites « non », trente coups. Alors, qu'est-ce que c'est? Vous voilà dans l'impasse. Qu'est-ce que vous êtes ? Si vous dites quoique ce soit, cela ne vaut rien; si vous ne répondez rien, cela ne vaut rien. Maintenant, « Qu'est-ce que vous êtes ? ». Voilà ce qui se passe en dokusan. Nous vous demandons : « Qui est entré ? Qui est entré ? », vous forçant dans ce cul-de-sac. Mais cela seulement si vous me le permettez. La plupart du temps les gens me crient après ou lancent des cris rauques. Mais c'est dans ce cul-de-sac, dans ce sentiment complet d'inutilité - je sais que cela peut sembler rude et je vous prie de croire que cette personne ne trouve aucune satisfaction à vous pousser dans de tels culs-de-sac - mais c'est là la direction dans laquelle vous devez aller. Certaines personnes se trouvent déjà, pour ainsi dire naturellement, dans cette condition. C'était le cas de Kafka. Il n'a pas eu à pratiquer longtemps; il était déjà là. Mais la plupart d'entre nous devons y travailler. Nous devons d'abord voir l'obstacle que constitue la pensée, voir comment notre esprit travaille dans un mode d'activité « ceci ou cela », voir cette tendance au

dogmatisme, cette tendance à vouloir déclamer sur quelque chose. C'est là que nous devons apprendre l'humilité, que nous devons renoncer, dans une certaine mesure, à cette prétention d'être distinct, unique et spécial. Et quand nous l'avons fait, nous sommes prêts, jusqu'à un certain point, à nous laisser pousser dans ce tube de bambou dont parlait Hakuin : « Comme un rat dans un tube de bambou. Il ne peut ni avancer ni reculer et il ne peut rester là où il est. »

Laissez-moi redire qu'il est possible de générer ce cul-de-sac émotionnellement mais qu'il s'agit là d'une simple perte de temps, d'une sorte d'apitoiement sur soi, d'un échappatoire, d'un évitement du véritable problème. Car bien que nous disions que l'on doit appliquer sa propre intelligence et que l'on doit aussi réfléchir, cela ne signifie pas que des personnes possédant seize diplômes pratiqueront mieux que d'autres n'ayant qu'une huitième année. En fait, c'est probablement l'inverse qui est vrai. Il n'est pas question ici d'éducation, d'intelligence scolaire, d'habileté à déchiffrer des livres savants ou à résoudre des jeux d'esprit complexes. Nous ne parlons pas de cela. Nous parlons de l'intelligence humaine naturelle que chacun de nous est puisque chacun de nous est Bouddha. Bouddha est cette intelligence dont nous parlons. Voilà pourquoi nous disons que lorsque l'on s'assoit en permettant à cette tension de se développer, un cul-de-sac naturel apparaît, une contradiction naturelle inhérente à la vie elle-même se révèle. Il y a un oui/non au centre même de notre être. Toute notre activité est façonnée afin de composer avec cette contradiction fondamentale. Voilà pourquoi nous inventons des rituels, des cérémonies, des jeux si vous préférez. Si nous participons à un jeu, nous le faisons de façon non contradictoire. Il s'agit d'un système fermé et nous pouvons nous y comporter sans douter de rien. Lorsque, par exemple, vous jouez au soccer, il vous suffit de suivre les règles. Vous n'avez pas à décider si vous devez ou non ramasser le

ballon et courir, les lignes de touche que vous ne devez pas franchir sont indiquées, les filets de chaque équipe sont clairement définis, l'un et l'autre à chaque extrémité du terrain et vous savez lequel vous devez protéger et lequel attaquer. Tout cela est clairement défini. Toute l'ambiguïté de l'existence est ainsi encadrée d'une façon structurée afin que nous n'ayons pas à composer avec l'ambiguïté elle-même. Le monde des affaires, les clubs, les sociétés sont établis autour de buts spécifiques qui nous indiquent la direction à suivre et nous épargnent d'avoir à prendre sans cesse des décisions difficiles. Mais, fondamentalement, lorsque nous laissons tomber tout cela, lorsque nous sommes assis devant le mur, alors tous ces jeux s'effondrent. À ce moment, nous avons le sentiment de faire face au désert, le sentiment que toutes les valeurs s'annulent mutuellement et que plus rien n'a maintenant préséance sur rien d'autre.

Tant de gens se plaignent, disant : « Avant d'arriver en sesshin, j'étais vraiment déterminé. Tout allait bien. Je savais exactement ce que je souhaitais faire. J'avais beaucoup d'énergie et mes attentes étaient bonnes. J'arrive en sesshin et vous savez quoi ? Rien ! » C'est vrai, c'est ce qui arrive. Nous avons alors besoin de patience. Le premier jour d'une sesshin est difficile, on est fatigué, on s'ennuie et tout le reste, mais au-delà de tout cela, il nous faut la patience. Il nous faut consentir à ce que le feu commence à brûler en nous. Sans se hâter, ni forcer les choses trop rapidement, trop tôt. On inspire, on expire. On travaille avec la sensation au bout des pouces. Par-dessus tout, patience, patience. Si vous vous hâtez, vous allez toujours passer à côté. Patience. Alors, graduellement, surgit cette tension, ce sentiment problématique pendant que vous inspirez et expirez Mu ou Qui? De plus en plus, on sent grandir ce sentiment d'un revirement, ce sentiment que quelque chose



ne tourne pas rond.

On peut alors commencer à poser la question, vraiment commencer à approfondir ce « Qui suis-je ? » Et vous devez être fermement résolu, lorsque vous venez en dokusan, à répondre à ce « Qui suis-je ? ». Voilà pourquoi vous venez en dokusan et vous devez décider que c'est là ce que vous allez faire. C'est là la raison d'être du dokusan, surtout pendant une sesshin de sept jours : que vous y veniez pour répondre à cette question « Qui suis-je ? ». Vous pouvez alors être attentif au fait que vous n'avez pas un temps illimité devant vous. À n'importe quel moment de l'après-midi ou de la soirée, vous pouvez être appelé à venir en dokusan et, à ce moment, vous devez être prêt à répondre à cette question. C'est ainsi que, graduellement, vous éprouverez le sentiment d'être confronté à un mur. Vous avez essayé ceci, vous avez essayé cela, puis quelque chose d'autre, vous avez respiré, vous avez retenu votre souffle, vous avez fait ceci, vous vous êtes levé, assis... rien. Maintenant, vous continuez. Vous continuez. Et quand vous revenez en dokusan, l'on vous pose à nouveau la question et vous vous sentez stupide, humilié, blessé. C'est cela. C'est juste. C'est bien. Enfin, nous arrivons quelque part. La source de la conscience ne peut être un objet de la conscience.

Connaître la source, c'est être la source. Quand vous vous rendez compte que vous n'êtes pas la personne, mais bien plutôt le témoin pur et calme et que cette présence sans peur est votre être même, alors vous êtes l'être. Cette présence sans peur est votre être même. Connaissant la confusion, vous la connaissez sans confusion. Vous connaissez la douleur sans être la douleur. La douleur ne peut pas vous faire de mal. La mort ne vous tuera pas.*

Sesshin en toute santé

Depuis un certain temps déjà, plusieurs s'inquiètent du fait que lors de certaines de nos sesshins, la grippe et le rhume font la vague dans le zendo. Or, si à certains moments l'inconfort et les distractions qui accompagnent ces maux sont inévitables, on peut penser qu'avec vigilance et certains soins il est possible de réduire leur fréquence et propagation. Le Conseil d'administration du Centre s'est récemment penché sur les moyens à adopter, en sesshin, pour brider rhumes et gripes sans nuire aux conditions si importantes à maintenir pour la pratique dans le zendo, c'est-à-dire le silence et l'économie de mouvements.

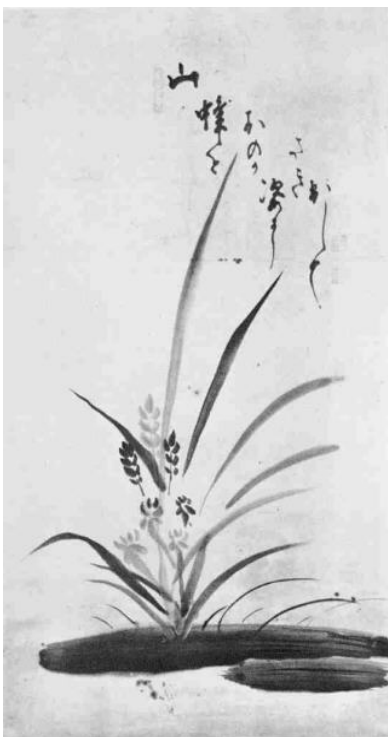
Les quelques règles suivantes s'appliqueront principalement au zendo et à la cuisine. Les moniteurs et chefs de cuisine verront à la mise en œuvre de celles-ci.

La première règle devrait être mise en application par chacun(e) des inscrits aux sesshins. Une personne incommodée par la grippe avant le commencement de la sesshin doit se décommander pour éviter de la transmettre et elle doit téléphoner pour annuler de sorte que nous puissions redistribuer ses tâches. Notre intention n'est pas de renvoyer une personne grippée ou enrhumée à la maison. Le jugement et la décision doivent être vôtres et tenir compte des inconvénients que vous pouvez causer aux autres participants si vous deviez en contaminer plusieurs. C'est en quelque sorte demander au cheval de Troie de rester bien loin de l'enceinte!

Cela dit, gripes et rhumes peuvent apparaître une fois la sesshin commencée.

Who is it that coughs?

Lately, many of us have expressed some concern with the spreading of colds or flues during sesshin. There is no doubt that complete eradication is not possible but vigilance and care we can help reduce the level or frequency of discomfort and distraction that they cause. The Board of Directors of the Center has recently looked at means of curbing the effects of colds and flues during sesshin, without affecting the conditions (silence and thrift of movement) that need to be maintained during practice.



The following rules are proposed primarily for the zendo and the kitchen. We have asked monitors and head cooks to oversee their implementation.

The first rule however can only be policed by each registered sesshin participant. A person struggling with a bad case of flu or cold before sesshin should cancel their participation and phone to notify ahead of time so that their work during sesshin is reassigned. We do not intend to send people who have a flu or cold away. The judgment call and decision not to come to sesshin should be theirs and should consider the inconvenience of spreading their flu or cold to other participants. It is like suggesting that the Trojan Horse keep its distance from Troy.

This being said, colds and flues do show up during sesshins. We have asked monitors to take aside participants that come up with a bad case of cold or flu during

Dans ces situations, au zendo, nous comptons sur les moniteurs pour demander à un(e) participant(e) qui présente une vilaine grippe et tousse beaucoup, de se couvrir le nez et la bouche discrètement au zendo lorsqu'il (elle) tousse ou éternue et d'utiliser un mouchoir pour éviter de semer les microbes à tous vents. On lui demandera aussi de se laver les mains fréquemment. Il y a dans la toilette du zendo, dans celles de la maison ainsi que dans la cuisine un désinfectant liquide pour les mains. Et puisque c'est notamment par les mains que se transmettent les virus, on recommandera par exemple d'ouvrir les portes en se couvrant la main de la manche de sa robe pour saisir la poignée.

À la cuisine, nous comptons aussi sur les chefs de cuisine pour faire de même en ce qui concerne toute personne affectée aux tâches de la cuisine et présentant de sérieux symptômes. Celles-ci doivent être remplacées dans leurs tâches à la cuisine sitôt que le malaise fait craindre que l'hygiène ne soit compromise.

En ce qui touche ces mesures, nous demandons aux participants à la sesshin d'attendre que les moniteurs ou les chefs de cuisine donnent des consignes avant de bouger au zendo ou de modifier ses tâches à la cuisine plutôt que de le faire de sa propre initiative. Une personne peut remettre une note au moniteur ou chef de cuisine si sa condition l'inquiète.

Il va de soi que les lieux exigus, la proximité de chacun et chacune dans la maison comme au zendo, font du sesshin un terreau très propice pour la propagation du rhume et de la grippe. En prenant ces quelques mesures et en étant vigilant(e)s, nous pourrions sans doute limiter ces inconvénients

Le conseil d'administration ❄

sesshin, and ask them to cover discretely nose and mouth when coughing in the zendo and use tissue to limit the sprinkling of their ailments. Monitors should also ask them to wash their hands frequently. For this purpose we will ensure that all washrooms and the kitchen area have dispensers of anti-bacterial hand liquid. Since colds and flues are often spread by our hands we should recommend that they cover hands with, for example, their robe's sleeves when opening doors.

We also asked head cooks to take similar steps in the kitchen when a participant presents symptoms of cold or flu. Head cooks should work to reassign out of the kitchen participants that come down with a flu or cold as soon as there is reason to believe that the healthiness of the kitchen may be compromised.

We ask participant to follow these measures (moving in zendo, switching work in the kitchen) once called upon to do so by the monitors and head cooks rather than on their own initiative. If a participant is worried about his or her condition he or she should notify the monitor or head cook. It is obvious that the limited space in which we live in the house and the zendo during sesshin make the Center a rather propitious environment for the propagation of colds or flues. In implementing these measures and in asking each one to be vigilant, we can help limit these inconveniences

The Board of Directors ❄

Calendrier des activités du Centre 2005

Le Centre Zen de Montréal : 824, rue Parc Stanley, H2C 1A2
 Téléphone : (514) 388-4518 www.zenmontreal.ca

Avril / April

Samedi / Saturday 2 - - - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 3 - - -
 Jeudi / Thursday 7 - - - - -
 Vendredi / Friday 8-15 - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 17 - - -
 Jeudi / Thursday 21 - - - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 24 - - -
 Jeudi / Thursday 28 - - - - -
 Samedi / Saturday 30 - - - -

Atelier / Workshop
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen
 Cours pour les débutants / Beginner's course
 Sesshin de sept jours / Seven day sesshin
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen
 Cours pour les débutants / Beginner's course
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen
 Cours pour les débutants / Beginner's course
 Journée de travail et Assemblée annuelle



Mai / May

Dimanche / Sunday 1 - - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 8 - - - -
 Vendredi / Friday 13-20 - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 22 - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 29 - - -

Séance d'une journée / One day sesshin
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen
 Sesshin de sept jours / Seven day sesshin
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen
 Séance d'une journée / One day sesshin

Juin / June

Jeudi / Thursday 2-5 - - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 12 - - -
 Vendredi / Friday 17-19 - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 26 - - -

(Jean Claude) Sesshin de trois jours / Three day sesshin
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen
 Sesshin de deux jours / Two day sesshin
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen

Septembre / September

Vendredi / Friday 2-9 - - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 11 - - -
 Samedi / Saturday 17 - - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 18 - - -
 Jeudi / Thursday 22 - - - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 25 - - -
 Jeudi / Thursday 29 - - - - -

Sesshin de sept jours / Seven day sesshin
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen
 Atelier / Workshop
 Séance d'une journée / One day sesshin
 Cours pour les débutants / Beginner's course
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen
 Cours pour les débutants / Beginner's course

Octobre / October

Dimanche / Sunday 2 - - - -
 Jeudi / Thursday 6 - - - - -
 Vendredi / Friday 7-14 - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 16 - - -
 Jeudi / Thursday 20 - - - - -
 Samedi / Saturday 22 - - - -
 Jeudi / Thursday 27 - - - - -
 Samedi / Saturday 29 - - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 30 - - -

Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen
 Cours pour les débutants / Beginner's course
 Sesshin de sept jours / Seven day sesshin
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen
 Cours pour les débutants / Beginner's course
 Atelier / Workshop
 Cours pour les débutants / Beginner's course
 Journée de travail
 Séance d'une journée / One day sesshin

Novembre / November

Jeudi / Thursday 3-6 - - - -
 Jeudi / Thursday 10 - - - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 13 - - -
 Jeudi / Thursday 17 - - - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 20 - - -
 Jeudi / Thursday 24 - - - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 27 - - -

Sesshin de trois jours / Three day sesshin
 Cours pour les débutants / Beginner's course
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen
 Cours pour les débutants / Beginner's course
 Séance d'une journée / One day sesshin
 Cours pour les débutants / Beginner's course
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen

Décembre / December

Vendredi / Friday 2-9 - - -
 Dimanche / Sunday 11, 18 -
 Vendredi (20h00 à minuit)
 Friday 31 (8pm-Midnight)

Sesshin de sept jours / Seven day sesshin
 Avant-midi de zazen / Morning zazen
 -Cérémonie du Nouvel An
 - New Year's Eve Ceremony

Voulez-vous savoir où est Manjusri ?
À ce moment même il y a quelque chose à l'œuvre en vous qui ne montre aucune tendance à chanceler, ne laisse voir aucune disposition au doute, c'est votre Manjusri vivant.

Rinzai
