

PRINCIPLES OF ZEN PRACTICE: ILLUMINATING THE SOURCE

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Calm and Clear

This lecture is about principles of Zen practice. I will not only say something about them, but will go through these principles with you in practice, so we can get a concrete sense of what I am talking about.

Let me start with two simple words: "calm" and "clear." If you can realize the Zen Buddhist meaning of these two words, you've got it. That will do. When you practice Buddhism, many questions may arise: From where can we start our practice? And where are we going with that practice - for what end? Who are we sitting for, who are we practicing for? If we simply sit for ourselves, that will certainly not do. But it won't do to simply sit for others either. Even more to the point, when we truly practice, who is sitting? These questions can be rather "un-calming" and the answers rather unclear. You may know already that in sitting zazen you are "supposed" to be calm and clear. Yet, as a matter of fact often we are not calm, and we are not clear. Perhaps that is why many of us are here tonight. Maybe we want to be calm and clear, but we are not.

Let me read a quote from a classic book on Buddhism - not Zen - by Walpola Rahula, a renowned Theravada scholar-monk. It's one of the most famous books in English about Buddhism, called *What the Buddha Taught*.

It is the source of all the troubles in the world from personal conflicts to wars between nations. In short, to this false view can be traced all the evil in the world.

What is "it" in this quote? What is he talking about? It sounds very big and heavy, doesn't it?

He is talking about the ego. The ego, this false sense of self, is the source of all our troubles. But in Buddhism it is, technically, a "false view." The ego is not real. It is an illusion. It is an unreal, inaccurate view of what is. There is no such thing. And yet we all know that it can be a very painful, powerful, and dangerous delusion.

Maybe some of you are uncomfortable with his use of the word "evil." Why does a Buddhist use such a term? I reckon he uses that word to distinguish what he is talking about from, for instance, a natural disaster like an earthquake. That's not evil, though it can be a terrible tragedy. It's not really that simple anymore, however, because we now know that even natural disasters can be brought on by environmental abuse.

Anyway, two points are clear. First: Ego is the problem. The other point is that it is an illusion. A very tenacious one, but still an illusion. So what do we do about it?

How do we get away from this false sense of self, with its greed and lack of clarity and calmness? As a practical method, there are many, many different kinds of Buddhist meditations. Let's take two concrete problems and see how the ancient Buddhist Sutras deal with them.

Fighting Fire with Fire

Let's say you are sitting in zazen, and something keeps coming up. Maybe you're angry about something, or about someone. Maybe you even feel hatred towards that person. You're trying to be calm but it is impossible because these strong emotions keep coming up. At that moment they are more real than your attempt at zazen.

One very simple method is what I call fighting fire with fire, or fighting fire with water. You bring up one thought, relatively speaking a "good" thought, to get rid of a "bad" thought. When you feel anger, hatred or revenge that is so strong you can't even sit zazen, then you take that person you feel so much hatred for and just try to bring up a feeling of loving kindness towards that person and let the angry feeling melt away. The Sutras go into great detail to show how to do this. I won't go into detail now, but the method is clear. When you find you've taken a negative attitude toward someone or something, you consciously cultivate the opposite. It may not be easy at first, but over time you can actually overcome that feeling of hatred. It dissolves. You can then deal calmly and clearly with that situation or person you hated. It's not that you are hiding your feelings. They are actually transformed. More than a meditation, you could see this as a specific method to overcome a particular problem that is preventing you from meditating or from fully functioning in the world. These feelings of anger or hatred will dissolve and dissipate. Then in a sense you can get down to the real work.

Another example is when you feel a real strong passion or desire. Let's say you're trying to sit zazen but all this erotic stuff keeps coming up. You're just overcome with these images. There are meditation techniques in the Sutras for that too. Obviously, monks and nuns 2,500 years ago had the same problems. One technique is to simply take the object of your desire and very clearly look at it, see it. Now see it when it is sixty years old. The Sutras even suggest going to a graveyard and actually meditating on dead bodies in various stages of decomposition, but we can do it in our imagination as well. Think of these beautiful forms, of this beautiful body and picture clearly how it will actually look when it is sixty, then eighty, with all the wrinkles and sags. And then at a hundred. Maybe it's dead now, decomposing, there's bugs crawling into the eye sockets, fluids oozing out, see it in detail. Here too you are fighting fire with fire, or fighting fire with water. After a while the beautiful image is not so beautiful anymore. It's not that you are refusing to see it, but you are no longer seeing it in just one way. You are no longer blinded by what you see. You're seeing it in a different way, in a new way. And it works whether it's a person or a thing, say a new car that you're obsessed with. Again, this is a specific meditation technique for a specific problem.

Three Marks: Impermanent, Dis-eased, Egoless

But what is Buddhist meditation aiming at? What are we trying to "get to"? Are we just trying to get rid of all desire, all feelings, and so on? That can't be it, can it? But then what's the real end? What's the point? Traditional Buddhist terminology - we're not dealing with Zen yet - lists three marks of existence. Everything: You, your friend, your enemy, your anger, your passion - everything has these three marks. That is what you are trying to calmly and clearly see in the meditation. In other words: When you transform hatred into love, that's a good thing, but it's not the final goal of meditation. The final goal is to actually see *through* all things, to calmly and clearly see them as *marked*, as "impermanent," "*dis-eased*" and "egoless."

Everything is impermanent, whether a feeling of hatred or of sexual desire. Beauty is too. They do not exist forever unchanged. The second mark is called *dukkha* in Pali. *Dukkha* is also the first noble truth, often translated as "suffering." I render it as *dis-ease*. Everything is impermanent and thus is characterized by *dis-ease*. All that is, is ultimately unstable. We cannot come fully to rest in anything that is. The third mark is that all things are without ego. These three marks are the fundamental principle behind every kind of Buddhist meditation. In every genuinely Buddhist meditation you see the reality that is there: impermanent, *dis-eased* or unstable, and without an ego.

Not a Thing to Cling

You see how interconnected these three marks are. In a sense they are saying the same thing from a different angle. So we should be able to make it even simpler, and according to the Pali Sutras Gotama Buddha indeed did that. Two places in those Sutras record that Gotama Buddha was asked if he could explain the essence of his teaching in one sentence. He replied, yes: "Nothing whatever should be clung to." This is another way of saying the same thing: Everything is impermanent, unstable and without substantial ego. There is nothing to cling to, to grasp, to hold on to.

That may sound very negative, very nihilistic. Early Buddhism often sounds that way. But the end, where they are going with that, is very, very positive. It's liberation. Total liberation, even from our selves. Nothing whatever to cling to: That's the basis of Buddhist philosophy, but also of Buddhist meditation.

Buddhism is not saying that we should no longer care about things, that we should not love our family and so on. Rather, we should not cling - we should not strangle what we love with possessiveness and jealousy. We all know the pain and suffering that comes from that.

Allow me to put it even more directly: There's not a thing to cling. I know, it may sound like a commercial for a fabric softener or something. But it's true. There is no thing anywhere to cling to, inside or out. Even more important and basic: There is

no self to cling either! Not only is there no thing outside yourself that you could cling to, there's also no self inside that could cling to anything. Realizing this, actualizing this, is the heart and soul of Buddhist practice.

Directly Into the Heart of the Matter

Now let's touch on Zen. In a sense the approach in seated Zen meditation or zazen is different. Of course it is a kind of Buddhist meditation, but it is a distinct kind. Whether it's ancient or modern Zen, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, or Vietnamese, Rinzai or Soto, koan Zen or the Zen of just-sitting, they all share an essential uniqueness. What is it? An often-used Chinese expression, consisting of only four characters, describes the essence of Zen practice very accurately and very simply: "Turn the light and illuminate back." This expression is found in the records of Rinzai as well as Dogen, and many other Zen masters from early Zen to the present. It was an important term for Chinul, the father of Korean Son or Zen, and it is a kind of motto today for the university where I teach, a Zen-affiliated institution in Kyoto.

The "light" spoken of here is a metaphor for awareness. Instead of dealing with specific problems that may arise - fighting fire with fire or fire with water - Zen practice deals directly with the problem of awareness itself. This in no way suggests that other Buddhist meditations, including the ones I briefly mentioned above, are not important or useful. On the contrary, Western Zen practitioners would do well to practice and master basic Buddhist meditative discipline! The fact remains, however, that Zen practice finally requires jumping directly into the heart of the matter.

This is the strength, but also the weakness of Zen practice. Its strength is that it can short circuit, in one fell swoop, the endless regression of ordinary consciousness. Its weakness, and this has been pointed out by early Zen patriarchs such as Tsung-Mi in the early ninth century, is that the very directness which is its strength, when not properly realized, is easily distorted. Then it can easily degenerate into something like "anything goes, it's OK as long as I just sit and 'be,' I don't have to do anything." Finally it's not something you do, but it does take practice with patience and diligence. Let me try and explain.

Illuminating the Source

What does it mean to turn the light and illuminate back, to cast the light of awareness back? Let's first see what we are normally doing with our actual awareness. We are so used to *moving with* - and *being moved by* - our awareness that we don't even realize it. Yet we are; this subtle activity of our awareness is almost constant. We are continually going toward what we seek and desire, or moving away from what we dislike, whether we imagine, see, think, desire, feel hate or love, and so on. Through Buddhist meditation this subtle movement can come clearly to the fore and naturally dissipate over time.

The point of turning the light of awareness back is, of course, to actually illuminate the *source*. The source of what? The source of everything. Not just awareness, but what we are aware of. Here and now, all around us and within us, there are bricks, pillows, people, feelings of love and hate, and so on. Where is it all coming from?

There's no need to resort to any metaphysical or transcendental reality, or to a supernatural God to answer that. We're simply pointing out the source of our present awareness. Each and every one of you is now listening. And each and every one of you is not apart from that source of awareness as you are listening. But you don't realize it directly. (And there's no other way to realize it *than* directly.) Why don't you realize it? Simply because you're so accustomed to turning it into a pillow, or a bit of discomfort, feelings of love and hate, or into the thought, "Isn't that stupid!" or "Isn't that brilliant!" Zazen, Zen practice, is simply and directly penetrating that source, right here, right now. Once again, I ask you: *Not* where is your awareness going to, but where is your awareness coming from - right now?

Zen neatly wraps up the whole bundle and lays it gently at our feet. As another Chinese Zen expression puts it, the litchi fruit is cleanly peeled and placed into your mouth - all you have to do now is swallow it.

What could be simpler than this? And when can you work on this? That's right: Anytime, anyplace. Because it is always there with every moment of awareness. No need to try and go back to some past moment, nor pine for a future one. Nor is there any need for a special place to go to, some old-case koan to attain it, or some authority figure to point it out for you. No matter how confused or deluded you are right now, where the hell do you think that all comes from? Of course, practically speaking, some paths can be more fruitful than others - another reason for Buddhist discipline and sustained practice. But nothing is apart from the source. Can anyone deny this?

Okay, then once and for all let go of your delusive seeking for some other state or condition that you think you need to be in. No need to make that mistake again! Rather, simply allow your present awareness to fall back on its source. It's just a subtle but essential change of direction, so to speak. Not going out to what we see or hear. With some experience of zazen, it is relatively easy to cease the mind's chasing after various sounds and sights that might arise externally. But to "turn back" doesn't mean to stop using your external senses and go "within" - into a world of thoughts, emotions, or images, and so on. These internal occurrences are no closer to the source than the external ones. They, too, have already been turned into something by our unsettled awareness. To "turn back" the light of awareness means back to the source itself - the source of inside and outside. Remember, the internal activity of thought and feeling is just the activation of the mental sense. The mind is one of our sense organs, just like sight and sound. No need to get wrapped up in it. Zazen is, very simply, that subtle "movement" of awareness falling back on its source. And that source is always here, and now. Where else could it be?

You can now see why using some tool to assist you may, on the contrary, lead you astray. That is why Zen practice is, in a sense, a matter of taking everything away. It

is *not* using any tools, *not* giving you something to contemplate. Still I would recommend learning basic Buddhist meditative discipline first. Otherwise, you're likely to just continue in your old mental habits, or get caught up and bound by some profound thought, overwhelming emotion or insight you may or may not have.

Stop!

Sometimes the quote about turning the light and illuminating back is given together with another concrete Chinese metaphor. It consists of two characters that literally mean "Step back," but they are perhaps better rendered as "Stop!" In other words, first step back, come to a full stop - cease all the activities of your ordinary awareness. Without that, zazen is impossible, realizing and entering the source is impossible. Ordinarily you simply sit there and follow this thought, then that thought, this sound, this pain in your leg, this pleasant feeling, or whatever. In a sense, zazen begins by putting an end to that. But this "putting an end" is not an act of will. Any act of will is also continuing along that delusive movement. Putting a stop to that is simply allowing the ordinary awareness of things to fall away, thus directly entering the source itself.

It doesn't mean closing your eyes and ears and stopping all consciousness either. It means not following that consciousness or awareness and turning it into something: be it a sound, sight, smell, thought, image, or emotion. Putting a stop to the activities of ordinary consciousness and tracing back to the source. Stop going out into the world - or into the inner world of thoughts and emotions. Stop creating things. See what is right here and right now - before creation, before you have created anything. Before you have turned it into something, before a thought has arisen.

See how simple zazen is? Then continue until *that* falls away. Don't even stick with the "source."

This is one way to describe the actual process of zazen. In a way it's a bit different from traditional forms of Buddhist meditation, which tend to have a particular object in the beginning to work on. For example, turning hatred into love, or turning sexual desire into clearly seeing through the impermanence of the desired object, as mentioned above.

Practice Brought to Life

Calm and clear - in a sense that's all I'm talking about. Clearly seeing through and coming to rest as the source of it all in each and every moment. Of course that means after you get up from zazen too: Seeing and being that source as you get up and do something, as you act, as you make a decision, as you think. It's not just about sitting still and doing nothing. That's useless, even less than useless. Zazen has to be brought to life in the activities of the real world. Zazen is not a matter of sitting for a while and getting a little bit of a rush or a feeling of peace or whatever,

then seeing it dissipate and lessen as we go out to the world. Just once, illuminate the source of awareness itself. Then it's no longer you shining your light on the source. The source is found to be constantly illuminating itself, and all is marvelously bright and alive. Without a single thought arising. You are that source. Realize it.

Of course, it is a process for which you need discipline. And in a sense you need to be able to learn how to do that, learn how to let go of your habitual tendency to go out to the external world or into the inner world of thoughts, ideas, images, and so on. If you read the Sutras and meditation manuals there are all kinds of good and concrete advice about how to do that. Once you have caught yourself following after a thought you can learn to trace it back to its source. Or you can simply return to your meditative focus, be it breathing, or whatnot. Or you can actively cut off each thought as it arises. There are many different approaches. One of the great insights of Zen meditation is that it has realized from the beginning that the very effort of cutting off a thought is itself a thought. The very effort of trying to do that means you've already gone out into the thought, you've already turned it into something and now you're trying to stop it. As it's said: The arrow has already flown far away.

It's always right here. Even to say you have to "return" is saying too much. It sounds so easy in the manuals:

Whenever a thought occurs, be aware of it; as soon as you are aware of it, it will vanish. If you remain for a long period forgetful of objects, you will naturally become unified. This is the essential art of zazen.

I spent a long time trying that, but some thoughts were still coming up. It's not that simple. Yet with patience, over time, the thoughts themselves have no need to arise, they have no place to hold on to so they just naturally dissipate. Then, even when a thought does arise, you are aware of it *as it arises*. We are not normally aware of thought until it has already formed. In our ignorance we think that we create our thoughts. But when we look deeper we clearly see where and how thought arises. We see the thought at its inception, then we see it just as naturally disappear. And then after a while thoughts no longer arise. That's good, but you don't need to get hung up on that. Continue, trace back to the very source itself, and when you illuminate that, when you actually "fall in," it's no longer you doing it, or it doing you. Once you illuminate the source, that is the source of all illumination. That's when the sparks really fly. Then it's no longer a problem of "you" or "something" or even some "source."

From Where We Practice

Of course, even to call it a "source" is just a metaphor. That source is you. Until you've actually realized that, however, it's not you. But you see how simple it is. You, in your present awareness, whatever awareness you have right now - smart, dumb, desiring, hearing, seeing - come from the source. And that awareness can

be traced back to the source.

Practically speaking, some are better than others to trace back. In a sense, that's what a koan is all about. A koan is designed so that you can't go out to the external world or into an inner world by turning it into something. You can't turn a koan into something. That's what in the beginning is so frustrating about it. You want to turn it into something, into anything; you want to satisfy the teacher or yourself or some such nonsense. But after a while, when the koan starts to take effect, it is no longer something out there or in here; it's actually you yourself. Then the doubt can solidify and reach "critical mass," so to speak. And at some point you actually stumble upon it, you turn back and reveal the source. That's when it really becomes clear.

So you see now from where we practice? To whatever extent you realize it, the practice is from here. There is nowhere to go - present awareness is where you practice from. Maybe that present awareness is full of selfish desires. Fine, work with that. Maybe it's very "pure." Fine, work with that. But your present awareness is all that you need, *provided that you trace it to its source*. To whatever extent you realize it, that's where we practice from. No need to compare yourself with your assumptions about someone else. Let go of the whole idea of trying to attain something. You can let go of that right now, you don't have to bring it up again. There is no place to get to. Even to say you have to get to the "source" is to say too much: where the hell do you think you are right now?! I repeat: Whatever extent you now realize it, that's okay. We're not in a competition here. Just continue from there, not out to the external world, not into the inner world either - but into the source itself.

For Whom We Practice

Who are we doing this for? Why do we sit in zazen? For you? For me? The typical Mahayana answer is: For all beings. Isn't that strange? Can't we sit here and get it for ourselves first and then maybe we can think about somebody else? Doesn't that make sense - you've got to do it yourself first, right? But Buddhism, especially Mahayana Buddhism, states that we *begin* our practice from the standpoint of all beings. Why? Because that is the only place we can practice! The source of present awareness is inseparable from all beings. It must include all beings. If it's just you, you're not at the source. And if it's merely for someone else, you're not at the source either.

Look at the first vow of the Bodhisattva: "Beings are numberless. Set them free." That's the first vow - not the second, third or fourth - for all Mahayana Buddhists. Not only are we to free all sentient beings, but it reminds us that they are numberless! You can't put a limit on it. Isn't that absurd? How can we free *all* beings? Well, there is no other way. You can only free all beings at once. In Buddhism salvation is freeing all beings - that's the beginning and the middle and the end. That's why I use words like "the source": That *is* the source, it must include all beings. The ones you love, the ones you hate. The ones you know about, and the ones you don't know about. If anything is omitted, it's because you've turned

this living source into something. Whether a thought, an emotion or a feeling, however noble, it doesn't matter: That will not do.

So you see: Freeing all beings is not an exaggeration. It's the truth. Beings are numberless. Free them all. It's the only way to do it. There is no other way. You can't free yourself, and you can't free another person. If you think another has freed you or that you've freed yourself, you're wrong. You're certainly not a Buddhist. If you think you can free yourself, you're deluded. If you think there's a self to free, you're deluded. And yet our vow remains: Beings are numberless - free every single one of them. This is what Buddha, what awakening, is. It's not your awakening. It's not mine either. It's the awakening of everything, down to the last little particle of dust. It's not where we practice *to*, it's where we practice *from*, right here, right now. So once and for all drop the silly idea of trying to free yourself or someone else! That is just another delusion. All beings, without exception, are free.

In the *Diamond Sutra* it says that. Then it goes on to state that although all beings are freed, there has never been a being to free! Why does it say that? Because it's true. There is no one to free, and yet we go on ceaselessly practicing. There is no ego to be freed. It is an illusion. And yet there are conditions of suffering, of *dis-ease*. And so we do whatever we can, including what we're doing right now, to help undo this delusive mess. And yet there are no beings to be freed. And so the *Diamond Sutra* concludes: "Precisely this is freeing all beings!" Damn right. And this goes on, constantly: Coming from the source which is at the same time going to the source with boundless calmness and clarity. As Dogen puts it: "And this traceless realization continues on without end."

How the *Meditation Manuals* Put It

The classic *Zen Meditation Manuals* say the same thing in their own way. For example, the one attributed to the fifth patriarch of Chinese Zen begins:

If cultivation is not kept pure, there is no way for any practice to yield realization.

"Cultivation" is a metaphor for practice. Patiently struggling in the barren fields. It is that kind of labor in a sense: Constant practice, patiently preparing the dry land to let things grow upon it. You can sit zazen for endless hours. If it's not pure, however, nothing will grow. What is meant by "pure"? The text goes on to explain this point:

The basic essence of cultivation should be discerned. It is the inherently complete and undefiled mind in which there is no false discrimination and all is fundamentally flawless, unborn and undying.

That basic essence is what I call the source. It should be discerned, in other words, seen clearly and embodied. It's inherent, it's already there. The complete and pure mind is the source of your present awareness. The text continues:

This is the basic teacher. This is better than invoking the Buddhas of the Ten Directions.

The first word "this" is none other than your own true mind: That is the basic teacher. Invoking the Buddhas of the Ten Directions was a common practice in those days. But your own true mind is the real teacher - and this must be kept pure. That's why we naturally practice with blood, sweat and tears. That pureness, however, is where we practice from, not what we're aiming at. So no more need to chase after states of mind or masters to confirm what you already are.

Let me quote the beginning of another famous Zen meditation manual, the earliest extant one. It was the basis for later Zen meditation manuals, including Dogen's treatises on meditation:

The Bodhisattva who studies Prajna should first arouse the thought of great compassion,
make the extensive vows and then carefully cultivate samadhi. Vowing to save all sentient beings, you should not seek liberation for yourself alone.

Didn't I just say that? Remember this is a *Meditation Manual*, it's not theory or philosophy. The next paragraph tells how to put your legs up in zazen and so forth, so we're dealing with daily practice here. Bodhisattva is an "awakening being." That's all of us. Prajna is this awakened wisdom. It says to first arouse the thought of great compassion. The vows are the vow to save all beings, the vow to study and practice the Way, and so on. Samadhi is none other than "calm clarity": the discipline of sustained calm and clarity. It goes on:

Then cast aside all involvement and discontinue all affairs. Make body and mind unified
with no division between action and rest.

In other words, bring all to a stop, as mentioned above. Remember, it says this *at the beginning* of the manual and not at the end. That's where it all starts, where it all comes from. Then it continues with this practical advice:

Regulate food and drink so that you take neither too much nor too little, adjust sleep so
that you neither deprive nor indulge yourself.

Only then does it go on to describe how to sit zazen. But from where? That's the point I have been pounding away at.

True Calmness is Completely Clear; True Clarity is Completely Calm

Let me talk about one final thing because it's on a lot of people's minds. What does calm and clear really mean in Buddhism? There are technical Buddhist terms for

these words, but there's no need to go into that here. Calmness is not simply a state of mind. Calmness must finally be completely clear. If it's a dead kind of calmness, it's not Buddhism. There are meditation techniques that focus on calming the mind, but again, that is not the final end. The end is calming the mind so that you can clearly see, and thus act in the world. Dead calmness, cutting off all thought, all emotion, all sights and sounds is not what we're after. It must be calmness clearly seeing. It's not a matter of dead blankness or escape from activity or from anything else.

And more importantly for a lot of people here: It must be insight - clear seeing - that is ultimately calming. If we speak of Buddhist practice in terms of insight, it must be an insight that puts everything to rest. But what often happens? People from all over the globe, men and woman, young and old, have spoken to me about their profound spiritual insights. Sometimes they occur spontaneously, sometimes after long and arduous meditative discipline. At the time, it is often the most wondrous and liberating experience of their lives. But many people go through all kinds of hell as a result. Why? Some are simply not prepared for it. Some are unable to integrate it into their lives. Others destroy their present lives and relationships, because they try desperately to get back to that experience or hold on to it. Some run away from it. As one woman told me, she had never felt more real in her life - but how could she explain to others that she wasn't there anymore?! Even people involved for a long time in meditative practice can be unsettled when all is suddenly revealed in a completely new light. Long-cherished assumptions - and much more - are shattered. Others grasp onto their insight, become puffed up with pride over their precious experience and come to feel that they are superior - their no-ego is the biggest around!

In short, far from bringing genuine peace and harmony, the result is agitation. Something has been seen through, but the depths have not yet been plummeted. Great care must be taken here. Especially after such an experience, sustained practice is important, as are encounters with others on the Way. We need patience and diligence to fully embody it, then let it fall away, and to work it out and apply it in the complexities of life. Then, even death is calm. For death is not apart from this. Thus, Buddhism has spoken since of old about "unborn, undying."

True insight or clear seeing leads to, and comes from, true calmness. Just as true calmness must *see through*. In some practices, insight is stressed. In others, calmness is the focus. But they really are two sides of the same coin. They are two valuable approaches to what I have called, for lack of a better word, the source. And they are grounded in that source. So make use of these practices. But beware not to get stuck in blank calmness or get carried away with seemingly profound insights. Let me warn you. I know - I myself have gotten stuck in this trap. Neither calmness nor insight on their own is realized Buddhism until both actually fall away and reveal their common source.

Let me end with a statement from the *Vimalakirti Sutra*. Manjusri responds to Vimalakirti, the great Buddhist layman:

High ground does not produce lotus flowers. It is the lowlying marshlands that produce them.

The pure lotus blooming amidst the mud of deluding passions is a symbol of Buddhism. What is the *Vimalakirti Sutra* telling us? That it is not about attaining some transcendent state on the mountaintop. Right here and now, bloom from out of the source!

Endnote

Revised version of lectures in 2003, in the Netherlands for Zen onder de Dom in Utrecht on February 14, for Zendo de Kern in Eersel on February 21, for Zendo 't Hool in Eindhoven on February 23; in Belgium for Zen-groep Romaanse Poort at La Foresta Franciscan Monastery & Retreat Centre in Leuven on February 28; in Italy for Sangha il monte interiore at Palazolla Retreat Centre of the English College in Rome on March 8; in Pennsylvania for the Philadelphia Buddhist Association at Chestnut Hill College on July 25, in Yardley for the Buddhist Sangha of Bucks County at the Yardley Friends Meeting on July 28; in Washington, DC for the Zen Buddhist Center of Washington, DC at the Friends Meeting House on August 1; in Rye, New York for the Empty Hand Zendo at The Meeting House on August 11.

Calm and Clear

In context, in the chapter on "The Doctrine of No-Soul: *Anatta*" from Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, p. 51:

What in general is suggested by Soul, Self, Ego, or to use the Sanskrit expression *Atman*, is that in man there is a permanent, everlasting and absolute entity, which is the unchanging substance behind the changing phenomenal world. According to some religions, each individual has such a separate soul which is created by God, and which, finally after death, lives eternally either in hell or heaven, its destiny depending on the judgment of its creator. According to others, it goes through many lives till it is completely purified and becomes united with God or Brahman, Universal Soul or *Atman*, from which it originally emanated. This soul or self in man is the thinker of thoughts, feeler of sensations, and receiver of rewards and punishments for all its actions good and bad. Such a conception is called the idea of self.

Buddhism stands unique in the history of human thought in denying the existence of such a Soul, Self, or *Atman*. According to the teaching of the Buddha, the idea of self is an imaginary, false belief which has no corresponding reality, and it produces harmful thoughts of 'me' and 'mine,' selfish desire, craving, attachment, hatred, ill-

will, conceit, pride, egoism, and other defilements, impurities and problems. **It is the source of all the troubles in the world from personal conflicts to wars between nations. In short, to this false view can be traced all the evil in the world.**

Fighting Fire with Fire

Metta-loving kindness and meditations based on it are a common theme in Buddhist literature. For example, see *Kakacupama Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikaya* 21; *Aghatapativinaya Sutta* in the *Anguttara Nikaya* 5:161; *Metta[nisamsa] Sutta* in the *Anguttara Nikaya* 11:16; *Karaniya Metta Sutta* in *Sutta Nipata* 1:8 of the *Khuddaka Nikaya*; *Dhammapada* chapter 1, verses 3-5 in *Sutta Nipata* of the *Khuddaka Nikaya*; *Patisambhidamagga* ("The Path of Discrimination") treatise 12 in *Sutta Nipata* of the *Khuddaka Nikaya*; Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* ("The Path of Purification") chapter 9.

For contemplation on the body see, for example, *Maha-satipatthana Sutta* in the *Digha Nikaya* 22 or *Satipatthana Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikaya* 10; *Kayagata-sati Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikaya* 119; Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* chapter 6.

English translations of all *Sutta* from the Pali Canon mentioned above can be found at the following web site: <<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/>>

Three Marks: Impermanent, Dis-eased, Egoless

For the three marks or "Dharma seals," see Takasaki Jikido, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, pp. 89-96.

Not a Thing to Cling

Sabbe dhammā nāla abhinivesāya has been rendered "Nothing whatsoever should be clung to [as 'I' or 'mine']" in Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 14-15 & 29-30. It also carries the sense of "There is nothing worth clinging to," "All conditioned *dhamma* are unworthy of clinging to," etc. I am grateful to my colleague at Hanazono University, Professor Shizuka Sasaki, for his assistance on this point.

Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree (p. 117, note 7) mentions that this statement is found in *Culatanhasankhaya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikaya* and in the *Dutiyaavijjapahana Sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikaya*.

Directly Into the Heart of the Matter

"Turn the light and illuminate back" is also found in Taoist meditation treatises.

Shih-t'ou Hsi-ch'ien's (700-790) *Song of the Thatched Hut* has: "Turn the light and illuminate back, then simply return." For an English translation of the entire poem, see Taigen Daniel Leighton's *Cultivating the Empty Field: The Silent Illumination of Zen Master Hongzhi*, pp. 72-73. Chinese text in T 51:461c.

The Record of Lin-chi [Rinzai] has the following exchange:

Question: What was the point of [Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of Chinese Zen] coming from the west?

Master [Lin-chi]: If there's any point, you can't even save yourself!

Question: If there was no point, then how did the second patriarch attain the Dharma?

Master: Attain without attainment.

Question: If it is without attainment, then what is the point of this non-attainment?

Master: You can't put your mind to rest as it scurries about seeking here and there.

Thus a patriarch said "Fools - searching for their heads with their own heads!"

Hearing these words, just immediately turn the light and illuminate back on yourself.

Never seek beyond this.

Then you'll realize that your own body-mind is no different from patriarchs and Buddhas, and immediately there will be nothing more that needs to be done. That is attaining Dharma!

Cf. English translations in Ruth Fuller Sasaki's *The Record of Lin-chi*, p. 33, or Burton Watson's *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-chi*, p. 68. Chinese text in T 47:502a.

Dogen Kigen (1200-1253) used it, for example, in his *Fukan-zazen-gi*:

Cease all practice based on words and intellectual understanding. Instead, learn the step back that turns the light and illuminates back. Then body-mind drops away of its own accord and your original face is manifest. If you want to realize this, practice must be immediate.

Cf. English translation in Waddell and Abe's *The Heart of Dogen's Shobogenzo*, p. 3.

The term was so central to Chinul (1158-1210) that Robert Buswell used his rendering of the term for the title of his book *Tracing Back the Radiance: Chinul's Korean Way of Zen*.

A similar term in Zen works was "Turn the light back on its source." For the Chinese text see, for example, T 51:449c. I am grateful to my colleague at Hanazono University, Zen master Sodo Yasunaga, for his assistance tracing back these terms. For Kuei-feng Tsung-mi's (780-841) description of the Zen of Hung-chou master Ma-tsu Tao-i (709-788) and his disciples as "whatever one has contact with is the Tao, and let the mind be free," thus mistaking the luminous pearl for the colors reflected in it, see Jan Yün-hua's "Tsung-Mi: His Analysis of Ch'an Buddhism," pp. 45-47 and 52-53. For further detail, see Jeffrey Broughton's *Kuei-feng Tsung-mi: The Convergence of Ch'an and the Teachings*.

Stop!

See, for example, Dogen's *Fukan-zazen-gi*, quoted above, for "**the step back**" [that turns the light and illuminates back].

Practice Brought to Life

On the problem of cutting off thought with thought, see for example stanza 5 of *Verses on Trusting Mind*, attributed to the third patriarch of Chinese Zen: "When you strive to gain quiescence by stopping motion, The quiescence thus gained is ever in motion; As long as you tarry in the dualism, How can you realize oneness?" Quoted in D. T. Suzuki's *Manual of Zen Buddhism* p. 77. Chinese text in T 48:376b. Cf. Soto master Menzan Zuiho (1683-1769): "If you think that you have cut off illusory mind, instead of simply clarifying how illusory mind melts, illusory mind will come up again, as though you had cut the stem of a blade of grass...and left the

root alive." Quoted in *Cultivating the Empty Field*, p. 19.

"Whenever a thought occurs...." quoted in Carl Bielefeldt's *Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*, p. 181 with slight revisions. From the Zen meditation manual *Tso-ch'an i*, attributed to Ch'ang-lu Tsung-tse (11th-12th C.). Chinese text in T 48:1143a-b. As Bielefeldt notes, Dogen uses the same wording in one version of his *Fukan-zazen-gi*.

For Whom We Practice

See Kumarajiva's text of the *Diamond Sutra*, especially sections 3, 9, 17, 22, and 25.

From Dogen's *Genjo-koan*. In context and rendered freely:

Awakening is a matter of inquiring into self; inquiring into self is a matter of forgetting self.

Forgetting self is according with all conditions; according with all conditions is body-mind

of self and other undone. No trace of realization remains then. **And this traceless realization**

continues on without end.

Cf. English translation in *The Heart of Dogen's Shobogenzo*, p. 41.

How the Meditation Manuals Put It

First three quotes from Thomas Cleary's *Minding Mind: A Course in Basic Meditation*, p. 1 with revisions. From "Treatise on the Supreme Vehicle." Although attributed to Hung-jen (601-674), the fifth patriarch of Chinese Zen, it probably reached its present form much later. Chinese text in T 48:377a.

Last three quotes from Bielefeldt's *Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*, pp. 175-177 with slight revisions. From *Tso-ch'an i*, attributed to Ch'ang-lu Tsung-tse (11th-12th C.). Chinese text in T 48:1143a-b.

True Calmness is Completely Clear; True Clarity is Completely Calm

From the *Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra*, chapter 8. Cf. Charles Luk's *The Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra*, p. 84.

Descriptive Bibliography for Further Reading in English

Readers unable to compare translations with the original language texts would do well to read with due care and caution.

Even the best translation is still a translation, so much in the original is inevitably lost or distorted. Below are some reliable English translations. When two translations are listed, it is hoped readers will compare both. Some of the translations are far from adequate, but were the only translations available. Feedback from readers is always appreciated.

Bielefeldt, Carl. *Dogen's Manuals of Zen Meditation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)

A critical-comparative study of Tsung-tse's (11th-12th C.) *Tso-ch'an i* - considered the foundational Zen meditation manual - with two versions of Dogen's *Fukan-zazen-gi*, his *Shobogenzo-zazen-gi* and his *Bendo-ho*.

Broughton, Jeffrey. *Kuei-feng Tsung-mi: The Convergence of Ch'an and the Teachings* (Columbia University, Ph.D., 1975)

Buddhadāsa. *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1994)

Buddhaghosa. Nanamoli tr. *The Path of Purification* (Vipassana Research Publications, 1999)

Translation of the *Visuddhimagga*.

Buswell, Robert. *The Korean Approach to Zen: The Collected Works of Chinul* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1983)

Buswell, Robert. *Tracing Back the Radiance: Chinul's Korean Way of Zen* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1991)

Helpful introduction with translation of three major works. Abridged edition of the author's *The Korean Approach to Zen* (see above).

Cleary, J. C. *Meditating With Koans* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1992)
Translation of "Whips to Drive You Through the Zen Barrier" (*Ch'an-kuan Tsê-chin*), a Chinese Zen classic first published in 1600.

Cleary, Thomas. *Minding Mind: A Course in Basic Meditation* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995)

Translations of important Zen meditation manuals, including Tsung-tse's *Tso-ch'an i* (see Bielefeldt above), rendered by Cleary as "Chan Master Cijiao of Changlu: Models for Sitting Meditation." Also contains "Treatise on the Supreme Vehicle" attributed to the fifth patriarch of Chinese Zen and other works by Chinese, Korean, and Japanese masters.

Leighton, Taigen Daniel. *Cultivating the Empty Field: The Silent Illumination of Zen Master Hongzhi* (Boston: Tuttle, 2000)

Contains translations of some texts and poetry especially important for Soto Zen.

Luk, Charles (Lu K'uan Yü). *The Secrets of Chinese Meditation* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972)

Contains Taoist and Buddhist materials, including T'ien T'ai Chih-i's (538-597) shorter meditation tract on pp. 109-156. This is one of the T'ien T'ai Buddhist meditation manuals that later Zen meditation manuals were based on.

Luk, Charles (Lu K'uan Yü). *The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1972)

Ñāamoli. *The Path of Discrimination (Patisambhidāmagga)* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1991)

Treatise 14 is on Loving Kindness.

Rahula, Walpola. *What the Buddha Taught* (New York: Grove Press, 1974)

Ratna, Gyana. *The Way of Practicing Meditation in Theravāda Buddhism* (Tokyo: Sankibo-Busshorin, 2001)

A wealth of information, although the English is sometimes unclear.

Sasaki, Ruth Fuller. *The Record of Lin-chi* (Kyoto: Institute for Zen Studies, 1975)

Suzuki, D. T. *Manual of Zen Buddhism* (London: Rider, 1950)

Takasaki, Jikido. *An Introduction to Buddhism* (Tokyo: Toho Gakkai, 1987)

Useful reference work with Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, and/or Japanese given for many technical terms.

Waddell, Norman and Masao Abe. *The Heart of Dogen's Shobogenzo* (New York: SUNY, 2002)

Watson, Burton. *The Vimalakirti Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000)

Watson, Burton. *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-chi* (Boston: Shambhala, 1993)

Yün-hua, Jan. "Tsong-Mi: His Analysis of Ch'an Buddhism" *Toung Pao* 68 (1972) pp. 1-54.