A LITTLE BIT OF ZEN

AN INTRODUCTION TO ZEN BUDDHISM

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STERLING ETHOS
New York

An Imprint of Sterling Publishing Co., Inc.

ISBN 978-1-4549-4060-9 (e-book)

Distributed in Canada by Sterling Publishing Co., Inc.
c/o Canadian Manda Group, 664 Annette Street
Toronto, Ontario M6S 2C8, Canada
Distributed in the United Kingdom by GMC Distribution Services
Castle Place, 166 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1XU, England
Distributed in Australia by NewSouth Books University of New South Wales,
Sydney, NSW 2052, Australia

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Cover design by Elizabeth Mihaltse Lindy
Interior design by Gina Bonanno

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INTRODUCTION

Zen Buddhism traces its origin to an incident in the time of the Buddha in India (approximately 500 BCE). One day, instead of delivering his usual talk, the Buddha picked up a flower and showed it to the assembly. According to Case 6 of the *Mumonkan*:

> *Everyone was silent, except for the saint Kashyapa, who broke out in a smile. Buddha said, "I have the treasury of the eye of truth, the ineffable mind of nirvana, the most subtle of teachings on the formlessness of the form of reality. It is not defined in words, but is specially transmitted outside of doctrine. I entrust it to Kashyapa the Elder."*

Scholars have proposed other origin stories (see Additional Resources). Historically, Zen appears to have risen out of the encounter of Mahayana Buddhism with Chinese Taoist Yoga. It produced a number of remarkable personalities, many of whom created their own schools by founding monasteries and recognizing "dharma heirs"—advanced disciples who were given the authority to

teach. In Japan, Zen became the highly cultivated aesthetic form with which it is most often identified today. However, Zen is now practiced almost everywhere in the world, and its expressions are as many and varied as the countries and teachers who promote it.

The pages that follow are not a history of Zen; they are not a scholarly exposition of Zen's extensive psychology, philosophy, or literature. Instead, they are the living teachings of a unique and authentic American Zen master, who lives in New York City and directs a community of lay and ordained students in the heart of the city's Soho District. They are a source of instruction, inspiration, and guidance.

Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara is a Soto priest and teacher in the White Plum lineage of Zen Buddhism. She is the co-founder and abbot of the Village Zendo in New York City. Roshi Enkyo was ordained by Taizan Maezumi Roshi, and she was given Dharma transmission (authority to teach) by Tetsugen Bernie Glassman, with whom she founded the Zen Peacemakers International. She teaches extensively in her New York temple and at various centers throughout the United States, including the IMS Buddhist Studies Center in Massachusetts, the Garrison Institute in New York, and Upaya Zen Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Roshi Enkyo O'Hara is committed to a spiritual practice that is fully integrated with life in this everyday world. She guides and inspires her students to pursue a profound understanding and practice of Zen, while participating in the arts and sciences, in social and political action, and particularly in service to others. Roshi Enkyo eschews the sometimes deliberately obscure and difficult manner of many Zen expositors. Her teaching is clear, generous, and practical.

I encourage you to read these teachings with what in Zen is called "beginner's mind"—an open heart and an attitude of curiosity and exploration. In the words of the poem that accompanies the *Mumonkan* story above:

A flower is held up
And the secret is revealed

- Howard Thoresen, editor

1

BEGINNINGS

I believe that Zen's most important teaching is that our life is here and now. There is no other life, no other reality to enter. Rather, concretely, here and now is where we live our lives and serve life, which is mixed up with everyone and everything else.

Of course, many of us are drawn to Zen either because we want to have a really big *experience, an enlightenment*, or because we want to heal ourselves, to free ourselves from our suffering. Both are possible, but not in the way we often think. When we begin to think of *enlightenment* as a thing to *get*, or a place to *go*, we are lost in an imaginary dream.

Why? Because we have everything we need right now; we just have to realize it. We have the potential to recognize our interrelationship with all things: every drop of water, every breath of air, every being who has ever lived and ever will live. We are part of all of that, and—yes—we are responsible for all of that!

And we have the potential to heal ourselves, to find the joy of life in every breath. Our understanding of self and other can transform into a dynamic, joyous adventure. Still, it is easy to be seduced by the notion that there's a "place" of emptiness, of oneness, that is our own blissful personal enlightenment.

It is Zen's rather rough demeanor that in fact protects us from falling into that dream, into the delusion of duality. There is no "other" place to be. This is tricky, though, because, in fact, through practice

of the Zen Way, we do find ease and joy; we do find our place in the universe, and we experience reality in a new and fresh way.

We Zen Buddhists, like all other Buddhists, trace our history back to the original teachings of the Buddha in India. In the 2,500 years from the time of the Buddha, a seemingly infinite number of schools, traditions, practices, and interpretations of the Buddha's teachings have appeared. In many traditions, it would be difficult to distinguish the Buddha from a god, and, indeed, some Hindus have adopted him into their religion as an incarnation of Vishnu. Myths, including magical birth narratives; stories of the Buddha's earlier incarnations as animals, humans, and deities; and mystically discovered new teachings, are widely spread.

In our Zen tradition, we like to think of the Buddha as a human being: extraordinary, no doubt, in his pursuit of truth, exceptional in his insight—but ordinary in his human needs for sustenance, sleep, and community.

Siddhartha Gautama, also known as Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was born in Northern India in either 563 or 480 BCE. In case you missed the film with Keanu Reeves, I'm going to begin by telling you his story.

It begins with loss. The first thing that happened to Shakyamuni Buddha was that his mother died one day after he was born. Although a wonderful woman took care of him—his mother's sister—still there was this loss at the very beginning of his life.

Soothsayers and astrologers predicted that he would become either a great prince, a great ruler—*or* he would become a great spiritual teacher. Of course, his father preferred that he become a great ruler and have lots of money rather than having to endure the life of poverty that spiritual teachers embrace. His father decided that he would protect his son at all costs. He arranged that in the palace where they lived, there would never be anything that would smack of suffering. Anyone who was ill was swept away, older people were kept away, and death was rendered invisible—so he was always protected from hearing about the plenitude of suffering that there is in this world. This is according to the story that has been passed down to us, the story that explains his subsequent teaching.

This life of uninterrupted pleasure went on until he was twenty-four or twenty-five, but at that time he became very curious about what was going on outside the palace. He convinced his friend—sometimes they say it was a servant, a charioteer, but I like to think of him as a friend—to take him out to the town on four successive nights. This is important, because the friend serves as a witness. If you go out on your own, later you may be unsure about what you saw; but if you have someone there who witnesses with you, you're on more solid ground. On these four excursions, he encountered what came to be called the Four Messengers.

On the first night he saw someone who was very sick, and he asked his friend, "What's with that person who's vomiting all over the street?" His friend answered, "Oh, that happens to everyone; every human being experiences sickness."

The next night he saw someone who was very, very old—like me! (The yoga I do now is not the yoga I used to do!) He asked, "What's wrong with that lady?" And his friend answered, "That's what happens to humans when they live a long time: they get fragile, they don't move so fast, and they don't see or hear so well."

The next night he saw a cadaver, and a similar dialogue ensued. His friend told him, "Death is what happens to everyone."

And on the fourth night he saw a seeker—an ascetic who was in rags. That was the tradition in India at the time: seekers lived by begging, and they had a severe spiritual practice that entailed not eating until they were ready to fall over, not drinking much water, and not sleeping very much. Essentially—and we have this in the Western traditions too—it was a kind of *purging* of the self. When he asked, "What's wrong with that person?" his friend answered, "Oh, that's a seeker of the truth." And Shakyamuni—his name was Siddhartha Gautama at the time—Siddhartha said, "I want to understand the truth of suffering. I want to know what causes suffering, and what can stop suffering."

He left the palace, and he searched for six years. He studied with three well-known teachers of the time, he practiced various meditation techniques, he struggled with the ascetic practices, and he wandered from place to place. He had a few friends who were

also on the path with him. And he became quite discouraged, because he couldn't seem to find an answer to his questions, which were, "Why do we suffer? What is the cause of suffering? And how can we end this suffering?" He finally reached a point where he had gone to such an extreme in his ascetic practice that he fainted. And when he woke up, he thought, "I'm not going about this in the right way." So he lay down on some *kusha* grass—soft grass—and for the first time in years, he slept until he woke up.

While he was sleeping, a young girl saw him lying there. She brought a bowl of milk and sweet rice and left it by his pillow. When he awoke, he took it and ate it all; he took sustenance. When he had tried to come from a place of deprivation, it had not worked; so now he wanted to come from a place of strength. Having slept and eaten, he bathed himself in the river, and went and sat under a tree. He vowed, "As the earth is my witness, I'm going to meditate through this night, and by morning I will have penetrated the mystery. I will have awakened." And he sat through the night, and as Venus—the "morning star"—arose in the sky, he suddenly—as we say it in Zen—"got it." (By the way, as we shall discover, there is no "it" to get.) He woke up.

He experienced the reality of our life—what it is, what our place in the universe is. And he said—and, of course this is according to the Zen tradition, this whole story is the Zen version—he said, *"The great mountains, the earth and all sentient beings with me are simultaneously enlightened."* Or, we would say, *"… simultaneously wake up."*

So you see, right from the beginning, waking up wasn't just about him—Shakyamuni. It's as if we could have some kind of awareness that all together, every single one of us at one moment can wake up. And if that awareness is only in one heart, it's okay; that's the beginning. That begins to make a change in all of us.

When he had awakened, he said to himself, "Wow, this is really something! But I am not going to be able to teach this. It's too complicated; no one will understand it." And just at that moment he heard a voice—we don't know where the voice came from, but he heard a voice: *You must find those that can hear, and teach them.*

Shakyamuni—now the Buddha, the Awakened One—taught for forty-five years after that day. For forty-five years he went from town to town to town, teaching servants and kings, teaching women and children, teaching monks and laypeople, teaching anyone who would listen. This *sharing* is an essential part of awakening. As the saying goes, "It ain't just about you." It's not about the small you. It's not about attaining some state of consciousness that's really cool. Awakening comes with the demand to serve, with the demand that makes a difference in the world. The Buddha taught for forty-five years, and if people heard, there was a delight.

If they couldn't hear—well, maybe later they would. Maybe they'd hear from someone who heard from him.

Looking up, we see the star,
And vast emptiness sweeps in,
Filling us with waves of compassion,
And we step out, over and over again,
To serve, and be of use.

GOING FARTHER

1. This story can be read in many ways, among them: as history, as a fairy tale, as a myth, as a hero's journey, as a psychological document, as a poem, as a drama. How do you tell the story of your life? What elements of your life story partake of these or other elements? Could you tell your life story from a different point of view?

2. The story of Buddha's awakening begins with a problem and culminates in a solution. What experience, insight, or understanding have you had that fundamentally changed your way of life?

2

THE PARABLE OF THE BURNING HOUSE

Please take a moment to appreciate this natural world, right here and now. Take this moment to stop your distracted thinking, sit still, and appreciate the birds, the green plants, the breeze, the play of sun and shadow, the air around you—even the human sounds.

There is a reciprocal relationship we might recognize when we open ourselves to the natural world around us. Somehow, when the natural world calls our attention, we feel a kind of ease and relational flow. For those of us living in cities, we might lose touch with the emotive, touching aspect of the natural world. Often, it is poets who remind those of us who are caught in our daily lives to appreciate the natural world's offering of ease and joy to the mind and heart.

I think of Wordsworth, when he writes,

> My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky:
> So was it when my life began;
> So is it now I am a man;
> So be it when I shall grow old …

Saigyo, a twelfth-century Japanese poet/monk, wrote this about the autumn:

> Autumn:
> it creates a heart
> even in those among us

who think of themselves
 as indifferent to all things-
this first wind of autumn.

And one more, from a medieval poet, Bishop Shinkei:

With whom can I share
 The feelings wrought in my heart
  By the autumn sky?
In the reeds, the evening wind,
In the clouds, wild geese calling.

Something indescribable happens when we sit near a tree or a body of water, when we look at the sky, when we listen to natural sounds.

Lucky for me in my big city I can walk through a little park every morning; I can feel the trees and shrubs around me. Sometimes I wonder what this land looked like a few centuries ago. Was it profuse with chokecherries, ferns, columbine, black cherry trees, and even wild ginger? I've read that there were abundant wild azaleas, bearberries, and wild germaniums.

Have you heard of the Net of Indra, an image in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* of the Buddhist vision of interdependence, emptiness, relational arising? It is a striking visual metaphor for the interpenetration of all things, in which the universe is seen as a vast, infinite net. In the points of each eye of the net, there is a brilliant jewel that reflects all the other points of light, all the other glittering jewels in the vast and infinite universe. Related, interrelated, interconnected—that sense that we are all woven from the cloth of the universe and are intimately linked. It is certainly a Buddhist notion, but also one that appears in many spiritual and philosophical and scientific traditions. How could it not? How could any being not be part of the whole? It is a powerful depiction of our interrelationship with all that is. In this space, right now, wherever you are, there is a way to experience that each of us reflects all others, whether we

realize it or not. You could say that each of our mind-moments is a precious jewel in the vast net of life.

In Zen Buddhism we ask, “Is it one? Or is it two?” Over and over we ask this about everything. You and I, the earth and each one of us: is it one—or two? Or both one and two? Or neither? In our attempt to make sense, and make a life that has meaning, many of us have turned to such a relational view: that we are all utterly related to everything, every moment; every thought; every being that exists, has ever existed, and *will exist*. And we are called to *care* for all our relations, throughout space and time.

Perhaps you see, as I do, that no time is more critical than right now, when the world is burning: the ice is melting, the heat is rising, the air grows dark, trees are dying, crops are declining, birds and fish and animals are perishing, the changes we’ve been warned about for years and years—climate change—is here, and now.

And with the changes around us, we, too, are called to change, to meet the reality that is our life here in our home, the earth itself. We are called to recognize that our own minds, our spiritual practice, are intimately tied to that of all minds, all practices on this earth.

Recently we’ve heard from many concerned citizens, including that remarkable young Swedish woman Greta Thunberg, who has become a next-generation spokeswoman for action in the face of climate change. In her many talks to governments, she has reiterated her mantra, “We must act like our house is on fire.”

We must act like our house is on fire.

This reminds me of perhaps the most beloved parable in the Lotus Sutra: that of the burning house. This story applies to our world now, and also, as originally intended, to our own intimate experience of life, of our spiritual life, of our very meditation practice, and of our relationship with our own mind.

In this story, Shakyamuni tells Shariputra about how one might gain the attention of those who are *distracted from what is really important*.

We see this inside and outside our minds. And, it is also, of course, the question of our times: how to gain the attention of those people, institutions, and states that are consumed by greed, by fear, and by simple distraction? How to help turn them to the realization that this earth is in danger, and that it belongs to all of us? On an individual level, how do we ourselves pay attention to our spiritual lives, our practices, our meditation, our own wise minds, amid all the distractions we live with? It's not just a matter of "cell phones off!"—it's deeper than that and an older problem than that, as we see in this story from the *Lotus Sutra:*

The parable begins with a father who is looking for his children. He's told that they are in a huge house with only one small door. The door is narrow; thus it is hard to find and hard to go through. And the house itself is falling apart: the walls are peeling; the plumbing is broken; the place is overflowing with filth; there are rats and snakes and bats and scorpions inside the house. Dangerous creatures too: bands of mad and hungry demons.

Suddenly, the house catches fire, and smoke and flames are on every side of the mansion. The father realizes that his children are inside the house, and that although there is a narrow door, they have not come out. He runs inside and tells them to hurry, to leave. He begs them to flee. But the children are laughing and very involved with their games! The sutra says,

> *… they were enjoying themselves and clinging to their amusements though they heard their father's admonitions,* ***addicted as before to their pleasures****, they amused themselves ceaselessly.*

The man then remembers that his children have been begging him for some carts—a dog cart, a deer cart, and an oxcart—and so he says, "If you come outside, I'll give you the carts that you asked for. I'll give you the dog cart, the deer cart, and the oxcart." And the children dropped their amusements—their toys, their cellphones, their Twitter feeds—and they went out of the house one by one. Even though it was difficult, one by one each was able to pass

through that narrow door. When they got outside they said, “Where’s the deer cart? Where’s the dog cart? Where’s the oxcart?” and the father said, “Well, actually I have something much better for you!” He had his servants bring—as many as there were children—some gigantic white oxcarts that had all kinds of ornaments and jewels on them. These were far better than the deer, dog, and oxcarts that he had promised them. And so the children were really happy that they received these gifts.

We could say that the burning house is our earth, as it suffers from the greed and distractions of humans. Or we can see it as our own mind, so caught up with our dramas that we neglect our spiritual practice—the deeper, wiser mind that is always present when we don’t distract ourselves. In both situations there is no escape unless, or until, we find the narrow door. It is narrow, because it is not easy to find, nor is it easy to move through. We can’t go through it with a distracted mind or an angry mind. We can’t bring the earth through the climate crisis with avarice or opportunism.

The door is so narrow! It requires wisdom, compassion, and sincere effort. It requires discipline! The question is, Are we up for it? Personally, for our own good, and as fellow beings in the world, are we willing to try to make our way through that narrow door? For the sake of all our relations? And for our own peace of mind?

However we might relate to this—whether it is to our own personal lives, our own minds, when we attend to that which does not serve us or others, or whether the burning house is the earth itself, linked to our preoccupation with greed or anger or ignorance—whatever way we look at this metaphor, *there is a way out*.

There is a narrow door, a *possible* way to escape the burning house of greed, anger, and ignorance and to build a new house; one that is spacious and includes everyone: the climate refugees, the butterflies, the soil, and the earth. It is a house that accommodates your very life, your mind that seeks insight, connection, and freedom. It is a far greater gift than we can imagine.

And just as the children in the parable receive far greater gifts than they expected once they escape the frenzy of distractions, the

pursuit of delusions, and find their way, so we, too, by waking up can find our way—for ourselves, our loved ones, and this very earth.

Can we escape the burning house and bring others with us?I really hope so. We need more people who are awake. Waking up can happen anytime, in any place, from the most intimate personal experience to the kind of universal vision that Shakyamuni realized. In my tradition it's never a done deal; it's moment to moment; it's being awake to everything, to your relationship with someone you love, to the community, to the planet. If each of us takes care of one another, we can make a difference.

What have we done?
It's on fire, trashed,
Disregarded—how can we rebuild,
Refresh, restore our home?
Breath by breath, we make our way
Through the narrow door.

GOING FARTHER

1. Please sit quietly for a few moments and reflect on our burning house, our burning earth, and how we can act as relatives, as family, to our home.

2. Have you ever been so involved in a book, movie, puzzle, game, or anything else that you found yourself in actual danger?

3

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Village Zendo in New York City, the community where I teach and practice Zen, exists on the exact spot where the Lenape tribe lived, where they established and walked the Great Lenape Path all the way to Boston. It is the same trail that we now call Broadway. Let's consider what it may have been like 500 years ago: no highways, no cars, no jackhammers, no industrial smokestacks discharging pollutants—then it was largely the great river flowing both ways, the small creeks flowing this way and that, the abundant vegetation during three seasons. What might it have sounded like? Birds' songs, the wind against the trees, the lapping of water on the banks. Imagine the colors of leaves and moss, rocks and berries, the blue sky, the sounds of owls and woodpeckers and vireos.

Now let's shift our gaze to 100 to 200 or 500 years in the future. What will it be like here? Will there be life? What kind of plant, animal, and human life will there be? Who might survive? Only those with great resources? Or perhaps no one at all?

Very slowly, over the past half-century, has come the realization of the great harm we have caused to our home, Earth. We have come to realize that fossil fuels are destroying our air and the natural protections of the planet; they are polluting our water and the integrity of the soil. The cutting down of trees throughout the world has stopped our ability to sequester, absorb, and nullify the toxicity of the carbon arising from our ways of producing. We have only to look at a mine, or a forest cut down and used for cattle production. We

can see the colors of orange and yellow in mountain streams. Whole sections of Louisiana are falling into the sea.

All over the world, there are victims of climate change, of lack of food and water, and of the resulting repressive political regimes that have come to power. And the victims, in order to save themselves, in order to find a place to live with these necessities, are walking north toward the countries that have more resources, countries that have not yet felt the sting of this disastrous climate change.

What is our responsibility today, when we can already see the effects of greenhouse gases on the poor people in the world? And what may lie ahead, unless there is remarkable change in the world economy and in how the earth's resources are cared for? Will we, as humans, take up the challenge, or not? And what does that have to do with me, or you, today? Basically, I am asking us all to consider what our ethical responsibility is to this same piece of earth many years in the future, to those humans and creatures who may have survived.

The classic Buddhist response—at least the Zen Buddhist response—is that we are all implicated because *we are not separate* from the places and peoples that came before, whether 100, 500, or 5,000 years ago. Neither are we separate from those places and people who will exist 500 years hence. We are all joined together, each part containing all other parts. That interconnected, interdependent view places responsibility on each one of us to pay attention, to study, to act, and to make change, and to recognize ourselves as fully responsible for the "whole catastrophe."

There are many and various ways that we can become more *intimate* with our understanding of our interrelatedness with all phenomena. Numerous brilliant philosophical works, many extraordinary poems and stories, seek to bring us to an understanding of our *connection to the whole* and, therefore, our natural responsibility to the wholeness. Naturally, I am partial to the Zen tradition's way of saying it—through the telling of the story of Shakyamuni Buddha's awakening, his insight, and its meaning for us now (see chapter 1).

In *The Transmission of the Light*, by Keizan Jokin, written in Japan in 1300 CE, he tells the legend of how, after years of searching and long sitting through the night, Shakyamuni looked up at Venus, the morning star, and said,

> *"I and all beings and the great earth together attain enlightenment at the same time."*

This is the moment of great insight. It was not, "I alone see reality," but rather, "I *and* the great earth *and* all beings *simultaneously* achieve the Way." We might ask ourselves: From what perspective does Shakyamuni speak? From what perspective might *you* say, "I and *all* beings *and* the great earth *simultaneously* realize Reality?" *How does that feel?*

Keizan explains,

> *This so-called "I" is not Shakyamuni Buddha and Shakyamuni Buddha also comes from this I. Not only does Shakyamuni Buddha come from it but the great earth and beings also come from it.*

Let's consider this. Where is the "it" that all beings come from? Where is this "it" that we are all connected to? Keizan goes on:

> *Just as when a large net is taken up and all the many openings of the net are taken up, when Shakyamuni was enlightened, the great earth and all beings were enlightened. And it was not only all beings on earth that were enlightened—all the Buddha of past, present, and future also attained enlightenment. Not just the great earth and beings but all Buddhas of past present and future were also enlightened.*

Keizan is evoking the compelling image from the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, whose primary metaphor is this interconnected, interdependent universe—a vast net that extends infinitely, and

within which all space and time is gathered (see chapter 2). It is a vision of our self that includes everything, to whom we owe everything and from which we benefit. It is the view of the self—the "I"—that led Walt Whitman, while riding on the Brooklyn ferry in 1856, to speak to those who would cross that river hundreds of years after him:

> What is it then between us?
> What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?
> Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not,
> I too lived—Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,
> I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in the waters around it,
> I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,
> In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came upon me,
> In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they came upon me,
> I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,
> I too had receiv'd identity by my body,
> That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew I should be of my body.

In those last lines he says he is "*struck from the float forever held in solution"*—a revealing image like the net, this one watery like the East River, and floating like the fishing net that floats. It is as if we are in this floating ocean of reality, of Dharma, of this very Earth, and then we emerge, each of us, as *this unique* body and mind that we are individually,

As he says,

> I too had receiv'd identity by my body,
> That I was, I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew I should be of my body.

Each one of us is unique as Whitman, as Shakyamuni, as the Lenape woman, as you or I; unique and different from one another and yet joined by this *float forever held in solution*, by this net of holes and not-holes.

We are *form and emptiness*, a vital strand of Indra's net.

As the American naturalist John Muir (who set out the boundaries for Yosemite National Park) said,

> *"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."*

And yet, that response, our fundamental interdependence, no matter how intellectually or poetically seductive, *may not be sufficient to* engage us in the effort that is needed to make the kind of change that is necessary now. Why is that? What kind of denial operates in us so that only the most individual gestures seem to suffice for each us? Perhaps we manage to recycle, maybe to compost, but what of the need to push for major change in our world? To disrupt the investments in harmful products, to insist on positive change to protect the young from the poisons of our industrial systems?

It is almost as if we can't take the step to a wider action. It all becomes an abstraction, not directly affecting us. We read or hear about climate change, but there is nothing driving us to action. It is as if the problem is at a distance, and we look at it *over there*, but we don't bring it *here*. Somehow, we are not intimate with our place in the wild reality of the universe. We stand back, holding on to what we have, what we know, what we can control.

What would it take to become more intimate with our earth and its predicament?

Sometimes it's a matter of paying attention and listening. Sometimes it's important to gather together, to take time together, to stop, to learn, and to mobilize.

In a 2018 lecture at Harvard Divinity School, the naturalist Terry Tempest Williams told a story of the rescuing of the giant sequoias in Yosemite. What prompted the project was the experience of one

park employee, Sue Beatty, who one day walked quietly, alone, among the giant trees, and suddenly seemed to hear, over and over, the refrain,

> We are suffering, we are dying, can you hear us?
> We are suffering, we are dying, can you hear us?
> We are suffering, we are dying, can you hear us?

Beatty was moved to action: she urged and succeeded in triggering the restoration of the entire Mariposa Grove—removing parking lots and refreshment stands and concrete walkways and restoring the hydrology system. It was the first such restoration project in Yosemite.

What struck me about the story was the *intimacy* it revealed. A solitary walk among these ancient trees, and somehow, this parks employee allowed a level of intimacy to enter her, to teach her, and move her to radicalize the entire Yosemite Parks administration.

What is that intimacy?

In one way, it is *paying attention* to our world, to the studies and careful work of science, and also to the earth around us. To feel the earth, the planet, and its peoples as our own family, that we care for and act for. To slow down enough to appreciate the way the natural earth is talking to us—to listen to the air, the water, the trees, the grasses. To take the time to learn more, to sit silently, to work together, and seek ways that can heal the suffering parts of our own being, our own great earth, and the people in it, now and years from now.

It's up to us to realize our intimacy with the earth and its future.

May we be able to say, with the poet Ryokan,

> As my will
> what can I leave?
> In spring, flowers
> In summer, cuckoos,
> And in fall, maple leaves.

GOING FARTHER

1. Trying to approach a subject like climate change can be overwhelming. Select one or two aspects of the subject that you could study and understand as thoroughly as possible. What one action could you take that might make a difference? Compost food, have a weekly meatless meal, carry a reusable shopping bag with you, or something else?

2. The story of Sue Beatty demonstrates that one person can make a difference. Is there a difference you would like to make in society, or in your own community? What small steps could you take, today?

4

OUR DISTRACTION / OUR MINDFULNESS

Sometimes I wonder, what brings people to a Zen Buddhist center? Is it to learn about the Buddha's teachings? Is it to meditate with other people? To be in one another's company?

Maybe it's to take some time away from our distracting devices!

Distraction is all the rage now. I read about it on all my distracting devices!

A flag comes up on my computer screen: fake news here, distraction there, driving fatalities here, train wreck there! Now we can even wear a device on our wrists—one that during our morning meditation can send us *a message* from *The New York Times*! Tap tap tap—"I'm meditating … but, oh! What does it want? What's happening?" Something urgent is happening somewhere in the world—accompanied by an ad!

And then, of course, there are our cell phones, our iPads, our computers, our podcasts—not to mention the more traditional distractions of radio, television, and newspapers. Our interest in these is a serious safety issue, resulting in car accidents, bus accidents, collisions in the street, bicyclists run over. I'm an avid pedestrian. I walk most places. It's kind of scary when I see a driver who has a cell phone in one hand and the wheel in the other. You only have to walk down Broadway in New York City to encounter people who stop suddenly in the middle of the street, fixated on their device. They've received a message and their eyes are riveted on their device. Nearby, someone else is staring into space while talking

at the top of their voice, not seeing anything around them, obstructing the natural flow of movement on the street. It's all distraction!

Are we paying attention to what we care about, or are we just being moved from one place to the next, mentally?

If you think about distraction, on one level it's simply that we are not focusing our attention on what we care about, on what we want to be looking at, at what our intentionality is. Instead, we're moved to look elsewhere, often toward something that is actually valueless to us. Somehow we've been caught, a flag has come up: *Oh! Look at this! Look at that!* And this distraction is ubiquitous because of electronic communications. And every distraction, at least in my "distracto-sphere," is to things that I think are important.

Somehow, I have sent a message to the databases that "she's going to be interested in *these* kinds of issues; she's going to care about *that*; so she's going to get a flag whenever there's a political issue, an issue about prisons, an issue about race—these are going to pop up on her screen very fast." I *do* care about these issues—and yet I feel like I'm being pulled in all these directions. Ordinary, intentional work or play gets pushed to the side. It's almost as if we were being hijacked from our true intentions. There's a shallow feeling of flow with all of these notifications that we receive, but is it really what we want to be doing with our minds, with our bodies, and with our hearts?

When there is an *inner* flow—when we're daydreaming and all the input is internal, or when we're following a creative idea or allowing an inspiration to express itself rather than telling ourselves what to think; when we're in a creative space and we allow things to happen—that's very different from the outside distraction that pulls us away. It's a separate kind of mental tapestry, because we are driving our attention in that case, not being driven by advertisers or information providers who are really anxious for our click.

Our distraction is monetized. In American politics now it's disturbing because there is so much *chatter*, and a lot of energy is going through to this distracted chatter, rather than toward meaningful action. We really have to look at this! Certainly the

internet is full of information about what's going on, but is that information being transformed into a basis for meaningful action, or is it just more *blah blah blah blah*? Those of us who are concerned about our civic world, about prisons, the environment, healthcare, the unbalanced distribution of power to the wealthy—we need to think deeply about these issues and not just tweet about them or add our comments on Facebook. We have to embody our concern in meaningful action.

We're being pulled away by the chatter. We're being pulled away from our civic responsibility and also from our relationships, our friends, those we're close to, and activities we want to participate in —because we *do* care and we *can act* if we're not distracted.

To just sit in a room and actually just experience quiet—that is so different from jumping, jumping, jumping.

It's not surprising that we have many antidotes for our distractions and that the antidotes for distractions have become very fashionable, marketable, and monetized—today mostly under the name "Mindfulness."

If you've been interested in the encounter of Eastern teachings with the West, you know what happened with Yoga. Yoga is a rich and deeply spiritual tradition that met American capitalism and became an unrecognizable industry, often stripped of all of its ethical and faith-based devotional structure. At the same time, Yoga has proven to be a magnificently and wonderfully effective technique, very beneficial to those who practice it. Because it was shorn of its devotional and metaphysical aspects it was able to be marketed to people of many faith traditions. Usually you don't hear about Yoga's ethical tradition at all! Still, it has unarguably served to provide healthy physical benefits to many. There's a kind of a conundrum there.

"Mindfulness" is much the same, I think. It has much to offer the distractible and distracted audience that we have all become. Like Yoga, it's been taken up and resized to American standards. It has been presented as a soothing antidote to our distractions. "Stop everything and tend to the moment!" And the suggested benefits: you know, you can have lucrative insights and better relationships at

work and at home … and really cool places to go rent a space and sit in! You can listen to bells, music (and snoring), and maybe you can even hook up. But I digress!

You might not be aware that mindfulness is legitimately a limb of the Buddha's Eightfold Path. It is a meditation practice supported by Buddhist theory and Buddhist ethics. And it derives from the earliest teachings, said to be the very word of Shakyamuni Buddha. It's a core practice in the powerful Theravada tradition. That it has been monetized in this country merely places it in the same store where you're going to find Zen tchotchkes.

Buyer beware! Beware another capitalization of an authentic spiritual tradition!

Like Yoga, American mindfulness began with sincere efforts to offer support and healing in a medical setting. Simply by stripping away the old language and belief system and offering a kind of direct training of attention, MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) was created by John Kabat Zinn, who was a student of several Zen teachers. MBSR practice has been hugely successful in medical situations, and because of that it has been studied by many brain scientists. I'm sure you're aware of much of the work that has been done with mindfulness in brain science and in social science. Its usefulness has extended to business situations, to professional situations; it has been used in the army, in policing—surely you've been reading about it over the past few years.

At the same time that this new sense of mindfulness was arising, there's also been an explosion of communications like a brilliant shooting star of distraction, a perfect dis-ease for the mindfulness cure.

In my previous profession as a professor of interactive media, I happened to be present at the birth of all these technologies. I remember at first we were typing into those earliest networking terminals, thrilled at the possibility of being able to connect to people all over the world. I was convinced that this was going to positively change us all and lead to greater understanding and interaction among people of all financial and geographic regions. This would be the revolution that would make the difference: everyone would be

able to talk to everyone and there would be harmony. We didn't realize the power of capitalism and the power of the media itself to make each click financially viable and important.

This so-called mindfulness cure for distraction that I see now is not the old Mindfulness of the Eightfold Path. The difference is that the old Mindfulness, the traditional Mindfulness that is practiced in many reputable Buddhist communities, is supported by a study of Buddhist philosophy, by ethics and a moral code, as revealed by what it follows in the Eightfold Path of Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. All of these ingredients are aspects of Mindfulness. They're not separate ways of practice; they're part of a unified path. As the seventh step of the Eightfold Path, Mindfulness is traditionally considered to be a kind of groundwork for the eighth step, which is *Samadhi* or Concentration Practice. You need to be mindful, paying attention to what is here right now, before you can experience this quality of *Samadhi*, of oneness of breath, body, and mind.

A flag pops up, a text or an image beckons.
What am I to do with this?
When many are in need,
When my voice, my hand, my effort,
Can serve more than my screen?

GOING FARTHER

1. This chapter describes Mindfulness as an element of a comprehensive ethical and spiritual path. How do you understand this in your life?

2. Take one ordinary daily task—like making your bed, brushing your teeth, taking out the trash—and explore what it means to do it “mindfully.” Can you be mindful without becoming slow and heavy? Perhaps through being mindful, you can actually simplify your tasks and find pleasure in them.

5

APPRECIATING BERNIE GLASSMAN

We have looked at the ancient Buddhist parable of The Burning House. In subsequent chapters, I will bring our attention to the honest-to-goodness fires that challenge our very survival today: fires in California, in Australia, floods in Thailand, in the Dead Sea region, in Jordan. What do these challenging issues of climate change, political upheaval, and unprecedented immigration, have to do with peaceful zazen, Zen meditation? Is there a relationship between meditation practice and action in the world? Are the two practices actually separate?

One person who emphasized that there was *no separation* was my Zen teacher Bernie Glassman. His sensitivities were to the suffering people of the world and he was willing to serve them through a radical understanding of the Zen teachings that he had studied for so many years. His Dharma name, the name his teacher Maezumi Roshi had given him when he ordained him as a Buddhist priest, was Tetsugen, which means “to penetrate mysteries” or “to penetrate the unknown”—a truly prescient name.

He broke down barriers as a true Zen master must, including the barriers of our ideas about what Zen is, what compassion is, and what serving is. It was a long road for Bernie, who lived for years as a traditional Zen monk, studying with Maezumi Roshi and supporting and managing ZCLA, a growing Zen Center in Los Angeles. After some time, Bernie returned to his birthplace in New York and founded the Zen Center of New York, first in Riverdale, and then in

Yonkers. Soon, he created the Greyston Bakery, which became a model for social entrepreneurship, offering work to homeless and previously incarcerated people.

I remember the first time I met Bernie, sometime around 1987.

He and others at the Zen Center, in addition to the bakery, had created something called the Greyston Family Inn. They were renovating a large apartment building that had been abandoned for years. The building was to include housing for homeless people, whom they were hiring for the bakery, which served as the financial center of the system. The plan was to have a day care center and counseling offices for the people who would live there.

In those early days I was teaching Interactive Media at New York University. I had done a lot of video work, and so when Bernie asked for some help in documentation, I was happy to comply, never realizing how deeply and permanently I'd be affected by his spirituality. Of course I looked forward to meeting this Zen monk who was said to be the foremost of the American Zen teachers, then still called by his Dharma name, Tetsugen.

When I arrived at the construction site in Yonkers on Park Avenue, I met "Bernie"—he looked just like an ordinary guy! Oh, there was still some aura of Zen style—he still shaved his head. He was wearing a yellow construction helmet, a very rumpled and dirty brown *samue* (a Zen work jacket), blue jeans, and construction boots. He immediately handed me a helmet and we began to climb all over the old abandoned building. I shot different angles and different people who were working while he talked, and we recorded his plans for renovation and future growth. At that time he was a strong political force in Yonkers, because not much was being done there for the homeless population; he also became kind of a rock star in what was then being called "socially responsible entrepreneurship"—making businesses and operations that would be socially responsible, hiring people who had prison records, taking chances with homeless people, and teaching them how to work in the bakery. It was very inspiring to all of us.

But I was new to Zen practice, and I still yearned for a traditional Zen, something that emphasized meditation, retreats, and chanting. I

did not realize at the time what a profound influence Bernie would have on my life. A blessed effect.

Bernie and his wife, Sandra Jishu Holmes, continued to expand this Greyston Mandala. They added a huge opportunity for housing people with HIV/AIDS—this was in the late 80s and early 90s—a place for people to live and die and have counseling services. All the while, they maintained the demanding business of the Greyston Bakery, which supported and held everything together.

A couple of years later I was then studying with Bernie's teacher Maezumi Roshi in Los Angeles, and I occasionally met Bernie when he visited. Now he had become a big, important person. He was in the news; NBC did reports about him; and his renown towered over his teacher Maezumi Roshi. Beside Bernie, Maezumi Roshi appeared to be more or less an ordinary Zen master.

I have a memory that is so strong I want to share it with you. We were sitting in the zendo in Los Angeles. Maezumi Roshi was preparing to give a talk and Bernie was sitting right next to him. And as Maezumi Roshi began to speak, Bernie—so gently and so lovingly—reached over and adjusted the *okesa* (robe) that Maezumi Roshi was wearing. It was just the most humble and simple way of showing his love and care for his master, and in that action he showed all of us in that room how to love, how to care for Maezumi. It was such a small detail, but I was so struck by it: by his caring for his teacher, his humility, actually. Also—oddly enough—Bernie was in fact quite a stickler for the way things ought to be in the ritual tradition, and if Maezumi's *okesa* was slightly off, it had to be fixed! This guy who was breaking all the rules—he knew the rules very well.

In 1995 Maezumi Roshi died suddenly, and poor Bernie—who was so busy with all of these other social entrepreneurial projects—was, as the first Dharma Heir, given the task of taking over the White Plum Asanga, which was the organization of Maezumi Roshi's successors. There were over 125 teachers at the time, all over the United States and Europe, and it fell on Bernie—who was quite reluctant—to maintain the organization. Maezumi Roshi's passing also stranded his students who had not completed their training,

including me. Bernie opened his arms and said, “You can be my student. Come and practice with me.”

I had no idea what that would entail, because working with him—which was his way of teaching—meant learning a lot about social entrepreneurship, and acting in the world of business, social work, and socially engaged leadership. It was an incredible gift that he gave me. He broke down the walls of the idea of a cloistered Zen practice, but he did that *through* the teachings, not against them. I was always struck by the depth of his understanding. I had never met anyone who had such a deep insight. He didn’t lecture us; he didn’t tell us to do something about the suffering in the world—he was *doing* something about the suffering in the world. And his vision expanded.

In 1996 Bernie started the Auschwitz Retreats, held on the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp. This was a Zen retreat that was open to people of all faiths, and none. It involved meditation and talks—but in this place where so much suffering had been inflicted by one group of humans upon another. There was great opposition to this when he first talked about it. But people came, and they began to understand what it really was to bear witness to suffering, to bear witness to sorrow, to anger, to hatred, and to guilt. Victims of Nazi atrocities and children of perpetrators both attended those retreats. It was heartbreaking and challenging to see that.

Another new form was the Street Retreat, where a group of Zen students live on the streets for a few days or a week. On a Street Retreat you learn firsthand that homeless people are ordinary people and how they are treated by others. You sit and eat and talk with someone who lives on the street and you get a little different view of the world you live in! It’s powerful work. Bernie called it “going to the cracks,” the dirty little places where things don’t fit together as simply as they do in our comfortable lives. In the 1990s, Street Retreats were held in Los Angeles, on the Bowery in New York, in homeless shelters, and in AIDS wards.

The Street Retreats and the Auschwitz Retreats were based on an interpretation of Buddhist teaching Bernie called “bearing witness.” To “bear witness” is to verify that something exists and is true. A

witness affirms that our stories are heard, held, and not forgotten. In the story of the Buddha, when he witnessed the suffering of sentient beings, he didn't run away; he was inspired to turn *toward* suffering, to understand it, and to seek a way to bring it to an end. Bearing witness to suffering awakens compassion and the aspiration to help. Bernie said, "All humanity needs to see that part of themselves which they are trying to forget—which has led to the possibility of the Holocaust, of genocide—this is still going on. There's a part of us that will allow us to dehumanize people, and then, to kill people. It's in us, and it's a part that we don't want to touch."

He urged us to look inside ourselves, to bear witness to our own dynamic energies, and to realize that we can transform ourselves by bearing witness inside and out. In his commentary on the Buddhist precepts Bernie wrote: "Doing zazen is seeing the interconnectedness of all life, of the entire One Body. We see the extent to which our zazen and everything we do affects everyone and everything else … Everything we do, even sleeping in our bedroom alone with the lights out, affects the whole universe. When we really see this, our whole life has to change … we see how much there is to do because our perspective, initially restricted to the self, is now unrestricted."

I have two photos of Bernie in my interview room where I meet with students. In one picture he is wearing a monk's robe, has a shaved head, shaved face, monk's jacket, and looks directly at the camera: intense, alive, ready. A classic picture of a Zen master! In the second photo, taken only a few years later, he has a beard, long hair, regular clothes, and a soft smile. He looks relaxed, alive, and thoroughly himself.

These photos testify to the bearing witness that Bernie did to his own individual life, to his many years of dedicated, formal Zen practice, and to his ability to let it go and bear witness to the change in himself and the world he wanted to serve. In a way, I can say that these two Bernies gave me the whole of the Dharma: we look inside and outside, we bear witness to suffering, and we do not cast out an "other" but instead directly recognize others in ourselves, ourselves in others. It becomes a liberation.

In these times of appalling revelations of the hatred and hostility between groups, and the social media storms, the breaking apart of civil discourse, it can be too easy to fall into the same kind of hatred that we are offended by. We must bear witness to our feelings, our reactivity, lest we act in unskillful ways, escalating the very suffering we wish to heal.

Bernie's creative design for Bearing Witness Retreats offered and *still* offers a transformational opportunity to see and feel and be with the suffering around us. He took us to the homeless shelters and street retreats, to the HIV/AIDS wards, to sites of suffering around the world.

Is this "Zen"?

What about enlightenment, what about emptiness, what about finding your "true self" that Zen promises? We Zen teachers like to connect the innovations of the present with the ancient tradition, as Bernie did so well in his life. There is a beloved Zen poem called *Song of Enlightenment*, said to have been written in the eighth century, that answers our question wisely. Much of this poem is about not falling into the dream, the delusion of duality, that we are separate from everything—and not becoming lost in an idea of emptiness, of oneness, of our own blissful personal enlightenment.

Here is one of the stanzas in this poem (of the 344 lines).

We know that Shakya's sons and daughters
Are poor in body, but not in the Tao.
In their poverty, they always wear ragged clothing,
But they have the jewel of no price treasured within.
This jewel of no price can never be used up
Though they spend it freely to help people they meet.

Lines 55–66

Shakya's sons and daughters is of course a way of expressing those who follow the path of awakening, the path of the historical Shakyamuni Buddha. So essentially, that's about us! *We* are Shakya's sons and daughters, if we find ourselves following the

Buddhist notions of the Four Noble truths and the interdependence of all creations.

Poor in body, but not in the Tao—this would refer to our simple ordinary imperfections, our simple bodies, some old, some young, some fat, some thin, some aches and pains, and still, with all that poverty of body, we are filled with the Way. And in our poverty, we *always wear ragged clothing*. What is this ragged clothing? On one level, it is the patched robes of the followers of Shakyamuni, and those who wear patched *rakusus* as Zen practitioners. But I also like to think that we wear our ragged parts so that they can be seen. We wear our *vulnerability* so that we can encourage others; no matter how raggedy we may feel, we all have a priceless jewel hidden in our imperfections. *If we wait until we are perfect, we will never act*. We need to realize that the jewel is always there.

In a later part of the verse, the jewel is likened to the moon that shines on all waters and is reflected in the vast ocean, the immense lakes, the tiny ponds, the drops of dew, the puddle of piss in our streets. The moon is reflected in each of us, and this is the *jewel of no price* treasured within. What is significant about this jewel is that it says,

> This jewel of no price can never be used up
> Though they spend it freely to help people they meet.
>
> Lines 55–66

We cannot exhaust it. Actually, the more we share, the more we serve, the brighter and clearer the jewel manifests. When we help each other, we help ourselves; when we express compassion and love, we open our hearts and receive it back.

Farther along, the verse says,

> The lotus lives in the midst of the fire;
> It is never destroyed.
>
> Line 300

This image of the lotus that emerges from the mud, the putrefying ponds, and is enlivened by periodic forest fires, is an image of the *leisurely one* who also manifests activity in the world.

The lotus—beautiful, extraordinary flower, blooming in a homeless shelter, in an immigrant boat, a solitary confinement cell, a broken heart. This is not some exalted, abstract idea of emptiness, of the absolute. It is enlightenment in everyday life.

In these images, this wonderful *Song of Enlightenment* or the *Verification of the Way* encourages us to allow our raggedy selves to be suffused with the wisdom of the WAY, and to act and serve in the world, balanced by this *leisurely one*—this aspect of what steadies us.

What is this Leisurely One? Who is this Leisurely One?

Isn't it you—yourself when you are in touch with your true nature?

Isn't this one aspect of what people call enlightenment, what can get solidified around a conceptual notion called "emptiness" or oneness, or "the Absolute"?

But isn't the idea of the Leisurely One more on point? It is that part of us that responds spontaneously, freely, with an open heart. It is that part of us that is willing to take care of everything we encounter, that recognizes both our interdependence and our uniqueness.

And the name "Leisurely One" implies the flow of life, the freely flowing reality that can encompass all creations, and also just this one little gesture that makes a difference.

The practice of zazen—meditation—teaches us over and over again that there is no *other*, no defining characteristic, no color of skin, or gender preference, or sexual preference; no religion or culture that makes an *other*. It's all in our minds. And it is our minds that can change our actions and can change the world. "I invite you to bear witness, and in your mind, to ask, 'What will I do?'" says Bernie in a film about his work. "You have many options. Choose one."

In many ways it may be frightening, but it's an exciting time to be alive. In this world we live in, with so much suffering from poverty, intolerance, and hatred, there is so much we can do, if we just take up Bernie's challenge: "Choose one." Let us scrutinize what we call

justice, what we call rehabilitation, what we call “welfare.” Let us not lose sight of the vastness, the interconnected quality of life. It was this teaching that Bernie gave us all: *how to activate the profundity of the Zen tradition*.

Thank you, Bernie
for waking us up
to what has always been
our true nature.

GOING FARTHER

1. Do you see a relationship between meditation and social action? In this chapter, Roshi says Bernie didn’t see a difference. How do your spiritual philosophy and practice affect your way of moving in the world?

2. Bernie once compared acting in the world to making a meal: one idea is to get a recipe, make a list of all the items you need, go shopping, come home, and follow the recipe. Another way is to open the refrigerator, see what you have, and improvise a meal out of that. Do you need to attain perfect enlightenment before you can act compassionately in the world? What ingredients do you have right now that you could serve as a blessing to others?

6

PRACTICING MEDITATION

When Siddhartha Gautama set out to understand the truth of life, yogic meditation was already well-established in India, and it was natural for that to be where his quest began. Generations of seekers and teachers believed that through concentration, contemplation, and meditation, a person could realize the truth of life. When the Buddhist teachings came to China, they were influenced very much by Taoist concentration practices, and in an evolutionary process they were eventually shaped into what we call Zen meditation. Seated meditation is the heart of Zen Buddhist practice. The words *Zen* and *zazen* come from the Sanskrit *Dhyana* via the Chinese *Chán*. All three have reference to the practice of seated meditation.

A unique characteristic of zazen—Zen meditation—is that it is not achievement oriented. While many meditation forms have as a goal the attainment of various stages of trance or ecstasy, Zen meditators take refuge in what they call “ordinary mind.” Although “unification of body and mind” might imply some kind of attainment, the Zen masters assure us that the aim is simply to be awake here and now, and not to cling to any “special” experiences.

The first meditation teaching we have in China that we can talk about as a specifically *Zen* manual is *The Principles of Zazen.* It’s very short, only 700 characters, and it was written by Ch’ang-lu Tsung-tse in the mid-eleventh century. These instructions are powerful and also show how mindfulness enters into the practice of zazen.

The manual reminds us at the very beginning that when you practice meditation you practice it not just for yourself but for all beings. Consider what it would be like if, before you sat down to do your meditation, you began by considering: *this isn't just for me—it is for all beings*.

Most of us notice that something is not quite right in our lives or our relationships, and that's what drives us to practice. But if we truly practice, it's not very long before we realize that our suffering is not unique to us. The miracle of practice is that, finally, it's impossible to have a selfish practice, because you begin to understand who the self is, what the self is composed of, and how you are intimately connected with others. So the first intention in Zen meditation might be: "I'm not starting this meditation practice only for myself but it is for everyone; everyone that I meet." That is ethical. That implies an ethical obligation that we have. We're not this separate thing, we're part of all of these things.

Then, as we study and practice zazen for a while, our practice reveals to us that nothing is separate from anything else, and we realize that we practice when we sit in a Zen center, but we're also practicing as we walk down the hall, as we chat in the elevator, and as we move through the sidewalks, stores, streets, and subways of the wild city where we live.

The manual says: *Body and mind should be unified with no division between action and rest.*

What would that be like?

There's a Chinese concept of *wu wei*, not doing, not forcing, yet acting with ease. It doesn't mean that you don't act. Often, when a person first begins Zen practice, everything about them becomes very slow, because they're trying to be *v-e-r-y m-i-n-d-f-u-l.* But sometimes in life, swift, direct action is required. And that's what this ancient manual says: *Body and mind should be unified with no division between action and rest*. One part isn't asking the other part what to do. All action is rest, and all rest is action. Consider your zazen practice to be action—*effortless action*. "I" don't have to force "my mind"—wherever it is located—to do anything. I *am* my mind. Where it goes, I go.

The manual continues in a very Zen manner:

Find an uncluttered space to sit. Sit in as stable a posture as possible, in an upright position.

If you lie down, you're likely to fall asleep. That's why we sit upright.

Place your hands in the Cosmic Mudra.

In the Cosmic Mudra, the hands are in the lap with the palms facing upward; the left hand is on top of the right hand, and the thumbs just touching. This reminds us of the whole universe right there in the palms of our hands. It's also a great biofeedback device—if you start to fall asleep the thumbs fall down! I was told when I first began, it's like holding a thin piece of paper between your thumbs, neither crinkling it nor dropping it: you're not *pressing*, but just barely touching.

Place the tongue against the palate.

That is a technique that I use all the time for patience. (I have issues with patience.) If you put your tongue up against the roof of your mouth it just reminds you, "Be patient. Be kind." It's a wonderful device—and it also keeps you from salivating too much!

Keep the eyes open, looking slightly down.

The manual says, If you attain samadhi with your eyes open, it will be the most powerful.

Samadhi is the term for a unified mind. When we begin to meditate, we have a tendency to close our eyes—but that often can be quite distracting, and it can also lead to sleepiness. So the eyes are open but relaxed. They're not staring; they're resting, looking down.

All of these instructions sound very simple, don't they? Maybe it's not be necessary to have extraordinary, gorgeous places to sit, with

music and incense. You can sit in a place that is plain and ordinary. The first place where I sat zazen was in a corner of my small apartment; I sat facing a wall that had a little crack in it. It was just fine! It was all I needed.

Once you've settled your posture, and regulated your breathing, you should relax your abdomen.

Right now, as you are reading, relax *your* body, *your* abdomen. This is not some abstract teaching about how you're going to be a better person after doing this! It's just, "Relax. Relax your belly."

Then it says: "When thoughts come and go, just let them. Do not think of good or evil whatsoever. 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 time forgetful of objects, you will naturally become unified."

Notice it says, "*As soon as you are aware of it …"* There's that time when we're thinking of a thing and we're lost in that thought; we're kind of like *there* in this little space; that's the first level. And then we *become aware* of our thinking, so that's the second level. On the first level there's thinking, and then there's the second level that says, "Oh I'm thinking, I'm not following my breath, I'm thinking about it."

Often that secondary thought takes off. "I can't do it, I'll never get this right, it's too noisy out there, the car horns are going, the TV is on, *blah, blah, blah, blah*"—there is just an endless variety of monologues we can have on the secondary level. But what happened to that quiet space in the middle that you started with? Remembering that, you can come back to it right away with the *very next breath* and drop back to the quiet empty space.

"Unified" they call it in the manual."Naturally"—without forcing anything—naturally allow yourself to come back. "Unified" is "*samadhi*." It is the unification of the mind, like taking a cool drink of water.

If you remain for a long time forgetful of objects,
you will naturally become unified.

The trick is patience. The trick is redundancy, daily practice, dipping into longer practice periods, going to retreats. It's important to practice with others; it's not so easy to do it alone. We enliven each other, we enliven one another's practice, and we encourage each other simply by sitting together in a room. Next the manual says:

Honestly speaking, seated meditation is the
dharma gate of ease and joy.

The *dharma gate* refers to the teachings, the teachings of the Buddha and of the teachers who came after him, but it can also refer to life itself—the way things are. The gate swings open, lets you in, lets you out. Ease—that's the opposite of distraction, isn't it? Ease—the loosening of our minds. When I was a videographer we used to say, "Ease that camera out." It's a very gentle movement. And joy, a sense of pleasure, happiness, lightness. It's not giddiness but something in the heart that you see in the faces of those who practice. It's what Dogen meant when he said, "Self-fulfilling samadhi." Feel the joy and ease of breathing, simply breathing. Fulfill yourself.

Practicing in this manner, you will be light and
at ease, the spirit will be fresh and sharp, and
you will be calm, pure, and joyful.

It is possible to actually feel that way.

Therefore, the manual says finally, *to seek a pearl we should still the waves, if we disturb the water it will be hard to get. When the water of meditation is clear, the pearl of the mind will appear of itself.*

This ancient and wise tradition, handed down in our lineage, is rich and empowering. It allows us to step into the Zen lineage, as he says at the end, "Like a dragon entering the water or a tiger taking to

the mountains."We're at home. We're in our original home. We're at home in our zazen practice.

We hold the ethical and metaphysical teachings of Zen so we can serve others—so we can serve the whole world. It's not about our self-gain. It's about serving. This teaching is rich, deep, and powerful; and without an ethical foundation we could get confused by the many distractions of modern life. So let's remember to come back to our zazen, to our own meditation practice.

Let me offer my *gatha* to close this chapter:

I came to this practice to find peace,
I wanted to be free, to feel alive and fresh.
I was doing it for myself.
And as I practiced, gradually,
I recognized who this "I" was.
And wherever I turn, there is one
I can serve, I can offer something, and be of use.

GOING FARTHER

1. Sit quietly in your room for a set period of time—five or ten minutes. Don't do any special mental or physical practice—just enjoy the quiet. After a break, sit for the same amount of time as before, practicing how to sit as explained in the chapter. Is the form helpful to your awareness? Is it a hindrance? Can you approach the form in a gentle or playful way?

2. Visit a Zen temple or other meditation center. How does practicing meditation with other people affect your practice?

7

MOTHER OF ALL BUDDHAS

Iam writing this on Mother's Day, the day we're encouraged to remember and honor our own individual mothers—however imperfect they may have been—and also the *idea* of motherhood.

The energy of the maternal is in all of us, male or female; the energy of nourishing the young—whether "the young" is a person, an animal, an idea, or an art form—whomever or whatever we can find to nurture. Actually, we can nurture anything that arises in our field of vision, and in that nurturing we are a part of this archetype of the Mother.

We can be grateful to those who came before, those who cared for the earth, right here, where we are. As I write, I am in New York City, Manhattan, with all kinds of enormous structures being built everywhere. Many of us are thinking and talking a lot about the taking of property, about the killing and imprisonment of people who lived here before, the construction of barriers right now, and the free movement of people on the earth. When the Europeans arrived on this land where I am sitting, this narrow little island of Manhattan, there was a settlement of people called the Lenape. They lived here, hunted, and fished—apparently there were big piles of oyster shells found near their villages in what is now called the Lower East Side, so they enjoyed the oysters that were here—and they were part of a larger group of people, the Algonquin-speaking people, that extended all the way down into Pennsylvania and Delaware and up to the Catskills.

The reason I bring them up here is that they were a matrilineal society. Their whole kinship system was based on the mother. The children belonged to the mother's clan rather than the father's clan, so when people got married, they went and lived with the mother's family, and it was the sisters and aunts that took care of the children. The entire *leadership* in the Lenape people went through the maternal line, the leadership of the community. Women elders decided the different managerial positions and made sure that the fields and the crops were equally distributed among the various clans. The men worked for the women in the fields, but they also were hunters and warriors when there was a conflict. It was the women who selected which warriors would go to the battles.

And there is this really amusing aside that I have to share with you from this historian of the people who lived right here.

The interesting thing about this particular tribe is that Europeans were highly confused about the importance of women within the society and their ability to select male warriors for battle, to grant permission of land rights and elected male leaders of the tribe. Even though they worked much in the domestic sphere, their way of electing leadership was not in line with a patriarchal society. In the eyes of the patriarchal European society, which were not familiar with the customs of the Lenape, their understanding of the typical gender roles they associated with their own culture was much confused by how the Lenape society actually functioned from a matrilineal and a matriarchal perspective.

So, the Europeans came and said, "What's going on here? This doesn't make sense to us. We don't know what this would be." And of course that civilization was essentially destroyed by the European settlers. A few Lenape remain. Those who were not killed were sent to Oklahoma, to what we newly called "reservations"—really, imprisonment systems for the natives—and a few escaped to Ontario. To this day you will find some Lenape, Algonquin-speaking natives there.

It's not so surprising that a patriarchal society would not understand what they were seeing, even when it was right in front of them. I wonder where else we can find that matriarchal energy? In one strain of Buddhism, in the Mahayana, we have what are called the *Prajnaparamita Sutras*, and *Prajnaparamita* is called the *Mother of All Buddhas*. You may have heard of some of these *Prajnaparamita* sutras, such as the *Diamond Sutra* and the *Heart Sutra*. In our tradition, there is one line from the *Heart Sutra* that distills the whole of this vast literature:

Form is no other than emptiness,
emptiness no other than form.

It couldn't be more clear. It is what all of the verses and stories and *koans* in our Zen system are about: "Form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form." This means that there is no special thing to be found. No *It* to grasp onto. Rather there is this life, *this life* that you have from moment to moment, and how *you* can express the light of compassion and wisdom at *this* moment in time —not some idea, not something you read about once that sounded good, but *this moment*.

Oh Shariputra, form is no other than emptiness,
emptiness no other than form.

This encourages us to live our lives with compassion, with service, and with joy, as opposed to grasping for some solitary experience, some special selfish individual insight that will make us feel better. *The Mother of All Buddhas* teaches that way of living to all Buddhas —and "Buddhas" include all of us who wake up or who understand what she is talking about.

Are you a Buddha?

If you have read this far, you know that in Zen we always have an old story to address any issue. These stories are called koans. A majority of the koans are about the ancient Chinese masters; over generations they have been refined into teaching stories, and

successive masters have made collections of them and written commentaries and poems to indicate their significance. Zen students study koans both privately with their teachers and also in groups. Koan study is not an intellectual exercise: the student has to *demonstrate* insight into the koan. The teacher may accept the demonstration or encourage the student to pursue it farther.

In the *Lotus Sutra*, one of the most popular Buddhist scriptures in the world, there's a story about Daitsu Chisho Buddha. Daitsu Chisho Buddha was said to have meditated for ten *kalpas*, but he had not attained Buddhahood. Now, a *kalpa* lasts somewhere between 16 million and 336 billion years, so he had meditated a long time. Still he had not attained Buddhahood.

In our koan, a monk said to Master Cho, "Daitsu Chisho Buddha sat in meditation for ten kalpas but Buddhadharma was not manifested nor did he attain Buddhahood. Why?" Cho said, "Your question is splendid indeed." The monk persisted: "Why did he not attain Buddhahood?" And Cho replied, "Because he did not attain Buddhahood."

This monk is asking, plaintively, really, "Daitsu Chisho sat in meditation for tens of millions of years and still did not attain Buddhahood. How could that be?" He's expressing the heartfelt frustration that all of us feel at different times when we get caught up in the idea that we're going to *grasp* something: *Why am I sitting here all this time? My knees are aching. Why? When am I going to get something?*

Instead of answering, this kind old teacher says, "Your question is splendid indeed." What does he mean? What is splendid about the question?—The question illuminates the problem. Splendid means shining, clear; you can see right through it. Splendid! Why did he not attain Buddhahood?

In the commentary on the koan, Mumon says, "The old foreigner may know it, but he cannot really grasp it. An ordinary person if he knows it is a sage. A sage if he grasps it is an ordinary person."

What is it to be an ordinary person? To sit without wanting to attain something, to enjoy, to enjoy the gift that you give yourself, to sit and allow the mind to rest in your breath, the mothering of self and other,

the mothering of your mind. We miss it when we grasp for it. We turn it into some *thing*, and we can't get it because part of our creation is that it can't be gotten, so we don't get it.

The teaching of the Mother of all Buddhas is that there is no solid thing you can attain.

In his essay on *Uji—The Time Being*—Dogen, the thirteenth century founder of Soto Zen in Japan, wrote:

> *The truth merely manifests itself for the time being as an ordinary person. Because you think your time or your being is not truth, you believe the sixteen-foot golden body is not you. However, your attempts to escape from being sixteen-foot golden body are nothing but bits and pieces of the time being.*

Isn't that marvelous? Because you think your time or your being is not truth you believe the sixteen-foot golden body is not you … so you go looking for it. You believe you are not a Buddha, so you go off to find out how to be one. Dogen is teaching us that each moment of our practice, each moment of our life, is that which we seek. Now we may not realize it, because if we've created an idea of what we want to attain, and we move away from the bits and pieces of our life, then we don't realize that we are the sixteen-foot golden body of awakening. It's here right now. It's so hard for us to see that we are complete just as we are; and it is in our practice of zazen (meditation) that we can see it. We don't meditate in order to attain it, we do it because we *are* it.

There's a story I love to tell about Kwan Yin, who is essentially the Chinese Mother of All Buddhas. So there's a person who wanted to truly meet Kwan Yin. He wanted to experience this quality of the Mother of All Buddhas. And so he decided to meditate until he was able to meet the Mother of All Buddhas. He was meditating very hard, sitting on a rock, practicing really hard, in order to attain Kwan Yin. Kwan Yin was delighted to hear that this young man was doing this, so she decided to walk over and speak to him. She tapped him

on the shoulder, and he said, “Don’t bother me right now. I’m looking for Kwan Yin!” She tapped him on the shoulder again. She thought, *This is really cool; this man wants to attain compassion*. But he said, “Go away, I’m meditating. I’m looking for Kwan Yin. This is my practice!” Kwan Yin shook her head sadly and walked away.

Of course, we struggle with our thoughts during zazen. Maybe we are obsessing over some error we’ve made or even over the idea of not-attaining. We can be a mother to ourselves; we can say, “I can drop that thought now and see what else there is in the universe, besides that little mistake I made yesterday” (or whatever it is you like to drill down on). Looking for something somewhere else separates us from ourselves.

Kwan Yin tried to help that young person. It’s so easy to get in the way, to set up a Buddha in our mind that we’re going to attain, and it’s so hard to recognize, to realize, that the Mother of All Buddhas is here right now. We can accept that nurturing quality of our practice, our simple little rituals, our zazen. And later, when we step outside onto those crowded streets, we enter the stream of our lives, and we carry with us this energy of the Mother of All Buddhas, the nurturing quality. So it’s a good day to remember our mothers, however perfect or imperfect they may be in our view today. They gave birth to us, and other mothers have sustained us, in whatever guise they may have appeared. There is the great mother, Prajna Paramita, who can protect us. Let’s vow not to send her away when she comes to visit us in zazen.

Here’s my closing gatha:

> Ah, Mother of All Buddhas,
> What are you doing hanging out in this space
> with creaking floors and noisy jackhammers?
> Could it be you’d like our attention?

GOING FARTHER

1. What do you love to nurture? A child, a pet, your home, an art or science? Make a list of all the things you nurture and celebrate them.

2. Do you know about the people who lived in your city or neighborhood in the past? Do some investigation into who lived there before you—both recently and in the distant past.

8

THE FACE OF THE OTHER:

RACE, CLASS, RELIGION, SEXUALITY, GENDER EXPRESSION

In our Zen communities, we come from our very different lives to practice together, to support one another, to feel part of something—maybe to feel part of something "spiritual." But so much of what's going on today in our cities, in this country, in other countries, and in this world is a desperate gesture to distinguish one's own life, one's own *individual* life; to distinguish what *is for me* and what is *not for me*. People are separating even more now than ten years ago on the basis of religion, culture, race, sexuality, and gender expression. Naturally, being a part of this world, I'm thinking about this a lot, and about what Zen has to do with it.

What is it that we perceive as difference? What is "not me?" "Difference" implies that there's also "not-difference," sameness, me-ness, what I belong to—whether it's skin color, class, sexual preference, or gender presentation—some of the many ways we perceive ourselves and that we perceive others. People we think are different from us—they're "not like me." Sometimes we decide that those who are not like me are people who I can't get close to, that I can't know—and most of the time that decision is unconscious. We create an "other," an idea in our minds—or we go to an idea that's already been sitting in our minds that we may not be aware of: "That is not like me, and if it's not like me, I reject it as alien." Then there is disgust, there's blame, there's fear, and there's hostility. That is what I see in the world these days.

This retrenchment into isolated groups who stand against other groups is seemingly everywhere: Europeans against the Africans, the Burmese Buddhists against the Burmese Muslims, who share the same geographical area! When we look around we see racism, sexism, ableism, violence against gays and the genderqueer. You have only to look at the papers—or maybe you don't look at papers anymore, you just look at screens—but the information is flowing in about this.

It could happen that we look into the eyes of another being, another human, and find a difference so striking that we feel we can no longer engage, no longer experience the humanity of the other one, no longer connect to the same reality of the human condition. How does this happen in our minds? How does this happen?

I think of Ryokan's little poem:

> noisy kids
> lack coordination
> to catch the early fireflies

When are our minds like noisy kids? Is it when we allow them to knee-jerk, to automatically go to some old, broken-down, mistaken ideas, such as ideas of the "right way" for the other to look, to act, to speak, to be? Ryokan says the noisy kids "lack coordination" and so cannot function skillfully. Think about how hard it is to encourage ourselves to be open, to be alive and compassionate, when we encounter something that we don't know, something that is new to us: a difference in class, culture, gender, sexuality? How do we get caught in that bias?

This is not an abstraction; I'm talking about you and me. How do we get caught in our own privilege and miss the Buddhist teaching of our interconnection, that we are not separate, we are all part of one—five fingers, one hand? How is it that we can ignore or deny the other?

Emmanuel Levinas, a Lithuanian French philosopher whose powerful insights have struck me for many years, has written about encountering the face of the other:

*The **first word of the face** is the "Thou shalt not kill." It is an order. There is a commandment in the appearance of the **face**, as if a master spoke to me. However, at the same time, the **face** of the Other is destitute; it is the poor for whom I can do all and to whom I owe all. And me, whoever I may be but as a person first, I am the one who finds the resources to respond to that call.*

"When you see the face of another it is a commandment, 'Do not kill.'" It sounds like "the other" might be God. It might be Buddha-nature, it might be the truth of our humanity, of our interrelationship, of the other, of the face of the other. You know, it reminds me of the Street Retreats—when we would go out with Bernie (see chapter 6, "Appreciating Bernie Glassman") and be on the street for four or five days—mostly around Tompkins Square Park—and spend time with the people who hang out there, who live there. We'd sleep in the park and then walk over to get food at the Bowery Mission. At the Mission, after you listen to a lecture, you can go to a cafeteria. People who are homeless usually smell, they're not necessarily friendly, they're suffering—and you sit down with them and look into their eyes—and how can there be disgust? How can one pull away? Just as Levinas says, facing the other "commands us" to care. We *can* open our eyes and look into the face of the other, but that can only be done when we stop our noisy thinking—just stop—and *behold* the other. Whatever we think of as difference, we can also recognize human connection; we're all part of the same human nature. In Buddhist teachings we call it "the interconnected reality of life." But what gets in the way is our noisy minds. It's possible that's why you're reading a book on Zen, to quiet your noisy mind! When our minds are noisy, we just react without connecting to the meaning of what's around us.

This reminds me of an old story. It takes place in eighth-century China, and involves Joshu, an important and famous teacher. Joshu was precocious and was recognized as "a comer" in the Zen tradition when he was very young. He went to his teacher Nansen when he

was nineteen years old, and he studied for thirty-nine years, until Nansen died. Then he was fifty-seven years old, and he decided to go around China. Joshu is reported to have said, “Even if a child of seven knows better than I, I will study with them; even if a person of a hundred years wants to study with me, I will teach that person.” Looking into the face of the other and being willing to learn from a child and to teach an old person—there’s a vast openness.

When Joshu was eighty, he decided to settle down, and he moved to a broken-down old temple that had been abandoned; it was really kind of falling apart; there are descriptions of holes in the roof and so forth. The temple was in the province of Joshu—that’s how he got his name. He was called The Old Person of Joshu, because in those days a person was named after their district. (You could call me The Old Lady of Soho!) There was a famous stone bridge in the town of Joshu that exists to this day. I’ve visited it: it is ancient and elegant, and it is the world’s oldest open-spandrel fully stone segmental arch bridge. It was completed in 605 CE, a hundred years before Joshu arrived.

At the time of the story, Joshu had become very famous in China. Hardly anyone practiced in his temple, but he was well-known. One day a traveling monk said to Joshu, “For a long time I’ve heard of the stone bridge of Joshu, but now that I’ve come here, I just see a simple log bridge.” Joshu said, echoing the statement, “You just see a log bridge, you don’t see the stone bridge.” The monk asked, “What is the stone bridge?” And Joshu answered, “It lets asses cross, it lets horses cross.”

When the monk says, “For a long time I’ve heard of the stone bridge of Joshu but now that I’ve come here, I just see a simple log bridge,” we could paraphrase it as, “I’ve come to see this great teacher, and I am not impressed! The place is falling apart, you look like a scraggly old man, you’re probably toothless … I’m not impressed.”

This story is often studied from the perspective of the gentleness with which Joshu teaches—he doesn’t hit the monk, or yell, or throw cold water on him, as happens in many koans. He very gently leads him to see symbolically, metaphorically, the difference between a log

bridge—which would be kind of like the relative world that is *impermanent*, changing and falling apart—and the stone bridge, which would represent Buddha-nature or the Absolute nature of reality.

But I'd like to look at it in a different way, to think about it from the perspective of this monk, who is so caught up in his idea of what a Zen teacher is, so blinded, really, that he can't see the master who is right in front of him. What he "sees" doesn't match his internal fantasy of a Zen master.

We're like that ourselves, aren't we? We think we know what a friend should look like, or member of our community should look like: what color, class, sexuality, or gender expression they should have. Joshu responds differently: "You just see the log bridge, you don't see the stone bridge." Look into the face of the other! You just see what's already in your mind. You don't see what is really here. You just see your idea of me; you don't see my Buddha-nature. You're not looking in front of you; you are reflecting an old idea from a broken old mirror inside of you. This triggers our internal thoughts: is that person performing their gender according to *my* expectations? And that expectation blinds me from seeing what's right in front of me, from appreciating what's right in front of me—the expression is here, now, in the Bowery Mission, in Tompkins Square, in the zendo, on the subway. Open your eyes and allow all those faces to come in—not according to these clichés and your thought patterns.

What can we do about this when we see it in ourselves?

We can come to a Zen center or Buddhist meditation center or a church and develop an ability to stop and really see the self. *Noisy kids lack coordination to catch the early fireflies*.

We can stop the noise, calm ourselves, and then follow that wonderful old Zen prescription:

> *To study the way is to study the self, to study the self is to forget the self, to forget the self is to be enlightened by the ten thousand things.*

To study the way is to study the self—to look for it, to see it, to educate ourselves so that we *can* see our bias.

To study the self is to forget the self—to open our hearts and minds, to drop our rigidity, to be creative, to be joyful about life and all of its expression.

To forget the self is to be awakened by all of life—that's why at my Zen center we offer teachings on racial issues, sexuality, gender, disability—awakening us, waking us to our blindness about things. We encourage ourselves not to coast in our privilege, to get edgy. Of course when we tear something off—some old idea we have about reality—sometimes it's a little painful. But if we do that, we can be free.

What is the truth of the situation? What is this before me? What does this face teach me? *Is this person asking for money on the subway the one who is going to lead me across the stone bridge to a recognition of my humanity, of my responsibility as a human?*

I do I think we need to look at what's happening in the world and look inside ourselves and teach ourselves how to forget those unfocused old ideas that we don't even know we have. In doing that, we can present our face to others. I encourage you to think deeply about this. It's a difficult time in the world, but we can do something about it.

> Oh, stranger
> I cannot see what is in my heart
> until I quiet my mind
> and look into your eyes
> and you say we are not two

GOING FARTHER

1. Sit face-to-face with a friend and look at them for five or even ten minutes. How well do you really know your friend's face? What

color are your friend's eyes? What differences do you see between the left and right sides of their face? Levinas says, *There is a commandment in the appearance of the face, as if a master spoke to me*. What do you feel, gazing at your friend's face?

2. Think of the story of the stone bridge—are there times in your life when you are seeing a wooden bridge instead of a stone bridge? What person, place, or thing have you taken for granted and not seen as full of beauty, movement, possibility?

9

BEING A BODHISATTVA TODAY

When we look at our world today—at the unrelenting suffering of human beings and of the planet itself—we are haunted by the ancient Buddhist teaching that all of life is heir to the three poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance. We want what we do not have, or what we think that we do not have enough of. We become angry and we hate others. And we are ignorant because we don't recognize our interrelationship, our interconnection with everything. We don't realize that we're not separate. So we make an "other" and we oppress the "other."

The Buddhist teaching is that this is the nature of being human—it's not like it's something wrong that we're going to "fix." We can see it in the animal world, as well. If we look carefully we can even see it among plants—they also invade one another's territory and struggle to survive. As Tennyson had it in a famous phrase: everywhere we look is *"nature red in tooth and claw."*

What is our place in this? What is our responsibility when we have awakened to our interconnectedness? Can we ignore the suffering? Is it possible to do anything? Is it possible to hide? These are impossible questions, yet we can't run away from them.

For me, personally, trying to find a way to face these impossible questions, I go back to the ancient Buddhist archetypes. What can *I* do? How can *I* position myself?

First of all, from a Zen perspective, I think we need to consider ourselves, to identify ourselves as Bodhisattvas … and then to act as

Bodhisattvas.

Zen belongs to what we call the Mahayana—or “Great Vehicle”—tradition of Buddhism that originated in India during the first century, CE, and was further developed in China, Tibet, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. According to the Mahayana, the early Buddhists (they disparagingly called them Hinayana or “Small Vehicle” but we now use Theravada—“Teachings of the Elders”) sought to become *Arhats*—highly developed practitioners who supposedly wanted perfect liberation for themselves alone. But the Mahayana proposed a different ideal—the *Bodhisattva*, who postpones her own liberation to bring *all beings* to freedom.

You may know that *Bodhi* means “light”—as in being able to see clearly, to discern, to function with light, to share light; and *sattvam* means simply someone who is, a being. So Bodhisattvas are “light beings.” In the early English translations of Buddhist texts they always translated it as “an enlightened being,” but I much prefer “enlighten*ing* beings.” There’s a little more room for action; there is energy there in the gerund. Let’s go with “enlightening.” It’s not just “I’m enlightened, I’ve attained something—me, me, me”— it’s more like “offering light.”

How can we offer light? How can we function as enlightening beings in this world?

The most important thing is that we mustn’t allow ourselves to get discouraged. That usually happens when we become focused on one specific outcome. We need to keep our vision wide open to new ways of working. And we mustn’t think that the work will be done once and for all when we accomplish one task.

There’s an old story I love that teaches us about this process. It’s about Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Her name originally in the Sanskrit means “the one who looks down”—as in “looking down from a height upon the suffering of the world.” When her name was translated into Chinese—Quan Yin—it became “the one who listens to the cries of the world”—“the one who *hears* the cries of the world.” Different traditions show this figure with different genders—sometimes a male figure, sometimes a female figure,

sometimes you can't tell whether it's a male or female figure; sometimes sitting on a Lotus—the symbol of enlightenment—sometimes holding a child, sometimes with many arms and hands holding tools to be of service to those who are suffering. (In my favorite modern image, he's got a little lasso and a shovel, a rake, and a credit card. I mean, we have to adapt to the times, don't we?) Sometimes, both in the male and female images, Avalokitesvara has many heads—nine or eleven heads, one on top of the other, and there's a great story about that.

Once upon a time, Avalokitesvara saw all the suffering in the world—the suffering perceived to be caused by the demons of hatred, greed, and ignorance mentioned earlier—and Avalokitesvara saw how these demons were torturing sentient beings, so she entered into battle with these demons and ended all the torture and violence. She actually stopped it all!

She turned to Amitabha—Amitabha is the Universal Buddha, whose name means "immeasurable light"—and she said, "Look, I've saved them all!" Imagine that moment of satisfaction: you look down, you see all this suffering, and you evaporate all the demons, and the sentient beings are no longer suffering. "Look! I've saved them all."

But Amitabha said, "Look behind you!" And when Avalokitesvara turned, she saw a whole new wave of suffering arising: more demons, more greed, more anger, more ignorance, more suffering. She couldn't believe it! She was filled with anguish and despair. She screamed, and her head broke into millions of pieces. (Have you ever felt that way?) And it is said in the story that Amitabha was freaked out, and he started gathering the pieces together to try to put them back. But he became quite confused, and Avalokitesvara wound up with nine heads.

After that, it is said, she—or he—learned the lesson that there's no end to the demons, no end to the suffering of sentient beings. Avalokitesvara simply continues to serve, using all those heads, all those arms, all those eyes to stop the suffering at *this* time, in *this* moment. She continues to serve today. We mustn't be discouraged, or we'll lose our heads like Avalokitesvara.

I really think it's a wonderful teaching, because when we realize that we aren't going to permanently *fix* ourselves—our loved ones, the climate, the political system, all the suffering in the world—then we no longer become discouraged; we no longer become depressed and paralyzed. Instead, we're free to act in *this moment* to respond to what's in front of us, to serve the vast network of life. And we're empowered to work with others to make a difference, to not think it's only *our* way that is right. Our service does not depend on our particular view of exactly what must be done and exactly how things must be done. Rather, our energy is around service: to be of service, to step in. Then we don't get discouraged, because we're working with others and we're free to act within that vast network of others who are also acting. We are not ignorant of our interconnection with all beings. Rather than being caught in our view of the way things must be, we can think of our work as service, by stepping in, paying attention, and working with others. That releases our energy, moves us toward more understanding—even toward those we consider our enemies: those ones that we think are the demons out there.

We have to really guard against that; *I* have to guard against that. It's so easy to demonize others, because most of the stories about what's happening in the world are slanted to what we want to hear. The newspapers that we buy, the magazines that we read, the internet sites that we look at—they're all based on our own biases, and so they are likely to increase our disdain for those who don't agree with our opinions. So we have to be very careful not to unwittingly create more suffering through our prejudice and bias against those who see other ways of living and working.

> We can't lose our heads.
> Oh, Bodhisattva!
> Losing your head doesn't help—
> Instead, extend your hand,
> Offer your words, your wisdom, your effort.
> That's what a Bodhisattva does, day in and day out,
> Serving all of life.

GOING FARTHER

1. What does *Bodhisattva* or “enlightening being” mean to you? Who do you know who exemplifies this quality? It doesn’t have to be a “spiritual” person—it could be a teacher, a friend, a bartender, your plumber, a local politician—who do you know who serves others and brings joy and awakening?

2. In the story of Avalokitesvara, she loses her head when she is overwhelmed. How is it possible to work toward the ending of suffering without becoming overwhelmed and without suffering burnout?

10

BODHISATTVAS HAVE MORE FUN

Recently, a question popped up in my mind:

Why do Bodhisattvas have more fun?

We Zen Buddhists take our practice very seriously. Our meditation and study, our citizen work, our compassion, our mindfulness in our everyday actions—all of these are seen, rightfully, as very serious and profound. Why, then, would I say that Bodhisattvas have more fun?

And what *is* that fun?

Isn't it a kind of delight in our daily life, in our breath, in the unraveling quality of time, in the early morning light? It's in the delicacy of the breeze, in the look on the face of a child when you smile, in the fist bump on the street (I mean, that's great; that pleasure will last for a block and a half!). There is fun in the kindness you offer and in the kindness you receive.

When you write a letter to someone who's in solitary confinement, when you visit your friends in prison, when you join with others to change the legal practices in your local government, when you write letters to parole boards—I would say that's fun! Recently we were asked to write a letter to the parole board in New York State. I imagined the board members sitting there, and I tried to write a letter that would somehow seduce them into granting parole, into being kinder, into realizing that people can make mistakes but that change actually happens.

Speaking up in meetings, accompanying immigrants to hearings—I would say that's fun!

As a Bodhisattva, you're not frozen in an attitude about the way things are—you're in motion. Obviously, something that gets in the way of a Bodhisattva having fun is getting attached to an idea of how something "should" be, or to the idea of "attaining" something. Particularly in the early days of Buddhism, they talked about how the great wisdom and joy of the Bodhisattva was that she was not trying to *attain* enlightenment, but she was *expressing enlightened conduct*—such a difference! Bodhisattvas are not fixed on some static idea of "getting enlightened" for themselves—that's what Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche called "spiritual materialism." That's getting materialistic about our state of mind.

So this is how I'm conceiving of the contemporary Bodhisattvas: we're not fixated on attaining a specific agenda item. We may agree on the principles of a Green New Deal, or healthcare for all, or reparations for descendants of slavery—we may agree on the principle, but we cannot get stuck on Point A or Point B, or we'll lose it all. We'll lose our enlightening sense, our openness to what is arising in the moment and of what it is possible to do.

To be open and creative is what today's Bodhisattvas do when they are embodying their energy. We have to see with fresh eyes all of the conflicts that create suffering in our world. We don't want to lose our heads. Instead we're looking for new and imaginative ways to approach the suffering we behold.

There's another way that Bodhisattvas have more fun, and that's by realizing and responding to the core Buddhist principle of "samsara is nirvana."

Samsara typically means our everyday, ordinary life: setting the alarm, getting up, making the coffee, coming to the zendo, going to work, coming home. The word is from the Sanskrit word s*amsr* (**संसृ**) which means "revolving, moving around, not static but moving." In ancient Buddhism and Hinduism it referred to reincarnation, to the cycles of rebirth. For us today, it's a way to really recognize that everything is shifting and changing all the time, that we are not the

same now as we were when we walked into this room a few minutes or hours ago. Tennyson wrote about *samsara* in a way when he said:

> The hills are shadows, and they flow
> From form to form, and nothing stands;
> They melt like mist, the solid lands
> Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

In this amazing vision—he sounds very much like Dogen in *The Mountain and River Sutra*—Tennyson sees that the movement and change of mountains, rocks, and rivers is just like the movement and change of clouds. That's what Bodhisattvas can also recognize—and it helps them have a joy in life instead of the grimness that we find so often in proponents of change.

And nirvana is often referred to as a kind of a transcendental state where there's no suffering. What do Zen masters mean when they say that *samsara is nirvana?* It's a hard question, but I think that having hard questions is more fun than having easy ones.

We are serving in time now, all together, and together we can have more fun! We can appreciate the preciousness of our lives in a spark of *just this moment*. We don't have to agonize about "How can I serve? How can I make a difference?" Instead, we can pick up whatever tool is at hand—Oh! It's a cup! Oh! It's a hammer!

In the *Astasahasrika Sutra* there's a wonderful image of people gathered at the riverside, and there's a Bodhisattva who is piloting a ferryboat full of people. This ferryboat is going from one side of the river to the other—it's a symbol, of course, of crossing the sea of suffering. And here's what it says (I've changed his gender because that's what we're doing these days):

> *She courses in dharmas as empty, signless, and wishless, but she does not experience the Blessed Rest, nor does she course in a sign. As a skillful ferrywoman goes from this shore to the other shore but also does not stand at either end, nor does she stand in the great flood.*

She doesn't get stuck in a sign, in a word, in *my way*. "A skillful ferrywoman goes from this shore"—the shore of suffering—"to the other shore"—the shore of "samsara is nirvana." She doesn't rest in some special state, and she doesn't get stuck—"at either end, nor does she stand in the middle in the flood."

It is a marvelous passage about a life of service, carrying yourself and others across the sea of suffering, not getting stuck in a self-important idea of "I am crossing the sea of suffering" or not getting caught in the idea of "suffering"—that's what all this business about "the sign" is. It is the wisdom and compassion of service, yes, but also to simply live that life, to meet the inevitable changes that life offers and just continue to practice, to be alive to it. "She courses in *dharmas* as empty, signless, and wishless." She recognizes the momentariness the signlessness of not getting stuck. What does she do? She navigates across the river of suffering from shore to shore, not stopping on this shore or in the river itself, constantly being present to life itself as time flows on.

Today's Bodhisattvas must be able to adjust to the changes that we see around us— political changes, changes in the climate, changes in gender identification and social norms—we must be able to shift and play with these changes, to not get stuck in *my* way. You could say we're all in a ferryboat together, making our way across the sea of life, the sea of suffering, with its temptations and tribulations. And I think we need to break out of some sort of rigid solemnity about what we're doing. This practice is fun! It's fun! Bodhisattvas have more fun!

Get in the boat
The water's rising
All together now
Row, row, row across this sea of suffering

GOING FARTHER

1. What do you do for fun? Do you associate mindfulness or enlightenment with seriousness? Does “fun” strike you as an appropriate description of spiritual practice?

2. How can you have fun without closing yourself off from the suffering in the world? Roshi indicates that Bodhisattvas not only have fun, but that they have *more* fun! Is it possible that by avoiding suffering you become closed off to all kinds of feelings, ideas, and emotions, and that in allowing yourself to be open to suffering you become more awake to an ever-expanding repertoire of experience?

ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION

Page vii: “According to Case 6 of the *Mumonkan* …” Thomas Cleary, trans. *No Barrier: Unlocking the Zen Koan* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993).

Page viii: “Scholars have proposed …” *From Stone to Flesh*, Donald Lopez Jr. (University of Chicago Press, 2013). A survey of the many forms of the Buddha in history, the encounter of European culture with Buddhism, and Lopez’s theory of the reinvention of the Buddha as a modern personality in ninteenth-century France.

1. BEGINNINGS

Page 2: “We like to think of …” *Old Path White Clouds*, Thich Nhat Hanh (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1991). For an extended picture of a “human Buddha.”

Page 3: “In case you missed the …” *Little Buddha*, 1993, a film by Bernardo Bertolucci, written by Rudy Wurlitzer and Mark Peploe, produced by Jeremy Thomas, with Keanu Reeves as Prince Siddhartha (the Buddha before his enlightenment).

2. PARABLE OF THE BURNING HOUSE

Page 9: “I think of Wordsworth, when …” William Wordsworth, *My Heart Leaps Up*, 1802.

Page 10: “Saigyo, a twelfth-century Japanese …” Steven D. Carter, *Traditional Japanese Poetry*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, April 1, 1993), 160.

Page 10: “And one more, from a …” Carter, 293.

Page 11: “Have you heard of the Net …” Thomas Cleary, *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avatamsaka Sūtra* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 1993).

Page 12: “This story applies to our …” Burton Watson, trans. *The Lotus Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

Page 13: “But the children are laughing …” Leon Hurvitz, trans. *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, revised ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 69.

3. CLIMATE CHANGE

Page 20: “Whole sections of Louisiana are …” “Scientists say the rapid sinking of Louisiana’s coast already counts as a worst case scenario” https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/06/15/scientists-say-the-rapid-sinking-of-louisianas-coast-already-counts-as-a-worst-case-scenario (accessed January 20, 2020).

Page 21: “In *The Transmission of the Light* …” Thomas Cleary, trans., *Transmission of Light: Zen in the Art of Enlightenment* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 2002); and Francis Dojun Cook, trans., *The Record of Transmitting the Light: Zen Master Keizan’s Denkoroku* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1996).

Page 23: “It is the view of …” Walt Whitman, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” in *Leaves of Grass*, 1856 edition.

Page 25: “In a 2018 lecture at …” Terry Tempest Williams, “The Liturgy of Home,” lecture, Harvard Divinity School, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Lr_YJHADFw (accessed January 20, 2020).

Page 26: “May we be able to …” Master Roukan, trans. Kauaki Tanahashi, *Sky Above, Great Wind: The Life and Poetry of Zen Master Ryokan* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 2012).

4. OUR DISTRACTION—OUR MINDFULNESS

Page 33: “Simply by stripping away the …” “Jon Kabat-Zinn,” Wikipedia, last modified September 26, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jon_Kabat-Zinn.

Page 33: “I’m sure you’re aware of much of the work that has been done with mindfulness in brain science and in social science.” A popular survey of the encounter of brain science with meditation

practices is *Zen and the Brain: Toward an Understanding of Meditation and Consciousness*, by neurologist and Zen practitioner James H. Austin (MIT Press, 1998).

5. APPRECIATING BERNIE GLASSMAN

Page 44: "There is a beloved Zen …" R. Aitken, trans., *Song of Enlightenment* (Honolulu: The Diamond Sangha, 1991).

Page 45: "On one level, it is …" *Rakusus* are the bib-like garments Zen practitioners wear that symbolize the robes of Buddhist monks. There is a charming tradition that the patchwork pattern is based on the pattern of farmlands that the Buddha observed as he and his followers walked in the countryside.

6. PRACTICING MEDITATION

Page 52: "The first meditation teaching we …" Tso-Ch'an (坐禅仪 Pinyin: *Zuòchán yí, Principles of Zazen*), Translation by Master Sheng-Yen, http://enlight.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-AN/an252087.pdf.

Page 57: "It's what Dogen meant when …" Dōgen Zenji(道元禅師), the founder of the Japanese Soto Zen school, most famous as the author of the *Shobo Genzo*.

7. MOTHER OF ALL THE BUDDHAS

Page 63: "In the eyes of the patriarchal …" Sarah Krykew, "Family, Women, and Children and Gender Roles in the Lenape Tribe," Chadds Ford Historical Society, accessed February 6, 2020, https://chaddsfordhistorical.wordpress.com/2016/07/22/family-women-and-children-and-gender-roles-in-the-lenape-tribe.

Page 64: "In one strain of Buddhism, in …" "*Prajnaparamita*," sometimes translated as "The Perfection of Wisdom," is represented in Buddhist iconography as a beautiful goddess. The *Prajnaparamita Sutras* and their commentaries (100 BCE–150 CE) represent "the oldest form of Mahayana Buddhism, one that radically extended the basic concept of ontological voidness (*sunyata*). The name denotes

the female personification of the literature or of wisdom, sometimes called the Mother of All Buddhas."

As mentioned, the sutra collection ranges in size, including *The Prajnaparamita in 100,000 Lines, The Prajanparamita in 8,000 Lines, the Diamond Sutra (Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra)*, and the *Heart Sutra (Prajñāpāramitāhrdaya)*, and even to "*Prajnaparamita in One Syllable*." According to the Oxford Biographies, the most complete survey of the vast literature is still Edward Conze's *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, 2nd ed., Bibliographia Philologica Buddhica, Series Maior I (Tokyo: Reiukai Library, 1978).

A popular "contemplative expansion of 40 verses" by Lex Hixon, with an introduction by Robert A. F. Thurman, is *The Mother of the Buddhas, Meditations on the Prajnaparamita Sutra*, A Quest Original (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1993).

Page 64: "It is what all of …" *Shariputra* was, in the older Theravada tradition, considered the most advanced disciple of the Buddha. Here, in the *Heart Sutra*, and in other Mahayana sutras, he becomes a kind of dupe to whom the expositors of Mahayana demonstrate his lack of understanding. A charitable interpretation is that he takes on this role so that the teachings can be expounded.

Page 65: "These stories are called koans …" *The Gateless Barrier, Zen Comments on the Mumonkan, Zenkei Shibayama, Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000. The Mumonkan* is a collection of forty-eight koans compiled in the early thirteenth century by the Chinese Zen master Wumen Huikai.

Page 66: "In his essay on *Uji …"* Dogen, Zen Master, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 2003). "Sixteen-Foot Golden Body" refers to one of the miraculous bodies of the Buddha in the Archetypal tradition. Dogen implies that you are sometimes a Sixteen-Foot Golden Body.

8. THE FACE OF THE OTHER

Page 72: "I think of Ryokan's little …" Ryokan Taigu (1758–1831), a quiet and eccentric Japanese Sōtō Zen Buddhist monk who lived

much of his life as a hermit. Ryokan is remembered for his poetry and calligraphy, which present the essence of Zen life.

Page 73: “Emmanuel Levinas, a Lithuanian French …” From *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press 1969), 1979.

Page 74: “It takes place in Eighth …” J. C. Cleary and Thomas Cleary, trans. *The Blue Cliff Record* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 2005).

Page 77: “We can stop the noise …” Dogen, “Genjokoan,” in *By Zen Master Dogen*, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 2013).

9. BEING A BODHISATTVA TODAY

Page 82: “As Tennyson had it in …” Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam A.H.H., Canto LVI* (published privately in March, 1850).

Page 84: “And it is said in …” The legend of the nine- or eleven-headed Avalokitesvara appears to come from Tibetan folklore rather than from a specific sutra.

10. BODHISATTVAS HAVE MORE FUN

Page 90: “Bodhisattvas are not fixed on …” *Cutting through Spiritual Materialism*, Chogyam Trungpa Rimpoche (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 1973).

Page 91: “Tennyson wrote about samsara in …” Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, CXXIII, lines 5–8 (published privately in March 1850).

Page 92: “In the *Astasahasrika Sutra* there’s …” Edward Conze, trans. *Astasahasrika Sutra* (*The Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines*) (Bolinas, CA: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973).

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SOME IMPORTANT MARKERS IN ZEN HISTORY

INDIA

BUDDHA AWAKENS (circa 500 BCE): Shakyamuni Buddha, also known as Siddhartha Gautama, was the originator of Buddhism. In Zen, "Buddha" also refers to the principle of awakening; the nature of and possibility for all beings to wake up. (See chapter 1, "Beginnings")

KASYAPA—THE FIRST ZEN PATRIARCH: (Received recognition for his insight when he expressed his understanding of the Buddha's "flower sermon" with a smile. (See introduction.)

MAHAYANA (circa first or second century CE): The Mahayana, or "Great Vehicle," refers to several schools of Buddhism that share common characteristics, including an emphasis on compassion, lay practice, the Bodhisattva ideal (see chapters 9 and 10) and *shunyata* or "emptiness" (see chapter 8, "Mother of All Buddhas"). Zen is one of the Buddhist teachings under the umbrella of the Mahayana.

NAGARJUNA (circa 150 CE): Generally accepted as the most important Buddhist philosopher after the Buddha himself, Nagarjuna developed the themes of "emptiness" (see above) and "not-self." He is associated with the *prajnaparamita* teachings (see chapter 8, "Mother of All Buddhas"). According to folklore, he received these teachings from the underwater serpents (*nagas*) who had kept them secret since the time of the Buddha.

CHINA

The origins of Buddhism in China are uncertain, but it was well-established by the sixth century when Indian monk Bodhidharma arrived in the court of Emperor Wu.

BODHIDHARMA (circa sixth century CE): The twenty-eighth Indian patriarch and the first Ch'an (Chinese Zen) patriarch. In a famous story, when the emperor asked what merit he would receive for his generous support of Buddhist temples and teachers, Bodhidharma

replied, “No merit.” In answer to the question about the highest truth in Buddhism, Bodhidharma answered, “Vast emptiness. Nothing holy.” And when the astonished emperor demanded, “Who are you who speaks to me in this manner?” Bodhidharma replied, “I don’t know.” Bodhidharma is said to have practiced unbroken zazen—sitting meditation—facing the wall of his cave for nine years.

HUINENG (also transliterated Hongren) (circa seventh century CE): An illiterate peasant who became the sixth patriarch of Ch’an. Huineng’s story is told in the first person in *The Platform Sutra* (See bibliography: Cleary, Thomas). Huineng is regarded as the founder of the “Sudden Enlightenment” school of Ch’an, also known as the Southern School.

SHEN-HSIU: A student of the fifth patriarch, he is credited with founding the Northern, or “Silent Illumination,” School of Zen.

JAPAN

Buddhism was officially introduced into Japan in the sixth century CE, and Zen some five hundred years later. Masny of the practices associated with Zen—such as flower-arrangement, tea ceremony, poetry, and martial arts—were refined in Japan.

DOGEN ZENJI (thirteenth century CE): An important philosopher, poet, artist, and reformer and a founder of the Japanese Soto School. Dogen is known primarily for his *Shobogenzo*, a collection of ninety-five profound and poetic essays on Zen practice and philosophy, and for founding the Eihei-ji Temple, which is still one of two head temples of Soto Zen.

HAKUIN (1686–1769): Priest, writer, and artist credited with the revival of Rinzai Zen in Japan and the codification of modern koan study. In addition, he is known for his delightful paintings, profound commentaries, and caustic rants about other Zen teachers and students.

EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES

In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry led four ships into Tokyo Bay, with the aim of reestablishing open relations between Japan and the West after 200 years of isolation. A kind of modern Renaissance

followed, as Western intellectuals and artists discovered Japanese culture, and Japanese emissaries came west. In the early twentieth century, Zen teachers began to appear in England and the Americas, notably D. T. Suzuki, Soyen Shaku, and Nyogen Senzaki.

D. T. SUZUKI (1870–1966): Japanese scholar who taught and lectured in England and the US, he is the most prominent intellectual exponent of Zen Buddhism in the West. *Essays in Zen Buddhism, Zen and Japanese Culture*, and translations and commentaries on Zen scriptures and literature had an enormous influence on Western psychology, philosophy, poetry, and beatnik culture.

ALAN WATTS (1915–1973): A popularizer of the writings of D. T. Suzuki and other Eastern traditions, his best-selling works include *Beat Zen, Square Zen, and Zen; Nature, Man, and Woman; The Book on the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*; and *The Wisdom of Insecurity*. In the 1960s he advocated the idea that psychedelic states were equivalent to mystical experiences.

TAISEN DESHIMARU (1914–1982): In 1970, Master Deshimaru created the European Zen Association, later the International Zen Association (AZI). In 1971, he opened the first Zen dojo in Paris, which was entirely dedicated to the practice and teaching of Soto Zen Buddhism.

AITKEN ROSHI (ROBERT BAKER AITKEN, 1917–2010): Founder of the Honolulu Diamond Sangha, he first encountered Zen as a prisoner of war in Japan and became a hugely significant figure in transmitting the teachings to the West. His *Taking the Path of Zen* is a popular introductory text, and *The Mind of Clover* is an American classic on Buddhist ethics. A social justice activist, he was a cofounder of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

SHUNRYU SUZUKI ROSHI (1904–1971): Known for his perennially popular book *Zen Mind/Beginner's Mind* and for founding the Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery, the first Buddhist monastery outside Asia. He came to San Francisco in 1959 and taught there until his death.

TAIZAN MAEZUMI ROSHI (1931–1995): Heart teacher of Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara and founder of the Zen Center of Los Angeles, the

White Plum Asanga, and other Zen organizations. He taught in Los Angeles from 1956 until his death. His dharma heir, Bernie Glassman, is the subject of chapter 5.

THICH NHAT HANH (born 1926): Vietnamese Zen monk, poet, and peace activist, founder of the Plum Village Monastery in southwest France and the Order of Interbeing, the author of *The Miracle of Mindfulness, Being Peace*, and more than 100 additional books.

JIYU KINNET ROSHI (1924–1996): Most famous for having been the first female to be sanctioned by the Soto School of Japan to teach in the West. Founder of Shasta Abbey in California, where she taught from 1971 until her death. *The Wild White Goose* (1977) tells the story of her difficult training in Japan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Deep appreciation to the many Zen teachers of the past, whose words and actions come to us through the work of the many fine translators and historians.

And to the poets and artists who kept the spirit alive.

And especially to my Zen teachers Taizan Maezumi and Bernie Tetsugen Glassman, who showed me the many ways of “being Zen.”

Finally, thank you to Howard Thoresen and Kate Zimmermann, without whom this book would not have been born.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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