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COVER CALLIGRAPHY: ENSO BY HAKUIN EKAKU (1686-1768)

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

ON THE PATH OF THE THIRD WAY

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In this issue two themes interweave – analytical understanding of Buddhadharma and uncovering the experiences to which it refers. If we can bring these two together we are well on the way to the third path: that through understanding both, we are led towards Enlightenment.

We have John's introduction to Master Sheng-yen's examination of a famous Chinese Sutra. In this John returns to examining the Dharma after his review of method in our last issue (NCF 42). We have a presentation of Chinese poetry from Yiu Yan Nang and an introduction to the holistic thinking of Jean-Marc Mantel.

Our poems and Florencia's pondering of her pet flies take us into experience. Finally, Roger Taylor gives us a clear insight into some controversial experiments on the edge of Science that, if proven through further research, would have great significance for us.

We end with our retreat reports as usual.

So – here we go again. Read, learn, digest!

THE SUTRA OF COMPLETE ENLIGHTENMENT: AN INTRODUCTION

Chuan-deng Jing-di, John Crook

The WCF receives the Dharma through the teachings and lineage transmissions of Chan Master Sheng-yen, our Shifu. We should all be familiar with his major works that help us practice and understand the Dharma. Leaders in particular should all study his books on Silent Illumination and Koan study.¹ His account of Chan history and philosophy with Dan Stevenson² provides a broad overview and some of us may wish to go on to his quite advanced presentation of the Sutra of Complete Enlightenment.³ This is not an easy book so I attempt to provide a summary of it here that can help those who may wish to investigate this important work. This text is an edited transcription of an evening talk at our retreat on Holy Island in 2007.

JHC

How do we train to be Bodhisattvas, or at least baby Bodhisattvas? A look at the major book by Shifu called *Complete Enlightenment* helps clarify what is involved in answering this question. Firstly, I don't think the book has a very good title in English. It sounds a bit inflated. The book is more like 'A complete course in approaching Enlightenment', and that it certainly is.

The story tells us that a group of Bodhisattvas are puzzled by the new Mahayana teachings of the Buddha so they ask him to meet them all in a conference together. So here they are assembling together to ask questions of the Buddha. These are questions we might be asking him ourselves since all of us are potential Bodhisattvas.

We will find they are indeed puzzling questions. The Buddha's replies are by no means completely clear, they need interpretation. This 'sutra' was a major work translated into Chinese from India in 647CE, a very old text. That first translation didn't catch on, and the better known text, which is the translation here, is by an Indian named Buddhapratha in 693CE. The reason it became famous is that it subsequently received a major commentary by the great master Tsung Mi (824 CE) who was one of the leading proponents of the *Hua-Yen* school of Chinese Buddhism, very close to Zen.

Shifu tells us there has been some doubt as to whether this ever was an Indian sutra at all. Three or four of the major sutras used in Chinese Buddhism are thought to be précis of Indian sutras, recompiled especially for the use of the Chinese. So far as we are concerned that doesn't matter, because the subject matter is absolutely to the point, very direct and on the ball in a rather Chinese fashion. A lot of the mystification that you find in Sanskrit literature has been removed.

There are all sorts of fascinating Bodhisattvas gathered for the meeting. There are the great ones of course, Manjushri, Samanthabhadra, Maitreya and others more 'junior' but with wonderful names such as Bodhisattva-at-Ease-With-Himself and other titles like that. They all have a question to ask. Manjushri is the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, so we might well expect him to set the ball going and indeed, he asks the first question.

There's a lot of etiquette at the meeting. The Buddha is on his throne. Manjushri arises and makes prostrations, then circumambulates the Buddha all the way round three times, makes another bow then asks his question. All of this sounds a bit formal but Shifu points out in his commentary that such a polite approach was Indian manners in those ancient times. Great honour and respect was paid to a teacher. So, from tomorrow I'll expect all of you to question me in this way!

The ritual palaver over, Manjushri asks: "O Honoured One, please explain the Tathagata's practice of the original arising purity of the causal ground."

What a question! So we have to struggle with what his question means before we even contemplate an answer. Actually, it's not so difficult.

'Causal ground'? We must remember that the Buddha's first insight was the Law of Co-dependent Arising. He saw the world, not as a collection of objects, but as a unified process of intimately linked causes and effects. So the 'causal ground' is the totality of what's going on in the universe. And the 'original arising purity' of it means that the causal ground – the universe – is entirely without fault.

How do we relate to this as a practice? Look at it this way. Some of us were out on the island beach just now, looking at the sea, the birds, and the sunset. When one looks at that scene from the point of view of the Law of Co-dependent Arising, what one sees is a world in which everything is interconnected. The setting sun throws beams of light through the Aran mountains that strike the sea and set the waves sparkling. The birds are beginning to move towards their roosts. Nature is settling down for the night. The tide is beginning to rise again, pulled by the moon. And the alternating days and nights are themselves expressing the rotation of our planet. The whole thing is in motion. The whole thing is interdependent, co-dependently arising.

When we hear that rather heavy expression, 'the Law of Co-dependent Arising', what we need to recognize is the way in which we commonly fail to see sea, island, sun as it were all of a piece but rather as unrelated, separate bits. Oh yes, the sun setting, there's the sea doing this and the birds are doing that – they're all kind of distinct entities in our minds. But if you look at the scene from the point of view of the Law of Co-dependent Arising, the whole thing is working together. And the beauty of it is that it is totally pure. Indeed how could it be faulty? But what is purity doing here?

If you think about it, how could the universe not be 'pure'? Words like purity, innocence, clarity – these are words which we apply to human conduct. Nature, the universe, just is. It keeps on going. It has no side. It is 'causal ground'. It is the basis. It is the turning, mysterious, co-dependently linked universe without intention – quite pure in fact. In poetic language, it's quite simply a singleton. We can see the poetry of the unified 'things'. As Roshi Shinriyu Suzuki has put it, "Things is!"

It is all one process. So, the question is asking: "Please explain the Tathagata's (Buddha) Dharma practice in relation to the arising purity of the causal ground – the original arising purity." It is always 'arising'.

The dawn comes, the night comes, the birds go to roost, the birds make their nests, the predators take the eggs – all are involved in the arising purity, the continual process.

As human beings, we might not like it when a Great Black-backed Gull goes and steals the eggs of a Curlew, but that's just our prejudice. For the Great Black-backed Gull, it's business as usual! It's the misfortune of the Curlew that it didn't hide its eggs better.

The universe is not sentimental. Human beings are sentimental. Nature is red in tooth and claw, but it is also gentle and kind. Tiger mothers are among the kindest of mothers to their cubs. Things relate together in ways that belong to nature. We do something un-natural in imposing judgements. And therein lies the problem.

So what does the Buddha reply? The Buddha says, "Well, we establish the great *Dharani* of complete enlightenment."

Dharani is an interesting word. It means something like a mantra, but it's much more than that. It means a whole process of learning, training, a moving along, a 'course' of enlightenment allowing us to relate to the suchness of the universe with wisdom and with release – the Nirvana that drops all. Such freedom is 'from' something – but what? That's the question.

The Buddha continues, "There is a problem. Human beings from beginningless time have suffered from Ignorance, delusion that prevents us seeing clearly."

The tricky bit here is to understand actually what this Ignorance is and why it is such a barrier to relating to the arising purity of the causal ground.

Surprisingly Ignorance arises from one of our greatest benefits, language. When you think about the Great Black-backed Gull or the Crows or the Oyster-catchers along the shore line here, we can see they relate to the environment directly, immediately. I was watching an Oyster-catcher trying to open a mussel-shell this afternoon. They're very clever birds but they're not thinking about it, they're just doing it: no discussion.

When cats, dogs, goats or sheep do whatever they do, they just do it. They don't think about it, at least not thought in the sense of verbal thought, thought using language. There is a kind of innocent immediacy about the behaviour of animals, in that they are directly there en face de nature, the world around them. By contrast, when we think about doing something it is through a secondary medium. The language of words is really no more than a description of the world around us. We are from the very beginning separated from the natural world by the fact that we don't relate to it directly, we relate to it through a medium: the medium of words, of language. And that distances us from immediate contact with what we're calling the causal ground, this extraordinary causal process we are talking about.

Language is very paradoxical. It enables us to do an enormous number of things – to calculate, for example, using the language of mathematics. We can go to the moon, we can understand the most extraordinary things. We can build up these whole worlds of understanding, which do indeed make

contact with that world out there, but it's through a kind of devious mesh of calculation. And it can be mistaken. As we know, no scientific theory is ever 100% proven. Always there are more ideas, more thought, more development: Newton, followed by Einstein, followed by quanta, string theory etc. Our analytical world is continuously moving and will continue to do so. Language is enormously creative. But it can also make enormous mistakes. When linked to desire it can lead us off into fantasies that may cease to relate to the world it purports to describe.

Even when we are describing things in a simple way, we colour them from inside with our preconceptions. Language is not merely a description of something outside; it is a description that is always coloured by something that is arising from within.

For example, think of the words Holy Island. Take away Holy for a start, just consider the word Island. We British people, living on an island, have a strong feeling for words like 'island'. The Hebrides have a great appeal to many people largely because they're islands. Places like the Scilly Islands are a delight, rather more than mainland Cornwall – why? Because they're islands. There's something special for us around the idea of islands, their separateness, their secretiveness, their privacy – all of those things give them a certain attraction. Now, when you add the word 'Holy' to it - wow, then you really start things moving! Holy – what is 'Holy'? You find yourself back with that dear old Celtic saint, who came here all those centuries ago. St Molaise, a tough old Irishman, came over here and sorted Christian things out somewhat, got fed up with it, and went to live in a cave – and here it is just along the shore there.

All of those ideas come up when we hear the word 'island' and even more so when we hear the word 'holy' and each one of us – because we're all separate poets – would actually have a different image, depending on what we may have read about islands and holiness. We each of us have a different poetry about islands.

So, when we say 'I'm going to Holy Island' or 'I'm going to an island' everybody has to negotiate exactly what this means. They may actually have quite different ideas in their heads about islands. Likewise, a description of the world is hardly ever objective. It's always got a subjective component plugged into it and we usually don't notice that. We make assumptions that what I mean when I say an island is what you mean when you say an island. Actually it's usually not so.

Ignorance then is the failure to understand how language works, and how tricky language can be. For example, the first thing to know about words is that words are only labels. Even if you take something as simple as a cup: a cup is a very simple object but the word 'cup' is just a label for it. There is an object and different variously shaped objects might be considered to be cups, or might be considered to be glasses, or even bowls. One person might call a cup a bowl and somebody else might call a bowl a cup, depending on how they approach the object.

These labels are pure conventions, indicating from one person to another what something is to be called. Even monkeys have a primitive possibility of doing that. There are some monkeys in Africa that have a

different squawk depending on whether a leopard, an eagle or a lion is approaching. They have an alarm cry specific to particular predators. These are almost, therefore, like words.

When we use words, we impute a 'thingness' to things. For example trees are not 'things' at all but complicated processes. In ordinary conversation a word is a thing. A sounding bowl is a bowl. A wooden fish is a wooden fish. There's no discussion about whether the important part of the bowl is the metal or the space within it. We use these words as if they were things with 'inherent' nature – that is things that are potentially permanent or unchanging.

Now we've just talked about a tree: clearly it hasn't got inherent thingness, rather it is a complex living process photosynthesizing the air. It's endlessly changing, just like the landscape. The tree is growing or dying. The tree is suffering from storms or not. The tree is having a good summer if it's drawing a lot of liquid up etc. The tree is always changing and moving. It hasn't got inherent fixed quality at all. But we commonly use words as if they are things of that kind, as if they refer to some sort of a fixed essence.

Furthermore, we either develop liking or disliking of them. Someone who lives in a desert might think trees are horrible. Somebody who lives in a forest might find a desert horrible. Actually a desert is just a desert and a forest is just a forest; in themselves, completely neutral. And out of our approvals and disapprovals come, of course, attachments and rejections.

If we're talking about people, it begins to get complicated. If I approve of somebody and you don't, it's rather difficult for us to converse about that person. And so, we get into disputes. And from that comes Samsara.

Nothing is stable in language, yet we have these strong tendencies towards like or dislike. One may have had a particularly happy childhood or one may have had a very miserable childhood and that affects the bias, the twist, with which one develops one's attachments and rejections. And all of that is the world of Samsara.

In a sense, it's a dream world. It's a dream world because it's all in what the Buddhists sometimes call the 'secondary'; it's all in language, and language as we've seen is an untrustworthy medium. It's a medium of thought that you always have to question. The Buddhists say it's like flowers in the sky. Of course, there are no flowers in the sky but we invent our samsaric worlds in the way in which a madman might say there are flowers growing in the sky.

This is the meaning of Samsara and the meaning of Ignorance. So, Ignorance is not something simple like making mistakes or making a rude noise at supper. It's absolutely fundamental. It's rooted in language.

How to stop people getting tied up in language and creating their flowers in the sky? How can we stop that? If we can stop that, we wouldn't even need to discuss enlightenment. In fact enlightenment doesn't exist, again, it's just a label. Enlightenment is being natural. But we are divorced from nature by the fact of our falling into the secondary, falling into this world of Samsara, attachments, rejections, hatreds and even worse. Just look at the daily news to see what that's like.

Up stands Samanthabhadra, circulates the Buddha and says: “Hmm, having heard all this, how should we practice? If all experience is illusory, how can we use experience to remedy illusion? How can we do this?”

The Buddha says intriguingly, “You have to use illusion to dispel illusion.”

Very interesting reply. You might think he might say something like “Well, you ought to forget everything about Samsara and go straight for Enlightenment.” No, it’s not as easy as that – because you cannot understand what words like ‘enlightenment’ mean simply from the side of words.

I bet everyone around this room has a completely different idea as to what the word ‘enlightenment’ actually means. I’m sure you all have your biases – some of you may even hate the word. Others of you may be so doting on it you’re driving yourselves crazy. Who knows? But everyone’s going to have a different view of what enlightenment might be.

So how are you going to get out of that entanglement? You can’t just say ‘Drop it and get enlightened’. You have to use words to help the disentanglement. And the words are precisely where the problem is. Hence, of course, *koans* using illusion to go beyond illusion.

As you know, *koans* are metaphorical expressions of insights; but metaphors are tricky. You can never be quite sure which metaphor it is. You have to use illusion to penetrate the illusion. And it leads us straight into the world of paradox, which of course is Zen’s speciality.

Up gets the Bodhisattva-of-Universal Vision. He stands up, approaches the Buddha, does his prostrations, circulates, another prostration, and then he says: “Honoured One, All this is very difficult to grasp at once. Please explain some gradual steps. What are the methods one could use? If one doesn’t have an immediate understanding of how to contemplate, one could just get confused. Surely there must be some provisional steps?”

Very sensible question, don’t you think?

The Buddha says, “Well, first of all, you have to realize that ignorance is pervasive. To penetrate ignorance, you have to use the illusory language but because so much of the trouble with ignorance and the trouble with Samsara is due to emotional entanglements, the first thing to do is to set up some precepts for yourself that will enable you to cool the mind down a bit.”

So the first thing is to adopt some precepts that will stabilize one’s world instead of hurtling from one entanglement to another like some addict on crack.

How to use ordinary talk to get out of that? Well, establish some precepts for oneself for a start. And then calm the mind. *Samatha*.

Bodhisattva Vajragharba gets up and asks another very interesting question. He says: “I hear it said that human beings are Buddhas already. After all, we are of the same nature as the ground of pure being.



We belong to the causal ground you've been talking about. Indeed, we are expressions of the causal ground. So since we are Buddhas already, how can this terrible ignorance arise?"

The Buddha says that Ignorance generates reason after reason until it becomes cyclic. He's talking about the cycle of life and death, whether you're thinking about reincarnation or simply the way in which our ideas keep regenerating themselves day after day. After a few minutes respite, all the nonsense starts going again. That's reincarnation for you. The nonsense is reincarnated every day!

The Buddha says the problem is that it's cyclic. And one has to be able to crack that cycle somewhere or other.

So then, not surprisingly, up gets the great Bodhisattva Maitreya, approaches the Buddha, does his prostrations, circles round makes another prostration and then says: "OK World Honoured One, how can we sever the roots of this karmic existence?"

The Buddha then begins to say some very interesting things. He says pure *Bodhi* – pure vision, pure mind – is without attachment left or right, up or down. It's neither that things are empty of what they appear to be nor that they are exactly what they appear to be.

To understand what Buddhists mean by emptiness we have to ask – what is something empty of? Well, it's usually empty of what it appears to be. That's the usual meaning. But when you see something and

somebody comes along and says it's 'empty' beware the clever-dick Buddhist. A clever-dick Buddhist might come along and you say "I can't drink my coffee yet because it's a bit too hot". He might say "What a stupid fool you are, don't you know it's empty!" Infuriating! Don't waste time with him.

Yes, well, it is only empty of what it appears to be – you don't have to call it 'hot' – 'hot' is relative to you. To somebody else it might not be hot. So its 'empty of the appearance of how things are' yet, given mutual understanding, a word for that appearance works for you both. A label is never exactly what it appears to be and above all it's empty of inherent existence. It's always part of the causal nexus of movement, or conversation, it's never a still permanent object that you can rely upon – ever. Even a cup!

Buddha says don't lean too far forwards to emptiness and don't lean too far back from accepting appearances. Both, as it were, give you a vision of how things are. So what you have to understand is how things are – neither just as they appear nor actual empty 'reality' but rather co-dependent arisings – no less. You have to find your way through to a perception of how things are. Form is emptiness yet emptiness is form.

To do this requires standing back from attachments because, of course, if you're attached to something you always see things from the attachment perspective. One has to find a third place, in which it is neither good nor bad. When you can settle in the place where the problem neither is nor is not, then you find a certain kind of freedom. This is a tricky concept. The third way means 'to be without bias'.

If you take up the third position without bias then you have a chance of seeing the thing in itself, actually how it is, rather than influenced by any of these poetic prejudices, one way or the other.

The mind has to go through *Samatha*. When the mind has been calmed you can see the thing as it is. You don't have to think "Oh what a beautiful flower arrangement! Isn't it absolutely wonderful?" Somebody over there would say "I could do it a lot better than that." It's just a flower arrangement. It's lovely. Have no bias, just appreciate it – daffodils, willow, roses. Just be there with it.

When the mind is calm, you can just be there with things, or be there with people, or be there in certain circumstances. Some people, of course, are specially trained to practice that. Doctors, medical people, firemen have to practice just being without bias in a situation, no getting excited this way or that way – you need to try to understand the thing in itself, the situation in itself. Good training – also true of military combat.

It's the same for Buddhists in Dharma combat. If we can calm the mind, we can just be present in the situation without the heavy bias that we normally bring with us.

As I've said elsewhere, we replace reaction with reflection. And you cannot reflect if you're charging around with your mind full of tension, worry, anxiety, self-criticism, self-loathing, self-like, self-admiration – any of that going on and of course the mind is warped. You won't be able to see except through distortion. It's like wearing five or six different-coloured glasses one on top of the other, and

hoping to see what you're looking at. You can take the lot off – of course, that may not help – you have to wear an appropriate pair of Dharma glasses! Then you might see something.

So don't react. Calm the mind into reflection and then it becomes possible to see a situation without all those biases. You're halfway there if you can do that.

The Bodhisattva At-Ease-In-Majestic-Virtue gets up and trundles round the Buddha respectfully and says 'Please tell us, then, what is the range of expedient means?' And the Buddha says "*Samatha, samapatti* and *dhyana*."

Samatha we've already discussed. *Samapatti* means insight. It's similar to *prajna*. Or rather, *prajna* is the method used in *samapatti*. *Prajna* is basically the careful insight into seeing things exactly as they are without bias. *Samatha* calms the mind, and then direct vision with the mind clear of all the fuss allows insight. Insight is not intellectual or wordy but rather an experience of clear knowing within which all these words at last make sense within their relativity. Silence and illumination emerge in understanding. No need to say anything. That's just it – neither good nor bad.

Mind you, moments of insight can happen out of the blue. But always because, for some reason or other, something has happened to knock the nonsense out of your head so that, for a moment, everything becomes clear. You can have a clear experience seemingly out of nowhere. You might have some good experiences here because on the beach at Holy Island you've managed to let go of all the nonsense. Letting go begins to become an important theme.

Dhyana is the combination of the two practices while remaining in understanding. It is being able to sustain a calm mind and being able to use insight into seeing things directly instead of through all these filters of attachments, likings and dislikings, bias and prejudice.

The Bodhisattva-of Sound-Discernment rises and says "How many approaches are there that we can use?" What is interesting about the Buddha's reply is his saying that there isn't just one way. You can combine them in different ways that suit you in relation to your karma. You might go slowly with one process and quick with another. You might be a sudden practitioner in one way and a slow practitioner with another. And another person may be the reverse.

One of the last questioners gets up, the Bodhisattva Cleansed-of-All-Karmic-Obstructions circulates the Buddha, does his prostrations and asks the question "What is the main cause of the defilement of our minds, so that it becomes so difficult to work all this out?"

The Buddha replies that the problem is attachment to 'self'. The nub of the problem is that out of our limited understanding in Ignorance of the world we have inferred that this process of being me is a self. And we get attached to that, egotistically. Yet, here is no person called 'John'. There is just sensation, perception, cognition, consciousness and action, continuously going along in a pattern with a history.

That's what John is. There's no John other than that. 'John' is a name.

But I think I'm me! I'm John! I'm really important! This worries me. Am I nobody? So long as I'm attached to my view of John, my need for a safe identity, and don't start looking at it a little more deeply I'm liable to remain in Samsara.

This is quite a tricky matter to get one's mind around. The mind naturally reacts against it. The thought that I don't exist is a pretty horrible thought. The Buddha would say "Hey, no-one said there's nothing there. No-one said that at all. They said that the word 'John' is just a label – what is actually there is a process. Have a look at the process. If you can understand how that process works you'll understand why you have attachments, why you have reactions rather than reflections, why you're a bastard sometimes and an angel the next. If you understand those processes, you'll understand why."

If you want to label it all 'John', fine but it's just a label. It means that one can detach oneself from this obsession with one's individuality, which is a Western obsession. By thinking of one's process one can be more open to these other processes, which also have names. But what's there? It's not that there's nothing there, it's wrong to say naively that Betty is empty – Betty is very far from empty. Betty is there, but it's not 'Betty' that's there, it's a history, a narrative, a story, which is going along through time acquiring novelty, dropping ancient things, having children – that's what's there. It's just called 'Betty'. Useful if you want to ring her up.

The final Bodhisattva we'll mention is the Bodhisattva of Universal Enlightenment, who asks a question that is perhaps very pertinent to us. "Since in the future the Dharma will be thoroughly dumbed-down, how can one be sure that sentient beings will still understand the Dharma?" The Buddha doesn't deny that. He says there will be great need, so seek out good teachers with correct views in which an understanding of the Dharma is free from contrivance and indifference. Basically, teaching should be honest and not cooked-up for self-fame purposes, or money or anything of the sort. Simplicity and love.

The questions that the Bodhisattvas ask are very profound questions and very searching. They are the roots of the Dharma. We in the WCF need to polish up on our Dharma, to understand much better and more clearly what the Buddha says in reply to these shrewd Bodhisattvas. We each have an issue here: how can we relate experience of life to what the Dharma is saying? And how can we actually have experiences described in the Dharma?

In the Dharma, many experiences are described. Many good resolutions to problems are described. They're not very difficult to understand on the page. But many of them are very difficult to grasp as experiences. A fundamental question for all of us as practitioners is how to relate what you might call the theory of the Dharma to actual genuine experiences of what's being written or spoken about. And how can we be sure that some of the experiences we have are actually the experiences described in the Dharma? These issues require a lot of patience. They require a lot of practice. And, to be blunt, a lot of thought.

Thought is something that Zen masters have often considered to be undesirable. Yet, there is a place for thinking and most Zen masters have clearly thought a lot. There is a place for thinking about how the theory of the Dharma and the experience of the Dharma relate. It has to be done both by 'no-thought' in the simplicity of experience, in the simplicity of watching the rising moon without comment, and in the course of a precise, subtle, largely introspective analysis of what the mind is doing. These things need to be brought together and anyone who wants to be a group leader or teach the Dharma has to take that difficult balance on board. It's not an easy balance. It's full of paradox. But it's also full of life, the kind of life that will give us some kind of self-at-ease in this decadent, contemporary world.

Friday, September 24, 2010

NOTES

1. Master Sheng-yen, *Illuminating Silence* (London: Watkins, 2002).
Master Sheng-yen, *The Method of No Method* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2008).
Master Sheng-yen, *Shattering the Great Doubt* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2009).
2. Master Sheng-yen, Dan Stevenson. *Hoofprint of the Ox* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
3. Master Sheng-yen, *Complete Enlightenment* (New York: Dharma Drum Publications, 1997).

POEM: WHAT IS THIS?

Paul Goddard

What is this?

*This depth of mind uncovered.
Flowing from my heart so broad and spacious
surely undeserved.*

What is this?

*This sky, newly shed of cloud
and in it's silence stands a child
beholding earth untainted.*

What is this?

*This energy, that yearns to run and spin
to touch the grass just created
upon my naked skin.*

What is this?

*This innocence, an infant's view before me
ideas fall like so many feathers
to leave me open and accepting.*

What is this?

*This gift to me, that leaves my gratitude weeping
what have I to take this seed
and find my place within the garden.*

A GLIMPSE OF CHINESE POETRY

Yiu Yan Nang



Chinese poetry has its origin from the Shijing (詩經) or Book of Songs. It was the first major collection of Chinese poems, consisting mostly of folksongs (the ‘Songs’). It comprises 305 poems of four-character (四言) lines covering the period from the eleventh century to the sixth century B.C. Some of the most popular ones are taught in schools nowadays. With the help of some annotations, they are not difficult to understand and appreciate despite their antiquity.

Poetry is the most popular form of literature since the beginning of written Chinese and is still popular today. It has developed into many forms throughout history and reached its zenith in the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907 A.D.) when poetry was the main subject in the imperial civil examination. In our present time, anyone who has gone to school can recite some of them. The classical forms of poetry mostly consist of lines of five-character (五言) or seven-character (七言) poems with special rules concerning rhythm, rhyme, tone and balance.

Chinese poetry has several distinct features that are derived from the special features of the Chinese language. Chinese is a monosyllabic language. Each character has a single sound. *Putonghua* (or Mandarin), which is the official language and the most common one, has four tones. One to three musical notes can represent the sound of a character. Each character sounds like a beat in music. Indeed, the Chinese classical form of poetry is very musical. Let us examine a seven-word-line poem – *Writing On a Wall* – from late Tang Dynasty (9th century). The words are simple and so is the story that any primary school student today can understand. It is a poem that can illustrate the basic features of classical poetry. An explanatory note at the end of this article describes the tones signs used in the text.

WRITING ON A WALL CUI HU

CHINESE:	去 年 /	今 日 /	此 中,
MEANINGS:	<i>Last year</i>	<i>to-day</i>	<i>this door centre,</i>
PINYIN (TONE):	qu (\) nian(/)	jin(--) ri(\)	ci(--) Men(/) zhong(--)
	人 面 /	桃 花 /	相 映 紅。
	<i>Human face</i>	<i>peach blossoms</i>	<i>mutually shine pink</i>
	ren(/) mian(\)	tao(/) hua(-)	xiang(-) ying(\) hong(/)
	人 面 /	知 / 何	處 去
	<i>Human face</i>	<i>don't know</i>	<i>what place go</i>
	ren(/) mian(\)	bu(-) zhi(-)	he(/) chu(\) qu(\)
	桃 花 /	依 舊 /	笑 春
	<i>Peach blossoms</i>	<i>still old</i>	<i>smile spring wind</i>
	tao(/) hua(-)	yi(-) jiu(\)	xiao(\) chun(-) feng(-)

TRANSLATION: *A year ago today at this doorway,
A maiden's face and peach blossoms were shining bright and gay.
The face is here no more
Yet the peach blossoms in the spring wind are smiling as before.*

This poem was written by Cui Hu (崔护) of late Tang period, about 1200 years ago. The title of the poem means writing on the wall of South Village in Du Town. It has since become a classic and is still very popular today. There is a CD containing this poem recited by a 9 year old girl in *Putonghua* very beautifully. Because of its popularity, many stories have been made up about the poet's romantic encounter. They can be seen online.

The beauty of this poem is its simplicity and economy of words. With 28 characters in four lines the poet creates a sweet story revealing the excitement of the first encounter and the disappointment at the maid's absence a year later. There is no overt expression of emotion and yet the reader can feel it clearly. The rhymes and rhythms make it like a song. The mood is placid and subtle. The imagery of "maiden's face and peach blossoms" is artistic and philosophical and is often quoted in its philosophical sense indicating life's impermanence.

THREE CHINESE POEMS WITH TRANSLATION

Classical forms of Chinese poetry are extremely difficult to translate into English without losing some special features unique to the Chinese poetic language, which have no parallel in English. The two languages are very different and so are the poetic forms, styles and culture. In the course of translation, the form, rhythm, rhyme, balance and structure are mostly lost or changed. Even more difficult are allusions and references which have historical contents. The best translator digests a poem and writes down the meaning as an English poet might. For this reason some say that Chinese classical forms of poetry are beyond translation. The illustrations in this text may explain some of the difficulties.

THE THOUGHTLESS MIND

CHINESE:	心中 /	无一物
MEANINGS:	<i>Heart centre</i>	<i>no one thing</i>
	烦恼 /	何处 來
	<i>Bother vex</i>	<i>which place come</i>
	长住 /	无念中
	<i>Long live</i>	<i>no thought centre</i>
	菩提 /	日日在
	<i>Bodhi tree day</i>	<i>day present</i>
TRANSLATION:	<i>In the mind no thought</i>	
	<i>So where's the problem?</i>	
	<i>This thoughtless state stays</i>	
	<i>Each day – a happy day.</i>	

BERTHING BY FANG BRIDGE AT NIGHT CHANG JI

CHINESE:

枫桥夜泊唐·张继

MEANINGS:

Fang Bridge night Berthing.

月落乌啼霜满天

Jian Fang fishing lights facing sad sleep

江枫渔火对愁眠

Su Zhao city outside Cold Hill Temple

姑苏城外寒山寺

Night mid bell sound arriving passenger boat.

TRANSLATION:

*A waning moon, crows cawing, a frosty night.**Fishing lights shiver by Jian and Fang bridges**Greeting the traveller, sad and sleepy.**Outside Suzhuo City**Cold Mountain Temple's midnight bell tolls**Reaching the traveller's boat.*

DRINKING WINE NO. 5 TAO YUAN MING

CHINESE:

飲酒之五·
結廬在人境
問君何能爾
採菊東籬下
山氣日夕佳
此中有真意

陶淵明
而無車馬喧。
心遠地自偏。
悠然見南山；
飛鳥相與還。
欲辨已忘言

TRANSLATION:

*I build a hut among the crowds
But I hear no noise of their carts and horses
You may ask why this is so –
When my mind goes remote, my land is afar*

*Picking chrysanthemum under the eastern fence
Leisurely I see West Mountain
Its colours at sunset are brighter
And birds are flying home together
There is truth in all this
But trying to explain
I forget my words*

EXPLANATORY NOTE: THE FOUR TONES IN PUTONGHUA

1. The first tone (Level Tone) is denoted by a macron (-) added to the pinyin vowel such as **‘a’ with ‘-’ above it.**
2. The second tone (Rising Tone) is denoted by an acute accent (/) such as **á.**
3. The third tone (Falling-Rising Tone) is denoted by a hacek or circumflex (ˇ) such as **‘a’ with ‘ˇ’ above it.**
4. The fourth tone (Falling Tone) is represented by a grave accent such as **à.**

Example:

妈 mā	麻 má	马 mǎ	骂 mà
‘mother’	‘hemp’	‘horse’	‘scold’

For further details and pronunciation see the ‘pinyin’ article in Wikipedia.

THE GREAT WORK: HEALING THE WORLD BY COLLECTIVE MEDITATION

Roger Taylor

In this article Roger explores ideas that arise currently from bold investigations along the fringes of contemporary Science. Science is extraordinary. Centuries ago we would not have believed what is now possible. The unusual perspectives described here may not be accepted by orthodox scientists for whom greater tests of evidence will be reasonably demanded as well as a formulation of theory at least commensurable with orthodoxy. Yet to challenge orthodoxy is always a creative theme and the links here to Buddhist enquiry, especially perhaps Tantra, are striking. We dare not deny their possible significance in these demanding and threatening times. What do you think? Eds.

It has been clear for some time that our world is coming to a crunch. Look at almost any aspect of our present (westernised) way of life and it will be seen to be unsustainable. Obviously this cannot go on indefinitely. And this crisis is accelerating, almost by the day. The human race is beginning to wake up to the need for concerted action. And many of us are thinking what kind of action we are best suited to take. In this article I want to pursue the ideas outlined in the earlier one: that in addition to physical action in the material world, we humans can bring about desired changes with our minds alone. Thus I, and I think many others, are no longer satisfied with the thought that, with daily practice of various Buddhist meditations, or other traditional religions, they might eventually become enlightened – perhaps only after many lifetimes. The situation is now such that whoever feels the call must not wait for personal enlightenment, but act now to the best of his imperfect ability.

In the earlier article (*Entering the Global Mind*) I introduced some of the ideas coming out of recent physics which indicate that, underneath the apparent separateness of the objects making up our material reality, there is a continuum within which space and time have no meaning, so that (as in older notions of eternity): ‘everything is everywhere all the time’. This implies that, at some level, everything is connected to everything else. Ervin Laszlo, building on the holographic theories of David Bohm, now sees this underlying continuum (also known as the zero-point field, or simply as the aether) as corresponding exactly to the akashic field described in the ancient vedas.¹

There is now good evidence (described in the previous article) for the connection of human minds with this underlying continuum. This comes from work of the inspiring Global Consciousness Project.² In brief: using simple electronic devices (Random Event Generators, or REGs) which are thought to respond to aetheric fluctuations,³ they have a large and growing volume of data showing how these instruments are responding to world events which engage very large numbers of human minds at a deep emotional level. These could be events such as a million-person meditation, or the Pope’s visit to Jerusalem, or especially Obama’s nomination and the events of 9/11. I went on to describe experiments of the Maharishi Institute of Science showing that enough people acting in concert can actually bring

about measurable effects in the real world. For example, in one experiment, some 4,000 meditators brought about a highly-significant reduction in the rate of violent crime in the city of Washington (refs below).

These findings clearly reveal a tremendous potential, which could, in principle, heal the world. But they are only the beginnings of what many authors are now seeing as a great further stride in evolution. Indeed, such a stride was seen many years ago by Teilhard de Chardin, when he envisaged a linkage of human minds into a coherent whole, termed by him the noosphere.⁴ While evolution is popularly thought to be a gradual process, with any significant change taking millions of years, many big changes have in fact taken place relatively rapidly: so-called punctate evolution. The rate of change in these, however, is nothing to the kind of rapid change in the human psyche, which now seems necessary if we are to transform our world and set it on a more healthy course.

Is such a change possible? While such a rapid change could not occur by classical (neo-Darwinian) selection, there is now increasing evidence for inheritance of (some) acquired characteristics. It has been proved that this can occur independent of upbringing, and even via the paternal line. The epigenetic mechanisms by which this occurs are now fairly well understood, and are particularly active in respect of brain and behaviour and, significantly, much more active in higher primates, and especially so in the human species. By these means a 'Lamarckian' type of evolution can indeed occur, and can proceed much more quickly than if it depended on the elimination of those less than sufficiently fit to reproduce.^{5 6}

In order for a change in use to become heritable, it is likely to be associated with some structural change. Indeed structural changes in the brain are well-known to accompany intensive mental activity, such as playing a musical instrument, and recent intensive use of the thumb on mobile phones is accompanied by changes in the relevant area in the brain in children. Significantly this seems to be true also for meditation. Interest has been focussing on a region in the pre-frontal cortex. This is relatively inactive under normal conditions, but becomes more active during meditation. Furthermore, it tends to become permanently active in long-term meditators, in whom it even grows in cellularity. On the other hand, in those disabled by early experience of abuse, it fails even to develop properly.⁷ Could this kind of change become heritable by means of these epigenetic mechanisms? Our species has undergone prodigious cultural and psychosocial evolution in only some thousands of years. Could this evolution be underscored by some kind of epigenetic inheritance – perhaps affecting brain mechanisms, or even structure?

Evidence for a capacity of human minds to enter into non-local linkage can also be drawn from studies of the electrical activity of the brain (EEG or electro-encephalogram) during meditation. Besides the well-known tendency in meditation to increase alpha at the expense of beta waves, recent work has discovered a marked increase in coherence between left and right brains. Nitamo Montecucco⁸ has found this to rise sometimes to over 90%, where in waking consciousness it often remains around 20%.



Highly significant in the present context is his finding of coherence between individuals when they meditate together. (In his ‘Buddhafield’ experiment, considerable coherence was seen even among eleven out of a group of twelve meditators). Other work has shown brain-wave correlation between individuals who, while not meditating, have close emotional bonding. Furthermore, such inter-individual coherence does not seem to require electromagnetic signals, since a German group ⁹ has found it to occur even when all electromagnetic communication had been blocked. If so, then the individuals brain-waves must have become correlated by way of the zero-point field – as indeed is likely in the other examples.

In view of these findings it may well be imagined that inter-brain coherence could occur among larger groups, and eventually most of our species, to result in the inception of Teilhard's noosphere. If the results of the Maharishi Institute ^{10 11 12} are to be believed (and the statistics are convincing) then the possibility clearly exists to heal the whole world. All we need is to enlist enough meditators. There are now several groups which are starting to do this. Perhaps the principal, and best organised one is that started by the Institute of Heartmath: the Global Coherence Initiative (GCI).¹³ As presently constituted, they are gathering individuals and groups world-wide through the internet. They organise ‘webinars’, and group meditations to focus on specific issues, such as Haiti or the great tsunami. At present without specific attempts at simultaneity, but this is planned to follow in due course. Some other groups are making similar initiatives. ^{14 15 16}

The word meditation could comprise a large compendium of techniques. While the TM method has had well-documented success, other methods could well be better. The field is wide open to further exploration. The Institute of Heartmath ¹⁷ teaches a practice of ‘being in one’s heart’, rather than the head where most of us feel ourselves to be. The success of this (amply shown in the way that those taking their courses become more effective in their work) depends on the effect of such ‘heart-focus’ in quieting the fear-based stress of competition in modern life, so that one’s creative faculties are allowed full play. It also of course greatly facilitates human interaction, so that co-operation increasingly takes the place of naked competition. In their physiological studies, they find meditation (especially with heart-focus) to result in

the heart-rate going up and down smoothly – so-called heart-rhythm coherence. This contrasts with the random chaotic trace seen during stress.

Significantly, in the present context, they find the state of heart-rhythm coherence to enable people to do things by mental intent alone – like changing the physical properties of water, or of human DNA.¹⁸ In this they are only confirming what has been so well-documented in parapsychology: that the influence of human minds extends not only to other human minds but to outer reality too. Now, as a logical extension of this, one might expect that some aspects of the material world could be influenced by the state of the aggregate global human mind. In fact the GCI has recently posted evidence which is open to such an interpretation. They downloaded recordings of the strength of the earth's magnetic field from two satellites. Mostly this varies with a smooth daily rhythm but, precisely coincident with the events of 9/11, it becomes distinctly irregular, and remains so (but tailing off) for a few days subsequently.¹⁹ Much more would of course be needed to make a convincing case, but the GCI, who have the close collaboration of some senior physicists, is seeking funds to study this by means of their own measurements.

But again: could the necessary changes take place quickly enough? One author calculates that we have only seven years to turn things around before the world goes into irreversible decline. Others put it even shorter. Here we can gain understanding from the mathematics of chaos, which form one of the most far-reaching discoveries of our time. The essential notion is that the evolution of complex systems does not follow a rational linear course, but may undergo sudden and unpredictable transformations. This is already evident in punctate evolution in biology. And it is obviously true in human affairs as well: regard sudden events such as the collapse of communism and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Many radical thinkers now see our world coming to exactly this kind of point, where a system reaches such a condition of instability that it can no longer continue along the same linear course. The state of maximum chaos that we are now approaching has (as some predict) the possibility of further breakdown of human institutions, leading even perhaps to the end of the human race; or else it has the possibility of break-through to a higher state of order. While nobody can predict in detail the forms this order could take, it can only be based on some kind of coherence at a higher level, and must require human co-operation to increasingly take the place of competition.

Viewed through the lens of material science, it seems totally impossible that what is at present such a very few could influence the minds and behaviour of the world's billions, the vast majority of whom are never likely to come anywhere near (at least intellectually) to such an understanding. But in the context of some of the scientific developments just described, it does seem not only possible, but mandatory.

And moreover: it is happening. According to Peter Russell,²⁰ the numbers of us engaging in meditation and other forms of inner exploration is increasing exponentially – as also is the number of web-sites devoted to bringing human minds into concerted action to heal the world. Here the insight of Teilhard de Chardin seems ever more prescient: we are in fact entering the global mind. Now that some of us are

coming to understand this, we are asking what we can do to assist in bringing it about. In his most recent book, with Jude Currivan,²¹ Ervin Laszlo sees us human beings as directing our own evolution and so becoming co-creators. Increasing numbers of us will surely be engaging in various kinds of programmes of world-healing, so that in due course we will be bringing about manifest effects in the real world.

And in due course also, further methods for enlisting the group mind will be developed. One suggestion concerns the use of technologies to enhance brain wave coherence. One of these, hemisync, requires sounds or music to be fed into left and right ears at slightly different frequencies. To appreciate the music requires the two brain hemispheres to co-operate – i.e. to become coherent. In a recent experiment²² several REGs were deployed in the vicinity of a number of people, each in a separate room, all listening to the same hemisync sounds. The REGs then registered greater than background coherence in the zero-point energy, just as they are doing in response to major world events. Thus in a similar way one might bring thousands into “synch” via the internet. Furthermore, it is worth considering that some times may be better than others. This is suggested from a meta-analysis of many distant-viewing experiments, which showed that this was most successful during a particular interval in the sidereal day.²³

But from a more fundamental perspective, we should consider techniques aimed to re-awaken the shamanic capabilities that have been progressively lost in the last few millennia. Many are now attempting to do this. Without experience of shamanic techniques I cannot enlarge on them, but I feel shamanism, and indeed what can be recovered of the lost riches of gnosticism, could play an increasing part in our future development. With the help of such methods we could begin to re-awaken the lost sense of truly belonging to the earth rather than looking at it, as most now do, from a detached egoic, and exploitative perspective. We might then see our world, Gaia, as many tribal peoples still do, as the Great Mother, and thus care for her unthinkingly, as a matter of second-nature. For this to happen on a general level, however, will require deep changes in religious life, in particular to outgrow the punitive paternalism of the Abrahamic religions.

Looking over the above I see that, in focussing on scientific aspects, I have written in a detached objective vein. It is then easier to relapse into scepticism and the state of comfortable denial in which so many of us are now living. But is this not to put the matter away from my real self, and escape responsibility? With denial comes despondency, loss of hope and inspiration, and even the will to go on living. (At 80 I have after all far outlived the span generally allotted). In revulsion from this prospect I then find the feeling of great urgency to re-assert itself. I am determined to go on, face the awe it awakes in me, and participate to the best of my ability in co-creation of the next version of our collective reality. In truth this is The Great Work – the greatest humanity has ever been called on to perform.

Nevertheless, I have to keep asking myself: WHO is doing this work? Here I find John Cage’s poem ‘Silence’ helpful:²⁴

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Although the main findings described above were made by scientists, please observe the caveat that most of them are not accepted, or even known, by scientists in general.

POEMS FROM RETREAT

Rebekah Kenton

THE WALL

*It is my task to extract clarity
from this blank wall.*

*My shadow gets in the way.
Zazen on a tightrope.
Easy to fall off the cushion
into the abyss of the mind.
Another day of torment.
The wall. Full stop.*

*But I persevere
until the wall is alive
like a polished surface
of a sacred object.*

SILENT ILLUMINATION

*I lost words to describe it.
I lost hope for miracles.
I lost fear of failure.
I lost ambition for
enlightenment.*

*Now that rubbish is burning slowly
in an interior bonfire.
I am being cooked.
What into what?
I don't know – yet.
Maybe a sheep, maybe a bird
will stop and look.*

AH, SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

*Ah, sleepless nights
inside an old farmhouse
somewhere in a Welsh landscape.
The air is dense with ghosts,
the dark side of thoughts and feelings
barely moving at all.
The ancient pillow
filled with headaches and tears
is of no comfort.*

*Ah, sleepless nights
cocooned in a sleeping bag.
Waiting for transformation,
that moment of emptiness
before wings start to grow.*

ETERNITY

*I was there. It came to me.
That sunset appeared from nowhere.
Earthly gold and purple
are but a cheap imitation
of that splendour.*

*I was in time behind time
where clocks have no hands.
All time is there
all the time.*

TEA PARTY

*The water was once an early morning mist
and is still magic.*

*Mixed with tea, served with cakes
in the garden,
it becomes miraculous.*

*The same miracle
in twenty different cups.*

*Some mysterious ingredient
makes love arise from my heart
like an early morning mist
and descend
on these trees, nettles, stones,
people.*

SOUVENIR

*The guardian spirit of the stream
did not allow me
to take pebbles as souvenirs.*

*The stream did not want to lose
its precious stones.*

*The spirit said nothing
about the grass on the bank.*

*Now the dried stalks
decorate my altar
amongst other treasures.*

*The distilled essence of those memories
quietly present,
invisible incense.*



FLY

Florencia Clifford

July in Maenllwyd. The new kitchen is finally flowing, the weather's warm. The stream carries little water so the milk is quickly going off; even the small dam we built is not holding enough of a flowing semi-pond to keep it cool. Fresh herbs are rotting, vegetables softening, bread is mouldy, and flies abound by the shelves above the sink. They are distracting me, buzzing about me, hovering around the treacle and jams. It is hard not to try and swat them, to stop any attempt to hit them with a tea towel.

Shoo.

Shoo.

I get more and more aggravated by them, they are here by the dozen. An invasion.

I sit by Tara on the steps under the sycamores, the beardy old men. I brought with me a small potted parsley plant as I need some to flavour tonight's meal. I am lost in the moment, looking at the plant, at each line on each leaf, tearing it slowly, carefully, lovingly and placing the small bits onto a metal bowl that shines in the afternoon sun. Suddenly a fat House Fly appears and lands on my knee. I am able to observe it, feel its tickly weightless body on mine. I can see her head moving and her large eyes that resemble the centre of the sunflowers by Padmasambhava's altar. Her front legs rub her face. How beautiful and intense her colours are, her rich textures and fur. Her antennae move as she gently flickers her wings. I observe it – microscopically.

What do you want Fly? Have you come to tell me something?

I am taken by the insect's presence, by its beauty.

A kind of at one with the universe – the Fly moment.

And yet, a guilty thought arises, I have killed so many. Insecticide, Fly traps, wet tea towels, you name it, I have done it. I don't think I ever liked doing it, but it was what you did to keep food safe, to keep away maggots, to preserve cleanliness. Flies are a pain when you live in hot places. A pest that threatens your food with residues of shit.

When I was a girl growing up in the Southern Hemisphere, summer holidays were long and hot at my grandparent's house in the hills. We had a lot of time on our hands and during the never-ending siestas in which the grownups disappeared for a snooze in dark cool bedrooms, we, the children, got bored as we needed to be unheard, silent. So, we invented games, pastimes. One of them was trying to catch flies. Sometimes it would take hours before we could, in a snap, hold a Fly in our hand. It was in itself quite a meditative process of waiting for a Fly to land near you; preferably on your arm and then snap! Being quicker than the Fly, grabbing it. You would fail many attempts before succeeding. The intention was

not murderous but yes a bit torturous for the poor insects. Once we caught one we played Make a Fly a Pet. It involved tying a long hair, usually mine, around the Fly's body to hold it captive, like a miniature balloon with wings, desperate to take flight, yet incapable due to tension. It was a kind of hero moment, look at what I got, a Fly Pet. I'm so clever. We would keep it for a while, amuse ourselves with watching it come and go held by an almost invisible thread and then finally let it go, the poor exhausted Fly.

Who was the first person who told me to kill a Fly? How old was I? Was it something innate? It could not have been.

The thought of taking the life of such a beautiful insect fills me with sadness. The desolation I often feel when I think how uncaring we are with the life around us descends on me for a moment. Then I feel grateful for the moment I am experiencing, for the teaching.

The Fly went about her business and I got back to the parsley.

Later on, after tea, I joined the group for the Mantra in the Chan Hall. It was a Mantra I found difficult to engage with, a bit tedious and with too many words. The room was warm as we kept the stove lit for hot water. There were flies around. Two or three kept landing in my arm and got between my fingers, crawling around my mudra. Suddenly, distracted by the tickling sensation they created I snapped both my hands shut and immediately realised that in each hand I was holding a Fly.

Awesome!

Yet, rather than a feeling of prowess, I felt humble and touched by the occurrence, by its beauty, by the whole connection to my previous encounter with the Fly under the sycamores. I could feel the tears filling my eyes, I felt like tapping the guest master with my elbow to show him but I kept the moment to myself and for a second, I observed the room, everyone lost in their chanting and breathing. The flies were struggling and my hands remained shut, I could feel their full energy buzzing in my palms. I held them there for a while, just to feel them, and then I opened my hands and gazing at their freedom smiled.

SAYINGS OF JEAN-MARC MANTEL

John Crook & Carol Evans

Carol and I were attending the International Mindfulness Conference in Bristol. One of the speakers was Jean-Marc Mantel, a psychiatrist from the south of France. As soon as he began speaking I was impressed by something other than his mastery of English, he was speaking from somewhere different. I had only experienced this before when in the company of yogins in the Himalayas or with persons illumined by Zen: a child-like quality with extraordinary clarity; a speaking straight out of a direct awareness within the situation. This was no descriptive discussion of method or idea as if somewhere else, the method and idea shone right before us. Few seemed to recognise this and the questioning that followed was not related to it but rather had the usual dualistic, analytical tone of intellectual discussion. I felt that that was not what he was on about. So what was he saying?

Carol and I travelled to Vence near Nice to find out. We had a private meeting with Jean-Marc and he shared much of his view with us. He kindly invited us to join a Sunday meeting in a farmhouse high in the hills. Some thirty people, his 'sangha' one might say, were there. Their session was devoted to interaction and discussion, not meditation. Jean-Marc sought to bring people into direct contact with where they were with detailed, compassionate concern and attention. Some got his vision – most did not. Speaking both French and English we learnt a lot: the sun shone; the mountains breathed; rocks, wood, crags, trees, in a distant haze the far-off sea.

There are two ways of expressing knowledge – the usual one is analytical, splits up a situation into its parts and bits and explores their relationship. The other is holistic, seizing the whole pattern at once while examining the components of that picture. Some call this 'Goetheian science' after the holistic approach of Goethe. The first is interested in multiplicity within the one, the other in the oneness of the multiplicity – as one scholar has put it. In facing the issues of being, Jean-Marc begins with the wholeness of life and its basis in bare awareness. The resemblance to Zen and Dzogschen is unmistakable. Insight has a wider reach than specialists suppose.

At the Bristol meeting, Carol had noted down phrases from Jean-Marc's talk. I have edited these here to reveal the wholeness of the perception that shone throughout his presentation. Whether you will see this as you read depends on how your mind is dealing with knowledge. Let us see what you find out. What was Jean-Marc telling us? Do you get it?

THE SAYINGS

Meditation is not an activity. You don't have to go there. You are already there. The silent background is always there. The witness is always there too – outside the meditation. Meditation is being one with what you are.

Being and your story are different. The silent background has no story. It doesn't move. You become silent awareness when you are present to the absence of thought.

Perceive that at the basis of being there is no thought. Silent awareness needs no such support. This silence does not impede sound. It is not imposed. It arises as happening.

Anxiety and depression are not real. They resemble a movie on the cinema screen. When something appears, do not believe it. It is necessary to welcome it whatever it is – yet while there is welcoming there must be no-one welcoming. Welcoming happens. Our reality is the permanence of mere presence in which the pure meaning of acceptance is oneness undivided.

Refusing something creates suffering. When there is no refusing, there is no suffering, no split. Stopping your refusing you do not find you are anything in particular-for it is a route to silent awareness. When you explore that which is not real, it brings you to reality. Peace, joy happiness all come from the silent background.

No need for beautiful experiences; just welcome the moment and be without a programme.

Your essence is not the thinking mind; you are not in its jail. As pure subject, you have no location. When you discover where happiness is not, you are happiness.

Tension in the body reflects tension in the mind – listen to it and it will dissolve. Stay with the tension. Do not seek to escape it – then it can leave you. You remain as simply being.

We are more like the projector in the cinema than the movie. The movie looks very real like the games-playing of a magician. Words and images are only pointers. The light from the projector does not need a movie. At essence, we are the light not the movie.

When you stop saying 'me', the ego is powerless and a response arises naturally from the silence. Such silence is love: being totally present to the present is love.

There arises a situation. An answer is needed but it is not a problem. No judgement is needed but a full awareness of the context of the situation. Full understanding without self-judgement yields release and action from silence.

Have a direct perception of the situation in its proper context. Forget the memories. The past is only an edited thought of the past. The emotion it produces is memories not the situation. Past is past. The picture on the wall is empty

Living moment to moment leaves no past. Stay with the present feeling of tension, contraction. Look into it directly. Narratives bring only temporary comfort. We are not our story. Acceptance is welcoming through being open to the now, not resignation. When sadness has gone there is no need to produce joy. It emerges when 'you' are not.

Suicide should be the ending of the 'I', not of the body – then there is peace.

A well-structured person is able to say 'Yes' completely, 'No' completely or 'I don't know!' completely. This is health. The root silence yields Joy, Compassion, Love. They are the silence.

Therapy is like learning to breathe when we have forgotten how. Expand into inhalation, exhale until there is nothing left – a space arises. Here we have the pattern of birth and death. The silence between the breaths is a gateway to the spaciousness and silence of the mind. Accept your non-acceptance for only then will it leave you.



RETREAT REPORTS

Retreat reports are an integral aspect of our journal and one much approved of by Shifu. We print them mostly anonymously and are most grateful to our practitioners for sharing themselves so generously with us. In reading these reports we learn much about the experiences of others on retreat and they often provide pointers for our own understanding. Eds

THE COOL BREEZE FELT COOL

WESTERN ZEN RETREAT, AUGUST 2010

During my last retreat, I had practised with the question ‘Tell me what love is?’ Towards the end of that retreat, during an interview, the question resolved: ‘This’ is love. When asked if it is attached, I answered ‘What else is there for it to attach to.’ When asked if it is free, I answered ‘Where is it going to go?’ I have felt very positive since that retreat and the way I experience the world/universe seems to have changed. There is an ongoing emancipation whenever my eyes are open to this love.

However, I’ve been having some trouble recently. Earlier in the year I made some loose plans to take a sabbatical from work to travel and do some surfing and also to maybe do a couple of Zen retreats in Japan, Korea or Taiwan (I’ve not taken a holiday in 3 years since I started to practice Chan seriously). Recently, I read some of the teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn Sunim, I found these teachings very clear and strong and they helped me to understand my true self. I then discovered that I could participate in the 3 month winter retreat being held at Master Seung Sahn’s monastery (Mu Sang Sa) in Korea. This retreat really appeals to me as they practice with koans, there are 10 gates that the students must pass. The schedule is tough, waking at 3a.m. for 108 prostrations, then sitting most of the day until bed at 9:20p.m. There are twice weekly interviews conducted in the Rinzai style of Dharma combat and a Dharma talk once per week. I can only imagine the effect of keeping a ‘don’t-know mind’ for 3 months.

Although I would love to do this retreat, I’m not sure I can. I’m a very active person and the thought of sitting still for 3 months just scares the hell out of me. I’ve always trained very hard and kept my body firm and in good shape. This discipline was instilled into me at a young age from training Kyokushin Karate. In the last 30 years, I don’t think I’ve gone more than 10-days without training. Although I no longer do karate training, I still go to the gym 3 times per week, I do yoga once or twice per week, I cycle to and from work, take regular walks and surf whenever there are waves. I’m not sure I can let my body go for 3 months or even if it is the right thing to do. Over the past couple of months, this has become a huge koan for me, I take it everywhere and I can’t seem to shake it off.

I was hoping to get a little clarity around this dilemma by working with the question ‘How is life fulfilled?’ However, during my first interview with Hilary, I explained how I had stumbled across the Dharma by reading a book on Zen in order to get closer to a girl I had fallen in love with. I explained how I was not with this girl and that she had very recently had a baby. Hilary picked up on this and she suggested I work with the question ‘Where is my heart?’ When she suggested this question I felt a surge

of emotion and knew that it was probably the right question to go with, but I felt I didn't really want to go there. I've dragged up all this stuff before, did I really have to go through it all again? It seems I did.

After this interview, I found the retreat extremely tough. Dragging up all this stuff about M once again was one thing, but I also found I had a huge aversion to practice. Just the slightest pain in my knees was causing a big reaction within me. I've worked very hard over the past two and half years, doing around 13 retreats. I'd offered my life countless times during prostrations, I'd given up my hobbies, I'd been celibate for almost 3 years and pretty much become a recluse. I felt I had done all that I could and here I was having to go through it all again.

When asked the question "Tell me where your heart is?" I kept thinking of all the time I spend alone sitting under the cliffs amongst the rocks and flowers or by the waters edge. I explained how I felt more at home outside than I do in my own house. But, as I explained this I felt terribly sad, why was this? Had I just adapted to being on my own as M. had chosen someone else to spend her life with? My sadness deepened and I began to dwell on all the suffering in the world. There came a point where I just didn't want to go on living (although I hasten to add, I would never take my own life).

I returned again to the now familiar image that keeps popping up on retreat of an African boy who had been mutilated by a rival tribe. He was one of many children who had his nose, ears and lips hacked off with a machete. How could I take any enjoyment from life whilst this sort of thing was happening. I'd learnt before that everything is included in this moment, you can't have bliss without horror, you can't have joy without pain, but even though I understood this, it was not helping, I couldn't see a way around it, I was at rock bottom.

During an interview with Jake I broke down crying like a little child. I couldn't go on; it was too hard; I'd done everything I could over the past couple of years; I just wanted to give up. After the interview, I stomped up the hill once again. How many times had I marched up this hill carrying such a heavy burden? When I got to the top I broke down again and fell to all fours and cried "Please God, please let me help this world". After the walk I began to look into an experience I had whilst out walking over the summer. I was questioning 'What am I?' and enquiring into where this 'I' comes from. All of a sudden this 'I' seemed to shoot up inside of me and simultaneously in all beings. Suddenly I was the whole universe questioning 'What am I?' Since then I have had a better understanding of my true self and the experience I had a year or two ago when everything dropped away and I became the whole of time and space.

My true self is before thinking, the whole of time and space. Shakyamuni Buddha was none other than myself. This is a thought I found hard to accept. Later that day or the next I was lying on the floor after the action meditation and I had the most incredibly profound insight. I was recalling the experience of becoming the whole of time and space, it was like a moving blackness that I passed through, then stillness, pure awareness. At some point the whole of reality seemed to appear before me like a single thought in space. As I recalled this I realised that the whole universe was my heart and all beings were my children. I wept in astonishment.

Yet, this realisation was puzzling, it was still thought and still somewhat of a dream. Later, when I went outside the beautiful full moon was rising, there was nothing outside myself, this one-mind experience continued for a day or so. The next morning when I walked outside the Chan hall I was taken back by the view and instantly thought ‘Wow, look how beautiful I am! I made all this!’ I also found clarity around my feelings for M. I had originally been attracted to her as she seemed so free and at ease with herself, she had the most beautiful smile and I wanted to be able to smile like she did. Over the years, the heartache she had caused me had pushed my practice deeper. For spurring on my progress she was better than any Zen Master and I felt nothing but gratitude towards her. I am so grateful she came into my life and so grateful we have such a wonderful friendship. I lit a stick of incense for her, E, and the baby and wished them happiness.

During interview, Hilary confirmed I had answered the question and asked what question I would like to investigate next. This was an easy choice for me, after all the hard work of the past few years I wanted to work with ‘What is freedom?’ I thought I already knew the answer: ‘This’ is freedom, but understanding this was no help to me, freedom seemed to be separate from me and I wanted to attain it.

Shortly after starting the communication exercises I realised that the answer, ‘This is freedom’ may not be the correct one as a more powerful resolution to the question occurred: ‘I am freedom’. This ‘I’ being big ‘I’, not ego. This ‘I’ is freedom from life and death, freedom from karma, unchanging, forever pure and unstained. I began to look into this ‘I’ more deeply. We all share this ‘I’. The ‘I-am-ness’ that I feel now is the same ‘I-am-ness’ I felt as a child, it is the same ‘I-am-ness’ that all humans feel as there is only really one ‘I’.

As I see it, when Shakyamuni attained enlightenment 2500 years ago, the universe became self aware. We all share this ‘I’ and there is really only one ‘I’, but humans associate this ‘I’ with their physical body, rather than the one body of reality. I then began to look into the intimate relationship between big ‘I’ and small ‘I’ and saw it as two sides of a coin. I then thought small ‘I’ is freedom. Having an ego is freedom. I am free to do as I please in this life, I can go and buy chocolate, go for a surf, even go and kill people if I so wish. I am free to walk any path in life, what footprints will I leave behind? I began to see cause and effect and how people make their own heaven or hell in this life.

After I began to look back over my life another resolution to the question came: ‘Freedom is now’.

I took these answers to interview and Jake seemed happy with them and suggested I take up the question I came to retreat with ‘How is life fulfilled?’.

At first this question seemed to have two sides to it: ‘How is my life fulfilled’ and ‘How is life in general fulfilled’. Very quickly I felt that ‘my’ life was fulfilled. I’ve had a great life, a great childhood, girlfriends, travelled the world surfing, had an amazing couple of years partying with my friends, a career where I have accomplished more than I thought I ever would. There has been a great deal of heartache in my life too, but it’s all part of the rich experience of life. Before this retreat I probably would have come unstuck

thinking that maybe I would have liked to have children, but now I realise that all beings are my children so this is not a problem. To top it all off, I understand my true self. I felt if I died that night, I would die content. So, what do I do with the rest of my life? Well, I would like to finish the great work of life and death and help others to understand themselves. During the retreat I gathered some parts from broken lamps in the tool shed, assembled them, fitted new seals where required and brought a lamp back to life. This felt great, imagine the joy if I could bring a being back to life by helping them find freedom!

This led me on to the other side of the question 'How is life fulfilled?' At first I felt that life just is fulfilled, ever changing, it just goes on and on. Then I began to think how for most species life is fulfilled by reproduction and continuation of the species. I thought back to an experience I had on retreat a while back whilst sitting on the hill. Sunlight was filtering through the trees and illuminating countless flying insects. I became aware that the cubic metre of space I was occupying was teeming with life. I thought to myself that even if we humans destroyed our environment so we could no longer survive, life would still go on. I took great comfort in this at the time. However, during communication exercises I began to question this. 2500 years ago when the Buddha attained enlightenment, the universe became aware of itself. If humans died out then would the universe no longer know itself? Would that matter? Would the universe find another way? I began to think about animals and their awareness. Does the universe know itself through animals that have no self awareness? I think not. What about chimps? As I have been led to believe, they are self aware, but give up this self awareness as they get old. Do they attain enlightenment? After all human beings evolved from chimps didn't they? I couldn't answer this, but thought probably not. I began to think about the transmission from one enlightened being to another. It seemed vitally important that this continued. Imagine a world where there were no enlightened people, what sort of hell would develop? I was reminded of one of my vows to surpass all who had come before me. Although I know this vow was naïve and it just sets a direction, I thought of how Ta Hui had brought 2800 people to awakening! I just wanted to go straight and save all beings from suffering, my every action for the benefit of all beings. This is how the retreat ended.

In the early hours of the next morning, I was at home laying in bed thinking about the insight I'd had on this retreat. Did I liberate God or did God liberate me? Have I gone crazy? My true self is before thinking, all of time and space. The whole universe is my heart; its substance is love, all beings are my children. If this realisation is enlightenment, then even this enlightenment is itself an illusion, just thought. This thought seemed to clear itself away, what was left behind?.....Truth....the sky is blue, the grass is green! Suddenly something seemed to be broken and a pure wind was blowing. I instantly thought of the *koan* 'The mouse eats cat food, the cat bowl is broken' and I felt I understood it. I got up and sat for a while and an answer to the *koan* came, I felt overjoyed. Also, a number of other *koans* seemed clear to me including the one I'd practiced with earlier in the year 'The buffalo passing through the window'. I didn't really know what I had realised, but when I went for a walk after I got up the cool breeze felt cool, that's the only way I can describe it.

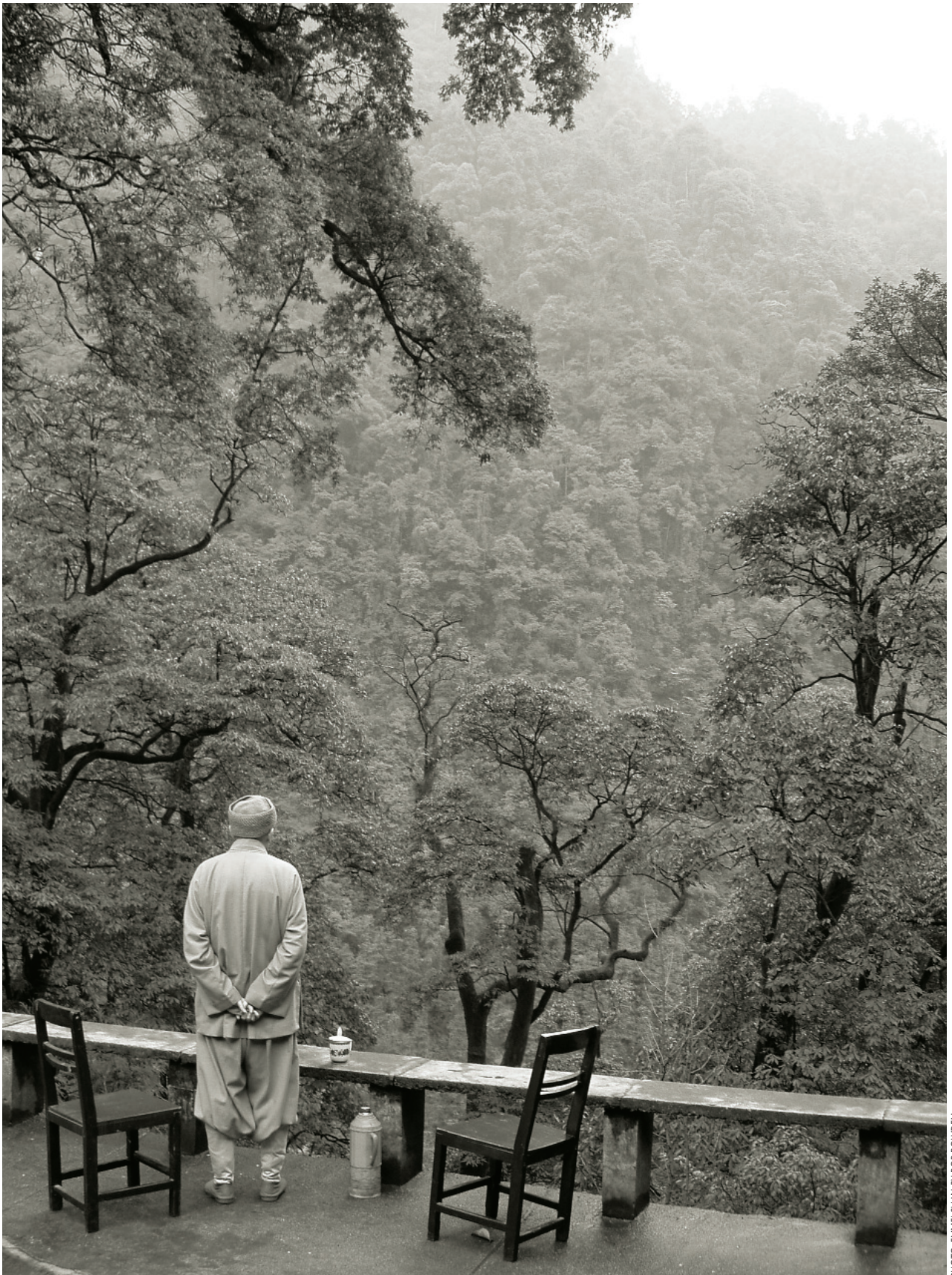


PHOTO: EMMEI SHAN BY ROB BOWDEN

THE IRON COW STANDS ON TWO LEGS
SILENT ILLUMINATION RETREAT, JULY 2010

One of the themes of this retreat has been around expectations.

Before the retreat, I knew that there would be a lot of work in setting up, due to the builders having been in at the Maenllwyd. I imagined chaos and dirt and things being upturned, notably the kitchen which is close to my heart, having cooked there myself. I knew that the suspended shelves had been dismantled and needed reassembly. The anxiety regarding these shelves that was provoked in me became something of a touchstone for the retreat in the weeks leading up to the event. I had e-mails from Flo who was worried about the 'flow' in the kitchen and whether she would find a way to operate around the newness of place and system and arrangement. I made soothing noises about 'flow' arising and Tara overseeing it all and things being okay in the moment and that as the days went on it would all work out. Part of me knew that and yet part of me still fixated about the shelves. I could not remember how they went together, how the knots were tied, how the balance was achieved. I spoke to Sophie on the phone and told her of my concerns about this required feat of engineering. She sounded amazed that I had this worry! When I asked her why, she said "You're a woman of Zen. Of course you'll know how to put the shelves up." I had been relying more on my Girl Guiding skills and memories of knots long since tied than my Zen practice.

The reality was less worrisome than my thoughts – no surprise there! The place needed some work and it was all hands to the pumps but there were many hands – Pam came to help like a *bodhisattva* from Derbyshire and Tara did smile in her enigmatic way. It all got done with good humour and some perspiration. Even the unexpected visitors on Friday held a message for me. I was showing around these highly enthusiastic students from Bristol who had appeared via Jin Ho and telling them of the place and its history and its quirks and suddenly knew again, quite overwhelmingly, that I love this place and what goes on here. How could one not? Even the shelves went up, not as they had been originally, but adequately for the event. These shelves of this moment. These knots for now.

John seemed physically better than when I had seen him last and I was immensely pleased about that. It was good to see him getting about the place more easily and he appeared in fine fettle with lots of his stories and cheerfulness. Those animated eyebrows of Chan sometimes say as much about Dharma as a formal talk. This is face to face Chan and I fail to see how it can be replicated in cyber space. Sometimes we just need to 'see' someone emotionally and physically to 'hear' what is being said. I don't see how that can be done by e-mail or web page. Those things may get us to a place where we can be face to face with a Teacher but they cannot replace that contact that I see as necessary.

What is it that I expect from a Teacher? It is hard to say. I have been to see a few over the years and am at times flummoxed when asked if I have any questions. How can I know what to ask when I don't know what I don't know? I just plod on or trot on according to the temperament of the moment. What else is

there to do? Sometimes Silence eludes. Sometimes Illumination overwhelms. Sometimes stillness and heart-seeing coincide and love pervades all. I know that I have experienced at times an umbilical link somehow closer than hand holding of something passing between – not knowledge but a sharing of my limited understanding with one who knows the road better than I. I can trust in that exchange and can choose to take heed. It is not always Marpa and Milarepa. Sometimes it is Dung Shan seeing a rabbit. Sometimes it's a glass of sherry before lunch.

There were quite a few people that I knew on this retreat – some as fellow practitioners, some as friends. What would I say in those early mornings? I couldn't permit thoughts of what anyone might think – I had to just stand there and say something. The mornings when I allowed the Heart to speak were the easiest. 'Trying' to say something got in the way.

There were some people who touched me deeply through their bravery. Facing themselves full on they confronted valiantly their personal nagas and demons.

There was no great confrontation for me this time, but several days of a deep happiness and ease. The red kites flew and I got to know individual calls and at times it seemed that they flew up and through my cerebro-spinal fluid. I wandered by the pines and found a dead ewe and a kite feather. I gave the feather to Tara for the retreat and when it was over to Guan Yin of the stars in the library. You find something, it gives you joy, you give it back.

What was this happiness that overcame me? Actually I realised that I am very content with the role of a bodhisattva. It is enough to be helpful and kind and to smile when love and compassion squeeze your hand.

I had thought that not much was happening since there were no great wranglings of mind but I had strange dreams on the retreat that have continued since. Dreams of strange places and strange tasks but always with a great sense of connection with someone.

John spoke a lot in his talks about emptiness. Who would have thought that it would be so full?

The other day I picked up a second hand book called 'The Iron Cow of Zen'.

The iron cow stands on top of the hundred foot pole and gives birth. I hope that my calf has eyebrows. And in the meantime, John, may I continue to enjoy seeing yours?

I still don't know what I don't know.

So I still don't know what to ask. But I am learning to smile.

FOLLOWERS OF THE GREAT WAY

Ken Jones

Swaying above the summer bracken the great scarlet banner proclaims... well, er... something or other. A brawny probation officer bears it aloft at the head of our little procession. The din we make scatters to the ten directions all uneasy spirits.

Power Point
the chief executive
blasts the thigh bone trumpet

Unemployed
she clashes
the brass cymbals

The divorcee
croons a mantra
to soothe the Hungry Ghosts

A wrathful deity
wears the mask
of a loss adjuster

We circle round the stupa, raised on the banks of a stream. Anima and animus – running water and resistant rock. Clockwise, of course. Lest we unravel the universe. Through clouds of incense flames leap from a rusty bucket atop the cairn. Each of us bows, and adds our stone. Midge cream we offer to the Angry Ghosts.

Then, on yellow fertiliser bags, we sit with our minds.

Meditation
the stillness of the stream
flowing through our brains

However, the unreconstructed loss adjuster does a visualisation of the divorcee as a *dakini*, bare breasted and dancing wildly in her girdle of skulls.

And so, back to the meditation hall, where once again we try to figure out who we are.

BOOK REVIEW

WORLD CRISIS AND BUDDHIST HUMANISM
 END GAMES: COLLAPSE OR RENEWAL OF CIVILISATION
 JOHN CROOK

New Delhi: New Age Books, 2009 ISBN 978-81-7822-325-4

Reviewed by Dr. Peter Fenwick, President of the Science and Medical Network

I recommend that you all pay attention to this book because it is written by John Crook, who is the first European Dharma Heir of the Master and Teacher of the Western Chan Fellowship. He has done intensive Zen practice with the venerable Chan Master Sheng-Yen of Dharma Drum Mountain, Taiwan and New York. John is also a PhD and DSc and is Emeritus in the Department of Psychology, Bristol University, and a pioneer of socio-ecology and evolutionary psychology. Who better qualified to write a book on the contribution that Buddhist humanism could make to the current mess we have got ourselves into?

But that is not all. John is a wonderfully accessible person. He runs Zen sesshins (retreats) on the top of a Welsh mountain (not really on top of a mountain, just metaphorically so, actually at a wonderful retreat in the Welsh hills). The path to the hut in the winter is covered in snow and the heat is provided by a wood-burning stove. If any of you are interested in the delights of John's sesshins to hammer your Ego then see Sue Blackmore's Ten Zen Questions.

So what does John have to say? In the early part of the book he describes the origin of Buddhism in Asia and its spread through China to Japan. What I found most interesting, mainly because I had not fully understood it, were the social factors and religious pressures existing in India at the time the Buddha was enlightened. At that time the Brahmin class were the holders of the religious rights, ceremonies and priestly hierarchies. Those who were not born into the Brahmin class or who had rejected it, left society and went into the forest. These forest dwellers then set out to investigate and develop their own spirituality, practising, often intensively, the techniques of meditation that were available. The Buddha Siddhartha, who was the son of a king, brought up in the palace with little contact with the outside world, finally rejected his upbringing and went out to seek his true nature. It is not surprising that he went through a phase of being an outcast, associated with forest dwellers and was taught by a number of highly experienced meditators, amongst whom was Arada Kalama.

Here he learned profound Yoga meditation which he studied with great vigour. The aim was to practise the purification of the self, elements of which transmigrate to merge with the greater self, the Absolute or Brahman. His teacher told him he had reached the meditative plane of nothingness but, having achieved this and pleased his teacher, Siddhartha did not feel that this led to an ending of desire and so left this teacher and journeyed on. His next teacher had reached the meditative plane of 'neither perception nor non-perception' and after periods of intensive meditation Siddhartha also achieved this plane but found that this too was unsatisfactory, as it did not lead to dispassion and the ending of desire.

These were the planes of absorption. He argues that if this was not the way and these planes were dependent on states of mind then what was the mind doing? So he used the technique of passive watching of the mind, *vipassana*, a technique he is reputed to have used as a child in the palace. We have now to imagine Siddhartha wandering through the hills and forests of India, practising this technique, and John quotes a wonderful statement which may make us cancel our tickets to Northern India and remain in England, when he quotes the Buddha remembering "It is hard to respond adequately to these remote abodes, the woods and hills of the forests. Solitude is hard. It is hard to enjoy being alone. It is as if the woods steal the mind of the monk who does not concentrate." So back onto your zen cushion and your sitting practice right here in the unforested UK.

Siddhartha continued with his searches. There is short section on his difficulties with different techniques until, finally realising that through the forest practices and self-denial he was committing suicide, he came to a small village in a beautiful grove near a river. Here a young woman took pity on his condition and gave him rice and gruel as he sat on freshly spread grass beneath a large Bo tree (as can be seen in Kew gardens). For 49 days he sat there practising his focused watching. John says nothing in the book about the temptations of the Buddha, but it is now argued in some quarters that before the ego is destroyed and finally gives itself up, the seeker will encounter very vivid and strong hallucinations, as did Jesus in his 40 days in the Wilderness. At the final break-through, when his ego disappeared and he came into enlightenment, the Buddha is said to have cried "Ah! The morning star. When the morning star first shone, there was I," a reference to his universal and timeless nature which he now perceived. Then, finally recognising that the ego was all illusion and had fallen away from him, he said "Oh house builder, you have now been seen! You shall build a house no longer. All your rafters have been broken, your ridge pole shattered. My mind has attained unconditional freedom and the end of craving is achieved."

Now I have spent some time on this, because the tensions that were present in the Buddha's time are still apparent today. Although it is not John's purpose in this book to look at modern tensions underlying the struggle for enlightenment, the ideas of gradually purifying the mind through meditation or the sudden deconstruction of the ego allowing enlightenment to arise are still the same today. Is the search for enlightenment a gradual purification of the mind or, in special circumstances, will the ego shatter suddenly with little prior work and a true view of the cosmic nature of mind suddenly break through? Such people as Merrel Wolff and Wei Wu Wei, and indeed even Shankara, seem to suggest that both are needed and that the final deconstruction of the ego is always sudden and not approached by stealth as the grace of final ego dissolution is given from outside. For how can the ego being deconstructed cause its own death and the vast expansion of mind that follows?

John discusses Proto-Chan 500-600 AD and how these ideas spread out through the Silk Route into China, the arising of Early Chan in 600-900 AD, the differentiation of these schools in the Song Dynasty Chan, 950-1300 AD and the spreading out of the *Soto* and *Rinzi* Schools and finally, modern and post-modern Chan-Zen.

There is a wonderful section on the Self and consciousness, as seen from a modern perspective, and he uses the device of asking how the present world would seem to the returning Buddha. The Buddha does return and meets Jim, a highly intelligent waiter in a café in Soho, and they have lengthy discussions about the current views of the Self, a thorough review of modern philosophy and psychotherapy (a psychotherapist is included in this discussion). The device works well and those of us who are uncertain of our Kants, Descartes, Wittgensteins, Schopenhauers, Sartres etc will enjoy this section. Finally John looks at the search for a future which is able to overcome the mess that we are in. John is very clear about the nature of the current crisis, which is related to the overweening demand of the self for security. This results in much of the over-consumption of today. The ungroundedness of the self affects all areas of our lives. John comments, "The economy is essentially an area for illusory solutions to ungroundedness then the whole of the consumerist world view is anchored in a fundamental but unacknowledged anxiety. Consumerism has a hidden spiritual objective, albeit an illusory one, in the attempts to compensate for ungroundedness. It is our modern religion and it has spread world-wide through a globalisation that has proved irresistible. The notion of a secular world is actually mistaken. Beneath the secular veneer spiritual needs dominate but in largely unconscious ways." He quotes Loy as saying that "God has actually not disappeared, but rather reappeared as the functioning of the Nation State, the market economy and our scientific projects, as if they were a source for grounding our activities in an objectified reality."

John suggests that education is the best, if not the only way forward, and that what is now formally entitled Religious Education be replaced by courses called Humanity, or Science and Ethics, and perhaps sub-titled World Renewal. He gives a number of headings indicating how we might change our education and points out that "Such a course would enable a trained teacher to integrate objective and subjective approaches to knowledge and understanding, so that a holistic post-Cartesian perspective can arise, giving an appropriate broad picture of the human dilemma."

It has been impossible in a short review such as this to give a full or even adequate account of the wisdom and knowledge that is in this book. John is a very special person with a wonderfully wide training, vision and understanding of the projections of the ego that we all make and call reality. A wide and different form of education is his solution so that the anxieties of the ego can be tamed and world renewal begun. Perhaps then, like Siddhatha, some of us will even be able to claim that we have seen and destroyed the house-builder and have been present when the morning star was first created, living cosmically. Please get on to your Zen cushion, possibly even set aside time for a sesshin in Wales and please get this book and read it. You won't be disappointed.

BOOK REVIEW

THE WORLD IS MADE OF STORIES

DAVID LOY

*Boston: Wisdom, 2010 ISBN 978-0861716159 £11.99**Reviewed by Ken Jones*

What makes this such a successful must-read book is the intriguing word ‘story’ – not ‘beliefs’, ‘myths’ or ‘concepts’. The story Loy offers is no less than “a new way of understanding Buddhism and a new Buddhist understanding of the Way.” Important here is the warning contained in the opening paragraph about clinging to stories: “The problem is not stories themselves, but how we relate to them. We do not see our stories as stories because we see through them: the world we experience as reality is constructed with them... The foundational story we tell and retell is the self, supposedly separate and substantial yet composed of the stories ‘I’ identify with and attempt to live.” There follows one of the many testing questions which keep readers on their toes: “Does the spiritual path involve finding the correct story, or getting rid of stories, or learning to story in a new way?”

In four chapters and a modest 100 pages the book deals with the different kinds of story. The first covers the basics and provides an overview. Each chapter consists of quotations about stories, from the famous to the relatively obscure, and after each quotation Loy adds a paragraph or two of commentary and elucidation. This device holds the attention well in what is a closely argued book. Many of the readers of this review will doubtless be familiar with the underlying arguments and explanations, but even the most seasoned Buddhist practitioners will find it stimulating to revisit what they know from a new angle. There is, nonetheless, plenty of detailed footwork, like “Do stories alienate us from nature or embed it in us?” (p10), or “A story is a point of view. There is no perspectiveless perspective. There is no way to escape perspectives except by multiplying them” (p11).

Progress, the dominant story of modernity, has lost most of its plausibility and is being replaced by apocalyptic and nihilistic stories. This chapter ends with a quotation from Thomas Berry: “We are between stories”. To which Loy adds: “... perhaps not a bad place to be.”

The second chapter is about the stories we tell ourselves – and are told to us – to make sense of the life of our self. “To be a person requires more than self-awareness; it involves some understanding of how I became who I am”, that is to say, a story, or, rather, several stories, some of which will be told by others. But for identity to change “there must be something other than narrative.” However, as soon as we try to characterise it, it becomes another story – a part of the story called Buddhism. This non-story is *shunyata* – ‘emptiness’ – the exhaustion of “all theories and views”, as Nagarjuna put it, in other words, of all stories. Emptiness is the condition for deconstructing stories as well as for storying. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. However, to attempt to define and describe emptiness can turn it into

just another story – continuing to carry the raft – the Big Story - even though we may have reached the other shore.

The next chapter is entitled “The Power of Story, the Story of Power”, and benefits from Loy’s work as a pioneer of a Buddhist social theory – the dog that does not bark in traditional Buddhist teaching. For example, power becomes authority when enough of the powerless believe the stories told them by their rulers. Or, in Loy’s William Blum quotation, “Propaganda is to democracy as violence is to dictatorship.” Commenting on a brilliant quotation from Neil Postman, Loy observes that “Orwell feared those who would ban stories except for the Official One. Huxley – closer to our own time – feared that there would be no reason to ban them, for no one would want anything but entertainment from them” (p.61). But “what story manipulates those who manipulate the official story?” And, for radical movements for social justice, what is it about their stories which leads to repeated failure?

The fourth chapter is about “The Big Stories”, the overarching ones, which include and explain all other stories. God is still the most popular one, though scientism has proved a strong challenger. We are reminded by the parable of the man struck by a poisoned arrow, who wanted to know all the details of the incident, that Buddhism is unusual among the Big Stories in that it does not attempt to be a Story About Everything. It is story which concentrates on how to achieve existential liberation. At the start, beginners futilely try to grasp something in the story itself which will liberate them (‘spiritual materialism’, as Chogyam Trungpa called). However, “Enlightenment-versus-delusion is a wonderful story that eventually self-negates” (p91). In this process koans, for example, have been developed as yet “another story about getting rid of stories, but as a practice.”

This last chapter on spirituality and religion demonstrates David Loy at his best – a superb scholar-teacher. In particular the play of quotation and commentary make for demanding reading and deep reflection. He concludes: “If the world is made of stories, who knows what our best stories might accomplish? If we ourselves are Buddha, who but us can create the Pure Land?”

RETREATS & EVENTS

WESTERN CHAN FELLOWSHIP RETREATS 2011

The retreats below are scheduled in 2011. Keep an eye on the website for any updates and to read full booking details including how you may now book and pay online using debit or credit card:
<http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/retreats.html>

2011 WCF RETREATS

2ND JULY – 7TH JULY

Pitfalls, Blocks and Delusions on The Great Way

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24TH JULY – 30TH JULY

Beyond Meditation: Meaning in Koans

LEADER: JOHN CROOK | VENUE: HOLY ISLE, SCOTLAND

24TH AUGUST – 29TH AUGUST

Western Zen Retreat

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL | VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

3RD SEPTEMBER – 10TH SEPTEMBER

Silent Illumination Retreat

LEADER: SIMON CHILD | VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

9TH OCTOBER – 16TH OCTOBER

Hua-tou Retreat

LEADER: JOHN CROOK | VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES

3RD DECEMBER – 8TH DECEMBER

Western Zen Retreat

LEADER: JAKE LYNE | VENUE: MAENLLWYD, WALES



CHAN EVENTS OF INTEREST 2011

29TH OCTOBER – 30TH OCTOBER

WCF Conference: Buddhism: Engaged Buddhism?

A WCF CONFERENCE ENTITLED 'WESTERN BUDDHISM: ENGAGED BUDDHISM?' AND WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE ODDFELLOWS HALL IN BRISTOL ON THE WEEKEND OF 29TH AND 30TH OCTOBER 2011. SPEAKERS WILL INCLUDE JOHN CROOK, KEN JONES AND JAN WILLIS, PROFESSOR OF RELIGION AT WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY.

WEB: <http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/conference2011>

Several WCF groups organise additional events such as day retreats from time to time. Keep an eye on their web-pages at www.westernchanfellowship.org/local-groups.html

ADDITIONAL CHAN RETREATS

- *Ven. Chi Chern Fashi, the first Dharma Heir of Chan Master Shengyen, will lead a ten day retreat in Poland in August 2011. See www.westernchanfellowship.org/more-retreats.html*
- *Simon Child will lead a Western Zen Retreat in New York, USA, in October 2011*
- *John Crook and Simon Child will lead a Silent Illumination retreat in New York, USA, in November 2011*

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Beyond Meditation:
MEANING IN KOANS

A RETREAT WITH JOHN CROOK

HOLY ISLE, SCOTLAND



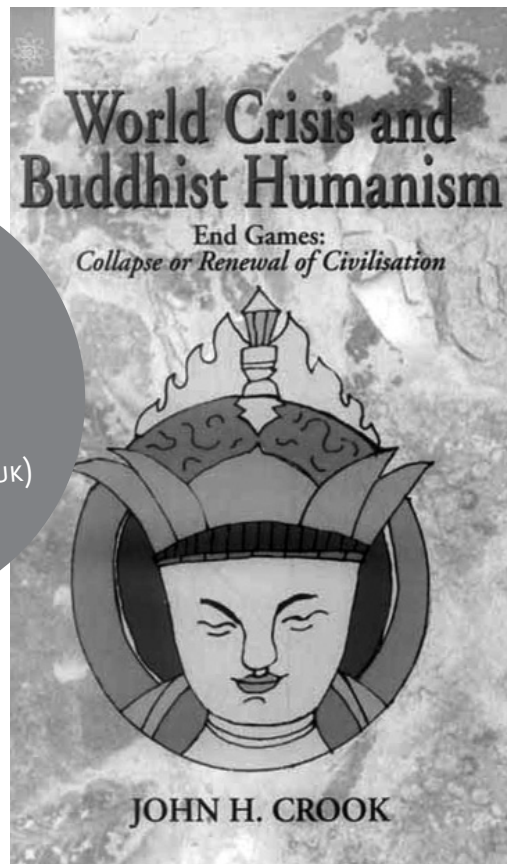
JULY 24TH – 30TH 2011

If meditation becomes merely quietism, simply calming the mind, that is not Zen. Zen is perpetual enquiry into life – whatever it may present. While a degree of calming is usually essential for practice, the essence of this enquiry lies in exploring what lies beyond thought in order to place our everyday themes in the wider context of a universal understanding. From such a perspective we can develop a ‘world-view’ capable of facing the world crisis of today. This will be our task on this retreat. Our starting koan can be “Why did the Saint come to the Island?”

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WORLD CRISIS AND BUDDHIST HUMANISM

END GAMES: COLLAPSE OR RENEWAL OF CIVILISATION



JOHN H. CROOK

I recommend that you all pay attention to this book because it is written by John Crook, who is the first European Dharma Heir of the Master and Teacher of the Western Chan Fellowship. He has done intensive Zen practice with the venerable Chan Master Sheng-Yen of Dharma Drum Mountain, Taiwan and New York.

John is also a PhD and DSc and is Emeritus in the Department of Psychology, Bristol University, and a pioneer of socio-ecology and evolutionary psychology. Who better qualified to write a book on the contribution that Buddhist humanism could make to the current mess we have got ourselves into?

DR. PETER FENWICK, PRESIDENT OF THE SCIENCE & MEDICAL NETWORK

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*Originally there is nothing to obtain;
Now what use is there in discarding?
When some one claims to see demons,
we may talk of emptiness, yet the phenomena are there.
Don't destroy the emotions of common people;
Only teach the cessation of thoughts.*

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