

Vasubandhu's Thirty Verses on the Realization of Mere Concept  
(Trimsika Vijñaptimatratasiddhi)

Commentary by Tenshin Reb Anderson

**Preface**

In his brief work of thirty verses, Vasubandhu describes the conscious and unconscious psychological processes that give rise to the perception of self and other, the reification of their apparent separation, and the afflictive phenomena that arise dependent on such reification. He also describes these phenomena in both their superficial and ultimate modes. Thus he provides a means of studying and realizing the Middle Way through meditation on our psychological experience.

The following material is a partially edited transcription of classes and Dharma talks given at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center during the 1994 Fall practice period. This is a work in progress which we hope to fill out with future classes and seminars early in the next century.

Tenshin Reb Anderson  
October 1999

Vijñaptimatratasiddhi  
*Trimsika-vijñapti-karika*  
***Thirty Verses of Vasubandhu***

1. Whatever, indeed, is the variety of ideas of self and elements that prevails, it occurs in the transformation of consciousness. Such transformation is threefold, [namely,]
2. the resultant, what is called mentation, as well as the concept of the object. Herein, the consciousness called *alaya*, with all its seeds, is the resultant.
3. It is unidentified in terms of concepts of object and location, and is always possessed of [activities such as] contact, attention, feeling, perception and volition.
4. In that context, the neutral feeling is uninterrupted and is not defined. So are contact, etc. And it proceeds like the current of a stream.
5. Its (i.e. *alaya's*) dissipation occurs in arhatship. Associated with this process and depending upon it occurs the consciousness called *manas*, which is of the nature of mentation.
6. Endowed with the four types of defilements, constantly concealed and undefined, involving self-view, self-confusion, self-esteem and self-love,
7. And also possessed of other forms of contact, etc. (i.e. attention, feeling, perception and volition) born of such (self-view etc.) and made of such (self-view, etc.). It is not found in the worthy one, nor in the state of cessation nor in the supra-mundane path.
8. Such is the second transformation. The third represents the acquisition of the sixfold object, and this is either good, bad or indeterminate.

9. That [acquisition of the sixfold object] is associated with wholesome psychological conditions, both universal and particular, and similarly with primary as well as secondary defilements. That includes the threefold feeling.
10. The first [i.e., universals] are contact, etc. Yearning, resolve, memory together with concentration and wisdom are particulars. Confidence, shame and remorse,
11. The triad consisting of absence of greed, etc., effort, diligence and non-violence are wholesome [psychological conditions]. The [primary] defilements are lust, aversion and confusion,
12. pride, view and doubt. Furthermore, anger, enmity, hypocrisy, malice, envy, avarice along with deception,
13. fraudulence, self-esteem, violence, shamelessness, remorselessness, deceitfulness, stupidity, lack of confidence, sluggishness, indolence and forgetfulness,
14. distraction, inattentiveness, worry, sloth, reflection and investigation-these are the secondary defilements, the last two being twofold [defiled and non-defiled].
15. The arising of the five forms of consciousness, together or separately, within the foundational consciousness is like the waves in the water.
16. The manifestation of mental consciousness takes place always, except in the sphere of non-perception, in the two attainments and in the state of torpor occasioned by insensibility and absence of thought.
17. Thus, thought involves this transformation of consciousness. For that reason, what has thus been thought of does not exist. Therefore, all this is mere concept.
18. Consciousness, indeed, possesses all seeds. Its transformation occurs in a variety of ways. It proceeds on the basis of mutual dependence as a result of which such and such thoughts are born.
19. Karmic dispositions, together with the two dispositions of grasping, produces another resultant when the previous resultant has waned.
20. Whatever thought through which an object is thought of as a substance, that indeed is a fabrication. It is not evident.
21. A dependent self-nature is a thought that has arisen depending upon conditions. However, the absence of the one prior to it is always the accomplished.
22. Thus, it [i.e., the accomplished] should be declared to be neither identical nor different from the dependent, like impermanence, etc. When that [i.e., the dependent] is not perceived, this too is not perceived.
23. The non-substantiality of all elements has been preached for the sake of [establishing] the threefold non-substantiality of the three types of substances.
24. The first is non-substantial in terms of characteristics. The other, again, is one that possesses no self-nature and, as such, is a different [form of] non-substantiality.

25. [The third is] the ultimate meaning of events, because it is also suchness. Since it remains such all the time, it, indeed, is a mere concept.
26. As long as consciousness does not terminate in mere concept, so long will the dispositions for the twofold grasping not cease.
27. Indeed, one who, on account of one's grasping, were to place some thing before herself [saying]: "This is mere concept," will not stop at "mere-ness."
28. When consciousness with object is not obtained, then there being no object, one is established in the state of mere concept, for there is no grasping for it.
29. It is without thought and without object. It is also the supramundane knowledge. Through the destruction of the twofold depravities, there is reversion of the source [of such depravities].
30. This, indeed, is the realm free from influxes. It is unthinkable, wholesome and stable. It is the serene body of release. This is called the doctrine of the Great Sage.

### Dharma Talk October 5, 1994

I hope that during this practice period we can discover, clarify, and develop the ultimate concern of our life. "Ultimate concern" is another way to express faith. so I would like to begin by considering our faith. I don't want to talk you into something. I can tell you about my faith and encourage you to discover what your faith is, what your ultimate concern is. It might very well be the same as mine; we'll see. I like the expression "ultimate concern" because it protects us from the usual idea of faith as "I believe in something over there." Some people may believe in something as good, but they may not be intimate with it. Ultimately, what are you concerned with? In the end, when it comes down to the end of your life and the beginning of your life, what is it?

The root of the word "concern" is "to relate to, to be involved with." It refers to being mixed in a sieve, before sifting, before you're separated. You can be together with something, and then a moment later, the sieve can shake, and you're separated from it. What is the ultimate thing that you are concerned with, that you're together with, and that you can also be separate from? Each of us gets to find that out. My ultimate concern is enlightenment. This is the same as saying that my ultimate concern is zazen. Ultimate concern also means that which you would give everything else up for. What is it that I trust; that by taking care of, everything else falls into place?

As far as I can tell, in the Zen tradition, the ultimate concern of all Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas* was enlightenment. They spent their whole lives as *Bodhisattvas* thinking of one thing – enlightenment, *Bodhi*. When they were thinking about other things, they were just in error, which they then would confess and repent, which is also part of the practice.

I'm pointing to the mind which is prior to this separation between people and enlightenment, between delusion and enlightenment. It's also prior to the distinction between the possible and impossible. A lot of people have said to me that enlightenment seems to be too lofty; they don't even like to think about it. We don't use the word very much; it's almost taboo. It is fine to say that you don't think enlightenment is possible for you. We're talking about something prior to your opinion of possible and impossible, something more basic; something more fundamental than whether you or I or anybody has ever been enlightened, or can be. I'm not concerned with opinions about whether or not enlightenment is

possible. I am interested in studying the mind which makes the distinction between delusion and enlightenment. I am interested in studying the evolution of the mind of delusion, the psychology of ignorance and attachment.

Later, we will study a text which shows how the mind evolves to create a sense of self and other, to develop a sense of separation, of delusion and enlightenment; how the mind evolves in order to create objects, form attachments and then cause various kinds of afflictions. Before studying such a teaching I would like us to be clear about our basic concern.

When I say that all the *Bodhisattvas* have always only thought of one thing and never anything else - I don't mean that they necessarily go around saying "*Bodhi, Bodhi*" all the time. To always think of *Bodhi* doesn't mean you are always thinking of the word "*Bodhi*." It means that you're thinking of something which is never stuck anywhere, that you're constantly thinking of what is never stuck, that you're constantly thinking of what is always free. How can you think of something that's free of being something? That's what the Bodhisattvas are thinking about all the time. As soon as you say the word "*Bodhi*," you're stuck in the form *Bodhi*. But it's just an indication, a finger pointing to this thing which is not stuck in the word *Bodhi*. It's also not stuck in the words "not *Bodhi*." Thinking about *Bodhi* all the time means constantly thinking about selfless practice, which means thinking about sitting, which means thinking about not doing anything. But, "not doing anything" means that doing something or not doing something doesn't make any difference to them. They have forgotten the self and can't remember the difference between "doing" and "not-doing." They've forgotten about a particular path, a fixed way of approaching *Bodhi*. They read texts and they don't read texts. They read the Heart Sutra and they don't read the Heart Sutra. They read the sky and they read the mountains, and they don't read the sky and don't read the mountains.

They're constantly producing a mind which has no abode. They're willing to give up everything else but that thought, and that thought doesn't interfere with any other thoughts. You can think of the people you're thinking of right now, and the thoughts you're having about them do not hinder the mind which has no abode. The mind which has no abode is arising right now and is not hindered by your thoughts. Bodhisattvas are not thinking about their thoughts; they're thinking about the mind which has no abode, which is simultaneous with whatever thoughts you're having. So, Bodhisattvas have the thoughts you are having. But they also have a mind concurrent with the thoughts you're having, which has no abode. Thinking about that mind is all Bodhisattvas ever think of.

In Case 3 of the *Book of Serenity*, our Great Ancestor Prajnatarā, the teacher of our founder Bodhidharma, after having lunch, was asked by his host: "Master, why don't you recite scriptures?" At that time it was traditional that when a king or a queen or even a peasant had you over for lunch, afterwards you would recite some scriptures, and donate the merit to them. But Prajnatarā just had lunch, and when he finished lunch, that was it. So the king said, "Well, how about the recitation?" Prajnatarā said *This poor wayfarer doesn't dwell in the realms of the body or mind when breathing in, doesn't get involved in myriad circumstances when breathing out – I always recite such a scripture, hundreds, thousands, millions of scrolls.*

He said "I'm always concerned with this scripture. It's not just the scripture of my breath; It's the scripture of - while breathing, not getting entangled in anything, not dwelling anywhere. Not dwelling even in a way to enlightenment. In this way, I'm always reciting." His ultimate concern was breathing in, not dwelling in body and mind, breathing out, not getting entangled. He was always involved in such a practice.

Don't worry if you slip from your ultimate concern. The *Eihei Koso Hotsuganmon* points out that when you slip, when you lack faith in this practice, repentance melts away the root of deviation from the practice. Even if you intend to not dwell in body and mind as you inhale and not get entangled in the myriad circumstances of your life as you exhale, even if that's your ultimate concern, you may slip. You

may feel that somebody shook the sieve and now we're separated. "Now I'm here and my practice of not dwelling anywhere is over there. I'm misplaced, I'm separate from my practice." Even if that happens, if you notice that slip and you examine it, your practice is protected. Not only your practice, but the practice of all beings is protected. The path of the Bodhisattvas may be summed up in one principle; that the protection of living beings is accomplished by the examination of our own mistakes. First there is faith, your ultimate concern. Then that faith is protected by examination of your mistakes; and not at all by the examination of other people's mistakes. You may notice other people's mistakes, and that's not a problem, because it's just a body-mind thing that's happening while you're breathing in. When you see somebody else's mistake as you're breathing in, don't dwell in their mistake. If you see their mistake as you're breathing out, don't get entangled in their mistake. Just breath right through all the mistakes of other beings - in and out.

When it comes to your own errors, you don't dwell there either. But you can examine them; you can study the farthest reaches of the causes and conditions of your errors. You can study how your ancient twisted karma gives rise to a mind which seems to forget its ultimate concern and makes practice into something fixed. The fundamental of Zen practice is the orientation which only seeks enlightenment. If you form an idea of what it means to seek enlightenment, then you are off. Those who seek enlightenment lose it. But, as Suzuki Roshi said, if you don't have a goal in your practice, that's a big mistake. If you envision enlightenment in some form, then you have just dwelled in your mind. As soon as you put enlightenment into some form, you're alienated from it. Of course, all forms are enlightenment. But if you say each form is enlightenment, that's putting it in a form too, and you alienate yourself from it.

Instead of talking about "enlightenment," a number of our ancestors said "My ultimate concern is to just sit." Nobody knows what that means. They wanted to do a practice that nobody including them, could know. There's one tricky point. Suzuki Roshi said that if you have some idea of self, then when you practice you're going to want to do some kind of a practice; you want to work on something. It's permitted to be a human being and to come to a Zen center and say "I want to work on something." People want that, so sometimes teachers give them something to work on. Because people have a self, they want a companion for it, some practice. If you have forgotten about the self, you don't need something to work on, and you can just sit. Even though you don't have a practice, you can just sit calmly and quietly. Myriad things are coming up, but you're not working on them. You're just exhaling through them. If you work on them, that means you're getting too entangled with them. To try to not work on them or to ignore them would also be entanglement. How can you have a mind and a body which are producing all these phenomena and not get entangled? That's called "just sitting." That's called "not getting involved as you exhale." That's called "not dwelling in the phenomena of body and mind when you inhale." That's called "only thinking of enlightenment," which completely transcends whatever's coming up and is completely there too. It's right under your nose and completely transcends your nose. It's right under your feet, it's right in your thoughts, in your emotions, in your judgments, and also transcends them. It's completely elusive and completely present. It's so completely free that it can be you, and the rest of us. Such a thing, which doesn't abide or non-abide in its thingness is my ultimate concern. Examining when I slip off that and get distracted from that is a practice that I do to protect my ultimate concern and bring it back in line with the Way.

The spirit of the Bodhisattva is to be only concerned with enlightenment without focusing or fixating on it. The spirit of only being concerned with *Bodhi* is to guide us back to that concern. As soon as we fixate on something, we're off. To notice that we've fixated on it or made it into something, the spirit of enlightenment says "oops, that's a mistake." Noticing that I'm off, I guide myself back. It's a kind of guiding to something which is ultimately a concern without then fixating. The mind does fixate and then the spirit of enlightenment says "oops, you fixated." "Oops you're fixated" means you're back on the path again. I'm only concerned with enlightenment and I just dwelled in enlightenment as my mind. I

made enlightenment into my mind or body. I made enlightenment into this posture, and I dwelled in it. Fine. That's a mistake. I make a posture and then watch to see if I dwell in it, and if I do, I catch myself in that error and then I'm back on the Path. The Path is a place of continuously noticing mistakes.

"Only concerned with enlightenment" means passing through worldly states and passing through spiritual attainments without clinging. To be only concerned with enlightenment is a spiritual state and we should pass through that too. We shouldn't cling to what all Bodhisattvas have always been concerned with. So I ask you and I ask myself, "What is your ultimate concern? What are you ultimately together with in the sieve before it's shaken?" Once that's clarified, we are somewhat protected in doing other kinds of study. I leave it to you to look deeply into your heart, and see what is ultimate for you, to find your faith in this lifetime. If you want to be Buddha's child, and line up with the Buddhas, fine. I do, myself. If you don't want to, if you want to say "No, I have a different ultimate concern," you're welcome here too. It would be very interesting to see what other ultimate concern you might have. It might sound different, you may have to say it in a different way, and I hope you have the courage to do that. Some people may have trouble finding it; it may not be clear. Or it may look clear for a minute and then you may feel, "No, I'm not willing to give up everything for that." Then the ultimate has not yet been discovered.

I would like us to consider whether the mind which has no abode is a safe place to put your whole life. Do you trust that spot? If not, what fears do you have? Please either line up with the Buddha or have the courage to say "I don't want to." And then, what do you want? We can work with that too. Dogen says that one of the main functions of a practice period is to clarify and deepen your faith. Is sitting zazen your ultimate concern? Is just being thus, your ultimate concern? This practice period offers the opportunity to clarify and deepen your faith.

Someone asked whether it would be possible to continue this discovery, clarification and development of his ultimate concern after leaving Tassajara. Yes, it is possible. You can do it outside Tassajara because you can get off track at Tassajara. Even in a place that is designed to support the clarification of your fundamental intention, we're able to get off track. Since you can always get off, you can get back on. The place you get back on is precisely where you get off.

When you get off, catch yourself, and don't beat yourself up. Don't cry, just say "the milk is spilt." You don't even have to clean it up. All you have to do is say "it's spilled," and it's cleaned. When you're enlightened, you get more decisive and have less hesitation in spilling the milk, so you notice it more. The difference between being unenlightened and enlightened is enlightened people notice that they're spilling the milk constantly. Less enlightened people notice that they're spilling the milk once in a while. People who are really deluded within delusion - those people never spill the milk. They're quite decisive and unhesitant. They unhesitantly never make a mistake, they unhesitantly are perfect. In the middle are most Buddhist practitioners who sort of admit, kind of, that they make mistakes. They do everything half heartedly because they think that if they make errors softly or weakly, it will reduce the error. Enlightened people go ahead and make full-scale errors. They do so constantly because the mind is constantly making separation. It's separating the Path from the not-path, making the Path into something or whatever. Don't be discouraged if you find your fundamental intention and later you notice that you're making lots of mistakes. You might even feel encouraged if you start to notice more errors than ever before. Dogen Zenji said the Path is one continuous mistake. Continuous mistake. The more I practice the more I see that he was serious - it isn't a mis-translation. When the path is one continuous mistake it is also one continuous joy. They say the Soto Zen Path is a 10,000 mile iron road. It is a joyful road because you are no longer afraid that the path is going to be an iron road.

### Class 3

October 19, 1994

Question: The first verse of the *Thirty Verses* says “*Whatever indeed is the variety of ideas of self and elements that prevails, it occurs in the transformation of consciousness.*” Is that **all** ideas of self and elements?

Tenshin Reb Anderson: Yes. All ideas of self and elements that occur in this world occur in the transformations of consciousness.

Q: What about ideas that are not about self and elements? Are there such ideas?

TA: There is a level of conscious functioning where there is no distinction between self and other. In the realm of direct sensory experience there is no idea of self and elements, but you have no objective knowledge of this level of experience. Ideas in the realm of self and other, and the images and notions you have of self all occur by this threefold transformation of consciousness.

Q: What is this transformation?

TA: In order for there to be a sense of self and other, awareness needs to go through a process, a transformation. Because self and other arise, there tends to be a sense of substantial separation, a kind of rigidification. This is a problem that we’ll talk about later. Ideas of self and other dependently co-arise. Unless we’re aware of this dependent co-arising, we will think that the ideas of self and other exist independently and substantially. This error is what brings on all the afflictions.

Q: Is this process physiological or psychological or both?

TA: It’s both physiological and psychological. Consciousness arises out of the interaction of organic and inorganic materiality. The *Thirty Verses* starts at the level of telling you how the ideas of self and elements arise. At an earlier stage of evolutionary development, and even right at this moment at a more basic level of functioning, there is the arising of consciousness in conjunction with sense experience. In newborn babies the perception of a separate self and other does not occur; the necessary equipment has not yet developed.

Our consciousness processes in three different ways to give rise to the sense of self and other. These three ways, which we are calling “transformations,” are simultaneous. Consciousness is transformed into *alaya*, the resultant; *manas*, the reflecting capacity; and the concept of the object.

Let me say a little about the origins of consciousness in terms of physicality. There are two kinds of physicality, gross and subtle, or inorganic and organic. One example of gross or inorganic physicality is electromagnetic radiation. In a certain band of wave lengths this is light, to which human beings are particularly sensitive. Another kind of physicality is sound, mechanical waves, which we sense through the media of air and water. We’re sensitive all over our bodies to these mechanical compression and decompression waves, and we’re highly sensitive in the area we call the ear. Then there’s chemical materiality to which the tongue is sensitive; gaseous materiality, to which the nose is sensitive; and tactile materiality, to which the skin is sensitive. These are the five sense fields. They are gross, they take up space and nothing can share the space with them.

The subtle or organic forms of physicality are organized capacities which can respond to the gross physicalities. The whole skin, the entire body, is sensitive to touch, which is the most basic physical sense. All the senses are adaptations of touch. The earliest organisms were mostly sensitive to touch. The skin, the surface that was touched, evolved and formed cavities which were sensitive to light, to mechanical waves to chemicals, and to gases. The part of the body that is most sensitive to light we call the eyeball, but this is not the organ. The eyeball is something you can see. The organ is something rather subtle; it’s the ability to respond to light. It’s located around the eye, but you can’t get hold of it. However, you could eliminate it by removing the eyeball.

Physicality is called *rupa*, which comes from the root *rupani*, to be able to hit or able to be hit. The part of physicality which is responsive interacts with the part of physicality which hits. That which is hit is the organ and that which hits is the field. When the field is interacting with the organ, it is not yet

called an object. The organ plays in the field. This interaction between the physical sensitivity and the gross field produces sense consciousness. Conscious life is born in this way. We are connected, right now, to that level of physical interaction and the consciousness which arises from that. It is going on in us all the time.

By studying the evolution of sense consciousness, we can develop a model which will help us understand the evolution and arising of mind consciousness. The structure of sense consciousness is basically the same as the structure of mind consciousness. The difference is that sense consciousness arises from the interactions of various kinds of materiality. Mind consciousness arises from the interaction of non-material things.

At a certain point in human evolution, sense consciousness developed a way to be sensitive to itself. First there is a dance between the subtle and the gross materiality. Then there is an arising of an overall impression of the dance. This is the sense consciousness. From this overall impression comes the ability to be aware of the field, the gross partner in the dance. This is the discriminating aspect of consciousness.

The interaction of the organ and its field gives rise to this consciousness. The consciousness becomes aware of the field, not of the organ. Although the organ is subtle, it has enough materiality to create separation between the awareness and the object. You can both see through it and be separated by it. If the organ wasn't subtle, it would block the consciousness from being aware of the field. If it were too subtle, consciousness and object would merge. If they merged there would be no separation and without separation there would be no consciousness. In a sense it's as though the consciousness can see through the organ. But the organ still separates the consciousness from its object of awareness.

The field for the organ is the object for the consciousness. The object of consciousness is the organ's field. The sense organ separates the consciousness from its objects. This becomes a paradigm which is then re-enacted in mind consciousness, where the mind organ separates mind consciousness from its objects.

Consciousness splits itself into two parts—an object part and a subject part. The mind developed the capacity to cut itself in two—into gross elements and subtle elements—the ones that are hitting and the ones that are being hit. Consciousness arose out of this dynamic difference. Gregory Bateson talked about how to tell if there's life on a planet. One way to find out is to observe whether there is difference. If there's a sign of difference there might be life. Life arose out of difference in materiality. Within the consciousness, difference occurred, and new life arose—mental consciousness. The consciousness was very much like the object of which it was aware. The main difference between the mind and the object is the organ. If you take away the organ, there would be no difference and it would stop being alive.

Somehow the mind evolved the capacity to partition or split itself. The partition is the organ. In early Buddhism, the partitioning was called mind organ, (*manas* or *mano-dhatu*, or *man-indriya*). The organ split the mind into two parts, the mental object (*dharma-dhatu*) and mind consciousness element, (*mano-vijñana dhatu*). In this way the mind was separated from its objects by an organ and that organ was defined as “the just-deceased sense consciousness.” The way the mind splits itself into two is that it uses the structure of the sense consciousness which just died as a model. The organ is defined as a just-deceased sense consciousness because this is the model for how the mind consciousness will separate itself from its objects. Actually, there's no such thing as a “just-deceased sense consciousness.” But past consciousness does have an effect. It's like a shadow or a whiff of perfume of the mind which is separated from an object. It is an after-image or model. Using this model, consciousness splits itself into organ and field. From this interaction a new level of consciousness arises—not sense consciousness, but mind consciousness.

According to Yogacara teaching, this particular function of the mind, its ability to cut itself in two, is the origin of the sense of self. In early Buddhism, *manas* played the same role. On one side is the mind



consciousness, that which is able to be aware of things. It is very subtle. The other side is the part of mind which you can be aware of—the environment, the world. This side is ideas or concepts of glasses, noses, Cadillacs, men and women. These things are more gross than consciousness itself. They are difficult to get hold of, but not as difficult to get hold of as the ability to be aware of them.

The mind organ, the just-deceased sense consciousness is more subtle than a mind-object and a little less subtle than the consciousness. Mind-objects interact with the mind-organ and give rise to mind-consciousness. The three elements of the mind—mind-consciousness, mind-organ and mind-objects—correspond to what Vasubandhu called the three transformations of consciousness.

Vasubandhu called the mind-consciousness, *alaya*; the mind-organ, *manas*; and mind-objects, the “concept of the object.” By emphasizing *alaya*, he described how transmigration occurs, as well as all kinds of karmic accumulations which the earlier Buddhist teaching didn’t explain. Vasubandhu’s model talked a little more explicitly about *manas* in a way that explained the arising of the self and the problems that occur in this process. Basically, Vasubandhu’s eight consciousness system and the earlier six consciousness system are the same, but the Vasubandhu’s teaching can go a little deeper into the core of the origination of delusion and the problem of the self/other split.

Q: Is there a conscious experience that occurs before the sense of self and other?

TA: Let’s just say there’s a conscious experience that occurs where there is no sense of self and other. It’s not really before, because it occurs at the same time. Right now, I’m discriminating between self and other, and simultaneously I have a consciousness which is not experiencing that way. In Case 21 of *The Book of Serenity*, this consciousness which doesn’t discriminate between self and other is called “the one who is not busy.”

Q: Where does *alaya* dwell?

TA: It dwells in, or results from causes and conditions and that’s why it’s called the resultant. Where are there causes and conditions? Everywhere, right? So is *alaya* everywhere? Maybe, or maybe just where there are certain causes and conditions. Mind has no location, but you don’t say it’s “nowhere,” because that’s a location. Mental things do not have locations. However, in order to create a sense of self and other, you create the idea of location. By having the idea of location, you have to separate the consciousness from the idea and make the idea external from the consciousness and then you have self and location. *Alaya* provides the opportunity to make up some locations. *Alaya* itself is unidentified in terms of object and location.

Q: You said that *manas* is like a mirror reflecting some part of *alaya*. Is there another name for the object that’s reflected?

TA: You have a mirror and something seems to be in the mirror. The function of a mirror is to make it possible to see a reflected image. It’s a reflection, something already there in the mind. It’s not something pulled from outside the mind. That’s why its apparent externality is an illusion. The acquisition of the image as an object is the Third Transformation of Consciousness.

The ability to reflect is called *manas*, which also means thinking. “Thinking,” the Second Transformation, is to take something in the mind and make a reflection of it. The Third Transformation is the acquisition of the illusion of an external object. Another way to say this is: the concept of the externality of the reflected image is the Third Transformation. Thus mind is aware of something from itself as being separated from itself. The sense of self arises in conjunction with this process of reflection.

A: What about the brain organ?

TA: It’s OK to say that the brain is the organ if you understand that it is the **functioning** of the brain that is the organ. If you take the skull apart and look at the brain, you can’t see the organ. However, if you take the brain away, you don’t have mind consciousness anymore. The mind organ is not located, but if you destroy that part of the body, there won’t be a mind organ. The mind organ dependently arises in relationship to a physical base which is the brain.

I would like to say something about the word *vipaka*. Kalupahana says it's very good that Vasubandhu calls alaya a "resultant" first, rather than a seed or the cause (which it is also), because he doesn't make it so concrete that way. He says, in the commentary on verse 2, "The transformation (*parinama*), as explained here avoids the notion of absolute beginning and therefore, as a temporal sequence as prior and posterior. This is one important reason for Vasubandhu to refer to alaya-vijñāna as a resultant (*vipaka*), which is a semantic equivalent of 'dependently arisen,' rather than as seed or cause, in this initial reference or description of it."<sup>1</sup>

By calling alaya a resultant, he's emphasizing that something caused it, that it dependently arose. People have a tendency to think that alaya is a primordial source of everything. Alaya can be called the basis, the most fundamental of these transformations, on which the other two are based, but they dependently co-arise with alaya. Alaya dependently co-arises also and is not more substantial than they are. They're all ungraspable processes, yet they still can lead to the sense of a graspable self.

In some sense alaya gets split in two, but it's not like you cut alaya, the mind-consciousness in half. It's like you take a mirror and hold it up to the consciousness. Alaya is still intact, and the mind has the ability to reflect something in it. It isn't that there's a substantial separation between alaya and some other part of the mind. It's rather that alaya gets reflected, and this thing that's reflected is conceived as external to alaya. So you have alaya, which is a dependently produced thing. You have the reflecting, which performs the organ function making it possible for alaya to be separated from something which becomes its object. The reflection will be perceived, by virtue of the Third Transformation of consciousness, as an external object.

How does the concept of self arise? Through causes and conditions—particularly the reflecting capacity, (*manas*). The capacity to reflect (the Second Transformation) creates an image which is perceived as external or other (the Third Transformation). The concept of other is simultaneously born with, and based upon the reflecting capacity. The concept of self arises in dependence on the concept of other. So the reflecting capacity is the basis which gives rise to a concept of self. That's how the concept of a separate self is born. The self seems to be independent even though it arises in complete dependence on the concept of other.

John Berlow: It seems to me that there is an apparent external separation, such as that between an infant and its mother, and there is a nervous system that's developed to the point that it's capable of reflecting on itself. Then, given that self-reflection and that apparent separation, a sense of self arises.

TA: Where does this apparent separation come from?

JB: From not having food when you need it or being threatened by an enemy, and having a mind that can reflect.

TA: Are you saying that being hungry creates a sense of separation?

JB: Yes, and then the breast comes and then it goes away.

TA: No, I don't agree. I don't think that when the baby's hungry it feels separated from the food. It doesn't feel separation until it creates a concept of self and other. It cries because it's uncomfortable, but at a certain point it does not think "the food is someplace separate from me and my mother's separate from me too." What I propose is that at a certain point the baby starts to see that the mother is separate, the food is separate, the father's separate, and the wall's separate. Then it mixes in the issue of separation with survival. This fuels and facilitates and hardens this idea that we have to keep the separation going in order to get what we need. What has to happen is for this whole thing to get dropped or reversed. You have to come back to the place where the problem starts, and see that right there, there is actually no separation; it's just a mind-created thing. In the process of trying to see that, demons come up and say "Hey, you don't have time to do this; you're going to get fried if you look at this any longer because

---

<sup>1</sup>Principles of Buddhist Psychology, David Kalupahana, p. 194

there's actually a threat right here. There actually **is** something out there, so stop fooling around and fight it!"

Q: I don't understand the idea of animals not having an idea of self and other. When an animal goes after prey, it kills an apparent other. It doesn't kill itself when it's hungry.

TA: When a male deer sees or smells a female deer, it goes right after her. He doesn't think "she's external to me." He just goes for the smell. The same with food. An animal just goes after food without thinking "that's other than me." The way lions goes after prey is beautiful, wholehearted. They are really doing it; they aren't thinking "I'm doing this." That's why they do it that way—because they can't think about it.

When you do something and you think "I'm doing it," you erode your thoroughness. If you are thorough about studying the way you erode your thoroughness, you will plug up the leak in your thoroughness and you will be as thorough as an animal. You will still have this ability to split, but it won't block you from being who you are because you will have exhaustively studied it, and will become free of it. So we have to do an extra thing that animals don't have to do—we have to study the *Thirty Verses*!

Stuart Kutchins: I think that we need our sense of self and other in order to survive. It's interesting that the earlier conversation had to do with the reification of the necessity for this process as a survival mechanism, a primary ego defense mechanism. When we start to contemplate the reversion of the process of creation of self and other, I keep feeling that I really need to hold on to the substantiality of the sense of self and other in order to survive.

TA: We do need it! That's right! We need it for enlightenment, not for survival. The reason we need it is that we have it! We also need the substantiation of it, because we do it; because it's happening, we need it. We don't need to talk anymore about needing it unless somebody is not admitting to it. Then we say "You need it. You have to admit to a sense of separation. You have to get the sense of self and other. Come back when you have a nice healthy, solid, substantiated separation. Then we can talk. Until then, you're dreaming that you don't have one." Some people have brain damage or other kinds of developmental problems—they grow up in closets or something, so they don't have a sense of self. In that case, they have to have special therapy, so they can create a sense of self and other.

Q: You said earlier that we just have to drop this whole concept.

TA: It must be dropped and it can be dropped. In fact, it **is** dropped, because the whole thing is just dreamed up. It's dreamed up and it's dropped. It's actually an illusion. It just arises out of this interaction between various elements of the mind that create the sense of self and other. It's just a mental production because of the way the mind works; that's all it is. Otherwise, we're not separate. It's just our imagination. However, we do do that. And as a result, we are human beings.

Charley: So, in terms of practice, maybe all we need to do is be aware of the process?

TA: Exactly. You sit upright in the midst of self-fulfilling awareness. Self-fulfilling awareness is the awareness of self interacting with other; the awareness of how the self arises from the other, how without an other there wouldn't be a self. It's being aware of a reflection of something and making the reflection into an object. This creates the sense of self. The thorough study of how all this happens is the awareness that fulfills the self. It's the awareness that everything you see is yourself. Just be completely upright with the phenomena of your mind constantly creating subject/object. If you thoroughly do that you'll see there's nothing to it and you'll be free of this sense of harassment and danger and threat and aggression and lust and attachment and confusion and affliction and ignorance and selfishness and cruelty. It will all evaporate because there will be no basis for it anymore. The basis will have been seen through.

The sense of self and other is not delusion; it's illusion, mental phenomena. To substantiate it, to believe in it, to think it's real—which we do—that's delusion. Buddhas are enlightened about that delusion; that's what Buddhas are. So of course, that means they're studying this very thoroughly.

We're trying to study self and other, how that occurs. Hopefully, this text will help you meditate on that. I wonder if you can try to spot the four afflictions and also if you can sense how they hurt. Even self-love and self-esteem—see if you can spot those happening right around every experience of self. Also, see if you can find the experience of self.

### Class 4

October 21, 1994

During the last class we discussed the world of materiality. There are two kinds of materiality that concern us, gross and subtle. Gross materiality can be described in terms of five kinds of fields or *visaya*—electro-magnetic radiation, mechanical waves, chemical reactions, gaseous reactions, and tangible things, which are the most fundamental. Subtle materiality is that which is sensitive to gross materiality. Out of the interaction of those two kinds of materiality, at some point in the evolution of this planet, consciousness arose. The subtle materialities or organs are sometimes called the *indriyas*, which means sovereign, like Indra. They are sovereign in the sense of determining what type of sense consciousness will arise.

The object (*alambana*) is actually the field. The gross materialities are fields for the organ, but for the consciousness, they're objects. Consciousness never really touches the field because it's separated from it by the organ. It's as though they're touching, and that's called contact. Consciousness isn't tied down to a place although it arises from things which are tied down and materially located.

Stuart Kutchins: Since there can be no real contact between organ and field, isn't there just apparent field and apparent materiality.

Tenshin Anderson: Yes, it's all apparent. Buddhist epistemology is that our knowledge is based on **apparent** things. The basis of our knowledge is appearances, behind which there is no support other than causes and effects.

SK: So we don't need to assume that these fields exist, that nature outside of us exists?

TA: No, you don't have to assume that, but by telling this story, you will see how it evolves into the story of how we live and how we create substance and misery and bondage. It's modeled on this first level of development.

SK: You say there is no contact, that the object doesn't touch the organ. How can that be?

TA: The field and the organ do touch. However, if you want to go to the emptiness of the process right away — if you look at anything that touches, either it overlaps or it doesn't. If it overlaps, it doesn't touch; they become merged. If it doesn't overlap, then they don't touch. So actually, contact doesn't really happen. Contact is an illusion. There is nothing to it. This is going to the emptiness of the process. I'm trying to teach you the origination of the illusion of contact.

Consciousness arises where these things are said to meet. The contact between the organ and the object gives rise to the consciousness. That's the contact between the three. That's what makes consciousness arise. The Buddha pointed out that this meeting never occurs, therefore consciousness does not happen. However, if you want to think about how it meets, this is the traditional way of thinking about it.

SK: I fear that we're falling into empty semantics.

TA: That's all there is in the world! Look at Case 37 of the *Book of Serenity*. All you have is karmic consciousness! That's all there is! I'm just teaching you how karmic consciousness arises and causes us to believe there's actually an inherent reality.

SK: Great, so they don't meet! What do they do? What do the field and the organ do to give rise to *vijñāna*?

TA: They co-dependently interact, which we call “contact.” However, if you look at this interaction, you realize it doesn't happen. The arising of consciousness happens from something which has no nature of its own. It's just an illusory process. However, that illusory process is the one that leads to the arising of consciousness, which is also an illusory process.

I'm teaching the origins of samsara—the world of self and other, the basis of all attachment and delusion. This is unreality that I'm teaching; that's all we've got, karmic consciousness, which is “unclear, with no fundamental to rely on.”<sup>2</sup> It completely pervades the entire human existence and there is no reality down at the bottom of it. However, there is a systematic presentation, a lawfulness of the origins of delusion, and this is one presentation of those laws. At any point, anyone can point out that this process lacks inherent existence. I was just trying to show you a story of how consciousness arises, and unexpectedly, I got to show you how it doesn't.

To review our discussion of early Buddhist teaching: you have a consciousness, a mind, and within that mind is a potential infinity of concepts. The mind has the ability to reflect or separate out one concept at a time, and the ability to differentiate or discriminate among the concepts. The capacity of the mind to embrace the overall experience of concepts, their reflection, and discrimination, is called *citta*. The ability of mind to differentiate among all the concomitant mental factors, we call *viññāna*. The capacity of mind to reflect and thus bifurcate itself, is called *manas*, or *mano* or *mano-dhatu*. The overall awareness (*citta*) is also the source of the things which we're aware of. We select from this awareness, and project out elements as concepts of what's there and then they're known objectively, as external realities that are separate from the sense of self which arises in conjunction with this process. If you understand this model, it's not such a big step to the threefold transformation of *alaya*, *manas*, and *visaya-vijñapti* (concept of the object).

Discriminating awareness (*mano-viññāna dhatu*), differentiates among everything that's happening, including many mental factors, for example, contact, feeling, emotions, concentration. In addition, there is a category within this field called concepts. This category, which is one of the 64 types, is basically infinite. All these factors are arising in association with the raw impression of it all.

Q: What about mind-objects, the *dharma-dhatu*?

TA: All the possibilities for *dharma-dhatu* are in mind. They are mind-objects, but they're all in the *mano-dhatu* in the six-consciousness system. There are basically 64 types or *dharma*s, and one of them is conception, which is infinite. They are not sitting out there someplace as objects of thought. They're actually all embraced by mind, and when cognized as individual objects, are said to be external. The mind is being consulted or accessed to produce these things. The *dharma-dhatu* is not something separate from mind. What's in the *dharma-dhatu*? The *dharma-dhatu* is a field which provides all the possible concepts for whatever *manas* has chosen to reflect from mind and the Third Transformation conceives of as external objects. In a given moment, although there are 64 possible types of objects, only one of them is an object in a given moment of experience.

An example would be anger. In every moment there is the potential for the full range of mental factors. In the six consciousness system, in a given moment, the mind-organ (*manas* or *mano-dhatu*) turns to the field of mind objects (*dharma-dhatu*) and focuses on anger. Something happens to the organism and there is some set pattern or disposition in each individual that causes *manas* to hook onto anger at that particular moment. The set pattern, which we may also call a disposition or an obsession, is different for different people. As soon as the mind organ looks at or reflects anger, *alaya* is aware of what has been reflected from itself. When *manas* reflects something from *alaya*, it gets put into the *dharma-dhatu* as an object. Then *mano-viññāna dhatu* is aware of anger as an object. This is the basic process by which the

---

<sup>2</sup>Book of Serenity, Case 37

organism knows things as substantial, external, knowable objects. This is the basic process of perception. I haven't yet talked about the arising of self.

Q: I don't understand how the mind-consciousness element, *mano-vijñāna dhatu* is different from the storehouse consciousness, *alaya*.

TA: They are not really different. The presentation of the storehouse consciousness elaborates on the functions of the mind-consciousness element which were not so clearly articulated in early Buddhism. The mind-consciousness element is part of the early Buddhist presentation known as the six consciousness doctrine, which is the same as the presentation of the 18 dhatus. The functions of *alaya-vijñāna* were implicit in the mind consciousness element (*mano-vijñāna dhatu*). The concept of *alaya* was developed to make the functions explicit.

*Mano-vijñāna dhatu* refers to the same transformation of consciousness as what Vasubandhu calls *alaya-vijñāna*. But this presentation of consciousness doesn't have as much explanatory potential as *alaya vijñāna*. They re-named it because they wanted to tell you about all the other functions it has, which we haven't discussed yet. It is the fundamental *vijñāna*, the first transformation of consciousness.

*Manas* is the second transformation. The concept of the object, *visaya-vijñapti* is the third. But in early Buddhism they didn't talk about consciousness as a transformational process the way Vasubandhu does.

The discriminating function of the mind-consciousness element never comes up all by itself. Many mental factors are always associated with it and each moment the mental factors are a little different. In each being, when they arise, even if they are the same list, there's a slightly different set of dispositions or pattern of relationship among the elements. All the elements plus the relationship between them determines the quality of the consciousness.

Consciousness has three basic faculties or capacities, and associated elements that it works with. *Manas* is never going to be, for example, "anger." Why won't *manas* ever be "anger" or "confusion" or "faith" or "concentration"? Because it neutrally reflects and because it can't become an object of consciousness. You could have a concept of *manas*, but that's not *manas*. We don't go around reacting emotionally by having the organ as an object. Even if you think of the organ, you don't get emotional. That's why the capacities of consciousness are not the mental factors. The mental factors and their dispositions are what color the consciousness.

Q: Can you give an example of the mental factors?

TA: Anger, lust, conscientiousness, deceitfulness, confusion, attachment, aversion, malice, hypocrisy, envy, doubt, shamefulfulness. They always have an effect, whether they're known or not. All these things are happening, but at a given moment, only one of them gets reflected and is therefore known as an object. However, the other ones are also there affecting the quality of consciousness. Basically, one thing is being selected from the pool of possible objects, (mental factors). It's projected out and therefore it's known. There's a wide variety of things that can be projected out, but they're not all out there all the time. They're quietly sitting in the consciousness, unprojected but still influencing the experience.

Q: What are the faculties of consciousness?

TA: The faculties are that it can embrace all that is going on in the psyche, that it can differentiate among all the elements and that it can separate part of itself from itself. That is, it can reflect upon itself and create the concept of an external object.

The concept and projection of an external object is pivotal in that it is the occasion for the birth of self. There has to be something external in order to have a self. By having something outside, there can be a sense of inside. There can be a sense of this and that, of self and other. That's the birth of the self, the birth of individuality, the birth of identity separate from the other.

Where there's a sense of death as something external, there's a sense of life as a limited thing, a thing bounded by death. The concept of a life limited by death is another root which gives rise to the birth of the idea of individuality or self.

People want to know the difference between the four afflictions. The four afflictions are directly derivative from the wonderful ability to create objective knowledge. When the sense of self arises, the four afflictions arise. Other afflictions could arise, but these four are particularly related to that which gives rise to the self—namely the ability to reflect. One of them is pride. You're proud of this thing which arose in conjunction with this breakthrough in human evolution. It is a cosmically significant event that living beings on this planet came up with objective knowledge. The sense of self is proud to be born at the same time—kind of like when your home-town team wins the world series and you're proud. That's how pride of self naturally happens. As far as I know, we are the only way the universe can know itself objectively. When I talk like that, don't I sound proud of us? That's pride. Pride in what? In the process, but also that I am associated with such a process. In other words, human beings tend very strongly toward pride in the self because of being associated with this.

Q: When you talk about pride, is this the same as self esteem?

TA: Yes, self-pride is self-esteem. Pride has to do with being associated with this great thing—it's an immensely important thing in the history of the universe that human beings are capable of this. We can actually cause a lot of trouble now because of this, because of objective knowledge. We can pollute this planet because of objective knowledge. It's very important that objective knowledge be used appropriately. It is very susceptible to misunderstanding and misuse. We're proud—in some sense rightfully proud—but this pride backfires on us.

An aspect of love is that we love individuals, we love individuality, we love particularity—individual flowers and mountains and oceans. The self is a precious limited thing. It has definite boundaries and you love it. There's a strong tendency by the whole set-up of the nature of the self that there will be love for it, that it will be appreciated. But because self-love makes you want to hold it and it can't be held, it's an affliction; it causes great disturbance in the ecology of consciousness. If you look at the way the self was created, that is, its dependent co-arising, and the wonder of the things associated with that creation, then the self-view and the self-ignorance or confusion will disperse. Not examining and not being aware of how the self is created is "self view" and "self-confusion."

Q: Can you repeat the three faculties of consciousness?

TA: The first faculty is that consciousness is the total cognition or raw impression of all that's happening in the psyche in any given moment. That's called *citta*; the all-embracing impression of what's going on, including all the functions of consciousness and all the mental factors. All the unknown sense consciousnesses are also embraced by this, as well as sub-conscious life forces.

The second faculty is the ability to discriminate, to know difference. Because it's born of difference, it can discriminate. There can be discrimination with or without objective knowledge. This discriminative capacity is called *vijñāna*.

The third faculty is *manas*, the mind's ability to act as an organ for itself by reflection. In order to have objective knowledge, there has to be reflection within the field of discriminating consciousness. Mind has to take one of the mental factors associated with itself and reflect it and grasp it as external. This is the third capacity—that mind can reflect itself. Self-reflection is pivotal in creating the self.

Those are the three. Then there are many mental factors, each one of which can be "queen for a day," so to speak—the thing that the mind reflects and knows.

Alaya is the basis that the organ uses to get its material to make objects. The mirror is not empty. It always flashes back some of these mental factors. The one thing it can't reflect is consciousness itself. Alaya is exactly the same process. It's just that by using the doctrine of alaya, we can explain

transmigration, birth and death, a sense of continuity, the relationship between consciousness and physical warmth, life force continuing and so on. These are the three functions of consciousness.

All-embracing alaya is a resultant. Manas is reflection which leads to separation. By combining the resources of all-embracingness or alaya and separation, you get the concept of the object and the birth of objective knowledge. In conjunction with all this, the sense of self is born. In this process, the major cause of the sense of self is manas.

Manas is called *klista manas*, related to the word *klesa* which means stain or defilement. It gets this bad name because the wonderful function of creating objective knowledge also creates the sense of a separate self which in turn is the basis of self-clinging. And self-clinging is the source of all defilements. Thus manas is implicated as the locus of defilement.

Once this happens, the sense of self and self-clinging gets laid back down in the mind consciousness which is re-named alaya. It is re-named in order to emphasize that the self lays back down in it, and because the self mainly hooks into and uses it as objective support and basis for its egoistic existence. The self has no self to hang onto. It wants to hang on to something, so it hangs on to alaya. Alaya becomes the carrier of this attachment and so becomes the bad guy too. Now self has proof of its continuing existence because alaya is dependable. Even when the mind shuts down, it's still there. So self can go through the deepest suppression of consciousness because it holds on to alaya. As soon as alaya recovers and can project things out again, the self is up and running. The alaya concept is ingenious.

Do you understand better now?

Q: What are the three functions of consciousness?

TA: The three functions are the same as the three faculties which we just discussed. They are a little different from the three transformations. The three transformations are offered to explain how the various elements of self and other came to prevail in the world. Vasubandhu is trying to give us more direct access to the creation of the fundamental human delusion of believing in an actually existent separate self and an actually existent other.

I feel that you are evolving through this discussion. If you are upright, you can allow the teachings to re-orient you to Dharma. When Dharma is working on you, it turns you. That's why you have to be upright in the process of the discussion and in confronting what the discussion is about. It's our un-uprightness, our leanings and excitement and enchantment with alaya that causes us not to be able to see reality. The exercise is to try to stay alert and upright in the middle of this discussion and it can be applied when this discussion isn't going on because another discussion will start as soon as this one stops. That will be the very process we are talking about here. If we can be upright with this process, alaya will lose its obscuring quality and will turn into a revelatory process.

Carol Schmidt: I'm feeling extremely uncomfortable because I can't understand this material. Do you have any recommendation? I want to stop the train.

TA: I would suggest that you say that you would like to stop the train. We'll stop it, and then when you're ready, we'll start up again. Maybe if we're quiet for a little while you can get your feet back on the ground and then you'll have another onslaught. Buddha said that alaya overwhelms people. This material is an onslaught. You are being overwhelmed and if you feel it now, that's good. If you think that stopping for a while will give you a chance to return to uprightness, we'll stop and you can return to the imperturbable composure of uprightness, and then we'll do it again. If you feel overwhelmed again; what is it that overwhelms you? You might be able to catch it and say "Oh, there it is!"

CS: I'm overwhelmed because I'm not able to follow what you're saying.

TA: When you can't follow what I'm saying, what is that that's overwhelming you? What is it?

CS: A feeling of inadequacy.

TA: What is inadequacy?

CS: I'm feeling left out and separated.



You're a self that's separated, you feel that. What is that? Is that the self? Could that be the self that you've discovered? Could it be that you're starting to feel how the self is harassed, assaulted by the other?

CS: I'm feeling, that, yes!

[intense laughter]

TA: That's what you're supposed to be feeling! That's what the Buddha says is going on. That's suffering. You're an isolated, left-out being, feeling assaulted by what leaves you out. That's what this text is about. You are having a direct experience of what it is saying happens to people. This is called affliction. You have a self-view that you are over there, that you have some understanding and there's another understanding which is not yours which you can't get hold of and it's assaulting you. There's a self that's being overwhelmed, who wants to stop the show. This is about people being overwhelmed by alaya. You are actually having an experience of this process and it is painful.

Last week I asked you to try to get a sense of these afflictions. You are being successful in the study of self. The study of self is not necessarily pleasant because self is not a pleasant thing to have. Self is harassed by everything that isn't it and you have an experience of that and you don't like it. Try to now be upright and have some confidence that you're having an experience of the suffering that results from self-clinging.

### Dharma Talk October 21, 1994

Our Great Ancestor Dogen Zenji said that all Buddha Tathagatas who directly transmit the inconceivable and wondrous Dharma, and who realize supreme perfect enlightenment, have all had a certain Way. Only Buddhas transmit it to Buddhas. The self-fulfilling awareness, *jijuyu zanmai*, is the standard of this Way. Sitting upright is the authentic gate to this self-fulfillment or self-enjoyment awareness. This is the same as saying that sitting upright is the authentic gate to the study of the self. The study of the Buddha Way is the study of the self. All we have to do is be upright, wherever we are. That will be our gate into the realm which is right under our nose, the samadhi which fulfills the self.

If you're in a supermarket and you're upright, you will immediately enter into the self-fulfilling awareness. If you're in a monastery and you are upright, your experience there will be revealed to you as the self-fulfilling samadhi of the Buddhas. If you sit upright in the face of a text like the *Thirty Verses* of Vasubandhu, your interactions with the text will be the self-fulfilling awareness. You will enter the Buddha Way through your relationship with the text. If you go into the supermarket and you are not upright, then the realm of self-fulfilling awareness will not open up before you. You will find yourself in the realm of demons. All the people and vegetables and ice cream in the store will assault you, will harass and affront you and impose themselves upon your self. Similarly, if you meet a text like the *Thirty Verses* and you're not upright, the text will be an affront and will be frightening and upsetting to you. We must constantly be devoted to this upright sitting in order to be able to enter all situations of our life as the samadhi of the Buddhas. Everyone will take off their masks and show us that their face is our own. But if we're not upright we think that other people are not us, and we think the *Thirty Verses* is somebody else's story.

In order to study the self we need to have some sense of the self. In order to sense and experience the self, we have to experience the other. When the other is seen as an other, rather than an other which is really part of ourself, the other is like death. It's an unfriendly darkness. Or it's like life, like a friendly light. When it's unfriendly, an enemy, darkness, we tend to be afraid of it and try to avoid it. Then we are possessed by the demon of the other. If we like it, we indulge in it and then we also are possessed by it. Liking it and disliking it are called leaning to the right and leaning to the left. To be afraid of demons, to

be afraid of somebody else's story is to be possessed by somebody else's story, to be a slave of demons. When we are simply upright in the face of somebody else's story, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, the story turns into the self-fulfilling awareness.

If your ultimate concern is enlightenment, one way to express that is to be unconcerned with enlightenment. To be intimate with the Buddha Way is not to attach to it, and of course, it's not to avoid or disparage it. It's to have an intimate relationship, to be close without clinging. You can have a similar relationship with the demons of destructive, unwholesome delusional states. Running away from them is another delusional state. How can you be just the distance you are from them, not any closer or farther? Intimate with them, and upright. Not indulging, not frightened. You should have the same attitude towards enlightenment and demonic states. The self-fulfilling samadhi has Buddhas and demons in it, and they come to visit you when they want. That's the real other. The other that comes to you when **it** wants to is the other that defines your self.

The mind has infinite capacities, and those capacities can be categorized in a number of ways. One way is to say that there's one mind. Then you can split the mind into two parts. One part is the active part, the other part is the passive part. When they are not separate they are harmonious and almost like one mind. But when they split, there seems to be some movement. There seems to be the ability to act and the ability to be acted upon. There seems to be the ability to refer to something and the referent; that which can think and that which can be thought of. The thing which splits them is the mind organ, the capacity of the mind to split itself in two parts. The subject derives from this ability of the mind to split itself in two. But the awareness itself, the thing that can be aware of the object, is not the subject. It is just the ability of the mind to be aware, the ability of the mind to think of something. This is manas, the mind organ.

Now let's go back: the mind is one. Within this oneness, our mind has the capacities to be thought of and to think of, and it has the capacity to reflect. As soon as it reflects, as soon as there's a split, there seems to be movement. Early Buddhism presents it in this way: the mind gets split. The abilities of this one thing become split or separated, and the two parts can then interact. Arising with the ability to have these two parts is a sense of self. The sense of self is not the awareness. It's something that arises because awareness is separated from what is now said to be an object. The awareness is not the subject, but a subject arises in conjunction with the ability to be aware of something external. When the mind is still, there is no separation; there are no external objects. There is a capacity, not operating then, for the mind to separate its active potential from its passive potential. When it's activated, the mind is split into active awareness and object. The splitting makes possible reflection, thinking. The splitting itself is not the thinking. It makes possible the activation of the thinking side of the mind. In conjunction with this wonderful thing of splitting the mind, a sense of identity arises, a sense of self. The four afflictions also arise: a sense of self-love, a sense of self-esteem, a sense of self-view and a sense of self-confusion.

The Buddha said that at this time, a being's sense of self gets involved with thinking and delight in the field of objects. Beings delight in alaya. Later, Buddhists developed this and thought that maybe this field of objects, called alaya, could be used to explain other phenomena. One of the problems the early Buddhists had was that when yogis go into certain deep trances where the mind is almost completely suppressed, they would close their eyes and then they would open them again and it would seem to be the next moment. They would have no experiences in between. So they wondered how it is that in such a deep trance, life can continue. They thought that there must be consciousness going on between those two waking states. If consciousness leaves the body, the warmth goes away and you die. So there must be some level of consciousness, some vital principal that continues even in the state where the mind is not functioning in an ordinary way. They thought that maybe alaya is that. Maybe the mind lays back into the physical sense organs. The sense consciousnesses are not operating; the person is not seeing or hearing anything. You can poke them or shine a light on them and there's no response. They're not thinking

anything, they have no images going on in their mind. This is one way that they came up with the word alaya - that it's the storing of consciousness. Even when the consciousnesses become activated, this basic storage consciousness goes on. In early Buddhism they didn't emphasize this too much. But as Buddhism developed, they realized that it would be helpful to have such a concept - something like a subconscious - something to create a sense of continuity in the life-stream, something to account for transmigration.

They developed the idea that this deep unconscious was actually an on-going and fundamental component of a personality. One way to understand alaya or storehouse is that it's a function of lying down there at the basis of the active consciousness. Another meaning of lying down is that it's what the sense of self lies on. It doesn't work very well for the sense of self to identify with the consciousness. The sense of self wants something to hook on to. It's just this ethereal thing which was conjured up in conjunction with the ability of the mind to split itself into awareness and aware of. Originally it wasn't split into self and other. But in conjunction with this split there was this sense of other and self. Now that there is a self, what's it going to hold on to? It can't hold onto the other; that doesn't work. It's born of the other, but it can't identify with the other. Awareness itself isn't a very good home either because if you look at it, it's ungraspable vastness. Where it seemed to find its home was in alaya, the field from which all the concepts are made. There is a vague sense of something deeply subconscious that's always going on. It's not the self, but it's something you can hook the self onto. As Kalupahana says, it's something life can get moored to even during a deep trance when it can't moor itself to the active consciousnesses. During ordinary life, your life can be hooked into active consciousness. You can use active consciousness for example, to bring warmth into your hands or cause the warmth in your hands to go away, like in a state of shock. Where does life get moored in terms of awareness? It can be moored and hooked on to alaya, a storehouse or kind of consciousness that you can store your life on.

Early Buddhism also had the theory that alaya would be present at the moment of conception and at the moment of death. From the moment of conception, the being uses alaya to hook into a lifestream and at the moment of death, it's the disconnection from alaya that makes life irretrievable. During daily life you're also hooked into alaya and therefore, in case you lose track of your active consciousness, you don't die. So alaya became almost the same as the principle of vitality or warmth. We do have a consciousness of this warm dependable place which is changing all the time and also being reproduced along with life. That's where we lay the self down. That's the home of the self. Some people say "I have a sense of self." I think what they mean is that they have a sense of alaya.

Q: It seems like the concept of alaya is kind of dangerous.

TA: Yes, it looks so much like a self or a soul. Buddha or one of the great Bodhisattvas said "I'm afraid to teach this alaya because people will make it into a permanent soul." It's not a soul because it only exists at this moment, by causes and conditions, just like life is not a soul. It only is something that is conjured up right now. If you take away the causes and conditions for life, we have what is called death. If you have the causes and conditions for life, there is some warmth and consciousness. So it's not a self, not a permanent soul. It is something which is dependently co-arisen which has no inherent nature and which is impermanent.

I want to say something about difference. Imagine we have an earth, a planet, some surface of materiality. Imagine yourself out in some desert-like area. There are rocks and sand and clay. Suddenly you start to see that there are different kinds of material things there, you notice that some of the material is moving in relationship to the other. There's an expanse of dirt and suddenly some of the dirt starts to loom up and look down on the other earth, or sink down. This somehow starts to happen on the earth and when I think about it I feel something about life. The earth seems to wake up or come alive.

Once I was looking at some snow that was melting. I saw that the snow was pulsing and undulating and seemed to be alive. Then I realized that the pulsing just happened to coincide with the pulse in my eye. What I was seeing in the snow was my own heart beating, blood going through my eyes.

When I think about the earth pulsing I feel that the earth is like me. When we see that kind of difference on a planet we postulate life there, or when we hear rhythm we think maybe there's life there. The origins of life have something to do with this - the materiality gets into a kind of rhythm with itself. That's the birth of consciousness.

The same thing happens at the next level up where we can know things. This lower level has a rhythm in it that gets transmitted up into the mental realm. We're interacting with that level all the time, but we don't know that level.

Q: Is current thinking considered a part of alaya?

TA: Current thinking is not part of alaya! Current thinking is a result of causes and conditions, and in particular, the three transformations of consciousness. The total causation includes sense consciousnesses which we don't know about, which set the basic model of a heart beat, of rhythm, of the dynamic in the physical world. If there's no dynamic in the physical world, life can't arise. In a planet where physicality hasn't differentiated into gross and subtle aspects, where you don't have difference between kinds of physicality, where you don't have a dance between them, you don't have consciousness. That is one of the causes of our present thinking, however, that's not the part we can experience as objective knowledge. In objective knowledge we can experience these three transformations. They account for the sense of self and other. Self and other, self and elements is what thinking is about. Thinking is reflecting. The object of awareness is a reflection of something. Alaya is the storehouse from which the elements are selected, but in alaya they are immature. When they're activated they are the image which is the content of the concept of something being external. Current thinking involves these three transformations.

Someone asked me to talk about how alaya is a transformation of the mind. In one sense it's just part of the mind. But as soon as you take the mind and make a part, the mind has been transformed. It is the part of the mind that the self lies on and hooks on to. The self makes karma possible. Karma has a momentum and the momentum of karma can hook onto this consciousness. Alaya is the thing that makes it possible for the effects of past karma to hook into life and then once there's life, at a certain point, the mind manifests its ability to split itself and the sense of self arises and then alaya is also the place that sense of self lays back. So the results, the implication of self/other life is karma. The implications and momentum of that hook into alaya and lie down in it and are stored in it and then once there is a living being, alaya provides the ongoing place, the ultimate or deepest refuge for the self. If you want to get nasty about it, it's like the deepest darkest hiding place for self-clinging. So you'll never be without a place to hold on and to be attached. You've always got one. And sure enough, the place of enlightenment, the actual texture and content of enlightenment, the place it will be enacted is in the deepest, darkest hiding place of clinging. All the other clings won't work until you get down to the bottom one. When that's dealt with, then the place you're clinging will be exactly the place of release. And the material which is obscuring the nature of life will be the material that reflects and radiates it.

Q: So is alaya habit?

TA: Yes, it's the resultant, the maturing of all past behavior. As such, it provides all the models for habits, all the things that have been done before, either once or zillions of times. Those effects are all in this consciousness. Not everything there is a habit - but when you pull things out of alaya you get an activated habit. Concepts are habits.

Q: What's the relationship between alaya and space?

TA: Space is an unconditioned thing. Materiality takes up space but space can include materiality without getting dented so there's not much relationship between space and materiality. Alaya is something which is hypostasized, something made concrete as a symbol. To call alaya a storehouse, seems to imply some physicality, but there is no physicality in the mind. There isn't physicality in alaya, there isn't physicality in mind consciousness, there isn't physicality in the mind organ. However, there is an

interplay between physicality and mind organ because mind organ is modeled on physical consciousness and physical consciousness arises from physicality. So physicality gives rise to physical consciousness and the consciousness of physicality is the model for the mind organ. Consciousness of physicality produces the mind organ and once the mind has an organ then the mind can split itself in two parts and the mind can be aware of itself directly.

A lot of what the mind is aware of is patterns of physicality and patterns of karma. Karmic habits are then part of what is impressed on consciousness and alaya is the place all this stuff gets laid down. The results of karma never get lost so this subconscious layer of past karma is always going on in a living being and then the self can lay down there and be connected to that and the self can pull up those habits and create more karma which then gets laid back down into alaya in this life. When the system gets dispersed and the living principle is lost and alaya withdraws and disperses, then the momentum of this life of self working with this material and hanging on to this sense of continuity - that kind of life produces a momentum which then can produce more life. The way it hooks in is the thing it last let go of. It hooks into alaya, the reservoir of karmic habits. So it can go right to work as soon as it's born, unfolding the karmic machinery. It doesn't take too long before it remembers the idea of a self. It doesn't have a self right away because it can't. It doesn't have a mind. The mind is dispersed because the mind grows up out of life. The full scale mind is not born full fledged simultaneously with conception. It does happen after you get out of the womb, ...at some point you say that your mom's not you. 18 months?

Because alaya evolves, it has a story. Its evolution is part of what's available in it and it evolves like a stream. Originally in every moment and in every life this thing that appears as life has a history and is like a stream, is like a river. There's a creation myth: in the beginning, in the unborn it was like a river. The river became like a road and the road was always hungry. This river becomes a road. How does it become a road? By transforming itself into alaya, object of consciousness and reflection. That's how you get the sense of separation of self and other and then there's a road in this river, a road of separation in the river. This system is always hungry, always thirsty. It's hungry to be reunited. There's nothing to be reunited with. It's split. It just gets reunited. It also gets reunited with its unknown aspect because it's unknown aspect is totally implied by its present form. The known and unknown get unified, the split in consciousness get unified, the self and other get unified. The defilements have no place to hold because the self is not separated from the other anymore. So the afflictions drop away. There's no way to be harassed anymore. There's no way to worry about survival anymore. You survive according to biological processes, just like you always did. Human beings developing this strange system became very adaptable on this planet.

Q: What is alaya?

TA: Alaya is the ability to be aware of the concept of the object and it is also the source from which the concepts of objects are drawn. Mind draws from itself by reflection and then is aware of itself by reflection. Mind has the ability to put a mirror up to itself and pull part of itself up into the mirror and then as soon as it sees it in the mirror, be aware of it. So alaya as an active consciousness, as a vijñana, can be aware of objects which are drawn from itself and then the self which arises in conjunction with this wonderful process lies back into alaya as its sense of continuity. This is all modeled on the physical situation which gave rise to consciousness on the sense level. Just as sense consciousness arose out of a split in physicality, consciousness itself became another field just like the physical world which developed these subtle and gross elements and split into awareness and objects. The objects are grosser than the awareness. Where do the objects come from? They come from the same awareness. So alaya has all the possible concepts and also is the awareness of the concepts when they're projected out into objects. As soon as alaya is aware of the object as separate then alaya becomes an active consciousness just like the sense consciousnesses.

This is a story about our mind. It's a popular story in Buddhism, it's not reality, it's a story about delusion, how delusion arises. If you understand this story thoroughly, you will see that this is all a made-up thing and you'll become free of it. If you can think of another story, let's hear it. This is Vasubandhu's, as I understand it. If we're upright in this discussion this is also called the self-fulfilling awareness. As we discuss these things, we have to constantly be upright and present to hear all this because our minds are really active. If we're upright then everything will be something like The Thirty Verses for us. Is that enough for today?

**YES!!!!!!**

### **Class 5**

October 24, 1994

I think it might be useful to again talk about the basic teachings of the six kinds of consciousness. The first level in the development of consciousness (vijñāna) is the interaction between two kinds of materiality—the field, visaya; and the organ, indriya. This is the portal to the birth of sense consciousness. Once the consciousness is born, that which is the field for the organ, becomes the object for the consciousness. For example, electromagnetic radiation, the material field for the eye organ, becomes the object of eye consciousness. The eye organ interacts with electromagnetic radiation, or you could say that eye sensitivity plays in the field of light. When consciousness arises, it relates to this field as its object of awareness. The organ has more direct contact with the object than consciousness does because consciousness is separated from the object by the organ. However, in a sense, all three—organ, object and consciousness—are in contact. Consciousness, vijñāna dependently co-arises with the field and the organ. At this level of development we're talking about the birth of sense consciousness.

Q: Why is vijñāna called the resultant? Aren't the field and organ also resultants?

Tenshin Anderson: They are. The field, electromagnetic radiation also arose by dependent co-arising, and the things that are sensitive to electromagnetic radiation co-dependently arose. The birth of consciousness doesn't just depend on the interaction between the field and the organ. Those aren't the only things that cause the birth of vijñāna. The history of the universe which gave rise to electromagnetic radiation and gave rise to physical sensitivities also caused the birth of consciousness. However, I am only talking about the **door** where we can witness the birth of consciousness. Throughout the whole universe, there are many causes, from beginningless time, for the arising of consciousness. But at the moment it arises, there is a door where organ and field interact. If they didn't interact, even though all those other causes are there, consciousness would not be born. The organ and field are just the last two that are necessary, the linchpins for consciousness. If they weren't also caused by innumerable causes and conditions, they would be ultimate realities. Then you would have ultimate realities coming together to produce something, but as soon as they produced something, they wouldn't be ultimate realities anymore; they would be in a causal relationship. Once consciousness is born in relationship to the organs and field, the organ and field change. Before, they were fields and organs; now they are "doors of arrival" of consciousness.

The sense consciousnesses are said to be direct experience. However, there is no concept involved and there's no objective knowledge of this direct experience. This level of experience is going on all the time, but is not objectively known to us. An example of this is the sense awareness of the physicality of light. There is no objective knowledge of this physicality, but there is a physical sense awareness which we experience and which affects us in a given moment. Eye consciousness at the direct sensory level is something that dependently co-arises with the field of light and the eye organ. It is a direct sense experience of physical light. "Seeing" is not the light, is not the organ, and is not the consciousness. "Seeing" is the interplay, the interdependence of organ, field and consciousness. It is something that happens at the moment that consciousness is born together with the organ and field. Before consciousness

is born there is no “seeing;” there is just the eye organ responding in the field. The birth of consciousness is a dependently co-produced phenomenon. Consciousness is a dependently co-produced thing and “seeing” at a direct sensory level is dependently co-produced. Thus consciousness, organ and field have no inherent nature; nor does “seeing” as a direct sensory experience. Seeing at the next level, objective knowledge, is awareness of concepts (e.g. color) and it also dependently co-arises. It arises from the interdependence of mind-consciousness, mind organ and mind objects.

Q: Could you say one more time what “seeing” is ?

TA: There are two kinds of seeing—seeing as direct sensory experience of light and seeing as conceptual experience of the idea of light. First there is an awareness of an actual material object, electromagnetic radiation. This is the realm of the direct experience of different wave lengths of radiation which are not yet categorized as blue, etc. Although they’re not yet called blue, and so on, the radiation is being responded to by the organ, and this interaction of organ and field gives rise to direct sense consciousness. The direct experience of light will later be categorized under the concept of blue and known as “blue.”

At the level of direct sense experience we don’t say “I see.” There’s no “I” there. There’s no objective knowledge. This is direct experience with no way of knowing it. There’s just immediate mental and physical response to color. The organ, the field and consciousness are all dependently co-produced, and seeing is dependently co-produced. There’s nothing you can actually get hold of called seeing, other than the interaction of these three. You can’t get hold of one of the three as separate from the others.

The next level of seeing is entirely mental. Here, the just deceased sense consciousness becomes an important condition for the arising of *mano-vijñāna*, mind consciousness. The mind consciousness is born of the interaction of the mind-organ and the field of mind-objects. The just deceased sense consciousness plays the role of mind-organ (*manas*). There are five sense consciousnesses—eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, and body consciousness. Having passed away, a sense consciousness, together with some mind object, (some concept of color such as “blue”) become conditions for the birth of mind consciousness. The interaction between mind-consciousness, mind-organ (the just deceased sense consciousness) and a mind object causes objective knowledge of colors.

Mind consciousness in its all-embracing function is just the total impression created by all the mental factors and objects co-arising with it. In this sense, the consciousness is receptive. It is what is impressed, the effect or resultant of all the co-existing dharmas. Imagining consciousness as a landscape of impressions of many things, the mind organ functions by separating the impression from all the things impressing it. It functions as a kind of carrier of the duality between the impressed (mind consciousness) and the impresser (mental factors). This is why this kind of consciousness is called *vijñāna*, “knowledge of difference.” Its causes are embedded in it so its quality of being is determined by what is impressed upon it. Since mind consciousness is nothing but the sum total of impressions, it has no inherent existence.

The realm of mental objects is called the *dharma dhatu*. The mental organ is called *manas*. Mind consciousness arises at the door where the mental organ and the mental object meet. The mental object is one of the elements of the *dharma dhatu* at any given moment. Mind consciousness is a resultant and it is dependently co-produced. The mental object is a concept which is known by this consciousness. We are no longer speaking of the realm of direct sensory experience. Our experience is now comprised of mental objects, and mental objects are concepts. Mind consciousness knows concepts. This is objective consciousness, or what we usually call “knowing” something. When we have a direct sensory experience of blue, this can lead to a conceptual experience of blue. Then we say “that’s blue,” but we are really speaking of something in our mind-object field.

Q: Is it correct to say that mind consciousness, *mano vijñāna dhatu* is the same as *vijñāna*, but it functions at a different level?

TA: Mind consciousness is one of the six *vijñānas* in the six *vijñāna* system of early Buddhism. It's one of the eight *vijñānas* in the eight *vijñāna* system of Yogacara. It is basically the same kind of thing as the sense consciousnesses. The way the sense consciousnesses operate is incorporated into the paradigm of mental consciousness. However, mind consciousness is aware of mental things and not physical things. Even when it thinks it's aware of a physical thing, it's actually aware of a concept of it. It's the same model—it's born the same way—namely by the interaction between the ability of the mind (rather than the ability of sense organs) to respond to mental objects.

Q: Could you explain that once more?

TA: Sense consciousness arises from some difference. There's the field, for example, sound waves, that tends to hit and isn't very responsive. Then there's the organ, the ear, which is responsive. Sound waves hit and ear drums respond. (The ability to respond is what we call the organ.) There's a difference between these two kinds of materiality and there's an interaction between them which is a condition for the dependent co-arising of sense consciousness, which is the awareness and discrimination of the difference. The capacity of the sense consciousness to discriminate difference incorporates the story of how consciousness arises in dependence on difference. Now we have discriminating consciousness which is essentially related to difference. The mental object and mental consciousness are shadowy conceptual renditions of the physical organ and field. Through the interaction of mind consciousness, mind organ, and mind object, a conceptual version of the physical world dependently co-arises. This mind consciousness discriminates a difference at the mental level which recapitulates a difference at the physical level. When that happens, the mind has realized within itself the capacity of an organ. What does this mental organ do? It finds something to respond to. Since it's mental and extremely subtle, it can respond to mind objects, which are concepts—of the physical world and of the mental world. The totality of things it can respond to become its field. When these concepts interact with the mind organ, this interaction becomes a condition which is traditionally called the door of arrival, (*ayatana*), for the birth of the very subtle mind consciousness. This is a creation myth for mind consciousness, the story of its dependent co-arising.

The capacity of the mind to act as an organ for itself is called *manas*. *Manas* is also the ability of the mind to reflect itself. The field for the organ *manas* is called *dharma dhatu*. *Dharma dhatu* is also the sphere of mind objects for the mind consciousness. *Manas* reflects things in the *dharma dhatu* one at a time. Things in the *dharma dhatu* are mental factors and they all can be converted into concepts and reflected by *manas*. Consciousness also has the capacity to see them as external objects and therefore to know them objectively. For example, we can directly experience anger, but we cannot directly know anger. When anger arises, *manas* can turn toward the concept of the mental factor of anger and reflect it. Then the mind consciousness can grasp and know the concept of anger. So we can say "I'm angry," or "I see anger," or "I see anger in someone else."

Q: Where is *alaya* in this discussion of the six *vijñānas*?

TA: Some scholars think that *alaya* is another name for mind consciousness, the sixth *vijñāna*, and I think we can cautiously agree. However, the early Buddhist treatment of mind consciousness doesn't carry all the functions that the Yogacara tradition wants *alaya* to carry. I suggest that there are three ways to approach this. One would be to call *alaya* a function that co-exists with mental consciousness. Another way would be to think of *alaya* as actually a different kind of consciousness. A third would be to see that *alaya* just expands on the capacities of mind consciousness. I think it's good to entertain all three of these approaches at once. If we can straddle the way of thinking of *alaya* as a pattern of functions that co-exist with mind consciousness, and thinking of it as a separate consciousness that co-exists with mind



consciousness—that would be good. Don’t make it into something separate, yet realize that’s it’s going to be a function beyond what the early Buddhist mind consciousness can carry.

Vasubandhu doesn’t say that there are eight consciousnesses. However, later, based on his teaching, there was a form of Yogacara which did develop a system of eight consciousnesses. In that system, alaya’s potential function is so significant that they call it the 8th consciousness. Similarly, the mind organ, manas, is so important that it is promoted to the status of the 7th consciousness. In this system, manas is the organ capacity, the reflecting capacity of mental consciousness. The Yogacara makes manas into a consciousness rather than just an organ. The 7th consciousness doesn’t have an independent existence from the 6th consciousness. It is actually a function of consciousness which is now itself also called a consciousness.

The purpose of the teaching of the three transformations is to account for the birth of a sense of self and other. In these teachings, the mind consciousness is not the source of these transformations. It is one of them, and the quality of being a resultant is also attributed to it. Calling this transformation of consciousness a resultant is different from saying it dependently co-arises. Using the term “resultant” carries a heavier connotation—that of being caused by something which has genuine causal power. Thinking in terms of genuine causal power is the thinking of karmic consciousness. In this way, this transformation of consciousness becomes a storehouse (alaya) for karmic consciousness. The earlier and simpler teaching on mind consciousness does not explicitly offer a vehicle to explain the accumulation and transmission of karmic cause and effect. This idea of a karmic resultant transformation of consciousness serves this explanatory purpose. It provides a reservoir for karmic consequences and a causal base for further karma. It provides an ongoing source for thinking in terms of self-sufficient causes. Therefore when this elaborated sense of mind consciousness interacts with the reflecting mind organ which is now called the second transformation and the concept of external object, now called the third transformation of consciousness, we have sufficient conditions for the story of the dependent co-arising of the self. Adding this resultant aspect to the basic functions of mind consciousness may be helpful in understanding the dependent co-arising of the illusion of an independent self.

Manas is also very important in the dependent co-arising of this conventionally existing independent self. In fact, manas is given the honor of being the locus or birthplace of the limited understanding of self. This is the basis for its being promoted to the stature of the 7th consciousness. But I think that it may be better to understand manas as an ability or activity of consciousness to reflect itself, than to see it as a separate consciousness.

The sense of self is born and then continues to be localized around this ability. It is born in association with this reflective capacity of the mind and then it continues to be an egocentric reflecting function because every time it reflects, the self is born again. Imagine the mind and imagine the sense of a self being born around this reflecting capacity. Every time the reflecting capacity occurs there’s a sense of self. This sense of self and other is the basic problem of human beings. It also involves a concept of genuine and substantial causal power which is carried by alaya. Alaya is the place where the process gets material for reflection of something substantial which finally becomes a substantiated self. This substantial sense of self arises with the reflecting capacity and is laid back down or stuck into alaya. Alaya becomes the bed for further reflection and creation of a substantial self. It provides all the seeds for the things that are reflected, and then the sense of self goes back and gets associated with alaya again. Since the self is associated with alaya, the things in alaya that are reflected out have got the self stuck to them.

We’re trying to figure out the birth of self and other. The self is born in association with the reflective capacity. What is reflected there? Something external, a concept that is seen as external. What is being reflected is something from alaya, the first transformation. Manas, the second transformation, selects by karmic formations. It is disposed to reflect one thing rather than another thing. By virtue of the

third transformation, externality is conferred on the reflected concept. Something from alaya is reflected and then another aspect of mind says that this is outside of itself.

Q: I understood Vasubandhu to be saying that the sense of self arose from the twofold grasping; that grasping/grasper gave rise to the sense of self, and grasping/grasped gave rise to the sense of substantiality of objects. Is that correct?

TA: Yes.

Q: Is the twofold grasping part of manas or part of alaya?

TA: The twofold grasping arises in dependence with all three transformations of consciousness as its conditions. Self and elements are the twofold grasping. Grasping and grasped are the twofold grasping. The sense of self and elements is the first thing Vasubandhu is talking about. That arises not from grasping and grasped; that isn't happening yet. The first thing to establish is the birth of self and elements. Once you have self and elements then you can have grasper and grasped. The fundamental thing is self and elements. It arises by the threefold transformation and that's what I'm trying to get you to visualize right now—the process by which self and elements are created. The other thing I want you to see is how this causes a problem, a defilement.

We're in the world of consciousness. We want to account for the birth of self and elements, self and other. What happens? Manas functions. It's not karma, but it's an activity of consciousness; it can reflect something in alaya. There's one more transformation which says that what is reflected there is external. You have alaya, you have a reflection of something in alaya and you have the idea that it's external. Alaya provides the seed for the concept of externality but that concept has to be activated, and that activation is the third transformation. If the concept of object is not activated, then you won't be able to have self and other. It has to be actively operating. That concept is not usually reflected. It can be activated at other times, in your meditation or your daily life. Ordinarily we see objects without saying "I think that's an object." When you see something that's an object, something other than yourself, the "concept of the object," the third transformation of consciousness, is operating. It must be operating in order for there to be a self and some element.

The teaching of Vasubandhu localizes the birth of the self with the ability to reflect. We don't so much associate the birth of the self with the concept of the object. But in fact if the concept of the object weren't there we couldn't have the birth of the self. Vasubandhu said, all three transformations of consciousness must be operating in order for the idea of self to arise. So really the birth of the self is associated not just with manas, the reflecting capacity of mind, but also with the transformation of alaya and with the concept of the six kinds of objects. The reason the self is especially associated with the function of reflecting is that reflecting is a prototype for the dependent co-arising of individuality. In the process of reflecting, there is a "this" and a "that." There is "this thing" and "that reflection." "This" is the individual, the self. "That" other is a condition for the dependent co-arising of this individual self. This reflective transformation of consciousness is the context for the arising of self. Though the illusion of self and elements is born of all three, it's localized on the reflecting capacity which then gets the name of defiled manas, defiled mental organ, defiled mental ability, klista manas.

This fundamental sense of self is then laid back down upon alaya. After the sense of self is born it gets stored in alaya. In this way, alaya is overlaid with a sense of self, with a sense of independence, and a sense of substantiality. Alaya, the source field from which things are reflected is now flattened with the idea of self. Now everything that's reflected is contaminated and confounded by this covering of self-existence. What was the nature of alaya before this covering? It was an interdependent field of dependently co-arising elements. Prior to the second and third transformations and the covering of self-existence, alaya was a pure and unobscured expression and impression of dependently co-arising phenomena. But prior to the second and third transformation, there was no conscious knowledge of this wondrous world of the dependently co-arising storehouse consciousness. However, once the second and

third transformations develop, there is the appearance of self and elements, and the dependent co-arising of consciousness is obscured by the coverings of self-existence. At this point, we have objective knowledge of the objects of consciousness but it is obscured by the grasping at self-existence. The grasping at self-existence obscures the vision of the dependent co-arising of objects of consciousness. It obscures vision of the selflessness of these objects.

Originally, consciousness is a living and luminous field of dependent co-arising. By the process just described, this luminosity becomes obscured by the imaginings of self-existence. The vital dynamics of inter-dependence get flattened into rigid substantial and self-perpetuating patterns. All of this is then laid down and stored in alaya. In this way alaya becomes a more and more fixed base for the processes of bondage to cyclic existence. All this is a story of the dependent co-arising of ignorance, and obscuration of the process of dependent co-arising. Removing the obscuration of dependent co-arising is the dependent co-arising of awakening. When dependent co-arising of awakening is obscured, there is bondage to the miseries of cyclic existence. When dependent co-arising is revealed there is liberation from samsara and the realization of nirvana. Therefore, awakening is the source of both samsara and nirvana.

Q: Is it this covered and obscured alaya that is referred to in verse 5 where it talks about the dissipation of alaya?

TA: Exactly. It's the dissipation of the obscured alaya. At Suzuki Roshi's ashes site there's a pole on which the Four Wisdoms are written. One of the wisdoms is Great Mirror-like Wisdom, the wisdom of Dharmakaya Vairocana Buddha. It's the wisdom which sees everything in the universe as radiant Buddha mind because everything in the universe that we see is something that is pulled up out of alaya and reflected and seen as an object. There's nothing we see that we don't get from this seed consciousness. Usually, we draw this stuff up out of alaya. But what we draw out of this universe of possible objects has this covering of self-clinging on top of it. So we don't see the radiance of mirror-like wisdom. We see radiance with a film over it. Because of this film, objects seem to be solid. All these objects seem to have solid and independent existence, rather than being just ever-changing, radiant, inter-dependent appearances which are reflected and externalized by mind. This radiant dynamism is really what is happening as alaya, before the self arises.

When alaya is turned one way, dependent co-arising is obscured. When turned the other way dependent co-arising is revealed. The obscured alaya is the base from which we work to again and again create a sense of self and other. If we ever woke up and saw what alaya really was, we could still use alaya to create a sense of self and other. It's just that the self that would be created then would be a self that arose with alaya being reflected as radiance. So the self would be like a bright light self and that bright light self would then be laid back down into alaya and this would be the bright light of the dependently co-arisen alaya. This bright light alaya would be the base from which we work to create the luminous vision of the dependently co-arisen alaya.

Q: What are the conditions for this turning of alaya?

TA: The primary condition for the turning of alaya is the study of the self. One may have to start this study from the deluded position of believing in an independently existing self. We may have to begin studying a self which we do not see as dependently co-arising. However, studying this self which we believe to be independently existing will eventually lead to the revelation of the incoherence of such beliefs and to the appearance of the dependently co-arisen self. Seeing this, alaya begins to turn from darkness to light.

## Class 6

October 27, 1994

In the history of Buddhist thought, Nagarjuna's teaching of the Middle Way, came first and the Yogacara came later. Nagarjuna lived in the second century and Vasubandhu and Asanga lived in the fourth and fifth century. In terms of the ascendancy of the ultimate teachings, the historical order is reversed. The ultimate teaching came first and was followed by a less ultimate teaching, the Yogacara.

In [terms of the ultimate truth], the Yogacara position doesn't really hold up in the final analysis. It's just a story, a presentation of reality, which is constructed in order to help people and finally there's really nothing to it. However, in studying something that is set up like this and discovering what it really is, one can realize liberation, realize Buddha's teaching. In some sense, anything that you can work on will be just a story. Case 37 of *The Book of Serenity* says that living beings just have karmic consciousness, boundless, limitless and unclear with no fundamental to rely on. What we have to work with as living beings is a consciousness which is conjured up by cause and effect. It is unclear, it's all we have and there is no fundamental reality to it.

Dogen Zenji says "To study the Buddha Way is to study the self."<sup>3</sup> However, there really is no such thing as a self. To study the Buddha Way is to study something that doesn't really exist, and to thoroughly study something that doesn't really exist is to forget it. To forget what doesn't really exist is to be awakened by everything. Most people will not forget what doesn't exist unless they study it exhaustively. If we study what doesn't exist very thoroughly, and rationally look at it from all angles, we can use that delusion to realize the Way. Dogen also says that Buddhas are those who are greatly awakened about delusion. The Yogacara is a story of the arising of and belief in illusion, and how that traps us, and how by studying this process we can reverse it and release ourselves from delusion. The story itself has no ultimate existence.

Some Buddhist teachings which presented material similar to this, especially prior to the Yogacara, said that it really **did** exist. Perhaps they did that because they were afraid that people wouldn't study it if they said, "we are going to tell you right off that this is all made up." So they actually said that these teachings about the psychological processes of perception and the stories about karma, had *dravya sat*, substantial truth. Vasubandhu, in his Abhidharma system, at various points presses the Abhidharmists and finally they relent and say "OK, OK, there really is no such thing, we just had to say so to make our system work." Sometimes you have to say, "let's pretend that this exists." If you don't, it's hard for people to follow. So they tentatively put something out there called *prajñapti*, which is related to *viññapti*, which means a concept. *Prajñapti* means just set up for a little while, a fruitful fiction.

When I was younger, I didn't like to read historical fiction because I thought it would corrupt my sense of history. Then I realized that it is better to read romantic history knowing that it is fiction, than a supposed history book that you think is actually true. You can understand the Yogacara teaching as romantic history, a dramatic presentation of the origins of consciousness. Unfortunately the way Vasubandhu puts it is not very romantic so you have to be encouraged to read it.

Now I would like to create a little dream here, a reconstruction of reality. We have the phenomenon of consciousness. There are five sense consciousnesses and then a sixth consciousness which works with the five so that their products can be known. Without the sixth consciousness, the function of the five is direct conscious experience but you wouldn't know anything. The sixth can know. The material of the sense consciousnesses is presented to the mind consciousness, the *mano viñjana*. However, part of the price of knowledge is the activity of reflection or thinking. That process is called *manas* in the Yogacara. In early Buddhist teaching it's sometimes called *manas* and sometimes referred to as *mano dhatu*.

In order for mind consciousness to be a vehicle of knowing, it needs to have reflection. The *manas* or *mano dhatu* provides that reflective capacity but it is always egocentric, so the mind consciousness gets

---

<sup>3</sup> Genjokoan

defiled by egocentricity. Having been influenced by self-centeredness, it sees an event which leaves an impression and that defiled impression of the sense data is laid down in a subconscious called *alaya vijñāna*. This is how information comes in, is known and then leaves an impression in our stream of consciousness. You can see that what comes in is never just directly stored, it always gets mixed in with the self. We never just let anything in, we chew it into something that is like what we had before and this chewing up is self-oriented. Everything gets somewhat converted, and these distorted versions of the input get stored in our subconscious.

What about the basic stance and point of view before anything comes in? We have the five sense consciousnesses and the mind consciousness. I just described the way the mind consciousness gets information and how the information it gets is distorted. The mind consciousness is also associated with lots of dispositions which are in its subconscious and are maturing up through it. You have this faculty of knowing but it never comes up by itself. It always comes up with dispositions or mental factors, the potential list of which can be found in the contents of the *dharma dhatu*. In a given moment of consciousness where we know something, many mental factors are present. According to the Yogacara, the mental factors that are manifested and present and that thereby provide the context in which you experience something have matured up out of the unconscious. The unconscious, where you laid down previous impressions, is now exuding or emanating certain of its potential elements. The receptive stance of the knower is that the knowing capacity is accompanied by whatever the unconscious has exuded. There is no control over this, this is all resultant. *Alaya*, the unconscious, is called the resultant but it also produces some freshly manifested material to go along with the conscious activity. In the mind consciousness layer there are some things which unconsciousness is always exuding. This mind consciousness is never without concentration, *samadhi*, contact, feeling, attention, decision, various mental factors. Also, there are universals that always come up with it. There are wholesome factors and unwholesome factors which sometimes come up and sometimes don't. There are primary and secondary defiling factors which sometimes come up and sometimes don't. They all come up out of this deep unconscious where the impressions of things that have happened in the past are laid down.

These impressions get activated and can come up again and be part of the present experience. Then you have the knowing, with some complement of these activated versions of past experiences accompanying the basic mind set with which new data will come in and the new data will then again be infected and defiled by the egocentric sense. Distorted information is coming in and it's met by a knowing capacity which is accompanied by a constantly varied complement of past impressions and dispositions which have been coughed up to accompany this sense of the experience. This process is going round and round constantly. Every moment a knowing capacity comes up with this accompaniment. It's always varying. It has constants which are always in a context so the way they function is different depending on what arises with them. The knowing comes up with a constantly changing environment and that situation of the knowing and the constantly changing environment is exposed to new material coming in which is always pre-processed by egotism and then that interaction produces another set of impressions which are laid down and mixed in with the other parts. The next moment a new set is exuded which comes up simultaneously with the new knowing capacity, the new information coming in and the new reflecting which makes it possible to know. This is the process.

Some people get sick when they hear this, but remember—you are getting sick when you hear a story. Don't hold on to this story. It's just a story and for some reason this story has been told over and over in the Buddhist tradition and the story itself does not stay the same. It was never told before like I just told it even though I was just repeating what I heard somebody else say. It's an oral tradition and it's never the same. The story is changing just like your mind is changing.

We can discuss the way you work with this material. For example, someone asked me, "Is the sense object related to the sense consciousness the way the mind object is related to mind consciousness?"

He was expressing the way his mind was working with a story he had heard. Then my critical capacities listened to his and responded and so forth. As we express our understanding of this material more and more, other people can help us hone our understanding and we can finally prove and disprove different parts of it, which parts are valid, invalid and so on. When you learn how to do this you can then turn around and do the same thing inside. You can learn how to establish validity with externally set up presentations of reality. Then you can look inside where you have another reality which you believe in to some extent, and see which parts are valid and invalid; you apply the same process. If your work with external discussions of confessions, illusions and stories is foggy and confused then that will be the way you work inside. Yogacara presents a story about consciousness so then the way that you work with the external story in this world can be applied to the internal story.

The other day I was talking about golf and tennis. What little I know about golf is that one of the principles is to keep your eye on the ball and another is to keep your feet on the ground. That is an interesting practice to do with feet, eyes, balls and turf. From the point of view of the liberation of sentient beings the important thing is how you apply that principle to your own experience. The way you apply yourself to the story of golf has implications for the way you apply yourself to the rest of your life. It may be difficult to translate but it does get translated.

In some ways tennis is more dynamic because you are playing with another person, and one of the rules there also is keep your eyes on the ball, not on the person. Some great tennis players can just stand there and the other person won't even see the ball. All they have to do is hit the ball over the net and the other person will completely miss the ball because they are looking at the person. "My God, there's Stephie Graf." Now you're playing with Stephie, so you just stand there and watch her and you don't watch the ball.

Robin Frey: "You can't return them anyway."

Tenshin Anderson: See! You say that when you play with Stephie you can't return them anyway! It's because you are looking at her, and you give up! It's the same way with your own experiences; you're looking at anger and then you give up. Because you are looking at a monster you give up. You don't look at what you are seeing. You look at the monster and then you punch it or run away. When you play tennis you have to not get distracted by the other player. Look at the ball, because in the end it is the ball you have to return. That is the game. If you concentrate on the ball, then you can return it. But there are many excuses for not looking at the ball, like the presence of a big tennis star. If you don't want to play tennis the usual way, if you want to play the game of looking at the person, that's another way to play.

The reason mind consciousness can know and the sense consciousnesses can't, is that it has manas, the reflecting capacity; it can think. However, manas is such an important, wonderful thing which makes possible objective knowledge, and it says, "Hey, this is the center of objective knowledge." It is ego-centered. This egocentric pride at being so important at accomplishing this great task distorts and converts what is coming in. The mind consciousness then has an experience of an ego-defiled, distorted thing and this is what it knows. That knowledge creates an impression which is laid down right away. At the time it took this stuff in, it had a certain context which was created by the maturing of the dispositions created by the impressions of past distorted experiences. That which is coming up to create the context and the frame of mind is distorted and that which is coming in is being distorted. That is the process.

Now let's read the text and see if it says the same thing:

*Whatever indeed is the variety of ideas of self and elements that prevails, it occurs in the transformation of consciousness. Such transformation is threefold, namely the resultant, what is called mentation, [is called thinking,] as well as the concept of the object. Herein, the consciousness called Alaya, with all its seeds is the resultant. It is unidentified in terms of concepts of object and location and is always possessed of activities such as contact, attention, feeling, perception and volition .*

And I would add samadhi, decision. Also, it always has feeling which is threefold. However, as you will see in the next verse, in this situation it is only one-fold. Basically, there are positive, negative and neutral feelings, the second skandha. In other words, in every moment of consciousness there is a capacity to judge; it says this is positive, negative or neutral. There is always contact, which means that the consciousness is in contact with its causes and particularly, organ and object. There is perception, samjña, which can also be called conception. There is volition, which is actually the definition of thinking. Volition is not thinking; it is the definition of thinking. “Attention” is whatever has been chosen by another dharma which is always present—decision, or adverting the consciousness. Consciousness adverts to some object within its potential field. Consciousness has lots of possible objects available in the universe and it chooses one every moment. Once it chooses the object, it bends or warps itself over toward the concept and focuses on it. Decision, bending the mind, and concentration are always present. These things are happening in alaya. They also leave impressions or seeds in the unconscious.

*In this context [of Alaya] the neutral feeling is uninterrupted and not defined, So are contact and so on, and it proceeds like the current of a stream. Its dissipation occurs in Arhatship. Associated with this process and depending upon it occurs the consciousness called manas, which is of the nature of mentation [thinking].*

Before I go on to the next verse, are there any questions on the first five?

Q: You said “volition” is the definition of thinking?

Tenshin Anderson: Yes.

Q: So you already had thinking before you got to mentation?

TA: No, I didn’t say it was thinking, it was the **definition** of thinking. So the actual activity of thinking is this reflecting capacity, but the definition of thinking is volition. The Sanskrit word for volition or impulse is *Cetana*. One definition I have heard is “the synergy of the consciousness,” the synergy of all the dispositions that arise with the capacity of discrimination and knowing. The Chinese character for *cetana* is *shi*... This along with this character *ryo*

forms the compound *shiryo* which is the term used for thinking in the famous koan “Think of not-thinking.” This character which is used for translating *cetana*, volition, means measure or calculate. Putting the word measure and calculate together with the word for volition or the definition of thinking; the combination means thinking. “Thinking” is a combination of reflection and some pattern. This compound is nice because the top part is a character which also means the pattern of a rice paddy, and the bottom part is mind. So volition and mind is a pattern of mind. Volition means the way a mind seems to be going, a pattern in the mind. I sometimes use the expression “the watershed of mind.” Mind has a certain pattern or shape. If you looked at mind or for instance poured water over the mind, where would the water seem to be flowing? Or if you see my body moving in one direction and my head looking in the opposite direction, where do I seem to be going? I seem to be going one way but actually I’m not going that way; I just look like I’m going that way. The volition or impulse of my body is that I seem to be going that way. You put that impulsive appearance, that shape, that pattern together with reflection and that’s thinking. *Cetana* defines the type of thinking that will happen. Every set of dispositions will have a shape.

Q: By “dispositions” do you mean “mental functions?”

TA: Yes. *Samskara*, the fourth skandha, literally means things that are made. In a given moment of experience you have the five skandhas, all the things in the dharmadhatu, all the dispositions. They are made by the activity of taking things in, creating a sense of self and then thinking that the self does things.

That creates samskaras which then are laid down in the alaya. According to the process of maturation, some of the samskaras come back up in the next moment and accompany the next experience. Things are taken in, reflected and thereby defiled by egocentricity. Because of egocentricity there is also the idea that this person can do something, which creates karmic formations. This is one of the main ways that the defiling activity of egocentricity occurs. It is a complex, many dimensional process.

The knowing capacity never arises by itself. It always comes up with many things—decision, concentration, leaning, feeling, a pattern, contact. It causes them and they cause it. Its quality is affected by each of these presences and each of them is also affected by all the others. All these things are coming together to make this happen but because of the reflecting capacity of the self, it seems that **I'm** doing this. **I'm** thinking this, **I'm** angry and now I'm going to punch or now **I'm** going to speak. That's karma. That way of seeing things, that way of being also creates karmic “stuff” that gets laid down in alaya. It has a certain patterning effect and that pattern gets brought up again and reflected. It is constantly changing and it becomes the definition of what is then called thinking and then the person acts upon this thinking.

RF: Going back to the tennis example, I understand the idea of keeping your eye on the ball. What I don't understand is how to practice it internally. I don't understand keeping your eye on the ball in that sense.

TA: If you practice keeping your eye on the ball when you're playing tennis, you find out that you don't, right?

RF: Well, I don't know.

TA: Well, hopefully you would find that out because you don't. You look at a lot of other stuff too. Depending who you are playing with, you have a different take on the game, which shows that you're not just looking at the tennis ball.

RF: But sometimes it **does** help to know who you are playing! It is relevant to know!

TA: See that is the way you think! You don't really keep your eye on the ball. That is what I just told you.

RF: No! Even if you keep your eye on the ball if you know that your opponent has a weak back hand then you could choose to hit the ball to that place in the court.

TA: See, you do not follow the instruction of keeping your eye on the ball. You are keeping your eye on the person because you think it's good to look at the person.

RF: Not necessarily. I just want to know how all this applies. I want to see what the ball is outside of the analogy of tennis. What is the ball?

TA: I'm telling you how it applies and I will do it one more time. The name of the game is look at the ball and you said that you don't see how it applies to yourself.

RF: I want to see what the ball is outside of the analogy of tennis.

TA: This is what people do in the study of doctrinal presentation. They don't want to look at the doctrine itself, they want to look at other things. You have to concentrate on the ball. The ball in tennis is the ball.

You do look at something besides the ball. If I tell you to look at your breath or study the functioning of manas, you will do the same thing that you do when I give you the instruction of looking at the ball. You won't look at it, you will look at other things and you will have good reasons why you are looking at those things. To the extent to which you will not follow the instruction in tennis and in golf, you will transfer your lack of faith to your analysis of your internal states. If I say to just concentrate on your breath or just concentrate on your posture or just think not thinking, whatever the instruction is, to the extent you will not follow the instruction externally in a dialogue, you will transfer that lack of faith inwardly. That's why it's good to talk to people; we find out that you refuse to follow the ball because you think, “I don't know what the ball is.” I am talking to you about the tennis ball and you start talking about the person and giving excuses why you should think of the person.



RF: What I intended to say was that I wasn't getting it on this level of tennis and that in this practice are we talking about posture or breath or....

TA: If you can't get it on the level of tennis you won't be able to get it on the level of golf, meditation or anything else. And that response is a part of it. Your faith is breaking down right now.

RF: I understand the concept of keeping your eye on the ball.

TA: And I said that if you try to practice that, what you will find out is that you do not keep your eye on the ball. So if you do that practice of keeping your eye on the ball in tennis you will notice that you don't. So if I tell you to keep your eye on your breath or if I tell you to meditate on pain or be aware of the reflecting capacity of mind or if I tell you to watch the dispositions that are arising, anything I tell you, you won't do it. Something else will happen and that is how you practice tennis. You don't follow the instruction in tennis and you apply inwardly the same lack of concentration.

What is the ball in this text? The three transformations of consciousness are one ball. Another ball is—can you watch how the sense of self is born constantly? The self is the ball. Concentrate on the self. The afflictions can be the ball. You get to decide. You are the coach, you are the player, the game is constantly redefined. You get to decide what you concentrate on but you will notice that you can't. That is why it is useful to externalize this process. If I say to go read a book on such and such, unless you externalize your study and tell me or somebody else what you are thinking, you won't necessarily find out that you are not paying attention to what you are studying. You can't find out that you are not following the instruction. You are studying the self but you are not looking at the self. You are looking at the other, or you are confusing the other for the self and yourself for the other. You're not really playing the game.

If you can play the game externally and you can demonstrate that actually you are following the instruction of following the ball and you are not looking at the other player, then the teacher might say, "now look at the other player and don't look at the ball anymore" or "now go back to looking at the ball" or whatever. If you can follow that instruction externally then you can follow an internal instruction. Almost no one can help you follow the internal instructions unless you talk to them, and then you and they can see how you follow external instructions. Do you actually watch the self all the time, do you see it? What have you found out? Have you found the afflictions that accompany it? Can you see how the self defiles everything that you take in? Can you observe these things? Have you decided to look at these things or not? Can you see how the other defines the self? Are you watching these kinds of things? Which one are you watching? Are you experiencing the psycho-physical effects of the interaction between self and other? Can you experience the gain and loss of energy around the interface between self and other? Do you experience the interface between self and other?

Q: In terms of keeping your eye on the ball, you mentioned something that I didn't find in the text, about samadhi always being present. My experience is that samadhi is not always present.

TA: The definition of samadhi is *citta eka gatta* which means one-pointed consciousness. Consciousness is always one-pointed because it is always focused on the object of that moment. Since we think in terms of memory images you may notice that you are seeing one thing. This lays down an impression which then comes up later. Then seeing another thing gets laid down and comes up again later. In this way you can create a sense of memory. You look at the different moments of concentration and you notice that you are jumping from one thing to another. Then you say "My mind is not concentrated because I'm thinking of tractor, now I'm thinking of your face, now I'm listening to my voice, my mind is jumping all over the place." But actually, in a moment of experience it doesn't jump anywhere. It just has that experience and it is completely concentrated. So samadhi is actually an ever present quality of mind. However, if you entertain the stream of your memory and your version of history, then your version may be "I'm not concentrated, I'm distracted, I'm jumping from one thing to another." That can be the story you tell. That is not concentration, that's a story about your concentration, made up of momentary events where you were concentrated. The first definition of samadhi, the one in the text, is that it is always

present, that the mind is always focused. It is never distracted and sort of paying attention; it is always paying attention.

There are also at least two other meanings of samadhi. One of them is the practice to develop a sense that you are concentrated, to develop an appreciation of your concentration. You willfully, obsessively, and compulsively choose some topic and try to bring your mind back to it. The effect of that karmic act of choosing a concentration object and coming back to it over and over again will be to concentrate on one thing. You keep coming back to your breath or your posture or cutting vegetables. You keep coming back to that again and again and you have a feeling like “Oh, there is some ongoing concentration here.” That feeling starts to overcome the sense of jumping from thing to thing and after awhile you think, “Hey, I am concentrated.” That is another meaning of samadhi and people sometimes feel like “Well, I do have that” or “I don’t have that.” That cultivation of samadhi, that concentration practice is really just to help you appreciate the actual stability of your mind which you already have, which is always there. In other words it is to help you appreciate the nature of your mind. The reason for samadhi practice in this sense of cultivation of stability is so that you can experience deeply that the mind is always imperturbable, that it is never moving.

The third meaning of samadhi is that you absorb yourself in some teaching or some reality; the samadhi of some vision or of some kind of faith practice or of meditating on the mind where alaya is dissipated, absorbing yourself in the mind of an arhat. This is another kind of samadhi. The difference between this and the last case is that here you have realized samadhi and you no longer have to work to get yourself concentrated. You just look at something and immediately you are concentrated. In other words you have realized that the mind is concentrated. You no longer have to cultivate concentration; you have realized concentration. You didn’t create concentration; the mind is naturally concentrated and you realize it. You use that concentrated quality of mind to look at things so that there is stability in your vision. Then you take that concentration and apply it to some meditation topic in which you either have insight or wish to develop insight.

That’s why some realization of the stabilization of mind is very helpful if you are going to enter into the realm of the *Thirty Verses* or the realm of a story—a Zen story, a sports story, or a story of your relationship to somebody else, in other words the self-fulfilling samadhi. If you are going to go into the self-fulfilling samadhi, it’s not just like “Hey, here I am,” it’s more like “Hey, here I am and there she is and we are interacting and it’s really a mess and I have all these feelings.” The self-fulfilling samadhi has demons and terrible things and wonderful things happening and it’s very rapidly changing. That’s the world of self and other and it’s really alive when the self is scaring you and exciting you and you’re noticing all this up and down. When you enter that realm it’s good if you are very stable so you can see each little facet of it with stability. Even if someone is screaming at you, you see that actually, nothing is moving. You are absorbed in the meditation of how it is that this person seems to be moving, and gyrating and all these effects are happening to you. This person’s obnoxiousness is actually fulfilling your sense of self, and you can see that when you’re stable.

That is why you practice uprightness. Uprightness is the gate through which you enter this dynamic study, the study of what doesn’t really exist. What doesn’t really exist is self and other, “me and the ball.” It doesn’t really exist but it’s a very scary situation. If you have uprightness and stability you can enter into that dynamic, and stay present and do pretty well. The more you enter into certain dynamic situations like that, of appearances which don’t really exist, the more skillful you get. Primarily, you get skillful by noticing mistakes, noticing how you lose confidence in your stability.

Once when I was offering incense, I realized the stability of mind. I was in the *kaisando* at Zen Center and as I watched my hand move through space, I noticed that nothing moved. It’s not that I got myself to not move and to concentrate on something, I just realized that even in the midst of movement there was stillness. You can enter into a dynamic dance with other beings and still feel the stillness all the

way through. Then you use that samadhi, that presence, that uprightness to meditate on the relationship between yourself and incense, yourself and your friends, yourself and tennis balls. Then you can learn that the nature of what seems to be self and other and movement is another kind of self and other.

Q: In the Yogacara or any other Buddhist epistemology is there is any idea of temporal sequence of reflective capacity and then the accompaniment of the dispositions? Is it possible to intervene, for the mind to see what is reflected before the dispositions arise?

TA: Temporal sequence, temporal sequence as no temporal sequence was taught by the Buddha. There is no such thing as temporal sequence. The only way you could experience temporal sequence would be in the present. There is no way to experience two different moments at once. That's a story I just told you. Although I said that there is no way to do it, no one disagrees with it. You have one experience, it changes and then you have another experience. You use a series of experiences to create a temporal sequence, but the way you do that is that these experiences get laid down in alaya, and alaya pops up the sequence. So you look and then one, two, three, there is a sequence, time. Temporality is something you experience in the present. The history of the universe is something you speak about now. There is karmic lawfulness about how you do that and if you concentrate on that process it will reveal to you the inner workings of sequential processes. They are not actual but they are lawful.

Q: Even though they are not actual, is there a story about the arising of reflective consciousness and it's accompaniment that appears sequential in the Yogacara theory? Is there a way of working with that to help free you from delusion?

TA: One of the main dispositions is that there is a sequence. That disposition of sequential temporality gets projected onto current events as a distorting factor. All the things that happen in our experience are simultaneous. However, it is important that in our simultaneous experience, which is all we've got, there is the experience of history. The disposition of the experience of history in the present has no temporal relationship in terms of sequence to the experience of that history. So the arising of reflection, the defiling activity, the creation of dispositions and the laying down of dispositions seem like a sequence. First there is the subconscious, then there is the arising out of the subconscious of the reflecting capacity. The reflecting capacity then reflects one of those seeds which has matured from the unconscious, and the mind knows it. In association with this reflection a sense of self is born, and it defiles the impressions that the mind knows. All this creates an impression which is then laid back down in the consciousness. All that happens, and it is simultaneous. The history of the universe is simultaneous with itself.

This is supposedly a liberating vision. If you analyze this and analyze how you don't believe it, you can isolate how you don't believe this story and then investigate your reasons for not believing it. Then you can see if they actually hold up. Then you can do the same thing to your own experience and you will stop being caught by sequential time and when you stop being caught by sequential time you'll stop being caught by karma. You'll stop being caught by the definition of action because the definition of action is that this seems to be going somewhere.

There seems to be a sequence here. See it? You'll stop being caught by the illusion of sequence. When somebody says, "one-two-three-four," you'll see that they are saying that right now. You can't say "one-two-three-four" right now but you can vision one-two-three-four in a flash of experience. You can't say "one-two-three-four." That takes several experiences. Many experiences happened when I just did that and in each one you can encapsulate much more of a sequence than that. The mind has concepts of one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight and larger numbers and we can go for it and grab them just like that, the whole thing, or part of it or twice it and so on. It all happens in the present. If you can catch that and catch that you don't believe it and analyze your disbelief and analyze your belief, then you get freed from the sense of sequential time which means you get freed from karma.

Our practice testifies to freedom from karma because we do something that has no sequentiality to it. We sit but not because of the effect it has. Of course we want to be happy; we want to be even happier than we are now and we want other people to be happy. The way to be happy is to be free from the idea of some later happiness, and also free from present happiness. Don't do things even to get present happiness. Do things to do things. If you actually practice that way, this is an act which is free from karma. If you can actually sit for only one reason, that is, sit for zazen, this saves all sentient beings because beings are chained to sequential temporality, which is "you do zazen and then you get happy." To sit for no other reason than to just sit is a testimony that you don't believe in sequential time, that you don't believe in karma. "I haven't actually analyzed that and had a direct insight into the stupidity of karma but in the mean time I'm going to do a practice which I would do if I did understand that, namely just sitting, doing something for no karmic advantage." This will give you the greatest karmic advantage of all in that it will free you from karma as soon as you do it. On the spot you'll be free from karma and you won't get anything out of it which exactly proves that you are free from karma. If you get anything out of it then it's more karma.

Roberto Amador: You tell me to look at the ball, but I'm not going to look at the ball because that is just the nature of the way I respond. Then if you give me a different instruction, or I give myself a different instruction to trick myself, would that eventually lead me to see that the name of the game is to look at the ball? Would I exhaust myself doing a bunch of other stuff before I realize that, or could you trick me somehow?

TA: This is a good example. This shows how you can use something external. If you said, "I don't want to look at the ball, I want to look at the girls," then we say "Ok, look at the girls." Then you look at the girls, but pretty soon you start looking at the boys. Then I say "you said you wanted to look at the girls." You say "I know but I got bored. I want to look at the boys a little bit." Well, what's the reason? You probably have lots of reasons why you're looking at the boys. Then we start analyzing those reasons and we find that you don't even believe in the reasons. Finally you might come back and look at the girls but even when you come back, and say "ok now I see, you're right, I should look at the girls," you will have distractions. We can talk about them and examine them and see how you keep veering away from what you agree would be a good idea.

You get to choose. If you choose a really bad thing and stay on that road it will work out. You can become enlightened by studying the wrong thing. In the process we will examine all the variations and that will protect the process of goodness and illumination. In the end it doesn't matter what you pick. If you are thorough enough, you can pick anything. I thought that was a good instruction, keep your eye on the ball. But we could choose something else, we would get enlightened no matter what we choose. You might not ever be a good tennis player if you don't concentrate on the ball, but you might become a great Buddha by concentrating on the grass or the net or the girls or the TV announcers. Anything you choose, once we agree on it, then that is it and we can learn. The process of study can use anything as its topic.

Q: Are all three transformations in the story you told? Where is the concept of the object?

TA: The concept of the object is that what is reflected by the activity of manas is external and therefore it can be known. Nothing can be known to consciousness unless it is external, so it has to be reflected. Someone asked whether when this thing is reflected, does it have to be labeled to be known? Whatever is reflected out there is a concept of the object, and a concept is a label of something. Something is happening and you pull up a label out of alaya, which is not what is happening, but the label is what gets reflected. A label is a concept, like Abraham Lincoln is a label for a whole bunch of stuff. Abraham Lincoln is a concept, a visual-verbal-mental concept for a bunch of stuff. So whatever you know has to be a word or language because it is a symbol for something else.

Q: You keep using the phrase "The reflections are laid down." What causes it to be laid down? How does that occur?

TA: There isn't something in the mind which goes over and grabs the impression and walks over to alaya and slaps it on there. Alaya is proposed as something which embraces its subconscious. There isn't another function called laying down.

Q: "Laying down" seems to be a significant part of what is happening. It lays down and comes up later and defiles what is going on, giving us a distorted view?

TA: Yes, but I'm not saying that Alaya has an **activity** called pulling it down to itself or exuding it up.

Q: Well I am wondering what that activity is?

TA: If you want to call it "activity," then it's the activity of getting laid down and of maturing and rising up. Maybe a better way to say it than "laying it down" or "pulling it up" is that alaya can be a basis or it can be what is laid down upon. It can be very useful to meditate on the dynamic between something that gets laid down upon and something that is the basis for things. So the activity of reflection uses alaya as its base. All the dispositions have alaya as their base but alaya is also something that gets laid down upon. There is a dynamic there of getting laid down upon and being a basis; receiving the impressions and then being a ground from which people can step forward into delusion. That is another dynamic and you can meditate on that. Maybe that will save you from trying to figure out how this stuff gets laid down and pulled up.

### Class 7

October 29, 1994

...the real living drama of your delusion is just spontaneously immediately non-discursively delivered to you by dependent co-arising. Uprightness is the way to enter that realm. Of course if anybody wants to try another way that's fine too.....any idea you have of uprightiness is not uprightiness .

[now class starts]

*Verse 5. Alaya's dissipation occurs in arhatship. Associated with this process and depending upon it occurs the consciousness called manas, which is of the nature of thinking, or reflecting.*

*Verse 6. Endowed with the four types of defilements, constantly concealed and undefined, involving self-view, self-confusion, self-esteem and self-love.*

I think it would be good to work on verses 5 and 6 for a little while. You might have some questions about what it means to say *its dissipation occurs in arhatship*. Let's be clear about the meaning of "dissipation" in Verse 5. The Sanskrit word translated as dissipation is *vyavrttir*. *Vrtti* basically means to turn. Alaya's turning or revolution occurs in arhatship. It also occurs in advanced, irreversible bodhisattvas. It turns from being an obscuring field to either just a regular *vijñāna* or in the case of a Bodhisattva, great mirror-like wisdom. In arhats, the lineage of the process of obscuration is cut.

"Obscuration" refers to the defiling impressions or effects of selfhood, ego distortions that form the dispositions—customary, fixed ways of relating to things based on our own ego view. These dispositions that have been laid down in *alaya* over a long period of time are penetrated and cut through. As one continues to live after this revolution of consciousness, basic functions of the ego are intact but the defiling activity of the ego is cut off. In other words, the defiling activity associated with the functioning of *manas* is discontinued. That's why it says in verse 7 that *manas* "is not found in the worthy one." The arhat doesn't have the defiling function of *manas*. Arhats do not lay down more dispositions. They have been able to meditate on the dispositions so thoroughly that they have been relieved of them. When *alaya* is no longer being used as a source for the activation of dispositions and the distortion of the ego is not creating more dispositions to be laid down, this lineage, this process of defilement and resorting to the defilement in the process of perception is cut.

Let's go on to verse 6: *Endowed with the four types of defilement, constantly concealed and undefined....* Speaking of self-view as an affliction means that first we have a view of self and then we view all other things through that self. Employing self view in this way is what is meant by the affliction of self-view. Self-view in and of itself is not an affliction, but we use our sense of self inappropriately; we over-use it. Interpreting experience in terms of self is the source of our suffering. It is possible to have self-view and not use it in this way. Of course, this requires great meditative skill and understanding.

To say that we have self-view means that we have a view of what we are and what we are not. This view may be clear or unclear. We have a view, a sense of where we start and where we end. Our vision of these boundaries also may or may not be clear. With such a self-view we can feel insulted or complemented, we can feel respected or disrespected. Our feeling depends on our interpretation of the events that arise at the boundaries of self. We use our self-view to feel that someone is angry at us, and to be hurt by that because we love the self. In this way, we're driven and afflicted by this view of the self.

If we look for our self we might say "I found it. This is it. It is this thing." But determining that the self is a thing is an expression of incomplete study of the self. If we are upright and look for and examine the self, we won't be so successful at finding such a thing. Being upright includes a rational discussion, a thorough conversation with oneself or with somebody else about the nature of ones self. What we can find is elements of experience in a field of obscurity. We might realize some experience of what is called *alaya* which contains all the effects of zillions of moments of laying down the results of self-clinging; clinging to something that we really didn't have in the first place, but we thought we did because of biased and incomplete study of self. Dogen Zenji recommends that we try to find the beginning and the end of the self. If we are really thorough about this we will be unsuccessful. This thorough study is the spirit of uprightness. Being unsuccessful in finding (some independent thing called) a self is the self-fulfilling awareness of all Buddhas. This is the realm of awareness in which the dissipation or revolution of *alaya* is realized.

In *Shobogenzo Zenki*,<sup>4</sup> Dogen says life is like riding in a boat. You get in the boat and you work the oars and put the sail up and steer with the rudder. However, nobody could ride in a boat without the boat. On the other hand, your being in the boat makes the boat what it is. A boat is not something that people don't ride in. You can't play with the boat unless there is a boat and your riding in it makes it the boat. In that situation, the whole world becomes the world of the boat. The whole ocean and the mountains and the sky all become the world of the boat. This is the world you're working, but also you wouldn't be able to work that world if it weren't for the boat and the world, and so on. Dogen says "quietly and thoroughly examine such a moment." All moments are really like that. You make them happen, you participate with them.

If you look at the self in this way, if you follow through on what's going on there, you'll find out that you make the self and the self makes you. You use certain things to make the self and certain things are used to make you, your experience. If you analyze back and forth like this, pretty soon you realize there's no such thing as a boat or you or the ocean; it's all one dependently co-arisen world, a blooming, ungraspable, inconceivable situation. You will no longer be able to find a boat aside from yourself, because you make the boat and the boat makes you.

You will not be able to find a self aside from yourself, aside from your processes of thinking about it and how you use it. You won't be able to find it; it's undefinable. The only way you can have a self is to have a limit to yourself and thus an other. The other is an indispensable condition for the self. The meaning of self cannot be fully realized without the other. Anything that is a condition for the arising of something and is always there with it, is identical to it. So the self is identical with what it isn't. In this

---

<sup>4</sup> "Total Dynamic Working," or "The Whole Works." See *Shobogenzo, Zen Essays by Dogen*, translated by Thomas Cleary

way, the nature of the self is completely contradictory. It is self-identical with what is not itself. When we contemplate the contradictory nature of the self we may feel confused. It may be easier for us to think of a self that exists independently rather than in such dynamic contradictory interdependence on another. Imagining such an independent self may give the illusion of a self that can be grasped objectively and therefore we may feel some sense of clarity. But this is actually a deeper and darker confusion than what we feel in the face of the illusive and ungraspable nature of self.

The self takes credit for the reflective and thinking capacities of the mind. It also takes credit for the fact that the mind can know objects, because it only knows external things. The coordination of the whole process of perceiving and knowing objects is attributed to the self. The self can say “I’m coordinating the second and third transformations.” Before the 2nd and 3rd transformations are realized, there can be no sense of self. Although the sense of self dependently co-arises with the 2nd and 3rd transformations, the self acts as though it were independent of these transformations. As soon as the reflection comes up there’s a sense of identity and then the self takes credit for the arising of what gave rise to it. It also takes credit for coordinating interactions between the reflection and the external concepts by which the knowledge occurs. Then it has proof that it exists because it lies down in and arises from *alaya’s* sense of continuity. *Alaya* is also made into a substantial thing because it becomes the ground upon which the self is laid down. The self becomes substantial by association with a substantialized *alaya* and *alaya* becomes substantial by being the storehouse for the substantialized self. You can’t really get hold of self but in this way we develop a belief in it. This is how self-view becomes an affliction.

Self-pride arises because of the wonderful functions attributed to the self and then self-love arises because it’s such a precious thing, because it can die. It dies at the limit of itself; right on the other side of itself is death. It is by definition a very precious thing. The self is defined by pride, by its supposed great accomplishments. It’s not a low quality thing. It’s an almost transcendent thing, a luminous thing. There’s an archetype called the self, a bright shining archetype. It’s closely related to reality and it’s closely related to delusion. The self is the pivot where we turn from viewing delusion to viewing Dharma.

When people hear of the teaching of no-self, anatman, and hear that belief in the existence of an independent self is the source of our suffering, they often come to the conclusion that there is no self, or that if there is, we should get rid of it. But this is not so. The self, like all other manifestations of life, is inconceivably precious. Of course, we must study the self and understand its dependent co-arising in order to realize Buddha’s Way. The concept of self has been used for a long time and now it’s a well established tradition and it must be honored. Every normal human being (except very young children) who has a sense of self consciously or unconsciously esteems the self. In the process of socialization many people come to reject or deny self-esteem, even to the point of despising themselves. The great irony is that this self rejection is based on a more fundamental self-esteem and self-love which one may or may not be conscious of. One rejects the self as a strategy to protect the self. So it’s good to get in touch with and develop our awareness of our basic self-esteem.

A monk asked me “Why do I take the world as myself?” I said that he was right. This is the reverse of what we usually do. Usually we take the world as other. But the world we take is always the world of ourself. The world really is greater than ourself, but for ourself the world is always ourself. If the monk actually understood the world for himself he would be in the self-fulfilling samadhi. When you really take everybody and everything as yourself, not just thinking that, but actually viscerally feeling that way, your self is fulfilled. That’s the self you can completely enjoy. The self of “I’m over here and all the others are over there” is always anxious and suffering. Whether the self is attacked or treated with love and affection it still feels some anxiety. The awareness that sees the whole world as the self, including seeing the self as the self, has entered the self-fulfilling awareness. Being upright is the entrance into this awareness. To continue to be upright in the face of all this being you, is the gate to liberation.

There are heavy duty rigid processes which are laid down and create dispositions, the habitual emotional responses of greed, hate and delusion. By virtue of your dispositions, when you tune in a particular stimulus, you'll always get a particular response. This is bondage. *Alaya* is the source of and is overlaid by such dispositions. In our daily life, as we are walking along, suddenly a disposition matures. We're sitting ducks! We think "Oh, that person came down here and insulted me," and then we feel a certain way. The interpretation of the insult and the way we feel is a maturing of past rigidities which were laid down and are just now coming up and then that's our frame of mind. So whatever happens, we're disposed to think in that way.

If we analyze the process of the self and how we believe in it, and try to find it and also watch the afflictions, we're getting at the root of what lays down the dispositions. If we get at this root, we can apply the same process to the dispositions when they come up, plus we stop laying them down. Working with the afflictions and studying the self and being unsuccessful at studying the self and realizing that the self is really you or the boat, whichever one you want, focusing on dependent co-arising of the self and other, that is the meditation instruction which I infer from verse 6. This meditation is a primary condition for the gradual dissipation or reversion of *alaya*. This is how we become free from the dispositions. We are now no longer sitting or transmigrating ducks.

Even before this long process of transforming all the dispositions is completed, bodhisattvas can have many encouraging insights. It isn't until advanced bodhisattvahood that one reaches the stage where *alaya* actually turns and stops being obscuring and dumping dispositions on us. An eighth level bodhisattva is like Manjushri Bodhisattva—that kind of a person, bodhisattvas who are beyond all karma. They've done something similar to what arhats do, they don't have any more striving. They're really advanced, irreversible bodhisattvas. Some scholars say that Nagarjuna just reached stage one. He was a Buddha, but in terms of stages of development as a bodhisattva, he wasn't that high. The wonder of Zen practice is that it is actually the ninth stage. We do a practice which manifests and directly points to a realization far beyond our personal achievement.

In a scripture where Buddha talked about *alaya*,<sup>5</sup> he said "Human progeny are delighted by *alaya*, excited by *alaya*. By these progeny delighting in *alaya*, delighted by *alaya* and excited by *alaya*, the dependent co-arising of situations is not easily perceived." In our usual way of being, as we are walking around in the world, we're delighted by *alaya*. Delighting in *alaya* means that we regard the objects of our awareness as independent things. That is to say, we ignore the dependent co-arising of *alaya* and its contents. *Alaya*, the storehouse of all objects which we regard as existing independently, comes to be a synonym for the defiled attitudes that are stored in it.

Originally, *alaya* is undefiled and neutral. It's just the capacity of the mind to accumulate the results of its own functioning. But as it stores defiling attitudes, it gradually becomes the source and hitching post for defilement. These defiling views obstruct our vision of interdependence. Then the fruit of those views are laid down into *alaya* and *alaya* becomes the seedbed for the sprouting of further defiling views, the results of which are in turn laid back down in *alaya*. By this process we come to speak of *alaya* itself as obstructing our vision.

In this way, *alaya* comes to be the awareness of the objects I see as separate from myself, like you, like the table, like the mountains, the rivers. *Alaya* as a storehouse where the results of such obscuring vision are laid down, then in turn becomes the source for continued production of perceptions which obscure realization of interdependence. Through *alaya* we get anchored to the world of darkness and delusion in which interdependence is obscured. What does *alaya* obscure? It obscures the vision of our dependent co-arising. It obscures the fact that looking at you is a moment like riding in a boat. I can use my eyes and I can use the light bouncing off you and I have consciousness and I wouldn't be able to see

---

<sup>5</sup>Majjhim-nikaya 1.167



you if it weren't for you, but you wouldn't be there if it weren't for me. Without meditating on things that way, I just delight in people as objects.

An earlier English translation of this scripture reads "human progeny are delighted by sensual pleasure." The Pali word translated here as "sensual pleasure" is "*alaya*." The translator may have consulted with some Theravadin monks who recommended translating "*alaya*" as "sensual pleasure" because they knew that the kind of sensory experience which is seductive is that in which the object of experience is seen as independent.

Sensual pleasure means you have pleasure in substantial objects.

How does *alaya* come to you? *Alaya* is spoken of as a place where things are stored, a consciousness where things stick, where all your dispositions are laid down. When you have an experience, you don't have an experience of all of *alaya*. What do you have an experience of? You have the experience of one little chunk of *alaya* being reflected by your reflective capacity. You're thinking about one object among the infinite number of objects, like Sala or Carrie or Stuart. When you think about one little piece of *alaya* you can have sensual pleasure and you get excited by it. Because you're excited by Steve and Dorotea and red tablecloths and breakfast, because you're excited by these reflections which are arising up out of *alaya*, you don't see dependent co-arising. You don't see the situation of causation and therefore you don't see the appeasement of all dispositions. You don't see the relinquishment of all grasping, you don't see the waning of all craving and you don't see the cessation of craving and you don't see freedom. Human beings do that. They delight in *alaya* in the form of sensual pleasure.

Even with painful things, there is pleasure in the fact that our senses are functioning on an object. There is also misery because the sense of self is arising and the four afflictions are there. So we're constantly miserable and simultaneously we delight in sensual pleasure; they go together. But the misery is not what's obscuring the process. Misery is the result of the process being obscured. The obscuration is due to our looking at those little mirrors and saying "Wow, that's a thing existing by itself," rather than "What is that?" When we ask "What is it?" there is no sensual pleasure there. When we regard objects with the mind of "What is it?" we look at situations as if we're riding in a boat.

When you see through the process of the self, that the self isn't a boat, or it isn't you riding in a boat, it's a dynamic process. When you see things that way, you don't lay down any more dispositions. When dispositions come up and are reflected in your awareness, you study all the dispositions individually. You can't look down in *alaya* where the dispositions are laid. They just get brought up one by one from *alaya* and made into objects and then you get to see how there's a disposition. You see that "When that person talks to me that way, I do this." There's a dynamic there and if you can see that actually you're a person riding in a boat, you're tuning in to the dynamic.

The whole universe is working through this riding in a boat. The whole universe is working through this perception of the person. The whole universe is working through the way you hear this and the way you're hurt by it. If you tune into that you will penetrate and clarify the self and then you will see the appeasement of the dispositions. You will see dependent co-arising, you will see the relinquishment of all grasping, you will see the end of suffering. Through your uprightness, you will start to open up to the complexity of things and see this dance. This will start to open a little space around the attacks that are happening to you all the time.

Q: What does it mean when Vasubandhu says "*Alaya* is unidentified in terms of concepts and location?"

TA: It means that in *alaya* there are no locations, no addresses of things. In order for things to have an address or be identified you have to have a sense of self. You need to project the thing up into the reflection, make it an object. It has to be an object in order to be known. It has to be reflected in order to

be separated. Once it's separated, there's a location and there can be an identity and it can be known. Originally, in *alaya* there isn't any of this.

Q: Do the "dispositions" include all "wholesome psychological conditions" and the defilements discussed in verse 9?

TA: Yes. Imagine mind consciousness as a big canopy of knowing, over our mind, or as a sphere surrounding us. Or you could think of it as just a spot of knowing. The reflection can light up any part of the canopy. On that canopy can be the primary and secondary defilements, the universals. They all can get flashed up on that surface of knowledge by the activity of reflection. All the things that get flashed up there are the seeds from *alaya* which are dispositions and concepts. The canopy is a surface of knowing. It's a surface of knowing which is conceived of as external, but it's not of course, because it's your mind. Across this surface can be that list—anger, greed, concentration, positive and negative feelings. These things get flashed on a thin surface. It's just one concept thick; the thickness of the concept of object. There's a sense of awareness of these objects. They're swirling across the surface—all the things listed from verses 9 to 14. If the dharmas flashed up there were no longer dispositions, that is, if their dependent co-arising were understood, they could still be flashed upon the surface, but they would no longer be sources of bondage. They would just be appearing by dependent co-arising. When the dependent co-arising of things appears, one sees emptiness, and experiences freedom and infinite possibility.

Q: How do we practice with all this?

TA: What do we do? We practice uprightness. To look at our life with the question—"Where's the boat and the oar and the sail and the ocean?"—is not the way to study it. It's too artificial. That would just be imposing our dispositions onto the instruction. The instruction is "Be upright." In uprightness we're ready to see things differently. We're ready to not see boats as separate from our self riding, not you and me, not you being the doan and me being abbot, or you riding on my back down the street. In uprightness we're open to realize how if you are on my back, I couldn't be your carrier without you and you wouldn't be carried without me. It's being open to seeing things in this dynamic multi-causal mutually co-creating way. To force oneself to think that way is not as good as to just be upright and have it revealed. When it starts to be revealed, we will realize that "These people actually are me." Just deal with what's happening in an upright way and it will gradually turn into the self-fulfilling samadhi, the awareness which spontaneously realizes dependent co-arising. That's how you get from here to arhatship but you don't stop at arhatship, you keep going beyond the personal realization of the arhat.

## Sesshin Day 2 Dharma Talk

October 31, 1994

Although it has been said many times and in many places, let me say it again: in India, in China and in Japan, and in California, over all pervades and prevails the character of this school which is simply devotion to upright sitting, total engagement in sitting still. The zazen we speak of is not learning meditation. It is simply the Dharma Gate of Repose and Bliss.<sup>6</sup> "Learning meditation" means some practice that we might do to concentrate the mind. What I understand this to mean is that you do it in order to appreciate that your mind is concentrated. There is no exercise you can do to make yourself into a concentrated person; you already are. There are some practices you can do to make yourself feel that way. These practices are called "learning meditation," and generally speaking they are wholesome. Buddha taught these concentration methods which are called the *dhyanas* and the Zen school was named after these practices. People saw Bodhidharma and his disciples sitting and thought "Oh, they are practicing *dhyana*, they are practicing learning meditation techniques." So they called them "*dhyana* monks," "Zen

---

<sup>6</sup> *Fukanzazengi*, Dogen Zenji

monks.” But actually, they weren’t practicing *dhyana*, they were practicing the Dharma Gate of Repose and Bliss. They were practicing the total realization of complete enlightenment.

Of course, when involved in a concentration practice, one can simultaneously practice the Dharma gate of repose and bliss. Some people come to Zen centers and want to be Zen practitioners, and they do concentration practices. In our introductory instruction we give teaching which can be construed as learning meditation. I myself do not give that kind of instruction to beginners but some people do. For instance, following and counting the breath can be understood as practices to concentrate your mind. Sitting and thinking of recipes for lunch are not usually considered practices for concentrating the mind, but remembering recipes while you’re sitting could be a concentration technique. Sitting upright and memorizing the *Thirty Verses* could be a concentration method. Almost any kind of memorization work you do while you are sitting would concentrate your mind and would be wholesome. But that is not what we call sitting upright.

The content of upright sitting can be anything. To say that the content could be anything means that whatever appears is the treasury of true Dharma eyes. Anything can be the sublime mind of nirvana when experienced in upright sitting. It's not the content that is the criterion, it is the uprightness. It is the balanced state of mind that is the criterion. No matter what is manifesting in your mind, a recipe, a work project, something that happened earlier in the day, imagining the future, thinking of other places, focusing on your breath or posture. No matter what is appearing to you, to be upright in the midst of those appearances is the Dharma gate of repose and bliss. No matter what is happening, just to be clearly aware, the state of mind that no words reach, the state of mind that no traps or snares can catch, that is the upright mind of the Buddha Ancestors. You can sit and follow your breathing and count your breath, but in the midst of the activity of following your breathing, there should be a mind that is clearly aware.

Some people follow their breathing and are not clearly aware. They can be very rigid and closed and they will not allow themselves to be disturbed. They have just told themselves “do not be disturbed.” Such kinds of meditation, although they may be wholesome, are obsessive and compulsive. They are not open to whatever is presently appearing; they are not open to revelation. Uprightness is open to revelation. That is why I do not recommend in zazen that you follow your breathing, that you count your breathing, that you concentrate on your posture, or that you memorize the *Thirty Verses*, unless you are so agitated that those things would help you. I don't recommend them; I would rather allow them. You may use any opportunity to practice zazen.

In the lineage of Dogen Zenji, the content of upright sitting is called the immediate manifestation of the public case, Genjo Koan. Zen practice is to be upright in the middle of whatever you choose to do, such as following your breathing. The public case can even manifest as a compulsion; in the midst of your compulsion you can be upright. If you are trying to follow your breathing and are unable to, and get angry at yourself and start beating yourself up for not being able to do it, and you call yourself bad names because you are so distracted, and feel bad about yourself because you don't do what you say you want to do; in the midst of that, you’re always clearly aware and no words reach it. This is the Dharma gate of repose and bliss. Once its heart is grasped, you’re like a tiger when she enters the mountains, you’re like the dragon when he gains the water. Being upright is not about self improvement. To make your mind state better is OK. If you want to make your mind state worse, that’s all right also. What we are concerned with in sitting upright is to actually practice the total culmination of practice realization right now. Bodhisattvas vow to accomplish such realization for the welfare of all beings.

When Prajnatara, Bodhidharma's teacher, said “Breathing in I don't dwell in body/mind, breathing out I don't get entangled in myriad circumstances,”<sup>7</sup> he was aware of his breath but he wasn't focusing on his breath, he wasn't dwelling in his breath, his body. He was just aware of what was going on, but no

---

<sup>7</sup> *Book of Serenity, Case #3*

words reached his practice. He was just clearly aware. If you are clearly aware you will probably notice your breathing sometimes, but you might not. Your breath might not be an object of consciousness; that's ok. The important thing is not to dwell in the realms of body/mind of things that are appearing. If breath appears don't dwell in it. Don't attach to it. If it doesn't appear don't attach to its non appearance. Prajñānataara meant “breathing in and breathing out I'm clearly aware of what is going on” and no words reach this practice.

Someone told me that in zazen she thinks about work projects and I said that she could still be upright. It's also possible for someone who is concentrated on their breathing to be upright. It may be that the person who is thinking about work projects is more truly upright than the person who is successfully concentrated on the breath. Who knows? I have seen people who are really concentrated on their breath who are really rigid and compulsive, mean to themselves, and uncompassionate with themselves and with others. Some other people who are just going along with whatever is happening in their minds, whatever is appearing to their minds, are completely present, relaxed, and compassionate. They just stretch out and take a nap. In other words they are liberated. They don't have to do anything any more to be who they are—they just are. They are like the dragon in the water, the tiger in the mountains. This zazen is the manifestation of ultimate reality.

Someone asked for some contemporary and ancient examples. Here's the ancient one. A long time ago in India there was a person who was a great master of Zen before it was labeled “Zen.” In other words he was a practitioner of the Dharma gate of repose and bliss. His name was Jayata, number twenty in our lineage of Buddhas and Ancestors, Jayata Daiosho.<sup>8</sup> He was traveling around India teaching what sudden or immediate enlightenment, enlightenment where you don't use anything to get enlightened. You just are enlightened. He came into the famous Buddhist area called Rajagriha where there were lots of Buddhist monks. There was one group that liked to debate and their leader was a young ascetic. He was the guru of the group and he was intensely seeking enlightenment. He worshipped Buddha by prostrating himself before a Buddha image six times a day, he would never lie down, he always sat, he only ate once a day, he was pure and free from greed.

Jayata saw this group and wanted to enlighten the leader. He figured that if he enlightened the leader the group would join along with him. So he said to the group, “Your leader is quite an ascetic, but even if he does these ascetic self improvement practices for innumerable eons, he will never achieve enlightenment.” The group members said, “Well we think our teacher is pretty good, what's the matter with him?” Jayata said, “What he is doing is far from the Way, it's not efficacious for liberation. He is good at manipulating his mind states but he does not yet have clear awareness that no word ever reaches.” The group members said to Jayata Daiosho, “What virtue do you have that you can criticize our teacher?” Jayata said, “I don't seek enlightenment, nor am I deluded. I don't worship Buddha, nor am I disrespectful. I don't sit for long periods, nor am I lazy. I don't eat only once per day, nor am I a glutton. I'm not contented, nor am I greedy.” This is what is called uprightness. This is called – no words can reach this practice.

When the leader of the group heard this teaching he woke up and understood. His name was Vasubandhu and he became Jayata's disciple. Vasubandhu is our 21st Ancestor. He taught uprightness in the midst of studying the point of contact between awareness, object, and organ, where consciousness is born. This dynamic situation was the context of his teaching of the *Thirty Verses*. He practiced and taught uprightness in the midst of the dynamic workings of consciousness.

Now here's a contemporary example. Someone asked that I apply the *Thirty Verses* to zazen, but really, the way to do it is to apply zazen to the *Thirty Verses*. Zazen is the fundamental practice. The *Thirty Verses* is a field of study in which we can apply our zazen practice. It's about delusion and how that

---

<sup>8</sup> *Transmission of the Light, Dentoroku*

manifests, and about uprightness. The first 15 verses or so, teach about the transformation of consciousness and the etiology of the deluded belief in substantial existence, and how attachments and misery arise. The second half introduces the three own-beings, the own-natures, and the dynamics among them that elucidate suchness and the practice of upright sitting.

Someone told me about an experience she had while sitting, and I said “I think you had a taste of this uprightness, of just sitting. The second part of the *Thirty Verses* may help you understand your experience at that time.” Then she told me that sometimes a certain state arises and when she observes objects in that state, the objects seem wonderful. In the uprightness of her sitting, her heart is open and unprejudiced and at least for the moment, free of dispositions. She didn't mention that in other states where she is not upright and the dispositions are still influencing her, when she observes objects everything seems miserable.

When these kinds of charged states—where the dispositions are still working – come over us, we consciously or un-consciously feel anxious and tormented. The dispositions that manifest, bubble up out of the consciousness we call *alaya*. They mature and are our frame of mind. The dispositions that are manifesting are such that our experience is framed by them. Conditioned to think within that framework, we are enslaved by the dispositions. We think that some ideas are good and others are bad. Based on these deluded perceptions of good and bad (which arose in dependence on dispositions) we may then act and thus contribute to the mass of karmic hindrances. In this context, everything follows according to the laws of karmic causation. Uprightness has nothing to do with all this and is in fact freedom from all dispositions. Of course uprightness is inseparable from such occurrences of bondage and misery. Uprightness is the heart that watches and listens to this wonderfully miserable show, that's clearly aware of all these dynamics and how they work, and which learns from this material rather than running away from it.

Zazen is not learning to concentrate in order to improve yourself. Zazen is learning the backward step, learning the reverse of such selfish manipulations. Rather than do something to be enlightened, find enlightenment right here. Then if something called enlightenment appears, don't be concerned with it. Whatever appears to you is not grasped as it appears. In other words, you don't get involved in it, which means—when breathing in don't dwell in body/mind. Don't dwell in worldly body/mind, don't dwell in spiritual body/mind. You doubt everything, which means that you trust uprightness in the midst of everything. You trust uprightness rather than things. Even if the untrue appears, like self and other, you study it. You study everything, even the untrue. You study the self and how it comes to arise. To study the self in this way is to study the forgotten self.

The first part of the *Thirty Verses* can help you study and see how dispositions frame your experience. According to Vasubandhu, this is happening. Vasubandhu saw this. Now, in being upright, you can see it too. Thus Vasubandhu describes the arising of ill, bondage, and running around in cyclic existence. In the midst of all this, there can be a clear awareness, and none of these dispositions reach this awareness. In this awareness the dispositions are quiescent. This awareness is the Dharma gate of repose and bliss. What I call “awareness” is not consciousness; there's no trace of consciousness in this awareness. As our great ancestor Huike said, “Words can't reach it.” “Words can't reach it” means consciousness can't reach it either. No trap or snare can reach this upright awareness. It is an awareness in the midst of consciousness which consciousness can't reach. It is the radiant nature of consciousness. It is the gate of freedom from consciousness. Nothing can pull it out of consciousness. Nothing can put it into consciousness. It is always present and ready to be revealed. Total devotion to upright sitting means total devotion to this radiant clarity which no words, no human activity can reach. It's there ready to be discovered, revealed, witnessed, expressed and realized.

Here's another example of someone who seems to be practicing learning meditation. She was following her breathing and in her concentration she noticed that if she was very focused on her breathing,

the thoughts that were arising at the same time were far away. If she fuzzed out, the breath moved away and the thoughts came forward. She also experimented with a third state which was in between the first two, either switching back and forth between them or just sitting in limbo, wondering which one was better. That state was confusing and was exhausting, so she asked which state I would recommend. Then one of us said, "Whichever one is happening, be upright."

If I were going to be involved with the karma of choosing, I would probably choose the first state, being concentrated on breath. If you are going to dwell in body and mind that is a pretty good dwelling place. The second option didn't sound too bad either. Although she was fuzzing out and the state wasn't so concentrated, it had a softness to it, an openness to the revelations of the workings of the mind that is pretty good. To be able to be upright in the third state would be difficult because energy is getting drained by trying to decide which state to be in. You would have to be pretty sharp and have no words reaching you to be able to live in the third state, because the words that are trying to reach you are confusion and decisions, "which one is best, where am I?" etc. Energy is leaking fast. If you feel like your energy is leaking, you might anxiously wonder, "Oh, I'm getting weaker and weaker, how am I going to be upright?" You can be upright then too. The point is to practice uprightness in whatever state.

Where is it, when is it, how is it that the right Dharma is manifesting itself? Zazen is where and how the right Dharma manifests itself. The right Dharma is not waiting someplace out in the mountains, hesitant to manifest itself down here in the valley. The right Dharma is manifesting itself right now, everywhere. It is an all pervading right Dharma, it's the right Dharma that is everywhere all the time and never misses a beat. This is my joyful understanding of right Dharma which includes everything.

Will you allow the right Dharma to manifest, including where you are right now, what you are thinking and what you are feeling? At the time that the right Dharma is manifesting, dullness and distraction are struck aside. It doesn't mean that there is no dullness and distraction, but when the right Dharma manifests they are struck aside. They don't have to go anywhere to be struck aside; that's how radically struck aside they are. You don't have to push them or shove them - that's just more dullness and distraction. It's that they don't reach you, there is just clear awareness in the midst of dullness and distraction. This is what is meant by struck aside. You may not like dullness. I don't. But if I had my choice of whether to be in dullness where the right Dharma is manifesting or to be in some really great radiant state where the right Dharma wasn't manifesting I would choose the former. Even states of radiance are struck aside and dropped off when the right Dharma is manifesting. This itself is the great radiance. Actually, the right Dharma is manifesting in whatever state you are in. No matter what label you put on the state, words don't reach the realm of right Dharma. No label can reach the right Dharma of yourself, there is no thought you can think about your state that is going to hinder the right Dharma or facilitate it. It manifests everywhere with no prejudice. Zazen is the testament, the conviction, the expression of faith that the right Dharma is manifesting right here, right now.

Vasubandhu had good dispositions, but he was not free of them. You can get better and better good karma and it will never liberate you. Actually, it gets harder and harder to be liberated the more good karma we accumulate. We are wasting time in which we could be practicing Buddhism. Whatever we choose to do, let's not miss the opportunity to witness and testify to the right dharma manifesting right here. We can call the witnessing whatever we want. I call it uprightness. I call it just sitting and that is what I am totally devoted to. I have never been disappointed when I have followed through on my devotion. Sometimes I am disappointed that I don't follow through on my devotion but in the midst of my disappointment with my laziness, I decide to use my mistake as my return ticket to devotion.

Vasubandhu tried a lot of tricks, and he was good at them. Some of you may be as good as him or not so good but that is not the point. The point is to be upright no matter what you are up to. The point is to practice a way that directly indicates the gate of total freedom for all beings.

OK? Thank you.

## Sesshin Day 3 Dharma Talk

November 1, 1994

One of the Buddha Ancestors whose name we say every morning is Manora, or Manorhita Daiocho. He went to study with Vasubandhu and asked him, "What is the enlightenment of all the Buddhas?"

Vasubandhu said, "It is the fundamental nature of the mind."

Manorhita said, "What is the fundamental nature of mind?"

Vasubandhu said, "It is the emptiness of the six sense organs, the six sense fields and the six sense consciousnesses."

Hearing this, Manorhita awakened and the enlightenment of all Buddhas was realized. The fundamental nature of mind, Vasubandhu said, is the emptiness of the six sense organs, the six sense fields and the six sense consciousnesses. You can also say that the fundamental nature of mind is the interdependence and dependent co-arising of these 18 realms; how they appear and disappear together. Vasubandhu wanted to teach the insubstantiality of the elements and thereby teach the fundamental nature of the mind and the enlightenment of all Buddhas. In the *Thirty Verses*, he says he teaches the insubstantiality of all elements in order to establish the three fold insubstantiality of the three types of substances. I hope to discuss these three types of substances and their insubstantiality.

Now I want to tune in again with you to this mind which has no involvements, which doesn't dwell in body or mind. If I try to convey to you Vasubandhu's teaching, since we are alive, listening to this teaching, whatever comes in gets interpreted through our dispositions and if our dispositions are active as we listen to the teaching we will not be able to understand. I must always come back to the fundamental method of Zen so that we have the right seat, the right attitude, the right practice to receive the teaching. I remind you and ask you to listen again to the teachings of uprightness.

Upright sitting can save us from our dispositions. Every moment, dispositions are entering into how we interpret what is happening. Dispositions always cause us to interpret what is happening rather than just experience it. They are always coloring and influencing what we think is happening. Dispositions are our habitual leanings, our habitual emotional responses to what is happening. Uprightness gives us a way to be free of our inclinations even though our experience is nothing other than their maturation.

Bodhidharma says, "Externally still all conditions," all objects that are appearing, all the objects you are aware of. Still the conditions, find the mind that is not excited in relationship to these objects. "Inside no coughing or sighing in the mind," no gasping in the mind. The mind becomes like a wall and "with the mind like a wall you enter the Way." With a mind like a wall you are saved from your dispositions which seem to be appearing internally as mental phenomena and externally as sense phenomena. Being upright is your mind being like a wall. Bodhidharma's teaching was sometimes called wall gazing, *mempeki*, face and wall, facing the wall. But it doesn't mean looking at the wall or gazing at the wall. It means the way the wall gazes. It's wall gazing, not humans gazing at walls. He sat in front of the wall in his cave and learned from the wall to be free from the dispositions of mind.

Bodhidharma gave this teaching to Huike, who in the end said, "I'm always clearly aware and no words can reach this." No words can reach the mind of a wall. The place where no words can reach is saved from all of our dispositions, our habitual emotional responses. This is the realm of dependent co-arising and brightness, the realm where there are no things by themselves, where thoughts and conditions are exhausted. It's clear, alert, and luminous.

Hakuin Zenji's disciple, Tore Zenji said, "Wall gazing, in the back a spring flower opens." When you hear the teaching of wall gazing, when you hear the teaching of "outside no involvements, inside no

gasping or sighing in the mind,” does it reach your body? Where in your body does it reach? He said “In the back a spring flower blossoms.” Is there some place in your back where you feel the teaching, some place in your spine where you feel the teaching of “clearly aware and no words can reach it”? One Yogi told me that the teaching was reached in the spine behind the heart chakra. Is there some place in your spine where you can feel this teaching? Behind your heart chakra, behind your neck chakra, your throat chakra, behind your hara, in the back of your head? Can you feel this teaching which is conveyed to you, these words penetrating your body? Is there some place in your body that is receiving this teaching? Is there some place in your spine where a flower opens in response to the mind being like a wall?

When you hear the teaching of Bodhidharma's master: “Breathing in, not dwelling in body/mind, breathing out, not entangled,” does that strike your body some place? Now listen, see if something will resonate in your body when you hear this teaching. Where in your body do you feel it? “This poor wayfarer when breathing in does not dwell in the realm of body mind. Breathing out, does not get entangled in myriad circumstances.” What part of your body received that teaching, what part of your body vibrated with that teaching? Since I said that, of course I was very close to the emitting vibration so I have it in me in that close way. If you say this teaching out loud, then you can also experience where it happens in your body. I asked a Yogi, How is thinking when you are sitting still and how is thinking when not sitting still. This was a homework assignment and so the yogi came back and told me how the thinking is when not sitting still. He said, “It's like a story or a feeling about myself connecting with something. I would say ‘elements,’ like a story of myself connecting to elements and there's something special about me or some juice in that connection.”

When I heard that, I thought it was a vision of the working of *manas*. It is not a vision of *manas* because you can't see the mirror. You can see the working of the mirror and in the mirror there are pictures. You can see the work of the picture because in association with the picture is a sense of self and the self connects with what is in the mirror. It also has some pride in itself; there is something special about itself and there's some juice for itself, or leaking. The patterns of this self-clinging with the elements that are connected to it is the pattern of the juicing.

Someone told me that they have a “relationship habit” and they hold on. Someone with a sex habit, comes on; someone with a romantic habit moves on. These are three different dispositions that will tell you how you relate, what kind of juice you have- the “come-on” juice, the “hold-on” juice or the “move-on” juice. Uprightness will save you!!! Some of you may have all of these three types of dispositions. If you can be upright in the midst of these dispositions, you can see these patterns come up and gradually find a person who is like a wall, who is so stupid that she can't get involved in any of these scenarios or a combination of them. In other words it's the way to enter the Way in the midst of this leakage, in the midst of these outflows, in the midst of this juicing; this gain and loss of juice in your relationships.

In the *Abidharmakosa*, Vasubandhu asks what are the dharmas that have outflows and inflows; that have juice in them, gain and loss, birth and death? What are they? Seventy two dharmas have outflows and there are seventy five dharmas! What are the three that don't have outflows? Space and two kinds of nirvana. All other experiences have outflows, all other experience leaks and floods the system, but there is a path, a Buddha Way in the midst of all these leaking phenomena. The Buddha path is not separate from these realms of inflow and outflow but it does not have outflows or inflows. It contains and embraces all outflows and thus ends all outflows and inflows. It's a way right in the midst of it that cuts through it. How do you enter the Buddha Way? By uprightness. Then you enter the same realm where these dispositions are functioning but you become free of them because you are always clearly aware and none of these words – which means none of those dispositions – can reach it. They don't reach the Way because the Way does not wish to reach anything.



I recently saw a *Far Side* cartoon that illustrates this. It has a picture of a lake and under the water there are two fish, a doctor fish and a sick fish. The sick fish has a hook in his mouth and the doctor says “The bad news is you are definitely hooked.” Then you look above the water and you see the fisher person in a boat but it's a dead person, a skeleton. This is like our situation. We're hooked, but the good news is that what's hooking us is dead. There is not even any enlightenment out there hooking us, but we're hooked to our deluded ideas of enlightenment as a separate thing.

The Buddha Way is entered when we are like a wall, as though dead. Part of us is just doesn't support this whole thing. It is just clearly aware. Nothing can reach it and it can't reach anything. It is just totally useless and therefore it's free and it's in our bodies right now. Can you see how when you're moving, there is you and others and there's some juice? Can you see that? Can you see how the self gets in there and wants to get some credit and pleasure for everything that happens and therefore also gets demerit for everything that happens; gets pain for everything? Somebody is in there messing around, but it's simply because of movement and that movement will continue. In that realm there will continue to be this somebody trying to get something out of the situation. You don't have to worry about that. She will always be there trying to get something out of it and if you ever forget about her it won't be a problem. She will come back in the next minute.

Let's try to find out about what kind of thinking there would be when there is no movement, when the mind is like a wall, and you don't do anything to make your mind not involved in external things. You don't go in there and try to suppress the activity. That would be another activity. If you look at something and notice that your mind is jumping up and down about it then you're just seeing the way the mind thinks when it's moving. Just let it be. Uprightness just lets that be. Not activating the mind around externals and not coughing and sighing inside isn't something you do. So please look for what kind of thinking there is in stillness. I've given you a hint now as to what kind of thinking there is in movement so you'll probably see that too. This is “coming on, moving on, holding on” kind of thinking because there is a little or a lot of movement. To not be concerned about that is very close to not activating the mind. The one who is not concerned is the one who is clearly aware; sees objects and doesn't try to change it, and doesn't get changed by it.

The mirror reflects things which you can feel connected to or separated from. They are reflected in a mirror so that you can seem them although you can't see the mirror. (You can't see the mind organ, *manas*). There is some kind of habitual meddling with the objects because a self arises in conjunction with the function of reflection. For one kind of image there is one kind of outflow or juice; for another kind of image a different kind of outflow will manifest. The things you connect with are external so you can know them as objects. This idea of externality is the third transformation of consciousness that Vasubandhu taught.

The story of the Sixth Ancestor of Zen, Hui Neng, is about this. His teacher said “OK, I'm retiring and I want a successor. Would you please write a poem expressing your understanding” (of the three transformations of consciousness). The head monk of the monastery, the most senior of all the monks, the greatest meditator wrote a poem and posted it on the wall, and no one else dared to write a poem. The poem said,

*The body is the tree of enlightenment,  
The mind is a bright mirror stand.  
Again and again wipe the mirror.  
Don't let any dust gather.*<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> *The Platform Sutra*

This is not a heretical teaching; it's a teaching of the moving mind. This poem is saying that if any kind of distortion occurs in the stories of your relationship to what is in the mirror, then go in there (enter the field of mental phenomena) and wipe the mirror clean. Get rid of the distortions, get rid of the dispositions, wipe the dispositions away. It's good if you can do it. As a matter of fact, it would be good if you could wipe the dispositions away and just directly see. But such wiping away of all dispositions would actually just obscure their fundamental nature. This absence of dispositions might then be misunderstood as enlightenment. Enlightenment is rather, the vision of the dependent co-arising of the dispositions, which is understanding their lack of inherent existence.

The 6th Ancestor was still a layman at that time and a laborer in the monastery. Because he was uneducated he had someone read the head monk's poem to him. When he heard it he understood its cardinal meaning. He made his own verse and asked someone who was able to write Chinese to write it on the wall also, so that he could offer his own original understanding. His poem said:

*Enlightenment is fundamentally not a tree,  
The clear mirror is not a stand.  
The mirror is originally clean and pure.  
Where could dust collect?*

Right in the midst of the causes and conditions of creating this twisted, defiled, juicy mess; right in that situation, rather than trying to wipe it away, you can realize that fundamentally this very situation is clean and pure. The mirror (*manas*), the Second Transformation of consciousness is originally clear. But since the sense of an independent self arises in dependence on this mirror, the mirror becomes the locus of the defilement of the delusion of self-existence. In the vision of this poem the interdependence of the mirror and the objects is realized and therefore there is no independent self and other. There is no mind consciousness and object and organ existing independently of each other. There are also not the distortions that come from making these elements into independent, substantial realities.

When you hear that there is no dust you might think that none of this matters, that you don't need to study the working of these elements. But it does matter. You have to stay right in that realm with that dusty mirror, with juice and outflows squirting all over the place and you caring about it and wishing the juice would be reprogrammed and replumbed. There is somebody who doesn't get excited about this. This is the upright being whose mind is like a wall. You have to find that one. Where in your body is that one? Where in your body are you receiving and practicing the teaching of Bodhidharma's wall gazing? That one can be right in the midst of all of this intense deluded activity.

In the midst of all this activity of the three transformations of consciousness, that is, the interactive working of mind consciousness, mind objects, and mind organ, in all this hubbub there is some clear mirror. No dust can alight on it, no words can reach it. Where is it? It's right in the middle of this mess. It is realized through uprightness in this mess of self and other juice. If you just sit upright in the middle of these messy outflows you can see how all this dependently co-arises, how all these things depend on each other and there is no dust to obscure the mirror. Everything is appearing in a dynamic, interdependent brightness.

Hakuin Zenji says, don't think that your mind is so crowded and confused with wild thoughts that you are incapable of devoting yourself single-mindedly to upright sitting. No matter how confused you are don't think you are incapable of finding the one who is too stupid to be confused in the middle of all that, who is just calling it like it is without even any words. Hakuin says – suppose some person was in the middle of a busy market place, pushing her way through dense crowds, and some gold coins dropped out of her purse into the dirt. Do you think she would just keep walking, and say 'well there are too many people around here, and besides that I don't want to be embarrassed by people catching me looking for coins in a mess like this.' Do you think she would just walk on or do you think she would stop and fall

down in the dirt and start looking for those coins, maybe with tears streaming down her cheeks pulling her hair out. Finding those coins even in that difficult situation with people crawling all over her, she keeps looking.

Is there something that is worth much more than those coins? What is this? It is being upright. It is that radiant presence in the midst of every situation that is studying how situations come up and go away. All our ancestral teachers are talking about the same thing. Vasubandhu, his teacher Jayata, Prajñatara, Bodhidharma, Huike, Hakuin, Tore. They are all talking about the same mind that will save you from these dispositions which seem to be obscuring and defiling our vision of what is going on.

*The wind blows through the great sky, clouds loom up from Bodhidharma's cave. Feelings for the Way and for worldly affairs are all of no concern.*

### Sesshin Day 4 Dharma Talk

November 2, 1994

Today I would like to enter the realm of experience in which the non-substantiality of all the elements can be understood. Before going forth into this contemplation I want to again invoke the the Ancestor's teaching of uprightness. You may remember that Jayata wanted to enlighten Vasubandhu who was already a very successful ascetic—never lying down, only eating one meal a day, worshipping Buddha intensely and so on. Jayata Daiocho said "I don't seek enlightenment, but I'm not deluded either. I don't sit for long periods but I am not lazy. I don't limit myself to only one meal a day but I'm not a glutton," and so on. Finally he said, "The mind that does not seek anything enters the Way."

Uprightness is the mind that does not seek anything, doesn't turn away from things, doesn't grab them, doesn't dwell in experiences of body and mind, doesn't dwell in sense objects, sense organs, sense consciousness. It is a mind that is just like a wall. This mind, Bodhidharma says, is how to enter the Way. When people hear about this mind that is like a wall, a mind that doesn't see anything, they may think it sounds cold and unfriendly. When they see pictures of Bodhidharma they may think he looks unfriendly. The emperor of China also thought he was unfriendly, but then he found out that this was the Bodhisattva of Infinite Compassion, and he wanted this unfriendly friend back. But it was too late. Bodhidharma had already crossed the Yangtse River and entered his famous cave at Shaolin. What was he doing? He was facing the wall, sitting still and silent.

Tiantong Hongzhi, the poet of the *Shoyo Roku*, said, "He sat coolly at Shaolin." When I first heard that I thought "the Bodhisattva of Compassion sat coolly? Wouldn't he sit warmly?" Yes, of course he's warm but there is a coolness there; the coolness of not seeking anything from sitting. Tiantong's verse says:

*Still and silent, he sat at Shaolin:  
In silence he completely brought up the true imperative.  
The clear moon of autumn turns its frosty disc;  
The Milky Way thin,  
The Dipper hangs down its handle in the night.<sup>10</sup>*

As we enter into the realm of considering our relationships with others, and try to see through where they stick, it will be very important that we give up everything, that we can be cool, that we can find this mind

---

<sup>10</sup>*Shoyoroku, Book of Serenity, Case 2 "Bodhidharma's 'Emptiness'" p. 8, Tr. Thomas Cleary*

that is not even seeking non-discriminating wisdom. With a mind like a wall we can enter into the study of all elements and realize their non-substantiality. We have to give up all juiciness in our relationships. It's a lot to ask but you get a lot for it—complete perfect freedom. The *eko* (dedication) at our Noon Service, says, “May we relate to all beings joyfully.” The way to relate to all beings joyfully is with a mind like a wall. If you've got a mind that is trying to relate to beings joyfully it isn't going to be joyful all the time. It's going to be sticky because it's based on dualistic striving. Ironically, the mind that is cool, that is not trying to get anything out of relationships is the mind that has joyful relationships.

When Vasubandhu heard about the mind that does not seek anything, he woke up. He already had considerable knowledge but when he received that instruction from his teacher he realized undefiled knowledge and became a teacher of men and women, and gods and goddesses. When his great disciple Manorhita came to him and asked, “What is the enlightenment of all Buddhas?” He said “The enlightenment of all Buddhas is the fundamental nature of the mind.” “What is the fundamental nature of mind?” he asked. Vasubandhu said, “It is the non-substantiality of all elements. It is the non-substantiality of the sense fields, sense organs, and sense consciousnesses.” If you have a mind like a wall and you observe your six consciousnesses working, (which is exactly what is happening now), you will see that all the elements in this drama are working together and all of them are insubstantial. This insubstantiality of all the elements of our experience is the fundamental nature of mind. It is the enlightenment of all the Buddhas.

This is Buddha's epistemology, his explanation of the basis of our knowledge and perception. Whatever we're aware of, whatever we know is not based on substantial entities; it's based on non-substantial entities. Insubstantial subjects and objects that dependently co-arise are at the base of our experience. This is the Buddha's epistemology and is also what Vasubandhu said in the *Thirty Verses*. Our experience arises within a mind which has insubstantiality as its mark, or as we sometimes say—emptiness as its essential quality.

Meditation on Vasubandhu's text will be most successful with a mind that doesn't seek anything, a mind that's not even trying to understand, a mind that clearly observes. The *Thirty Verses* doesn't even reach the mind which will understand them. The mind that can understand the words is a mind that is not reaching for the words and which the words don't reach. The first 14 verses mostly describe the arising of self and other and the problems that arise with that. Then Vasubandhu shifts somewhat.

*Verse #17 says, Thus thought involves this transformation of consciousness. For that reason, what has thus been thought of does not exist. Therefore all this is mere concept.*

Whatever we are thinking of, whatever we are aware of comes through transformations of consciousness. External stimulation triggers a series of physical and mental transformations. These transformations are the basis of our awareness of external objects. What we know is not something that came in from outside, but is a concept which we choose from amongst our various concepts. What we are aware of is selected by a complex process of causation as the best possible guess for what is going on. We are aware of an object and the object we are aware of is a concept. It is only conceptually external. There may be external objects, but the objects we're aware of are not external to our awareness. Awareness and objects of awareness are dependent co-arisings which have no substantial reality independent of each other. All we are aware of is a concept, therefore *all this is mere concept*.

*Verse #18:*

*Consciousness indeed possesses all seeds. Its transformation occurs in a variety of ways. It proceeds on the basis of mutual dependence as a result of which such and such thoughts are born.*

This verse gives an overview of the process. All these seeds, all these dispositions are available. These transformations are occurring and all this proceeds on the basis of mutual dependence. Hence various thoughts of self and objects are constantly being born through mutual interdependence of the three transformations which includes all the dispositions due to past thoughts.

*Verse #19:*

*The karmic dispositions together with the two dispositions of grasping produces another resultant when the previous resultant has waned.*

The dispositions of grasping and grasped, of the grasping and what is grasped; or of the grasping and the grasper, the self—these different dispositions create more effects which come into fruition when the previous effects have waned and then new effects come from the past grasping.

In the next verse, verse 20, Vasubandhu introduces what is called *parikalpita svabhava*, which is imagination of own-being, the imagination of substantial existence:

*Whatever thought through which an object is thought of as a substance, that indeed is a fabrication. It is not evident.*

There is no proof for it. We have a thought by which we imagine that what we are aware of has substance. This thought comes through our imagining that one of the six types of objects is substantial. In this context the dependently co-arisen object is imagined to be something more than just a dependently co-arisen concept, which by definition lacks substance. It is imagined to possess substance. Thus a dependently co-arisen object is imagined to be not dependently co-arisen. This is pure fantasy, for which there is no evidence. The ordinary things that we are aware of in our experience are things that dependently co-arise but now among these things we think that something has substance. This way of thinking is pure imagination. The *parikalpita* is not a dependently co-arisen concept. (That's the second own-being.) It is the imagination that a dependently co-arisen concept has substance. This imagination is the same for all things. When you attribute substance to a cow and when you attribute substance to a unicorn, the attribution is the same. There is no way to distinguish between these attributions. (The *parikalpita* is the attribution of substance to dependently co-arisen things.) The attribution has no marks, no characteristics. For example, we might experience an image of a unicorn. We might further imagine that the unicorn substantially exists. There is evidence for the experience of the image but there is no evidence for the substantiality of the image. This example makes it easy to see that although something may be imagined, attributing substantial existence to it is mere mental fabrication. The substance of the image cannot be verified. This applies to all images, although not quite so obviously as in the case of a unicorn.

In verse 21, Vasubandhu introduces the second and third kinds of own-being, *paratantra svabhava*, and *parinispanna*, the dependent and the accomplished own-beings:

*A dependent self-nature is a thought that has arisen depending upon conditions. However, the absence of the one prior to it is always the accomplished.*

The second own-being is a dependently co-arisen concept. Since it arises in dependence on conditions, it is also insubstantial, but it is insubstantial in a different way than the first one. The first own-being is doubly insubstantial. It is insubstantial because it is a dependent co-arising and secondly it is insubstantial because it is pure mental fabrication and doesn't even have characteristics. The second own-being

(*paratantra*) is not an imagination of substantiality. It is insubstantial because it appears through causes and conditions. It is a dependent co-arising. It's empty but it is not mere mental fabrication. It has various characteristics, like the concept of a unicorn or a cow.

When there is just the second own-being, the *paratantra*, by itself, and the imagination of substance is separate from it or absent, that absence of the imagination of substance, is called the accomplished, the *parinispanna svabhava*, the third own-being. This “accomplished” is non-discriminating wisdom. To understand this, we have to be upright. Imagine that you have a relationship with some one. There is the self, and the other. The dependently arising thought is the thought which arises in dependence on conditions of self and other and many other things. There is a sense of somebody over there which arose through the processes of perception. By the interactions of the three transformations, we now have the dependently co-arisen experience of self and other. This dependently co-arisen experience is insubstantial but miraculously, we can have such an experience of some thing or somebody. That conceptual experience is the dependent self-nature (*paratantra*). But also, there can be the imagination that there is some substance to the object. The imagination of substance in the object is what is called *the one prior to it*. We are able to have this kind of mental fabrication because of how the process of delusion develops. We get a concept of a substantial self which we then can use to project an imagined substance onto something that dependently co-arose. When something dependently co-arises and then we imagine substance on top of it, that's the pure “imagination [of] own-being” (*parikalpita svabhava*) and that may be called “not being upright.” When the concept of something occurs in the absence of the imagination of substance, that is called “being upright.” This is the accomplished. In this context, the concept of self and other appear but without substance imputed to them. That is the accomplished and this is non-discriminating wisdom.

Question: What do you mean by substance?

Tenshin Anderson: “Substance” means that a thing has independent existence; there are no such things. So, imagining a substantial thing is pure mental fabrication.

Q: How does the ability to imagine substantially existing things arise?

TA: The ability arises from the creation of the concept of self which arose in the process of perception involving the concept of an external object. As the sense of self develops, and goes on without examination, this unexamined self becomes the paradigm or prototype for imagining self-existence in other things, that is, imagining independent substantial entities. The basis of imagining substantial entities is insubstantial but insubstantial things can be the basis for the arising of concepts and perceptions of substantiality. These concepts arise because of causes and conditions. The dependently co-arisen concepts are the *paratantra*. It is the dependent kind of own-being. Those concepts and perceptions which arise by causes and conditions and then are imagined to be substantial are the the basis for an imaginary self-nature (*parikalpita*). The *paratantra* is the basis for the *parikalpita*.

When the imagined self-nature is absent and there is just the dependently co-arisen thought, that is called *parinispanna*, and that is non-discriminating wisdom. That is why we need to have a mind like a wall. When we are upright and cool we will be able to see how things arise. When the imagination of substance is overlaid on your experience of a concept, that is the first own-being, *parikalpita*. That's the mere imagination, mere mental fabrication. When *parikalpita* is separate from the *paratantra*, that is called the accomplished. In a sense it says here that the accomplished is the real own-being; *it is the ultimate meaning of events*. But it doesn't mean that the other own-beings don't happen. When the ultimate meaning of events appears, that is called non-discriminating wisdom.

Vasubandhu also says that the third own-being, the accomplished, is the ultimate meaning of events because it is suchness. Suchness is that the dependently co-arisen is separate from the imagination

of substance and this *remains the same all the time*.<sup>11</sup> Because it remains the same all the time, non-discriminating wisdom also is a mere concept. Because non-discriminating wisdom is a mere concept it isn't really about anything. It's not that there is the dependently co-arisen and then there is something else called non-discriminating wisdom. Non-discriminating wisdom is just a thought that is dependently co-arisen and is absent of the imagination of substance. There is not a third thing other than what is miraculously apparent by virtue of causes and conditions and the imagination of its substance. There is not a third thing but it is called a third thing when things are thus. So it's just a concept too. Non-discriminating wisdom, the accomplished is also insubstantial.

What is the accomplished about, what is non-discriminating wisdom about? It's about the karmically created. The content of it is the karmically created. It is inseparable from the karmically created. It is just the karmically created, absent of the imagination that the karmically created is a substance. Karmically created things can happen and because they happen by causes and conditions they are insubstantial. To leave them like that and let them be that way is suchness, to leave them like that is simply non-discriminating wisdom. There is also this thing called imagination of substance. It is not banished from the scene. It is there someplace too, but it's absent in the appearance of phenomenon. Understanding the imagination of substance as mere mental fabrication is an aspect of non-discriminating wisdom.

Self and other happen by the processes we have discussed of how the reflecting gives rise to the sense of self. Whenever there is awareness, there is self, and then there is self and other. When there is self and other without any overlay of substance on the other or back onto the self who then is the grasper, or onto the other which is then the grasped; then these self-other relationships, just as they are, are non-discriminating wisdom. Then we coolly contemplate relationships, with a mind like a wall. This can be called "joyfully relating with all beings." We don't have to come in with a blow torch and burn away the imagination of substance. We don't have to beat down all the juice that is oozing around all our relationships, because there is this insubstantial non-existent thing called outflows all over the place. All we have to do is somehow have revealed to us that this juicy substance, this glomming activity of mind is separate from the karmically created dependently co-arisen experience. We don't have to make it that way, we don't have to clean the situation up. All we have to do is see that when there is a karmically created overlay with the sense of substance, we have delusion and misery. We must somehow wait and watch and be upright until we have a chance to see what it is like when this overlay is absent and things are just appearing by causes and conditions.

*Verse 26: As long as consciousness does not terminate in mere concept, so long do [these outflows,]the dispositions [and these inclinations] for the two-fold grasping not cease.*

The two-fold grasping can be part of the causation, but the dispositions can cease. Since the two-fold grasping is dependently co-arisen it has no substance. Therefore the two-fold grasping is non-discriminating wisdom and there is no more two-fold grasping. This is not because it has been put into the category of non-existence, because without this two-fold grasping we couldn't have any experience. Because the two-fold grasping is non-discriminating wisdom and non-discriminating wisdom is not the two-fold grasping, the two-fold grasping is the contents of non-discriminating wisdom. Non-discriminating wisdom does not discriminate between them but their discrimination is part of the causation which makes them appear and not attributing substance to this discrimination, having that be absent, is the non-discriminating wisdom.

---

<sup>11</sup>Karika 25

*Verse 27: Indeed, one who, on account of one's grasping, were to place something before herself saying: "This is mere concept," will not stop at "mere-ness."*

To do that is not the mind of the wall. To stop and say "This is mere concept" is not "I am clearly aware and no words reach it." "This is mere concept" reaches it in this case. This is not really stopping at mere concept. Stopping at mere concept is the mind like a wall. Stopping at mere concept means that in self and other relationships, we know this is just a concept but we don't then let the words "this is just a concept" reach us. That wouldn't be mere concept. That would be saying "I'm clearly aware and no words reach me," and let those words reach you. That would be again attributing substance to the state of non-discriminating wisdom. That would be taking what is appearing by co-dependent arising absent of the imagination of substance and putting substance on it when actually what is happening, by dependent co-arising, is absent of the overlay of substance. It's just a mere concept too. Substance can't be laid on non-discriminating wisdom either.

*(28) When consciousness with object is not obtained, then there being no object, one is established in the state of mere concept, for there is no grasping for it.*

*(29) It is without thought, and without object. It is also the supramundane knowledge. Through the destruction of the two-fold depravities there is reversion of the source of such depravities.*

*(30) This, indeed, is the realm free from influxes (free from juice). It is unthinkable, wholesome and stable. It is the serene body of release. This is called the doctrine of the Great Sage.*

Recently I saw another cartoon from *Far Side*. It shows a dog riding a bicycle, holding a cat in her mouth, balancing a vase on her head, working a hula-hoop and juggling four balls, on a tightrope with a whole bunch of people watching. The subtitle says, "High above the hushed crowd Fifi tried to remain focused. Still, she couldn't shake one nagging thought: 'she was an old dog and this was a new trick.'" Right now we are all walking on a tightrope, riding a bicycle with our most delicious friend in our mouth, balancing many things while we are jiggling ourselves. We are supposed to stay focused while we are learning this new trick and we also have these little demons in our ear saying "You can't learn this, it's too hard."

This is a new trick. Don't be hard on yourself. It's going to be hard to learn this one and so we're going to fall off many times. If we can be upright, we have a chance to witness the attribution of substance to karmically created concepts that are dependently co-arising. If we stay present and cool, we can see that the attribution of substance is absent, is separate. There is just karmically created, dependently co-arisen experience, by itself, without substance and yet appearing. Then occasionally there is this substance that comes in and sits on it and then it is real again and then everything causing these dispositions comes up. In the midst of that there is a possibility of forgetting all the nagging thoughts and just witnessing what is happening as such, and then not even putting that in front of us. If we can realize suchness without even putting suchness out there, that is the Supreme Body of Release.

So we have finished the *Thirty Verses* and now we can try to live with them. You've got them, now please take care of them, keep studying them and discussing them. Basically that's it, the first time through.

We are ancient dogs and it is hard for us to learn new tricks. This is a trick that the Buddhas and Ancestors have learned, the trick of finding the mind which is not seeking anything and using that mind to enter into the dependent co-arising of the 18 elements, mind, object and organ. Using the mind which doesn't seek anything to study them and realize their insubstantiality and thereby witness and realize the



fundamental nature of mind. It's a simple instruction, but very difficult to follow. It's very difficult to give up all craving and all seeking and all gaining and just be like a wall and then to enter into the complexities and subtleties and the twisting and turnings of the mind. Once we get in there and it starts to reveal more and more of itself, we have to be even more upright. New temptations will come that we never even saw before, which were never even possible. All kinds of meditation sicknesses will come up. It's horrendous, but that's the program.

### **Sesshin Day 5 Dharma Talk**

November 3, 1994

Throughout 2500 years of practice in India, China, Japan and now in America, the character of the Zen School has simply been devotion to upright sitting, total engagement in sitting still. Throughout the myriad variations of practice that have occurred, there has always been this simple devotion, this simple complete vow to sit upright in the world of birth and death. This is the practice that has been done by the Buddhas and the Ancestors of our tradition.

Beginners have been given many skillful instructions to encourage them. Some beginners have been sent to the rice pounding area for a while. Some have been told to follow their breathing or count their breath; others have been told to shut up. Beginners have been told almost anything you could think of. But the practice that the Buddha does is to just sit, with no gaining idea and with no object in mind.

Of course, objects are appearing all the time but that's all that is happening. Objects are just appearing and disappearing. The practice is just to sit. Dogen Zenji says "This practice of sitting is not learning meditation."<sup>12</sup> It's not a concentration technique. When you just sit you are completely concentrated. Sometimes people demand a technique to get concentrated and they may even be assigned one. This is called "giving yellow paper to crying children." (Yellow paper is a substitute for gold.) But the overall practice which has prevailed among the Buddha Ancestors is to use no technique to get concentrated. Our practice is to be concentrated, to have a peaceful mind without using any device.

Someone gave me a cartoon series from "Nearside" on Dogen Zenji being interviewed on TV. They ask him "What do you teach your students?" He says "I teach them to just sit." "Isn't there anything more to your practice than that?" He says "No." "What about enlightenment and universal compassion?" "It is realized by just sitting." The interviewer breaks into tears on hearing that. When she recovers, she says "What about koan practice?" Dogen Zenji says "Koan practice is very good." The interviewer says "I thought you said 'Just sitting is enlightenment itself' and that is all that you teach." He says "That's right, but some people won't sit unless you give them a koan."

Give them a koan and they sit. The sitting does the work. Some other people won't sit unless you give them a concentration technique, so give them concentration techniques. No technique will reach the Way. The Way is not some substantial thing separate from the practitioner that can be opened by some device like a can opener. It's all pervasive. It's right under our noses. All we have to do is sit here and it will stand up and say "Hello." But as long we think "I don't know if the Way will unfold before my face, maybe I should do something," it won't come to meet us. Even though it stands up and says hello, we say "No, this couldn't be it. This state of mind could not be enlightenment." Many suffering people in this world don't believe that just sitting is enlightenment. They think "Let's improve it at least a little bit before we make it into enlightenment." They think, "Don't you have to get a little bit more concentrated? Don't you have to get rid of a few of your delusions before you can be awake?" Even Vasubandhu had this kind of attitude. That's why he tried to become so pure. He got really good at it. He was a virtuous

---

<sup>12</sup> Fukanzazengi

person, he had improved himself a lot. But this was a far cry from the Buddha Way. The Ancestor Jayata wanted to enlighten him so he said “The mind that doesn’t seek to improve enters the Way.”

Why do I teach Vasubandhu’s *Thirty Verses*? I teach and study and encourage you to study the *Thirty Verses* because Vasubandhu explains how you get caught by your gaining ideas and think that you have to do something more than just sit in order to attain the Supreme Body of Release. If you sit with no idea of self, you don’t need to do anything. It’s only because of our idea of self that we don’t trust this self.

Self and other dependently co-arise and therefore we can have relationships. As our relationships dependently co-arise, at their dawn they are suchness. They are non-discriminating wisdom. When our relationships, self and other are first born, prior to any attribution, they are non-discriminating wisdom. Relationships, as they are born by dependent co-arising are immediately joyous and harmonious. As the mind arises by dependent co-arising it is just a dependently co-arisen thing. It is free of the imagination of substance.

“When erroneous imaginations cease, the acquiescent mind realizes itself.”<sup>13</sup> When the attribution of substance which is erroneous imagination ceases and our body and mind, self and relationships arise without that erroneous imagination, this is the realization of the acquiescent peaceful mind. This is always happening. The dependently co-arisen mind, the dependently co-arisen relationship is acquiescent. It’s docile. Docile comes from the Latin *docere* which means teach. A docile mind is a mind which can be taught. It is a mind that willingly accepts training. Some people are docile but they aren’t firm. Things that dependently co-arise are firm. Nothing “sort of” happens. Flowers are strictly flowers and when they first blossom they are firm in their blooming. They are firm just as they are, and when they die they’re firmly dead. Nothing is not firm in its dependently co-arisen being. Everything that arises that way is also docile. It can learn from all circumstances. Its firmness is in the fact that it learns from all things. This is the way our relationships originally are, as they first appear by the auspices of the entire universe. This is the dependently co-arisen mind in the absence of erroneous imagination, in the absence of attribution of self.

Our practice is to just sit. Since we’re not focusing on a particular object we can see what’s happening. Something comes up by dependent co-arising, then this substantial thing comes over and lays on it and we get upset. I recently had a dream and I wasn’t even asleep. It was a dream of Meiya making a mistake. A mistake means not doing what I wanted her to do. I got upset over the dream of her doing something. I actually did! Can you believe that? It was wonderful! I was able to see it because I was a little bit upright, even in my dream. I believed it and I watched myself get upset! It was a little visitation I had, a little insight. If I had been really upright, I wouldn’t have been able to have this insight because I wouldn’t have been upset in the first place. I would have known that I was dreaming that Meiya was doing this and I know my dreams aren’t real. If I just imagine Meiya doing something I don’t like I don’t get upset. I know it’s just imagination, just something that happened because I have a brain and there’s a person named Meiya and I had breakfast. I got a little drowsy, and in the twilight this little thing came over and said there’s actually some reality to my idea that she made a mistake. I got upset, but I felt very happy that I was awake enough to observe its arising, my attributing substance to it, and then seeing the effect of that attribution of substance. If you’re upright, the world will come and show you how it works.

I’m a little worried that by emphasizing this teaching of just sitting, you may think I’m disparaging all other kinds of practices. Buddhas can play golf or tennis; they can eat breakfast, they can do concentration techniques. Shakyamuni Buddha himself, when he died, did a little yogic vacation tour. He zipped through all the different advanced yogic trances from the bottom one all the way to the top and

---

<sup>13</sup> Song of the Jewel Mirror Samadhi, *Hokyozaumai*, by Dongshan Liangjie. See *Timeless Spring*, tr. Thomas Cleary or *The Record of Tung-Shan*, tr. William F. Powell

back. My theory is he was saying goodbye to his friends in those realms. Then he came back down to the ordinary realm of subject, object, men, women, dogs, cats, mountains, rivers. He came back to that realm and then he went back up into another yogic trance, the fourth *jhana* and that's the state he was in when he died. That's the same as if one of you at Tassajara decided to go die in a Stone Room instead of in the shop. It wouldn't mean that if you die in the Stone Room you're a Buddha and if you die in the shop you're in trouble. Buddhism came from a tradition that does yogic practices and yogis have always been associated with Buddhism, but you don't have to do some special yogic practice. You don't have to play golf either in order to be a Buddha. Buddha found that out. He just happened to be able to do those things, but you don't have to. If you want to, you can; it's ok. Just don't think that's Buddha's Way.

Doing concentration techniques is wholesome and it will make you susceptible to the teaching but—whatever you're doing, even if you're doing concentration practices, even if you're practicing Zen—the teaching is—just be still, just don't move. Just have no gaining idea. That's all. Practicing that way, all the dependent co-arising teachings will be revealed to you and you'll learn how you get in trouble. By learning how you get in trouble, you will get the joke. Then the dependently co-arisen will be separate from the attribution. Then you will see “Oh, this was a dream of this person doing that and there was the attribution.” If you take away the attribution you will see that it's just a dream. This can be a dream of a wonderful relationship with somebody who is doing something you don't like, and yet you feel perfectly harmonious and joyful. When erroneous imaginations cease, the firm and docile mind realizes itself.

Shakyamuni Buddha went through a really hard time to find this path for us. He tried everything. What we have tried is nothing compared to what he tried! His disciples also tried various techniques even though Shakyamuni had already tried them and found that they didn't work. For 2500 years they all tried techniques; they even tried some things Shakyamuni hadn't thought of. Of course, we could think of something new. But most of us aren't even trying. We're just trying to do the old things which they already found out don't work! We can keep trying, it's fine. But remember, it's already been tried. Take his advice. Nothing works.

The only thing that works is the way things are working, and we don't make that happen. The way things are is the acquiescent mind realizing itself when the erroneous imagination is out of town. Even if the erroneous imagination is in town, the acquiescent mind is still realizing itself; it's just that the erroneous imagination doesn't believe it. The erroneous imagination doesn't want this acquiescent mind which is constantly learning new tricks to be there.

In the process of realizing the acquiescent mind, it helps if you can express your thinking to others. You can get feedback from them which will clarify your understanding of how these processes work. When your thinking about external events becomes clear, you can turn around and look inside yourself. You can watch this thing going on in yourself. You can watch the dawn of a dependently co-arisen thought and see how bright and shiny and docile and flexible and radiant and free it is. You can watch the evil one come and lay an attribution of substance on it. You can catch this and see how you get upset and attached. You can actually apply this teaching to your own self, because it was made for people like us. As I said, I saw an example of it in this morning's dream. It applies very nicely.

*The breeze at dawn has secrets to teach you.*

*Don't go back to sleep.*

*You have to discover what you really want.*

*Don't go back to sleep.*

*Your relationships are walking back and forth at the threshold  
where self and other meet.*

*The door is round and open, don't go back to sleep.*

## Class 8

November 14, 1994

Verse 16: *The manifestation of mental consciousness takes place always, except in the sphere of non-perception, in the two attainments and in the state of torpor occasioned by insensibility and absence of thought.*

Tenshin Anderson: Let's begin class tonight with questions. Do you have any questions on Verse 16?

Question: What are the two attainments?

TA: The two attainments are *asamjñika samapatti* and *nirodha samapatti*. *Samapatti* means an attainment or an absorption. They're basically the same state, from two different points of view. They're states where judgment—the *vijñana skandha*, positive or negative feeling—is suppressed. Conception is also suppressed, so there is no way to have objects of knowledge. It's almost like unconsciousness, except that the yogi is sitting up and breathing and so on. This state is easily mistaken for nirvana. If you construe this state as an attainment of liberation, if you camp out in this attainment, that's called *asamjñika samapatti*, the attainment of unconsciousness. There's complete calm and absence of negative sensation at that time. Some people say it's the state of certain kinds of deities, one of the highest possible heavens. If the yogi realizes that this is a conditioned event and doesn't take it as a final state or liberation—arhats can do this—then it's called *nirodha samapatti*.

Shakyamuni Buddha entered that yogic state and when he re-emerged he said that it was not what he was looking for; it was not liberation. This mind is different than the earlier stage of our evolution where the mind does not yet have the ability to create the concept of external objects. In both *samapattis*, the yogi's mind can create concepts of objects, but the function is suppressed by yogic obsessions and compulsions. By obsessively meditating on the vastness of space and so on, a yogi can work himself into a state where conception is highly attenuated. Yogic texts say that at a maximum of seven days you revert to a lower trance and finally you go back down to the normal subject/object world. If you go into those states and take them as final, you're in big trouble when you come back down because you'll be quite shocked at re-entry to discover that those mind states weren't final after all. If you take them as conditioned events, with some awareness of how they arise, your descent won't be so shocking because you'll watch the causes and conditions of the descent and you won't resist it so much. In those states the third transformation of consciousness does not function.

Q: "Insensibility and absence of thought" sounds like sleep.

TA: It's very deep dreamless, sleep, almost like a coma.

Q: I assume that verse 16 refers to the third transformation of consciousness, but the commentary suggests an identity between mental consciousness (*mano vijñana dhatu*) and the foundational consciousness mentioned in the previous verse, which is associated with *alaya*.

TA: In order to answer your question I would like to first give some background on the six sense consciousnesses, one of which can be seen as the foundational consciousness. I agree with Kalupahana that the third transformation of consciousness as presented by Vasubandhu is another way of studying the six kinds of consciousnesses. The Buddha taught six kinds of consciousness, which means the 18 elements; that accounts for all experience. The presentation of the third transformation of consciousness is another way to deal with the same material. Looking at the Six Consciousness presentation of experience, the sixth consciousness (*mano vijñana dhatu* or mind consciousness) embraces the five sense consciousnesses. In a functioning human, if any of the five sense consciousnesses are operating at given moment, then there is also mind consciousness. Then at the next moment, another sense consciousness is

activated and simultaneously there will be mind consciousness. Sense data is coming in; we're being affected. Our sense organs are responding moment by moment. The definition of a "moment of experience" is a response of the organ and the arising of the consciousness to a sense data. That's direct experience; it's not known objectively and it is happening all the time. Simultaneous with that and of the same duration is a mental experience. The mental experience is not of this currently happening sensory experience. The mental experience is of some previously experienced sense consciousness. The previous experience is represented by a concept and then is known to mind consciousness. Mind consciousness is always arising with sense consciousness. Mind consciousness is knowing a concept, but this is not what's happening in the sense consciousness in the same moment. What's happening in the sense consciousness is direct experience, unmediated by conception. There's always mind consciousness, and one of the other five consciousnesses happening in a given moment. They come up together and go down together.

The quality of the mind consciousness is influenced by the presence of other *skandhas*. So far I have just been talking about the consciousness *skandha*. At the level of sense consciousness there's consciousness *skandha* and *rupa skandha*. Another *skandha* is feeling, which is suppressed in that high state of consciousness, and there is also conception. Also there's the fourth *skandha* which we translate as "formations" or "mental formations." The quality of our experience is greatly influenced by whatever dispositions or formations are dependently co-arising with consciousness. In any experience we have (except in those high trances), five *skandhas* come up. Mind consciousness comes up and it has some object. The third *skandha*, perception comes up, using this concept. There's a feeling too, which is also a disposition; it's such an important disposition that it is a *skandha* all by itself. And many other dispositions arise at that time. That's always going on. The sense consciousnesses take turns according to the intensity of the sense environment. If there's a really loud sound and it lasts for a while, we almost don't see anything. Or if there's a really bright light, we may not hear anything. Intense sensory input can dominate. Under normal circumstances there's a high level of competition between the senses. For human beings, there's a lot of seeing, a lot of hearing and for most people, not so much smelling and tasting. Vision and hearing are dominant and get converted into mental images. This is a review of the Six Consciousness presentation.

Now we're talking about a different way of describing the same process. Put the six consciousnesses aside. *Alaya* can be said to play the equivalent role of the mind consciousness. *Alaya* also apprehends the six sense consciousness. Actually, it apprehends the six sense organs at birth. *Alaya* is born at the moment of conception and then as things develop, it apprehends the sense organs of the being. It also pulls in the sense consciousnesses. In that sense, *alaya* plays the role of foundational consciousness the same way mind consciousness does. On this level, it's the same. *Alaya* is the source of and receives the results of the dispositions. That's the same thing that *mano vijñana dhatu*, mind consciousness (in the early 6 consciousness system) does. It takes dispositions into itself and then when the dispositions arise, it arises with them. The concept of *Alaya* was developed in order to emphasize and explain this process. *Alaya* provides a dual imagery of seed field and storehouse—seeds for dispositions and storehouse for the results of dispositions once they have matured. *Alaya* is thus the condition for the arising of dispositions and the resultant storehouse of arisen dispositions. *Alaya* and mind consciousness (in the earlier system) are two alternative names for the foundational consciousness. The teaching of *alaya* articulates the foundational quality more fully than the earlier teaching does.

The third transformation of consciousness is not the same as mind. It is the ability to make objects, the concept of the object, which *alaya* uses and also mind consciousness needs in order to know things.

Q: If we say there are six consciousnesses, five of them are material consciousnesses and the sixth is *mano-vijñana*. If we identify *alaya* with *mano-vijñana dhatu* of the early six consciousness teaching, does this force us to describe the other two transformations in terms of the other five consciousnesses?

TA: The Yogacara eight consciousness system seems to identify the other two transformations as consciousnesses, but I have some disagreement with that. I suggest that to correlate the three transformations with the six consciousness system, you could consider the second transformation as the mind organ (*mano dhatu*) and the third transformation as mind objects (*dharma dhatu*). In the six consciousness system, the six consciousnesses are paired with six organs and six objects. The more appropriate correlation would be that the second transformation, *manas*, corresponds to the organ and the third transformation corresponds to the objects or field of the organ. In the six consciousness system, there's mind consciousness and then sense consciousnesses. So if you're looking for another consciousness besides mind consciousness, you're going to have trouble because mind is the only mind. There's not a bunch of mind consciousnesses. If you want to look for a place for *manas*, the reflecting capacity or the effects of thinking, let thinking be the organ of mind consciousness. That's the theory. Just like sense consciousnesses are born of the interaction between the organ and the field, mind consciousness and *alaya*—*alaya* is said to be generated by thinking, by reflecting. Vasubandhu talks about the three transformations of consciousness, but *alaya* arises in dependence on *manas*. Of course, *manas* also arises in dependence on *alaya*. Thinking arises in dependence on consciousness, but what isn't mentioned by Vasubandhu is that *alaya* is generated in dependence on thinking or reflecting, just like the sense consciousnesses are generated in relationship to the function of their organs. But their organs aren't thinking; their organs are physical receptive capacities. The mental receptive capacity is thinking. So thinking generates *alaya*. Also, thinking can not function except in dependence on *alaya* because what's being reflected are the contents of *alaya*. So all these things are mutually dependent and that's how the mind consciousness arises.

*Alaya* arises by dependence; so does the mind consciousness. Vasubandhu doesn't mention that. He's switching back now to talk about the Buddha's ordinary presentation, but he actually calls it the foundational consciousness. The mind consciousness is foundational consciousness and *alaya* is also foundational consciousness. *Alaya* has more explanatory power but the trouble is that in response, there's a tendency to substantiate it, to turn it into a thing. People didn't tend so much to make the mind consciousness into a thing, partly because it wasn't carrying so many functions. For example, they didn't call it a storehouse. It wasn't thought of as a place which was apprehending and pulling the sense consciousnesses into being. Also, it didn't become so dominant; a huge all-encompassing mental function which over-emphasized mental life and too much de-emphasized material reality. That's part of the criticism of this system—the more work *alaya* was able to do, the more reality was attributed to it, to the detriment of the reality of the material world. In this way, the whole system tended toward idealism, which was certainly not Vasubandhu's intention.

Q: I understand this presentation in terms of *alaya*, the first transformation, having the position of mental consciousness; and the second transformation being mind organ. What role does that leave for the third transformation? In some respects it seems more closely allied to the function of thought or the manifestation of thought and conceptualization. If we're going to identify *alaya* with *mano-vijñāna dhatu*, mental consciousness, then I don't see where the home of the third transformation is, the concept of the object.

TA: He's worried about the third transformation of consciousness. You don't see what happened to it?

Q: Yes; if we're saying that *mano-vijñāna* is identical with *alaya*, this is the realm of thought. Then what has happened to the concept of the object, the manifestation of the thinking or reflecting function of *manas*?

TA: The third transformation of consciousness, the concept of the object, is the same as the realm of mind objects, *dharma dhatu* in the teaching of six consciousnesses. Verse 17 talks about what happens to the third transformation, namely, *Thus, thought involves this transformation of consciousness*. We just

finished discussing mind consciousness. Mind consciousness has the ability to discriminate. Discrimination is different from thinking. Thinking is more like reflecting. Discrimination operates on the thinking, on the reflection. I would say that Verse 17 is talking about mind consciousness, the ability to think, so that *thought involves this transformation of consciousness. For that reason, what has thus been thought of does not exist. Therefore it is all mere concept.* This is a way to see why the third transformation of consciousness is a concept of the object. It's not some object; it's a concept of the object. It is a cornerstone of this system that everything you're working with is mere concept. So that's verse 17, and that's the third transformation. When a thought comes in it is converted into concepts and also it is transformed by the dispositions that accompany it and it has also been transformed by dispositions before, as it's brought up to be a concept. This whole process of drawing on what has been disposed of by previous experience and now choosing from the results of previous experience as the basis for what's happening now; this is the process that *mano-vijñana* uses to come up with objects of knowledge. Because of this process, everything we know is mere concept. That's not the third transformation. The third transformation is implied by what I have just said. The third transformation, plus what goes on to create the experience of mind awareness, everything that mind consciousness is aware of, all that together, is just concept. That's all that we're working with; that's what they are saying here. That consciousness is going on all the time except in those special states mentioned in verse 16.

Q: What is "thought"?

TA: I'm calling "thought" *vijñana*, knowledge of difference. Thought is discrimination. It is awareness of something, of concepts. These concepts are not coming in from the external world. The mind consciousness resorts to concepts which have been created by past experience. So you can't with your mind consciousness, think of Abraham Lincoln without using your grade school and junior high school experience. You also can't think of yourself without involving all those past experiences and you always use some concept summarizing your past experience as the candidate for your object of awareness. That's thought.

"Thinking" is a little different from this. Thinking is *manas*, the reflecting activity that's going on in the thought process. Thinking is the pattern by which the dispositions are constellated and transmitted. It is the way the impressions are formed and then become an experience. The effects of thinking generate *alaya* and also influence what mind consciousness uses to have its experience. Thinking and thought are different. In mind consciousness, thinking plays the role of an organ. Mind consciousness arises based on thinking, but also thinking arises in conjunction with mind consciousness. They're interdependent.

Q: So thought doesn't exist apart from the process of thinking?

TA: That's correct; thought does not exist independently from thinking.

Conception is dependently co-arisen also, with thinking and consciousness, and past experience and dispositions. The pattern of all the dispositions embraced by consciousness is thinking. So thinking is dependently co-arisen.

Q: Is discrimination a prerequisite for thinking?

TA: Thinking arises in dependence on discriminating mind and is the shape or landscape of discriminating mind. This shape is determined by the reflective capacity (*manas*) and the dispositions of a given moment. The capacity of the mind to act as an organ along with the dispositions sets up the shape or pattern of a moment of consciousness which is what we call thinking. Mind consciousness is the basis for thinking and *alaya* is the basis for *manas*. The organ is a capacity of mind and it arises based on mind. The reflective capacity, thinking, arises in dependence on *alaya*, the first transformation; reflecting, the second transformation; and the concept of the object, the third transformation. Thinking is the pattern of all three transformations. Thinking arises in dependence on mind consciousness. Mind consciousness arises in dependence on its organ; on the thinking. You can't have mind consciousness without thinking. They are mutually co-producing each other. Both are dependently co-produced.

Discrimination is prior to thinking; it's present in the sense consciousnesses. They are called sense *vijñāna*. *Vijñāna* means knowing difference, discrimination. So there is discrimination in the sense consciousness realm. They're born of difference. If electromagnetic radiation is stimulating the organ of sight, visual consciousness may arise. Consciousness knows the difference between the organ being stimulated and not being stimulated. Also, it knows that the organ responds differently to different wave lengths of radiation. Although it doesn't have the concept for feeling separate from the light, it can know differences in the field of electromagnetic radiation (light). This discriminative function of sense consciousness then evolves into mind consciousness. Mind consciousness now does the same thing. It discriminates differences among elements in the field of mind objects just as the visual consciousness discriminates among various wave lengths in the field of light. However, with the aid of the third transformation of consciousness it can discriminate something as different from itself. It has the concept of mind objects being external. It relates not to the current sense experience, but to former sense experiences, which have been converted into and are now available in the form of dependently co-arisen concepts. That is what we're consciously aware of. The discrimination doesn't make the concept. The concept is conjured up by reflection of some element in *alaya* and the third transformation of consciousness, which conceives of what is reflected as an external object. The function of the organ only starts happening when there's a consciousness. Thinking doesn't come up by itself; it always comes up together with consciousness. You don't have consciousness coming up alone; it always comes up with thinking and you don't have mind consciousness without thinking. In other words, you don't have one *skandha* coming up by itself. You always have at least four and usually you have five *skandhas*. When mental consciousness comes up, you have thinking. When it's sensory consciousness, you have *rupa*. You still have perception, but perception now is not of concepts, it's of sense data, because it's a sense consciousness. However, there isn't the concept of external object yet, so it isn't known. And there isn't the referring back to past experience in sense consciousness to see what's happening. What's happening is actually a direct experience of something new coming up. So we are in relationship to something other than our own mind concepts. But in the mind realm we always consult our conceptual version of past experiences which are modeled on sensory experiences. We don't consult present our sensory experience, we consult mental experiences which represent sensory experiences.

Q: Is it possible for us to have a direct experience or perception with no object?

TA: Yes, that's sense consciousness. Sense consciousness is direct thought of sense data and there is no thinking in that realm.

Q: Is that enlightenment?

TA: Although that's not enlightenment, when we're enlightened we're in harmony with that realm of existence. In awakening, the belief that our objective consciousness is separate from that realm is seen through. "Seen through" means that we understand that the separation is just an illusion. We no longer believe that there are objects separate from ourselves. In the realm of sense consciousness we're not thinking. Without thinking we can't have reflection; without reflection, we can't have an object separate from ourselves. When we see the dependently arisen nature of that process, we no longer see it as substantial. When we no longer see it as substantial, then the world which used to be seen as a world of substantial objects, comes to be seen as a world of insubstantial objects. This is the same as the realm where objects of awareness are not seen as external. The whole psychic system comes back into resonance and harmony. Before that, the realm of direct experience is cut off by our substantiation of the realm of indirect experience. We feel cut off and bereft of our natural, organic, biological responsiveness to the environment and to each other, to the way we share light, the way we share sound, and smell. We live and swim around in direct sense experience all the time but we're cut off from it because we live in a conceptual world of walls and cliffs of substantial objects. When we see through the conceptual world, then the world of experience becomes integrated with it. You don't have to change the process; you just



have to understand how it dependently co-arises and see it as such. In the realm of direct experience you don't need to understand it as dependently co-arisen because you don't think it isn't dependently co-arisen. It is dependently co-arisen very nicely, and we're enjoying that right now.

Q: How does the third transformation of consciousness, (the concept of the object) relate to the six consciousness system?

TA: First of all, I should reiterate that the third transformation is not a part of the six consciousness system. What we're trying to do here is show the harmony between the early teachings about consciousness and Vasubandhu's later development of the teaching in terms of the three transformations of consciousness. In the teaching of the six consciousnesses, numerous mental factors can co-exist with mind consciousness. All of the possible mental factors, including the dispositions are listed in verses 10-14. When mind consciousness arises, some sub-set of this list comes up with it. They influence the nature and shape of a moment of experience. There's a particular thing that mind consciousness needs in order to know something. It needs some object to be aware of. One of the mental factors that arises with mind consciousness is a decision to look at some particular object in the field of mental objects (dharma dhatu). The second transformation of consciousness is the reflector which in effect, decides to look at this or that. Another mental factor or quality of mind consciousness is that it is bent or inclined towards its object. A third quality is that it's focused on the object. These three mental factors or functions which dependently co-arise with consciousness are *adhimoksa*, (adverting decision), *manasikara* (mental inclination), and *samadhi*. (concentration). These factors, along with contact and feeling, are present in every moment of consciousness. So, in the six consciousness system, dependently co-arising with consciousness, there is a decision to pay attention to one of the many concepts available. In a sense, there is a bending of consciousness toward the object and a concentration of consciousness upon the object. These three functions which dependently co-arise with consciousness articulate the second transformation of consciousness, reflection. The third transformation of consciousness is to provide the concept that the object thus reflected is external.

Don't make the third transformation into the sphere of mind objects, the dharma dhatu. The third transformation is not all potential objects of consciousness. It's also not all the mental formations that dependently co-arise with consciousness. That's the fourth *skandha*, which includes the mental factors and the dharma dhatu. The potential field of objects of the mind is not the third transformation of consciousness. The third transformation is just the concept that whatever you're aware of is external. Now, with the sense consciousnesses, there is no need for a concept of sense objects being external, because they actually are. Therefore, the third transformation doesn't need to operate in conjunction with the sense consciousnesses. That's how the third transformation works in the six consciousness system.

Q: Is the concept of the object part of mind consciousness, *mano-vijñāna*?

TA: No, it's not part of it. It's a concept, a mental factor, part of the dharma-dhatu, if you want to know where to put it in that system. It's not the whole dharma-dhatu, but it gets applied to whatever element in the dharma-dhatu that is currently the object of consciousness. Whenever mind consciousness comes up, a whole array of mental factors comes up. Dispositions come up, feelings come up, concepts and perceptions come up. Among all the dispositions, all the things in the fourth *skandha*, one of them is conception and there's a particular conception that is really helpful in this whole process of creating a sense of self and that is a conception of externality—that which you're aware of. Potentially, you could be aware of a lot of different objects in a given moment, but you choose one thing to be an object and that object is conceived of as external.

In order for the sense of self to dependently co-arise we have to conceive of something in the field of mental factors (which of course is not really external) as external to that field. This is the function of the third transformation of consciousness. The mind consciousness arises and is inseparable from its partners, its field. Then, by the function of the third transformation of consciousness, there develops a

sense that its field is external to itself. When this happens, there can be a sense of there being an external world. We deal with this external world in terms of our memory of what has already happened—our own previous experience, not somebody else's previous experience. Consciousness consults it by means of the third transformation, and says it's external. We say that the conceptual impressions of the yesterday we're looking at is not just our mind. We think there is actually an external yesterday—outside, over there, in the past. Or we say that these people—actually our own internal mental rendition of them—are external. I don't say "I'm looking at my concept of you to know who you are." Thus I can think that I'm looking at you and you're external to me. This happens through the third transformation and that's how we get the internal/external, self/other thing going.

Q: How do you reverse the third transformation?

TA: You reverse it by studying how it dependently co-arises. By seeing how it arises with thinking and the dispositions and the sense of self, the process is reversed. We're liberated from the process by which the third transformation sets up the sense of a substantial separation of self and other. All this substantiation is reversed and dropped off by studying the process by which it gets set up. It requires a change in perspective of life which we call uprightness. When we practice uprightness we observe dependent co-arising rather than believing in the substantiation of self and just being involved in more karma. Even though the karma keeps rolling along, we're making an effort to watch the process. Being upright is to put our life energy into studying how things are happening rather than trying to manipulate them. This in itself is a fundamental reversal, an unselfish approach, because there is no self-gain in such study. All our energy goes into being intimate with what's happening rather than into calculating what we're going to get out of it. In fact, we will get something out of it; we will get a reversal of our whole life pattern. But if we're concerned about gain, we're not being upright, so then we don't fully enter into the study of dependent co-arising.

Q: Is it actually necessary to understand all the minute details of the six and eight consciousness systems? It doesn't really interest me. I feel that I basically understand what is being said; is this enough to be able to practice with it?

TA: You can and will practice, based on your current understanding. You can only practice as far as your eye of Dharma reaches. You are always working with your present level of understanding of dependent co-arising. You must finally, according to the Bodhisattva Vow, enter every single Dharma door. There are innumerable Dharma doors in every text, so eventually you need to enter all the minutiae of every single living being's mind. But not necessarily tonight! Tonight you have your present understanding of Buddhist teaching and of Vasubandhu and it's with this understanding that you're going to practice through the night and through zazen tomorrow morning.

## Class 9

November 17, 1994

I was thinking that it might be good to start on the *Thirty Verses* again, the famous work on the nature of mind by Vasubandhu.

Verse 20 of the *Thirty Verses* says, *Whatever thought through which an object is thought of as a substance, that indeed is a fabrication. It is not evident.*

Whatever kind of thought is used to imagine that something has substance, that thought is totally constructed. The imagining of substance has no basis. This particular way of thinking applies to what we think about the *Thirty Verses* as a text also.

This morning on the way to the zendo, Zori seemed to be hurt. Either his body, his feelings or his mind was hurt. Did you hear him crying? I thought maybe Sanchi hurt him. I wasn't sure, but Zori was

running down the stairs from the zendo and Sanchi was running along the deck. Zori was crying and Sanchi wasn't crying at all. So I got the impression that Sanchi had in some way hurt Zori's feelings. This was just a thought I had, but I didn't attribute substance to the thought. I don't believe that there is a reality; that thought represents reality, it is just something that my mind conjured up.

Q: After you had that thought, did you think "this is not reality?"

Tenshin Anderson: No, because that would be another kind of substantiation; then I would believe that. It's just that there is nothing to it, there is no basis. I couldn't really see in the dark what happened. It looked like maybe Zori was in ecstasy. I don't know. If I did more research on this and got more data, then I would say "well it is true," that there is substance to the thought that Sanchi hurt Zori or there is substance to the thought that Zori has been hurt. There is the thought that Zori has been hurt or there is the thought that I have been hurt. A dependently co-arisen thought: "I have pain." But the thought that there is substance and reality to "I have pain," that this is substantial reality—that is what verse 21 is talking about.

Taiyo Lipscomb: I was wondering what the experiential difference would be if your thought had substance to it.

TA: I could have gotten angry at Steven for letting his dog run on the deck. I could have gotten upset with Sanchi. Once substance is attributed, then the dispositions go "klunk." They come into place and then you're done for.

TL: That is what I wondered. The dispositions come into play when you give substance?

TA: They come into play and you create more dispositions when you attribute substance. Obsessions come into play and so on.

Now I want to stop and apply this to the *Thirty Verses* itself before you ask more questions.

I know that people have certain opinions and perceptions about the *Thirty Verses*. I've seen various people running around crying, thinking that the *Thirty Verses* is mean or that Vasubandhu is on some kind of trip. I heard somebody said that they thought that the *Thirty Verses* is very dry.

I propose that this text is about the Buddha extending his hand to you through Vasubandhu. It's just Buddha's hand, it is not anything more than that. If you take this hand, join hands with it and go for a walk, you will get to see things that you have never seen before. You'll see what Buddha sees. Along the way many things will happen to you and you will have various perceptions and finally you will get to see in a completely fresh way.

When I was young I used to have the experience of remembering some things but other people would have a different memory. For example, I would say that such and such happened or I saw such and such a thing, and someone would say, "No it didn't." In those days I thought that what I experienced was something that really happened, rather than simply something that I perceived. So I used to do this thing that I called the "Burma Shave technique."

When I was a kid there were Burma Shave signs along the highway. They were advertisements, one word at a time on not very big posters. You would see one word and then you drive a little further and see another word and so on; something like, "If - you - want - a - good - shave - use - Burma - Shave." They rhymed, so you could remember the order.

My method of getting someone to remember what I remembered was like driving down the road. You'd see something and say to your friend a little while later, "You know back at that gas station where that bus was parked and those people with those dogs were running around?" and your friend would say, "We didn't go by a gas station." If they said they didn't see a gas station there isn't much to talk about but if they say there wasn't a gas station, you might say, "I beg to differ, there was and there is a gas station unless they just destroyed it after we left."

I would say, "If you don't remember the gas station, do you remember Omaha?" They'd say, "No, I don't remember Omaha." Then "Well do you remember Minneapolis, where we started?" "Yes, I

remember Minneapolis.” “Do you remember Sioux City?” “Yes.” “Do you remember after Sioux City we went over a river?” “Yes.” “Do you remember what happened after that?” “No, I don't. What happened?” “Do you remember those hills?” “Yes.” “Do you remember what happened when we got to the top of those hills?” “No.” “Do you remember that big church on top of that hill?” “Oh yeah, that's right.” “And after we went down the hill do you remember that there were some lights out in the distance?” “Oh, yeah.” “Do you remember that that's Omaha?” “Oh yeah, that's Omaha.” So now you have Omaha. “Then when we were coming out of Omaha do you remember that there was that big sign advertising the Black Hills?” “Yeah.” “Then do you remember the gas station that came right after that?” “Oh yeah, there was a gas station!”

If the person will join your hand and go through your scenario, if they can tune in to your reality, you can connect them to a reality that they never experienced before.

This text is like that. If you can somehow, find something in here that you can identify with, step by step you can let this text take you to some place you haven't been before. It's an experience like you ordinarily have but it's an experience where erroneous imaginations cease. That is where this text is walking. It's taking us for a walk into our experience which is free of the substantiation referred to in verse 20.

The poem I read last night in the Zendo came to mind:

*The mind is seething, there is great pain. Somehow it has turned cold.  
The blue mountains grow more vast and more blue.  
The autumn waterfalls are louder.  
I take my cane and go out the gate for a walk.  
I can hear the last crickets singing in the chilly evening.  
I am happy.  
The rays of the setting sun shine through the evening smoke that hovers over our village.  
I throw back my head, drunk with beauty and sing the Willow Song at the top of my lungs.*<sup>14</sup>

When I hear that I think, “Yes, here it's turned cold, the blue mountains are getting vaster and more blue and the autumn waterfalls are louder,” and I think that also applies to the social experience at Tassajara. The blue mountains are getting more vast, the autumn waterfalls are getting louder. Part of what is going on here is this text, but primarily it's that your experience is that autumn waterfalls are getting louder. The question I hear from people, who don't necessarily know that they are talking about the *Thirty Verses*, is “Can we allow these autumn waterfalls to get louder? Can we allow the blue mountains to get more vast and more blue? Can we allow it to turn cold? Can we allow life? Can we allow the people in this valley to manifest as they are?” We can, if we can simply witness, like Wang Wei did, that “it has turned cold.” Period. Not “it has turned cold,” and then put verse 20's substantiation on top of it. You may say, “Hey wait a minute, we can't have this happening, this is too much.” That's saying that we can't accept life being as it is, so we enshroud it with substantiation.

Verse 21 is: A dependently co-arisen event and experience, “it has turned cold” is life manifesting now. If it's free of substantiation, this is called “the accomplished.” That is the thrust of verse 21.

*A dependent self-nature is a thought that has arisen depending upon conditions.*

“It has turned cold” is an example of that. “The blue mountains grow more vast and more blue. The autumn waterfalls are louder.” Human beings at Tassajara are expressing themselves in various ways. Then what does the poet do? He says “I take my cane and I go out the gate for a walk” in this world. Then he says “I can hear the last crickets singing in the chilly evening.”

<sup>14</sup>Wang Wei, in *100 Poems from the Chinese*, tr. Kenneth Rexroth

To this he says, “I am happy.” What is he happy about? In effect, he is happy about verse 21. He is happy about a dependently co-arisen last singing of the crickets in the chilly evening air. Do you hear the last singing of the crickets in the chilly evening air? Sometimes it is the last singing of an old friend in the autumn air. Just that. No substance attributed here. He says “I am happy.” He continues to observe what is happening. Even though he is happy he doesn’t just sink down in his happiness and curl up in a ball and hide. He keeps walking, facing this dependently co-arisen phenomenon and that’s it. He keeps doing it. He says “the last rays of the setting sun shine through the smoke that hovers over the village.” It’s a Chinese village, and it is sunset and he is up in the hills a little bit above the village and there is smoke coming up. The trees have dropped their leaves, it’s gray, it’s getting dark, there is a little sun coming in and there is smoke.

I thought “Pollution! Way back in the Tang Dynasty!” Then I thought, sometimes at Tassajara people light fires in the evening and there is smoke in the valley. Then you think “Pollution! Smoke in this pristine wilderness!” If the *parikalpita svabhava*, the attribution of substance happens, you’re going to get upset about the pollution. Maybe you’ll criticize the people who have lit fires and are polluting the air. Of course when you’re happy, you’ll find out that you’re the one who lit the fires. When you wake up you’ll find that out. If you don’t, you’ll think that somebody else lit the fires and is causing the problem. This doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t reduce the amount of pollution in the atmosphere. Maybe we should. But you don’t have to get angry at the “bad people” in order to improve the air quality. The best way to improve the air quality is to realize that you are polluting it, that I’m polluting it. Then I won’t be self righteous in my clean air activity.

This is Wang Wei, a great Chinese Buddhist poet. His happiness is based on the perception of the insubstantial, dependently co-arisen objects. That is what happiness is based on. The knowledge of the Buddha is based on insubstantial, dependently co-produced experiences. It’s called “being based on emptiness.” This doesn’t mean “nothing.” It just means that everything that you’re aware of, all your experiences have no substance because they are conjured up by such complex causes and conditions. That is the basis of the Buddha’s happiness, of Wang Wei’s happiness, of our happiness.

Vasubandhu could say, “Why don’t you people just observe that all your experiences are dependently co-produced and watch to see if you can see just that, and not let this substance-attributing, this substance-imagining side of mind, infect it.” Regain this purely dependently co-arisen experience which has no substance in itself either. Retrieve that pure experience from this self-projecting, substance-attributing activity of mind. That is what he is saying in this verse. It is what is implied here. The rest of the text is his way of holding your hand to take you to that experience.

I jumped a little ahead and we skipped a very important verse, verse 19. An example of that verse would be: “It has turned cold, smoke over the village,” and so on. As you start to study this, various things will come up in you, so I wanted to move ahead to take the view of the accomplished, which as Mr. Kalupahana (the Buddhist scholar and translator of the *Thirty Verses*) says, is an epistemological achievement. It’s an achievement of a new epistemology. It’s an achievement of a new understanding of what your experience is based on. Vasubandhu is taking your hand and trying to take you to this achievement of a new understanding of what is at the basis of your experience.

It’s a rough trip sometimes. There is smoke in the air, it is cold, the waterfalls are sometimes really noisy. Your fingers are getting numb, your toes are getting numb, and it’s sad sometimes. You can barely stand to hear those last crickets. You can barely stand to stay awake because reality is right in your face and you are scared to death. You know if you go to sleep you’ll get a chance to survive and keep holding on to that attributing practice which keeps making you miserable. So if you can just stay asleep you’ll be able to stay miserable. At least get indoors and turn the lights on and forget about this cold autumn air. Now we can have some questions.

Q: I just want a word clarified. What is “epistemology”?

TA: Epistemology is a philosophical enterprise. The way I'm using it here is not in the sense of philosophizing, but in the sense that everybody has an implicit epistemology. In other words, everybody has some understanding, some position regarding the basis of their perceptions. For example, you think that they are real or they are illusory. You think that they are absolute or conjured up. For most people, the result of their epistemology is that they are miserable. Buddha's epistemology is that at the basis of all your experience are insubstantial objects. They are insubstantial because they are dependently co-produced. You can't experience the "substance" of the thing; that is pure imagining—verse 20. But you can have an experience of a dependently co-arisen thing.

Experiences are based on dependently co-arisen *paratantra*. "Paratantra" means depending on other. We can have those experiences. They are based on something that arrives from something other than itself. Since it depends on other things, it doesn't have inherent nature. It is insubstantial. That is the basis of our experience. Then we have imaginings that those experiences are substantial and that calls into play a different epistemology, which is the epistemology of bondage, of obsession and dispositions.

I was just talking to someone about the word "obsession." Many people want to become free of their obsessions. You can even have an obsession about becoming free of obsessions. There are some practices of meditation that are obsessive. The root of the word obsession is "to sit on." It is from the past participle of a word which means to sit. It's the state of having accomplished sitting before something. The old meaning is kind of interesting. It is the state of being beset or actuated by a devil or evil spirit. To sit before the devil. Demons are always out there and you sit before them. The more modern meaning of 'obsession' is a compulsive preoccupation with a fixed idea or an unwanted feeling or emotion, often with symptoms of anxiety. Or it can be the compulsive idea or emotion at the center of such a preoccupation. So the obsession can be the object which causes you to be compulsively fixated on it or it can be the fixation. The same pertains to the word 'compulsion.' In modern psychology, 'compulsion' means an irresistible impulse to think about something or to do something. The compulsion is also the thing that you are irresistibly drawn to think about or do. It's the action or it's the impulse to do it.

We want to become free of these obsessions and compulsions. Sometimes certain meditation practices are used obsessively or compulsively—to meditate on posture or on breathing in order to become free from other obsessions and compulsions. It's okay as a warm up. But what I am recommending is different. It is to be upright with obsessions. If you want to do something about an obsession, you might just try to randomly do whatever comes to mind. This is actually what you will do. To be fixated on the idea of a particular obsession-removal program, of course, is an obsession. It also will become an obsession when you can't stop yourself from doing it. In other words, you can't stop yourself from doing something to get rid of your obsession. But maybe you can develop an obsession-removal program but be relaxed about it and not have a compulsive feeling to do it. You could say "Let's experiment this week with having an obsession-removal program. Let's just do it for a few minutes, but be relaxed about it." Then it's not really an obsession, it's just like playing golf. If you get fixated on it, it can become an obsession. It's the fixation and the compulsion to have the fixation that are the problem.

Uprightness in the midst of the obsession could reveal to you where the obsession is coming from. It's coming from an idea, which you may or may not be aware that you have, that whatever you are working on has some substance. My usual recommendation is that rather than telling yourself that this stuff doesn't have any substance, that these are all insubstantially, co-dependently arising phenomena, it is better to catch yourself at the fact that you **are** attributing substance to things. If you are, you should admit it. You shouldn't pretend that you are not, by saying some other noise over here which becomes another obsession which you have to do because you don't want to admit what you are doing. It's better to just admit what is happening because what is happening is that you are doing this obsession on top of

what you need to see. What you need to see is your experience which you are now obsessing about. There is an actual experience that you are obsessing about.

Sala Steinbach: Can you give more examples of when substance is being attributed to a dependently co-arisen event? I still am not hearing the distinction.

TA: Rather than give more examples it would probably better to go back and go over the same examples more thoroughly. So, are there any experiences you have had lately.....well maybe you don't want to say. Maybe somebody did something recently that you really have trouble accepting; you actually are judging it.

Somebody said to me recently that there were two ways or two minds that she identified in her body. One way was judging and the other way was letting it be. Really letting it be, means what verse 21 is about, the dependently co-arisen, without judging on top of it, without saying "this is existent, this is how to accomplish proper attitude." To let it be, to really let somebody be. Sometimes you think you're letting them be but actually you are putting on top of them "I like them." You do like them. Your experience is "I like her." That's just a dependently co-produced thing which I didn't even know about until she took her glasses off. When I saw her without her glasses on, it happened and I liked it. If I attribute substance to that, I feel like "well I'm allowing that." But I'm not allowing it.

When you first see the person and you like it, at that time of that experience, if there is not any attribution of substance to it, you just have a pleasant experience of looking at somebody's face, that's letting it be. If you attribute substance to something which you find pleasant, you think that you are letting it be. "I'm just letting her be cute." But I'm not just letting her be cute. I am actually attributing substance to it but I didn't notice it. Why didn't I notice it? Because attributing substance to something that I'm finding pleasant doesn't hurt much. It's very subtle. Do you see the difference between enjoying a pretty face and attributing substance to a pretty face? "It's a pretty face plus she is my friend." So you don't notice.

Take the other case, where you make a judgment against the person. Then you have an experience of unpleasantness. That in itself is just unpleasant, like "it has turned cold." You can say "it has turned cold, my fingers hurt. Zori's crying. I'm worried about him and I'm happy." If it has turned cold and I attribute substance to it, I'm not happy. It becomes very painful when I judge and attribute substance to my judgments. If it is a pleasant sensation, a pleasant judgment, and I attribute substance to it, my mind has to be very subtle to notice this that gives me pain too. OK? Just sit with this for a second.

This comes back to allowing or letting it be. So I refer you to any experiences that you have had recently, where you had trouble really allowing something to be. Where you had trouble allowing the cold or the heat, or you had trouble allowing a person to be the way this person was. Perhaps you had trouble allowing and accepting this manifestation of life, which means having trouble allowing the way the experience was for you when you perceived the person that way. Allowing your pain.

So I refer you to that experience. Can you just say "It has turned bitter cold. It has turned very hot," just that? Can you notice when you say "No, we can't allow this. I can't allow this and I hope that we can't allow it, so you'll help me not allow it?" When has that happened recently? Has it happened that something has come to you and you say "I'm having trouble allowing that, which makes me feel like this"? Look there. That's where you'll find the dependently co-arisen. Not in the absence of the constructed substance. Then maybe you can find, maybe you even have an example of some time when you had an experience in the absence of "the previous one," i.e, mental fabrication of substance, and how then there was the accomplished. The same phenomenon but a new basis under it. Instead of a rock foundation, now it is floating on water and it's moving.

These examples are very close. If you got the bad example, the good example, the happy examples are right near by. It's like a mountain being on a rock foundation or a mountain being on water. When the

mountains are on rocks, you are unhappy. When the mountains are on water, you are happy. When “it has turned cold” is on the water, you’re happy.

This is like when they asked Yunmen, “Where are all the Buddhas born?” He said “Eastern mountains move on the water.” Dogen Zenji says, at the base of the mountains there is always water but you have to walk all the way to the bottom of that mountain. You have to walk to the bottom of this dependently co-arisen event. As you walk down the mountain, that’s called studying dependent co-arising.

As you walk down the mountain of “it has turned cold,” the autumn waterfalls are louder. You walk down that mountain. You start walking down and you say “the autumn waterfalls.” Then—“they are louder and they hurt me” and so on. You thoroughly experience the autumn waterfalls and at the bottom, there may be something really surprising.

There is a rock-like quality of our experience and at the bottom of that rock-like quality is water and there the rock-like quality moves. That’s where Buddhas are born. That is not where they do all their work. Sometimes they run back up in the mountains to help people and encourage them to come down. But they are born at the place where the solidity melts. Where verse 20 falls off of verse 21. That is where they are born. Once they are born, you can get around a little bit more.

Are there any questions before I go on?

Q: Sounds like what you are talking about is that place on the twelve fold chain of causation between feeling and craving, is that right?

TA: Yes. It’s like Wang Wei’s “it has turned cold.” If you can say that, you’ll be able to say “it has turned cold.” See if you can say that like Wang Wei said it. See if you can say “it has turned cold” and take your cane and go for a walk. See if you can do that and watch these things happen, if you can let the cold be and see if you are happy. If you can’t let it be, notice how you don’t, and notice what you do with the cold so that it is hard to just let it be.

This is another instruction of how to be upright with these experiences. The words “it has turned cold” are said by someone because something has happened. Even while you repeat or consider the words now, it has turned cold. Before you say that, something happened that can lead you to say that it has turned cold. Probably what has happened is ‘C-O-L-D’ or ‘ouch’ or ‘yikes’ or something like that. Something happened there. At that time, try to be upright. Watch the moment of cold, watch the moment of physical pain. Watch the moment of getting overwhelmed. Watch the moment of someone saying something that hurts you. Watch that moment for the place which is right there where the word “cold” doesn’t reach, where the word “pain” doesn’t reach. Don’t deny the pain but just be present enough and balanced enough so you have a chance to see more deeply and to practice uprightness.

I want to echo these words from verse 30: *This indeed is the realm free from influxes, it is unthinkable, wholesome and stable. It is the serene body of release.* That is what we are talking about. You can start practicing verse 30 while you’re meditating on verses 21, 22, and 23. This is the realm free from influxes. Free of influxes means all these words that are flying around you—pain, pleasure, cold—all these words and all these judgments too. They are flying around, they don’t get into someplace. There is a place that is free from these inputs and outflows. This place is unthinkable. You can’t think of this place. I’m talking about it now, but this is just like holding your hand to take a walk someplace, the place where it has turned cold. You can’t think, you can’t obsess, you can’t think even a little bit, but you can’t not think either. There’s no conceivable method you can use to get to this place that is not someplace else. What you do is be upright. In other words what you do is—not-moving, not-doing. This is being stable. It’s unthinkable.

While you’re studying this material keep not moving, being very very stable. Don’t think yourself into that stability. This is not a stability that you can think yourself into. It’s an unthinkable stability. Even when you think “I’m unstable,” that stability doesn’t say, “wait a minute, don’t bad mouth me.” It smiles



no matter what you say. It's just really serene and stable, it's unthinkable. This is the serene body of release being talked about. This is the way to hold Vasubandhu's hands.

When you study this text and you have judgments like "dry," just keep holding the text's hands and be upright. That's all you have to do. If you can do it with the text you may be able to do it with daily life experiences. Just hold her hand for a moment and be upright and then this will take you into this place, this realm free from outflows.

The emphasis of this text is to try to actually revamp and get a new basis for your understanding of your experience. It's not exactly an introverted text because it's dealing with objects a lot—how you get the sense of objects out there. However, a lot of introverted work needs to happen and I think that what part of this text is saying is if you can first revamp the way you understand the basis and reality level of your experience then we can talk about what to do. I think that there is a kind of anxiety or uncertainty among us about whether being upright will be enough for us to respond appropriately to the myriad moral dilemmas of our life.

So what is being proposed here is why don't you just go and find this place and then see how you behave. Let's not talk about that right now. Wouldn't it be wonderful if when we realize this place, that the precepts just naturally flow from us, rather than our reaching over there and looking at the precepts and checking with them all the time? Wouldn't it be wonderful if once we realize this new basis our behavior was just like the Buddha's?

Verse 22: *Thus it, the accomplished, should be declared as neither identical nor different from the dependent, like impermanence and so on. When that, the dependent is not perceived, this too is not perceived.*

As you see from his commentary (*The Principles of Buddhist Psychology*, p. 206), Professor Kalupahana makes a big deal about the past participle. The past participle typically expresses a completed action. It is interesting to notice some other participles in our practice. There is a verb called *bodhi*. *Bodhi* means wake up. It's from *bud* which means awake and the past participle of *bodhi* is *Buddha*. *Buddha* is the accomplishment of *bodhi*. We also have these other wonderful things—*sunya*, and *sunyata*; empty and emptiness. Then you have *anitya* and *anityata*. *Anitya* is the impermanent. So you can perceive impermanent things, you can observe what is impermanent. Based on observing what's impermanent you can realize, you can accomplish something called impermanence. Impermanence is also an epistemological achievement. In other words, you can observe these impermanent things and observe those impermanent things and you could still hold on to the epistemological view that this person is a jerk—forever. "This person is permanently a jerk." You wouldn't have realized impermanence.

For centuries men have held the view that women are inferior. They have tenaciously held the position that women are inferior, because they are afraid of what women really are. They haven't studied thoroughly when they do that. People can hold to their opinion about something and think that's the same thing as it was before, even though they have seen things change. But by intensely studying how things change, and being upright, it is possible to realize a new basis for understanding. Then you don't have to remember things like "Things are impermanent."

Remembering that things are impermanent is an obsession. It's like the other one which comes more naturally, which is remembering that they are permanent. Remembering that things are impermanent is an obsession that you might adopt to cure yourself of the bad effects of remembering that things are permanent. But if you study impermanence enough, you could realize a new way of being. When you are that way, when you realize this new way of being called impermanence, you realize a new life and this is where peace is born. Peace is born from this new way of understanding what your experiences are based on. Your experiences are based on constantly changing impermanent things and this is when you are peaceful.

Wendy Lewis: I have a sense of always having seen the world as impermanent. I grew up in a situation that was unreliable, so I keep questioning this view of impermanence. I see it as “cold.” I wonder if you can shed some light there?

TA: My first reaction to your seeing it as “cold” is that this is an example of **not** seeing impermanence. That is how you keep this changing stuff under control. Putting it under the heading of “cold” is one of the ways to do it. There are other ways to do it, but that is the way you use. Very few children who live in an environment that is unpredictable and undependable are ready to be upright with it. To deliberately expose children to impermanence is not necessarily good. Since they aren’t able to be upright, what they tend to do is to rigidify even more. They throw a kind of cast onto the system to protect themselves from the actual unpredictability of phenomena. Today, when you hear some kids talking about chrome and fabrics, they aren’t talking about remodeling their cars, they are talking about coffins. This is a reaction to a very harsh exposure beyond their ability; they react by making something permanent. So to warm up to this practice it will require considerable encouragement for a person who has been abused and offered meditation challenges ahead of their time.

There are two ways to resist a meditation practice. One is to call it names like cold, dry, abstract, whatever you don’t like. The other way is to say this is really the hottest stuff in town and the *Thirty Verses* is totally cool. You should just say “It has turned cold.” That’s it. The *Thirty Verses* is the *Thirty Verses* and that’s enough. Because of your background certain things seem “cold” to you. You may be able to catch this bias, as you just did, which is good. As soon as you notice that bias, examine it, examine that word “cold” and in that examination you’ll protect the warmth. You’ll bring yourself back in line.

This is not necessarily to like meditation. Liking meditation is leaning the other way. The proper attitude towards the impermanent is uprightness, which is not to **like** meditating on impermanence. That is an outflow. It’s not to dislike it. If you notice the outflows, by examining these outflows, you come back in line. As soon as you spot an outflow you’re upright. Unless you haven’t thoroughly admitted the outflows. As soon as you’ve completely said “this is an outflow” and in precisely in what way it’s an outflow, you are back in line again. That is the way to study whatever it is, in this case the impermanent.

WL: I was reading the other day and I just wanted to die. I think that part of it was because it does require looking at the way I look at things and it’s not that it is uncomfortable, but that the flow of warmth is frightening or something or...

TA: That is part of holding Vasubandhu’s hand. You’re going to feel these outflows one way or the other and then you examine the outflow and then you’re back on the path again. Then you’re off and examining the outflow and you’re back on again. To notice the influx carefully brings you into the realm where there aren’t any influxes. To notice opinions and judgments and thinking as such and to let it go at that bring you back in the realm of the unthinkable rather than thinking. You’re back in stability

Christina Lehnerr: We often talk about objects and not attributing substance to something that we externalize, so I realized that my dispositions or my reactions are also co-dependently arisen. If something happens and I attribute substance and then have all these reactions then, instead of trying to scrape the substance off from the object I can actually turn and see what’s happening in myself; that it’s dependently co-arisen. It’s not me having a bad disposition. It’s loosening it up and making it less cold by not judging that but that is also happening right now when that is where it has moved to and I can apply this whole teaching to that. That’s different from the way I approached it before—attributing substance to dispositions, attributing substance to karma.

TA: You spotted that you were actually attributing substance to dispositions. In fact, one of the problems with dispositions is that we attribute substance to them. So if you attribute substance to the dispositions wouldn’t you want to get rid of them? Really substantial, customary modes and fixed ways! So it is pretty hard. If these habits are substantial and disposition of habits are solid, then it is pretty hard

not to become obsessive about them, which is exactly how they are born. So you have to be upright with the experience of attributing substance to the dispositions or attributing substance to the obsessions.

The parallel thing in this case is we don't have the past participle thing. We have the past participle but it is not operating on an original verb. *Parinispana* —the accomplished—is not the past participle of *paratantra*—the dependently co-arisen. The realization of *sunyata* is based on observing the interdependent **lack** of inherent existence of things. The realization of peace which comes from realizing the state of impermanence, comes from studying the impermanent. The accomplishment, the serene body of release comes in relationship to studying the dependently co-arisen. So it's a past participle. I appreciate Mr. Kalupahana emphasizing that this is not an absolute reality. This is just something which is accomplished in relationship to something else. The accomplished is the accomplished in relationship to the dependently co-arisen. You've got to have a dependently co-arisen experience to have the accomplishment of this very subtle non-discriminating wisdom, like impermanence and so on.

Vasubandhu goes on to say, *if you don't have the dependently co-arisen experience then you don't have the other one. If the dependent is not perceived then the accomplished is not perceived.*

The accomplishment is not the same as the dependent, but it is not different from it either because you cannot have one without the other. So the karmically created or the dependently co-arisen is the content of non-discriminating wisdom. It's inseparable from it, but it's not identical to it. If it were identical to it, then the attribution of substance to the dependently co-arisen that comes from the self-projecting nature of mind would automatically slough off. But the dependently co-arisen is not protected. It lets itself be abused and co-opted. The fact that is so is also part of non-discriminating wisdom.

Q: This sounds like that line in the *Heart Sutra*, form is emptiness and emptiness is form.

TA: Yes, it's just like that. Form is a dependently co-arisen thing, so are feelings, perceptions, formations and consciousness. All these things are dependently co-arisen and so the accomplishment of this new understanding is not the same as them and it is not different.

GM: I hear you saying something a little bit different than "form is emptiness." I hear you saying something like "form, also emptiness."

TA: Well, you know that phrase is problematical. The Chinese says *shiki soku ze ku*, "form immediately is emptiness." It's not exactly "equals." It's like when you have form you have emptiness but they are not identical there either. When it says "form is not different from emptiness," that's right but it's not identical either. It doesn't say that though. I think that part is implied by the *soku* which means "immediately." There is no separation but they are not identical. Form is not emptiness, it is neither identical nor different.

That is why it is very important, if you want to realize emptiness, to meditate on form and feelings, perceptions and all these formations, all these dispositions. They are the basis and what you need to do is somehow let them be cured of their infection from this substance producing thing. *The Heart Sutra* doesn't talk about this overlay of phenomena. It talks about the phenomena after they have been saved. It's the vision of Avalokitesvara after she understands. She doesn't talk about what it is like before. Hearing about what it is like afterwards sounds kind of cold. *The Heart Sutra* sounds cold; it is a heartless sutra. So we need this other-dependent. All of our experiences have an opportunity to reveal the other-dependent to us completely free from this imposition of substance on them.

There is pain around judging our experiences when these judgments are taken to be real. Judgments themselves are dependently co-arisen. "It has turned cold" is a judgment. When Wang Wei said it, it was free from attribution of substance. When he said "it has turned cold," that was non-discriminating wisdom, which made him happy and made him able to sing in his decrepitude.

Last night I said "I take my staff and go out for a walk," but actually I like the cane. Even when you are a wimp and falling down you can still do this meditation, even when you need a cane to go on this

walk. You can use whatever you need to take this walk and see and make this judgment. When this judgment is free from the imagined nature, free from erroneous imaginations, free from attribution of substance, then you are happy making judgments. You can actually sit there and just judge away. When you judge and your judgment carries erroneous imaginations along with it, then judgment is very painful.

Many Zen students hate their judging side. But you can't get rid of your judging side. That's part of what feeling is. Every moment you're judging. But judging which is free of erroneous imagination is happiness. It's just the wonder of life judging or the wonder of you judging somebody judging you, or even the wonder of you judging somebody who is judging you with erroneous imaginations in their mind. They are judging you and they believe the reality of what they are judging and you judge that. You can judge that without believing in your judgment as something substantial; just see it as something that comes up whenever people judge you.

When people compliment me, I always come up with the judgment: "great!" It's a disposition, an obsessive reaction. It's automatic. I can't help but have this fixed idea that it is good. I wish I didn't sometimes. Why do I always glow when they say "That was wonderful?" I notice that it is a well-established obsession that every time they give me certain kinds of compliments with a certain look on their face, I always get this warm feeling. If I believe that this is real, I actually say, "I'm not happy. I feel like a puppet." It gets really tiresome because every time it happens there is an outflow. If it happens once, fine, but if it happens fifteen times in a day, you notice that you get tired out or inflated. It is not the realm free of outflows. There are outflows every time I think that this is real.

If they say "that's wonderful," or if they insult or criticize me, and there is no energy increase or decrease, this is the realm of stability, free from influxes and outflows. If I notice outflows or if there aren't any, then I am happy when they are insulting me or when they are praising me. Either way, I take my cane and go out for a walk. If I am Wang Wei, if I am walking this path with Vasubandhu, I just keep processing, keep going forth, studying no matter what they say. Everything that happens you study and you notice your energy increases or decreases around that stuff,

Ninen Kutchins: Did you say that judging is feeling?

Feeling is judging, judging is feeling. Feeling is a mental judgment, like positive, negative and neutral. This is the way I use the Abhidharma word "vedana." The second *skandha* is judging, evaluation. Is it painful, is it pleasurable, is it neutral? Those are the feelings that are talked about in this text.

I don't understand Wang Wei as saying he has a positive feeling at that time. He might, but that is not the point. The point is, "it has turned cold, I'm getting old, I need a cane. The autumn waterfalls are penetrating my poor little eardrums. These mountains are getting more vast, they are kind of scary. They are beautiful but they are also kind of scary, they loom up there and get dark." You can dread this valley as it gets colder and colder and darker and darker. You can have a negative sensation here in this valley and when that negative sensation is just a negative sensation you are a happy camper.

NK: Why the word "happy?"

TA: OK, how about the word "joyful." He is obsessed. "I am happy!" Every time he has an experience and the experience is free of attribution of substance he just freaks out and starts singing. He can't help it!

Somebody told me that when she got free of her obsession she felt good. It is tricky you know. I don't think that this freedom feels good. You might feel good, you might feel bad. It is not a conscious thing—this serene body of release. It is not consciousness, but it doesn't happen some place else from consciousness. It leaves no traces in consciousness. That is why you aren't necessarily having a positive sensation at the time of the experience of suchness. You might have a negative sensation. Usually the first time people have these experiences they have negative sensations. When you are having a positive sensation of this experience you might not notice it. When you have a negative sensation and you are very happy, you think "What? How come?"

I remember the first practice period here. It rained all the time and the food wasn't good and we were afraid that things were going to end any minute. The kerosene lamps were getting darker, toilet paper was running out. We were suffering, and we thought it was because it was cold and wet and damp. We were walking around like zombies. Everybody was very slow, really down, cold, dark. It was wonderful. We didn't have a teacher to bother us, to tell us to be more or less depressed than we were, or even to be just like we were. We were miserable because of all that stuff. But we thought the reason why we were miserable was because of that stuff. I was very surprised one day when I was totally not miserable and nothing had changed. I said "Well how come? Where did this come from?" I still don't know where it came from, but I realized that it wasn't because of the circumstances that I was happy. It definitely was not because I was cold, it was dark and the food was running out and these people were the way they were. That was not what was making me happy. I also realized that it wasn't because of the circumstances that I was unhappy before. But before that, I did think that was why I was unhappy.

### Class 10

November 19, 1994

Someone said "When you have alternatives you can easily revolt against something, but when you don't have any alternatives you can only go forward." I think there's something useful about that. One of the great advantages of having one practice, of choosing to do one practice during sesshin, or one way of understanding everything that happens as an opportunity to practice uprightness, is then you just go forward rather than rebelling against something.

Someone asked me to discuss verse 22 where Vasubandhu says *Thus it, [that is, the accomplished], should be declared to be neither identical nor different from the dependent, like impermanence and so on*. We have subject/object relationships, our sense of subject and others. These experiences are examples of something that arises dependently. The sense of self and other is an example of an other-dependent event, something that arises by causes and conditions. The accomplished is the other-dependent as something which originates by causes and conditions. It's *like impermanence and so on*. In other words, it's the accomplishment of impermanence. Impermanence is an accomplishment based on a meditation on impermanent things. Impermanence isn't the nature of phenomenal appearances and disappearances. Their nature is that they are impermanent. You can't have the understanding called impermanence without impermanent things.

You can't have the accomplished, which is non-discriminating wisdom, without these things that aren't really substantial, aren't really true. If you take away these conceptual events, these events which are just concepts, which aren't really the way things are, but simply the way things appear to be, then there's no possibility for non-discriminating awareness. If you take away what dependently co-arises in terms of our perceptions of what's going on, then you can't have the accomplished. That's the meaning of *impermanence and so on*.

In the same way, "*sunyata*" is emptiness. Mahayana Buddhism is the deep understanding of how things are empty (*sunya*). It's a realization of emptiness (*sunyata*). But you can't have emptiness without something that's empty, in other words, without things. So *sunya* and *sunyata*, *anitya* and *anityata*, and *paratantra* and *parinispanna* are pairs; you can't have one without the other. They're not the same, not identical, but they're not different.

Non-discriminating wisdom is to see clearly the process of discrimination, without any erroneous imagination, without any erroneous notions overlaid on the process of perception. The erroneous imaginings are called *parikalpita*. There's another term—*abhuta parikalpita*. *Bhuta* means something that has come to be. *Abhuta* means something that doesn't really happen. So there's an imaginings of something that doesn't come to be, an imagining of the unreal. Imagining what does come to be is what

comes to be. In other words, your imagination comes to be. But it comes to be by causes and conditions; that's exactly why it's insubstantial. That imagination, all by itself, without any attribution of substantiality—that's the accomplished. So the accomplishment also comes to be. It's an accomplishment. And since it's accomplished, it is not something final either.

The *parikalpita*, the imagination of substance, as it says in verse 20, is not evident. There's no evidence about this kind of fabrication. The imagination of substance is insubstantial in terms of characteristics; it doesn't have any characteristics. It's empty of characteristics. What **has** come to be, what has dependently co-arisen as a sense of self and other, for example, has characteristics. It's not empty of characteristics. It has definite characteristics which we can talk about and which define precisely what the perception is and if you change the characteristics you have a different other-dependent event, a different dependently co-arisen experience. It's different precisely because the characteristics are different. It lacks its own nature, it has no self-nature. The imagination of substance doesn't have characteristics.

The things you're imagining to have substance—those are the other-dependent—they **do** have characteristics. If you think of a unicorn—that's a perfectly good concept; it has characteristics. We may have some different sense of what the characteristics of a unicorn are, but we can talk about that and find out. "Oh, your unicorn's blue? Mine is white." We can talk about the characteristics. The imagining that a unicorn exists has substance. But that imagining has no characteristics. Also, the imagining that unicorns do not exist is a false and erroneous imagining. The way that you imagine that they don't exist is indistinguishable from the way you imagine they do exist. The actual attribution and belief in their insubstantiality is indistinguishable from the belief in their substantiality. The only way you can tell the difference is in terms of concepts which **have** characteristics. The attribution of substance or lack of substance has no characteristics. If you look, you will see that.

Daigan Lueck: So the moment I come to the conception that all things are empty, that conception itself is empty; I can't hold on to it. It's empty of characteristics that I could hold on to.

If you tell me that all things are empty and that they co-arise and I can actually experience that fact....

Tenshin Anderson: So you hear me say that and you make a concept about what I just said...

DL: Yes. I immediately conceptualize and try to freeze the concept as something to hold onto, and see that I can't do it. This demonstrates what the concept is stating. Correct?

TA: If you see that you can't do it, then you have just freed your concept about emptiness—which is a bad example to choose because everyone is going to be confused now—but anyway, if you can see that your concept of emptiness doesn't work for you to freeze it, then your concept is freed of erroneous imagination. It would be easier to apply it to something like your jacket or your name. When you see that it doesn't work to attribute substance to this concept, then the concept is free from the attribution and the concept is simply dependently co-arisen and then that's the accomplished. You really see that the attribution of substance doesn't work, that the substantiality is not really there. But there is something there which is dependently co-produced and doesn't have any fabrication paired with it to make it substantial: that's called non-discriminating wisdom. This is life when the attribution of substance is dropped away. It's freed; it's liberated from the attribution of substance. This is non-discriminating wisdom and this is the opportunity of our sitting—body and mind dropped off.

John Berlow: I'm still a little confused about this attribution of substance being without characteristics. For example, if I am attributing substance to something that means I treat it as something solid, I think of it as unchanging, I blame it for all the suffering that I have at the moment...

TA: Wait a second! Blaming it for all the suffering you have—that doesn't sound like attributing substance. That's getting into imagination. By the way, all the things you mentioned have characteristics.

JB: I meant, for example, an object of an emotion. I have an emotion of dislike and there's a so-called "other" before me and I say "oh, it's so and so" and then I feel yucky and then I think it's their fault.

TA: Take something like a concept of "dislike" or even a concept of the other person. Right there you can attribute substance. This does cause suffering, but the view that it causes suffering is not the same as attributing substance. You can see that it causes suffering with or without attributing reality to your perception. What I'm saying is that if you look carefully at anything that you're aware of, you can catch yourself in the act, if you are attributing substance. Attributing substance means attributing independent existence or selfhood to something. This is simply pure mental fabrication and there's basically no difference in the way you do that to various concepts such as anger, lust, John, Jenine, Daigan. There's no characteristics by which you can distinguish one instance of self or substance attribution from another instance because the imagining of self-existence lacks characteristics. This is what Vasubandhu is referring to in verse 24 when he says *The first is non-substantial in terms of characteristics*.

The *parikalpita* always uses the *paratantra* as its base for the imagining of substantial independent existence. You never have *parikalpita* all by itself. Whenever it's functioning, it operates on the *paratantra*, the other-dependent. *Paratantra* is what gives a variety of colors and characteristics to the imagined substantial world. The actual rendering of beings into substantial entities is always by virtue of the functioning of erroneous imagining.

JB: So first we attribute substance, and then things have a solid feel and we can project blame.

TA: Yes. Once you make something or someone substantial you can blame it as an independent agent. Those concepts upon which you impute substance are *paratantras*. We can discuss them and look them up in the dictionary. This creation of concepts is something you do together with all beings; it has a vast causal nexus. It's empty of own-being, but it's not empty of characteristics.

But *parikalpita*, the attribution of substance, has no qualities that vary from case to case. Therefore it has no own-being. In order to establish own-being you would have to specify its characteristics. But substance imputing is empty even of characteristics by which you would ascertain that something doesn't have own-being.

Albert Kutchins: I'm confused about the difference between the *paratantra* and the third category. It seems that the first category is the dependently co-arisen, the second category is the attribution of substance to the *paratantra*, and the third is just the second without that attribution of substance. Then why do you need the third? Why don't you just say there is that which arises and there is the attribution of substance to it?

TA: What I heard you say is "If you have the *paratantra* freed from erroneous imaginations, why do you need a third thing?" which is non-discriminating wisdom. You don't need a third thing! Once the *paratantra*'s freed of erroneous imagination, you don't need another thing. It doesn't say that then there is this other thing. There's not another thing. That is non-discriminating wisdom. That is the third thing.

AK: Could one say that instead of there being three categories, there are two categories of viewing the *paratantra* or of relating to it?

TA: That's right. There are two categories of *paratantra*. One with imagining of substance and one without. Or you could say one with non-discriminating wisdom and one without. But when you have *paratantra* with erroneous imaginings, then you don't have non-discriminating wisdom. When you have *paratantra* without imagining of substance, then that is the accomplished.

AK: And you never have *paratantra* without one of those two?

TA: Exactly. You don't have *parikalpita* —imagination of substance—by itself either. "Imagining" is unicorn, or Albert, or weird state of mind, or chalk. That's *paratantra* —that you see some element out

there. If you attribute substance to it, then it's *paratantra* with *parikalpita*. That's a very common situation. This is the ordinary situation of misery for human beings.

The other situation is *paratantra* by itself. Those are the two situations for our life; there's not a third. There's just what's happening, what has come to be, with or without the imagining of substance. When you have one, it's called "deeply sunk in misery." When you have the other, it's called non-discriminating wisdom. *Paratantra* is there in both situations. In other words, things are dependently co-arising moment by moment, because that's the definition of a moment. A moment is a dependently co-arisen something.

John Grimes: But Vasubandhu says it's not identical to the dependent.

TA: Right, it's not identical to the dependent, to *parinispanna*. The accomplished isn't identical to the other-dependent.

The accomplished does have characteristics because it is the *paratantra* which has characteristics, without the attribution.

There is a dependently co-arisen concept—breath, body, pain, another person, whatever; something has happened. When it happens without the attribution of substance, it is non-discriminating wisdom. Non-discriminating wisdom isn't something identical. And it isn't separate from the dependent because the dependent is the content of it. It is inseparable from it, but it isn't a thing. It is just this; this in its radiant, dependent emptiness! It's not different from it. The only thing you can make different is another *paratantra*. *Parikalpita* can't be different either because it also has *paratantra* as its content. But *parikalpita* imagines that it is separate; but of course it's not.

[break in tape]

Barbara Kohn.: What would uprightness be in that situation?

TA: Uprightness is—you say "I am imagining that this person has a charge."

BK: And I don't move.

TA: That's right, and then again, you might say "I am imagining it again." Then if you start noticing a charge in yourself, then you say "Now I notice a charge in myself." This charge is based on a different type of experience; I actually feel something in myself. "I notice that I believe this and I feel an energy change around that belief. Now I notice that the energy change has gone away, actually everything is calm and I notice that I have just stopped believing in this. I just let go of this particular view and the energy went flat." Flat doesn't mean dead. It means there's a huge ocean which is calm now instead of tumultuous poison land. Uprightness is the observation of what's going on, moment by moment. You can also be upright and notice that you've been hurt, and not necessarily by your outflows. A bee might have bitten you or someone may have punched you. In that case it's not necessarily not upright to back away from the injury.

BK: Including psychological injuries?

TA: Yes, you can be upright and back away without leaning backwards. You can take a step without retreating. You can be present with each step forward and each step backward. If you have no alternative you only move forward.

BK: So the bee sting is a physical hurt, but it's hard to understand. It seems that if I don't attribute substance to a psychological state that's coming at me from the other person, then I wouldn't experience it as a sting. That's what confuses me.

TA: If someone screams at you, your skin might contract, your eardrum might experience pain. If they say something to you with a certain nuance in their voice, your heart might really ache. This can happen without attributing any substance to the pain or to imagining what they were up to when they said that. You can feel pain without saying, for example, "I think they said a mean thing," and believe that what they said was mean.

BK: So it's when we describe or analyze their state that there's a problem?



TA: No, describing the state is part of the *paratantra*. We're always describing states; that's part of what gives rise to a state. That's part of what makes the concept that you're aware of—saying “I feel pain, I feel pleasure, they're screaming at me, they're complimenting me.” These are *paratantra* examples.

BK: But talking about what that might mean to myself, that's the problem.....

TA: As each thing happens, to attribute substance to it and believe that this is what is really going on, that “they really are mean,” that “they really are cruel,” that “they are kind” or “I really am neat,” or “I really am a jerk,” rather than “what is this?” It's the attributing of substance which causes the outflows. The experience of pain is not necessarily an outflow, even though you should probably take care of yourself if you're in pain. You can experience pain in your knee, uncross your knee or leave your knee crossed, make a good or bad decision about that pain without any outflow, without any influx, without any charge. If you have a pain in your knee and you attribute substance to it, then there will be outflows. If you deny it, that's also attributing substance to it. That's an outflow too. So descriptions are inevitable, they're constantly being co-produced. You can't stop it, it's the life process. But at any point that you attribute self to it, which is the same as attributing substance, independent existence to an experience—rather than a merely dependently co-arisen fleeting impression that this person is a monster, then the outflows start happening and when that happens you know that you have just done it, that the *paratantra* has been infected by the *parikalpita*, that the dependently co-arisen reality which is empty has been overlaid with a belief in a substantial independent existence. There will usually be a physical effect to that, shortly after, which you may or may not notice. It's good if you can. After a while you can notice it almost simultaneously with it, and that's good, because you're getting closer to catching yourself in the act of erroneous imagining. If you catch yourself, you're still in trouble, but you know you're a troubled person, you know that you're somewhat disqualified from sanity at that moment, in that particular case.

Jack Goldberg: So it seems you're saying that there only is *paratantra*; however, when we have *parikalpita* that's *paratantra* too....

TA: I won't say that. I just say that the *paratantra* itself is the liberating principle. *Paratantra* by itself is liberation. But I don't deny that there is the imagining of what isn't. If I deny that, then I deny suffering. Because of emptiness, because of dependent co-arising, human beings can imagine what isn't and suffer. I don't want to say that isn't the case. If I do, then that's nihilism. I say—there is a reality. It's a conventional reality, but there is a truth to the fact that people imagine stuff that isn't. I want to affirm that conventional truth.

Ultimately, there's just dependent co-arising, and that's liberation. Based on that, you can attain freedom. We have to first of all admit that there's something more than that, that we imagine substance and there's misery. So that's the relative truth upon which we can understand this ultimate truth. That's why I said to John also, work on the relative truth. The relative truth is that you're walking around all the time attributing substance to stuff, you're having outflows left and right. That's the relative truth which you should study very carefully. If you study that, the ultimate truth will start teaching itself to you. Hopefully, it won't expound itself to you until you've mastered that level. If you get the ultimate truth too early, you can just overlook the fact that you're suffering, which is not good, if you are, and you are, as far as I can tell. But I don't “believe” that, I just don't deny it either.

### Sesshin Day 1 Dharma Talk

November 20, 1994

*Quietly explore the [nearest and] farthest [implications] of these causes and conditions, as this is the exact transmission of a verified Buddha.*

Verse 21 of Vasubandhu's *Thirty Verses* says that a dependent self-nature is a thought that has arisen depending on conditions. Verse 17 says that because thought involves transformations, thought is

really just a concept. A dependent self-nature is a concept that has arisen depending on conditions. When a concept that arises by causes and conditions is freed of ideas of self, freed of attribution of substance, it is the accomplished, it is non-discriminating wisdom.

What appears before us moment by moment—our birth, our sickness, our pain, our growing older—actually is free of all our concepts of substance. So in some sense our zazen practice is simply, unhesitatingly, without any resistance just **being** what is coming, moment by moment. All we need is to be completely absorbed in what happens moment by moment, whether we are calm and relaxed or seething with emotions, complications, trouble and anxiety. When these things appear, that's all we need. They arise by causes and conditions and if we can let that be, then these things are happening, free of all erroneous imaginations.

*The mind is seething, there is great pain. Somehow it has turned cold.  
The blue mountains grow more vast and more blue.  
The autumn waterfalls are louder.  
I take my cane and go out the gate for a walk.  
I can hear the last crickets singing in the chilly evening.  
I am happy.  
The rays of the setting sun shine through the evening smoke that hovers over our village.  
I throw back my head, drunk with beauty and sing the Willow Song at the top of my lungs.<sup>15</sup>*

By the kindness of the Buddhas and Ancestors the teaching of Suchness has been intimately communicated. Now you have it. Please take care of it. If you can take care of it, moment by moment and achieve some continuity this is called the teacher within the teacher.

### Sesshin Day 2 Dharma Talk November 21, 1994

*Enlightened people of old are exactly like enlightened people of today. Before Buddhas were enlightened, they were the same as we.<sup>16</sup>*

Do you want to know how Buddhas were before they were enlightened? They were just like us and they studied how they were, so if you want to be like Buddha, study the way you are coming to be. That's the way all Buddhas practiced. They had no fixed way to do that, and it wasn't even something they did. But the self was studied; the way we are was studied. As I said yesterday, this is to be completely intimate with and absorbed in the complexities, troubles and anxieties of your life.

Shakyamuni Buddha continued to practice zazen in the midst of his troubles. He had great anxiety, just like some of us, and he continued to sit in such a way that he didn't intervene or interfere with his anxiety. He didn't meddle with it, he didn't lean into it, he didn't lean back from it. He just sat in the middle of it without moving until he found the source of anxiety and became free of it.

The world of Dharma is where birth and death and anxiety dependently co-arise. The practice of being with what's happening without interfering has nothing to do with self. It can't be touched by any human activity. Total devotion to intimacy with what's happening obliterates all human sentiments. Human activity, however, is on a rampage, constantly. Being upright does not interfere with human activity. In fact, interfering is human activity. Human activity is meddling. This meddling is the

---

<sup>15</sup>by Wang Wei, in *100 Poems from the Chinese*, tr. Kenneth Rexroth

<sup>16</sup>*Eihei Koso Hotsoganmon*, Dogen Zenji

companion of anxiety, misery, paranoia. All this ill arises from the non-stop imagination of the substantiality of things. This is believing in things and then trying to prove that they're real.

It's not meddling to conceive of and imagine things. Even the most elaborate complex conceptions are not in themselves meddling. They are just dependently co-arisen images. Our impulse to meddle arises from imagining that our conceptions are substantially real, something more than just conceptions. Meddling and attachment arise when we think that something is substantially good rather than a dependently co-arisen good. We think we can get hold of it. Or we think it's substantially bad and try to get rid of it. We think something is right and try to prove it, or we think it's wrong and try to disprove it. The world of Dharma is where we're just imagining things without imputing substance to the imaginings. In the Dharma world there is clear awareness of causation without any interference. The world of human misery is to imagine things and think they're real. Once we think they're real, we can't help but mess with them. Ignoring the interdependence of things and believing in their substantial reality, we are driven to act in accord with that erroneously perceived reality.

We need to sit upright, not interfering, and be completely absorbed in the process of imagination just as it is happening. This sitting upright without interfering is not something that we do. The person who practices this way is not an independent person who is enlightened. The *Genjokoan* says that the moon doesn't get limited or diminished when it's reflected in a puddle of water. Enlightenment, when it dawns on a person, isn't limited by that person. The water is not damaged or broken by the moon being reflected in it. When a person practices zazen without it being something that she does, she realizes her body and mind just as it is, as totally culminated enlightenment.

Looking forward to this sesshin, I thought how wonderful that you would be able to sit here this week and quietly explore the farthest and nearest reaches of the dependent co-arising of your experience. I know that the quiet exploration will be exploration of a field of experience that does not necessarily seem to be quiet. If I say "Have a nice quiet week," some of you may say, "What do you mean? I'm going to go nuts!" So I feel happy that you can quietly explore a seething mind, that you can quietly explore a high energy jungle of complication, that you can be upright and stable and serene in the midst of this very active living system.

When we sit on our cushions, conceptions will arise. There may even be conceptions of sitting practice itself. In being upright, the point is that one does not meddle with or get entangled with these conceptions. One discovers an intimacy with them where one does not project substantial reality upon them. Being thus, one is not driven to meddle or interfere with the flowing field of conceptions. Don't miss the opportunity, when sitting, walking, standing or reclining, to discover a practice which is completely free of all conceptions of practice.

When you think about this schedule, when you think about this meditation hall, when you think about your body and mind, this is nonstop conception. You come here into this meditation hall in conjunction with that process of perception and also maybe in conjunction with believing these images. But you can also get in this room in conjunction with the stream of conception, without believing one of those conceptions. To get in this room in the midst of the dynamic flow of concepts that is happening without believing those concepts, is called Dharma practice. To get in this room by believing in your stream of consciousness, in your stream of images, of things you know and believe are real, is called misery. It is misery even though the concepts might be dreams of Dharma, of zazen, of kinhin and of enlightenment. It's OK to dream of enlightenment, it's OK to dream of Shakyamuni Buddha and Vasubandhu. It's OK to dream of Madonna, or whoever you want to dream of. And you will. I'm just saying that the Dharma world is the world where you don't mess with any of that. It's the realm of the dependently co-arisen, of the other-dependent arising free of attribution of self, of attribution of substance. Attribution of substance is called meddling. It is called human interference in the process of

human life. Human life uninterfered with is called Buddha's life. Human life unmeddled with is called upright sitting.

The world of Dharma is the world of human life which has nothing to do with yourself. Human life unmeddled with is the realm of Dharma. The realm of Dharma is right now being manifested. It is untouched by all human activity and all human intervention. If you want to join the Dharma realm, join noninterference with your life as it's manifesting by causes and conditions, moment after moment. Just be stable and just be nothing but the causes and conditions of your life. Then you are not interfering anymore, and you're still whatever you are.

We have a story which we chant—the story of the fan. The teacher is fanning himself in the T'ang dynasty and the monk says, "Teacher, the wind's constant and there's no place it doesn't reach. Why do you fan yourself?" The teacher says, "You understand that the wind is constant but you don't understand it reaching everywhere." The monk says, "What's the meaning of it reaching everywhere?" And the teacher quietly continued to fan herself.

I found another rendition of that story, or maybe it's a story that happened on a different day with a different monk. The teacher was fanning himself and a monk came up and said, "Well, how come you're fanning yourself? The wind is constant." The teacher said, "You understand that the wind is constant, that the wind exists, but you don't understand the other side." What's the other side? The other side is: the wind doesn't exist. The monk said, "What's the meaning of 'the wind doesn't exist?'" The teacher quietly fanned himself.

If the wind is constant and reaches everywhere, that's pretty good. The wind exists. So why fan yourself, the monk asked. And the teacher says, "You understand that it exists, but you don't understand that it doesn't, and that's not good." If it doesn't exist, there's no place it doesn't reach. It's the same thing. "No place it doesn't reach" is very similar to "it doesn't exist."

People usually interpret this story as meaning that Dharma is everywhere, but unless you practice, it doesn't reach everywhere. That isn't correct, because Dharma **does** reach everywhere. It doesn't depend on whether you practice or not. It isn't that if you're not fanning yourself the wind won't reach everywhere. It isn't that if you don't sit zazen, zazen's not going to reach everywhere. It is constant and it reaches everywhere. As a matter of fact it reaches you, even when you don't do it. It doesn't mean that you have to practice zazen, you have to fan yourself for the wind to reach everywhere. It means that you practice in order to realize that the wind doesn't exist.

You know Dharma exists. What you don't know is Dharma doesn't exist. You have to practice in order to realize that Dharma doesn't exist. You have to practice so that you forget about Dharma, because remembering Dharma is you meddling with Dharma. Remembering practice, remembering the Buddha Way is you meddling with the Buddha Way. The Buddha was just like you, including you meddling with the Buddha Way. The Buddha was completely wholehearted in messing around, because that's what human beings do, and when you're wholehearted in being a human being, there's no intervention.

You sit zazen to show the meaning that there's no such thing as zazen. You already know there is such a thing as zazen. You need to free yourself of zazen. You need to free yourself of this thing that has dependently co-arisen in your life, called Zen practice. You need to fan yourself until the Dharma reaches you and sets you free of yourself, which in your case, since you're Zen students, sets you free of Zen...and zazen.

Don't worry, you're never going to forget...well, some of you will. Some of you are going to forget about zazen. Some of you don't think about zazen all the time. You people should think about zazen all the time. That's "zazen exists." That's "zazen is constant." You're always thinking about zazen. All you care about is Zen, right? That's the way this monk was, and the teacher said, you know about that. That's fine, but what you don't know about is that there isn't any zazen. First of all, you should be totally

hung up on Zen, and then sit in such a way that Zen disappears. Fan yourself. Sit zazen so that zazen disappears, so that your life is uninterfered with.

You dedicate yourself to a practice which is going to free you of making that practice into something. Making practice into something is called meddling with your life. It's not Dharma. Dharma is when you practice or don't practice—doesn't matter what you call it—you can call it "I'm going to not practice." OK, fine, and then don't practice but don't interfere with not practicing. Or you can practice but don't interfere with practice.

You can die and be born and be miserable and be happy. Just don't mess with it by making it into something. It's already been made into something. Don't mess with it by saying "that's it." Practice in such a way that you become free of that.

I hope you can feel the *Thirty Verses* are there but I haven't been able to get into them. I have to get into them this way.

Here are a couple of stories:

A friend of mine travels around to people's houses, usually people who are sick, people just like us. Once he was visiting a woman, and she said "I pray through you." He said "What do you mean?" and she said, "Well, I know that after you leave here you go visit another sick woman. I pray through you to her. I pray for her well being through your visit." He said, "Oh, that's really great. I'm so happy that you do that, that I'm part of your prayer. Would you mind if I told her?" And she said, "No, I'd like that. That would be great."

So then he visited the next woman, and he told her and she said "Oh, that's wonderful. I think I'll do the same. I'll pray through you to the next person you visit." And he said "Well, great." This helped him in his practice of visiting these sick people, to have them praying through him. And then he told me that the symptoms of the first lady who was praying through him mysteriously stopped. Her illness went away.

I thought "I wonder how old this woman was? Maybe she was young." He didn't tell me how old she was. Maybe she was twenty-eight. I said "How old was she?" He said "She was eighty-two." Then the thought crossed my mind "Well, her symptoms went away, but she's going to die soon anyway, isn't she?" And she did. She became well, and then she died. I thought "Even young people can do that. Young sick people can become well and then die. Or you can be sick and then die. That's also a possibility." But that story made me realize that you could wake up, become nice and bright and shiny before you die, even though you're sick or old. Before Buddha was enlightened Buddha was just like that.

Here is another story: one day Medicine Mountain was sitting zazen. He was sitting still. He was sitting upright, and his teacher, Stonehead, came up and said, "What are you doing?" Medicine Mountain said, "I'm not doing anything at all." Stonehead said, "Well, then are you idly sitting?" Medicine Mountain said, "If I were idly sitting I would be doing something." Stonehead said, "Well, you say you're not doing anything. What is it that you're not doing?" Medicine Mountain said, "Even the ten thousand sages don't know."

Even the ten thousand sages don't know anything about what Dharma is. Nobody can get in there. Stonehead got a little bit excited about this and uttered a poem.

*We've been going along like this together,  
Just in accord with what dependently co-arises.  
Though he's been like this all along,  
Even the ten thousand sages don't know who he is.*

[26] *As long as consciousness does not terminate in mere concept, so long will the dispositions for the twofold grasping not cease. Until your mind and body terminate in that fan or that zazen posture or*

that anxiety, until your mind terminates and you practice so thoroughly that you cannot meddle with your experience, you'll still be able to grasp your self, other, pain, pleasure, Dharma, Buddha, whatever.

As long as your mind is not like a wall, you'll still be able to grasp. [27] *Indeed, one who, on account of one's grasping, were to place a thing before herself and say, "this is mere concept," will not stop at mere concept, at mereness.* So you hear, "make your mind like a wall." Don't interfere, practice zazen to forget about zazen, practice zazen to make zazen disappear, fan yourself to realize that there's no such thing as Dharma. Dharma is not a thing. Dharma exists, but Dharma also doesn't exist. You want to realize that? Use this fan. You hear about that, so then you pick up the fan, you pick up practice and you say, "I'm doing this. This is mereness. This is uprightness. This is zazen." *One who, on account of one's grasping* does that because we want to grasp. When we hear about the inconceivable practice of the Buddha Way, because of our grasping, we take it and put it in front of us. Even "mereness" we put in front of us. That's why it's nice to get down to get down to this real core thing because even at that core, where you say it's just mere concept, we'll even do it then. We're tenacious. Give us the tiniest shred, the tiniest little hairsbreadth and we can grab it and make it into the whole universe.

To make your mind into a wall and put it before yourself and say "I made my mind into a wall," is not a mind like a wall. [28] *When consciousness with object is not obtained, then there being no object, one is established in the state of mere concept, for there is not grasping for it.* Practice zazen so wholeheartedly that it cannot be an object. There are no objects, but since you're doing zazen, and there's nothing zazen's meant for other than to be forgotten, it won't mind. Your spouse or your children might mind if you forget them, but zazen won't mind. It's saying, practice me wholeheartedly so you can forget me. That's what I'm here for. Dharma is saying, seek me so you can realize I have no form. Practice until it's not an object, until you terminate in mere concept.

So, it happened. We got through the *Thirty Verses*. I hope it was relevant, that it didn't distract you from your practice. I hope it helped you in sitting zazen and being upright. Sitting upright means sitting with no object called "sitting upright" before you. The upright mind is the mind that terminates in mere concept. It's practicing upright with no idea of "upright" out there. It's hard to practice, to sit upright, because of our grasping tendency. We want to have "upright sitting" out there and hold on to it so we know we're doing it. That's not what we mean by uprightness.

When you put something good up there, like uprightness, it's hard not to think that it's true. If you make up a good scenario about what happened the day before yesterday, it's hard not to think that it's real. When you hear other people's scenarios that you don't like, it's hard not to say, "No, that's not what happened." But as soon as you disagree, you're not upright anymore. When you hear their scenario it can just be left there, without interfering.

It's more like just a wonder. It's just a wonder that this stuff can happen. That's what the Buddha said, isn't it? Wonder. It's a wonder. It's wonderful. It's a miracle. I can be that stupid because I forgot what a miracle is. If I have some idea of what a miracle is then this might not be a miracle. When I stop interfering I let go of my ideas of what miracles are and then everything's a miracle. Letting go of my ideas of what a miracle is, is called zazen.

### Sesshin Day 3 Dharma Talk November 22, 1994

With the aid of *The Thirty Verses*, let me again tune in to the teaching of mere concept. Vasubandhu says that *the manifestation of mental consciousness takes place always*, except . . . . He tells you the exceptions. For all practical purposes, this mental consciousness takes place all the time. *Thus, thought involves this transformation of mental consciousness. For that reason*—in other words, it's a kind of thought that comes to us through transformation—*what has been thought of does not exist. All this is*

*mere concept. Consciousness indeed possesses all seeds. Transformation occurs in a variety of ways. It proceeds on the basis of mutual dependence as a result of which such and such thoughts are born.* All these thoughts, these mere concepts, are born by mutual dependence. *Whatever thought through which an object is thought of as a substance—whatever kind of thought we use to think of these dependently co-arisen concepts as having substance—that indeed is a fabrication.* That kind of thought which imputes substance to these dependently co-arisen concepts is fabrication and is not evident; there's no evidence for it, because as Vasubandhu says later, it's empty of characteristics. There are no characteristics for you to bring up as evidence for it—no evidence except its effect, which is misery. So it does function, but it's insubstantial in itself. The process of attributing substance to the concept we're aware of is itself insubstantial. The concepts that are arising are insubstantial, but they're evident; there's evidence for them, very clear evidence, which we can discuss. The evidence is their characteristics. Each one can be specifically identified through the evidence, through the characteristics it has. Because it has characteristics—the very way it's evident—is precisely why it's insubstantial. Verse 20 says the kind of thought through which the concept of this object is made into a self—that kind of thought is itself mere fabrication and it is insubstantial.

For me the meditational pivot of the text is verse 21, which says this dependent self-nature, this concept that dependently co-arises, is a thought, a concept that has arisen by conditions. However, the absence of the one prior to it—the absence of this attribution of self—is what we mean by the accomplished. One way to understand the accomplished is this: this thought that arises by causes and conditions is just a concept, which we call *vijñaptimatra* (*vijñapti*—concept, *matra*—just). *Vijñaptimatra* arises moment by moment. Whatever you're aware of, whatever you know about, whatever the self knows, it's just concept—*vijñaptimatra*. When no substance is attributed to *vijñaptimatra*, that's called *vijñaptimatrata*. That's the accomplishment of the state of mere concept. In other words, a dependently co-arisen event is just a dependently co-arisen event—*vijñaptimatrata*. It seems to me that many or all of you have had moments like that when there was *vijñaptimatra*. You're working with that all the time. I think there are also moments when there is *vijñaptimatra* without anything being attributed to it, and that's *vijñaptimatrata*. That's the accomplishment of mere concept. That's the state of mere concept.

By studying things that are empty, watching empty things, things that are *sunya*, we accomplish *sunyata*—we realize emptiness. By studying things that are impermanent, *anitya*, we realize *anityata*, impermanence. By studying things themselves, all the elements of our experience, the *dharma*s, we realize *dharma*ta—we penetrate and understand dharma. All these different attainments are conditioned by what we're studying and arise in co-dependence on something else that's arising in co-dependence, too. So they aren't final realities, just mere concepts.

Again for me the pivot is verse 21, where I come back to the concept—consider and meditate on the concept being all by itself; watch if that concept gets infected or if anything gets attached and messes with it; see how the concept works with some self, some transcendental apprehension; watch how that happens, how that gets mucky and unclear and sucks me down or throws me around; watch that and then watch for those moments when the *parikalpita svabhava*, the *abhuta parikalpita*, the imagination of what has never happened, drops away and there's just a concept—simple, ordinary, plain old concept; watch what happens in such a moment—a moment of *vijñaptimatrata*, a moment of mere concept—observing further how that in turn may be taken, made into a concept, and then grasped. This is how substance is then attributed to the attainment of mere concept; how then the accomplished becomes an object itself and self is re-invited to inhabit the accomplished. The pivot is those three verses—20, 21 and 22. Verses 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29 are all additional instructions around the earlier three. Verse 21 is the center of my meditation. Verses 20 and 22 round it out and the others are guardians to 21, which is just a dependently co-arisen concept. The eye of the koan of experience is verse 21. It's the dharma eye of this

text. I'm not saying this is the only eye of the text. Maybe for you the eye would be someplace else. If so, I would be interested in hearing where it would be.

I was discussing this meditation with someone, and he had some questions about how to work with this process—how to work with this thing which presents itself to us moment by moment. While we were talking, a poem by Rilke came to mind. The center of the poem is the ancient tower:

*I live my life in growing rings, ever growing orbits  
Which pull themselves over things.  
The last perhaps I won't complete,  
But I will be attempting it.  
I circle around the ancient tower  
and I circle for a thousand years.  
And I don't know yet  
Am I a falcon?  
Am I a storm?  
Or a great song?*

Somebody asked, "Is it possible to have consciousness without cognition?" The answer is yes, if you mean by cognition, cognizing a concept. However, when you have consciousness without cognition of an object, which is a concept, you don't know it. Everything I know on the level where there is an "I" is just concept. So then the person said, "I'm really confused about this." When there is cognition of a concept, if there is any attribution of self, any attribution of substance to this concept; if you are walking around the tower and there is any attribution to the tower; if you know for sure you're not a falcon; if you know for sure you're not a storm, you're not a song; if you know what you are—you're attributing substance to yourself and to whatever you're looking at. And so you get confused because you know something for sure. Knowing something doesn't confuse you, but being sure that what you know is something substantial does confuse you. The confusion will show you that you must be attached to something—you can't get confused unless you're attached. If you just sit there and look at the concept and don't attach to it, you won't get confused. You will just be amazed at the wonder of conception, the wonder of birth, the wonder of death. That's all. You'll just be in awe. You'll cry, you'll laugh, whatever—you're a free agent in awe of what you're aware of. There's no attachment because you didn't attribute substance to the awesome concept. If you don't attribute substance to it, you can't get hold of it. Some people worry that if they stop attributing substance to concepts, they won't be able to get hold of them anymore. "I like holding on to these people. I like having my babies, my wife, my money. If I don't attribute substance to it, I might not be able to hold on to this stuff anymore. What's going to happen to my lawnmower?"

So then he said that he was afraid that any form of volition, any motivation that you have in your practice, might be substantial. Volition is not substantial. Don't worry about it; nothing is. You don't have to worry about your volition or motivation being substantial; it's not. However, the volition you're thinking about—whatever motivation you think you have for practice—that's not volition, that's a concept of volition. What you're aware of as your motivation isn't your motivation; it's related to your motivation. You do have motivation or volition, but what you think it is, as soon as you think of it, is converted into something which is merely a concept. If you're suspicious of that having substance, you can just convict yourself immediately—not of its having substance, but of your attributing substance to it. It doesn't have substance. Fortunately or unfortunately your motivation for practice, whatever it is, is free of your interference. Its dharma functioning is going along very nicely, and you can't get to it because it's beyond your conception. Your actual volition is inconceivable and therefore protected from everybody.



The concept of your motivation, however, you can play with. And you can be aware of playing with this concept of your motivation for practice. And it's possible to observe yourself attributing substance to it; you will be observing a concept of attributing substance to it. You don't have to attribute substance to that. You can just note it and let it be.

Sometimes it helps people to have stages, so I'm going to give you some stages to play with—the training process of studying mere concept. There are some people who are not in the training program. Those people you might call the unenlightened individualists. They are unenlightened, and they are proud of it. They think Buddhism is weird, and they think they're not, and they do not want to have anything to do with opening up to the idea that what they're aware of, what they care about in life, is just a bunch of concepts. They cognize concepts just like us, and immediately they develop a sense of self about whatever they're aware of and attribute substance to it, and because of that they consider themselves to be made of it and to be made by it. They consider it to be their own and take delight in it. This is not really training; this is developing experience, which may lead one to ask for help. But the person is not really engaging in study at this time.

Then there are those who are training, who are attempting to comprehend what a concept is. They are trying to understand what a dependently co-arisen object of awareness is.

Eventually, you're able to stop believing in it and identifying with it, and being manipulated and tossed around by these things. There are many ways of how to do this. You walk around the concept for a thousand years.

Somebody asked, "Is this practice of studying mere concept related to the passage in *The Book of Serenity* where it says 'catch the thief by riding the thief's horse'?" Yes, it is. One way to think about it is that the thief is running away and you jump on the thief's horse and chase after the thief. The way I would suggest is that the thief is on the horse and you jump on the horse with the thief and give it a hug. Who's the thief? The thief is verse 20. The thief is a thought which attributes substance to things. Get on the thief's horse. What's a thief's horse? The horse is concept. Jump on the concept. Is there a thief on this horse? If so, give it a hug and it will fall right through your hands. Pretty soon you'll just be on the horse without the thief. The one that's attributing substance won't be there. That's how you catch and get rid of the thief. Get closer to it and you'll find out that there isn't one anyway. And there isn't really even a horse. The thief is the one who says, "My horse! I'm on this horse and I love it!" This is the kind of thing the trainee does.

Then there are those who have attained *vijñāpimatrata siddhi*, in other words, so-called enlightened people. The *vijñāpimatra* is happening to them the same as to us, and the sense of self is not happening. It's gone—permanently separated. That's the difference. You get so trained at it that it never catches on anymore.

Buddha, in the *Udana* (1.10) enumerated various kinds of concepts—earth, fire, water . . . the seen, the heard, the sensed,<sup>171</sup> and the cognized. Then there's unity and diversity, and there's "everything." Then there's the concept of freedom, liberation, enlightenment, supreme bliss. Using the set of seen, heard, sensed, and cognized, Buddha said, "Please train yourself in *vijñāpimatra*, thus. In the seen there will be just the seen. In the heard there will be just the heard. In the sensed there will be just the sensed. In the cognized there will be just the cognized. When for you in the seen there is just the seen and in the heard there is just the heard and in the sensed there is just the sensed and in the cognized there is just the cognized, then you will not identify with these concepts. When you don't identify with them, there will be no here or there or in between and this will mean the end of suffering." This is training in *vijñāpimatrata*. This is how to work with these things—the seen, the heard, and so on.

---

<sup>171</sup> The senses of smell, taste, and touch

If you do work with those things and you get to the end of suffering, then what happens? Then you have these other verses. Then you have mere concept. You have attained it, if you just focus in on something and don't focus too much or too little. In other words, if you are memorizing a text, you can't overlearn it or underlearn it. You're learning just the amount of words that are there. You're being upright with the text in an intimate way. Memorizing a text can be an example. "The word is heard and that's the word." Memorize that one. I'll memorize, "In the heard there will be just the heard." When you focus in on things like that, you get tuned in to this state. And then you may get up from this state and you may walk out the door of your room and everything is kind of dazzling, luminous. All these trees and grasses and walls and tiles and pebbles and people—they're all coming up, dazzling you with their docility and their firmness and their vitality! And then you put that in front of yourself, and you make that into a super-duper concept. And that's fine, unless you attribute substance to it. If you do, then it's a 90-mile-an-hour train. Almost no one can help you with this one; it's really going to throw you for a loop, so be careful.

You're all working really well, so as a result you're getting little attainments, little dazzlings. You're getting aligned with what's happening. You're being upright, so then you get the attainment of mere concept, which is great. Someone said he was sitting in lecture and suddenly felt he was in a rain of comfort and couldn't stop himself from smiling. Then wham! Something smacked him. What was that? He was thinking, "You aren't supposed to be so happy in lecture. The other people aren't smiling and they might ostracize you for being happier than they are." But there's another wham which is before the social wham. It's the wham which happens to you when you make that rain of comfort into a substance. And if you are being rained on by comfort, who wouldn't want to make that into a substance? It's very tempting, especially if your body gets into it, your face starts changing shape, and you start getting warm. These are concepts worthy of substantiation. But your life, which has just been allowed some space, some comfort to be itself, that same life says, "Don't now make this into something! That's what you just got released from!" Wham!

If you're not comfortable and then you hold onto something, you may not notice what that does when you hold on to it. If you're miserable and then something goes by and you hold on to that concept, you won't notice that holding on to it makes you miserable. There isn't any difference. It just perpetuates the process. What's helpful is when you take a break from it. When you feel relaxed and warm and comfortable, you can see that it's true that if you hold "so much as the letter A in your mind, you go to hell as fast as an arrow shot." Just like that! Just the letter A, not to mention a big fat word like comfort! If you're already in hell, you don't notice it. What sends you there is holding. But of course what really sends you there is your attributing substance to that comfort.

Your body and life does it to itself. Your life says, "OK! Hell, you do this one more time . . . hell!" "I'm willing to stop. How can I stop?" "We're not going to tell you. Just stop that!" It's bio-feedback. Your life does not want you to hold on to its happiness, it's fulfillment. The proof of that comes to you when it's fulfilled for a second. Then you can see.

People think, "This pain is too much! I can't stand this pain!" But in terms of this kind of study, it's not that the pain is too much. If the pain were too much—do you think the universe really made a mistake in delivering this pain to you? Do you think your body is making a mistake in suffering this way? Yes, you do. [Laughter] But it didn't make a mistake. You or I made a mistake by attributing substance to this pain. It's not that the pain is too much; it's that attributing substance to it is too much. The pain's enough. It doesn't need any more from you. But anyway, you do give substance to it. A little bit of pain with substance attributed to it is too much. A lot of pain with substance attributed to it is also too much. You might ask, "Well, isn't a lot of pain with substance attributed to it more too-much than a little pain with substance attributed to it?" Well, what do you think? Check it out and come and tell me. Is there really a big difference? Maybe the difference is that a lot of pain is more useful, because when you have a

lot of pain, you realize, “I cannot stand to attribute substance to a lot of pain, but I can stand to attribute substance to a little bit of pain.” So actually maybe a lot of pain is better, because you can’t fool around with a lot of pain. Anyway, the point is—as soon as you attribute substance to it you’re in trouble, you’re in hell. The same applies to pleasure. A little pleasure, if you hold on to it, also sends you reeling. Medium or large size pleasure, if you hold on to it, will also send you reeling . . . I think. If you have different information, let me know. I haven’t heard any other stories yet.

These are examples of study. You asked for examples, did you get some?

Teah Strozer: Thank you for asking, but I need stupid examples. For instance, the other day we had soup for dinner, and it wasn’t enough for me, so I said, “This dinner is not enough.”

Tenshin Anderson: You had a concept “not enough.” Then did you attribute substance to that?

TS: Yes, I did, because I thought that *wasn’t* enough.

TA: That’s what it’s like when you attribute substance. You actually think that not enough is not enough. Attributing substance means you actually think it’s true. Other people in the room might have thought it was enough, but that doesn’t count. You may know that, but you think, “At least for me, it actually *wasn’t* enough.” Someone else may say, “Yes it *was* enough for you!” You can say, “You can’t determine how much is enough for me! I get to choose that!” You do get to choose how much is enough for you. And you do say it all the time: “Enough!” “Not enough!” “Enough!” You do that. However, other people can also say that you had enough. (“No, I didn’t!” “Yes, you did!”) They can have their opinion, too. Who’s right? The one who had the concept with substance. If “not enough” is substantial, then that would be right and “enough” would be insubstantial and that wouldn’t be right. So the one who had the substance would be the correct person. [Laughter] That’s what you get into if you want to live in that world. Buddha calls this the two paths, the two ways of relating to your concepts. One is called the path of war, the other is called the path of peace. One is when you actually have a view: that’s “enough” or “not enough” dinner—either one. The tenzo says it’s “enough;” the person eating says “not enough.” They both dogmatically hold those positions, so you can have a war. Even if the tenzo says, “I don’t know if it’s enough,” and the other person says, “It’s not,” and they’re sure, you can still have a war. People can go and attack the tenzo. It’s a dogmatic, rigid belief in the concept “not enough.”

The bowl you’re eating out of is called “just enough.” That’s the name of the bowl. This means whatever you get in that bowl is enough. You have your opinion, but whatever your opinion is, there’s always enough. You’re going to think something else, but don’t believe it. That’s what the bowl is about. What is the meaning of what’s in this bowl? What does it mean that there’s not much soup here? There’s a famous Zen story. The monk comes to see the teacher. Huairang Huihai comes to see the Sixth Ancestor. The Sixth Ancestor says, “What is it that thus comes?” What is it that has just come to be here? Huairang says, “To say it’s this is already missing the mark. To say it’s not this is also missing the mark.” The Ancestor says, “Does that mean there’s no practice or realization?” Huairang says, “I don’t say there’s no practice or realization. I just say that it must not be defiled.”

They come and pour something in your bowl. You look at it. Something has come. What is it that thus comes? Is it this? Is it enough? Is it not enough? To say it’s enough misses the mark, to say it’s not enough misses the mark. To say it’s this misses the mark, to say it’s not this misses the mark. Whatever you say, if you think what you say is it, you miss the mark. What’s important is that *this* must not be defiled. The amount of soup you get must not be defiled. You will have a thought, like “This is enough!” “This is good!” “This is bad!” Such concepts will arise, of course. But to say, “This is enough,” “This is true,” misses the mark. How do you protect the co-dependently produced delivery that you’ve just gotten? How do you discover it’s purity? This is the Buddha Way. How do you jump on the horse with the thief and catch it? This is uprightness.

November 23, 1994

For me the eye of the *Thirty Verses* is now the phrase, “The mind terminates in mere concept.” The eye of the text and our fundamental concern is mere concept. I’m starting to see in you the arising of real doubt. To me this means that now we’re actually getting down to putting theory into practice. One meaning of doubt is that you don’t believe in something; you don’t think it’s true. But I’m thinking of doubt in relationship to faith. It’s something that characterizes someone who has faith, someone who is trying to do a practice. Their doubt is in relationship to what they are trying to do, what they’re willing to try on. Of course, it’s related to believing that something’s true. You don’t really believe that the teaching is true. You’re not sure it’s true, so you hold back.

The root of the word doubt means to waver or vacillate or vibrate. The root is *duo*, which is the basis of two or dual, or duality. A hairsbreadth deviation can be as big as the distance from heaven to earth. I feel in myself—and in others—some doubt, some vibration around the issue of letting the mind just terminate on mere concept. There is some doubt about letting the mind be like a wall. There is some wavering around letting the mind settle completely so that there’s no activity, no jumping around the outskirts of the object of awareness. This wavering is doubt, doubt in actual practice.

Full faith is the faith of a Buddha whose mind completely settles on just concept. There’s no coughing or sighing in the mind. It’s the realm of Dharma. You and I can’t get in there. No words reach it; it’s just clear awareness. The jumping around, the activity of the mind around the object is fundamentally the attribution of substance to what you’re aware of. The mind like a wall drops that activity. There’s just a concept. What is proposed here is to let consciousness terminate on just the concept—nothing more and nothing less.

There are lots of reasons for doubt. Your pain, your pleasure, your emotions are all ideas. It’s not really pain that you’re dealing with. You’re dealing with the concept of the pain, the concept of the pleasure, the concept of hunger. As you settle into that, as you try to settle down and be still with that—if you haven’t already—you will probably start to notice that there is some activity around it. There is coughing and sighing in the mind around that concept. That’s why Bodhidharma said, “Don’t activate the mind around the object. Don’t have any coughing and sighing in the mind.” He said that because usually there is—even in his great disciple, even in himself. He was just like that before he was enlightened. He had coughing and sighing in his mind.

What happened to Shakyamuni Buddha when he tried to sit down and just settle with mere concept? Did he notice some activity, some coughing and sighing in the mind? He didn’t move. He was just like us, but more so. The more he didn’t move, the more he got challenged, the more intense the coughing and sighing became. Many of you have admitted very kindly that as you approach this place you want to go to sleep, you want to take a nap. The only reason you don’t is that there’s too much of a storm going on and you can’t. This is called going down into the green dragon’s cave. Nobody will voluntarily do this. However, you may have noticed that you’re already there.

Bodhidharma sat coolly at Shaolin in his cave behind the temple. Can we be cool about sitting with mere concept? How can we get down into the place of major full-scale suffering without mortifying ourselves? How can we comfortably let ourselves down into that cave? As for me, I got a letter in the mail. I didn’t ask for the letter. It just came. I opened it, and there I was in the cave. It could’ve been just for a moment and then I’d have been out of the cave. But I kept being in the cave again and again. The pain kept coming back. I didn’t ask for it. I got it. It was a gift to me because of sitting upright. If you sit upright, you’ll get a letter or you’ll see a face—something that will put you in the cave. All you have to do is be upright and you’ll be in the cave.

When we get in the cave, what do we do? We do something to get ourselves out of the cave. It’s up to you to say whether what you’re doing is trying to get yourself out of the cave. It’s not for me or

somebody else to say, “Hey, you’re running away from the cave! You’re discrediting or denying this pain which was delivered to you because you’re a good Zen student! You got instant admission to the dragon’s cave where Zen is practiced, and now you want to take a nap!” Try to actually stay awake even though it’s getting tough. Try to find the mind which can stand this and the mind which can take care of you so that you don’t hurt yourself. You may discover you’re already wounded, so take care of yourself without running away. It’s difficult and we have doubt about this, but this is where we are.

We have an opportunity to go deeper during this practice period. Now we can get ready to actually go all the way and experience the mind terminating in mere concept. It’s not that far away right now. The mind like a wall is simply the mind which does not jump around and does not attribute substance to what you’re experiencing right now, the mind which doesn’t think, “What I’m saying is true or false.” When this mind listens, it hears and it makes a concept out of that. And that’s it. It just stays awake with that concept, and then it hears something else and converts that into another concept and then hears that concept. It doesn’t really hear, it cognizes. In pleasant situations our habits make it difficult for the mind to terminate in mere concept. It’s also difficult to sit still and let the mind terminate in difficult situations. I would say, with Wallace Stevens, that we must have “the mind of winter” in order to sit still in the dragon’s cave.

*One must have a mind of winter  
To regard the frost and the boughs  
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;  
And have been cold a long time  
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,  
The spruces rough in the distant glitter  
Of the January sun; and not to think  
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,  
In the sound of a few leaves,  
Which is the sound of the land  
Full of the same wind  
That is blowing in the same bare place  
For the listener, who listens in the snow,  
And, nothing himself, beholds  
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.*

We must be that cold and that cool to sit still in this cave with Bodhidharma and let the mind terminate in mere concept. And nothing herself beholds her own freezing, her own death, listens to it, doesn’t meddle. This is what opens the bud of the serene body of release, which is warm beyond all measure. Finding this mind is bitter work, and we won’t be able to do it unless there’s already some bitterness in our life. And there is, if we just would sit still and open up to it.

Sometimes doubt or wavering has to do with thinking of the future. Often people ask me, “If I let the mind terminate in mere concept, how will I deal with my plans for the future? How will I decide about my airplane reservations?” Kalupahana said that without inductive references (in other words, if you do this, then that will happen,) and without conceptualizations about the future in terms of the past and present, we would not have any possibility of intellectual activity. We wouldn’t be human beings. So can I really let mind terminate in mere concept? What about my plans? Don’t I have to think about this stuff? One answer is, just for the rest of the day, don’t think about your plans, just let mind terminate. Give it a try. But what about when you do have to think of those things? Can the mind terminate while you’re thinking of the future, while you’re making plans? To try to stop that activity of the mind wouldn’t be

terminating mere concept; it would be saying, “Those are real thoughts, and therefore I should stop them!” It’s okay to let the mind go down those paths, those trains of conceptualization, if every single moment of the way you realize, “mere concept . . . mere concept . . . mere concept.”

How can you carefully get yourself in the position where you’re not going to run away anymore, where you’re not going to waver? *As long as consciousness does not terminate in mere concept, so long will the dispositions of the twofold grasping not cease.* So long as your mind doesn’t terminate, when you think of the future you’re going to grasp it, you’re going to make it real; you will not be able to resist making it substantial. Any speculation beyond immediate sense experience—any speculation about anything we know about—imprisons us in mere concept. As long as you don’t realize that you are in the prison of mere concept, that’s all you can see. It’s not reality, it’s just a concept, and that’s the prison you live in. That’s the cave you’re in. As long as you don’t realize that, you cannot resist the inclination to make it into a reality, into a substance. Then it’s your baby; you become totally enmeshed in it. Letting the mind terminate in mere concept means you realize, “I am totally trapped in mere concept. I am in this cave, and this is not reality.” When you’re established in the state of mere concept, when the exhaustive search for something which inherently exists is abandoned—being established in such a state, then you cannot grasp anything.

I would like to again use the example of the head monk who said there was a moment in her life when the thought arose, “Not enough! Not enough food!” We have some particular blood sugar level, and then we have concepts about whether we’re hungry or not. Dogen said that to penetrate one thing is to penetrate ten thousand things.<sup>18</sup> An ancient Buddha said, “A painting of a rice cake does not satisfy hunger.” To say a painting of a rice cake does not satisfy hunger is like saying to refrain from all unwholesome actions and to respectfully practice wholesome actions. It is like saying, “What is it that thus comes?” Some people, when they hear a teacher say that a painting of a rice cake does not satisfy hunger, think this means that written texts, scriptures, the words on the page, paintings of the Buddha’s teaching will not satisfy hunger. Some people say these words of the Buddha will satisfy hunger, have been able to satisfy hunger. Other people say, “When you said them they did, but when you write them down they won’t be able to satisfy hunger.”

Dogen says it’s like saying, “What is it that thus comes?” When somebody says, a painting of a rice cake will not satisfy hunger, do you hear, “What is it that thus comes?” What was just said? What was it that you just heard? You might think it means this or it means that. Dogen didn’t say what it meant. He said it’s just like saying, “What is it that thus comes?” It’s the same kind of expression. It’s like saying, “Don’t do evil, do good.”

*A monk asked Yunmen, “What is your statement, teacher, about going beyond Buddhas and surpassing the ancestors?” Yunmen said, “A sesame rice cake.” You should quietly examine these words. When this sesame rice cake is actualized . . . opening the matter and hurling it back as a sesame rice cake is itself two or three painted rice cakes. Yunmen’s is a statement that goes beyond Buddhas and surpasses ancestors, an activity that enters Buddhas and enters demons.*

Dogen’s late teacher Rujing said,

*A tall bamboo and a banana appear in a painting. This phrase means that things beyond measure are actualized together in a painting.*

---

<sup>18</sup> “Painting of a Rice-cake” (Gabyo), in *Moon in a Dewdrop*.

Your future, your past, all your life plans—your hunger—are all beyond measure. They are actualized together in a painting. All things in the universe are, of course, beyond measure. The cry of a baby, the bark of a dog are beyond measure. They come to us with everything. Everything comes to us, and we convert it into a painting. We never fail to make a painting. Often we forget that we have just made a painting, that we are trapped in our painting.

We also live in a world of direct experience where things beyond measure are constantly touching us in ways beyond measure. Our life is not a measure of these things—our life is just completely supported by these things. But these things that are impacting us beyond measure are actualized in a painting. The tall bamboo and a banana appear in a painting. Dogen says,

*Know that the entire heaven and earth are the roots, stem, branches and leaves of the tall bamboo. This makes heaven and earth timeless; this makes the great oceans, Mt. Sumeru, and the world in the ten directions indestructible. A walking stick and an arched bamboo staff are both old and not old.*

The entire heaven and earth are actualized in the painting of the bamboo. The entire world is the roots, stem, leaves and branches of the tall bamboo. The banana has earth, water, fire, wind, emptiness, mind, consciousness, and wisdom:

*A banana has earth, water, fire, wind, emptiness, mind, consciousness, and wisdom as its roots, stems, branches, leaves, flowers, fruits, colors and forms. Accordingly the banana wears the autumn wind, and is torn in the autumn wind. We know that it is pure and clear, and that not a single particle is excluded.*

*Now, the fluctuations of the tall bamboo and the banana are a painting. Those who experience great awakening upon hearing the sound of bamboo, whether they are snakes or dragons, are all paintings. Do not doubt it with the limited view that separates ordinary from sacred.*

*That bamboo pole is just tall. This pole is just short. This pole is just long; that pole is just short. As these are all paintings, the painted forms of long and short always accord with each other. When you paint something long, it cannot be without painting something short. Thoroughly investigate the meaning of this. Because the entire world and all phenomena are a painting, human existence appears from a painting, and Buddha ancestors are actualized from a painting.*

*Since this is so, there is no remedy for satisfying hunger other than a painted rice cake. Without painted hunger you never become a true person.*

If you have hunger which is not just a painting of hunger, you are someone who is caught in your belief in substantial existence. If you waver and try to prove your position, you are caught even more. A true person has painted hunger and uses a painted rice cake to satisfy it. A true person is willing to be just like Buddha was before enlightenment. Before enlightenment we are trapped in a painted world of mere concept.

*There is no understanding other than painted satisfaction. In fact, satisfying hunger, satisfying no-hunger, not satisfying hunger, and not satisfying no-hunger cannot be attained or spoken of without painted hunger. For some time study all of these as a painted rice cake.*

*When you understand this meaning with your body and mind, you will thoroughly master the ability to turn things and be turned by them. If this is not done, the power of the study of the Way is not yet realized. To enact this ability is to actualize the painting of enlightenment.*

We have to decide whether we're going to hold on to our cherished beliefs or turn around and go in the other direction—whether we say, “This is reality and I happen to be able to see it,” or whether we say, “What I’m seeing is actually a painting of reality. I’m no longer in charge of the truth. I’m in charge of a bunch of paintings—a painting of cold, a painting of pain, a painting of hunger, a painting of being insulted, a painting of being complimented, a painting of enlightenment.” If I’m not willing to be this way, I can’t be a true person, because a true person is actuated from being a regular person, and regular people are living in the world of dreams and constantly being shocked by their belief in the reality of dreams. The shock comes from not understanding that this is a dream, that this is a painting of the world. If you understand it’s a painting, the shock will go away.

You will not be able to grasp enlightenment when it’s a painting. You will not be able to grasp bamboo or bananas or pain or mountains or rivers. When you don’t grasp them, this is the serene body of release. But you cannot avoid grasping them, you will throw your whole self into them, and you will grab them with your whole being as long as you think that they’re not just a painting. It is irresistible. But when you realize it’s a painting, you don’t eat paintings of rice cakes.

Thank you very much for letting me talk about painted hunger. I’ve been aching to do it for many years. I always felt that they would lock me up if I talked about this. I have finally gotten it out of my system, and now I hope I can continue to talk about it because I think this is one of the most wonderful teachings of Dogen and Master Yunmen. It gets right in there at that place where delusion and enlightenment turn on each other. Real delusion turns to painted enlightenment, and painted enlightenment turns to real delusion. Real delusion turns to real enlightenment, which gets made into painted enlightenment, which becomes excruciating delusion. Excruciating delusion becomes a painting of excruciating delusion, which becomes a painting of enlightenment and turns into real enlightenment. If you have some delusion, enlightenment’s just on the other side of the coin.

It’s not hard to live with this dynamic reality. We have a strong habit of wanting to get out of there and take a nap because there’s no “you” there in that world of dharma. There’s just light turning on darkness turning on light. Light and dark spinning, spinning, spinning. You don’t have to chop yourself up and throw yourself in the garbage can. All you need to do is enter that place and the self will drop off. You need to be willing to enter and willing to drop it off. It’s possible to culminate this study, to go far enough to actually get some confirmation of your practice. Please be thorough. If you have doubt, that’s fine. It shows you have some faith. If there’s some doubt, then you’re wavering on something, and we can settle with that doubt.

## Class 11

November 25, 1994

We’re now getting to the part of the text that more specifically refers to practice. Verses 26, 27, 28 and 29 are sometimes called the **path** part of this text. Verses 20 – 25 are about **the three natures**. Verses 20, 21, 22 are **the content of the meditation**. The way of meditating is laid out at the end of the text. The beginning of the text, which discusses the nature of consciousness and how the transformations create ideas of self and elements, is to help us meditate on the other-dependent or dependently co-arisen.

When you look for the other-dependent, this thought or concept that you have before you, the previous verses help you understand how it is other-dependent. They give you some clues, some education in how to look for its cause. Whatever you’re aware of, whatever concept you know, whatever object of knowledge you have is insubstantial in terms of its own being. The previous verses tell you how it’s caused and give you guidance on how to experience and understand its insubstantiality. Once you’re meditating on the other-dependent, watching out to see if it’s by itself, or whether it’s associated with



self-projections or substantiating imaginings, then the other verses—25, 26, 27, 28 and 29 and 30 in a way too—help you actually stay with the meditation.

I think we're getting down to really doing the meditation. Some people literally, or figuratively, have told me that they're developing doubts around doing the meditation. I felt good about that because that means you're actually doing it. Before, there was doubt about the text, but now it's doubt about the actual practice.

Teah warned me about something I said about being thorough until you get confirmation. She pointed out that this could be interpreted as meaning that if you're thorough you'll get confirmation. This implies some gaining idea. What I mean is—be thorough until you realize you've been thorough. Go all the way to the end until you feel like you've gone to the end. When you feel like you've gone all the way to the end, one way to get confirmation is to come and tell me. And I can say, “Oh, you've gone all the way to the end? Tell me about it.” As soon as I ask whether you have really gone all the way to the end, you may start to feel like, “mmm, maybe I haven't,” or something like that. And then you wouldn't get confirmation because you realize that you don't really believe it yourself. The point is not to get confirmation. It's to confirm you in what you're doing so you can continue to do it with full confidence. It's not that you stop the practice at that point. It's just that you feel confirmed, or verified, or you finally have evidence.

This is like the story I told you: “What is it that thus comes?” In this case you're meditating on something. What is it that is coming here? What is your practice? You have some ongoing sense of what you're doing with your practice. What is that? We don't say that there isn't practice, or that there is practice; that there isn't confirmation, or that there is. We say “Don't defile it.” Staying away from the issue of confirmation is a way to defile it. Saying that this is confirmation is a way of defiling it. Saying this isn't confirmation, never talking about confirmation or verification—you can't maneuver yourself away from defilement. That's a defilement.

We're groping for the path that's free from any kind of one-sided approach to practice and realization. In order to get to the point where we deal with the fundamental concern, we have to be thorough. We don't get the full opportunity to practice if we're not thorough, if we're holding back. That's doubt, wavering. Try to be unwavering. Keep working at it and be more and more thorough at it until you feel like you're finally unwavering. It isn't that you're unwavering and then you get a present or something. Rather, you feel that “Finally I completely give myself to practice and I have no doubt about it anymore. I'm actually finally sitting still. I'm not moving anymore, and all these doubts that are flying at me are not really functioning any more. I'm not moved about by doubts.”

I think some people are afraid of what will happen to them if they give themselves completely to the practice. They wonder, “Will there be anybody left? Will life be fun anymore?” There's some fear if you think of the future, of what will happen to you and of who will take care of you if you throw yourself completely into the practice. Dogen said there is a who there in non-thinking who will take care of you. Suzuki Roshi said that if you follow your breath all the way to the end, as if it goes into a white piece of paper, you just go into vastness at the end of your breath. He said “Don't worry—Buddha will take care of you.” There is a kind of dying there. At the end of being thorough there's a kind of dying of all other options. You're giving up everything except what you're working on. If you're holding back a little bit of your life just to make sure you're going to be all right, then that's your doubt.

Teah asked me for some examples of fear and renunciation. The prototypical example is Shakyamuni Buddha. If he wasn't a little bit afraid of Mara coming at him, it really wouldn't have been a very interesting story. He must have been a little bit afraid to draw that assault, but he didn't move. He just sat there in the face of this assault, this testing of his resolve to sit still. He didn't know that Mara was going to split after he sat still. There was no previous story about Shakyamuni Buddha for him to be able to say, “Well, the Buddha did it.” Teah also pointed out that he didn't really know what he was doing.

There wasn't a "Buddhist Way" yet. He was just experimenting with major trauma, full-scale anxiety. At a certain point he gave up his doubt and just sat there. Then things got calm and he could meditate without any distraction.

I hope I'm not leading you into an idea of being thorough for some gain. I would say—be thorough to be thorough. If you don't think you're thorough you're probably right, and if you do think you're thorough you might be right. If you need any help or reflection on your thoroughness, check it out with a friend. Get some mirroring on your thoroughness and see if the mirror says, "Yes, you are thorough." Go all the way, or go far enough until you feel that something tells you that you've gone all the way. Something may give you a signal eventually that you've finished, although I really don't think there's a finish.

You go all the way until your mind terminates in mere concept. If it doesn't terminate in mere concept, the depravities are still functioning, the graspings are still going on. When it terminates in mere concept there's no more grasping, there's no object. However, that is also just a mere concept. There is a finish, but it's not really a finish, it's just a mere concept of finish. So you get to the place where you get told, or you feel like, "I finished." But before you get to the place where you feel like you finished, you didn't finish. You say I'm not finished. "Not finished" is also mere concept. But reaching mere concept is possible. Then all this wonderful stuff happens, and that's suchness and "it remains such all the time." And that's also mere concept.

Dogen went to his teacher and offered incense and his teacher asked him what was happening. He said "body mind dropped off." He finished. No more Dogen, no more body and mind. Then the teacher turned it around and said, "body and mind dropped off" and Dogen said "dropped off body and mind." Then he said "let me out of this one, too, please." So there is a conclusion and then the conclusion gets dropped, and you're back in business again. There really isn't an end, but you do get to a place where you don't think you've even got there yet, and that's where you still have some doubt.

Stuart Kutchins: Well, I have a little doubt about this subject you've just raised.

Tenshin Anderson: You have doubt or questions?

SK: I have some question about it which is that sometimes people come forward in the manner of no doubt. There are many different kinds of fanaticism. People sometimes feel thoroughly converted and have no doubt, and present themselves with that kind of certainty. Often there's something disturbingly wrong with what they have no doubt about.

TA: Well, is it what they have no doubt about? Or is it their no doubt? Or both?

SK: Well, in terms of being disturbing, if the content doesn't bother me then it's not so bad.

TA: The prototypical example, is enlightenment, right? They're confident and have no doubt about their own enlightenment. Many Zen stories are about a monk who's coming to present his enlightenment to his teacher or to some other teacher after his own teacher has confirmed it. He actually has confidence. We know stories of confident monks coming and saying, "OK this is it. What are you going to say about it? This is it. This is the Genjokoan. This is ultimate reality. Let's see what you have to say, teacher." Hopefully, they get some real reflection. Sometimes what they see leads them to take a totally different point of view.

There's the famous story about Fayen and Superintendent Ze.<sup>19</sup> Fayen said to Ze, something like, "How come you never come and talk to me?" The reason Ze didn't go to see Fayen is because he was already enlightened, he had no doubt about himself. Fayen said "Well, how come?" Ze said "I was enlightened under my previous teacher." Fayen said "Well what happened?" He said "I asked the teacher, 'what is the student's self?' and the teacher said that the fire god comes seeking fire. I woke up, and I've been just fine ever since."

---

<sup>19</sup>Book of Serenity, Case 17, "Fayen's 'Hairsbreadth.'" Also see Eihei Koroku #11

Fayan said “Well tell me more about it.” He explained, and Fayan said “That's what I thought! You didn't understand.” Superintendent Ze got kind of huffy and puffy and said “You just lost yourself a superintendent. I'm getting out of here!” And he left. As he was tromping down the road he thought, “hmmmm, well, Fayan is the teacher of all those people; maybe he has a point. I'll give him another chance.”

So he went back to Fayan and said “I thought it over and I'm gonna give you another chance.” So Fayan said “OK, ask me the same question that you asked the other teacher.” So the superintendent said “What is the student's self?” Fayan said, “The fire god comes seeking fire.” And Ze woke up again, but in quite a different way. He understood that his previous understanding was totally cockeyed.

That's the point. When you are certain, you're supposed to go expose your certainty to somebody and if that person says fine, then expose it to somebody else. If that person says not fine, then go get huffy and puffy and take a walk, and after you walk awhile then maybe you change your mind or maybe you don't. But that is part of Zen practice.

Somebody came to see me recently and I asked “Are you sitting still?” The person said “Yeah.” And I said “Really?” He said “Totally sure.” And I said “totally sure?” I wondered how the “totally” got in there all of a sudden. Why not just “yes”? If I ask whether you are sitting still and you tell me you are, it's not that I don't believe you. It's just that I might be amazed to see before me someone who has actually realized total stillness. I might say “Wow really!” and you might say “Yes.” I might say “No kidding!” You might say “No kidding!” And I might say “I don't know if I deserve to be in the same room with you any more.” It's not that one's right or wrong, it's just that one keeps putting mirrors up until finally the person is confirmed or has some question and starts over.

Joe Janowski: For me, it seems that recently things seem less real.

TA: You mean because of this talk about mere concept?

JJ: I can't go back to the way I used to see things. I'll be putting on my robes and things seem normal, or the way they used to be, and then I realize that everything seems dreamlike. We say “Now we have completely taken refuge in Buddha,” but it's not really true. I still can't do that last bit. Somehow I don't want to take refuge; it's almost like fear of dying.

TA: Yes, that's a great example. Our great expression of doubt. We want to hold back a little even though we're already kind of on the slide down to not being able to really believe the world anymore. We still feel like “I can't go back but I don't feel like going all the way either.” Is it OK to look at your wife and remember that what you're seeing is a mere concept? Can you have a relationship with somebody and keep that in mind?

I heard this expression: “There may be truth in their hyperbole but I don't know about taking their hyperbole as truth.” Most people's view of you has some truth in it, but you don't necessarily have to take their view as truth. You have some view of things and it's not that there's not some truth there, but mainly the truth is that you're looking at yourself and your own stuff. There's some truth in that.

JJ: Just like now, as you're talking—there's an almost a dreamlike quality to it. It's very strange, it's a new and frightening thing to me.

TA: If that's the case, then there's certain times when things happen and you feel like, “Now it's not a dream.” I think some people are thinking of when practice period's over and they're going to leave Tassajara and get in a car. They're going to go back to their house or their job. When you think about that, you say it's not a dream. You pretend it's not a dream and then you can think about it in a different way. You say that it's hard for you to go back to that other way, but the problem is when you do go back to the other way. If you really can't go back, it may be scary but that's not what I'm worried about. What I worry about is that people will get scared and then go back to the other way—thinking “I can't deal with this stuff as mere concept. I have to switch back to this other way when it comes to these topics, these concrete commitments and so on.”

There is a movie called *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. It was about these alien people who came and took over your body while you were asleep. They made a clone of you and the clones had no emotions. The scene that was the most chilling for me showed the only two people in town who hadn't been converted to pod people. They were running away. The woman had fallen asleep, and when the man kissed her, he knew that she had been converted into a pod person because there was no feeling in the kiss; there was no juice there. So we think, "Will I lose my juice? Will I kiss people and they won't feel any juice from me? If I enter the realm free of influxes, does that mean I can't get back to the one where there are influxes?" If you have children does that mean you go home and you have no juice for your kids? No clinging any more? Would that be OK?

I think we're afraid of what would happen if we bring everything that happens into this central arena, if we make everything dependent co-arising. If we make even dreams dependent co-arising. If there is some juice, make the juice dependent co-arising. If there is fear, make the fear dependent co-arising. If there are plans, OK fine, bring the plan into and look at it. How does that plan dependently co-arise? How does it happen that I now think I have to think of the future? How does my worry around this happen? Are there outflows around this? Am I attributing substance to it? The same practice for everything and no exceptions.

That's basically what Shakyamuni Buddha was doing. He was sitting there saying "I'm not gonna move." Mara says "How about this? Will you move for this? Oh come on, for this you'll move won't you? I mean really! Well you won't move for that—how about for THIS?" Now you say, what if somebody comes and starts beating somebody up? Do you really have to move for that—how about for THIS? Can't you bring that in there too and look at that as dependent co-arising? Didn't Shakyamuni Buddha do pretty well after he was enlightened? Was he incapable of functioning any more? No, he still could get around and help people, just as well, even better. But we doubt that we can continue the practice in this situation, don't we? There are so many good excuses, like the example that Teah used. She said "The words 'not enough' came to mind." And then I said, "You attribute substance to that 'not enough.'" And she said "Yeah because it **wasn't** enough." In other words, "I attributed substance to it because it was true. I attributed substance to it because it had substance!"

Meiya Wender: What if you know that it doesn't have substance but you still attribute substance to it? Just knowing that it doesn't have substance doesn't mean that you stop attributing substance to it.

TA: You don't? What do you mean "know"? You **know** that it doesn't have substance?

Teah Strozer: She knows theoretically.

TA: Theoretically? Like what?

MW: No, he trapped me!

TA: She understood. Did you understand? If you **know** that it doesn't have substance, you just attributed substance, because the reality is that it doesn't have substance. That's real. The thought, "It doesn't have substance" is a real thought. It's actually kind of a hyperbole, it doesn't have substance. You make the hyperbole into truth. There's some truth that it doesn't have substance; you know that. But when you go so far as to say, "I know"—then you've gone too far. There's truth in that, but it's not the truth. It's a view.

If you believe in what you said you know, then you just fell for your view and you made your view into reality. Everybody's got views. There's some truth in everybody's view in any situation. Right now in this class everybody's got a view of what's going on. If you have a dreamlike sense of your view, fine. If you don't have a dreamlike sense and you're sure, fine. If you're sure or not sure—anyway there's some truth in your view, but your view is not truth. Nobody's view is truth, but there's some truth in everybody's view. Everybody's view dependently co-arises. The truth of your view is its dependent co-origination. The truth of your view is that it's empty. It's true because it liberates you from your view.

Is there any substance attributing to the dreamlike quality? I would suggest that for a lot of people, when you start to get into this dreamlike quality, you actually think it is that way. There's some outflow around the dreamlike quality. Sometimes people, if they just came to a Zen group, and over the door there's a big sign that says "everything's like a dream" and they get a sense of this dreamlike quality, they might feel like, "Hey, I'm really into the meditation after only a few days!" You get inflated by the juice of having a perception of a dreamlike quality. It's also possible that you feel enervated and weakened and feel like you couldn't really do your thing with a dreamlike quality. You're still orienting towards that dreamlike quality as something you can grasp and work with, and there's some energetics around it.

If there's fear around it too, that's another sign that substance is being placed on insubstantiality. If you're afraid of it, you're making it into a substance. We are not afraid of insubstantiality. We are afraid of insubstantiality when it's brought out and made into a substantial thing. We can't be afraid of insubstantial things because we have no way to grasp them. You have to have something out there to grasp in order to have confusion and fear. If you really see it's insubstantial, you might wish you could be afraid, but you don't know how. You can't get access, you can't decide what to be afraid of.

If you feel that it's dreamlike, go back to that again and again. See if you can conduct your life while doing that. You can see whether you can still talk to people on the telephone, drive cars, go to staff meetings and so on. Sometimes when you're learning a new trick there's a shakiness or self-consciousness. Rather than feeling this shakiness, it's very nice just to shift back into the old gear where we know our way around. But that's where the learning happens. You already know how to do the old things and you know where they go. They go to stress, and anxiety, and so on. You know how to do that stuff. This new thing, if you think about it, is scary. But when you think about it you just made it into a concept, which you can get a hold of. Since I'm afraid of it it must be a concept. Now I'm dealing with a concept, a concept of fear. Now you're back on track. And this is new and you're learning. You're a student of the teaching of Vasubandhu.

Jon Landon: It strikes me, what huge rippling psychic biceps you have to have to stop the world. You know—like where Superman comes from outer space and grabs a planet, and stops it. It stops spinning.

TA: You already have huge psychic biceps! Therefore when you hear about this process you project your huge psychic biceps onto it. It doesn't require huge psychic biceps. You have a full body of psychic power. That's what you already know how to use, and when you hear about this thing it sounds really hard and you think, "Wow, that would be a tremendous effort." But this effort is not the same kind of thing. It's not huge psychic biceps. It's **thoroughness** at staying with your huge psychic biceps. It's a totally different thing. It's the reverse. It's staying with what you're doing rather than doing something.

However, your power to do things doesn't have to get weaker. Shakyamuni Buddha was a powerful person. He had a powerful ego. He didn't get more powerful from practice—he was already powerful enough. He thoroughly studied his powerful mind, his powerful psyche. He learned to stay with himself and not get distracted by the world. That's enough. That's what he learned. He said "I'm going to study myself and I'm not going to move until I understand myself."

Robbin Frey: The kind of doubt that I have manifests in that when you're giving a very concrete example, when you're talking about the process of doing this meditation, I can follow that. Sometimes it's really clear. But when you stop talking about it, my understanding goes away. I need to hear more examples, so could you go through a few more?

TA: I didn't feel that what Robbin just said was doubt. She gave examples of doubt, but her telling us that was not doubt. Her report is from her meditation. She would like more examples of doubt. She just gave examples of doubt. And she also said that sometimes she can't even notice that she is doubting. Is that what you're saying?

RF: No, no. I don't want examples of doubt, I want examples of the process, those questions you're asking yourself doing this meditation. I'm thinking I just need to hear more of them so when I'm sitting there on my cushion I won't be thinking, "What were those questions I'm supposed to be asking myself?"

TA: Ok, so what you're saying now is not doubt. What you're saying is a kind of report of something you think you need in order to do the practice.

RF: The doubt comes up. It's the reporting of doubt when it comes up.

TA: Yes, but right now your report of the doubt is not doubt. Your report of the doubt is part of the meditation practice. She would like more examples of how to remind herself. But one of the main ways you remind yourself, which you have already done, is remind yourself how you forget. What you just said is how you can remind yourself. You said that, not me. You came up with that. That's from your own experience, you see? So don't overlook the fact that you just gave an example yourself. I'm just doing what you asked me to do! You asked me to give an example but the example I'm giving is to point to you as an example. I thought that would be useful since you brought it up!

Now if you could be more specific, now could you please tell us more specifically how you get lost? Then that will be an example.

RF: I sit there and things come up and ... I remember this question, "How am I attributing substance to this?" But suddenly I realize I don't know what that means anymore. It doesn't mean anything to me.

TA: Stop for a second. You say you're sitting and what happens? How about right now? Right now you're thinking of something, aren't you?

RF: Yeah, I'm thinking about the frustration of that process when I'm trying to do this.

TA: Ok, so how can you remind yourself to do it right now? You just looked into yourself and came up with some images of something about the way you meditate. Right? Now is there any substance to that stuff?

RF: Yeah, I think there must be because I'm not happy with that and I'm frustrated.

TA: There you go, you see. I asked you if there was any substance and you said "Yes, I think there must be." You could have also said "Yes, I think that I think there must be. I seem to believe that there is because I'm unhappy with it."

If you're unhappy about the story I told about you, then probably you're attributing substance to it. You don't think it's funny, you take it seriously. That shows you that you're attributing substance. You're dissatisfied. If the story was told a different way, if it was the opposite version, if it was a story about how you were able to continue to meditate, and you didn't get lost, and you didn't forget, then you probably would be happy. In both cases, you're sitting in this room, looking in your mind, coming up with images. One set of images makes you feel frustrated and upset, and the other set makes you feel pretty happy.

RF: I would be more satisfied with that if that were my experience.

TA: That's a better example because it's fresh. When I was talking, an image came to her and she liked that one best of all. She attributed substance to it, and she liked it. I could tell another story that I might think she would really like, but she might hear it in a way that made her depressed. The point is, the way you heard it, when you attribute substance to it you get drained or depressed. Another story, you attribute substance to it, you get elevated. It's the elevation and depression of energy around the stories that shows you that you're attributing substance to it.

That's another reason we hesitate to do this practice. We're not sure we want to have things **not** lift us up and put us down. We're not sure we want to be stable.

I think we're afraid of stability. It's potentially boring. Baudelaire pointed out that the superstar, the king, the boss of all demons is boredom. When you're excited or depressed, you don't need boredom. You're already off track. You've already got outflows and inflows, you're already getting drained or inflated, so you don't need boredom yet. But when you start getting stable, then they bring in the big one.

“This is boring, you're wasting your time. Don't you remember the old days when you used to get up and down? Remember those highs you used to get? They were so high that you were willing to go low—remember those? Well they're not happening now are they? They're not going to happen any more either.” That's the big scare, boredom.

It's like death. We don't want to die. This is like getting close to death, like getting close to the limit of your life, where death comes and knocks on the door. You're not sure you want to go into this realm yet, but if you want to go into this realm which is free of influxes, there's going to be something like death around there. And then there's going to be fear.

Wendy Lewis: It seems to me that at the same time, there's also what I call a sense of eternity, where there's also this incredible feeling of comfort. It's not like a personal comfort like “something's comforting me.” It's kind of boring but it has an eternal quality that sustains. It's like being in the midst of despair and nothing's wrong. You know nothing's wrong, and so you're not really upset.

TA: If that's the case, believe me, I'm not worried about that. That's not a problem. I don't see that as a problem unless you make that into something.

WL: But my feeling is that the fear of boredom doesn't include that other feeling.

TA: Tell me what you're saying. What are you really saying?

WL: Well, what it feels like to me, when you stop going up and down, nothing is happening any more, there is a feeling of boredom and a feeling of despair. But you suddenly realize that it's not attached to anything, that there's nothing really to be despairing about. Then something else seems to be there at the same time. That's not making sense to you?

TA: It is. But what are you bringing this up for?

WL: Because it sounds like we're just getting to this little edge where you're saying it's going to be boredom.

TA: I'm not saying it's going to be boredom. I'm just saying boredom is a sign that you're getting close.

WL: Right, that's what I'm saying. And I think that with it comes this other feeling.

TA: But what are you bringing that up for?

WL: Because I just want to say it's not so frightening.

TA: What are you bringing that up for?

WL: Because I don't feel so frightened.

TA: But why are you bringing that up?

WL: Isn't that what we're talking about? We're talking about fear and doubt.

TA: If people are afraid, what's the reason for bringing up that you're not afraid?

WL: I'm not saying that I'm not afraid. I'm saying at the same time that the fear comes up, this other thing comes up.

TA: You don't have to be afraid, but you should take this thing you're saying and throw that in there. I feel like you're holding that out separate. You should throw that in there too.

WL: Yes! Well I think I do, but I also have to express it first like this sort of separate thing that I'm trying.

TA: That's the reason I asked you what you brought it up for. I feel like you're still holding it out there, away from the furnace. And I want you to throw it in. People don't mind throwing boredom in there and fear. I want you to throw this in there just like with fear. That's why I asked you the question. Now would you please throw it in there? Throw it. Did you throw it? Do you understand what I'm saying? Does everybody follow this?

RF: I just want to know, in terms of the question I asked you, did it get to the end of the line? I'm hanging here wondering. I've acknowledged that I've attributed substance to this thing. Is that where I stop and wait for anything to come up?

TA: Well I'm not saying that's all of Buddhism, but the main thing I thought we got to with your example was, you were sitting here in this class. You aren't in the zendo, you're in this class and you're thinking of saying something about your meditation. You were thinking about your meditation right here in this classroom. Just like in the zendo you think of your meditation practice. Some people are in the zendo thinking of their meditation practice! Even when you're asleep you're thinking of your meditation practice. That's the way you're thinking about it. You're saying, "This is not interesting, so I'm gonna take a nap." That's the way you think about your meditation practice. And then you think, "Oh, I'm supposed to be concentrating on mere concept but I'm not." Then you get upset because you're a bum. Or you think, "Oh, now I'm actually tuned in; I'm doing it, so I feel good." Or you think "Well I don't feel good, but I just caught myself at slipping off and that's supposed to be good, so that's good."

You gave two examples when you were imagining your meditation practice. You thought about it and you actually felt upset. That's an example of your image of your practice, or your life, and your attributing something to it, and getting upset. Or I said something to you and you heard that and converted that into some idea and you liked that one and you got happy. So you became an example, you got yourself to be an example of what you asked for. You want to go further on this example?

Before we go further on that, I want to get back to Wendy. I feel that she gave more information but I really felt that when you brought that up, you were holding that information separate from the process. This is just my fantasy, OK? I'm suggesting to you that part of this practice of the mind terminating in mere concept is that you have no recommendations or encouragements to yourself to do it. You're not talking yourself into doing it any more when you're terminated. When you're still talking to yourself that's fine, but when you're telling yourself to do it, when you're telling yourself to bring yourself back to it; if you think that's true, if you think that you're actually trying to encourage yourself to do it and you think there's substance to the idea of getting yourself to do it—then you are not realizing that the conversation you're having with yourself is it. So in fact you're not doing it. That's why encouraging yourself to do it is basically an error in this practice. It doesn't mean you can't do it. You're allowed to make any errors you want. But you should understand that anything you do to make yourself more comfortable to do the practice or encourage yourself to do the practice—anything like that you do is off the track. On the other hand, if you realize that that's a concept, it's not really an encouragement, it's a fantasy about encouragement. It's actually an example of doubt. It sounds like an encouragement, but it's an expression of doubt. To encourage yourself to do the practice is an expression of doubt. It's a concept of encouragement which you think is encouragement because you don't realize that THAT is the practice right there, the encouragement. And it's not that it's encouragement—it's doubt. Because you think, this isn't the practice, that you're doing right now. You want to encourage yourself to do something else, which is the practice. But if you catch yourself on that, you're right. And then when you see doubt as doubt, that's not doubt, that's the practice, in this case. Are you getting this? Another important way that you can catch yourself and keep on track, is to notice that any leverage you use to get yourself on track is doubt. If you notice that you're leveraging yourself into the practice and you catch it as doubt, it's a wavering, basically you don't trust your mind at that point. You say, "I should get myself to be this other way. I should get myself to do this mere concept practice" even though the thing you're using to get yourself to do this mere concept practice is a mere concept. You could do it right then, rather than getting yourself to go over there to do it. So you have to catch all these examples, all these things around here. They're doubts when they're outside the practice, even if they're pointing you back to the practice.

WL: Is that the shadow? The other day I was walking up the hill and I thought, my god, 'I'm just a phony, because I'm trying so hard. I'm just a phony because I keep thinking I'm making this effort.' That makes me think that that's the shadow.

TA: Saying "I'm a phony" is the shadow?

WL: Well that's how it comes out.



TA: Good example. To say “I’m a phony” is mere concept. If you fall for it, that’s the shadow. To say “I’m doing the practice” is the shadow of the practice too. Both of them are. In other words, we fall for it. That’s the shadow. Ok? In other words, we have to learn to catch everything other than mere concept, as doubt, as a distraction, as a veering off. If you catch that stuff as doubt, you’re right! And then it turns into mere concept. Doubts always come in that packaging too.

Joe Janowski: Her saying “Yesterday I was walking up the hill and I saw my shadow,”—all that’s just concept too.

TA: She could have caught it then too if she wanted to. She might have, we don’t know.

JJ: And me saying that about her—concept also.

TA: Exactly! And faith in this teaching is to stay on that track. Although you might get scared, when you get scared, that’s doubt too. That’s doubt-sponsored too. If you stay on this track, you will not be afraid when you’re on it, but if you veer a little bit you can get frightened and so on. Frightened, depressed, excited—all that stuff can happen as soon as you veer away from it. Not to mention not even getting frightened and not even getting inflated but basically you do get inflated or depressed. Your energy’s gonna go down or up whenever you go off. You’re gonna get tired and stressed or you’re gonna get energetic and hyped up. Something’s going to happen to your energy as a result of these moves. If you watch, you can catch it.

There is an energetic gain and loss around all these moves. When you’re on, the mind’s terminating in mere concept. When you’re off, you’re in doubt and if you catch it you get back on. When you’re off, there are energetic consequences which hopefully you will eventually notice. Faith in this teaching is just to be present and to keep looking at dependent co-arising. What dependently co-arises? Concepts of awareness. Things you’re aware of are concepts and they dependently co-arise. That’s what Vasubandhu is explaining to you, how they dependently co-arise. You don’t have to do anything, just look at them, and this will be revealed to you.

You have to keep coming back to the mind terminating in mere concept, so that no matter what happens you don’t veer off and think “now wait a second, now I’m not dealing with concepts any more, now I’m back dealing with reality.” In fact, we are always doing this. We’re being asked to admit what we’re always doing. We’re always in this realm of dealing with concepts, of conceptualizing. We’re doing that all the time—we’re not asked to do something we’re not already doing. We’re asked to own up to what we’re doing and just stay on that beam of being honest and upright with what we’re doing, or what’s coming to us. Actually we’re not doing this, it’s coming to us. We don’t make these concepts, they are made by the workings of our mind.

If you can stay on that beam you enter this realm. We have a lot of fears of entering this realm and around the frontiers of this realm are fears of what’s going to happen to us, what’s going to happen to our energy, what’s going to happen to our self, what kind of a person are we going to become. All these things are like frontier guards to this realm. That’s where we’re at right now. Sometimes you’re not exactly at the frontier, you’re actually going in the other direction. When you’re going towards it you get fear. You get excuses and reasons why actually it is real and why you shouldn’t do it. When you’re going away, you have these energy fluctuations. So we’re going towards and away. This is our doubt. We’re vibrating and wavering around this practice. We’re all more or less doing this together.

Meiya Wender: I don’t feel doubt so much as frustration because I feel like you’re saying you have to keep doing this, and at the same time you say, you can not do this practice. This is practice that you can not do. So I feel tossed between those two sides.

TA: Do I say that? Do I say you have to do this?

MW: That’s what I hear. You have to stay on this beam.

TA: Right, you have to stay on the beam but it’s not something you do. If you do anything you’re off. In fact you have to just be still and upright. Being upright is not something you do. Righting yourself

is something you do. Bringing yourself back into alignment is something you do. But that's something you do because of noticing you did something. You don't really do anything when you notice something. It's not something you do. You just notice or you don't. If you don't notice that's no work. If you do notice that's no work—it's effortless. As soon as you notice you're off, you're on. If you're not off, you don't have to notice you're on, you're just on. That's what you have to do. It's not doing anything. You just have to stay on all the time. Everything that happens to you has to be something that keeps you on. If it isn't, if it brings you off, then you have to admit you're off. As soon as you admit you're off you're back on. But that isn't doing anything. That's just calling a spade a spade. Just noticing what's reality.

It's not really work. It's not karma. When you're doing karma you're supposed to own to the karma. But owning that you're doing karma is not necessarily karma. If you think “I did this thing of noticing my karma,” then that's karma. But just saying “karma karma karma”—that's not karma. That's just noticing. That's just awareness of karma. We're supposed to stay on the beam of noticing our karma. That's not doing anything. If you just stay upright and don't move, then you notice your karma. It gets presented to you. That's all you can see. That's what's happening. This stuff is being produced before you. Just noticing it is not more of that stuff. It's the opposite of that stuff—it relieves you from that stuff. That's the beam that we're supposed to stay on, but that's not doing something.

If I sound like I'm saying, “doing something,” then call me on it because I'm saying “no, it's not that you do something.” That's why this practice is renunciation—you have to give up doing things and switch over to just being present with the fact that you are doing things. To be present with your great psychic muscles which are exercising themselves, and which nobody can stop.

MW: So what do you do with the *Thirty Verses* in the situation of not doing anything?

TA: You just stay present with the *Thirty Verses*. Don't lean into the *Thirty Verses*, don't lean away from the *Thirty Verses*. Don't lean to the right of the *Thirty Verses* or to the left of the *Thirty Verses*. Just be upright and let the *Thirty Verses* do their thing—whatever it is. What is it? I think some people have certain energy variations through the day. What I'm talking about are energy variations which you can notice are directly related to the way you think. It would be good if you could start noticing this. If you're not thinking, then you won't have energy variations related to your thinking. Ok?

So we'll all go to sleep tonight and tomorrow morning there'll be no outflows. At last, we're liberated from all this grief!

## Class 12

November 29, 1994

I would like to look at the beginning of the text from the point of view of zazen practice. Perhaps you now understand it in such a way that we can practice with it. As you know, it starts out:

*Whatever indeed is the variety of ideas of self and elements that prevails, it occurs in the transformation of consciousness. Such transformation is threefold....*

Whatever ideas of self and elements happen in our lives, the important thing is our attitude. You could say the same thing about zazen practice. The depth of your practice depends on the attitude with which you practice. Do you have the right attitude while you're sitting or while you're standing or whatever you're doing? Do you have *samyak drsti*, right view or right thought? Do you have right motivation, do you have right livelihood, right mindfulness, right concentration, right speech, right deportment and so on? Do you have all those correct unfoldments of the Buddha Way in your zazen practice? The right attitude to practice zazen is that zazen is not something other than yourself and it's not something you do, it's not something you can play with. It's not a toy, an object. In the perceptual process where we have a sense of self and others or elements, there is a dualistic attitude and a non-dualistic

attitude. The dualistic attitude is that this is a self and those are elements and the self exists outside those elements. The self exists in isolation and independence of all the elements. The elements exist independently and outside the self. That's a dualistic way of seeing things. That way comes with dispositions and creates dispositions.

The text says that perception, the actual idea of self and elements occurs through a transformation. Since this is the case, ideas of self and elements must not be things that exist in isolation. Elements must not be things that exist by themselves and the self can't be something that exists by itself. Since they arise from the same transformation they probably have something to do with each other. Also, they are born of and depend on a threefold process. They depend on each other and on many other things. Therefore, self and elements don't exist in isolation, they aren't independent. A thorough understanding of that is called the right view of the ideas of self and elements. The text tells how self and elements appear and if you can pay attention to this, you can work it into your repertoire of living and then you will gradually develop a non-dual attitude in the midst of the appearance of self and elements. It isn't that self and elements evaporate; it's that through the study of their interdependence, isolated, independent self and elements drop away.

Throughout the day we see other human beings and mountains and rivers and we may think, "That person is friendly." Or "that person is not friendly." "That person is irresponsible." Those are examples of self and elements. When I have these ideas, do I remember that I have something to do with them? As I become involved in these views of people do I remember that I'm involved in the process? Someone else who just walked into this valley who doesn't know this person might have a totally different impression. Maybe they talked to him and he was very friendly, so they think, "Wow, what a friendly person." You might think, "What a phony! He's not really like that. He just put that on." Or "He can't be friendly with people he knows because he has dispositions towards them, but he was nice to the stranger because he doesn't have any dispositions towards him." Who is right? The person who just came in? It's not a matter of correct perception. Both perceptions are dependently co-arisen.

The beginning of the text shows how you can start applying meditation in looking for the *paratantra*. Watch how you project erroneous imaginings on to things and people you meet; we do it quite a bit. One way to spot it is through energy disturbances. If you're at Tassajara and you walk around looking at leaves, it might be that you don't have such heavy dispositions about leaves. But if the ground is very muddy and slippery, that might evoke dispositions associated with falling down in the mud in the past and hurting yourself. So you might already be upset. You might notice these energy disturbances arising when you look at leaves. So this energy shows you something about the dispositions that are coming up and tips you off that they are activated.

The text gives you information to help you realize that self and elements are interdependent. The more you can tune into the causation of this process of illusion, the better chance you have of not viewing self and other as isolated. This teaching will help you to free yourself from the erroneous imagining of independence, and guide yourself into the world of interdependence.

Putting the text aside for the moment, I would like to again present the early Buddhist teaching of perception. I agree with the early teaching of Buddhism which says there are six rather than eight *vijñānas*. The eight *vijñāna* system can be used as a way of explaining the six. I no longer think that *ālaya* and *manas* are other things, in addition to the six consciousnesses.

I'm just going to talk about the sixth consciousness tonight—*mano vijñāna dhatu*. It has an organ—*mano* or *manas* and its objects are in the *dharma dhatu*. All the possible things in the *dharma dhatu* are potential objects of this consciousness. We can know about this aspect of sense consciousness; there are intellectual processes going on here. These are ordinary experiences of consciousness and when things in the *dharma dhatu* are known to this consciousness, they have been converted into concepts. That is, *mano vijñāna* knows things. It knows them as objects which are in the *dharma dhatu*. When the mind

knows blue, what it actually knows is a concept of blue. At the sense consciousness level below this, the sense consciousnesses are not known. They are directly in contact with the fields of physicality but they have no intellectual functioning.

This doesn't paint the whole picture of our psychic life and that's why they made up *alaya*. In some point in human history, in conjunction with the organ function of mind, there arose the idea of a self, something existing by itself, an identity. That thought had an effect which was not one of these objects you can know consciously. It was something very subtle, like a perfume left over from smelting iron. Where did it go? It went into the darkness of the mind, a place where the effects of thinking could manifest some result. But that was not a realm that could be an object of consciousness, not when it was being stored, not in its effect stage. It got laid down, it was a resultant, and this resultant side of the mind started building up. This resultant side also serves as a support or a place from which the resultants can turn into seeds and become a cause of dispositions.

The perception of an independent self has an effect. It leaves a trace of itself within mind and there is an amassing of these effects. Gradually this amassed sense of self becomes the seed and the cause of a set of dispositions around self-perception. Finally, whenever the process of perception and reflecting arises, the dispositions come up with it. The dispositions of self-clinging, self-view, and self-confusion come up with the thinking or reflecting function, and then of course it happens again and gets laid down again in *alaya*, this area that you can't perceive. You can't perceive any location or identity. All around this triad of perceptual processes which we're conscious of are the effects of the process and the seeds or dispositions which affect it. This process or function is what is called *alaya*, the storehouse consciousness. It is actually part of the functioning of the sixth consciousness, in conjunction with *manas* and its objects. It's not another thing, it doesn't have a independent existence. We live in a world of conscious perceptions which are fed by direct sensory experience. *Alaya* is fed by great darkness all around it which are the effects of past action. It is a way to visualize the huge dark world of dispositions in seed form surrounding the world we see.

I was just reading about Freud's description of the unconscious as being full of "seething and fierce emotions." Last week in my meditation I experienced a kind of seething. Stuff was seeping into my consciousness like I was in a cave and emotions were oozing out of the ceiling and up out of the floor and out of the walls. Stuff was seething into my mind, like thick green pea soup. This is coming from darkness all around. D.H. Lawrence said something like:

"This is what I know, I am myself, the world of my conscious self is like a little clearing in the middle of a dark forest. Deities come out of the forest to visit now and then, and then they go back."

Visitations from *alaya* are dispositions, but they also are deities in the sense of being indicators, showing you traces of the working of the mind. They're almost like demons and devils but they are showing you that there's more going on than this little world we're living in. The process of cleaning things up is to sit upright in the middle of the world you know. Lawrence also said something like "I vow to have the courage to let them come and let them go back." If you can sit upright in this field you know about, that stillness is the antidote to greed, hate and delusion which are the prototypes of other dispositions.

Going back to the *Thirty Verses*, Vasubandhu says: *Such transformation is threefold, [namely], (verse 2): the resultant, what is called mentation, as well as the concept of the object.*

The three transformations are three ways to look at the working of the sixth consciousness, which is consciousness as an organ, which helps consciousness to reflect upon or separate itself from its objects and therefore be aware of the objects. This doesn't account for the fact that in association with this organ function of the mind you always have the arising of ego, self-view, and erroneous imagining. By positing

a transformation of consciousness called *alaya*, you now have a source from which to draw the erroneous imagining every moment and also a place where the results of that erroneous imaginings are stored.

*Manas* is the locus of defilement because this kind of thinking is always egocentric and is always afflicted by self-confusion and self-view. I picture *manas* as having two eyes. Every moment that it comes up, one eye looks back at *alaya* and the other eye looks at something in the *dharma dhatu*. *Dharma dhatu* is whatever the mind consciousness is aware of as its object; it's known. Things in *alaya* are not known, they're in the dark. Vasubandhu says *alaya's dissipation occurs in arhatship. Associated with this process ...—the process of alaya—associated with the effects of egocentric thinking, which can be a cause for a disposition arising later. That's the process of alaya. Erroneous imaginings have effects and then these effects are received for further erroneous imagining. Associated with that process is thinking which draws up the effects of past thinking as seeds and uses them for present thinking. So he says associated with this process [alaya] and depending upon it occurs manas.* So there is darkness all around this conscious process. *Manas* is associated with that darkness and depends on it. Another translation is: *depending on this process and having that process as its object.* Not just associating, but having *alaya* as its object. *Manas* has *alaya* as its object and also reflects the *dharma dhatu* or the mind consciousness element. So it mirrors something for the mind consciousness to see and it brings something up from *alaya*, out of the dark. It always brings up self-pride, self-love, self-confusion and self-view. But it's in the dark. It looks at *alaya* and brings up all this crap and goes over here and reflects something and shows it to the mind and the mind sees whatever the thing is, ensconced in all this erroneous imagining, namely substance, self. That's why the second transformation is so important in creating the sense of self. It delivers that sense together with the toxins, limitations, and rigidities that have been karmically associated with individuality and substance.

The third transformation is called the *acquisition of the six-fold object*. It's acquired by *alaya*. *Alaya* acquires the objects. This whole system is to explain the actual acquisition of the sense organs and sense consciousnesses by the body.

I want to keep you tuned in to this as a meditation practice. At the beginning I talked about watching how you meet things and you're aware of self and elements, self and door, self and cold, self and faces. There's an idea of self and an idea of elements. At this level, it could just be awareness, without erroneous imagining. In this world, life is very simple and very basic and there's no belief in the substance of the things over here that are known, no belief that they exist independently. The reason why there isn't is that *manas* has ceased to be *manas*. It's just reflecting now. It's no longer looking back into *alaya*—actually it is looking into *alaya* but it doesn't see anything in the dark because the dark is no longer dark. It's no longer dark because the dark has been turned into light. Every time anything came out of the dark, it was seen as a visitor from the dark. Somebody was sitting in the dark forest and said “look who's coming.” You started to spot that, because of spending quite a bit of time sitting in the clearing and noticing that you felt a little funny, noticing that you were starting to hate your friends or do all kinds of weird things in the clearing. Little by little you noticed that the weird things you were doing had something to do with these visitors. You started to notice all the visitors, when they came and when they went back. After a while they didn't go back anymore; they came and they came and they came. You didn't send anybody back. After a while there was nobody out in the forest anymore. There were no visitors. There was just sitting in the clearing and that's all that was going on.

Freud has the idea of pushing out into the unconscious. The idea here is that somehow you actually clean up the whole thing, appease the whole field by witnessing how these things come and what effect they have. That happens to arhats and in the Supramundane Path. *Alaya*, the dark area, is released or dissipated, transformed because you become so skillful at noticing the functioning of this idea of self and objects of self.

Upright sitting is what makes this transformation occur. It might seem like a big job, but you have so many experiences, if you sit still with them you can learn on many many occasions. It is possible to get quite a bit of work done if you work really thoroughly and intensely, sitting in the middle of this process, noticing causes and effects. *Alaya* gets transformed or released from playing that dirty role, *manas* gets cleaned up and the situation gets quite simple.

Q: Earlier you presented the early Buddhist teaching of Six Consciousnesses, then you brought in *alaya*. I'm confused about which system you're talking about now. Eight or six?

TA: I'm not presenting the eight consciousness system. I'm trying to present what Vasubandhu said and I don't think he's teaching that system. I think he's presenting a story of how the sense of self and elements arises through the three transformations of consciousness. These three transformations are another way to explain the functioning of the six consciousnesses, particularly the sixth. The advantage of this threefold presentation is that it shows how the six consciousnesses produce the sense of self and other. You could talk about how the six consciousnesses produce self and other without talking about *alaya*. However, the advantage of *alaya* is it shows how the effects of projecting a self onto an element becomes a cause to do it again and how the situation gets more and more entrenched in self-centeredness and self-projection and erroneous imaginings. The three transformation system is useful because it accounts for the birth of this illness. The more specifically you can diagnose the illness, the easier it is to meditate on it and therefore to cure it.

This system is the mind of a Buddha. Buddha's mind does this, but it doesn't have defiled *manas* anymore. The person has sat and watched the process of defilement, has watched the mind bringing up the effects of past self-clinging, has watched the mind convulse its past errors into present erroneous imaginings so many times that it is no longer caught by it. The situation is cleared up and "dullness and distraction are struck aside." You still have this functioning but now it is pure.

Q: I thought *dharmadhatu* was all the potential objects.

TA: Right. One particular object is being pulled up and there are dispositions around it which aren't being pulled up. The ones that are in the dark around the one you pull up are called *alaya*. Instead of having *alaya* out there some place, you let it come right into the *dharmadhatu* so whenever you pull an element out of the *dharmadhatu* to be aware of, you pull all the other goo up with it.

Q: So the visitor in the forest appears in the *dharmadhatu*?

TA: No, the visitor is in the clearing. The visitor is the camp fire or the person you're talking to or a cup of coffee. That's something in the *dharmadhatu* you're not aware of; it's in the light. There are things in the clearing that you're aware of.

Q: What I'm saying is you don't know anything in *alaya* until it's in the light and then you can talk about it as *dharmadhatu*.

TA: You can say that if you want to, but there are things in *alaya* that are affecting the situation, which aren't in the light. Those are important because people do not usually notice that these core afflictions are standing around everything you're aware of. That's the part of *alaya* that's important.

Q: I thought *alaya* by definition was pre-cognition. As soon as you're aware of something it's moving out of *alaya*.

TA: Yes, as soon as you're aware of it, it's not in *alaya* anymore. It's just *dharmadhatu* and it's an object of *mano vijñana dhatu*. However, when you're looking at something, like a frog or pain, etc., the seed for that could have been in *alaya*, but now it's just something that you're aware of. That part of the effects of past actions is not a problem. You've had pain before, now you're having pain again. You had pleasure before, now you're having pleasure again. That's also part of the causes and effects. Simultaneously with that pain there's a whole bunch of dispositions which you do not know about. They are not in the light and they're happening right now around that pain. Your body is cringing, you're angry, because you're attributing erroneous imaginings to this event. Those are also *alaya* coming to fruition, but

they're not known. As we somehow become aware of those things coming out of the dark, we become more aware of the cause of self-clinging, and now also the cause of future seeds of doing it again. Becoming aware of that by becoming upright in the middle of that process dissipates the process spontaneously. If you try to mess around with it at all, you're hooked. **You** trying to mess around with it is exactly the process that is unfolding right under your nose. To let it unfold without messing around—this is something new. This is something of which the system might say "Hey, wait a minute. This is no good. This is a waste of time. Call this off! There's no expectation of this."

Q: Can you give some examples of "visitors" from the dark?

TA: The activated dispositions are the visitors. If you see somebody's face and you become angry; when you notice that you're angry, that's a visitor. Now it's anger that you're aware of; it's something appearing in the clearing. But sometimes you see a face and you don't take it as just a face. You have all kinds of dispositions and you don't know why you feel a certain way. You see somebody and you relax, or even though you just met a person you feel uptight. That's because of dispositions; you don't yet know what they are. You might not notice that from the first moment you met the person that the dispositions were working. You might ask "Why am I feeling so bored with this person? I've only been talking with him for 3 seconds and I'm already feeling really bored or I'm thinking this person is a jerk. I want to punch this person. What is going on here? Could he have done that much to me already?" You might think this person really is a jerk "He's done terrible things in the last 10 seconds, just by the way he looked at me." Some other people might say "I don't know what you're talking about," but it's not a matter to prove. What I propose is that you could notice what **you** do in that situation. The main reasons for intense reactions when you first meet someone have to do with your own past actions. You don't usually know why you feel a particular way. You can uncover what these dispositions are, but mostly they come in unnoticed from the dark, and they come fast. The best way to notice them is to be still and upright, moment after moment and watch. If you study it thoroughly you can actually turn the process around and clean it up.

Q: Is there a difference between *alaya* and the unconscious?

TA: I was just reading Freud and when he was talking about that "seething fierce blah blah...." it sounded a lot like *alaya*. However, I don't know if the Western understanding of the unconscious includes all the functions of *alaya*. Jung, from his studies of Yogacara, thought that *alaya* was the collective unconscious. But I'm not going to equate the two.

### Class 13

December 3, 1994

Tonight I would like to start by reiterating the context and the foundation for this study. Sometimes as we go through the forest of Buddhist teachings and look at the trees, the bark, and all the cells in the cambium layer, we forget where we are and say "where's the forest? I thought we were going to save the forest and now we are looking at the cell structure." We are minutely studying self-clinging and attribution of substance, and all the outflows and influxes that happen around the surface of concepts, and we may lose track of what it is all about. So I want to reiterate that what this is about is universal enlightenment.

This study, this practice period, Vasubandhu, the schedule—it's all about this enormous project of saving the entire forest. It's about everybody's enlightenment. An aspect of enlightenment is freedom from self-clinging, so this practice period is about self-clinging. What are the origins of self-clinging? How do you get into thinking that there is a self separate from others that you have to take care of separately? How do you see this process when it is actually happening? Through awareness of the process of self-creation and self-clinging you can be liberated from that process.

Dogen Zenji's teacher, Rujing said, "Every time you sit zazen, before you sit you should remember that you are sitting for everyone, for all beings." You are sitting for them before yourself, before your own enlightenment. Whenever I say this at Green Gulch, someone says "What about me? Couldn't my own enlightenment be at the same time as everyone else's instead of after?" Actually, everybody's enlightenment is simultaneous, but as a self-transcendent strategy, it's good to put everybody else first. Our problem is not our self-transcendence but our self-clinging. If you put others' enlightenment first, yours will be at the same time. You have to want them to get enlightened first in order to overcome your tendency to want to get enlightened before them.

Somebody gave me a newspaper article with a speech by Vaclav Havel, the president of Czechoslovakia because they thought the way he spoke was so Buddhist. In the speech he said, "Our only real hope for people today is in a renewal of our certainty that we are rooted in the earth and at the same time in the cosmos." Cosmos literally means harmony; it doesn't just mean universe. The harmony of the working of all things is the root of our life. All beings working together to give us life is where we are rooted.

The meaning of competition is "petition together." That is the origin of sports. We get together and petition the gods to bless us all. That is the way we wrestle together, run together, sit together and so on. In that sense, we compete together. This awareness of the certainty that we are dependently co-arisen, from the earth and all beings endows us with the capacity for self-transcendence. We want to work for the benefit of all beings, but we cannot do it if we haven't transcended ourselves. You can't work for beings by putting yourself first and others second. It doesn't work. You have to pull yourself back and put them first. We have to transcend the self in our awareness of how our self dependently co-arises. That is what this text is about: understanding how the self dependently co-arises.

You are all very compassionate and kind, and your kindness and service to each other is only limited by your understanding of yourself. If you understand yourself completely, your kindness and compassion to each other will be unlimited. We can deepen our understanding of ourself, and therefore we can widen and deepen our compassion and kindness. Given your present understanding of yourself, you are all doing your best. Yet we can liberate our full compassion and skillful service by deepening our understanding of the workings of our own mind and thus end all outflows which destabilize and interfere with our service to each other.

Someone asked, "Does this end of all outflows mean no more emotion or passion." No, the end of all outflows does not mean the end of all compassion. The end of outflows means the birth of total compassion. It means you join the passion of all beings. You lose your individual passion, your self-centered passion when outflows end. When you lose self-centered passion, you lose the passion for helping yourself at the exclusion of others. You are stable, serene, effective and on the job, the job of embracing the passion of all beings. Beings are excited about baseball, bridge, food, life and death. Beings are really passionate and you embrace and join all their passion when you drop your own personal passion.

Will outflows stop? Some might. You might stop hating people, you might stop hating everybody. You might forget about disharmony with others and only remember how everybody is helping you. The first meaning of emotion is agitation or stirring up of the passions. The second meaning of emotion is strong hate, strong love, strong joy or strong sorrow. You won't lose your strong joy and sorrow. You will embrace others in their hate. You won't identify with it and you won't identify with their love either. You won't identify with anything and by not identifying with emotions you can be free of suffering. You are not running away from the emotions; that would be another way to identify with them.

Will any emotions come in you? Yes. For example enthusiasm and concentration. With concentration comes the greatest worldly happiness, so you feel lots of bliss in relationship to concentration. Concentration is a kind of emotion, it is a way to intensify your emotions whatever they



are. Enthusiasm, concentration, compassion, sincerity, loyalty. You stand by the Buddha dharma and you won't move. You have energy, loyalty, emotion, feeling, generosity, bliss, joy, compassion, devotion, dedication.

Q: I don't perceive my life existing without a whole range of emotions coming up. My effort is not to identify with them, not fall for them, not leave them but I don't imagine not having them come up.

TA: You don't have to imagine them not coming up. Some people are imagining them not coming up and they are scared to death. So I am just telling you that you might lose anger, vengeance and so on, but some of these other good emotions might not be lost, so don't worry.

Q: When you say lose them do you mean they don't come up at all?

TA: I mean you don't have them. They don't come up at all.

Now we are going to study about self-transcendence, as well as self-descendence or descent into self. Transcendent, by the way, means *trans*—over and *cendery*—climb, to climb over/out of the self. So we have to study descent, focus on this center of self-descent, the center of self-defilement and the center of self-clinging—*manas*.

Verse 5 says: *The dissipation of alaya, the cleaning up, the release, of alaya, occurs in Arhatship. Associated with this process and depending on it occurs a consciousness called manas, which is of the nature of thinking.*

*Associated with this process* refers to the process of *alaya*. It also means that *alaya* becomes released. *Manas* is associated with *alaya* developing and becoming darker and heavier and more influential in our life. Our life is mostly determined and influenced greatly by this huge darkness around everything, by this unconscious.

You could picture your known life as a little circle of light or a little clearing in a forest where the huge dark forest is the unconscious. Another way to picture it is that every little thing, feeling and emotion that comes up is a little light and around each little light is a field of darkness. Everything that comes up, although you can't see it, is accompanied by the four afflictions and a lot of dispositions. You never get anything by itself. All you see is one object, like a hand or a pain or pleasure or enthusiasm or some concept. You always see a concept coming up, one at a time. Of course, they come up rapidly, so you put things together quite quickly. Each concept is surrounded by the four afflictions and dispositions. You can't see them because they are not the object, although they are coming up with it. They are in the dark. They really determine what happens in your life and how you behave.

Q: Didn't you say that we should notice self-view, self-confusion and so on? It says that they are "constantly concealed and undefined."

TA: Yes. So how are you going to notice them? By inference. By their effects, by the outflows. That is how you notice them. For example, when self-confusion is in the dark it agitates you, it causes a disturbance, it determines your actions. If you can bring self-confusion in front of you, at that moment, it is clear, it isn't self-confusion. The more you get a chance to bring examples or inferred examples of self-clinging, self-confusion, self-love and self-view into awareness, into the light, and then try to appreciate how they dependently co-arose, the more you transform the process.

Every time anything that happens is important for you, it gets laid down in the unconscious or *alaya*. When things that happen aren't important for you, there is not much effect. You can have experiences where there is no you and no self involved; these don't register much. All the you-oriented experiences get registered in the unconscious. They become influential not by their number and mass but by the fact that they are in the dark and the fact that they support self-clinging. They can operate on us without our even knowing what we are working against.

Q: Isn't that also true with sense experience? I mean we can sense things and not be aware of them but they do have an effect.

TA: I think that they do have an effect but I don't think that they get laid down in *alaya*. *Alaya* apprehends sense processes. I don't think the sense process has that much to do with *alaya* and anyway if it does, fine, because what gets laid down is non-self-centered experience. The basic revolutionary move is to interact with what is happening in an unselfish way. Then you have a moment of an experience that is not important to you. Experiences that aren't important to you do not get laid down in the unconscious and therefore don't become your unseen boss.

Unselfish practice is helpful because it doesn't get laid down in the unconscious. In a sense, that's what *zazen* is. It is something totally useless from your point of view and therefore you don't store it away for future reference. The self wants to store all the stuff that is important to it because you never know when you may want to use it. Actually the problem is you put it away in the dark and you don't know where it is and it uses you. *Zazen* is a practice that is not for yourself, not for your own pleasure, not for fun. It is basically just a pure ritual enactment, a selflessness. It doesn't develop *alaya*.

Meanwhile, *alaya* is unfolding the results of quite a long time of doing things that were important for the self. That is what makes being unselfish difficult. The results of being selfish keep emerging around every experience. Such results may be "Aren't you a fool?" and "Isn't this boring, doing a practice which is not giving you something? Aren't you afraid that the Buddhas and Ancestors are just using you? Aren't you falling into some Japanese or American Dharma trap, dedicating and throwing your life down, one more body in the long lineage of Buddhas and Ancestors!" These are the kinds of dispositions that are the results of past thoughts. They come up and influence you but most of the time you don't even know that they are there. They just make you turn away from doing something selfless and do something selfish.

Let the results of past actions reign/rain, in both senses of the word, or all three senses of the word, including rein. Let them rain upon your life and let your life struggle and be tossed about by this raining of the results of past selfish thoughts. *Alaya* is going to unfold and you can't stop it. You don't even know where to stop it because it is coming from the dark. You don't know what direction it comes from but it does come and every moment it dumps a little bit of the results of past actions. It unfolds, it becomes mature, it influences, it drives us. It is big, it is powerful, it is basically turning our life.

We have one little thing we can do in the face of that, one little unselfish thing. Call it whatever you want. I call it being upright, it's unselfish, it's done for others, it's not done for the self. It doesn't give you anything. It doesn't take away anything. It has no effect on self. However, eventually it liberates the self and cleans up *alaya*. *Manas* lives in conjunction with *alaya*. It works with *alaya* when *alaya* is becoming heavier and thicker and is unfolding and exhausting itself. In arhatship, *alaya* is completely released. All past action just gets burned off. "Arhat" means to be burned out. All the results of past actions have burned off. Then there is just a mind that is operating and perceiving without self-clinging, without developing a new *alaya*, now that it has been liberated and the results of *alaya* have been brought forth and expressed.

If you're an arhat who is not going to come back, and you're going to completely clear out *alaya*, sometimes there is a last minute burn-out. The text says that *manas* is "not found in the worthy one nor in the state of cessation nor in the supramundane path." *Manas* is still generating self-interest and having self-interested experiences. It is not found in the worthy one, or in the Arhat because the unconscious gets cleared out due to *manas* not functioning for quite awhile.

Supramundane path means anybody who is doing Buddhist meditation. In the traditional system, there are four kinds of saints: Stream Enterer, Once Returner, Never Returner, and The Worthy One, The Burned Out One. Stream Enterer means somebody who has entered the stream of actual Buddhist meditation.

Strictly speaking, Buddhist meditation means selfless meditation, *zazen*. *Zazen* that I **do** is not *zazen*, although hopefully it is good karma. It is sort of like a warm-up to Buddhist meditation. It is still

practicing meditation from the point of view of a supposed independent self. That is not actually Buddhist practice, although it is on the first two of the five paths. These first two paths are not Buddhist; they are warm-ups. The five paths are the path of preparation, the path of concerted effort, the path of vision, the path of cleaning up *alaya* and the path of vacation- enjoying being an Arhat or an irreversible Bodhisattva.

When you enter the supramundane path, *manas* is no longer functioning because you have changed from the self school to the no-self school. What is called *gotrabhu* occurs there. *Gotra* means your lineage, your self-lineage and *bhu* means to end. You have cut the lineage of self clinging; you don't believe it any more. *Satkaya dristi* is the view, or position that self has a body. (*Satkaya* is the true body or self.) That view is dropped when you enter the supramundane path. This is when you start practicing zazen without **you doing** it anymore. Zazen does zazen. If you practice like that long enough you forget about yourself and then it is really zazen. That is the supramundane path. That is stream entering and *manas* is not there.

When *manas* is not there the unconscious starts getting eroded. It fulfills itself and expresses itself and determines your experience but every time it does it uses one of its chips and pretty soon it runs out of chips. Pretty soon your life is no longer unconsciously determined; it is just compassion for all beings who are still into doing or not doing practice and who believe in self. That is the story about verses 5 and 7.

Q: You said earlier that it is through *manas* that all things are known. Without the functioning of *manas* how would we know?

TA: Good question! The simple organ function of *manas* continues. The reflecting side of *manas* continues but the sense of self that comes up with it has been seen through by Buddhist practice. Your practice is in direct contradistinction to the belief in self. Thus by acting in this unselfish way over and over, by constantly thinking of the welfare of others first and doing practices which attest to your interest in others first, this clinging side of *manas* drops away. All that is left is the mind's ability to be aware of something with the aid of *manas*. *Manas* is non-defiled then. Some people say it completely disappears but I don't see how you are going to describe the process of perception if you take away the function entirely.

Q: How can you think of others without self, since self and other are mutually implied?

TA: Once you get on the track of practicing for that purpose, you don't have to think that way anymore. When you practice zazen and live in this unselfish way, you realize you don't have to think of self and other. One of the things that people are worried about is "if I forget about self/other will I still be able to feed myself?" I think you will be able to, but if you can't, don't worry, someone will feed you or they will send you to rehabilitation. *This is your spoon, this is your hand, this is your mouth, now come on—open up wide.* They will re-educate you if you need it, don't worry.

In the process of birth and death, the twelve-fold chain of causation, there is ignorance, karmic formations, consciousness, name and form, six senses, contact, feeling, thirst, clinging, becoming, birth, old age and death. That was the content of Buddha's enlightenment. Buddha became liberated by understanding that process, and then after enlightenment, he still hung out in that process. Some people say that Buddha didn't go all the way around that process, that he just went up to the place where you have feeling, and stopped. He didn't get into thirst and clinging. Clinging is what Buddha pointed to as the source of suffering. Other people say he just went as far as contact. I think that actually in explanation of the process he stopped at contact but if you are still operating at the level of contact maybe you automatically get feeling and that is enough. Maybe meditating on contact, when the feelings arise you don't get thirst. You are still involved in the process of contact. In this process of contact, I think that there is a separation between consciousness, object, organ. So there is still some organ function of the mind, even in Buddha.

Are there any questions about this?

Q: If we practice selfless activity, eventually *alaya* will become purified. On the other hand, I thought *manas* was defiled insofar as it has karmic dispositions. When it is functioning in someone normal, does it look into *alaya* with some structure of karmic dispositions and pull something up and reflect it? What purifies *manas*? It seems that *alaya* can get purified but then *manas*.....?

TA: Yes, OK, I got it.

By the way I want to refer to something that Kozan said, “What about imagination in this process?” To me this class is all about imagination. We are imagining the process of imagining the process of imagination, imagining the process of conception and the process of attributing substance to things. You are imagining now that I am responding, that I hear you and I make an imagination about what you were trying to say. I think I understood what you said. Now I’m going to say something and you are going to judge whether I got it or not and so on. We are all sitting here and imagining away, imagining the process of imagination. We want to use imagination now in a liberating fashion.

So his question is, if you have this sense of reflecting some mental object (some concept), lots of concepts are available because of past conceptualization. We have many concepts available to interpret what is going on in our life. I have a concept of Albert which I often use when I see certain things. If Albert changes a lot I may not use the Albert concept anymore but since I see him regularly, even though he does change, I keep using “Albert” for what he changes into.

In conjunction with the process of reflecting, a sense of self is born, as well as all the conceptions that are keyed into that self. Self arises with concepts, so you know they are closely related. They are dependently co-arising. Thus all those experiences not based on self but that happen in conjunction with the self get stored away and then new experiences come. Aside from the dispositions that come up with the new experiences, there is a new enactment of self and self-clinging right on the spot.

*Manas* offers continual examples of self-clinging, self-confusion and self-view that occur around every new experience, every new instance of the use of a concept. *Manas* operates in conjunction with *alaya* in two ways: All the things that are potentially used for concepts come up from past experience. We talk about the seed aspect of consciousness, the resource aspect of all past experiences. They all have an effect and you can use those effects to bring new concepts to life. Simultaneously, many dispositions are brought up from past experiences and co-exist with the concept you are using. *Manas* doesn’t have all those dispositions. Its main dispositions are the four kinds of afflictions. All this is one mind, right? We are focusing on *manas* as the focus of the self-defiling activity. *Alaya* is emphasizing the fact that mind (the brain, the unconscious), has the ability to embrace the effects of all of our past actions. Then those can be drawn upon, but usually not at will.

---talk continued outside and was not taped---

### Class 14

December 6, 1994

The opportunities which life provides for defilement and entrenchment and bondage are good places to focus on release. A way to locate the place of limitation and defilement is to look at the experience you’re having right now. The focal point of that experience may be where you feel affliction, pain, the dispositions—these heavy inclinations towards certain ways of coping, these floods, influxes, outflows, turbulences, agitations; where fraudulence, violence, shamelessness, remorselessness, deceitfulness, stupidity, lack of competence, sluggishness, indolence, forgetfulness, distraction, inattentiveness, worry and sloth are coming down in an uncomfortable rain.

In that place, find “the mind of winter” that doesn’t cry out in the freezing sleet. Find the mind of a furnace, where the stuff has a chance to melt like snowflakes. The place to find this mind is right in the middle of what may seem to be a storm—a storm of our imagination, a storm of concepts. A storm of birth and death, a storm of sickness. But then who knows? This might not be a storm, it might be a falcon. Or it might be a great song. For now it’s definitely just a bad storm. That’s why we want to go someplace else. If we can sit in the middle of this storm and let it rage, the storm will reveal itself to you. It will reveal that it’s a mystery. It’s life! We have to enter the center of this and sit there, and let this stuff rain down on us, snow on us, tear us to shreds. We have to be devoted to uprightness.

At times, everything that appears—a person’s hand, a person’s clothes, the way he lifts his sleeve, the way he takes his glasses off or puts them on, the way she blinks, the way she chews—really annoys us! We want to smash her for the way she puts a cough drop in her mouth. Or the way she doesn’t put a cough drop in her mouth. No matter what she does, whatever concept appears, for some reason or other all these obsessions come up and surround it. But they don’t say “hey—this is an innocent bystander, this is a person holding her hand up and now we’re surrounding her and coloring her the most obnoxious color.” You just hate her. You can tell yourself it’s not so bad that she cleared her throat, it’s not that obnoxious. Probably there’s something else happening here besides the way she’s clearing her throat or the way she’s chanting. Or the way she smacks her lips. Why should it bother me so much that she just went “smack”?

If you surround that sound with the right mental formations, which are being brought up from the unconscious, delivered by *alaya*, and which might always come up whenever that sound is made, and you just sit there, you gradually realize that no matter what this person does, you’re going to hate it because it’s surrounded by obnoxious effluvia from your own mind, which you can’t see, but which surrounds everything you’re aware of. The imagination is producing images moment-by-moment, non-stop, and the dispositions are coming up around those images non-stop. Sometimes the dispositions are really heavy. They are heaviest when you haven’t noticed them for some time. They have to get heavier to bring your attention back to the concept. The concept is not coming to you purely, but is always coming with this stuff.

Again I quote that poem.<sup>20</sup> This stuff is coming for “the one who sits listening in the snow. And nothing in himself beholds the [Dharma] that is not there, and the [Dharma] that is.” This stuff’s gonna rain down on us until we’re the one who just sits in that rain and listens. If we can just sit there and listen, then we become “and nothing herself beholds.” You become “and nothing yourself beholding,” just clear awareness—and then you can see and understand the Dharma that is not there, and the Dharma that is. You can see the dependently co-arisen Dharma that is, and the independently existing Dharma that is about what isn’t. You can tell what is from what isn’t. The price of this vision is to sit in the middle of that pain.

Kozan has been reading a book<sup>21</sup> and he asked me to relate what he’s been reading to what we’re studying here. I’m not going to introduce the language of that book but I’ll just give him a clue. The clue is, I would read “soul” for dependent co-arising. I won’t keep saying “soul.” You translate if you want to—you can hear “soul” and “dependent co-arising” at the same time. This book doesn’t discuss what to do **about** pain, it’s what to do **with** it. Not how to get rid of pain, but how to dance with it. Like Jung says, the thing about neurosis is how to use it, not how to get rid of it. How do you use this sickness? This sickness is useful to show you where to work. It points. There’s an image always, in the middle of this illness; there’s the smacking of the lips.

---

<sup>20</sup>Wallace Stevens

<sup>21</sup>*Facing the World with Soul*, Robert Sardello

Last night there was noise in the zendo; people were making noise with their bowls. Earlier in the day I may or may not have heard that noise. If I had, that noise would have been surrounded by affliction and dispositions. My attitude would have been, “let’s get rid of that sound and everybody who’s associated with that sound. Let’s get out of this valley full of blankety-blank blanks who make sounds like that with their bowls.” At a time like that, generally speaking—“shut up, Reb. You have nothing to say. You haven’t got your seat yet. You can’t talk until you get your seat. You get your seat when you can sit in the middle of the experience of people making noise with their bowls in the zendo, surrounded by afflictions, and you find your place and you sit still there.” Then the afflictions melt in the furnace of that presence. And you start to gradually see just the noise and the people. And you can see, maybe they all had good excuses. Maybe it’s just a coincidence that at this time during this meal, mindful people all happened to make noise for some reason. Who knows? It can happen, there are times like that, and it’s not because of inattention.

Let’s check it out. Once you have your seat, and you hear that sound, you can tell the difference between the image itself and all the afflictions that accompany it because of your own past karma. Sometimes it happens that the images come up and the dispositions are not that heavy. Either way, if you take your place with that image, deal with it as a dependently co-arisen thing. It’s not what you try to do about it, it’s what you try to do with it.

So I asked you, “please try to not make noise with your bowls.” That’s what I did in the evening **with** it. That’s how I worked **with** it. In the morning I might have tried to something **about** it. So I sat all day yesterday, because I was working on this. I didn’t want to have dokusan because I didn’t have a seat from which to talk to you. If you came to see me in dokusan before I got to my seat I would have been giving you all that stuff, positive or negative, based on what I saw in your face. That’s not about you—that’s about me. But before I get to my seat I think it’s about you.

When I get to my seat, it’s me. When it’s me, it’s not me, it’s just dispositions. Then I’m not there any more, there’s just sitting, and the stuff dies away. Dependently co-arisen pain, images surrounded by certain feelings, give rise to dependently co-arisen disgust. This kind of stuff is the medium through which the world is regenerated. So I tested it last night and I said “please,” and you responded.

You see the world through dependent co-arising in order to come to the dependently co-arisen world. But you can’t do so until you take your place, your seat. If you can take your seat and stand the obnoxiousness of it, then you can start seeing dependent co-arising, because dependent co-arising happens at your seat. Not a little bit away from your seat, not far away from your seat, but **at** your seat. That’s where you feel pain, that’s where your pain dependently co-arises. So you have to get there and sit still. Then what will be revealed to you is not pain or good or bad, but dependently co-arisen pain or good or bad. What will be revealed to you is constantly dependently co-arisen things. A mystery will be revealed to you, which can take any form, and this form is testing you, to see if you can stay there with it and have continual revelation of life in its dependently co-arising vitality.

If we practice like this, seeing the world, seeing pain, seeing sickness, seeing disgust, with the awareness of the world dependently co-arising, then the world is revitalized and regenerated. Unless we see that the world is dependently co-arising, we don’t understand that it’s being revitalized and regenerated. I talked to you about the docility of dependently co-arisen things. When you see things arise co-dependently, they teach you. It’s not “you teach them,” but your vision of their dependent co-arising teaches them. They don’t exactly even teach **you**. They just teach and you’re there. You’re not really anything, but they’re revealing “the Dharma that isn’t there and the Dharma that is.” They’re teaching you, they’re revealing the nature of the world. Also, your witnessing that, your being there, teaches all things. The world gets regenerated while you do also.

In the morning, before I took my seat the world was dead. It was disgusting and painful and embarrassing. I couldn’t do anything. I knew that whatever I did would be simply the action of a person

who wasn't at his seat. I knew I should minimize my activity. I should not respond in all the ways I was going to respond from that disgust. The impulse to crush you all for whatever you did wouldn't have been helpful.

If an impulse to crush ever came from a dependently co-arisen vision, then it might be helpful. It has happened in the history of Zen that being mean was really helpful, but usually it's not that way. Usually, dependently co-arisen visions lead to awe. Once in a while meanness can come from awe but usually what comes from awe is gratitude, respect, and appreciation. Out of that appreciation comes the willingness to ask people to do something. Since you respect them so much, you ask them to live out what you appreciate.

I propose to you that the medium of transformation, the medium of regeneration of yourself and the entire world, is co-dependently arisen events in the world. Inside your body and outside. Co-dependently arisen defilement. Then from that position your awareness becomes the self-fulfilling samadhi. At such a time, at such a place,

*All beings in the ten directions and the six realms, including the three lower realms, at once obtain pure body and mind and realize the state of great emancipation and manifest the original face. At this time all things realize correct awakening, myriad objects partake of the Buddha body, and sitting upright under the kingly Bodhisattva bodhi tree, you immediately leap beyond the boundaries of personal awakening. At this moment you turn the unsurpassably great Dharma wheel and expound the profound wisdom, ultimate and unconditioned*<sup>22</sup>

The Dharma wheel is free of all human involvement, all human action, free of all karma. Free of all karma does not mean "no karma"—it means "free of a person." There's no person there in the turning of the dharma wheel. Nothing in herself beholds the Dharma that is and the Dharma that is not there.

*Because such broad awakening resonates back to you and helps you inconceivably, in zazen you unmistakably drop away body and mind, cutting off various defiled thoughts from the past and realize the essential Buddhadharma. Because grass, trees, earth, walls, tiles, pebbles, all engage in Buddha activity those who receive the benefit of wind and water caused by them are inconceivably helped by Buddha's guidance, splendid and unthinkable, and awaken intimately to themselves.*<sup>23</sup>

When you tune into this dependent co-arising you see the docility of earth, grass, trees, walls, tiles, and all human faces. You are helped, you are taught by all those things. "Those who receive the wind and fire benefits spread the Buddha's guidance..." Seeing what's happening to you as dependently co-arisen, is called receiving Buddha's guidance. Buddha's guidance has to do with what's appearing to your imagination right now. The afflictions and dispositions are also around that imagination. Mara's guidance and Buddha's guidance are both surrounding everything that's happening to you.

Mara's guidance is that the way you feel about what's happening is the proof of why you should smash it. The dispositions are proving that the lousy feeling you have about what you're looking at is why it really is bad! That's Mara's guidance. Buddha's guidance is—the fact that this thing is surrounded by these dispositions is why you feel so bad about it. Actually this thing is the point at which you're being taught and delivered Buddha's guidance. This thing is the mystery of awakening. This is the vitality and life of the world being revealed to you because this thing couldn't possibly be this way by itself. It

<sup>22</sup>Self-Receiving and Self-Employing Awareness, from *Bendowa*, *Shobogenzo* (On the Endeavor of the Way), Dogen Zenji

<sup>23</sup> Self-Receiving and Self-Employing Awareness, from *Bendowa*, *Shobogenzo* (On the Endeavor of the Way), Dogen Zenji

wouldn't upset you that much unless a lot more was going on! In other words, unless you're receiving Buddha's guidance.

That's where the pivot turns—towards defilement, entrenchment, and karmic bondage, or towards freedom—right there; on the concept that you're experiencing. All those things: greed, diligence, non-violence, pride, enmity, malice, avarice, hypocrisy, fraudulence—these are all mere concept. They're just our imagination functioning on this thing right now. Which way does it turn?

Someone was talking to me recently about the characteristics of another person. She was attributing to the other person the characteristic of "denial." If you think of somebody and say "Well, they do have this characteristic of denial," how are you going to prove that they have denial—sort of laminated into their personality? First of all you're going to have to come up with another concept. I might have already done the same myself, in which case you wouldn't have to work that hard! But maybe I don't know this person very well. Or maybe I haven't seen that side of this person.

You tell me something about the person, some little image of what the person does. Then I start to tune into the feeling of denial a little bit. You use the other concept which, temporarily you're going to let be real—substantial—just for fun. Or even without making it substantial, you just use the concept to describe this thing which we're going to try to make real. So you give me examples about the person. That's Mara's guidance. Every new element that you bring in proves that there really is such a thing as "denial" to be looked at and that can be associated with this person.

Buddha's guidance is—the very reasons through which you established the reality of this person's "denial" are exactly the same reasons why this "denial" is non-existent. To use the reasons for establishing it as the reasons for its emptiness is Buddha's guidance.

The same reasons why "there isn't enough food being served" are exactly the reasons why the concept "isn't enough" is empty. If you get more and more reasons to prove the reality of "not enough," the more clear and positive the case that "it isn't enough," the more you have material to show that it's empty. All you have to do is take away each one of those little characteristics and you notice that every time you take one away, it's less substantial. Its substantiality is totally due to all those causes and characteristics! Each time you take one away it feels a little flimsier, until finally there's no case left. You realize that besides all this stuff, there's no case! There's no such thing! It is dependent on these arguments, these other concepts, dispositions, and so on. The thing about dispositions is that often you don't know what they are. They're just something that you can build up. They're actually unconsciously building up a case for why it's totally obnoxious. Sometimes somebody's saliva is totally obnoxious, sometimes you don't mind.

Bosco Nobrega: It seems to me in the case of the zendo that the teachings are misleading. I hear lots of noise in the zendo, I'm misled, and I start to be less mindful and I make noise also.

TA: When you hear noise you're being misled?

BN: I mean, I also become less mindful, and when you ask us to be mindful to that and also it's another teaching, it's not misleading anymore and I become more mindful to that.

TA: When you hear noise in the zendo, and then you become less mindful, and you observe that, then you're observing dependent co-arising and you're being taught. When there's noise in the zendo and you get noisy, when there's inattention in the zendo and you're inattentive but you don't notice that, then you're under Mara's instruction and you can say "it's their fault." But when you observe, "that noise makes me like this," then you're starting to see "I am something to do with that. Also, if I'm something to do with that then that's something to do with me." You enter into that and that kind of awareness teaches you.

It's awareness of dependent co-arising that brings you into the world of dependent co-arising. It's that kind of awareness which takes you into the place where the world is made. Then by joining the place where the world is made, you make the world. By finding the place where the world is born and



generated, you regenerate the world. You can do that in any situation. The key is that you have to enter the situation, and it's hard to enter situations which have already been defined as obnoxious.

If you have been inattentive for awhile, sometimes you get a big batch of obnoxiousness which snaps you out of it. Just one moment is not enough. You sometimes need hours to snap you back in to the meditation practice. That's the world helping you—it's the grasses and the trees and the walls and the pebbles and the people saying, "help this person, snap 'em out of it, get 'em back to their seat." And if we don't get it, they just turn up the volume. Eventually we get it, and we die.

John Berlow: There are all these situations of acting from our afflictions and noticing outflows and then working with that. One thing I've been wondering about is situations where there's an experience of flow or of merging with an object, of states in zazen for example where everything just appears and there doesn't seem to be any problem. Or for example in music where there doesn't seem to be any performer anymore, but it just occurs. You might notice it while it's happening but you also might notice it when it's broken down. I'm wondering about the relationship between this experience of merging....[tape ends]

TA: Just to quote a text for you, "merging is auspicious, do not violate it." "Naturally real, yet inconceivable." Don't violate that merging. "Merging with principle is still not enlightenment." Enlightenment is—not violating the merging. Merging, according to this text, is when there's just mere concept. Legs, biceps, neck, feet, gravity, woman, man, music, that's it, concept, concept, concept. There's dispositions flying all over the room but they don't touch it. There's such concentration on mere concept that none of these dispositions cut it. They're coming up, they're unloading from past karma but they can't cling at this time because there's total concentration on leg, and there's no distraction. There is mind of winter which is not crying out, trying to blame somebody for the pain in the leg.

There is merging, it's auspicious, don't violate it. It's naturally real but it's inconceivable. If you conceive it you violate it. That's called bringing mere concept up before yourself and looking at it. Then you violate that, and the dancer loses it, or the musician loses it, or it turns into music as somebody's idea rather than music which has completely transcended music, and nobody knows what it is anymore because the concept of music was just the concept of music for a moment. There were just the notes. There was just the sound. There was just the seen. There was just the heard. There was just the imagined and that's it. There was nothing more, and that was not violated. There was just dependently co-arisen experience. There was merging undefiled.

Merging by itself isn't enough. You have to not defile it. Nanyuan goes to the Sixth Ancestor and the Sixth Ancestor says "What is it that has thus come?" What's happening? What is this concept here? And he says "To say it's this would miss." The Ancestor says "Does that mean there's no transformation and no practice?" He says "I don't say there's no transformation, no realization or no practice. It's just that you can't defile it." There is transformation, there is merging, except I can't say "there is." He didn't say "there is transformation." He said "I don't say there isn't." I don't say there isn't, and I don't say there is.

I don't say there's merging, I don't say there isn't merging. That's not what I do. I just don't defile merging. If there's merging, OK, I don't defile it. If there's not merging I don't defile that either. It's the non-defilement that counts. If you non-defile non-defiling there'll be merging. But sometimes as soon as there's merging then you take the merging and make it conceivable. It's naturally that way. It naturally occurs by causes and conditions. It's brought to you by the whole universe; that's the natural part. It happens, moment by moment.

If you conceive it, you defile it. And we do conceive it, so we defile it. That's dependent co-arising so we can recover from that too. Bodhimind sees, "oh, there's a conception—now we lost it." Just like I mentioned to you before, when you're balanced you're not thinking about how you're balanced anymore. That's when all the causes and conditions go away.

Like I was saying the other day, encouragement can be doubt. Encouragement can be the instruction of Mara, depending on how you look at it. If you look at a concept and all this junk happens

around it, try to let your mind terminate in mere concept. Try to just sit with the concept that's appearing moment by moment. Try to be with your imagination as it's manifesting right now. Take your seat in this moment of imagination, in this image of pain, this image of sickness, this image of tightness, this image of disgust, this image of projecting whatever. Take your seat there. When you do that, it doesn't mean that you won't be harassed by lots of turbulence. You will. As a matter of fact you might feel it even more.

There can be joy there also and encouragement. The choruses of encouragement can also happen while you're taking your seat. You hear the thunderous voice of thousands of years of practitioners encouraging you to take your seat. Everyone in the zendo is quietly applauding you for settling at your place. Don't let that encouragement distract you either. But people let encouragement distract them just like they let the discouragement distract them. "Distract yourself" means to do it because of the encouragement; the same as to not do it because of the discouragement. If you do it because of the encouragement it's the same as not doing it because of the discouragement.

You don't do it **for** anything. To do it for anything is not mere concept. It's a gaining idea. You're still a little off-center. You don't dance for anything, you don't sing for anything. You have to sing, and you have to dance, and you have to sing just like this and dance just like this, and that's it. And you're not expecting anything more. Encouragement is basically what we're here for. We're here to encourage ourselves and others but, if you use encouragement in this dualistic way, encouragement is doubt. It shows you don't really trust the practice, if you use encouragement that way. If you use encouragement that way this is Mara saying, "If you practice you're gonna get all these good things." You usually expect Mara to say, "If you practice you're gonna lose all these good things. You're gonna lose fame, health, you're gonna catch cold, you're gonna get old, you're not gonna have a retirement policy. What's gonna happen to you? You're gonna lose love."

You say, "OK, I've heard that one before. I'm gonna sit just like Buddha. Buddha didn't move when he heard that stuff so I'm not going to either." Then Mara says "OK, you're gonna get a lot out of that. You're gonna be just like Buddha." "I am? Oh boy! Now I'm really gonna do it!" And so you really do it. And you sit still and you just...became a disciple of Mara. When you come out of your meditation you have really attained something. And this kills the world.

This is not dependent co-arising anymore. This is you doing karma, as usual. But a very high-quality one, which is of course is Mara's telling you that you're doing just what Buddha did and in fact it's very close to what Buddha did. Except nobody was telling Buddha that this would work. He didn't know what was going to happen! He was scared, but somehow he had the faith of Buddha-nature, which is: don't make any deals. Sit for no reason. Just let the mind terminate in mere concept ---- and your disciple Vasubandhu will explain later!

Albert Kutchins: Given that there are a hundred things we hear or see on some level, in every moment, what brings a specific one to mind-consciousness?

TA: I hate to say this but, karma. In other words, it's brought to you by your past karma. That's what would determine the pattern.

AK: But we also have all these dispositions that are whirling. How is it that a given disposition and a given sensory perception are the ones that meet in a given moment? Is this just chance?

TA: Cause and effect. It happens by the law of cause and effect. The Buddha studied that and then he understood how it happened. It's just cause and effect. Material things that happen to you are cause and effect but not personal cause and effect. The material things that happen to us are the cause and effect of all of our karma. Our dispositions are our personal "take" on that presentation. By group and individual karma we get the material world presented to us, the colors and sounds and so on are presented to us, and then our dispositions are our own personal karma. Put the two together and that's our take on the moment. "Cause and effect" is the way all that works. Once one is released entirely, one gets a totalistic vision of

the whole thing, in the way that a Buddha understands; namely, simply the way it's happening, that's it. That's the most core answer that I have.

Q: Can you say that again? The material world that is presented to us is based on all our causes and conditions?

TA: All our karma. The physical world is created by group karma. The physical world which is called the *bhajama loka*, which means container. The container world. It's the physical world that contains living beings. Inside that is the *sattva loka*, or *sattvakya*, the world of being. Beings create the physical world. Together, we make the physical world. Life made electromagnetic radiation. But life also arose from electromagnetic radiation and chemical reactions and so on. They're totally dependently co-arisen. Life and the physical world make each other. Which came first? They're simultaneous. It all happens at once.

Individual karma can account almost completely for the dispositions with which we frame every presentation of the container world. The patterns of the container world, about what's loud and what's not so loud, what stimulates one sense organ more strongly than another, and so on. The intensity of the external world also has something to do with it. If a blast goes off almost everyone hears it. It's our group karma that we all turn to a loud blast. Quieter things, some of us hear and some of us don't. Generally speaking, there's a pattern by which the sense organs orient to the more intense physical stimulation. Group karma determines which physical inputs are going to be loudest. We're not in control of that but we contribute to it.

On the Buddhist path, while we are not yet able to tune into dependent co-arising we do our best to take our seat in the midst of this unloading of our past karma in the form of these dispositions which frame every experience. At some point we get to the place where we are listening in the snow, nothing in ourselves, and beholding. We actually have a moment of forgetting the self, and then this stuff keeps unloading. The past karma and dispositions keep framing the experiences, but we keep getting Buddha's instruction about these experiences.

The experience fulfills itself without then putting something back in the bank to cover the exhaustion of that karma. Every time this stuff presents itself to us and we see it as dependent co-arising, every time we are taught by it, we teach. By teaching dependent co-arising and being taught dependent co-arising we don't create more dispositions. But we have to live through periodic unloading of little or great amounts of affliction around our experience.

I was talking to the kitchen crew about how practice is to demonstrate for yourself and others how you manage, in the midst of these afflictions. Sometimes the afflictions are very pleasant, they're not really afflictions. It's a very pleasant seed. You have to practice there too. Some people have really good meditation skills for planning lawn parties and tea parties. They do very well under very pleasant circumstances. They have the courage to work creatively with very pleasant situations.

Some other people are really good at working with negative situations. They feel less skillful and uncomfortable in pleasant situations, they don't know how to provide ceremonies for pleasant situations. Both kinds of situations are the result of dispositions. Some people have dispositions about things which are positive; they think it's really cute the way she smacks her lips. They can plan a lawn party in that context. In either case, you have to be watching for the dependent co-arising of it, so that you're using this opportunity to be taught, to have the mystery unfold, and using this opportunity to let this awareness teach the world.

Wendy Lewis: As you were talking about what I said, what I remembered saying was that something **also** arises, not **but** something else arises. What I was trying to express was my confusion that at the same time that there's this fear and pain or anxiety, that there's something else that arises. What I was trying to express as my doubt was the confusion that that would also arise. Sometimes I'll go into the zendo with some anxiety about all kinds of things and then I'll sit down and I'll be so comfortable and I'll

think, how can this be? That's what I was trying to express, that my doubt was just the confusion that comfortableness could meet that anxiety. My doubt wasn't an expression of not having any fear because this thing comes up, but another feeling that there was this meeting and that it was hard to understand. I was kind of surprised.

TA: Yeah, you were surprised. Could you say you were surprised by dependent co-arising unfolding that way?

WL: Yes. Rather than sitting down and feeling more pain. Instead, I sit down and I'm so totally comfortable.

TA: Could you be in denial? Could you be kidding yourself, or could this be what you're actually supposed to be meditating on? Warm, relaxed feelings. Could it be that "I can watch how this happens even though I was kind of expecting something else?"

Sala Steinbach: I don't quite understand how you work with the pleasant dispositions.

TA: Exactly the same way. It's just that somehow we feel more encouraged to work with the pain because we have such a bad feeling about pain that we're willing to hear a better story. We're willing to hear that working with the pain might be a medium for the regeneration of our life and the lives of all those around us. But when you tell people in pleasant situations that working with it in a dependently co-arisen way will regenerate their life they say, "well, that sounds nice," but they might not go any further than that.

They might not want to pick it up and figure out how to change what is quite a pleasant experience like breast feeding into an opportunity to meditate on dependent co-arising. Rather, just sit back and relax, and go off into sleepy-land with the baby. But if the baby's biting you and keeping you up all night, and someone says "I have a meditation practice for you," you may be more interested in how you can turn this misery, how you can see this misery as the way the world is revitalized. By not running away from it and also without even not trying to encourage yourself to be here. Just flat out have this pain and have no techniques or anything.

SS: Just flat-out have the pleasure also?

TA: Yes, but most people don't have the pleasure, they go to sleep in the pleasure. If you go to sleep in pleasure, it doesn't seem that bad! First of all you're having a good time, then to go to sleep and have dreams about it—that may seem fine. On the other hand, if you wake up and you're in misery you weren't meditating on the dependent co-arising of your sleeping as dreaming. You don't notice that the misery you come out with had something to do with your sleeping. Not so much directly that the sleep caused the misery but you weren't aware and taking care of the sleeping and the pleasure which led to sleep. But if you go to sleep meditating and you wake up in pain you say "oop!—now we got pain, how are we going to practice with this?" Your confidence about the opportunity for revitalizing the world is the same in the two situations but if you aren't meditating when you're in pleasure then when pain hits you, you're often shocked.

Fortunately if you've received some teaching, even though you're shocked and surprised that you're in such a state, you often have a chance to remember, "oh yeah, I know what to do." Pleasure is a situation where you sometimes go to sleep. That's why some Buddhist meditators stay away from pleasure—they don't know how to stay awake. Some other people are good at working with pleasure. They work with pleasure and stay awake. They may not be as good with pain because they're so skillful with pleasure. They have been trained at how to deal with pleasant situations. Maybe they had a friend who taught them how to breastfeed and stay awake, and they really appreciated that and know how to do that. And they also have friends who taught them how to have a wholesome lawn party rather than a party where everybody just indulges themselves in the substantiality of things.

The point is, in any situation, that no presentation of the circumstances, and no dispositions that arise around the image, put you to sleep. If Mara can't get you by making it horrible then Mara will get

you the other way. The test for Buddha was on both sides, remember? The most delicious and comfortable, and the most horrible and painful and frightening. The most seductive and the most horrific. They both happen. They're both part of what we have to learn to deal with.

Stories of some of our Zen ancestors describe the original part of their practice as bone-crushing, freezing cold, not much food, not much sleep, pain in the knees, frightening master, leaving home, confrontation with death at every corner. Then they leave the monastery, go to the capital, and all these ladies come by smelling wonderful and they aren't used to it; and these colorful clothes, and the food! So they go back to the monastery for more training. Then they come back to the capital again, and this time they can handle it.

Just imagine how good the Japanese were in the Nara period! Imagine how beautiful things were then! It would have been hard to stay awake. Or in the T'ang dynasty—the pavilions and the poetry and the music, all the special wines and teas and flowers and silks and gardens and birds...those little lanterns along the way...who wouldn't go to sleep there? Who has the mind of winter there? When everything's thawing in the snow.

What's the mind that goes with this yielding, opening, birth-giving, making room for it, and also it is precisely this—how do you balance those two? This is the Buddha mind, both of these things. When they're balanced, there's no sign. That's when all the signs are taken away. Nobody knows. Mara seems to disappear but Buddha didn't say "Mara disappeared." Mara did leave—that's when mere concept dawns. But then you don't say, "hey—Mara left." Guess what that is when you say "hey, Mara left. We're gone now, you're safe, you can come out. You can make one real thing. Mara's finally gone." That's not terminating in mere concept.

Christina Lehnerr: I have a sense that I understand on some level, but then I run into a situation like, this morning I come into my house and Taiyo has turned on the kerosene heater and it smells like a truck garage where they let the trucks run all the time. I immediately feel like I'm getting a headache and I'm getting nauseated. How do I apply co-dependent arising?

TA: Let's kill Taiyo!!! You have an experience where you come in and you smell the fumes. As soon as that happens, dispositions and obsessions come up around that. Right away. There they are. Maybe you notice the difference in the way you feel about that thing and the way other people would feel. It's partly also that you have different concepts too. There's different dispositions around the different concepts, and some people's dispositions are like yours. You need to take your seat there. In the meantime, as you're trying to take your seat, you might do various things, all of which are things that a person who's not in her seat does.

CL: Yes but how do I take a seat there?

TA: There's no way you take the seat there. One way to take the seat is to go outside the house, and say "OK, I went in the house and I immediately noticed that I wasn't taking my seat because I was getting really upset with Taiyo. He was just in the house with the kerosene heater on. Why do I now have this problem with him? Because when I smelled that stuff, all these dispositions came up. I didn't want to act from not being present with these dispositions, so now I'm outside in the rain, trying to take my seat."

You stand in the snow until you take your place, and go back in the room and see how it is. Maybe you just walk in the room and see if you can continue to take your seat as the fumes come. Maybe you can, maybe you open the windows, maybe you turn the heater off. Maybe you knock on the door and say "Taiyo, would you come outside, I'd like to talk to you." I don't know what you do.

The amazing thing is that the regeneration of your life and his life and all of our lives come from you taking your seat and watching how this works. Take your seat and then watch how these dispositions are coming up around your images. You're always imagining, what's coming up, take your seat, and pretty soon even though the dispositions are still coming, you're enjoying how they dependently co-produce this particular take on this concept.

Both of us are thinking now: “cabin 14, kerosene heater.” We have the concept. As we get closer to it, depending on whether we consider cabin 14 to be **my house** or not, then you have a different concept from me. I might say, I’ll put “my” on the house too, and then I start to be more like you, I say “Yes, I know what you mean.” If it’s my house, I’m upset. If I’m just visiting I know I can leave soon and it’s not so bad. You might just take away “my” and see what that does.

You’re studying dependent co-arising. I put “my” in, you take “my” off. We watch how that changes the situation. You don’t have to play like that if you don’t want to. You can just leave it be and watch how it works. Switching from not watching how it works to watching how it works is what changes death into life. It changes life which is dead and unvitalized into life which is creative all the time. This is what we’re looking for. All the other things we’re interested in are just substitutes for this. This world of dependent co-arising where life is being vitalized and death is being deathified—this is the world of our awakened mind. But before you can have that world unfold to you, you have to be where it can unfold. It unfolds in the middle of what’s happening. What’s happening is that sometimes we’re imagining misery. Anything we imagine is a perfectly good opportunity—anger, lust, violence, deceitfulness, fraudulence, intelligence, stupidity, honesty. Whatever you’re imagining is an opportunity to revitalize your life, and revitalize the lives of others. Everything is an opportunity, once we enter into the dependent co-arising of the thing. It’s actual vital origination.

We have to settle into the concept and the horrendous or pleasant things that are happening around it in order to watch the actual, not theoretical, dependent co-arising. It’s the actual moment-by-moment appearing, dependently co-arisen docile thing that we’re looking for, and you have to be in your place to actually taste it. The first hard work is to get there. The second hard work is to watch the causes and conditions.

You have to be one-pointed on pain, one-pointed on pleasure. In the Buddhist path, the place where you break through and cut the belief in self is usually meditation on pain. I don’t know why, but it’s not meditation on pleasure. It is not taught that the characteristic of all created things is pleasure. Buddha said that the characteristic of conditioned things is that they’re painful, impermanent, and not self. He didn’t say “pleasurable.” Meditating on the dependent co-arising of pain is where we break loose of suffering. We don’t seem to have much of a problem with pleasure. The breakthrough just happens to be related to pain, so pain is very important in that way. And we have plenty of it so seems like a good thing.

Thank you for your attention.

## Class 15

December 9, 1994

Tonight I want to speak about the last word in the title of the text, *siddhi*. It means accomplishment, or mastery, and sometimes is translated as supernatural, or magical power. Another word that comes to mind is “miracle.” *Vijñaptimatratā siddhi* is the magical power or miracle of mere concept. When the mind terminates in mere concept it is a miracle. Our understanding of miracles is miraculously transformed and we understand that our previous idea of miracle was just an idea. Now we understand that everything—terrible things, wonderful things, good things, bad things, living things, sick things, dying things,—everything is a miracle, a total, cosmic miracle.

There are many stories about people who had one fixed idea of a miracle. That one idea made them feel terrible because their idea of a miracle, the miracle they were waiting for never happened. Many other miracles kept smashing them in the face, but “No, thank you, no, I don’t want that one. I’m waiting for this other one.” There’s one miracle that will not happen, and that’s the one you’re waiting for.

The miraculous transformation in this text is the reversal of our understanding. We take our seat, and at that seat we turn around. At that seat there’s an inner conversion, an inner revolution, an inner

initiation. It doesn't matter what it's to, or what it's about. The point is it's a revolution from misery to something else, from misery to liberation.

At the end of the last class, I spoke about the process of refining steel, burning off the last impurities with an oxygen lance, blowing high-powered pure oxygen in on the steel to burn away the last little residual impurities. I said that the oxygen lance was "sitting still." Actually, the oxygen lance is dependent co-arising. "Sitting still" provides the material, the seat for the steel and then dependent co-arising, the nature of things, burns away the impurities.

Buddha's slogan was *pratitya samutpada*, dependent co-arising. Slogan is a Scottish word meaning battle cry. So the battle cry of the Buddha, the battle cry against self-clinging, against this mind which constantly turns toward misery, or the sources of misery, is dependent co-arising. That burns away the impurities.

I'm talking about learning the backward step which turns your light around and illuminates inwardly your self. The way you turn this light around is to confess that you're a human being, that you're caught in conceptual activity, and that you believe what you're thinking. The next phase in learning the backward step is that you have deep faith in studying the dependent co-arising of this concept and the belief in the concept. First you admit that you don't believe in dependent co-arising. Then you have deep faith in dependent co-arising. You make it your highest priority to look at things in that reversed light.

In terms of this discussion of consciousness, *manas* is the function of the mind where the concept is construed as a substantial self, as inherently existent. This is the always-reflecting *manas*. *Manas* is the locus of this activity of projecting self. We don't say that *manas* acts all by itself because *manas* depends on *alaya*. *Manas* depends on what it's reflecting. This is the center of miserly projections onto what's happening. From the point of view of dependent co-arising, *manas* is not doing this by itself. It's just that this is a good place to catch the defiling process.

The point where the defilement is focused is the place where we're bound, and the place we're released. It's good to have your seat at *manas*. Take your seat at *manas*, or have *manas* at your seat, because that's where you get released. You're hooked if you're learning the forward step, you're released if you're learning the backward step. The forward step is: **I** practice Zen, **I** open the door, **I'm** talking and so on. That's the forward step. I confirm that that's Jack. I practice and confirm Zen, I practice and confirm Christianity, I practice and confirm everything.

The backward step is Buddha, the forward step is Mara. But it's just called Mara, there's not really such a thing as Mara. So, the forward step is: I do all these practices, I carry the self forward and practice and confirm every thing. That's called Mara.

To turn the light around and have everything come forward and then there's me, that's Buddha, or that's Bodhi. The backward step is to go to your seat and watch and confess that you're carrying your self to your seat, that you're having your self do your thinking and do this and that and breathe and move. You're doing that. You confess that that's delusion. You sit there and watch, and you can witness that all of a sudden things can shift and turn around and come towards your seat and then there's you.

Learning the backward step is learning to get to your seat and then sit there and watch and learn this reversal of the function of the defiling part of mind called *manas*. *Manas* doesn't reverse by itself, it doesn't create illusions by itself. It reverses by causes and conditions, by the kindness and compassion, of all beings. All the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas throughout time and space are helping the person who is willing to sit there allowing her mind to be reversed and learn this backward step, allowing her mind to realize this *siddhi*, this miracle. To switch from carrying this existent self around, to see this self become a dependently co-arisen self, to go from a self that can't learn anything to a self that can learn. As Professor Nagao says, the world of the dependently co-arisen is first and foremost a world of beauty. The self that dependently co-arises is always a beautiful self, a docile and radiant self.

You allow this shift to happen at the place you sit. The seat is a *Bodhi Manda*, a circle where *Bodhi* happens. It is a place where we're initiated into the Buddhist path. There is a separation involved in this initiation. You actually have to separate yourself from the mode of your ordinary world of misery, which is the world where you learned survival skills. You were taught how to survive in that world, and look what it got you! Can you shift from that world of misery where you know how to survive to another world which will require new survival skills?

A survival skill in this new world, and also the initiation into the new world is learning this backward step. Part of the shift from this self-centered world to the community-centered world, from "I do things" to "everything does me" is a separation, a loss of your childhood, a temporary relinquishing of your survival skills. That makes it hard. Part of the hard thing about learning the backward step is you have to separate from your very powerful skills of forward stepping.

This is a separation from what you're bonded to. It's separation from what you're skillful with. Some of you may be uncertain whether you have bonded enough with the world to let go of it. It's tricky, and sometimes Zen teachers have pushed people to let go, either not at the right moment or when the person wasn't ready, and it hasn't worked very well. I'm not going to push you to separate and give up your old survival skills and learn this backward step, but that is necessary if you want to learn the backward step. I would encourage you to go right up as close as you can get to the backward step and notice how you feel about it. If you feel scared and think you haven't bonded enough with the world to separate from it, I would be happy to hear what you're afraid of. Depending on what you tell me, I might say you're not ready and that maybe you should get a better grip on your world before you let go of it. I do not yet know that anybody here is not yet ready to make the move, but I'm not going to push you.

Even the great Hakuin said, "I made a mistake. I taught many people, I made two mistakes. One mistake was with Chodo. Chodo studied with Master Kotetsu, and he had some attainment with him, what they technically called the state of nothingness. At that time Hakuin was very well known, and Chodo told Kotetsu that he wanted to study with Hakuin. Kotetsu said, "I don't think you should," but Chodo didn't listen to him and he went to Hakuin anyway. Kotetsu said "OK, let me write you a letter of introduction." So Chodo took the letter and he went to Hakuin. Hakuin was in the bath when he came and Chodo barged in and presented himself in a very dramatic way. Hakuin said, "Well, if you're like this, we may be able to work together. Come back later." So Chodo came back and did the usual formal introduction and gave him the letter. Hakuin read the letter, which said, "This young fellow has some attainment, but he's pretty inexperienced and uncooked. Please deal with him expediently. Hakuin immediately said something like, "You're a person of shallow capacity and inferior potential. How dare you come here and try to call this complete attainment?" Chodo immediately went mad and never recovered. He left Hakuin and went and built himself a little zendo. At Rohatsu sesshin, like this, he would go and collect young monks from around the area and force them to come and sit with him. He also forced cats to sit with him. When the cats ran away from their seats he would run after them and beat them.

Hakuin said, "I made two mistakes in my teaching. Chodo and one other one." So, it's dangerous to push people like that. I don't have the skill to push any of you into this reversal. You're going to have to decide yourself. If you want to turn around I'll hold your hand and go with you as far as I can go. I might get scared too. I'm not going to push you unless I really know you well. It's up to you to decide whether you want to make this reversal in your mind, and turn around.

This is not something you think about. It isn't that you sit on your cushion and discursively think, "How am I going to turn *manas* around? How am I going to shift from carrying myself forward and confirming things to, having things come and confirm me?" It isn't by intellectual analysis or anything like that. It's first of all, by sitting still. "Just sitting still" means you don't sit still promising yourself that the *manas* is going to turn around. You don't sit still trying to get something out of sitting still.



Of course, before you sit, you're always thinking of what's beneficial to people, and you sit in order to help people. You can sit and think about helping people, too. That's fine, but fundamentally, you give up. Even though you think of helping people you give up thinking of people. You relinquish all your mental activities, all your emotional activities. You let go of them, you renounce them, even though they still go on. You also don't try to push them away, because that's not renouncing them, either. That's not just sitting. That's another obsession. You give up your obsession of getting rid of your thinking. You give up your obsession of improving your thinking, you give up your obsession about everything, you give up your obsessions about analysis and discursive thinking and figuring things out, including figuring out cause and effect.

Giving that all up is what's called deep faith in cause and effect. Relinquishing everything that you're attached to, just sitting still and allowing what you're attached to to manifest is itself a total reversal of your karmic patterns. That in itself is completely different from what we usually do. That is not doing anything. That is *vijñaptimatratā siddhi*. Your mind is constantly dealing with objects. You sit there being aware of object after object. Everything you're aware of is an object. You just let your mind be aware of objects. You just sit there at that seat and let that happen. And it will, don't worry. Or worry. Let your mind terminate on the concept of worry. That's it. With no gaining idea.

The process goes on and you let go of the whole process. That is a reversal. That is turning the light around and illuminating the self which will be standing up saying various things. Sometimes it gets the attention of our awareness. Sometimes it appears in the form of a concept such as "I'm scared, I'm wasting my time, I can't do this." No matter what happens, you can turn the mind from all that multiplicity and realize that one thing's always going on: dependent co-arising. There's wonderful miraculous variety, but it's always dependent co-arising. All forms of our life are dependent co-arising.

Through all the miraculous and wondrous changes of appearance, if you can never be moved, never swayed, if you can always remember that what's appearing before you is cause and effect—that is the reversal. That is a major separation from our usual way and there is a death. There is a shift from childhood to adulthood, and there is a shift from the world of misery to the world of the Triple Treasure. This whole course of study, this whole practice period, is to get to this point, to be thorough in the next seven days about your practice, to go all the way, to sit still, and to give everything else up but just sitting still and letting the mind terminate in the concept.

Any questions?

Question: You said a while back that another problem in this society is that it's not certain that we have bonded well enough to be able to separate from this world of survival skills. So, how is that in our society?

Tenshin Anderson: Yeah. I think there may be some societies where there's a high percentage of bonding to the family and the home, and to basic survival skills, and people feel that it goes pretty well. But I think a lot of people are forced to separate from before they even got a hold of their family. Their family was ripped apart before they even had a chance to use it for what they needed a family for. People with that experience may or may not be able to learn this backward step. That's why I'd like to hear what your reservations are about going forward on the path. Maybe you do need to do more bonding work before you separate. I don't know.

Q: A question was asked about drawing a line. We have come this far, to this valley, but we refuse to cross the line and are not able to take the backward step. It's almost ironic...

TA: It is ironic that we, of all people, who have made such great effort.... I gave up a lot to come to study Zen. Then when I got here I gave up a lot to be able to not only study Zen but to be as close as possible to Suzuki Roshi. I did what is called "post" practice. I became a post, a piece of furniture in his life. I was there all the time. He would sit on me and pile books on my head and things like that. If he had any problem with his TV he would call me. I didn't exactly say, "Suzuki Roshi, if you have any TV

problems, I want you to know I'm a TV repairman," but when he had problems I would volunteer to fix his TV, and he learned that I usually could. So, whenever he had problems he called me. Fortunately, most of the problems he had were not complicated ones. Usually, it was unplugged. So, very skillfully, I would crawl under the bed and plug it in. Or sometimes the aerial wasn't connected to the TV.

What I wanted was to be alone with him so he could teach me "special stuff." But every time he taught me special stuff, I split. Sometimes he wouldn't let me, but I'd try again and again, and finally he'd let me get away. This is ironic.

I wanted to get away because "the road to Shu is hard." It's hard to shift to that other world that I wanted to shift to. A hairsbreadth's deviation. Very hard to cross over that.

So I appreciate what you said. I think a lot of us understand what you're saying. We're so close. We have seven days to get right up to that line and see if we chicken out. If you admit that you're chickening out, you're there, being a chicken. Be a chicken completely, without trying to get something out of it—like "Reb said if I'm a chicken completely, I'll turn into a phoenix." Just be a chicken completely, totally stupid, like you couldn't think of anything other than being a chicken. Whatever you are, just be that completely, with no other agenda. This is called relinquishing everything. It's very hard to do that. We're very close to that. We're very close to the mind terminating on mere concept. We got the concept. The mind's aware of it. If you can, just completely just stop at that point and drop everything else.

Taiyo did a good thing in his life. He said to Arlene: "Arlene, if you don't follow the schedule, you can't drop body and mind." He said that to her when she was in the kitchen, in a trance from kitchen work. What he said was a post-hypnotic trance, which she now remembers in the morning when she sticks her head out of the sheets into that cold space and starts saying all kinds of things to herself about how stupid it would be to get out of bed.

Then these words come to her, "Arlene, if you don't follow the schedule..."

"This is stupid. I'm gonna stay in bed. This is a crazy place. Everybody knows it's stupid."

"Arlene, if you don't follow the schedule you will not drop body and mind."

Then the leg goes out. Arlene starts with the leg. This is really funny. You should understand, it is funny that we're doing this. It is funny, it is a miracle. But talking like that is like forgetting about another world where what I'm saying doesn't count and is not true. What I'm saying only counts in the strange world of dharma where the person's not there anymore, where the person who says how stupid it is has been forgotten and we just get up and go running through the cold to the nice warm zendo.

OK. Any other questions? I appreciate your comments. We're very close, so let's just go all the way, OK?

Question: Aren't we "all the way" already?

TA: Yes.

Student: Thank you.

TA: You're welcome. Congratulations. Now you can prove that you're all the way. The way to prove it is, step off the pole. Since you're all the way you can now do this reversal. It's possible since you're all the way. You can really practice. You can really do it. That is, it can happen. You can't **do** it, but it can happen. The conditions are good. We have an opportunity to do something very simple. To just sit with no gaining idea for seven days, in the midst of the road to Shu, in the midst of rough stuff that might happen. Cold and pain and confusion and doubt, hatred, rage, fear, jealousy, stupidity, hypocrisy, despondency, slothfulness, enmity. All this stuff could happen right at your seat. All you have to do is this very simple and difficult thing called reversing the whole pattern of your existence since the empty eon.

### **Sesshin Day 1 Dharma Talk**

December 11, 1994

Now that we're nearing the end of the practice period, I would like to go back and remember what we discussed at the beginning—our ultimate concern. Many of you said that your ultimate concern was to be happy and to be enlightened, and that you wanted everybody else to be happy and enlightened too. All of us have done our best to conscientiously cultivate this concern so that these compassionate aspirations will gradually fill our bodies and minds and command our whole being. As part of this ultimate concern we're always thinking of the welfare of others. However, we sometimes forget to think of the welfare of others and so we need to encourage and remind each other of what we already know. Many people ask how it is that they don't always remember what is most important to them, their ultimate concern. Then they remember that the reason we forget is that we get confused.

We sit quietly and we realize that we're hearing the Dharma. As it says in the Eihei Koso Hotsuganmon, "upon hearing it no doubt will arise in us." We don't lack in faith and we "renounce worldly affairs and maintain the Buddha Dharma and in doing so the great earth and all living beings together attain the Buddha Way." This is to return to our ultimate concern. And then somebody spits in our face and we forget; our faith gets broken for a moment. We don't hear the Dharma, we pick up worldly affairs again and put down the Buddha Dharma and in doing so the great earth and all living things together put down the Buddha Dharma and forget with us. We need to train ourselves thoroughly so that all the outrageous things that happen to us can be understood as the Dharma. We need to put aside worldly affairs and maintain the Buddha Dharma. I would like to begin this sesshin by putting aside worldly affairs myself and asking you to do the same.

I don't know if you really ever bonded with your mother, but by now in some sense you have separated from her. Now it's time to separate from yourself and from all your worldly concerns, all your self-centered concerns. Now it's time to let them go, put them aside. Since we have self-centered habits, putting aside self-centered things means to put aside everything. If I try to select, I won't put aside what I need to put aside. We need to relinquish and renounce everything we know. This isn't **all** of practice, this is just one kind of initiation, initiation by fire, the initiation of renouncing worldly affairs. After we renounce worldly affairs, we go on to the next initiation which is called maintaining the Buddha Dharma. Let's start with the fiery initiation. Are you ready?

This is not just about leaving home, getting away from your mom, this is about growing up. Someone told me that she feels some sadness at the thought of growing up. This kind of sadness is not depression, it's a good sadness, a sadness that's helping you let go of what's already gone. It's helping you catch up to the present. When you have gone to the bottom of the sadness, you're ready for the present. This is about going from childhood to adulthood, from fantasy to reality, from insanity to sanity. This is about studying the self so thoroughly that you forget it and let it drop.

Some years ago I went to Austria and visited friends who took me mountain climbing. It was springtime and we didn't have to climb very far before we got into the snow. We climbed quite high before they gave me any instruction. Then they gave me a pick and explained how to use it. What you do is stick it into the ice and then, when it's in, and you're holding on to it, you take a step. Before you take another step, you pull the pick out and put it in the ice again. Then you take a step. The idea is "pick, step, pick, step." You use the pick to stabilize yourself as you take a step. It works pretty well: pick, step. Very simple. You can climb a mountain that way. We climbed higher and higher and we were on the blade of a ridge with the earth going away on both sides and somebody said "Don't look around!" That was a very good instruction because if you look around, it doesn't really help and it just makes you dizzy because there are big drops on both sides. So with those two instructions I proceeded to walk up: pick, step, and not looking around. I didn't completely give up all worldly affairs at that time because I was still involved with this pick/step thing but I wasn't concerned with much else besides that.

A friend of mine likes to go “mountain climbing” in the dentist’s office. The way he does that is by not using Novocain. He concentrates on the experience of his nerves and doesn’t let his mind veer off from the direct experience of nerves expressing information. In that way he is able to stay with the experience and not get too anxious. Once there was some noise in an adjoining office and the dentist was distracted by it and so my friend also got distracted and he realized what would happen if his mind deviated at all. When I was in climbing in the mountains, being so concentrated and so simple, I realized that my wife was down below, buying plane tickets, changing money, making arrangements for travel, and washing clothes. The person in the dentist’s office also was able to concentrate on what he was doing only because the dentist and her assistant were there assisting him and concentrating on him.

When we’re concentrating on something and putting everything aside, everyone is helping us do that. And when we’re not able to do so, everyone is helping us also. When I’m able to put everything aside and not look around, then I can understand that everyone is helping me. If I don’t put everything aside and I do look around, it’s still true that everyone is helping me, but instead of appreciating it, I tend to think they’re harming me. But in both cases, no matter what you’re doing, everyone is actually helping you. Without putting aside worldly affairs you don’t see it as help. The key thing is to renounce worldly affairs. Then you will realize that everyone is helping you.

Here’s another example. I once saw a great tea master make tea. Nakamura Sensei, our tea teacher at Green Gulch was with me. Afterwards, she said that he was actually just tea, he was just the tea ceremony. Somehow I had noticed the activity of his wife. I noticed what she did in order for him to be like that. She was very active, changing money, buying train tickets, washing clothes. One side is running around and crazy so that the other side can be totally concentrated. You actually have to have the two together. It may seem that being concentrated is hypocritical but it isn’t really, it’s actually necessary. When that side is realized then the other side is in the dark.

At Tassajara we’re in a situation where everyone is helping us to renounce worldly affairs. The kitchen, for example, is helping us by cooking and providing food so that we don’t have to think about it. Many sentient beings all over the planet are serving us and supporting us to be here so that we can drop everything as it comes up.

The main thing to drop is movement. Don’t move. It doesn’t mean you can’t move, it means you renounce movement. You give up movement as a worldly affair. By not moving, you say “no” to the impulse to move. “No” is not that you’re fighting it but that you’re not going to go with the impulse. It is possible to raise your fist in the spirit of not moving, and bring it down in the spirit of not moving. It is possible to raise your hand as a direct expression of not moving and to speak as an expression of uprightness. It is possible to think, as an expression of putting everything aside, of not looking around.

Pick/step could be inhale/exhale. Pick/step, pick/step, don’t look around, inhale without looking around, exhale without looking around. While inhaling and exhaling, many thoughts come up, in the zendo and in the kitchen. So many thoughts are going to come up while you’re inhaling and exhaling. What do you do with those thoughts? Don’t look around, don’t get entangled in them, don’t dwell in them. See if you can just stay with pick, don’t look around, step, don’t look around. All the time concepts will be flying up around you. Concepts which say “I’m an exception to the rule. Give me some attention, look at me. You have to think about this. You have to think about what you’re going to do on your vacation. You have to think about presents you’re going to buy for people.” “OK, you’re making a really good case for my giving you some attention and getting involved with you. But how about just for seven days, let me say ‘bye bye’. I’ll take care of you after sesshin is over.” “But will you remember me?” It’s true, I might forget that it’s Christmas. I might forget that I have to plan the rest of my life. It’s possible, but I don’t think so.

The poet Charles Olson said you have four legs to stand on. The first one is be romantic. The second one is be passionate, the third one is be imaginative and the fourth one is never be rushed. Coming

to this place is a pretty romantic thing and so is doing a sesshin. And it's pretty passionate to do a practice period. You're a pretty imaginative group, you imagine all kinds of things, about yourself and about others. The funny thing is—the main thing that this place is set up for is “never be rushed.” Don't let what's happening rush you. Don't let what's happening push you into thinking you have to move or you have to take care of it or that you have to hold on to it or remember it. Don't even be rushed by anything that you read in a Buddhist text. And don't be rushed by being still. Don't get pushed around by that either. Never be rushed. Don't be in a rush to sit down to meditate. Don't be in a rush to get concentrated. Just get concentrated. What a romantic thing to do, to get completely concentrated. How passionate of you, how imaginative of you to think that you could practice such a way! Don't be rushed. Don't make this practice into another worldly thing.

I don't want to ask you what it is that you cannot resist, that you can't put aside, that you really believe you have to think about or come back to and obsess about during this sesshin. I don't exactly want to ask you; I just want to say that whatever it is, I'm talking about that too. I'm talking about saying “no, thank you” to that. I'm not talking about pushing it away, I'm talking about not looking around. When you get to your seat, then we can talk about what you have to say and what you have to think. Until we get to our seats, until we have actually given up the world, there's not much to talk about, because all we're talking about is entanglement and attachment and being fooled. This is the fiery initiation which says “no, there are no exceptions.” Try that out—no exceptions.

If you do this path, since it is a separation from yourself, it's a separation from everything you know. You will not understand what you're doing. If you bring along an understanding of what you're doing, you haven't let go of that. You can have something; you can have a pick and feet. You can have a knife and a spoon and a pot and water. You can have that. You can have a body, you can have teeth and lips and tongue. You have to give those up too, but you have something to work with. But if you're going towards your seat, you have given up knowing what to do. You're literally renouncing everything. You're renouncing your life. I'm just trying to scout the landscape and see if there are any exceptions you might come up with, something that you think you don't renounce. Something about which you think “no, no, I have to take care of that.” But we turn “take care of” into “hold onto,” “get entangled with,” “take as real.” And that is what derails our fundamentally excellent aspiration. That's the source of our forgetting and confusion and losing our perfectly good way.

It's a little scary but I'm actually suggesting that we try to sit still and be quiet. “Be quiet” means that in the midst of all the noise that comes up, all the impulses that come up, you just say “no, not-move, not-think.” You're thinking all the time. What you think is “not-move” and “not-think.” And then listen to Mara try to talk you out of this. Listen to the good exceptions.

Yesterday I went to get my unionsuit off the clothesline and I looked over to where I thought I had hung it and it wasn't there. I thought “Finally, I too am a victim of what I've heard about at work meetings. I have heard the cries of pain of people who in all good faith have hung their clothes on the line and then found them not there. How discouraging it is to come to a place jam packed full of compassionate people, people who are dedicated to the welfare of others who do things like this with my clothes.” I looked and it wasn't there and I thought “Will this turn out to be that kind of a story? Or perhaps someone has actually taken my unionsuit and neatly folded it and put it in some lovely place. That's still a possibility.” Then I looked more carefully and found that I had hung it in a different place.

During this little scenario I was actually playing with the idea “Will I now be such a sad person as to have this terrible thing happen to me?” I even thought “How wonderful if it's down in the mud and then I can know what that feels like and I can feel outraged that here in the land of kindness, people can do things like that.” But is it people who do things like that or is it the wind? Even if it was a person, was it a person who did that or did the wind just blow on that person and make their arms and legs do certain things like walk over and take the unionsuit and throw it high into the air and watch it fly and then jump

up and down on it? Is that a person or is that a wind? Or is it a storm or is it a falcon? Or is it a song? What is that? I actually used my imagination to dream like that about this whole story which never happened. And after the story was over I got my unionsuit off the line and took it back to my cabin.

These stories happen or don't happen. But whatever is happening or not happening it's possible to not look around, not take them, not grab them, not know whether they're true or false or whether there's a better story or a worse story to tell about life right now. Many stories will be told every second for the next approximately 160 hours. Find your seat in the middle of those stories. Find an unmoving, unthinking, unthinkable body of release in the middle of these stories. Find no-movement and no-thinking in the middle of these stories. Find your sense of humor in the middle of these stories. If we find that place, we can do what we came here for, what we came to this temple for, what we came to this life for. Then we will be able to work for the enlightenment of all beings. If we don't give up these stories and go to this place, we really haven't gotten our seat yet. So let's enter the fire and sit there where all Buddhas are turning the Dharma Wheel.

## Sesshin Day 2 Dharma Talk

December 12, 1994

On the night of Shakyamuni Buddha's awakening, the two main events were that he took his seat and that he discovered a dependently co-arisen experience. A lot of other important things happened that night, but those are the two most important for liberation. In between the decision to take his seat and finding his seat, many things came up. He was challenged by Mara in many ways. He developed some shamanic or super-normal powers in the process of sitting there with what was happening. But this didn't liberate him. What liberated him was seeing the dependently co-arising mind.

There are many ways to talk about what it means for Shakyamuni Buddha to find his seat; many ways to express what it means that he sat still. We call this "going down into the green dragon cave." Finding the seat is a process of descent. It's a ritual reenactment of our descent into consciousness, of our becoming entrapped in our thinking. We go down deeply into our minds and bodies to find our seat. We find our seat at the place of deepest descent, the place where we limit and defile our life. In the psychological terms of the text we've been studying, we call this place, this occasion or focus of defilement, *manas*, which has the character of always thinking.

This place is the source of worldly affairs. Worldly affairs emanate from this thinking. "Worldly affairs" doesn't mean just going shopping, or calling someone on the telephone. Those things are not necessarily worldly affairs unless they're hooked into and originating from the defiling locus. We need to go down into this pit from which worldly activities emerge. We need to go down into the place in our minds where thought activities are born. This is called learning the backward step.

Usual worldly affairs are to go along with the thinking that arises from this mind. To relinquish these thought activities means to turn around and go back to where they come from. It means to quiet down, to carefully, in an unrushed way, settle down to where this thinking is born. This is called stopping all the movements of the conscious mind. It doesn't really mean to stop the movements. It means that your effort is to turn around and go back to where the movement comes from. It means that you use your life energy to sit still, to say "no" to movement, to say "I'm not going to get on the wave of this thinking, I'm going to go back to where this thinking comes from. I'm going to relinquish, give up, leave behind all thought activity. I'm going to give up activating the mind around objects of awareness. I'm going to give up activating the mind around concepts." All our ideas are concepts, so the place we get up is the place we fall down. The place we transcend, the place we climb up and over is the place we descend.

Now I can introduce the other side of the story, the other event in the night. After Shakyamuni Buddha relinquished thought activities, after he renounced worldly affairs and sat still, he was able to

observe dependent co-arising. The Eihei Koso Hotsuganmon says: “renounce worldly affairs and maintain the Buddha-Dharma.” “Maintain Buddha-Dharma” means study and now come from this source. Maintaining Buddha-Dharma means to observe the dependently co-arisen experience, as the Buddha did. The Buddha did it from her seat. She had to get to her seat first. To observe dependently co-arisen things before you are at your seat is just to be dreaming about dependent co-arising.

Once you’re at your seat, the world can turn around and there can be a revolution in the way things work. You can ride the dependently co-arisen world of awakening. You ride **down** into the cave. You ride down to your seat on dependently co-arisen misery. When you get to the source of that misery, you see the unfoldment of the dependent co-arising of that misery. Then you ride **up** on dependently co-arisen liberation.

I find it helpful to think of this two-fold process of renouncing worldly affairs and sitting at your seat in the deepest part of your mind, and then observing dependent co-arising, in terms of two kinds of Bodhisattvas of Infinite Compassion—two kinds of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Mahasattvas. These two kinds of bodhisattvas are really more like two phases of compassion: phase one and phase two. It goes from phase one to phase two to phase one; it’s a circle.

The first Bodhisattva of Compassion is called Kanzeon, or Kannon. Kannon means to listen to, or to contemplate sounds. The word “*kan*” is also used to translate *vipassana*, insight, higher vision. Kanzeon means to listen to the sounds of the world; to listen to the cries of the world. This is the Bodhisattva Mahasattva who is in the Kanzeon scripture that we chant—Namu Kanzeon. Align yourself with this Kanzeon. If you align yourself with the one who listens to the cries of the world, you’ll naturally descend to your seat. When you listen to the cries of the world, and particularly to the cries of your own body and mind, you descend deeply to your seat. By fully embracing this kind of compassion, you arrive at your seat. When you conscientiously cultivate this feeling of compassion, it will take command of your whole being and let you sit there.

This way to your seat is the way of Kanzeon. It’s by great compassion that you get to your seat. Conscientiously, sincerely cultivate this feeling of compassion. Listen to yourself down to the bottom of your being. Find that deep seat. Listen to the thinking that is going on every step of the way—thinking, thinking; there is always thinking going on. And when you get to the pit of that thinking, to the deepest, darkest, most difficult place to be compassionate, you find your seat.

You might have to develop some shamanic powers along the way, like Buddha did. What are the shamanic powers that might develop? Well, divine eye, divine ear, and recollection of past lives. You might have to go through lots of past lives. By developing compassion and listening carefully to the world crying you can go deeper to your seat, or at least stay in your seat and learn what these stories are really about. Gradually, out of this kind of experience, the Buddha’s Dharma may start manifesting. You may see that these stories are not just stories. They are stories of dependent co-arising. They are stories of liberation.

The next kind of Bodhisattva is called Kanjizai Bosatsu. This is the Bodhisattva of the Heart Sutra, who contemplates self-existence. “*Kan*” means to contemplate, “*ji*” is the self, and “*zai*” means existence. *Kan-ji-zai*: to contemplate how the self exists. Once you take your seat, then Kanjizai Bosatsu can come to work. Kanjizai Bosatsu can’t come to work until you’re at your seat because that’s where the self exists. It doesn’t exist in general. It exists at a real place. Your seat is the place, or address, where the self exists, and where Kanjizai can come to work. Kanjizai is the Bodhisattva who wakes up to the true nature of “*jizai*,” of self-existence, of how the self exists. How the self exists is called self-existence, or autonomous, or completely liberated. It is total revolution at your seat by this new kind of compassion, Kanjizai Bosatsu.

This is the kindness which studies the subtlety of the cause and effect of the self. How subtly or wondrously this thing called self appears. How it really happens. This is the kind of compassion that’s

right with the passion of creating a self. The romance of creating a self. That great imagination of creating a self. This process of creation is not hurried. We must not be hurried. We must be in the right pace, in the right rhythm with the creation of this self and how it exists. How it comes and goes. Get with the rhythm of the creation of the self. This is Kanjizai Bosatsu, the Bodhisattva of the Heart Sutra.

Kanzeon Bosatsu teaches you how to be upright. To just listen. To just hear. To just see. To just smell. To just touch. To unhurriedly experience. Be kind enough to yourself to let yourself unhurriedly never be rushed in your experience. Realize that this is compassion that you are receiving and accepting. It is very compassionate of you to be this way because if you really want to help people, you can't help them when you're rushing. Also—to rush into what I just said and think that was something—that would be rushing, too.

There's a literary expression for New Year's Day in China, which is "teacher rushing day." Not that you're rushing the teacher, but that the teacher rushes on the New Year. Even the teacher. Usually the teacher is dignified, shuffling along, in pace with the cosmic creation of the ancient brocade. Shuffle, shuffle... Each new thread being incorporated with the teacher's feet. But on New Year's Day the teacher freaks out and goes running all over the place visiting everybody, throwing away the practice of dignity. That's also being unrushed on New Year's. Don't rush into making "unrushed" some fixed thing. Be careful and compassionate about what never being rushed might mean. Don't jump to a conclusion about what it looks like. Nobody knows what rushed looks like. Still, it's important to say: never be rushed.

Realize that Buddha's compassion allows you not to be rushed, and you allow others not to be rushed. It's because you want to help everyone be happy that you don't rush yourself; that you carefully, gently, conscientiously develop a feeling of compassion that allows you to sit exactly where you are. This is uprightness. Homage to Kanzeon Bosatsu. Align yourself with the compassion that allows you to be just as you are, to be close to the passionate, romantic, imaginative person you are. Uprightness is the gate to the self-fulfilling awareness. The self-fulfilling awareness, Kanjizai, is to contemplate the way the self really is and thus to wake up out of this self-fulfilling awareness. The gate to self-fulfilling awareness, the gate to Kanjizai, is uprightness. The awareness which is entered by this uprightness is Kanjizai, the gate to liberation.

This whole process of developing wisdom is supported and sponsored by these two phases of compassion. If you aren't nice to yourself, if you aren't gentle with yourself, if you aren't flexible with yourself, if you aren't really, really sweet with yourself, you will not get to the bottom of this pit. Only by coating the descent with honey will you get there. It's not a pleasant place to go. It's the rottenest place. It's the source of all defilement. Who wants to go there? Where we want to go is not to the **source** of defilement. We want to go **into** the defilement. Defilement is: "this is nice, and that's not; he's nice and she's not; these are my friends and these are my enemies." That's what we like. That's the world we like: "avoid the bad and go to the good."

A world of misery comes from a place where this rotten stuff is created. We have to go down there and catch this stuff. Only by being very kind can we go down to that place. So homage to Kanzeon Bosatsu. This is the way down, down, down, down... to our seat. And then once we are at our seat, the even more subtle work of looking at the wondrous miracle of the creation of self and other happens. How does this happen? How do we get down there and watch this? Our compassion has to be even more sweet, and more flexible and more encouraging. We have to avoid a whole new set of demons, and distractions, and lazinesses. Homage to Kanjizai Bosatsu.

I would almost suggest that you don't invoke Kanjizai Bosatsu until you get to your seat. Be honest. Be upright enough to admit that you haven't really called upon Kanzeon enough yet, that you haven't really trusted yourself enough yet, that you aren't really at your seat yet. Don't even try to look for self-existence, and how dependent co-arising happens until you get to your seat. And when you get to



your seat, when you're really at your seat, when you feel like you've been kind enough to yourself, then call on Kanjizai Bosatsu for the assistance you need to contemplate dependently co-arisen experience.

The famous Zen collection called the *Mumonkan*, the Gate of Renouncing Worldly Affairs, the Barrier of the Gate without a Bolt, the Barrier of the Gate that doesn't have a Lock, also tells this story. The first case is "MU," NO! Does a dog have Buddha nature? Forget it! "MU" doesn't mean "no it doesn't have it," it means stop talking about such things. It means renounce that kind of consideration. Don't get into that. "Am I all right? Is he my friend? How am I going to do this? How am I going to do that?" NO. "Where should I go?" DON'T MOVE. "How am I going to do this?" DON'T THINK ABOUT IT. Just be upright. And gentle.

The second case is: does an enlightened person fall into cause and effect, or not? This is to contemplate dependent co-arising. Does an enlightened person fall into dependent co-arising or not? Some say no. Some say yes. Some say they're not blind to cause and effect. Some say they're not ignorant to cause and effect. Well, what's their relationship to cause and effect? It's very subtle. They're liberated from cause and effect. But what does it mean to be liberated from something? What kind of a relationship do you have with somebody when you're liberated from them? What kind of relationship is that?

It's not just that they're not around, that's not enough. When they come back, what's going to happen? It's certainly not that you've got them in your grasp. But letting go doesn't necessarily mean that you're liberated either. What does it mean to be liberated in relationship to the self? What is "jizai?" What is self-existence? That's the second case. So these first two cases are the two kinds of Bodhisattva. The MU koan is Kanzeon, and the story of Baizhang's wild fox is Kanjizai Bosatsu in the form of Zen stories.

I don't know if you've renounced worldly affairs, and taken your seat yet. But that's my question. Have you renounced worldly affairs? Have you relinquished all thought activity, and dropped down to the source of thought activity? Have you descended? Have you been kind enough to let yourself be just as deluded as you are? No more and no less. If you have, please continue sitting there. All the Buddhas are there with you, sitting in the middle of that fire. They're turning the Dharma wheel. As you sit there, you'll start to notice the wheel being turned.

We have to get there to do our real work. We must be as romantic and passionate and fantastic as we really are. And we have to be steadfast, and careful not to rush to get to that place. We have to be gentle and flexible. Teachings of dependent co-arising are intended for those who are kind enough to themselves to take their seat. It's hard to take your seat. By kindness, you may be able to do it. You don't have to worry about the hard part, just worry about being kind. Just take your seat. And when you get there, quietly explore the farthest reaches of these causes and conditions. Just as Buddha did on the night of his awakening. This is the transmission of the exact practice of a verified Buddha.

If you take me seriously, you might rush to practice. But don't. Take your time. Step by step, work your way to your self. Working your way to your self is called renouncing worldly affairs. It's shifting from "you do this" and "you do that," to turning around and exploring who's doing this and who's doing that. And remember, Buddha is doing all this from her seat, so go sit with her. She's calling you to come and join her. She's been waiting a long time for you to give up worldly affairs and come home and sit. Or so the story goes.

### Sesshin Day 3 Dharma Talk

December 13, 1994

Picking up on the words "renounce worldly affairs," from the *Eihei Koso Hotsuganmon*, I have been encouraging us to enter into the practice of renouncing worldly affairs and restraining myself from

going on to discuss “maintaining the Buddha Dharma,” until I feel that I have gone down to the pit of relinquishing all activity of thought. What I’ve been expressing over and over is “Put everything aside.”

An image came to my mind of the Bodhisattva of Infinite Compassion, the image of Kanzeon. When I was in Paris some years ago I saw a carved wooden statue of Kanzeon in a dragon cave, a jagged stone grotto, sitting cross-legged with her hands in the cosmic concentration mudra that you have your hands in now. There were two little shelves on either side of her in this cave. On one shelf there was the lotus flower which she often has in her hand and on the other shelf there was the vase that the flower often emerges from. These are the tools of her trade, and she had set them aside. In some sense the tools of our trade are our worldly affairs. Worldly affairs are all we have to help people. Our thought activities are the basis of our actions by which we can help people.

Beings of infinite compassion use the same material that ordinary people use except that they have been initiated into the essence of mind. The initiation process proposed here is the fiery initiation of setting everything aside, disentangling from everything and watching mind resist or be overly enthusiastic. The practice that Kanzeon demonstrated and which I’m recommending as the first initiation is the practice of not moving. It’s not doing anything. It’s putting aside all action, even putting aside the source of action, stopping all movement of the conscious mind. There is a time in maintaining the Buddha Dharma when we get very active and expressive and pick everything up. I’m suggesting now that we put aside expression and get to the fundamental; get down to the essence of your mind. It will appear when you give up everything else, including what you think it is. If you have some resistance to doing this because you think that couldn’t be all there is to Buddhism, you’re right. This is really not the Way. This is simply a raft to get to the other side of your delusions so you can really go to work. This is putting aside the deluded mind.

I’m carefully considering whether to say anything because I don’t want to direct your attention in any way unless necessary. I don’t want to add my pointing or my suggesting to your activities of thought which I’ve encouraged you to set aside, to put on the shelf. But just in case you have not put everything aside and you are still pointing in your mind, I could give some counter-points. To meet your impulses and obsessions, I could give some counter-obsessions. If you’re at the place where no thoughts and no words reach, then my words will peter out on their way to you. If you’re still involved in anything, then maybe you can use the words I send you to drop your involvement.

If you’re still involved in thinking and carrying yourself around, if you are bringing yourself to your actions, or bringing yourself to practice and verifying events, then I would suggest as a way to end this karma, that you follow this path that you’re already on. Follow it to the end, follow it to the place where this kind of activity comes to an end. This means that you’re simply aware of the beginning of your actions. Notice the beginning of doing something, of thinking something, of posturing and speaking. Notice the middle of it, notice the later part of it and notice the end of it. Notice the whole process of your action. This kind of observation is not for any purpose. It’s just in the spirit of putting aside and relinquishing the activity which is going on, because if we don’t maintain mindfulness of these activities of mind, we naturally get entangled in them. Unless we can be thoroughly aware of them as they’re happening, we tend to just join in the forward movement. This setting aside isn’t doing anything, and yet it is very alert. It is not just alert to the experience *per se*, but to the burden of self on top of the experience.

If the self is not there, you’ve come to the end. You’ve just witnessed the end of the burden of self, you have disentangled. If you can’t see it, it’s either because you’ve finished or because you’re still not clear enough to see that you’re carrying the self around and projecting it onto everything, and making every experience into a self. This burden is so pervasive that it’s hard to notice. Self-view comes up with every thought; it’s always concealed, yet you can feel it. You can feel it when you think, when you do things. There is a place of impact between self and other, between self and element. It’s the place where

the world can turn if you're there. It's the place where you can finally drop self and drop all these activities. It's not even that **you** drop. They just drop. Like the schedule. As Taiyo said to Arlene, "If you don't follow the schedule, you won't be able to drop body and mind." Another way to say it is "following the schedule along with all the other monks is the self of body/mind dropped off." If you follow any experience to the end, at that point, the self terminates and meets the other. There's a point at which there's an end to the self doing things and at that point is the beginning of things doing the self. To be on the lookout for things doing the self, I don't think is best because it'll just be the same thing again. However if you do get into looking for all things coming forward to make yourself, just remember that's another example of yourself now looking for this special event, which you may have heard is enlightenment. If you just watch the place where this ends, which is also the place it starts, this is the pivot where spiritual work turns. This is the pivot where the thinking, or *manas*, becomes purified. We're not recommending that you do a thing called "trying to stop yourself from doing something." Rather, follow what you're doing to the end. That involves relinquishing worldly affairs. Worldly affairs is to not follow what you're doing to the end, it's to dance on the surface of the self.

What I'm talking about is not the Buddha Way. The Buddha Way is, I think, what you really want. It's where you really act and interact with beings in a beneficial way, a harmonious, gentle, liberating way. I'm talking about an initiation into the actual practice, not pretending, not wanting to, not "it would be nice" kind of thing, but the actual practice of enlightenment. The gate to this practice, the gate to the unfoldment of the way things actually work, is not interesting. It's not painful. It's not pleasant. It is simply renunciation. That's all it is. It just means give up all your trips. It doesn't mean stop making excuses. It means when you're making excuses, just relinquish that activity. When you're complaining, when you're blaming, when you're trying to get something, just renounce that. Renounce everything, not in theory, but in your experience. Whatever trip you're on, whatever delusion, whatever enlightenment you're actually working with, that's the thing which has to be relinquished, left behind. Until this is done, everything is vain discussion. After it's done, everything is not vain discussion, everything is the Way. Everything is totally awesome and cool.

My understanding is that once I'm completely painted into this corner of renunciation, I will burst out of nothing that I get myself into. Have we really settled down, have we stopped moving, really? Have we found our seat? Have we really put everything aside? If so, it may be time to pick up the vase and the flower again. If not, we need to sit longer. More still, more quiet and give up more deeply, give up every technique, every method, including this one.

There are millions of stories about this process. I'll tell you the first half of one of these stories. The introduction starts off by talking about how it is after you settle down. It points to your capacity as it will unfold when you stop fooling around with your thinking.

*The ocean is the world of dragons—disappearing and appearing, they sport serenely. The sky is the home of cranes—they fly and call freely.*<sup>24</sup> These are the creatures of the Buddha way, cranes, dragons, garudas. *Why does the exhausted fish stop in the shallow pond and a sluggish duck rest in the reeds? Is there any way to measure gain or loss?*

I know why there's a sluggish duck and an exhausted fish. The fish is exhausted dreaming of being something other than a fish, wanting to be a dragon. She has to accept her exhaustion completely and somehow stay awake. The acceptance of this exhaustion is not theoretical. It is alert admission of it. The admission is not painful. What is being admitted may well be pain, I don't know. The duck is sluggish because her energy has been depleted through outflows around the way she messes around and holds on to her thought activity. She's all pooped out and dull because she has spent so much energy on worldly affairs. If you can sit still with whatever kind of a fish or duck you are, you can enter into the

---

<sup>24</sup> Book Of Serenity, Case 32, Yangghan's 'Mind and Environment,' Introduction, p. 140

realm where dragons and garudas are born. It doesn't count to go part way, you can't sort of settle into being a duck and a fish. You can't sort of spend a little bit of time or a lot or even many years, settling down halfway, or even 99 percent.

In Case 32, a monk comes to Yangshan and Yangshan says, "Where do you come from?"

The monk says, "From Yu province."

Yang Shan says, "Do you think of that place?"

The monk says, "I always think of it."

Before Buddhas were enlightened, they were just like that. They were always thinking of Yu province. They were always thinking of where they come from, just like we do. This monk was honest and upright, so Yang Shan said, "*The thinker is the mind and the thought of is the environment. Therein there are mountains, rivers, lands, buildings, towers, halls, chambers, people, animals, and so forth.* Reverse your thought. Learn the backward step and think of the thinking mind."

Think of your worldly activities. Think of your mental activities, which is another way to say just think of what you're thinking of. In other words, renounce them by simply thinking of them rather than being carried away. Turn around and look at them. This is renouncing them. Study the place where you think of it, where you say it, where you do it. That's the thinking mind. Think of that thinking mind. Think of your ability to think. Watch how you can think. This is how to relinquish your mental activities. Relinquish them by thoroughly admitting them. Admit them to the end of them. Admit them at the beginning, at the middle and at the end. Do nothing but that. To be in a such a state is called to be in a state of renunciation. No matter what the state is, whether you are an exhausted fish or a sluggish duck; even if you're a dragon or a garuda or a crane.

Aligning ourselves with Kanzeon, with this compassion, will help us, will guide us to the place where we can hear the Dharma, will guide us to sitting still. It will embrace us and sustain us in our fear of what will happen to us if we renounce worldly affairs. It will gently whisper in our ear that it will be all right if we give everything up, that we'll be taken care of. "Yes dear, it really is a good idea. All the Buddhas have done this." This mind of renunciation is a place where we actually can hear the Dharma that we so dearly want to hear.

### Sesshin Day 4 Dharma Talk

December 14, 1994

During the whole sesshin you have been very quiet, but now I feel an even deeper quiet, a deeper stillness in the whole group. Maybe we have found our seat. If you have settled into a steady, immobile sitting position and found your seat, then it may now be time to turn around at your seat and enter the Way. At the point of entering the Way, one actually does take a different direction. Even though one had been intending to follow the Buddha Way, at the point of entry, you actually reverse the position and you have what's called a rift, a severing in your lineage. You switch from being in the school of rough individualism to being on the Path of the Buddha.

I would like to again bring up Case 32 of the *Book of Serenity* and go a little deeper into it.<sup>25</sup> It's about Yangshan teaching quite a good yogi, a very good monk. Yangshan is the disciple of Guishan, and Guishan is the disciple of Baizhang. Baizhang is the disciple of Mazu. They called Yangshan "Little Shakyamuni;" Shakyamuni's teaching reaches across the centuries through Vasubandhu and Prajñatara and Bodhidharma, to Yangshan, to Dogen.

In this case, a monk comes to see Little Shakyamuni, who asked "*Where are you from?*" *The monk said, "I'm from Yu province."* *Yangshan said, "Do you think of that place?"* *The monk said, "I*

<sup>25</sup> Case 32, "Yangshan's 'Mind and Environment,'" *Book of Serenity*, translated by Thomas Cleary

*always think of it.*" Yangshan said, "The thinker is the mind. The thought-of is the environment. Therein are mountains, rivers, and the land mass, buildings, towers, halls, chambers, people, animals, and so forth; reverse your thought to think of the thinking mind." Reverse your thought to think of [manas.]

And then he says, "Are there so many things there?" We don't know how much time passes before he asks this.

The monk said, "When I get here I don't see any existence at all." Yangshan said, "This is right for the stage of faith, but not yet right for the stage of person."

The monk said, "Don't you have any other particular way of guidance?" Yangshan said, "To say that I have anything particular or not would not be accurate. Based on your insight, you get only one mystery—you can take the seat and wear the robe. After this, see on your own."

Yangshan asked the monk, "Do you think of that place?" And the monk said, "I always think of it." If he had asked the monk if he always thought of it and the monk had said, "No," he would have come up with some other strong point to get him out of that. But this monk was able to speak the truth and say, *I always think of it*. In other words, when he said, *Do you think of it?* he's saying, "Do you have *manas*?" Do you have the transformation of mind which is always thinking? The monk said, "Yes." He understood that he was always thinking of where he comes from. Where we come from is all the causes and conditions leading to our present concepts.

The commentary on the monk saying *I always think of that* is *True words—he should repent*. Repentance is to reverse your mind and think of the mind which thinks. The mind which thinks is the mind which is generating defilement, self-clinging. Repentance is to admit that you're thinking that way and to turn around and look at the process of defilement, which the monk did. We don't know how long he did it. It could have been a minute, a second, or quite a few years.

At some point, he's face to face with Little Shakyamuni again and Yangshan said, when you get to this place of reversing your mind, *are there so many things there?* The monk said, *When I get here, I don't see any existence at all*.

This is quite an attainment. What might have happened to someone who heard the instruction, "Reverse your mind. Reverse your thought and think back to the mind that thinks?" What might happen if you tried to enact that instruction of studying the function of *manas*, the always-thinking mind? Turning around and looking and considering "how is thinking," when your mind is still and quiet, you might see something. You might be looking at something, the wall, perhaps a shadow on the wall, a light reflecting off the floor, the sound of the rain. These are things you could be thinking about. The willingness to sit still is already renouncing worldly affairs. Be willing to look at what you're thinking rather than just ride around on your thoughts. Let go of your thoughts, give your thoughts to Buddha, give your thoughts over for study. Let them be offered up to be considered and watched, rather than just let go unattended, buzzing around.

Some of you may think, "I have to go Christmas shopping. I have to think about this stuff. Not just think of it and study it, but follow it through and take it to some conclusion so the thoughts can achieve fruit." That's called holding on to your thoughts and using them to take you where they're going. Relinquishing means to leave them behind. Put them aside. This doesn't mean get rid of them, it just means to set them aside. *Dedicate* means "to set aside for some ritual purpose." Set your thoughts aside for study, bring them up in front to look at. Scientifically investigate your thoughts. Not by doing anything, but by staying still and quiet. This is relinquishing your thought. Then the thoughts appear and disappear as usual but you're not pursuing them. Now there is no activity on the object, it's just the object appearing. There's no comment, no gain, no loss. There's no good, there's no bad, there's just the reflection of light on the floor. There's just the sound of the rain entering the ear. There's just the sound of "Open your eyes." Turning your mind around and studying your thinking is your mind being like a wall. This is what it means to cease the movements of the conscious mind. The mind is conscious of objects.

Ceasing the movements means there is just awareness of objects. There's just awareness of walking. There's just awareness of listening. There's just awareness of touching. There's just awareness of smelling. There's just awareness of all these kinds of concepts. And that's it. Things are still happening, things are still appearing and disappearing, however, the mind is not jumping around the object anymore. The mind is like a wall. When you let your mind be like a wall, you have renounced the world and you can enter the Way.

You can walk around this monastery and just be going along with worldly affairs or you can be walking from here to there and your walking is just walking; you have left the world. Making this switch is to separate from the lineage of the world, to turn around at your seat and enter the Way. This is not a theoretical turning. You do it where you are; you actually are willing to be there and at that place you turn. You don't just think about walking around and letting the walking be the walking. While you're actually walking, and not ahead of yourself or behind yourself, you turn. The other one doesn't count, although some wonderful insights can happen even when you're not at your seat.

There's another story which I told you the other night and I'll tell you again, about Fayán "breaking down" Superintendent Ze.<sup>26</sup> This man was enough of a priest to get to be superintendent of the big monastery where Fayán was abbot, and he became a Zen master because of this story.

Fayán called him one time and he said, "How long have you been at this monastery?"

The superintendent said, "Three years."

He said, "How come you never come and talk to me?"

He said, "Oh, well, I had entry, I got initiated with Master Ching Lin."

Fayán said, "At what words did you get entry?" What were the initiatory words that you heard from Ching Lin?

He said, "I asked him, 'What's Buddha?'" That's what it says in *The Blue Cliff Record*. He says, "What's Buddha?" In *The Book of Serenity*, he said, "What is the student's self?" What is the student's self?

Ching Lin said, "The fire god comes seeking fire."

Fayán said, "Oh, that's great. Great teaching, but I'm a little afraid that you may not have understood. Could you tell me more?"

Superintendent Ze says, "Well, it's like the fire god coming, taking fire. The fire god is in the domain of fire and seeking himself in his own domain. It's like the realm of the student is the realm of the self, yet he is still seeking the self in his own domain."

Fayán said, "Oh, that's what I thought. You don't understand."

The superintendent contained his anger and left. He left the monastery and crossed the river. Fayán said to his attendant, "If that monk turns around and comes back, he can be saved. If he doesn't turn around and come back, he cannot be saved."

As the superintendent was walking along, he thought to himself, "Hmm, Fayán is the teacher of quite a few people. Maybe he has a point, perhaps I should give him another chance." So he did turn around and go back. He came to Fayán and apologized and Fayán said, "I forgive you. Ask me the same question you asked Ching Lin."

So he said, "What is the student's self?"

Fayán said, "The fire god comes seeking fire."

The superintendent was greatly enlightened.

What's the difference between the two stories, the two times? In the language of these last few days, I would say the difference is that in the first case he was following after words, pursuing speech. He had an intellectual understanding. Dogen says, "Why wasn't he was enlightened the first time and fell into

---

<sup>26</sup> Case 17, "Fayán's 'Hairsbreadth'"

the road of intellectual understanding; and why was he was greatly enlightened afterwards and shed his nest of cliché?”<sup>27</sup> There’s the answer. The first time he was going forward on the road of mind, using his mind to understand what the teacher said. He understood very nicely and had mind entry, but we need to cut the mind road. The way you cut the mind road is to turn around and look at the mind. On the road, he turned around and came back. He renounced his thinking, his understanding. He renounced his spiritual attainment, which had become another object which he was grabbing. Therefore, he could hear the Dharma. The monk in this case did renounce worldly affairs. His mind was still. He did turn around and he didn’t see anything existing at all.

One way to understand this is that things are appearing but there is no activity around the things, not even the activity of saying “The sound of the rain exists. The silence of no sound of rain does not exist. There is just the sound of rain.” Another thing that may happen is that you lose the illusion of the object and you actually don’t see anything existing at all. However, when you don’t see anything existing at all, then that “no object” is an object which you again can switch back into, activating the mind around not seeing an object.

Here’s another story.<sup>28</sup> *Yangshan one day presented his understanding to Guishan. He said, “If you have me see for myself...”* [in other words, if you want to know how I see for myself] *“...at this point there is no state of completion and nothing to cut off either.”* *Guishan said, “According to your point of view, there is still some object, still some phenomenon. You haven’t yet got away from mind and objects.”* *Yangshan said, “Since there is no complete state, where are there still mind and objects?”* *Guishan said, “Just now, didn’t you make such an interpretation?”* *Yangshan said, “Yes.”* *Guishan said, “If so, then this is completely mind and objects—how can you say there are none?”*

Yangshan said, “At this point there is no state of completion and nothing cut off, either.” Guishan said, “Still, according to your point of view there are still mind and objects.” He said, “How can there be mind and objects if there is not even a state of completion?” Not even a state of completion, how can there be mind and objects? He said, “Didn’t just now you make that interpretation or that discrimination? If so, there are still mind and objects.” And Yangshan got it.

This is the same as verse 27 of the *Thirty Verses*. *Indeed, one who on account of one’s grasping, were to place something before herself saying ‘This is mere concept,’ will not stop at mere concept.* Mere concept is not even a state of completion. Do you understand? A state of completion would be as though you said, “Well, that’s a state of completion.” But take a state of completion as not even a state of completion. “It’s just a concept. I just attained something and it’s not even a state of attainment and it doesn’t cut anything off.” If you place that there, on account of grasping, if you bring this to Guishan to show him what you’re interpreting, the mind still hasn’t terminated in mere concept. Yangshan was in a good position to catch the monk because he had had a similar insight and had been caught. The monk was in the same situation. He did the instruction, he reversed the mind. He saw that there aren’t really objects out there, that they’re just mere concepts. Even his realization wasn’t a state of completion. He didn’t even have an insight to report. He didn’t see anything existing at all. But by not seeing anything exist at all, he had something out there existing called “nothing existing at all.” He did follow the instructions, he actually did see objects without pursuing them. He did see a sight and let it just be a sight. That was accomplished. However, in order to grasp what he had accomplished, he then made it into something else, and by grasping it, he activated his mind again and slipped back into worldly affairs. It’s just that now, the object, instead of being a worldly object, was a spiritual attainment.

<sup>27</sup> Eihei Koroku, Dogen Zenji, in *Rational Zen*, translated by Thomas Cleary, p. 48-49.

<sup>28</sup> Case 32

Yangshan says to him, “This is right for the stage of faith, but not yet right for the stage of a person or a human being.” The Chinese character for *faith* is composed of a radical of a person with the radical for the word. The stage of faith is entry. The person used the word to enter, he was a stream enterer. He reversed his thought on the words of Yangshan. The person turned around and entered. However, after he entered he grasped his entry and stopped walking. The Chinese character for *person* looks like somebody walking. Yangshan’s instructions are instructions for entry, but also they are instructions about how, after entering, to go to work. The monk couldn’t go to work after he entered because he took his entry and put it before himself in order to have the attainment. He did get one mystery. He got his seat and he got his robe. But he didn’t yet get his room, where he could work, where he could save sentient beings. He realized emptiness but then the mind took emptiness and put it in front of him, so he was temporarily halted in his great path.

The thinking mind is going on even after you’ve found your seat. You are always thinking of where you come from. If you want to relinquish your thinking, if you want to renounce worldly affairs, go ahead and renounce them, but it’s not so easy. As I said, there’s a space between Yangshan saying to the monk, “Renounce worldly affairs, reverse your thinking” and his saying, “Now are there so many things there?” That might have been a long time. If you hear this instruction and are practicing it, there are various reasons why it might be a long time before it goes into effect. One reason is that you may lose your seat again. You may get excited and resist being where you are. Another reason is you might stay at your seat, but study relinquishing in a way that’s not actually relinquishment. You might have a method in mind about how you’re going to reverse your thought. That’s not relinquishing your thought. That’s the usual way and most people try it for awhile. When I hear people tell stories about this kind of intellectual attempt to reverse the mind, I know that they haven’t really relinquished, but they’re trying to put into effect the instruction on relinquishing.

If you have this willingness, although you may not be able to stop the mind from going in its usual direction, you may notice the difference between thoughts just appearing with no activation around them, and when there is activation. You may notice the energetic difference when a thought arises and the words around it get to it and when the thought or the object appears and it’s just that thought. You may notice that as you pursue or cough or sigh around the words, you’re becoming an exhausted fish, a sluggish duck. You may notice that energy depletion or inflation happens around the way you’re activating your mind around the object. If you catch yourself at that very moment, it’s reversed. If you catch yourself afterwards, if you notice that you have been doing it and remember what you did, that’s a break in the usual flow, and it’s a small reversal in the sense of a confession of being off track.

When you just see an object and there’s no inflow or outflow, you don’t gain or lose any energy in relationship to the way you’re looking at the object. However you are losing some energy in terms of metabolism. You can’t keep this up indefinitely even though this reversed mind is effortless. The other one tires you, it burns out. This one, you can keep doing until your blood sugar level drops. You do have to eat some in order to do this practice.

I’m going to forecast a little bit about what it’s like when you don’t get stuck in this attainment, and then little by little I’ll get into what it’s like when you take your seat, reverse your mind and then make that into something before yourself and just go forward from there. This is a poem written by a disciple of Fayen, the guy who broke down Superintendent Ze, old Dharma Eye.

A monk said to Fayen, “What’s it like when there’s a drop of water from the fountain at Huineng’s temple?”

Fayen said, “It’s a drop of water from the fountain at Huineng’s temple.”

Another monk was standing in the area at that time. His name was Shao. He heard this interchange and woke up. Later he became National Teacher Deshao. He wrote a poem about overhearing Fayen. The poem said:



*Crossing the summit of the mystic peak,  
It's not the human world;  
Outside of mind there are no things.*

The monk in this story got that far: crossing the summit of the mystic peak is not the human world. When you take your seat and reverse your mind, this is not the human world. This is the mind like a wall. This mind like a wall is just the entry; we don't want to stay there. When you're not in the human world, when the mind is reversed, there are no things outside the mind. Even though there are objects, they have no way to be out there. You have to activate the mind to have them out there, you have to get excited, you have to pursue them. If you don't pursue them, they're not out there. This is not the human world, they say. This is also not the Buddha Way, this is the gate to the Buddha Way. The gate to the Buddha Way is to relinquish the human world and cross the mystic peak.

Yangshan got that far and the monk in this story got that far, but Deshao's enlightenment was deeper. He ends his poem with one more line: *Filling the eyes are blue mountains.*

This is the stage of the person. This is going back to work. Our English translation of the Heart Sutra says "form is emptiness, emptiness is form." That's okay, but a clumsier translation which has more impact is: "Immediately, this very form is the essence of emptiness." Once you've reversed your mind and there are no objects which are out there anymore, and therefore not in here anymore, those objects that aren't out there anymore are the essence of not out there. Do you want to know what *not out there* means? Those objects are the essence of "not out there." What is the essence of not being separated from other beings? Other beings. What is the essence of going beyond the human world? The eyes are filling with blue mountains.

Your job now is to continue to find and stay at your seat, and then quietly and clearly be aware of and think of the thinking mind. Study that thinking mind. See how it works. See how it runs. See how it has outflows and inflows. Don't try to increase or decrease the outflows or inflows. This is already renouncing worldly affairs. The renunciation can go deeper and deeper, until we can see more clearly how our thinking is going, leave behind the world of self and enter the world of Buddha. Then we can talk about how not to camp out in the world of Buddha. There are no official camp sites on the Path. There are fires around the Path all the time, but no camping is allowed.

Crossing the mystic peak, reversing your thought to think of the thinking mind, studying the functioning of *manas*, is entering into meditation on the function of Kanjizai Bosatsu. This is entering the compassion which has for its object the nature of existence and the functioning of the self. Studying the thinking is also to study how thinking creates the self, how it seems to exist, how it seems to function. After entering Buddha's Path, the self has been left behind, but now the self that has been left behind can be used to help people. The left-behind self is a docile, gentle, useful self. It isn't the self which says, "You can't leave me behind. You can't bring me along." Whatever you need from the self, it will then be Kanjizai Bosatsu who responds.

### **Sesshin Day 5 Dharma Talk** December 15, 1994

*The ocean is the world of dragons, disappearing and appearing, [these great-hearted ones] sport serenely. The sky is the home of cranes—they fly and call out freely. How does it come to be that the exhausted fish stops in a puddle and a sluggish duck nests in the reeds? Is there any way to figure gain and loss?*

Yangshan asked a monk, "Where are you from?"

The monk said, "From Yu province."

*Yangshan said, "Do you think of that place?"  
The monk said, "I always think of it."*

Yangshan said, "The ability to think is of the mind and that which is thought of is the realm of elements, of self and other. Therein are mountains, rivers, ....men and women, children, halls, thousands and thousands of distinctions. You seem to be an upright and stable person, young man. You seem to have found your seat in this turbulent world of distinctions. So I say to you, reverse your thought and think of the thinking mind. Think of the all-reflecting mind. Think of the locus of defilement, the generator of self-clinging and self-view, memorize the *Thirty Verses*.

This is the ancient assignment of the lineage and in accord with the ancient way I assigned you the same. I asked you to renounce worldly affairs, to study and renounce the activities of your thinking mind. I asked you to learn the backward step which turns your light around and illuminates the nature of the thinking which creates the self. I waited until the end of this great practice period to strongly encourage you to do this meditation so you would have enough background to track what was happening to you. I waited until you were stable, upright and calm enough to enter the fire of your own mind and until you heard enough warnings so that you wouldn't rigidly turn the meditation into another fixed thing.

In Case 32, Yangshan saw the monk as a stable, well-prepared meditator. Otherwise he wouldn't have recommended this rather steep climb, this abrupt reversal and radical disengagement from the usual flow of thought. I think that you also are ready, so I ask you to cut off the mind road. If you get too spun around as you enter into the realm of meditation, just forget the instructions and find your seat again. When you feel secure and stable you may naturally want to again go forth into the world and enter the fiery initiation.

In normal human development, we start out by being bonded to the earth, to our mother. This is a static feminine phase. When we've been there long enough, we break away, we separate from our mother. We enter a dynamic masculine phase. Then we're on our own, and we get in trouble, we use our new-found dynamic energy to hurt ourselves. Then we may hear about a training program and enter it half or fully consciously. We enter a fiery initiation. This is somebody else's program, a tradition where there are standards, a way to do it and a way not to do it. We have to give up our self. Once we have completed that fiery initiation and forgotten the self, we enter into a dynamic feminine stage where we take the forgotten self and put it to work. Finally, we spend the later years of our lives in great creativity which comes not from self-clinging but from self-liberation, from self-transcendence. This creative phase is a watery initiation. In the end we go back to the static feminine again and die. To go back there is death. Hopefully, we go back after a life of beneficent creativity based on a fiery initiation.

The monk in Case 32 has been told to study his mind. I ask you also to study this mind in conjunction with which the self is created and which projects the self onto everything. Watch how it creates dispositions. Watch how the dispositions come up all around everything that it sees. In this way, gradually let the show of all these obsessions and compulsions educate you about how this process has arisen from myriad causes and conditions. Little by little see through, see into this self. Through this backward step learn and illuminate the true nature of self. Then no more dispositions will be created by you. Your experience will no longer be framed by the results of past self-clinging, but will be fresh and spontaneous.

The monk did the work, he saw through the self.

*Yangshan said "Now, are there so many things?" And the monk said "When I get here I don't see anything at all." Yangshan said, "This is right for the stage of faith but not yet right for the stage of a person."*

This is right for the stage of faithfully following this training and he did it, he followed the program, but he was not yet a person. The dispositions of clinging were still framing his liberated vision, so he didn't see anything existent at all. He brought his attainment around in front of himself and let the dispositions say that it was something. The process of liberation from the nature of mind was still going on in this monk. He got part way. *But even though the basis is reached and the approach comprehended, true eternity still flows.*<sup>29</sup> He reached the basis and comprehended the approach but *true eternity still flows*—for him it didn't flow. He was not yet ready to go.

Even though you master the teaching, the truth keeps escaping. It may be genuine and constant, but it's still flowing. This is like Yaoshan practicing zazen. Shitou came up to him and asked:

*"What are you doing here? Yaoshan says "I'm not doing anything at all." Shitou says "Then are you're sitting idly " Yaoshan said "If I were sitting idly, that would be doing something." Shitou said, "You said you're not doing—what aren't you doing?" Yaoshan said "Even the [ten thousand] sages don't know.""*<sup>30</sup>

*When I get here I don't see any existence at all.* That's still knowing something, that's still discriminating. That's OK; he just slipped back into doing something. The thinker is still there, re-emerging in response to what it's like at the end of thinking. He followed the instruction all the way to the end, but when questioned, he flinched. We must never leave our seat. By being at our seat for eternity, the true seat flows. Wherever you go, stay at your seat and realize that if it's a true seat it constantly escapes you and flows. This is the truth of your seat in this world. It's also the truth of your mind when it's purified. If you can have a seat like this, your mind is purified. Dedicating yourself, vowing to be that way is vowing to realize this purified mind. You already have it. The question is how to take care of it.

The monk did very well. He found his seat. He did his work but he didn't let it flow. As Dogen Zenji says in the *Fukanzazengi*, he made a "partial excursion around the frontier." Or as Carl Bielefeldt translates it, he's loitering around the precincts of the gate. Either you've entered fully or you're close to the gate. This gate is not far away. At most, it's only a little bit away. With a still and reversed mind, you enter. There's a stream of thoughts running by and through us. Follow it to where it ends, which is where it starts. It's offering itself to you. If you sit still, it will demonstrate its function.

Realize that whatever is happening is mere concept. All of nature, mountains, rain, earth, food, people, the recycling area, greed, hate, and delusion, all the things outside yourself are mind. The mountains and rivers of the immediate present manifest the path of the ancient Buddhas if you understand that they are mere concept and let your mind terminate there.

The limit of the mountains and the earth and the sky shows you that the sky and the mountains are mind. They're limited because they're mind. The way they're limited is the way I'm limited. They show me myself because my self is projected out on them. Everything is like that. All of the environment has this mind quality, this limiting quality. It shows the limited self and therefore shows the true self.

Also, everything I see doesn't have mind. My face in the mirror doesn't have mind. You don't have mind when I look at you. Mountains and rivers and sky have no mind and no limit, and this mindless quality shows us the limitless side of our mind. It shows us a compassion which has no mind, the deep unlimited objectless compassion which is us. The mindlessness of the mountains shows us our ability to accept whatever comes with an open heart. Our compassionate mind is like the sky and the earth. When we see the mindless quality of sky and earth we see the limitless quality of our own compassion. This is called reversing thought and watching thinking.

<sup>29</sup> Song of the Jewel Mirror Samadhi

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 37, "Yaoshan," in *Transmission of Light*.

Watch how when you think that there's mind in things, it resonates back to show you yourself. Watch how when you see there's no mind in things, that shows you the limitlessness of your own self. The way you think about nature teaches you about yourself. This is the way thinking works. What is a mountain? Is a mountain a limited thing or an unlimited thing? What is the sky? Is it limited or unlimited? It will be what you need to learn. If you need to accept that you're limited, the mountain will be limited. If you need to understand your limitless compassion, the mountain will be mindless and have no limit. A piece of junk in the street will be mindless or it will be mind. When you learn that it's mind and understand yourself, this is good. However, true eternity still flows. It turns again. The mind in the piece of junk goes away and the piece of junk is mindless.

The question is, do you keep your seat when the world turns from mind to mindless to mind to mindless, when who is out there is you and then who is out there is not you. Everything you see is yourself and then as soon as you accept that, everything you see is definitely not you. If you think it is, then move on to thinking it isn't. When you think that you have problems with other people, it's you that you have problems with. All those things out there that you're looking at are not you. Nothing out there is you and you're not you either. If you think they're not you, get liberated from that. If you think they are you, get liberated from that. True eternity still flows. That's how you can continue this practice throughout your life. But you must not move from your place. You must stay here, always, and come from here. This is where the Path comes from. You must stop clinging to worldly affairs. Give them up and stay here. This "here" flows. This definite place flows.

Suzuki Roshi told the story of his teacher, when he was a young monk sitting in a hall like this, during rain like this. He heard the rain and heard a waterfall in the distance. Then someone hit the han. He went to his teacher and he said "Where is the place where the sound of the waterfall and the rain and the han meet?" His teacher said, "True eternity still flows." The monk said, "Is there anything beyond that?" The teacher said, "It's a bright mirror, reflecting everything. Bring me that mirror and break it, and then we can meet."

This is called working through the final details of the fiery initiation, of renouncing worldly affairs and forgetting the self. This is called really learning what it means for the mind to terminate in mere concept. When it terminates in mere concept the termination flows. If it terminates and stays terminated, that's bringing it out in front again. Whatever it is—this self that appears, this concept that appears—however it comes to be, that's our concern. How does that happen? How does the self appear? How does it get projected? How does a concept appear? How does it get made into a thing? How does that happen? What is it that's coming? What is this? Who is this? Is it a falcon? Is it a storm? Is it a song? Circle around, take a look at it. What is it?

If you stay at your seat, such a boring inquiry will be interesting. If you stay still you will be willing to do such radically useless work. You'll be interested and willing to look to see what it is. If you stay still and don't do anything at all,—even the ancient sages don't know what that is—you will be interested. You will be willing to spend your time wondering "What is it that is coming now?" without saying "well, it's this." Mara challenged Buddha to say "It's this." But Shakyamuni vowed not to move, not to say "this is it."

The cornerstone of Zen is when Nanyue Huairang, the teacher of Matsu <sup>31</sup> goes to the Sixth Ancestor and the Sixth Ancestor says to him "Where are you from?"<sup>32</sup> He says "I'm from Mt. Sung." The Ancestor says "What is it that thus comes?" Nanyue didn't say anything. Eight years later, he said to the Ancestor, "To say it's this won't do." To say "it's this" misses the mark. This is shorthand for saying "To

<sup>31</sup> Nanyue, also known as Zen Master Dahui, is the teacher of Matsu. Matsu taught Baizhang. Baizhang is the teacher of Guishan. Guishan is the teacher of Yangshang.

<sup>32</sup> See "Body-and-Mind Study of the Way, (*Shinjin Gakudo*) and "All-Inclusive Study, (*Henzan*) in *Moon in a Dewdrop*, Dogen Zenji.

say it's this won't do, to say it's not this won't do, to say it's both won't do and to say it's neither won't do." To bring it out in front of you and say "this is what's happening" is not the Way. That's not "true eternity still flows."

The Ancestor says "Then is there no practice or realization?" No liberation? Nanyue says "I don't say that there is no practice and there is no realization." He also didn't say that there is no misery and there is no delusion. "I just say that they must not be defiled." The Ancestor was very happy and said "This non-defiled Way has been guarded by all Buddhas. You are now thus. I am thus too." There is a "this" happening. He didn't say there wasn't a "this." "Thises" are happening. "Thises" are coming to be, moment by moment. Have you noticed them? They are coming. But to say "This is it" misses the mark. We just sit still with this and wonder what it is. We really are in wonder about this—this mountain, this rain, this thawing roof, dripping in the sun.

In Case 32 the teacher said "When you get here are there so many things?" The monk said "This is not like that. This is no existence at all." This is a real break-through, but he did say "this is it." He did say "there is no existence at all." Huairang would have said "To say that what I've accomplished in these eight years is it won't do. I have been liberated, but to say this liberation is it, misses." To say this bright mirror is it, misses. Break the mirror.

It was hard for the Ancestors also; they said it was bitter work. They called it going down into the dragon's cave for the sake of others, for the sake of the dragon cave, doing the bitter work for the sake of the bitter work. It is bitter work. It's OK to cry out in pain. and listen to yourself cry out.

I'm talking about a perfected state which bursts out of perfection and descends into you. Life has willingly and consciously transgressed into you and me. This is perfection beyond perfection. This is transcendence which has forgotten about transcending and has gotten back into a skin bag. The Buddha's triumphal lion's roar is to enter every living being, and every living being in its fullness is the Buddha Nature. Do you want to know what Buddha Nature is? It's the fullness, the completely settled and flowing personhood of each person. So settled that it jumps out of itself. So much itself that it transcends itself. This is perfection that won't be trapped by perfection, which is free of it.

### **Sesshin Day 6 Dharma Talk**

December 16, 1994

This world, as you may have heard, is called a *saha* world, a world in which it is possible to practice patience. It's also a world in which it is possible to get angry. The reason why you can practice patience here is because there's some difficulty. There are some other worlds where there isn't any difficulty. When human beings hear about that, they sometimes think it's a mistake that they came to this world. Some of them ask Buddha why we're practicing here. Why don't we go to those other places? You can't practice patience in those other realms, and if you can't practice patience, you can't realize enlightenment. You can be blissed out for a certain period of time, but then everything ends and you're in trouble. On this planet you can practice patience and therefore you can realize infinite wisdom and compassion.

Once, on a sunny day here at Tassajara, I hung my laundry on the line. It was a bright piece of cloth, maybe a white towel, and it reflected the sunlight. When I hung it there freshly washed, and smelled it, I thought, "This is worth it. This is worth coming for. If all I get in this lifetime is to hang these clothes on this line and see the light come off the sun, onto my cloth, into my eyes, I'm willing to put up with the rest of it." I still am willing to put up with the rest of it, for a while. Eventually I'm going to check out. However, my vow is to come back until the whole thing, every little particle, is willing to be here and willing to come back, too. That's my vow.

Along these lines, there's the teaching of Little Shakyamuni reaching out to the monk who had found his seat in the world of suffering. He said, "Reverse your thought. Let's have a radical alteration of your consciousness. I want you to take a totally new approach to what's going to come next. Relinquish all your patterns. Give up all your habits, and then, think of the thinking mind." If you just sit down and think of the thinking mind, that's just the thinking mind. First, relinquish all thought activity. Cut off the mind road, and with a cut off mind road, think.

The *Fukanzazengi* says to cast off all involvements, cease all concerns, don't think good or bad, don't be concerned with right or wrong, halt the movements of the conscious mind. Actually it says, "Cease the movements of mind, intellect and consciousness." Literally, the characters mean to cease the movements of *citta*, *viññāna* and *manas*. Stop the calculations of all thoughts and views. Don't aim to become a Buddha. Resolve to become Buddha, but then let go of all thought activity around that vow. Don't then make that vow into another karmic trip. Don't try to make a Buddha. We give up the idea of becoming a Buddha as part of our vow to become Buddha.

"Cease all the movements of the conscious mind, the gauging of all thoughts and views." A slightly different translation of this is, "Don't interfere with the workings of your mind." Don't try to control the movements of your thought. Simply accept things as they have come to be. Sometimes people say, "Do you mean to just accept **everything**?" Yes, accept everything. But there is further instruction about what it means to accept everything as it actually appears. Usually people try to accept things but they don't; they dream of accepting things. They activate the mind around things, they doctor them up, and they tell themselves stories to make it okay that things are this way. They think, "Well, I accept them," but there's this huge mass of goo around everything which protects them from getting angry at the thing. There is the thing and all this stuff around it and antidotes all around that, and that's what they call accepting things.

The instruction of making your mind like a wall says, "Don't get involved in all that stuff. Just right out, flat off, cut it out. Let's have a major reorientation here." The instruction to the consciousness is to stop doing anything about what's happening. The mind goes right ahead and does its stuff, but there's nothing done about that. The function just goes on. This is the first part of the instruction. This is the reversal. Then, with a mind like that, study. Watch your thinking and you'll have a different view. Watching yourself will be like watching somebody else, and watching somebody else will be like watching yourself, and so on. Then you can see through your thinking.

The monk in Case 32 did that. He reversed his mind. We don't know how many years it took him to understand what that meant, how many times he went back to Yangshan and asked what he meant by "reverse." Yangshan gave him the instruction and he finally applied it accurately and saw through his thinking. He saw that there wasn't anything existing at all. He saw through his own thinking, but then he made a thing out of it, saying, "I don't see any existence at all." That makes something exist. That makes his revolution and his breakthrough into a thing.

I like this story; it's quite subtle. In an earlier encounter, Yangshan was studying the *Thirty Verses* and he presented his understanding to Guishan. He said, "If you want me to express how I see things at this point"—he's already "at this point,"—"there is no state of completion and nothing to cut off, either." He thought he'd cover his tracks. And I'm sure he was completely sincere.

*Guishan says, "According to your point of view, there are elements and you haven't gotten away from mind and objects."*

*Yangshan says, "Well, since there's no complete state, and nothing's cut off, where are there still mind and objects?"*

*Guishan says, "Just now, didn't you make such an interpretation?"*

*Yangshan says, "Yes."*

*“If so,” Guishan says, “Then this is completely mind and objects. How can you say there are none?”*

So the monk still had “this.” When he said, “There is no existence at all,” There was still “this.”

Nanyue’s exchange with the Sixth Ancestor was different. He studied the question “What is it that thus comes?” for eight years. Then he said, “I’m not going to say ‘it’s this’. You asked me what’s coming, but I’m not going to make it into ‘this.’ I’m not going to bring it out here and make it another thing.”

*“Well, is there no enlightenment? Is there no practice? Can’t we have them, either?”*

*“I don’t say that there’s no practice. I don’t say that there’s no liberation. I also don’t say there is something. I just say don’t make me defile them.”*

*The Ancestor said, “This non-defiled way has been protected by all Buddhas. Now I am thus and you are thus too.”*

When he said that, he defiled it. That’s important. After we don’t defile it, we defile it. First, you have to reverse your mind and see through your story. Then don’t defile it. Don’t make it into something. The monk in Case 32 made it into something.

In order to do this practice, in order to look at your thinking in a way that isn’t just more thinking, you have to sit still. In order to sit still, you have to renounce everything in your life. If you’re holding on to something, you’re going to get pushed around by your holding on. You’re actually not moving but your attachment makes you seem to be moving. Your true nature is that you’re not moving. From this true nature, if you look at what’s happening, you can see what your thinking is. You can see what it is that thus comes. What is it that is thus coming? Your thinking is coming. You can see it if you don’t move.

Projecting the self out at something and grabbing it, you’re tossed about. Then you look at your thinking and you just get more upset. So you figure, “Hey, forget it! I’m going to just curl up in a ball and not look at this show.” It’s not good to look at your thinking if you’re moving. It’s just nauseating. But it doesn’t help to curl up in a ball and not look at it. The reason you’re doing that is you did look at it and you couldn’t stand it because you were moving.

The thing to do is renounce everything and sit still. Learn the backward step. Reverse the mind, then immediately body and mind drop off and you can see. I don’t know if it requires that you give up everything. However, you are required to give up everything that you don’t want to give up. There may be some things you don’t have to give up. But why don’t you just give up everything for starters and then see if maybe you can hold onto some things. Mostly we get moved around because we’re holding on to something.

If you let go of everything, I’m sure that you’ll be able to be still. Then you will see with your original eyeballs and original face. You’ll be able to see what your thinking is and how it produces these concepts. You will be liberated from the clusters, from the tar baby of conception. At that point, the point of realizing mere concept, you have to be careful and stay still; don’t move. That’s when you get excited. That’s when it “becomes a pitfall.” You pull it out and make it into a “this” again. Imagine if you had an audience with the Sixth Ancestor and he says, “Well, what is it? What did you find?” It would be difficult to hold back and not make it something to give to the Buddha. It’s just a test, you know. It just shows you that actually you want to give yourself something.

Guishan and Yangshan also appear in Case 37 of the *Book of Serenity*.

*Guishan said to Yangshan, “If someone comes up to you all of a sudden and says, ‘All living beings just have karmic consciousness, boundless and unclear with no fundamental to rely on,’ how would you give them an experiential test on this?”*

All living beings just have active consciousness, a troublesome consciousness which gets active around objects. They don't have another kind of consciousness. When you give this consciousness an object, it pursues it or avoids it or tells stories about it or makes antidotes to it.

You say, "Well, what about enlightened consciousness?" When you talk about enlightened consciousness that way, you make it into "this." We don't have enlightened consciousness. As soon as you have a consciousness which doesn't mess everything up and play with everything, including practice and realization, you've got "this" again. You've defiled the mind, which is not consciousness. We don't **have** the Buddha's mind. We **are** the Buddha mind. As soon as we have it, we bring it around and make it into a thing, and then it's karmic consciousness again. We do have karmic consciousness, and because we've got it, it throws us for a loop. What we've got to do is let go of this karmic consciousness.

Karmic consciousness is boundless and there is no place it doesn't reach. There's no deep down bottom where there's a nice, clear karmic consciousness. It actually is all we've got and there's nothing to it. This is good news. Now you don't have to worry anymore. You know what you've got, and you know what you have to relinquish. You have to relinquish karmic consciousness. Now, let's see how they test somebody around this issue.

*Yangshan said, "Okay, see that monk over there? Watch! Hey, you!" The monk turns his head. And then Yangshan says, "What is it?"*

*The monk was speechless.*

*Yangshan says, "All you have is karmic consciousness, boundless and unclear with no fundamental to rely on."*

*His teacher, Guishan, said, "Good. Good test."*

Here is another story, also from Case 37.

*A monk asked Yunan, "The Avatamsaka Sutra says that the fundamental affliction of ignorance itself, which all human beings are subject to, is the immutable knowledge of all Buddhas. This seems rather difficult to understand."*

*Yunan said, "Hm, it doesn't seem difficult to me. It seems kind of clear. Watch. I'll show you." There happened to be a young monk nearby sweeping. Yunan called to him, "Hey, you," and the monk turned his head.*

This is the same as the previous story. The teacher said "Hey, you" and the monk turned his head. However, in this story, instead of then saying, "What is it?" the teacher said, "What is Buddha?"

*The monk dropped his broom and stumbled off and Yunan said, "Is this not the fundamental affliction of ignorance?"*

When you say "Hey, you," it's possible to not activate the mind around that. It's just "Hey, you." Laundry hanging on the line. That's it. It's worth coming for. But when a Zen teacher says, "What's Buddha?" or "What is it?" you bring it out in front because you've got to have an answer. You've got to have something. You project the self onto the "What's Buddha?" You grab it, and you're done for. You're paralyzed. You're reaching for something outside yourself.

The monk got to the place of, "Hey, you." He turned around, he looked at his thinking and his thinking got to be like "Hey, you." "Yeah?" "Hey, you." "Yeah?" But then, he thought, "Oh! Teacher wants to know, so I'll bring it out to show him," and then he lost it. Yangshan did that with Guishan, this monk did it with Yunan. It is normal to make emptiness into something in the process of learning this, and the thing that we usually make it into is a nothing.

I'm ready to move on to the next phase of this process of what it's like when you don't fall down. What it's like when you reverse your mind, look at your thinking, see through it and don't take what you've seen through and make that into something again. You reverse your mind, look at yourself and



forget yourself, and then don't pick yourself up again to report that you've lost yourself. What do you use to report? Students know they're not supposed to make their experience into something, so they often report nothing, but it doesn't work. The teacher can feel that there's still something there, there's still somebody interpreting and seeing an object out there and saying "That's it." You can feel it. The language reveals it. It leaves a trace in the choice of words.

After the monk says this, Yangshan says, "This is right for the stage of faith, but not yet right for the stage of person." This is right. You have followed the instructions, you are a faithful practitioner. You are now in the Buddhist group. He has entered. He has seen through his self, but he flinched and made it back into something. There's another stage where you don't do that. He says to the monk, "You get one mystery, not three. Based on your insight, you get a seat and a robe. From now on, see on your own."

There are various interpretations of what the seat might be. One interpretation is that the seat is emptiness. I think this monk did find his seat. He reversed his mind, he looked at what was happening and he found his seat. He found the insubstantiality of his place. His place—our place—is what we're thinking. Concepts of objects and location. You have to be thinking to have a location. When you have a location, that's always thinking. One of the ways you can tell whether thinking is going on is whether you have a location. When you have a seat and you sit on it and you see through it, then you also see the emptiness of your place. This monk understood the emptiness of his place. He realized the emptiness of his seat. His seat was his realization. He gets a robe also, to take care of himself.

"But after this, see on your own." What's that about? What more is there to see? That's where the poem of the National Teacher Deshao comes in.

*Crossing the summit of the mystic peak*

*It's not the human world.*

*Outside the mind there are no things.*

The monk got that far. "After this, see on your own." See what? "Filling the eye are blue mountains." Blue mountains filling the eyes. Outside the mind there are no things. Filling the eyes, blue mountains. Once you've realized the emptiness of your thinking, you go forward from there. You walk from there.

You realize that nothing matters and then you realize everything matters. Your seat doesn't matter. Therefore your seat does matter because your seat is the revelation of what makes everything possible. Your thinking, because it's not anything, makes everything possible.

You have stories, which are your thinking. When you study these stories from a reversed point of view, you see through them. When you reverse the mind, you still tell stories, and then you study the stories you were telling. You watch your stories, you examine your stories. People think that when you reverse the mind you stop telling stories. No, you don't stop telling stories. All you've got is the stories you're telling. The question is, can you look at the stories with this reversed attitude? If you can, you can see through the stories and be liberated from them. It's not for me to tell you your stories don't matter. It's for you to look at your stories with a revolutionized attitude, with a radically altered consciousness; in other words, with no consciousness. It's for you to look at your mind as it's functioning to produce these stories and for you to see that these stories don't matter.

"Yeah, but he really did punch me in the nose, I mean he really . . ." It's not for me to tell you that it doesn't matter. I mean, I know you have been abused and I could say "Well, I have too." and you could say, "Well, not as much as me." And we could argue and try to figure out who's been most abused. Whose pain is actually greatest, which means who is the most deluded. It's not for me to tell you that your stories don't matter. It's for you to find out that they don't matter. If you don't find this out, then you won't find out how they **do** matter. They **do** matter. Blue mountains are filling the eyes. That's the stage

of the person. These stories are filling your eyes. They **do** matter. But they **all** matter, not just some. It isn't just your big scale abuse that counts, it's the little abuses that count, too. The people who had almost no abuse are just as important as you.

So, you get there and you look at your stories of abuse. You sit there and you look with revolved, reversed thinking and you see that, "This is just a dream. I just made this up. This is my version. I could change the story. I could change a punch into a kiss. I could see how the fact that I'm trying to prove that I was abused, proves that I wasn't." The proving proves that it isn't. The proving that it is, proves that it isn't. You can make that switch. You can have complete liberation, happiness, joy and love or your misery back.

You can also look at this thing and see it in a totally different way and be relieved from your story. Your story, not my story about you. You can't get relieved of that. That's not the one that bothers you. That's the one that will test whether you've gotten rid of yours. My story is not really about you. My story is about whether you are free of your story. See if you can convince me that you don't fall for what story you're telling. See if you can convince me that you think that you see that your story doesn't matter. The way I can tell if you see it, is whether all stories matter to you equally, including my story that you haven't yet gotten to the place of seeing that all your stories are not equal.

Once you're relieved of your old stories you can tell new stories. You can be a great novelist. You can be a playwright. You can put on all kinds of choreographies. This is entering into the dynamic, feminine, creative, phase. You can loop those new threads of spring into the ancient brocade and you can really have a ball. You can watch these things coming, bursting out of emptiness, filling your eyes with blue and green and purple.

I would like to talk about what to do with people who have seen that their stories don't matter.

Tientung, celebrating the situation of after the stage of faith, says,

*Bursting out of the empty sky, the garuda takes wing on the wind.*

*Thunder accompanies the dragon as it treads over the ocean.*

What are we going to do with these dragons and garudas? They do take seriously other people's suffering, as they tread upon the waves and hang out on the wind. They know from personal experience that their suffering comes from believing their stories. They believe their stories because they're moving. They want to help, but they are also somewhat out of control, so what do you do with these people? What is their relationship to karma and cause and effect? That is what I would like to discuss tomorrow.

I would like to end by telling you a long story about Su Tung-p'o, who was considered to be one of the greatest poets, painters, calligraphers and scholars of the Sung Dynasty.<sup>33</sup> He was an expert on the Confucian classics but he also spent time studying Buddhism and he memorized the entire Chinese Buddhist Canon. He passed the highest exams for ministers and became the emperor's official representative in four provinces. He traveled around visiting all the government facilities. He also visited Buddhist monasteries, which were under government jurisdiction at that time. He loved to go to the monasteries and quiz the teachers on Buddhism. He would ask questions like, "OK, what are the last five words of Chapter 43 of the \_\_\_\_?" Most of the monks would say, "Oh, well, I...." They might be able to answer one but they wouldn't get the second one—"I don't know." Then he would tease them about how lazy they were. Finally he actually took his own story seriously, that these Buddhist monks were a bunch of no good, lazy retards. After making the effort of memorizing the entire canon, he lost interest in Buddhism. But then somebody said to him, "I know a Zen master who you might be encouraged by. Maybe you could respect him. Go see him."

---

<sup>33</sup>See "The Sounds of Valley Streams, the Forms of the Mountains," (Keisei Sanshoku]. bu Dogen Zenji, in *How to Raise an Ox*, tr. Francis Cook

So he went to see this Zen teacher. Usually when you go to a monastery, you come to the gate, get off your horse, ring a little bell, hit the han—bop, bop. The shika comes out and says, “Yes, sir?” And you say, “I’d like to visit, maybe even meet the teacher.” They say, “Come in please,” and you go and sit down and the teacher comes in to see you. Well, Su Tung-p’o rode his horse in through the gate up to the Buddha Hall, walked in, sat down with his back to the Buddha and waited to see who would come to visit him. Eventually the little master came in. He was seven feet tall, but he came in low and humble because Su Tung-p’o was the imperial representative of four provinces. He came in and said, “To what do we owe the honor of your great presence, sir?”

And he said, “Well, I came to do my thing. My name is Mr. Scales. Do you know why they call me Mr. Scales?”

And the Zen master said, “No sir, I don’t.”

“Because I weigh the understanding of all the Buddhist teachers.”

And the Zen master “Ah!” and said to Su Tung-p’o, “How much does that weigh?”

So Su looked through his mental card file of all the scriptures he had read and memorized and he couldn’t find any answer for that one. Isn’t that something? People can think up new things. He was impressed. And he thought, “Maybe I’ll reconsider Buddhism after all,” and he bowed reverently to the teacher and he vowed to start studying Buddhism seriously, not just in order to tease the monks. He was transferred to another province and he met a Zen teacher named Fu Yin and he studied with him and became really good friends with him. They were like brothers, they said, really close friends, and one day he went to visit his friend and for some reason or another he got all dressed up. He wore his official silks, like yellow and purple silk gown and the stitching of gold thread and wore his official belt, a big jade belt, and he came to see the teacher and the teacher said, “Oh, wow! I’m sorry your majesty, I have no suitable seats for such an august presence. All I have is these simple cushions that I usually sit on.”

And Su Tung-p’o said, “Don’t worry, I’ll sit on you.”

So the teacher said, “Okay, I’ll make a deal with you. I’ll ask you a question. If you can answer the question, you can use me as a chair. And if you can’t, give me your belt.”

And Su Tung-p’o said, “Okay, it’s a deal.”

So his friend, Fu Yin, says, “It says in the Heart Sutra that this form, this color, itself, is the essence of emptiness. And that emptiness, of course, is itself form. Now, if you use me as a chair, isn’t that clinging to form without understanding its essential nonexistence? But if things don’t really exist, then what will you sit on?”

Su Tung-p’o was stumped and his friend said, “You see, you’re still clinging, even now. Do away with all activities of thought. Renounce worldly affairs. Reverse your thought. Then you’ll understand.”

Su Tung-p’o handed over his jade belt and from then on, he did Zen with greater ardor. He meditated at all times, read many Zen books and went to visit the master whenever he could.

This lecture is going on so long, but I have to tell you a story about Suzuki Roshi. He went to the Narrows one day and jumped into the water. In his exuberance, he forgot that he didn’t know how to swim. So, of course, he went down to where the bass are and the trout. The students saw him go down and not come up and they thought, “Oh the master can really hold his breath a long time. He really is a great yogi.” But after some period of time, they thought, “Well, maybe not. Maybe he’s a bad swimmer.” So they went down and got him and pulled him up and he was very embarrassed. He told that story one time during a sesshin, about himself and how embarrassed he was. Then he said, “After that, I really started to practice Zen hard.”

At dinner that night somebody said to him, “Roshi, you said that after that incident you really started to practice hard, but weren’t you practicing hard before that?” He said, “Yes, but then I really started to practice hard.” So now Su Tung-p’o is really practicing hard. He’s been embarrassed enough. He’s going to get it together.

## Class 16

### December 19, 1994

At the beginning of the practice period I said that practice periods offer the opportunity to discover your utmost concern in life and to clarify and deepen it. Now, at the end of the practice period, there's a question hanging in the air. How did it go? Did you discover your ultimate concern? Did you clarify it? Did it deepen?

I have been thinking about initiation and I would like to say something about its structure. The approach or evocation of initiation involves separation. Many of you left something in order to come here and a small death may have occurred. This separation, relinquishing, or death is usually a part of initiation which then puts you into another world. Initiation is the process of becoming more alive by entering this new world. There are many kinds of initiations that a person can go through, entering world after world. When you no longer believe in the substantial existence of a self, the world opens up, but there's a tendency to camp out in the new world. The world that you enter must also be transcended. You have to get initiated out of that world; you have to separate from the world of initiation.

Another facet of the approach to initiation is that you don't know what's going on. In some ways you don't know where you are. You may learn that your body doesn't need to be the way you've been holding it. A characteristic of approaching another world is that you let your body start being a little different, you let your mind start being a little different, you let your world start being different, you let your friends start being different. Not being sure where you are and what's going on anymore may show that you're approaching an initiation.

You have to accept not knowing what the outcome will be. The Head Monk, Teah, had an initiation a couple of days ago; she didn't know the outcome. She didn't know where she was. She had to separate herself from that cabin and go into the zendo for the Shuso Ceremony.<sup>34</sup> I'm a Cancer so I have a thick skin. Inside it's like soft crab meat. I don't necessarily notice that things are bothering me until I'm practically cooked. At my Shuso Ceremony, I was walking down the aisle in the old zendo and all of a sudden I thought "Oh my god, what have I got myself into? This is totally ridiculous." You feel exposed to events, to what's happening, to the cold, to the community. You feel exposed to the teaching, you feel exposed to the food. During this practice period something may have become broken or separated. I would like you to think about whether that happened for you.

You can also look to see whether you think you had or didn't have "entry." In a Buddhist sense, once there is entry there is no turning back. Once you see through your belief in self, once you see that something that you thought was substantial is not substantial you never forget and you're permanently changed, marked or scarred. You're not the same person. You have no choice after initiation. A Buddhist initiation is to see the dependent co-arising of the ego, to see through the ego. Choice has to do with the ego. It is possible to choose even though you see through the ego because it's a function of mind to constantly choose what to pay attention to. After initiation choice is not an issue anymore. It's a matter of being chosen rather than choosing. You are chosen by all events. All events come forward and choose you rather than you choosing all events. That's the reversal. You separate from the world where you choose, and enter the world where you're chosen.

Connected with this is that the limits of your situation are set by others. We want to set the limits ourselves. We want to set the temperature of the water at the baths. If you want to be in control you're not in an initiatory space. If you want to be initiated then you have to let somebody else be in charge, or get a new bath guru. Somebody else determines the temperature. If I choose the temperature I'll make it too hot

---

<sup>34</sup> Dharma Inquiry Ceremony

or too cold for someone. Of course I'll try to make it the right temperature but it will always be not right. If I choose I'll stay in my own ego temperature.

At Tassajara of course, we have a daily schedule. Let somebody else make the schedule. You may want to figure out the schedule but you were already doing that before you came here. In an initiatory process somebody else designs the schedule and gives it to you. You submit to someone else, and I think you have all done this. You may have had some problems with it, but at various levels you have done it.

Someone asked me to talk about the relationship between emotions and feelings. We sometimes use the word *vedana*, which means "to receive," or "experience," or "sensation" or "feeling." This word refers to the psychic phenomenon that in every moment of experience we have a basic understanding that the object of awareness is positive, negative, or neutral. Feelings are basically of two types, there really isn't a third type. It's just that sometimes we're so confused we can't tell which one it is, so we say there are three—"I don't like it, it's no good, I'm in pain." Or "I like it, it's positive." Or "I can't tell which it is." Those are feelings or sensations. "Emotions" refer to all the dispositions which ensconce the feeling and can make the feeling more intense. So for example, if you have a negative feeling and it's in association with the belief that some person is your enemy, then the feeling of pain is much stronger. If it's ensconced in the belief that he is your pal, that the slap on the back was an act of affection even though it was a little painful, you might feel quite good about it. In some situations you might have pain but not get angry. If you're climbing a mountain and your muscles hurt, you don't necessarily get angry. It depends on the situation. Emotions are the intensified feeling. "Emotion" also means agitation of the situation. So when you "enter," there sometimes is an intensification of emotions which is why they say "if you're excited it becomes a pitfall."<sup>35</sup> You also sometimes hesitate, which is another kind of emotion. Your imagination becomes highly activated, so whatever issues you bring into the space can get magnified. If you're wounded archetypally you can experience the archetype of your wound. If you have power problems or feelings of inferiority, those get blown way up.

You can consider whether any of this sounds familiar and has anything to do with the process of initiation you may have gone through during this practice period or in your life. Certainly all the mothers here have been separated. When they had children they lost their girlhood. Also, the beginning of menstruation is a kind of initiation. Recently, we have had ceremonies at Zen Center for young girls at that time. Menopause is also the beginning of a new phase of life. After puberty, after motherhood, after menopause you are permanently changed; you don't go back. It's a little bit different from "no turning back." "No turning back" is when you enter. After it's over, you have actually changed, you're a different person. There's evidence of it, there's proof, it can be verified. There's inward change which you can express verbally and in that way it can be verified externally. There are external changes which people can see, and more importantly, they can hear. It's mainly by words that you will be able to show it.

These initiations make you more alive and more in life. You may not know you have been initiated until some later time when you're in trouble and you find yourself thinking back to something that happened during a sesshin or during your time at Tassajara or when you had a car accident. You go back to that time as a resource. You notice that it was a point of strength and wisdom in your life. It was informal, it wasn't traditional. That's the reason why even though war is horrible, a lot of people who have been in a war think back to that time after the war is over. There are traumatic war experiences but also there are initiatory war experiences that can be resources for the rest of your life.

You might look over your time here; do you see yourself going through this kind of process? Now we can go back to the original question: did you discover, clarify and deepen your faith? Is it hard for you to say "Yes I did discover, clarify and deepen my faith. I did discover my utmost concern in life. I clarified it and it got deeper." Is there any way to respond to this?

---

<sup>35</sup> *Song of the Jewel Mirror Samadhi*

Roberto Amador: For me it's more of a process. There are mini-happenings rather than one big happening, and the process is still happening.

Tenshin Anderson: I didn't mean to imply that you would deepen your faith and then it would stop there. It gets deeper forever. There's no bottom to faith. Did it get any deeper? Did it become more unshakable? Are you more uncertain about what is important in your life, or more certain?

RA: Probably a little more certain, but not heavily certain.

TA: Kind of a light certainty? A flexible certainty? That's what certainty is like. When you're not actually certain you make it real heavy, like "I'm certain!" That shows you're not certain. If you're really certain you can forget about it.

Here are some more questions that people asked me to discuss:

"Is dependent co-arising a concept or is a concept dependent co-arising?"

A concept is co-arising. Do you see it? All the time concepts are co-arising. Whenever you have an experience a concept arises. Also, concepts are dependently co-arisen. They all arise by causes and effects. For any concept you pick, like "Christina," there have to be certain causes for it to happen. You can't have "Christina" without a whole bunch of stuff. Also, you have to have yourself. If she put on 80 pounds and came back to Tassajara and said "I'm Christina," you might wonder. But you would have to be there to decide. Many things come together to make every single concept, so they are dependently co-arisen. Is dependent co-arising a concept? Yes, it also is a concept. Emptiness is a concept, Buddha is a concept.

Q: "What about the *bajama loka*?"

TA: *Bajama* means container. Living beings are contained in the *bajama loka*. Living beings are composed of tangible things, smellable things, tasteable things, touchable things, audible things and visible things. The elements, earth, air, fire and water come together to make these five types of materiality. Each of the types of materiality is dependently co-arisen. You can tell which one it is by studying their dependent co-arising. If you take away some conditions from light, it's not a visible thing anymore, it's not light. We saw earlier how the psyche, how our mind arises out of the interplay between these different types of dependently co-arisen materiality. Since the psyche is born of dependently co-arisen things, it thinks in terms of dependent co-arising. Its essence, its origin, its root is dependent co-arising. So the container world, the physical world gives the essential quality to the mind. That's one of the reasons why scientists have fun—they get to see the nature of their liberated consciousness by studying materiality. That's what's liberating about science.

John Grimes: What is "the dependent" that Vasubandhu refers to in verse 22?

TA: He's talking about three types of nature. One is called "the dependent," one is called "the imagined," or "fabricated," and one is called "the accomplished." They are called *tri-svabhava*, three kinds of own-being. It's kind of ironic to call them own-being since own-being means self-existent, and later he shows that all three of them are empty. They are three ways to be. One way to be is the dependent way. When a concept arises by causes and conditions, it's the dependent form of existence. Concepts are dependently co-produced in the minds of living beings. When I look over there and see the concept "Christina" I have trouble not seeing her as Christina because certain causes and conditions have come together but when I look at Lee I have no trouble not thinking of Christina. There are causes and conditions which make the concept happen. That's the dependent situation.

If I just leave it like that, that is wisdom. But if I attribute independent existence to Christina, then that attribution which is applied to something which is dependently co-produced obscures the dependent co-arising. I may say "it's substantial, it doesn't depend on other things, it's really this." That imagining that something exists all by itself, that John acts like this because he's an independent thing rather than understanding that I and everybody else make John be the way he is—that's called the fabricated. That way of existence is miserable. That's the story of how birth and death happen.

I have a thought about you, that you're stupid. The way I imagine that the thought is real and true, that you are really the way I think you are—that's a fabrication. There's no evidence for it. I might think I have evidence, but all the reasons I use to point out why you're stupid are exactly the reasons why you're not that way. If you really were that way I wouldn't need these excuses but without the excuses there's no proof you're that way. That's why I use them. Before I used them I just thought you were that way and attributed substance to you. If you want to say someone is some way you don't need any proof. But then if people challenge you, you bring in information to prove it and the more information you bring in, the more you show that they are not what they are unless you bring that information in. Finally you give enough information so that everyone agrees that proves the person wasn't that way. Then you see how they are dependently co-produced. That's what they really are.

For example—who's a perfect person we can use for an example? Gloria? Since she's perfect I can make a story about her being bad. If I say 'Gloria's not so good,' someone else will say 'she's not so bad.' Then I say 'What about this thing about the temperature at the baths?' 'Well, that's true, she does have some problems around that.' Other people may say 'well, that's not really so bad.' 'Well, did you hear she did such and such a thing?' 'Oh, she did? My god!' Pretty soon I build this really big case. But what I built is a different Gloria than we had earlier. Now everybody sees a terrible Gloria who has been conjured up by all the stories I told. It wasn't there before I told the story and if I take the story away there's nothing left. So the very things I used to conjure her up show that there was never anything there before. If you do this in your mind, and then take it away, there's nothing left.

Have you ever seen Bunraku puppets? They are large and have life-like faces and fancy costumes and are operated by four puppeteers. You could think of the body of the puppet as the *rupa skandha* and then there are four master puppeteers in black clothes who come in and make the puppet come alive and rise up. Then they move away and it dies. It's just like a thing called a person. These things come together and make a person. There was nothing there before and suddenly there seems to be one thing. Actually it's not one thing, it's a puppet with four people operating it. We call it one thing. You take Teah, Gaelyn, Meiya and Dorotea. Are they one person, one thing? No they aren't. Suppose they take a puppet and make it stand up. Suddenly there's one thing there. What happened? There are reasons why it looks like that. If two start pulling one way and two pull another way and they rip the puppet in half you wouldn't see one puppet, you would see a bunch of shreds on the floor. You might call it one thing—"puppeteer disaster." But when you see that there's no such thing, you have a dependently co-arisen thing without any substance attributed to it and that's called the accomplished. Something is happening but you see how it's made. You don't see it as an independent thing. There's the absence of the attribution of independent existence. The only way to keep it absent is to appreciate its radiant production.

JG: What about the phrase "the absence of the one prior to it"?

TA: Vasubandhu introduces "fabrication" first, in verse 20. The next verse introduces the *paratantra*. He could have said "the absence of one mentioned in verse 20." It probably chants better in Sanskrit this way.

Meg Jeffrey: How does rebirth relate to this teaching?

TA: Vasubandhu doesn't talk about that here. But if you achieve this "serene body of release" then you will be able to go to work earlier on your meditation practice when you are reborn. According to this theory, *alaya* is how human beings get hung up in their psyche and in the effects from their past karma. When you revolutionize this whole process, you gradually get lighter and lighter and yet if you make certain vows, the effect of those vows is that you will be reborn. Without making those vows you would become an arhat and wouldn't come right back. However, according to Mahayana teaching you would eventually come back. It doesn't deny rebirth, it just emphasizes the process of liberation so that you can go through the process of rebirth with the highest possible level of attention and alertness, and not be fooled by what's going on.

Joe Janowski: Before, I didn't believe in reincarnation at all. Did you immediately believe in reincarnation when you encountered Buddhism or is it a belief that developed?

TA: When I first encountered Buddhism I didn't run into the idea of reincarnation for a long time. When I did, it was mildly interesting. Mostly, I was interested in the extent to which other people were interested in it. It's funny how people always want to talk about it, given that our society basically rejects it. I wouldn't say exactly that I believe in it. I would say that I have the same attitude toward the story of rebirth that I have about the story of my life. The story of this guy appearing in Mississippi 51 years ago has an existential reality equal to the story of his having previous rebirths. If I take a position that I didn't have previous births, then I'm believing that I didn't, and then why would I believe that this birth is real? Dogen says that if you don't believe in rebirth then you should also not believe in this life. It's inconsistent to take a position against it but I also don't take a position for it. I don't think Buddha took a position for it. He just said things like "when I reviewed my past lives...." He made the decision to sit still and then during the night he attained various shamanic powers. One shamanic power is to review past lives, so he reviewed his past lives and went way back and found that there wasn't a beginning.

Buddhism becomes interesting to cosmologists and particle physicists because you can look back through this process. The way the stories of our lives go is the way the stories of our past lives go and the way those stories go is the same as the story of the universe. If you study those stories you can get back to the big bang and inflationary universe theories. It's all in the psyche too because the psyche arose out of the material world. The way we were created is the story of the universe. Einstein can sit there and look at his upset stomach and come up with general relativity. The principles of indigestion are produced by the history of the world.

I asked someone—"When you saw your reversal what did you see?" He said he saw some monks and nuns and things like that. The answer I was hoping for was "I saw five *skandhas*." That's what Buddha saw. When Buddha looked back, there was one thing he saw in every life. He always saw five *skandhas*. Some people say they saw Egyptian princesses and so on. Buddha also said he was a frog and a lion and things like that. But in every single past life he saw five *skandhas*. In other words, in every life there was dependent co-arising, there was an ungraspable event. In every life we map a self onto that event. The event of life is prior to the concept. In every life there is the event of life and then there is or is not a concept placed on it.

Robin Frey: Isn't reincarnation just a concept?

TA: Did you just say "it's just a concept?" What would Vasubandhu say about that? He would say that everything is just a concept. Not only is reincarnation a concept, but life is just a concept. Every moment of your life is just a concept, so is rebirth, so is dependent co-arising. That's why I'm not going to say "I don't believe in the concept called rebirth because this other concept is true!" Every element of my life, plus making up a big fat concept about all the little concepts; all those are just concepts. Rebirth, past lives, Buddha, dependent co-arising, enlightenment, Zen Center are all just concepts.

RF: If there's no permanent self, what is it that continues or is reborn?

TA: A person. It's the story about the rebirth of a person, the same person. If it were a different person we wouldn't be talking about it. Nothing is created or destroyed. There's no end to things and things aren't endless. The way the world works is more mysterious than our little brains can get a grip on. There is a story about one person going on and on and on. You have a story about this life, and in the same way the story can go beyond this life. To make a case against it going before or beyond this life is the same as making a case for or against it now. Taking any position on the existence of something that dependently co-arises is called "no evidence for it. It's mere fabrication."

Do you want to get free from this whole process? Find out what it's like to actually see how something dependently co-arises. See how things actually happen and you'll get released from the whole thing. Then you will be able to see all your past lives, and what you will see is the five *skandhas*. You will



see the inconceivability, the ungraspability of things. People will continue to dream up their lives, their past lives and their future lives or reject their past lives. The question is—are we going to be free and happy, or are we going to be miserable? The key to happiness is the study of dependent co-arising. That's the key to seeing that everybody is beautiful. When you see how people dependently co-arise, every single person is beautiful. If you don't see things as dependently co-arisen, then only some people are beautiful, and they had better stay that way. Like, Sala doesn't like my mustache!

Meiya Wender: Is that why it's there? To show dependent co-arising?

TA: That's why it's there!

MW: What a sacrifice!

TA: I sacrificed my face to science! to Sala's scientific inquiry into causes and conditions.

JJ: So everything's a concept. The moon is a concept, a spaceship's a concept. We can work with those concepts. We can agree that Tassajara is a concept and we're all leaving the day after tomorrow. We can function with those concepts; they seem to have validity. You can say that everything is a concept but some seem to have more validity than others. What if I say "We're in Paris"?

TA: You can't just make up concepts out of nowhere. There are reasons for them. For example, we don't agree that we're in Paris. You can say that, but we don't agree because there are causes and conditions for Paris. What about the Eiffel Tower? Where is it? I have a concept of Paris, it's a perfectly good concept. Each of us has a different version but we can communicate because our concepts are built in certain ways and I can find out how you built your concept. If for some reason you don't have the Eiffel Tower in your concept of Paris, we can work that out. How about Montmartre? I might ask you what you think Paris is. You might say you think it's a city in California. But I think it's a city in France. Then you might say "Oh, that's right, it is in France." If you have a different idea, then maybe this is Paris. Maybe what you mean is "I feel like I'm in Paris every time I finish a practice period!" Now we know what you mean by Paris. Now I'm in Paris too! That's why concepts are dependently co-arisen and why there's nothing to them. Do you see how we just switched from one Paris to another? That's why there's no such thing as Paris. It's just a concept.

John Landon: What about that encounter with the woman when you shouted "Don't believe what you think....." What if she had pulled out a meat tenderizer....? The non-substantiality of things really is giving me a hard time!

TA: You're making non-substantiality into a substantial thing! That's what's bothering you. You **can't** be bothered by non-substantial things. Non-substantial things are beauty. When I see her over there doing her thing and I see her as a non-substantial person, then she's a beautiful woman. It's when she was substantial that I was having a problem with her. And if she pulled out a meat cleaver then I would have had even more of a problem with the substantiality of that. It's when you think that the woman with a meat cleaver is substantial that you get paralyzed, freaked out, ready to kill. It was my perception of her as having substantiality that was scaring me. That's why I was jumping up and down saying "Don't believe, Reb, don't believe what you think! You think that she really is that way!"

When some lady raises a meat cleaver we might think "I'm not going to meditate on this and see how the world is creating this. I'm not going to watch how it is that my mind sees this tiny lady as big and frightening, and that she's screaming at me because she's scared to death. I'm not going to see all that. I'm going to see her as a monster and I'm going to freak out."

"Non-substantiality" is when you see that things are being produced by everything in the universe. It's extremely beautiful to see creation at work before your eyes, before your nose, before your tongue, before your body, before your mind. You do not have a problem. If it's a meat tenderizer, you just sit there and see the beauty of a meat tenderizer. And if it's coming towards you, you see the beauty of getting out of the way.

Then you see the “unique breeze of reality.” You see creation “weaving the ancient brocade.”<sup>36</sup> This beautiful story of the creation of the universe comes forward from beginningless time and we can see the latest thread that’s being put in right now. If you see it, this is revelation. It’s being shown to us all the time. That’s why we have to be quiet. Just be quiet and watch for the next appropriate response. The appropriate response and revelation come up together. When the monk asked Yunmen “What was Buddha’s teaching during his whole lifetime?” Yunmen didn’t just say “revelation.”<sup>37</sup> When you’re a Buddha, everything that’s happening is revelation but it isn’t only revelation. It’s revelation and then you **respond**.

---

<sup>36</sup> *Book of Serenity*, Case 1

<sup>37</sup> *Blue Cliff Record*, Case 14