

Midwest Zen

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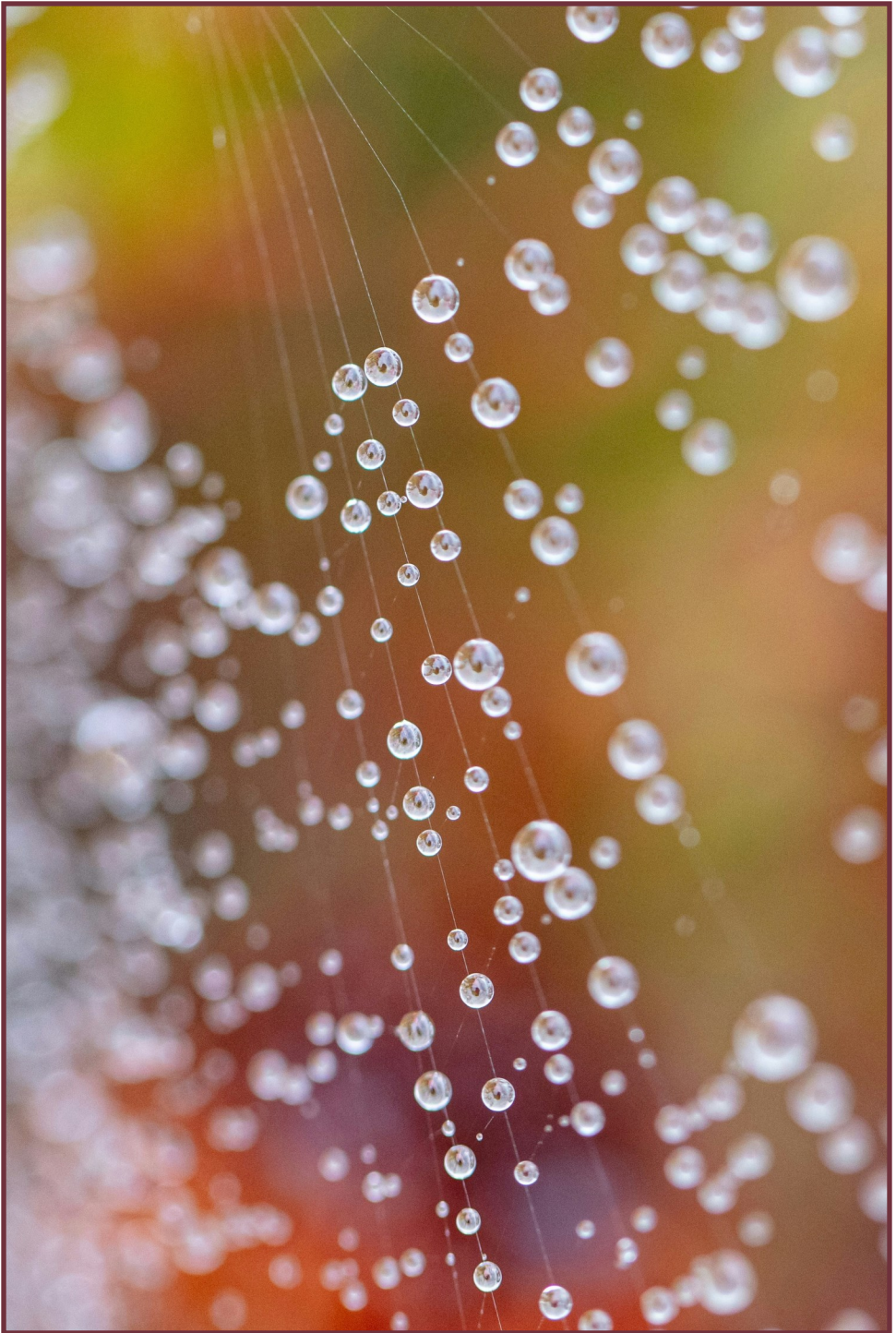


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Coming and Going in Indra's Net

There is a hoary old Buddhist joke that goes: “A monk approached a NYC hot dog vendor and the vendor asked, ‘What’ll you have?’” The monk said, “Make me one with everything.” Still, once we have stopped chuckling, we realize that the monk had a mistaken view. “One” is undifferentiated sameness. Any “me” would vanish into that undifferentiated sameness. There could be no “me” in oneness, for to be one allows for no distinctions.

Perhaps he could have answered the question “What’ll you have?” by saying “Just as it is,” for things just as they are already exist in relationship to everything else. Their nature is primarily understood in comparison with their opposite. We understand what something is by reference to what it is not. “Is this hot?” “Well, it's not cold.” Hot is not cold and, conversely, cold is not hot. To know what is high, we must know what is low and the “one” is understood in its relationship to the “all.” In this way, true reality is the intimate, inseparable, and necessary pairing of reciprocally-defining partners.

The *Heart Sutra* offers the classic example of this partnership when it states that “form is emptiness, emptiness is form.” Forms change and as such are a demonstration of their emptiness of fixed being and emptiness is the attribute of forms which allows them to change. Dogen suggests the degree of this interdependence when he says that we don't need to use the verb “is,” for this would mean there are two separate things. When we say form, emptiness is there. When we say emptiness, form is there. In fact, although we can perceive them only one at a time, we cannot separate form from emptiness, nor emptiness from form.

This intimate embrace means that we really cannot say there are two separate things. They are “not two.” Nevertheless, the partners in the embrace that is their reality do not dissolve into the undifferentiated sameness of “one.” They exist in a living relationship that is never two, yet never one, individually engaged in creating each other's reality.

I find “not two” a thrilling answer to the question that first brought me to Zen. My question was not about how to find peace or to find meaning in life or to learn how to improve myself. At a time in my life when my inevitable mortality first struck deep into my

consciousness, the question that arose was, “Well, then, what is this life? What's going on that requires my death? How do I fit in?”

Early reading in Zen and my first experience of zazen gave me the sense that somehow this was a different perspective on life. I began to practice and study and gradually came to understand and joyfully accept the concept of “not two.” I belong. I am not separate. I remain individual, yet my life intimately participates in the life of the whole universe, a whole that derives its reality from my individuality. I came to see that my changing life is an element of the changing universe and, as such, I must understand this process of universal change as well as I can so that my participation will be as beneficial as possible.

Indra's Net is a gorgeous Buddhist metaphor that represents how we and the universe are “not two.” According to Wikipedia, “The metaphor's earliest known reference is found in the *Atharva Veda*. It was further developed by the Mahayana school in the 3rd century *Buddhāvataṃsaka Sūtra* and later by the Huayan school between the 6th and 8th centuries.”

Indra's Net is a network of relationships that fills the entire universe. It is described as a cosmic net adorned with brilliant jewels at each knot of intersection. Each of these jewels has many polished facets and each jeweled facet reflects all other jewels even as it is simultaneously being reflected in all other jewels.

This is a glorious vision that dazzles the mind, yet we must be careful not to think of it in two dimensions, nor see the reflections as a one-way matter. Indra's net is alive and buzzing with change, for each received image changes the receiver, however slightly, and this means that the receiver's own image, now reflected in other jewels, has changed. Furthermore, each jewel has many facets, each of which participates in the mutual stream of activity. Indra's net shows that our relationship to what is happening in each moment is a complex, living web of causes and conditions.

The message of Indra's net is that it is in our relationships that we are part of its shining network. We are part of an inseparable whole, distinct and individual yet, as Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Indra's glowing network is one way that, for thousands of years, Buddhists have portrayed one of our most basic tenets: interdependent origination. The Buddha taught that everything comes into existence through its relationships with everything else. Nothing arises alone.

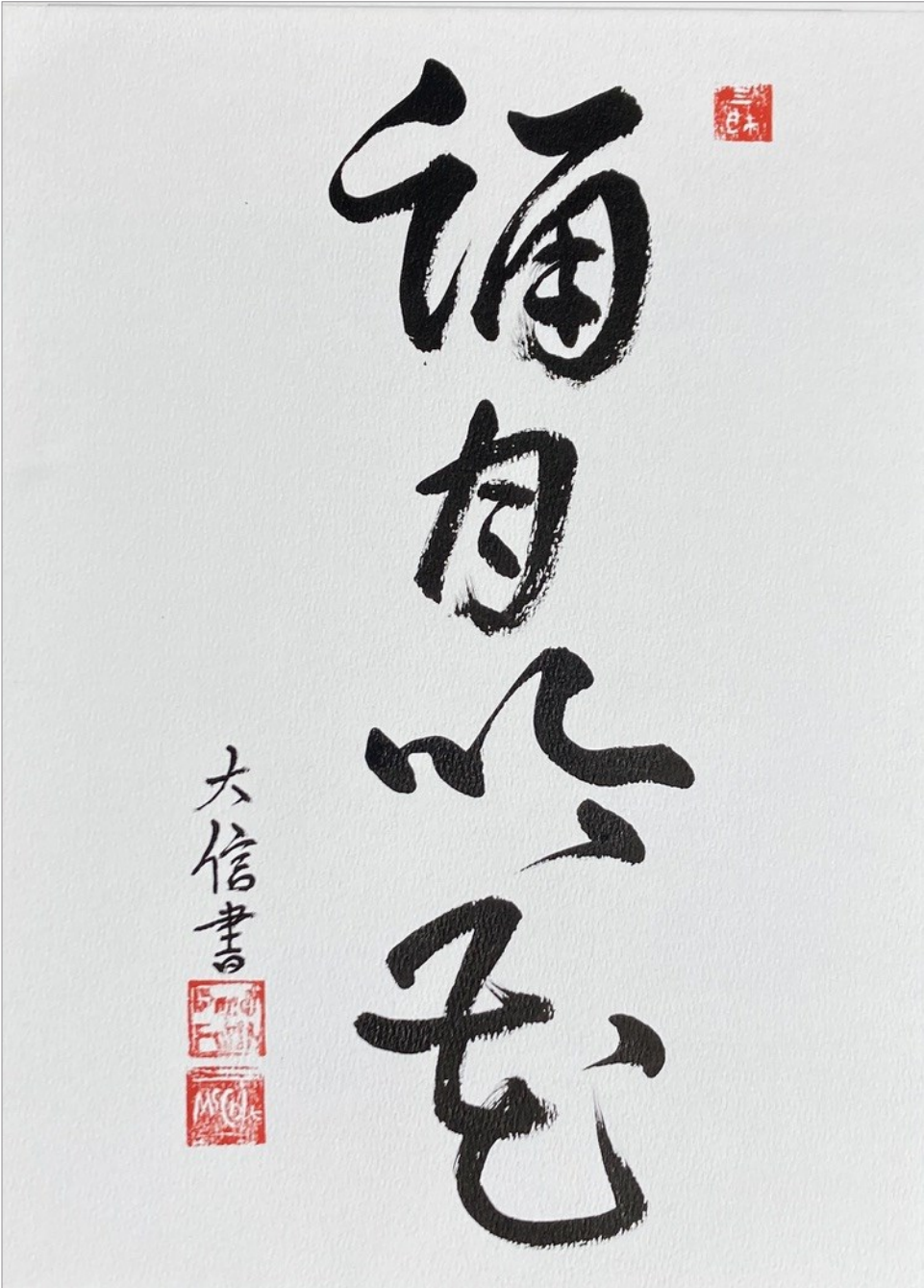
A second great Buddhist understanding is that of impermanence. Everything changes, nothing lasts. This is because everything is empty of fixed or permanent nature, a reality described in Buddhism as "emptiness." Dogen (1200-1253), the Japanese founder of my tradition of Soto Zen, says that the green mountains walk. Despite their majestic bulk, change is occurring and just as walking is our human mode of displacement, so is the mountain doing its own "walking," although in a different time frame.

These two, interdependence and impermanence, are at work in the reflections of Indra's Net that stream forth in mutuality. Our lives reflect the endless process of the life of the universe and at the same time contribute to its nature. This life process is a manifestation of change, of coming and going, within which we also come, and we also go.

If we become vividly aware that we belong within Indra's living net, we begin to see our life as a relationship with everything we encounter. Our aim is no longer to own, to possess, to have, to defeat, to conquer. It is to relate intimately with all things, in the knowledge that we are "not two." All things are essential as contributors to our individuality. Our respect grows for each person we encounter, and we attempt to see the fullness of their humanity. Our respect grows for the pets who share our lives, and we become companions, not masters. We begin to respect the objects in our lives, washing each dish with care.

Above all, our sense of gratitude grows. We are grateful that we belong, that our small individual self plays its part. How wondrous to be working together with the Milky Way in the life of this universe!

That first glimpse of mortality that spurred me to seek understanding occurred forty years ago, forty years in which I have come to know the joy of belonging to it all. At 91, mortality looms clearer and closer than ever before. Like most of us, I seriously regret that I must die, but it is good to know that in dying I participate in this endless flow of change that we call Life.



誦月吟花

Recite a poem while viewing the moon and flowers

Lakota medicine people and Jesuit missionaries participated in a series of inter-religious dialogues on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota in the 1970's over a several year period. I had the privilege of personal access to over 1000 pages of the minutes of these dialogues and used them to assist in writing my honors thesis at Bucknell University where I had majored in Biology and Religion. Per the request of those in the dialogue and for their privacy, these minutes remain unpublished. Yet, in studying them I think it's important to share here the differences between Western and Indigenous ways of thinking about the natural world.

What struck me like a bell during this study was reading one of the medicine men's accounts of prayer, comparing it to Christian forms. For him, prayer could be conducted to or through the natural world. It was the natural world itself that served as an altar to God. He talked about sending his prayers over the Appalachian Mountains, where he was wrongfully imprisoned for some time, at Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary. He talked about praying to various animals, and learning from them what they had to teach.

This way of thinking about the natural world is not uncommon to many indigenous peoples. The above four kanji have a similar sentiment, and they express something that all of us, Buddhist or not, indigenous or not, can do as a means of celebrating our connection to the world around us. The phrase reads, "Recite while viewing the moon or flowers."

What should one recite? Perhaps a poem. Maybe a prayer. The point is that the moon and flowers and anything in the natural world can act as an altar. While we need our churches and temples as a focal place to gather as a community, we also need to remember that the earth itself is the most precious spiritual center. "Right where we walk is our temple" is a famous Zen saying. Monks would go out on pilgrimage after practicing at a

Daishin McCabe

temple for months or years and be reminded that the whole of the natural world is the place of awakening.

Buddha woke up while sitting in a forest under a tree. Mahakashapa's enlightenment was verified when the Buddha held up a flower. Ryokan gave away his clothes after a thief found nothing of value in his hut. His regret, as the thief was running away, was that he could not also offer him the beautiful moon shining brightly that evening.

The truth is that we are all reciting something all the time, but usually we are unaware of it, and unaware of the world around us. We have unconscious mental scripts that induce anxiety, anger, and shame, and we gravitate to conversations that reinforce our unconscious thought patterns. These scripts block us from seeing the beauty around us. The question we can raise right now, however, as human beings capable of compassion and beneficial deeds, is what kind of mental script do we want to replace the unconscious one's with? Perhaps we can draw from a prayer or poem that will open us up to the world around us.



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Henry Shukman

Sweeping the Yard

When I sweep the yard in the morning
I don't do it for myself,
because I like it tidy,
I don't do it for the yard's sake,
because it enjoys being clean.

I do it for the shy one
who lives inside me,
who loves the world
better than I ever will,
whose innocence is beyond
understanding,

who has nothing to prove,
whose sweetness
shines on the earth
so the earth loves itself again,
who I only ever know
in glimpses that leave me

breathless with longing,
with hope that goodness
is still possible, is still somehow
present in the world,
and which knock away
all my ideas of who
or what I should be,

as we pick up the broom again,
he and I, and send the old leaves
skittering across the patio,
and the dust smoking over the tiles
like ink from a brush,

and make the little heaps
we'll gather in later.

This is how he wakes up,
this is how his wakefulness
turns our little yard
into the bright place
I remember now as home.

Henry Shukman

Walkers

I heard them, the trudge
on the cold shingle of the path,
before I saw them: the people,
their shadows first, moving across
the bright needles of the firs
lit by late sun streaking up our little valley.
I'd been hoping to fix the broken step –
just a piece of staked board
where the rains had washed away
a gap I'd been meaning to fill.
But soon after I got to it,
they came. I'd known they would,
and I'd been in some alarm about it.
Some old dread of hostile bands
among trees, perhaps, of martial law
or press gangs you couldn't refuse.
Or because evening was just touching the hills'
shoulders and it was cold,
with snow patches on the ground,
and though the higher branches were still catching the light
and it was beautiful gold up there,
down here it was dark and dingy-feeling,
here in the dull dark it brought out
something old from the blood, something
wicked remembered, from days
when the coming of strangers meant danger.
I scraped and pressed in a last handful,
and went behind a shield of scrub oaks.
The shadows came, then the heads,
and after that since it was a long line
I began to see the frontrunners up above already,
on the ridge, the skyline,
lit gold in the last of the cold day,

their goretex and lycra shining
like they could have been clad in tin.
35 or 40 of them – a good band.
Then they were gone. In the quiet,
fat little thrushes jumped back down
among long stripes of shade on the ground,
picking for pine nuts, flutter-tumbling about
like balls of lint, flickering among the grass stalks,
at ease in their busy-ness once again,
now that trouble had passed.

Henry Shukman

Passenger

when the last moorings
have been released,
when the lines have swung loose
and the hull parted from the quay,
and you feel the new tide
take you, as if it had been
waiting all this time just for you,
and in no time the dock
is already far behind –
don't imagine it's you
who made this current,
so smooth yet with the unseen might
of a great river in it.

It's like that first time you swam,
when you were seven or eight,
and lifted your toes
clean off the pool bottom,
and to your astonishment
the water held you.
You hovered like a cloud
in the sky, your shadow flickering
over blue land below.

So now all you've done
is give yourself over,
against all instincts,
and found that you're held,
and that what carries you
knows where to take you,
and there's no reason
not to let it, and you do,
and in doing so you realize
you've just found an answer
that had always eluded you.



Robert Okaji

Bamboo Flute

I am studying simplicity
in the way a rattlesnake
watches a field mouse,

which means of course
that I am doing it all wrong
and making this much more

difficult. Today's lesson
is humility: I achieve no
tone from this damn bamboo
flute, no matter how I adjust
my mouth and wind. *Go
watch football*, the voices
say. Instead I go to the grocery,
buy my wife's favorite
wine, and later pour her

a glass and offer Irish cheddar
with rice crackers and a few
grapes. I sip beer, pick up

the flute, and sound
a wavering D followed by a goose
fart and spitting hamsters.

Progress, I think. Now
back to the lesson. Relax!
I'm nailing this simplicity thing.

In the Garden of Wind's Delight

Faltering, it drifts
to a stop, rests for a moment
before fluttering to its end.

It is good to be sound.
It is good to trickle through holes.
It is good to be old
even if just one of a crowd.

These notes serve no purpose
yet they linger beyond
their existence.

I listen to their past
for their future. Where are you?
I ask. What is your true name?

Sasa Buki

Thin at the tip
then wide,
tapering down

to the stalk.

Exhaling, I search

Robert Okaji

for the leaf,

reshaping lips

and angle,

listening

to the wind

I have made

in this moment.

Ro

When this note fades

will it join you in that place

above the sky or

below the waves

of the earth's plump

body? Or will it

circle back, returning

to my lips and this

diminished day

to aspire again?

Exhaling, I Get Dizzy

From one note flattened

to the next floating whole,

textured with rustling

stalks and the sweet odor

of dried grasses, you
detach, drift off.
What colors this tone, you
ask. What sings my day?

The Shakuhachi Knows

Silence pours through itself
and huddles against the light.
Unsure, I exhale, and a tongue
of air flickers through the openings,
bearing questions whose answers
I cannot shape into words.
Who stands there singing?
What is the color of love
or a shadow's weight?
When will this begin to end?



Notes:

Bamboo Flute was previously published in the anthology *The Larger Geometry: poems for peace*.

In the Garden of Wind's Delight was previously published in *Nine Muses Poetry*.

Sasa Buki, or breath of a bamboo leaf, is a *shakuhachi* method of developing skill.

Ro is the musical note made by closing all holes on the *shakuhachi*.

The Shakuhachi Knows was previously published in *Winnow Magazine*.

Ancient Streams

Shortly after I hang up the phone, I walk to my village post office, a decaying building painted in yellow. There, a middle-aged clerk picks up a phone which has just started ringing. After a moment of silence, she yells into it: "I'm not interested! Why are you calling me again? I didn't ask you to call me! Stop calling me!" She seems to be on the verge of tears. For a moment, I wonder if she has just spoken to the same person I did earlier at home. During that call, I had to explain that I didn't want to share my age over the phone and that I wasn't interested in any marketing offers. The clerk sighs and we exchange understanding smiles.

outside the window

lazy clouds in the summer sky

a clerk slams her phone

Such a brief moment taking place in an insignificant village in a small country, yet packed to the brim with one message after another. A single phone call, a representative of so many life situations seemingly leaving no other option than to turn to anger as means of protection. One thing deeply misunderstood, even though our red skins, clenched teeth, anxious hearts, and minds in turmoil are literally yelling it. It's the angry ones who get burned first.

Even though I have no doubt that anger rooted in hatred is damaging for oneself and others, things are not black and white, and it is certainly not my place to judge anyone. I heard of stories where energy of anger was needed for people to make a step they

needed to do to help themselves out of harmful situations. I too know what anger feels like. At the same time, when I am honest with myself, I recognize that if there's enough clarity, it is possible to offer a response from a place of freedom and stability. Sometimes perhaps with a gentle whisper and other times with a loud shout, but always without the pain of hatred or fear. And I ask, what's preventing this?

Running away from the pain underneath, hardening and hardening, it can never really heal. Misconceiving kindness as weakness and anger as strength, softness is underestimated. However, it is a river that wears away rock, not the other way around. Arising from the clarity about the nature of experience, how could true kindness ever be shaken? This is much more than mere politeness. Watching the water meeting the stone at this moment seemingly reveals nothing, and so I wonder if it's short-sightedness that makes it hard to understand.

fulfilling

entire canyons—

ancient streams

There is no need to wait millennia though. Leaving behind all the ideas about what anger and kindness mean, if there were two people standing next to each other, one kind and another raging, just simply by looking at their bodies, where is tightness, and where is space? Which one stands like a mountain and which one is trembling? I am suspicious that human confusion often arises from relating to our experience through habitual thoughts rather than allowing ourselves to fully experience. Standing in

Fūmyō Michaela Robošová

the skin of those two people, how does it really *feel*? What it *is*?
Perhaps a next phone call can reveal this.

I wouldn't like to forget about those on the other end of a telephone line. One can never know who's calling. Yes, it might be a person who wants to steal information or money. It could also be coming from a call center employing a divorced mother who is struggling to provide for her children, like my mother did. Rejecting a marketing offer or even reporting someone in cases of malicious activity doesn't need to mean rejecting a fellow human being.

digits

three jobs, two kids

one mother



Note:

This work was previously published on the [Rustling Leaves blog](#)
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September

The yellow butterflies zigzag
above the traffic and out of their lane,
taking up the whole sky, and near
the gate with the broken latch
a pumpkin grows out of last year's ruin,
as green and small as a promise.



Immersing body and mind

Deeply in the Way

Awakening true mind

Shuso ceremony of Hiro Ikushima
Sinzan Junji
Wednesday, December 13
Tassajara Zen Mountain Center

Hiro asked me to draw an image of valleys, full moon and wake up bell. The drawing shows a monk as Shuso (head student) holding a wake up bell. Shuso's job is to run down the cabins of Tassajara and wake up everyone in the morning, 3:50 am, 4:30 am, or 4:50 am. It is usually still dark and you can see the moon and stars.

- Esho

Commentary Comments

*Forms don't hinder emptiness; emptiness is the tissue of form.
Emptiness isn't the destruction of form; form is the flesh of emptiness.*

—Hakuin

Commentary on the Heart Sutra

Bring me a small wisdom—one you heard
on wind that passes quick as a lost bird
or your last kiss. Carry it in your own hands,
ungloved, open to cold and warmth. Let rain
unloose stray shards of time, marked with names
like truth or news. I want a wisdom as new
as your eyes. Wisdom that falls, never lands.
Bring it naked as love. That cool, that blue.

*

He's away from home all the time but he's
never on the road. He travels as loose
as fishing line dancing on a bright brook.
His eyes decide what might be home. He sees
a road unroll through sleep, then ties its noose
to his bed. Nowhere to go or to look.

*

You're killing chaos to give him fresh eyes—
Still, blind, dead. Your every move's as futile
as watering a stream. Chaos can't lie
until you kiss him with your deadly cold lips.
They're your gift, the soft key that may unlock

little secrets you're certain he still hides
in his own icy mouth. Secret lore slips
past you while you question a dead god's smile.
Sit still. Don't whisper. There's no need for talk.



Note:

The first line of each stanza is drawn from Hakuin's commentary on the Heart Sutra.

Early Buddhism

Polly Cannon set off all by herself
to find un-named trees and lose her wrong self
like a basket or a love note. She looked
at leaves, branches, sky. She refused to chant.
The sounds that god-names made scared her infant
soul. She ignored birds. Learned no holy books
while scratching words in dust. She asked for no
meaning. She sat still. She breathed. She let go.

Shunyata

Rinsing
a water bottle:

Play
of air and light,

clarity on
clarity.

Practice
of the needless.

Questions on Practice

Can I practice Zen when I'm not doing zazen?

Harada Roshi talks about dividing our life into “Zen within stillness” and “Zen within activity.” In this way we will be able to be one with our work and be one with the samadhi of zazen. “Being one with our work” means being present with whatever is in front of us right now. Whatever we are experiencing, we do not try to distract ourselves away. We stay and we stay and we stay until, because change is the nature of reality, eventually it turns into something else. Meanwhile we will have had the full experience of ourselves throughout the process. I know someone who features a powerful presence of mind though she has just been diagnosed with lung cancer. She stays with herself, her feelings, her questions, her wish to understand her treatment plan. She is not impatient or angry or resentful. She is just herself today knowing that she has lung cancer. That’s practicing Zen when you’re not doing zazen or you could say that’s zazen when you’re not on the cushion.

The best advice for Buddhist social action:

“Robert Thurman ended a talk with what he calls ‘the best advice for Buddhist social action I have yet seen’ referring to Dogen’s ‘Four Methods of Guidance’ (which Thurman called the ‘four political practices’)—giving, kind speech, beneficial action, and identity action. That was kind of an eye opener.”

It’s a reminder that everything we do, even small actions, are political because of our interconnectedness. It turns Jane Austen’s main theme of “manners” into social-action-teaching completely relevant for today, because she studies how people treat each other and their growing understanding of behavior that is beneficial as opposed to destructive. For her, generosity and kind speech are at the heart of it. In the end her indicators of growth are always some form of deepening consideration for others. Those who are best at this not only are the happiest, but the best liked and therefore the most powerful. It turns what is political away from big speeches to small personal actions. So insightful.

What is the best way to change our habits of behavior and thought?

Penelope Easten, an Alexander Technique teacher from Ireland has

developed tips for changing default patterns in muscle use and consciousness by thinking the thoughts involved in any specific change regularly. It is easy, she says, to make a change using inhibition, but the brain usually resets quickly to the old pattern, its current “default.” We need to repeat and repeat until the new patterns are taken into sub-cortical layers and become the new default. I notice that some defaults reset easily; others fight you all the way, she says.

This is beginner’s mind—a place of no expectation. EVERY time we want to make a change, we need to inhibit the old desire and then do all the thinking involved in making the change again and again persistently.

It is those small but powerful moments of quiet, sustained attention that change brain plasticity. Alongside changing our movement patterns, think of building new habits of staying conscious and present, of being upright!

Does it really do any good to sit zazen now and then in the midst of one’s multi-tasking life?

Yes it does. Perhaps it’s *because* our soul so desires it, regular short practices drop into our nervous system and establish themselves in our body. You will begin to want different things, like not to rush, for example, or simply be more careful. That in itself can cause you to make different decisions, even to want to practice more. Even if your “now and thens” don’t become slightly more frequent, you’ve accomplished something.

Respect as a form of concentration

“I love when Roshi said, ‘when we respect things we will find their true life.’ Also when he said, ‘when we pick up the chairs one by one carefully, without making much noise, then we will have the feeling of practice in the dining room,’ there is the implication that this feeling of practice will be felt in the dining room even after the cleaners have gone. I myself, entering spaces where people have practiced regularly can feel the intensity of their concentration even when they’re not there. But I hadn’t extended that to spaces where things are just taken care of properly.”

Respect itself is a form of concentration and you can feel it in the people and things toward which it has been given, as if it’s in their

skin now. Plants show it immediately with such gratitude and human beings do also. This means that you can give yourself respect, and others will sense the feeling of practice in you that Roshi is talking about. Isn't that neat?

The liturgy of everyday life

“I understand that Dogen's liturgy was the liturgy of everyday life—washing your face, making your bed, cleaning the bathroom, using the lavatory—and that attracts me very much, but I'm not sure how to go about practicing in this way. Please, if you have suggestions, I'd be grateful.”

This is a great question. Thank you for asking it. Of course you would do it according to your temperament but here's one approach: pick a day of the week (Sunday) and one thing that you will focus on until the following Sunday (making your bed). For the ten minutes say that it takes to make your bed, make absolutely sure that you are straightening every crease and tucking in every corner and smoothing the bed cover, and so on, and as you do each task, it helps to say to yourself, “Now I am straightening creases, now I am smoothing the cover” etc. Hearing yourself is like listening to dharma and can help you stay focused. Pay attention to improvements that you notice in your ability to concentrate. On the following Saturday, assess your progress (“my mind wandered a little less”) and also pick a second task to add for the second week. This approach makes a container, holding your practice so you can watch it carefully.

“The line “Don't make up rules of your own”—does that hold for lay people as well? I know in a monastery you should just follow what has been established, but when we want to start our own home practice, don't we need to make our own rules?”

Only you know the inside of your situation and what your household can handle, so of course you must set up your own precedents. That said, let me give you a wonderful example of how it could be done if you're very serious: John Daido Looi, the now deceased Roshi of Zen Mountain Monastery, tells the story of how he and his wife (who was also a serious Zen practitioner but they had a young child and both worked full time) arranged their daily practice. In their rural and very simple home, they set up a zendo for themselves and in the very early morning they turned on an audio recording he had made of their monastery's morning sounds, including the wake up bell, the *han* calling people to the zendo and the bells and drums before

and after *zazen*. Then they opened their *oryoki* bowls and had a silent breakfast together in their “*zendo*.” He went to sit at the monastery a few nights a week and had *dokusan* with his teacher regularly. This sets a high bar I’m aware but whatever you do, it *should* be set. So that there is the feeling of practice and not just doing something for the sake of your convenience. Once it’s in place, then follow it like a mule or an ass. That would be perfect.

How can one work on developing constancy in a world that doesn’t stay the same for an instant?

It’s like building a muscle at a gym. You work on it slowly. Over time you get a more complete idea of what a muscle is and how it works in your body. Once you build the muscle, if you take care of it, you will have it wherever you go, not just at the gym. It’s the same with constancy. The more you work on it—e.g. are able to stay focused on your state of breath and mind in the midst of your activities—the easier it is to do it, no matter what the outside circumstances. Eventually you will not be disturbed by whatever the outside circumstances, even pain or death.

Why does Suzuki Roshi say that if you’re very very busy, it’s a sure sign that you are wasting your time?

If you are very very busy it’s a sure sign that you are not practicing—both in the sense of quiet mindfulness (regularly relating back to the part of you that is not busy) and in the sense of not making time for *zazen*. People who are very very busy are the ones who can’t find even five minutes. So from a Buddhist perspective their life is entirely turned around, focused on what is not important and neglecting what is most important. It’s also an indicator of a person who has not yet aroused the mind of awakening because that’s the mind that knows *zazen* is the most important because that’s the activity most likely to prepare one for awakening by way of settling oneself on oneself. If that is you, going from being very very busy to very busy might be a good start.



Note:

If you have a question you would like Gail to answer, write or send an email to Questions_On_Practice@greatwindzendo.org. There is a good chance she will be able to answer it specifically, depending on volume. Tapping into one question and one answer takes us back to the field of *One Practice*.

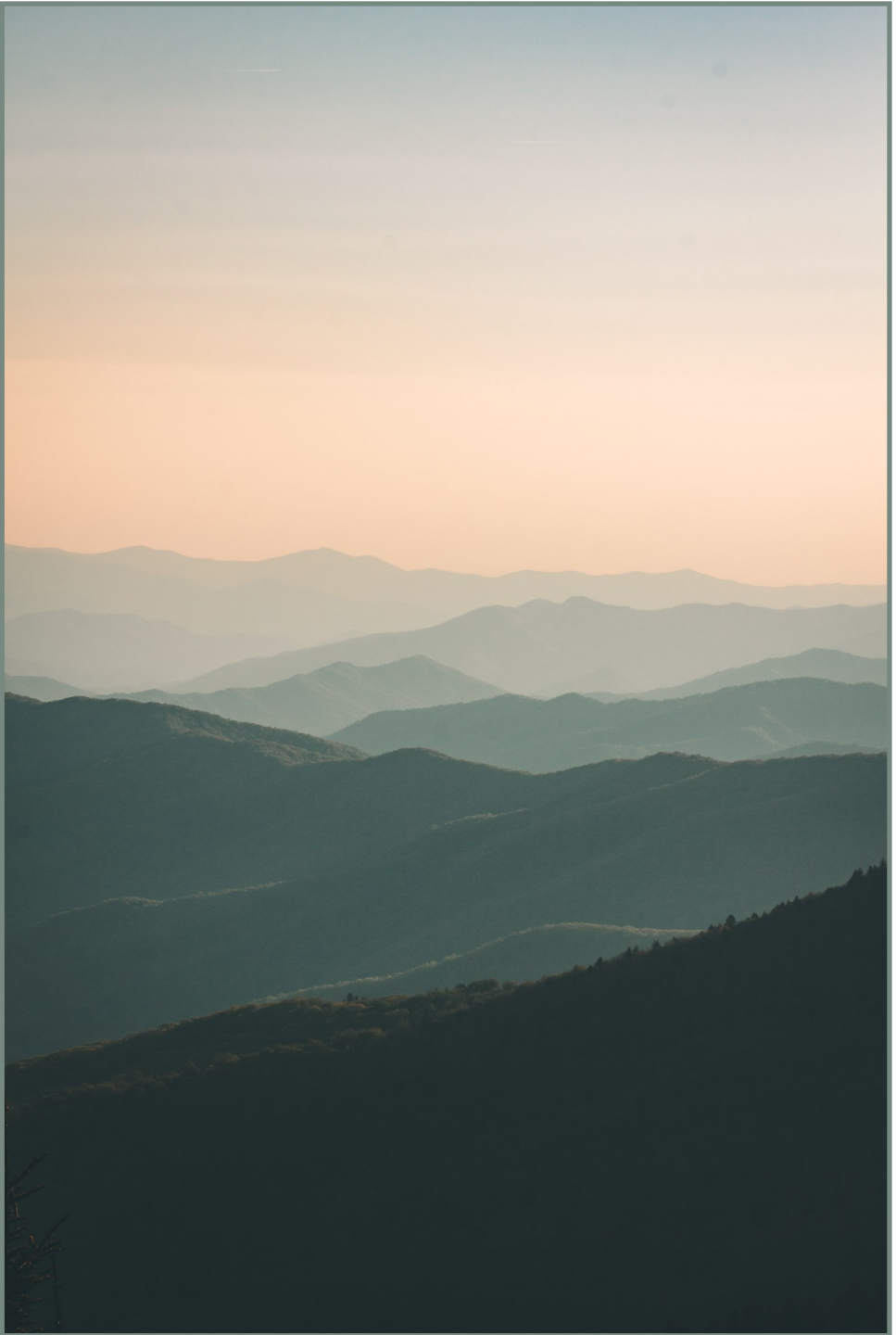


Photo by [Ivana Cajina](#) on [Unsplash](#).

Into the Fold

Tree, how come to water, to air?

Ant, so adept your lift and haul.

Hawk, how come to loft, to swoop?

Mouse, yours is to scurry.

Ancient hillside rock,

how know to stay, to slide?

Mind that muddles thought,

courting darkness, elevate your gaze!

Truth is the day's lifeblood.

Into its fold all would deliver you.

Darrell Petska

The Lyre

Listening to all that is,
breathing in, breathing out,
nothing to judge,
nothing to expect

stillness, motion,
sound and silence,
mind unbound from
daily circumstance

time's shatter, time's repair,
space a trompe l'oeil,
weightless words adrift
in cloudless sky

letting come, letting go:
tree, rock, this finite body,
one life, one world,
one moment's harmony

untethered yet in place,
just now, just here,
sitting, listening
to being's dulcet lyre.

Zen Meadow

The old white-tailed buck has breathed his last—
his legs now bearing yonder gravid doe,
his eyes seeing pheasant on its way,
his ears alerting rabbit to high-flying hawk.

Meadow grass sways with his hair.
Tree frog speaks with his grunts.
Northward wind, catching his leaps,
bounds forth on its journey.

Airy vulture and crow, creeping maggot,
prowling coyote and fox—the old buck's muscle
powers them on. Where is death when
meadow's life teems eternal?

Carrying Our Happiness

Shakyamuni Buddha's teaching says that each of us carries within ourselves our own happiness, which we must discover. According to the Buddha, happiness is not something out there waiting for us just around the next corner. It's not something to get—it's something we already have.

What are we talking about when we say "happiness?" We're talking about that feeling of being at home where we are, being content, not being pulled about by either external or internal forces. It's a calm, stable center that lets go of the dissatisfaction and judgmentalness about the reality of our life. From that place we can see the fear, anxiety, and discomfort of this moment and make our home in them. We may not like what we have to do or where we are, but we let go of like and dislike and go and do it anyway, at home in it. We take the next step, then the step after that. We notice our indecision—our fear that THIS way has some real problems, but so does THAT way. We quietly remind ourselves that, yes, THIS may not work, but we have to do something. Why not this?

So happiness is not about avoiding discomfort of either body or mind. It's our ability to receive and use these. We can be content that we're miserable. We don't let misery get the upper hand. We wake up to it and stop wanting out. We stop trying to manipulate the world in order to be "happy" and we just live in reality as it is. Rather than being angry and depressed, we take care of our problems. If we're sick, we see the doctor. If our spirit is gray and dingy, we look for things that will cheer it up, even if it's only emptying the trash by our desk.

When we're not bound by our misery, our attention expands. We find happiness in our dog's greeting at the end of the day and the taste of Iowa sweet corn (with real butter on it). We realize we need a break, so we call a friend or watch our favorite mindless show. We notice the things that lift our spirits and do more of them. Though misery sits beside us in the car, we let it be as we enjoy the sunset on the way back from the grocery store.

We let go of the suffering—the dissatisfaction and frustration that things are not good right now—and life becomes more manageable again. Our happiness wakes up and walks with us wherever we go.



Photograph by [Mark Basarab](#) on Unsplash

Diane Webster

Window Gaze

With desire she gazes
out the window pane
pain from silhouette
to cast off shadow.

Escape glass layer
away, wait, weigh
inside to out worth
tattered curtains
easily swayed.

Second Arrow Buddhism

Pale or not so pale faces,
no big difference,

pain's inevitable
but suffering more optional.

Lifted up then cast down,
our human race's

never won or done
— ending that fabrication

of cravings even beyond
five basic senses

when there aren't
enough real hungry ghosts

come/go like Michelangelo
with deathlessness —

good night rage rage
against dying of the light.

Sharon Lopez Mooney

Whispers In B-flat

Stepping into 5 am

Bahia San Carlos, Mexico

Silence

belongs here

not just quiet, lack of sound but stillness

deep within everything turning, tuning together.

Across on buoys bobbing at shoreline, even seagulls have
stopped squabbling

as night seasons the air with its massive hold, the full moon of
January relieves

the stars of their guard posts for a while longer.

The silver globe dazzles its bold shimmer onto the sea adding to
moon light, but

even a double moon does not move the pitch of night

reaching deep into the sky invoking stars, spreading flat against
the water

allowing mysterious dark sea life to have its way for a few hours
more.

I slip into shadow of night with brimming mountains, a few lit
homes on far shore

lavish moon radiance, hushed waters, and three panga boats
fishing close in, two

with dim lanterns held in shadowy bows, one simply working in
deep trust

of the full moon's promise.

I draw in my breath matching this dense moment, Have I seen a
painting of this?

Is the embodied, slow motion of time and solitude what draws me into

this composition with three fishermen whose lives are built of salt and waiting?

being known

i have prayed holy words in sacred chapels
sang praise in languages i didn't know
knelt on wooly carpets in response to the Morning Call to Prayer
danced in circles of devotion to the pulsing music of
gimbri and bindir while chanting of universal love
i've sewn images of mystery into poems of unspeakable words
at times, i stumble and cannot remember the steps
cannot find the melodies nor remember Your names
often my feet can no longer move
nor am i able to bow double any longer
still, my yearnings are heard, my heart is known
and i am reminded i do not need to struggle
to be with You

Old bodies

Old women have historical bodies
we carry children hidden from deamons,
our shoulders shelter sisters fighting for control,
lovers hope for just a wee bit more, more of us
our hips swing across slippery floors of dirty
footsteps through our lives, our venerable bodies
harbor wallpaper peeling, dreams stripped

so we pull back, find our footing
find balance and lose
our chance
to swim with the Divine

Michael Mintrom

Mark Rothko at the Art Institute

Thank you, Mark, for stripping everything back
to this still moment. No more clutter,
no more clambering distractions.

Some people see trees, some forests.
You saw the world before all distinctions.
What excursions, what exercises led you here?

We all must travel such a long way.
How many cans of paint did it take
moving through complexity to simplicity?

But enough questions. It's enough
to sit on this leather bench
in this quiet room, and absorb your work.

Taking time to drift away from time,
move from absorption to tranquility,
samadhi to samatha.

Lost in the play of color and light,
finding a world never seen before —
it is this one.

Upekṣā, Early Evening

Another day of contracts, proposals, big dreams
in this city that leans above the river,
stretches, scratches, sweats.

Breathing hard, I thud down the concrete stairwell,
exit into a street of garbage ooze and sawtooth roofs.
Glimpse cones of candy-floss sky.

Walking towards the lake shore,
harsh wind slaps the face, eyes tear up.
Thinking of people back in those buildings —

struggles, embraces, strange looks,
things we hear, things we don't
want to hear. Stories we tell ourselves.

Quiet friends head towards this room,
shuck off the day. Sit, eyes shut.
Bodies close, heartbeats slowing.

Then walk home. Rows of red and white,
car lights, street lights make squiggles on the lake.
Those big buildings, calm now.

Zen is Impossible

It is not uncommon that people come to Zen practice, try it for a while, and eventually give it up. They become confused and frustrated about what they are supposed to be doing and what the benefits are of doing *zazen*, bowing and participating in service or *sesshin*. Even some long-time practitioners end up feeling that they aren't making any progress and are wasting their time. This is quite understandable because, from our usual self-centered point of view, Zen practice is impossible. That's what I would like to briefly look at, the impossible nature of the Awakened Way.

Joko Beck once advised that, before we began a sitting period, briefly consider why we are sitting. She didn't want us to come up with a reason but to notice if we had an expectation or goal associated with our *zazen*. Expectations and goals can be hindrances to our practice. They tend to be based on a desire to become other than who and what we are. If we seek a special experience or mind state, we have set ourselves up for disappointment. Our practice isn't about becoming a Buddha. It's about noticing all the ways that we convince ourselves that we are not. It's not possible to become what we already are.

It is impossible to understand Zen. We can listen to a thousand Dharma talks and read hundreds of sutras and we still won't understand Zen. We can learn how to do *zazen* and memorize the gathas we recite but we still won't understand Zen. This is because Zen is our life and our life is unknowable and ungraspable. We can only experience our life as it is and this is

our practice. No understanding is required. So, what is the meaning of Zen? The beech tree in the Zen Center courtyard.

From a relative, self-centered point of view, the Awakened Way is impossible to attain. We can chase enlightenment our whole life and we always end up right back where we started. Right here, right now. But, through our practice effort we begin to appreciate that the Awakened Way is exactly our life as it is and eventually, we realize that we were never apart from what we seek. There is no separate self that needs to gain anything. We come to see that all of our doubts and frustrations are a dream within a dream and we are free to be the joyous wonder that is always just this.

We have briefly looked at what is impossible. And yet, what is possible is for us to make our practice effort moment by moment, day by day. It's very simple but certainly not always easy. We tend to take our attachments for granted. But we don't need to be concerned with how we are doing. Simply be mindful of what we are doing. We notice when our expectations and desires get in the way of our ability to experience our life as it is. And then, over and over for the rest of our lives, we come back to just this, the Awakened Way.

Kenneth Goodman

High Identity

Zero name for *I AM*

equals high identity:

egoless deity...

way to find it vanishes

upon discovery.

What's a Slap between Friends?

Purity obsession pollutes deLight
stainlessly : wearing [this] flesh fabric
naked unashamedly.

You've actually seen it?

It sees : unseen/directly.

You slapped me in the face to face!

Slap of serenity.

Tonia Kalouria

Snug as a Bug in a Rug

I knew that the day had to come,
though I'd hoped to be ancient, not young.
Some might call it *A Moment of Truth* —
(Like being Vegan is subject to proof!)

A *huuuuge*-bodied, multi-legged bug
went scampering across my jute rug,
thus, for worse, (or maybe for best,) my
“*Zen Mettle*” got put to The Test

“YIKES!”

(Allegro)

No time to don the Hazmat suit, nor mylar
vest, or steel-toed boot!
“PLAN B,” though, was :The stocked valise:
Dread Arsenal Cache for “Catch/Release.”

I utilized tool after tool,
but “Bug” was swift; my means uncruel.
And patience, too, was wearing out,
when . . . HA! . . . I cried my victory shout!
Now, multi leg-ged scamp’s all snug
in silky grass — not scratchy rug.
Thus, a “win” it was for me *and* “Bug”:
One creature spared; one vegan smug.

Visiting Korinji Monastery

“I recently got back from my first dai-sesshin at Korinji—all spattered with mud and okayu, feeling a bit stunned, impressed, and grateful. The fact that the place itself even exists is startling, it’s two buildings springing like giant mushrooms from a steep Wisconsin hillside. The wooded grounds are amazing, walking trails climb up and down the hills among enormous boulders, moss and ferns. The boulders were particularly incredible, dozens of them across the property. Ancient—tossed up before the last ice age when the glaciers missed scraping off this region—each with real presence and character, several flat and wide enough to sit zazen on. The vine maples reminded me of bamboo angling up among the bigger trees. One morning during a break I stood under the sanmon gate and watched a doe grazing up the valley in the misty rain for ten or fifteen minutes. Little birds flitting around, carrying caterpillars in their beaks without eating them, seemingly just to show off for one another. It’s a wonderfully serene, contemplative setting. Even within the relentless schedule of dai-sesshin, I found myself with a half hour here and there each day with nothing to do but soak into the surroundings—scheduled down time that almost never happens in my busy home life, which I appreciated immensely.

I’m not sure what I expected, but I was surprised to find a fully functioning sodo. All of the traditional monastic forms are faithfully maintained with nothing omitted or abbreviated—no notion that “modern westerners” can’t do it or wouldn’t benefit from it. During dai-sesshin there are about 10–12 hours of zazen a day, between 4–5 hours sleep, and sanzen 2–3 times a day—which was very familiar to me. There were some details of the form I hadn’t encountered before which I found helpful and supportive. Just a couple of examples: at wake up time when the lights are turned on with a shouted “kaijo!,” there is an immediate inkin ring down and you have to jump out of bed and be standing in line at the foot of the bed to bow all together. The effect is that you’re standing there bowing before you even know what’s going on, skipping entirely any sense of dragging yourself out of bed. And they do the full five-bowl jihatsu meals with handaikan servers, which was really cool. It’s complicated and difficult, the jikijitsu barks every time there’s a mess up. It requires you to center in your tanden with spread out



awareness—like a many-armed Juntei Kannon—to be able to keep an eye on what’s going on, do all the things, and also eat (very quickly!). And when it’s working, it’s really beautiful—the whole group flowing together. It made me appreciate how these monastic forms aren’t just a “good opportunity” to apply our practice—these forms were specifically designed and refined over centuries to

inform, support, integrate, and embody our practice. What a rare and precious thing!

In addition to the beautiful setting and the rigorous formal aspects, I really felt a general freshness, a vitality, and earnestness among the trainees. They are actually establishing the monastery grounds with their day-to-day work practice for everyone who comes after. And most impressively, they are hammering out a sincere culture of training in that place. I think none of them realize how that culture of training will echo for who knows how long—they're setting a really high bar, and it's great. I'm looking forward to the next time I can participate in the training there, and hope it will be sooner rather than later. And I would highly recommend the experience to anyone with the interest and motivation to go. Even for newer practitioners who might not be ready for a full dai-sesshin, there are *Intro to Zen* days offered at the monastery, as well as weeklong *Zen Life* retreats that would be ideal for beginners.”



My Pursuit as a Minimalist

One day in my late thirties when I was sorting out my wallet, I noticed my cards filled up all the slots: my ID, credit cards, debit cards, and all kinds of membership cards. I used to take pleasure in holding on to so many cards like they were my assets, but that day I was thinking if I left the world of a sudden, it would be such trouble for my family to cancel them for me.

That was my first awakening to pursuing a simple life. Later, I was exposed to the term “minimalist.” Even checking the definition of it online made me excited. In “The Minimalists” website, minimalism is defined as “a tool to rid one’s life excess in favor of focusing on what’s important—so you can find happiness, fulfillment, and freedom.” The website also describes how minimalism has impacted people everywhere to eliminate their discontent, reclaim their time, live in the moment, pursue their passions, discover their missions, experience real freedom, focus on their health, create more, consume less...”

Then I read that many famous people led a minimalist lifestyle. One of them was Apple’s co-founder, Steve Jobs. Apple’s former CEO John Sculley once said in an interview, “I remember going into Steve’s house and he had almost no furniture in it. He just had a picture of Einstein, whom he admired greatly, and he had a Tiffany lamp and a chair, and a bed. He just didn’t believe in having lots of things around, but he was incredibly careful in what he selected.”

American writer Henry David Thoreau once said, “Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage. Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends. Things do not change, we change.... Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts.”

As someone who is always in the process of searching for a happier and more meaningful life, minimalism seems irresistible to me—maybe this can give me a more fulfilling life. Maybe I should not only keep my belongings to a minimum, but also refrain from seeking others’ help and approval.



Years ago, if someone showed me pictures of a mansion with plenty of bedrooms and bathrooms, luxurious lamps and decorations, and

pans of different sizes hanging on the top of the island of a huge kitchen, I would probably have fallen into deep jealousy. Now I do not think a magnificent house will do my happiness much good. Home to me is a cozy, convenient, and personal space to do my own things. I would not crave a big house with rooms that I don't sleep in but still feel the need to upkeep.

Years ago, I was a shopaholic. I wanted a closet that included all the fashion styles I dreamed about. I often hunted from one big clothing sale to another. Now I find that new fashion styles keep emerging, shops put something on sale everyday, and no matter how many clothes I buy, I will never be able to catch that trend and there will always be another one that I feel short of. As I grow older, I spend more time on regular exercise and little time shopping for clothes because I know no apparel can beat a fit body.

Years ago, if someone told me that they had two homes, one in the United States of America and one in the People's Republic of China, I would probably look at them full of admiration. Now, as a Chinese living in the US, I know it is so difficult for me to keep a double identity. I have both Chinese and US social security accounts, driver's licenses, phone numbers, bank cards.... When my Chinese cards expire, I cannot fly back and renew them. I have Chinese social media accounts like WeChat, QQ, Weibo, and also American ones like Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr.... Maintaining these accounts takes immense time, and I see time as my most precious asset as I grow older.

I once watched a YouTube video called "Minimalist Life 101" by Sarah Settanni. Sarah says diamonds were not popular in the 1930s, so the businesspeople designed a message that "a diamond is forever." If a man truly loved a woman and really wanted to show that, he would get her a diamond, even though a diamond could still chip, break, or discolor. That sales strategy was highly successful, and statistics show that 10% of first-time brides received diamond engagement rings in 1940, and in later years, the figure soared to 84%, and it is maintained today. Sarah also says, "We define what luxury means to us." For some, luxury is a diamond ring. For others, such as Sarah herself, luxury is the equivalent of simple pleasures. Being able to have the windows open and smell fresh air is a luxury, or even going for a walk and having a warm cup of tea.

Zhijia Wang

With this insight in mind, now, I'm seldom tempted by promotional stunts or sales strategies created by companies. There was a time when I shopped in Manning, Hong Kong's largest health and beauty product chain store. The dazzling array of famous and foreign brands of skin-care products overwhelmed me. When I was hesitating about where to start, a salesgirl came to help.

I asked her, "Do you have a moisturizer that I can use for my hands, my body, and my face?"

She said, "Oh no, you cannot use the moisturizer for your hands on your face."

I laughed. I think I would use the moisturizer for my face on my hands.



For most of my life, I followed the herd and tried to accumulate as many things as possible. I accumulated a diploma, a family, a kid, and an apartment; I gained different job experiences in various companies, and I got some promotions and pay raises—but none of them led me to be a white-collar elite.

My career bottleneck came when I was 37. I was stuck in the same position as a supply chain manager in an international company's branch in China, and felt bored and unappreciated, but could not find any better or even equivalent jobs elsewhere.

I started looking for other things in life that I could improve. Maybe I can accommodate my child's schedule and send her to school every day. Maybe I can prove that I can do something myself. After many considerations and discussions with my family, I quit that job.

I became an online retailer selling radio-controlled model airplanes worldwide. All the skills I accumulated in my previous jobs returned to zero, but the experience I gained from focusing and fumbling for my own business helped me to see the world in a different light.

When I worked for myself, I found I was not restricted by bias, politics, and the opinions of my boss or my boss's boss, or the fights between different departments and regions. I only had one thought: to source a hot sale radio-controlled model airplane that would

benefit both me and my clients. I had endless research to do, numerous products to list, and countless opportunities to think over. I did them by myself, and I did them by not following others and by freeing my thoughts.

After a long-dormant period, my business started to take off. Even though my earnings were still less than my previous jobs, in those several years, I learned many more life truths than I learned while working for companies for many years. I learned to be true and fair to my clients, so they would be true and fair to me. I learned that a good business was a win-win situation; I learned that taking good care of people's feelings was more important than making money. I proved that in every difficulty, there was an island of opportunity.... Even though I dealt with disputes all the time, I also received many flying pictures and videos from my clients in different countries for me to put in my store to promote my products. I could connect myself with people all over the world.

One year after my resignation from my old job, I began to clean up my shoes in my shoe cabinet:

I freed my feet from high heels,

I freed my face from cosmetics,

I freed my hair from perms,

I freed my hand from the jewelry.

My life became simpler and purer, and I started to become more of myself.



Now I have minimalism permeating many aspects of my life. In cooking, I believe in minimal procedures and seasoning to keep the food's natural taste and maximum nutrients. I seldom add sugar when I make bread, but I can still taste sweetness because my tongue gets more sensitive after I am used to light flavors. Most importantly, I believe that using fewer condiments is better for my health.

I found the clothing I love to wear is usually one or two items that I feel most comfortable in. When I got used to one, my natural reflex

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was to wear it every time I got up. When it is worn out after a couple of years, I search online in the hope of buying a new one with the same style.

Maybe because I love poetry, I appreciate the rules that less is more, and the smaller the lens, the bigger the story. If I can use fewer words to express an idea, I won't use more. I don't envy prolific writers as I used to. I like the white spaces in writing as I like the white spaces in my cabinet, my room, and my mind. I do not believe in make-up like I do not believe in affectation in writing, like Elmore Leonard says, "When I sound like writing, I rewrite."

The minimalist lifestyle also impacted my pedagogical strategies. While teaching, I ask my students to read a small range of well-chosen articles, stories, and poems. My goal is humble, yet ambitious. If from all the materials I ask them to read, they find one sentence or line illuminating and still remember it after many years in their lives, then I would consider my teaching a huge success.

I now keep few apps on my cell phone.

My emails are mostly short.

I join the minimum number of group chats.

I have minimal posts on my social media.

I also try to minimize one thing at a time. Eat when I eat, walk while I walk. Because I want to sink myself in that moment.

The biggest difference between my past and present might be that I have a more intentional and conscious approach to my life; I see the value of the present. I do not look forward to the coming of tomorrow, as I know it may not be better than what I have now. If I read an excellent piece of writing, I feel satisfied as I know I am not going to read things like this for some time. Really good things never come that easily or often.



Recently, I read an article about Japanese people who practice Shu-katsu (終活.) Shu-katsu means an abbreviation of your activity for the end of your life. What interests me most is the timeline it proposed:

At age 40, it suggests that you start to throw away most of the items you do not need.

At age 50, it suggests you get rid of the equipment for racing cars, mountain climbing gear, and 90% of your books.

At age 60, it suggests you dispose of extra real estate and furniture to remain with only one property, or rent a small suite that is easy to take care of. Also, dispose of the extra bank cards, deposits, shares, and credit cards, and keep only one bank card.

At age 70 or 80, it suggests you dispose of cars, and rely on public mass transportation, also to dispose of art or antique collections, process albums and keep limited photos, and keep an electronic copy for the kids.

This reminded me of my first thought to simplify my life years ago. Maybe my family or child won't care about canceling the cards or accounts for me after I die, but as a person who wants to give the least trouble to others in their consciousness, I know it is better to arrange these things by myself.

I am not alone in this idea. In Arkansas, I joined a WeChat group chat for second-hand deals. One day, an old man posted an ad. He wanted to sell all his fishing gear: a rubber fishing boat, oars, all kinds of fishing poles and accessories, and at the price of one dollar. He said this was not a joke. He just wanted a good owner for the things he once loved. In less than 5 minutes, he told the group that his stuff had found a new home.

I surmised he was doing "Shu-katsu," and it made me reflect on what guided him to do this. Maybe as we grow older, we find that we don't own our lives. We are more like a guest, a passerby, and a traveler on this earth. If death is part of us, we can do something before it comes.



Rob Greenfield is a young American who once lived and traveled in Europe. According to a video he made on his YouTube channel, he owned merely 47 possessions. Over the past 10 years, he has transformed his life by downsizing all of his belongings, getting rid of

Zhijia Wang

his bank accounts, and dedicating his work to raising awareness about environmental issues.

He did not have a phone, driver's license, social security card, or bank account; he simply carried all his money with him. In the video, he shows people the simple, zero-waste possessions he travels with and talks about the philosophies of non-attachment, non-materialism, and non-ownership that drive his lifestyle choices.

The 47 items he owns include a backpack, 13 items of clothing, a hand-powered razor, some personal hygiene products, a pot that serves both as cooking and as a bowl, a laptop... and one of them is the sticker of a quote by Gandhi on his computer, "We must be the change we wish to see in the world."

Despite my utmost admiration for these extreme minimalists, I may never be like Rob—I still crave a convenient lifestyle, and I still crave love and support from others. They let me know I am just one in the middle. They make me believe what Dale Carnegie said, "Happiness doesn't depend upon who you are or what you have; it depends solely on what you think." They also make me believe that life is a gift, no matter how much we give, we will never be able to give more than we take.



I cherish a creed obeyed by environmental travelers:

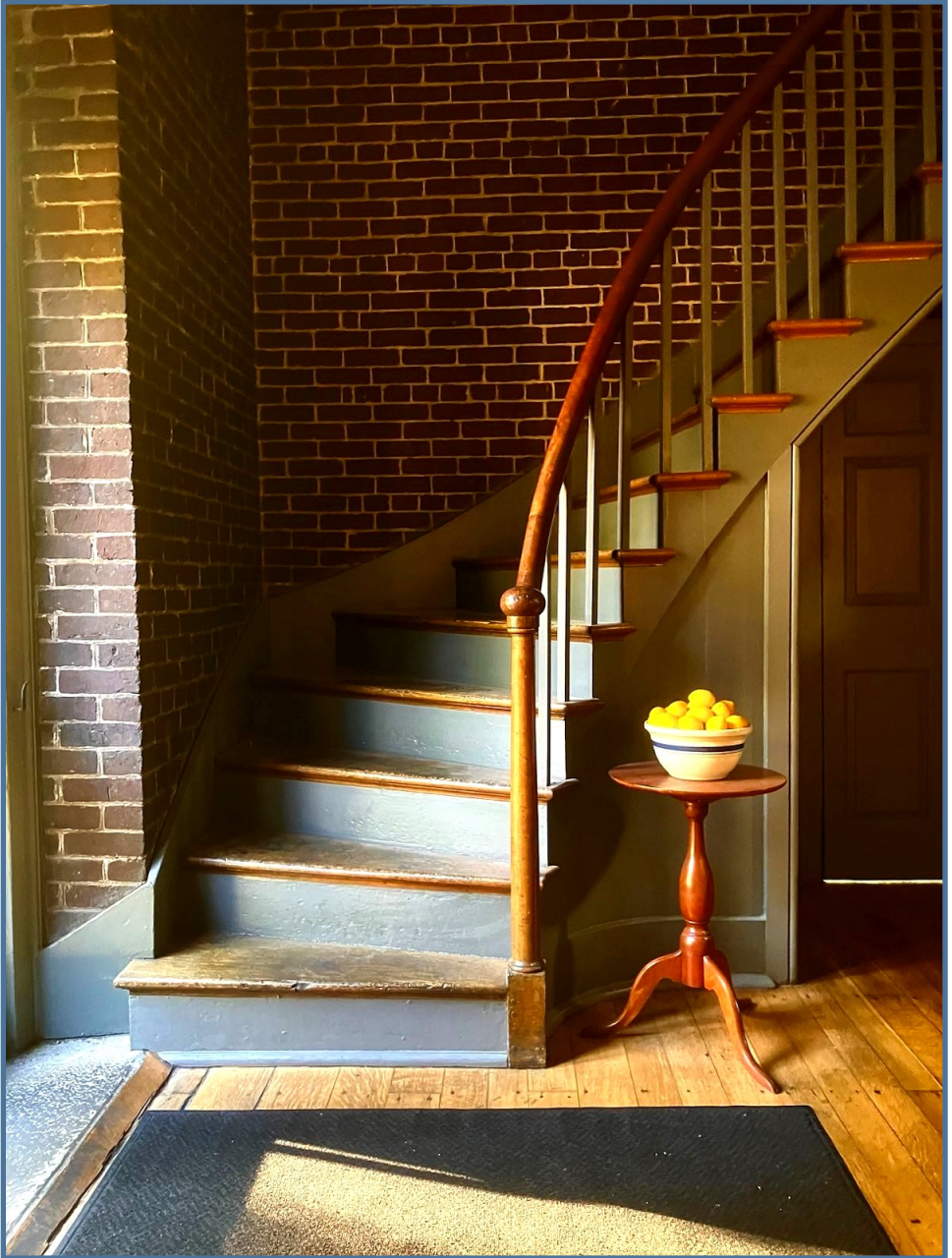
Other than footprints,

I leave nothing.

Other than pictures,

I take nothing.

With the idea of minimalism, I can always find things I can improve. If focusing on less can make me achieve more, and meanwhile, relieve the strain on the planet I am living on, I will carry it through.



Photograph by Mark J. Howell

Contributor's biographies

Daishin McCabe teaches at Zen Fields in Ames, Iowa, and at the Nebraska Zen Center in Omaha.

Darrell Petska is a retired university editor and two-time Pushcart Prize nominee, publishes widely online and in print. He lives near Madison, Wisconsin, with his wife of more than 50 years.

Diane Webster lives in western Colorado and some of her work has appeared in *El Portal*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Verdad* and other literary magazines.

Ed Mushin Russell is resident teacher at the Prairie Zen Center. He served as Elihu Genmyo Smith's attendant, completed koan study and became Genmyo's first Dharma heir in 2015.

Esho Kikuko Morimoto is an artist and Japanese language teacher. She is in priest training under Shohaku Okumura; in April 2024 she will be Shuso for the Spring practice period at Sanshin Zen Community.

Fūmyō Michaela Robošová practices Buddhism in the Czech Republic and regularly visits her teacher and community in the U.S. She writes and illustrates for [Rustling Leaves](#): A Buddhist practitioner's journal.

Gail Sher received lay ordination from Shunryu Suzuki Roshi in 1970. She is a poet, writer, teacher and psychotherapist in the San Francisco Bay area. Her talks on Zen practice are at gailsherdharmataalks.com.

Genryo Jones trained at Sogenji under Shodo Harada Roshi back in the late 1900s. He runs Iron City Rinzai in Pittsburgh and does sanzen with Meido Moore Roshi of Korinji.

Gerard Sarnat is a prize-winning author and is published by *Gargoyle*, *Oberlin*, *Brown*, *Stanford*, *Harvard*, *Main Street Rag*, *New Delta Rev*, *Brooklyn Rev*, *LA Rev*, *San Francisco Mag*, and the *New York Times*.

Henry Shukman has written poetry since his teens, and has published in the *New Yorker*, *New Republic*, *Times Literary Supplement* and *London Review of Books*. He teaches meditation on the meditation app, *The Way*, and is the author of the memoir *One Blade of Grass*.

Jay Tuttle finds the mix of art and science in photography very appealing. Making photographs that others enjoy is a great pleasure in his life.

Kenneth Goodman synthesizes Zen meditation and poetry creation in Cleveland, Ohio.

Mark J. Howell is a founding member of Great Wind Zendo and resides in Danville, Indiana.

Mark J. Mitchell has been practicing Zen for about 30 years. His latest collection is *Something To Be* from Psaki's Porch. He sits in San Francisco where he lives with his wife, Joan Juster.

Michael Mintrom is a New Zealander. For many years he lived in Michigan and he now lives in Melbourne, Australia. His poetry has appeared in a range of literary journals.

Paulette Guerin is the author of *Wading Through Lethe*. Her work also appears in *Wild Muse: Ozarks Nature Poetry*, *Best New Poets*, *epiphany*, and other journals. Her website is pauletteguerin.com.

Phyllis Green Phyllis Now at 91, she has authored 17 books for young people, 50 stories in literary magazines, several off-Broadway plays, and two radio plays She has 130 paintings accepted in literary magazines.

Robert Okaji is a half-Japanese Texan living in Indiana. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Evergreen Review*, *Vox Populi*, *Threepenny Review*, *Tipton Poetry Journal* and elsewhere.

Sharon Lopez Mooney is poet & retired Interfaith Chaplain living in Mexico. She received a grant and three writer's honors. Her poems are published internationally. Her poems are indexed on her [website](#).

Tonen O'Connor is the Resident Priest Emerita of the Milwaukee Zen Center. A recent literary adventure was editing and writing an introductory essay for *Ryokan Interpreted* by Shohaku Okumura.

Tonia Kalouria has works in/on *The LOL Comedy*, *The Classical Poets Society*, *Take Five*, *The Literary Vegan*, and anthologies including *Quoth the Raven*, and *Lifespan Vol. 4: Love*, among others.

Zhihua Wang received her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Central Arkansas and is currently a Ph.D. student in Poetry at the University of Rhode Island.

Rev. Zuiko Redding is the teacher at Cedar Rapids Zen Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She leads zazen, gives dharma talks, ministers to groups in the Iowa prisons and reads with her cats.

Great Wind Zendo is a place for Zen Meditation located in Danville, Indiana. We are open to the public and there is no charge for our programs.

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Contributed essays, poems and works of art are welcome. You can find our submittal guidelines at <http://www.greatwindzendo.org/mwz/submissions>.

Sky Above

Great Wind

—Ryokan