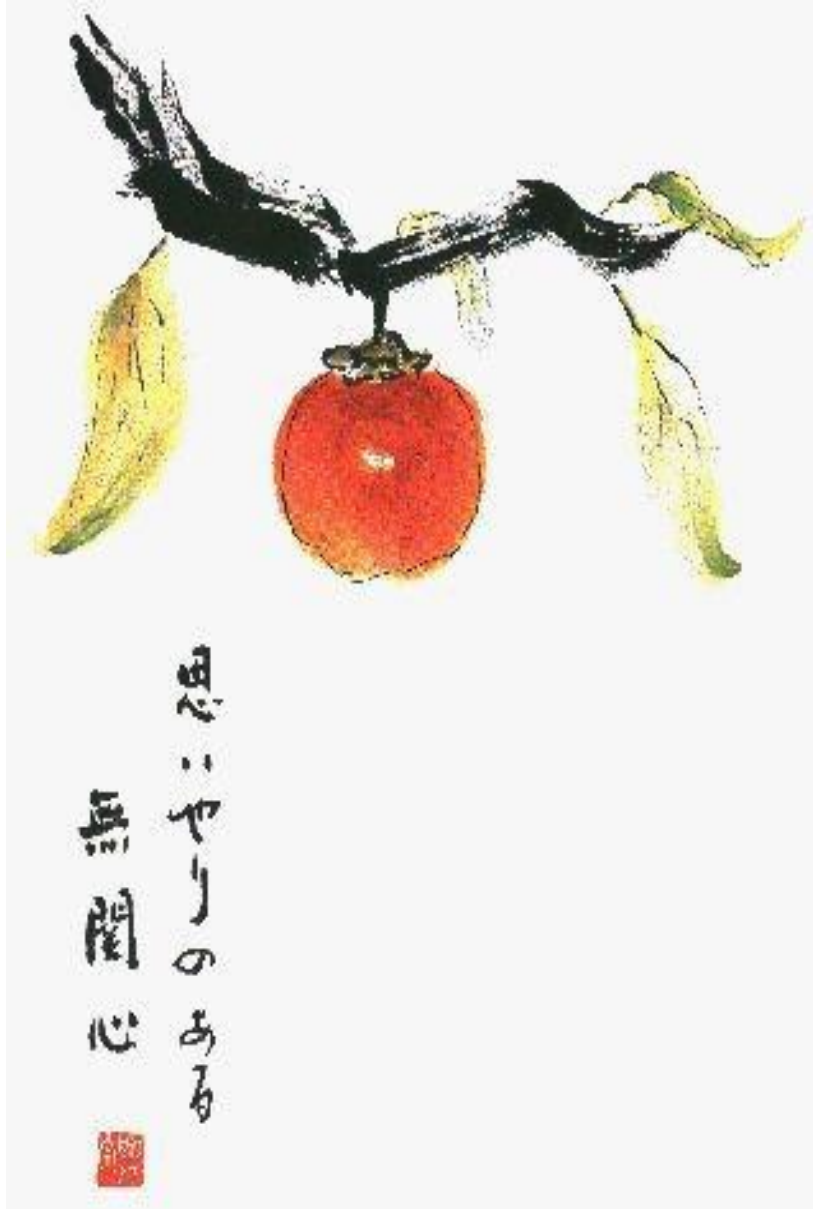


## THE WOBBLY POT

Quarterly Journal of the **Zen Group of Western Australia.**

Spring Edition 2014 - Reflections on the PRECEPTS



*Monks these days study hard in order to turn a fine phrase and win fame as talented poets. At Crazy Clouds hut there is no such talent, but he serves up the taste of truth as he boils rice in a wobbly old pot. – Ikkyu*

## **The Wobbly Pot**

This journal provides a medium for members and friends of the Zen Group of Western Australia to express their views. The opinions are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect Council's views, or those of other sangha members. To contribute to the next edition please contact Phillip McNamara at [mcnamara9@optusnet.com.au](mailto:mcnamara9@optusnet.com.au)

Membership to the Zen Group of Western Australia is encouraged. Membership supports the activities of the group; including publicity, this journal and hall rental. Members get discount to our Sesshin and Zazenkaï's as well as access to books in our library.

## **Zen Group of Western Australia (ZGWA)**

ZGWA started in 1983 with a small group of people sitting in a private home in Mt. Claremont, Perth. It is affiliated with the Diamond Sangha tradition of Zen Buddhism, which was founded in Hawaii in 1959 by Robert Aitken Rōshi.

The Diamond Sangha tradition follows the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism, practiced and passed on from Shakyamuni Buddha in India, through China and Japan, from Japan to Hawaii, and now to Australia. Diamond Sangha communities integrate this ancient tradition into their lives in contemporary cultures throughout the world. Drawing on the great Japanese schools, our sangha offers a rich and authentic environment for the study of Zen Buddhism.

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## **Rain (pitter-patter of inherent Precepts)** **- Phillip McNamara**

What a dream I had; bathed in rain. I shake the droplets loose. I shake and shiver. It is still raining outside as I write this and the sound makes me feel both cold and tired for a warm bed. By the time I finished typing the preceding sentence the rain started hammering down. It now washes in waves with the wind on the tin roof; which also howls through nearby pergola struts. I am 'out there' with the elements, yet the elements are also 'in here' with me shivering.

Of course sound itself does not make me cold, tired or shivery. It is how the wind tugs at the imaginal recesses and memories, the crevices and creases of associational thoughts and feelings, that recreate emotive ideas that morph into these present physical symptoms. Much of my life goes in and out of my senses, wisping and whispering here and there like licking wind and rain. The kaleidoscopic coalescing of senses and stimuli and imaginings fascinated me as a child. They were just reactions, yet they also seemed uncannily something else. Where and why did they come? What did they herald about me? And although they tumbled my sense of time and place about, they also threw me into a reverie that viewed them from some timeless point. Such feelings were one of the reasons I often snuggled into bed and tried to keep those liminal states between sleeping and dreaming, waking and dream floating, lasting as long as I could get them to.

Sometimes in meditation I find myself at that same edge; the counting of my breath fades away and the certainties about where I am or what I am hearing fade away. The ties of sound and form are loosened and suddenly what am I sitting amongst, and who is observing the passing sense parade, falls apart into just presence. Liminal but awake. Aware, but only of eternal instances. Perhaps that is what Zen calls Empty Oneness. Perhaps it is a question never asked. Yet, because there are often questions or at least reflections, such things as "outside the mind no thing exists," "in the three worlds there is One Mind alone," and "the true appearance of all things," have been preached.

Sometimes in everyday life the same eternal instances also occur. Indeed. Suddenly, just prior to that sentence I realised that I have been sitting still at my desk taken up in sound. I had stopped typing and was enjoying just the moment of sound. Alive, loud and fresh. Openness and mystery.

Right now the sound of the rain has been replaced by loud galah screeches. Escher like the sound of rain has morphed into that of galahs. Now the galahs are a hammering. Someone is hammering on what sound like a large plastic bucket. No, they are digging and turning cement over.

But if I step back from working out what is making any particular sound it is rain-galah-hammering together in a polyphonic cacophony that was truly mysterious and without any certainties about what would come next.

When I was having no expectations about what would come next it was like a dream of *sound*. But as soon as I try to explain this, the meaningfulness of the moment is lost. I shiver.

This reflection and echo reminds me of one of my favourite chants:

... *NEN NEN JU- SHIN KI,*

*NEN NEN FU RI SHIN.*

... *thought after thought arises in mind,*

*thought after thought is not separate from mind.*

In his “Guidelines for Studying the Way” Dogen Zenji says some people: “*say the thought of awakening is the insight that each thought contains three thousand realms.* That’s a very interesting thought: the awakening insight is that each thought contains three thousand realms.

The insight is that we are not separate from *anything*... each thought is the many beings, each ‘nen’ moment contains the whole universe; the whole of life including us.

And now I hear rain, and the galahs, and the banging out of cement. Each sound was, for a prolonged moment, the entire universe, yet each was always there; tumbling over and in me whilst also just rain drop, bird call, cement mixing.

Rain drops falling, birds flying, cement mixing freely.

The world is vast and wide yet each sound is also cement in a wall that I climb as a reality. Nevertheless it is an uncertain reality that I respond to like a dream; floating along yet trying to put each step in a sturdy place.

How can we have appreciation and respect for that uncertainty? How can we integrate these dream like moments into our practice? Such moments can feel too open, yet Dogen Zenji *also* provides encouragement for us to find this realm (and continue through it) when he says: “*Freedom from the ties of sound and form naturally accords with the essence of the Way-seeking mind*”.

How can we step into such nature without fear? How do we leave behind duality, discrimination, wrong thinking and attachment to hear the sounds of the world? Yet if all things are dreams and illusions, like bubbles or reflections, then these sounds are also echoes. How or why do things echo? Are they entangling conditions or awakening conditions? Well they are our practice. We search and seek, wade and climb the many sounds of the world. They are our brambles and they are our ladders. They are the search and our true home. They are our ground and space. They are life mixing freely within Buddha nature.

There are many ways to find or see or manifest this Buddha nature. Its conditions are all around us. But zazen and sincere practice may lead or return us to the no-thought or no-mind of the self-nature. Reaching this space is called the Original Face in Zen. It is the Precepts shining and acting within from their Inherent Nature. As such the Precepts are always intangible, always of the moment, always like drops of rain and unheralded bird song

The Precepts are carried and practiced because they harmonize us with, and are the manifestation of, the One Mind. Mental formations, or the senses and the various thoughts which arise around those and which lead to karmic activity, can through meditation and taking up of the Precepts be seen as empty. It is then that we practice because of practice. It is then we live because we see with Kanzeon that:

with the Buddha I have my source,  
with the Buddha I have affinity  
affinity with Buddha, Dharma, Sangha,  
constancy, ease, the self, and purity.  
Mornings my thought is Kanzeon,  
evenings my thought is Kanzeon,  
thought after thought arises in mind,  
thought after thought is not separate from mind.

#

### **Anger**

-Paula Inayat-Hussain

Sudden squalls  
Keel me over  
Even now.  
Black and red  
Blind my eyes  
Dumb my tongue.  
So  
Is love lost  
Or  
Like a burn  
To the skin.

#



## **Weekend in the Mid West**

-Trish McAuliffe

(July 2014)

### **We are in the World and the World is in us: Why Fracking ignores this Principle.**

“Self nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the everlasting Dharma, not giving rise to the idea of killing, is called the **Precept of Not Killing**”

We are experiencing serious threats to our living planet, through global warming, acid oceans, melting ice caps, and much more. We are currently losing species at a rapid rate in the animal and plant kingdoms. Our political leaders are supporting policies that enable this to occur. They are either ignoring the consequences of their policies, or taking planet friendly actions that are too weak to be effective. Accordingly, I believe that not taking action to prevent this devastation of the natural world can be in opposition to the precept of not killing

A group of anti-frackers recently went on a reconnaissance trip to the Mid West to observe the early impacts of the fracking behemoth starting its rampage on our precious land. The group (about 25 persons) included members of the Conservation Council of WA, Wilderness Society, 350.Org, No Fracking WAY, Lock the Gate, Frack Free Geraldton, and other concerned citizens.

Our convoy sets off from Perth on Saturday morning. We head first to our camping just north of Eneabba. The camping ground is owned by naturalists, who have restored previous grazing land to its natural state after decades of hard work. The surrounding vegetation is known as Kwongan heath land. This area is classified as a world biodiversity hotspot. It is part of our iconic wildflower country. Many protected species there are unique to this region of the world.

After lunch we go to see the stage marked out for the imminent seismic survey, whereby the frackers will establish a map of the underground landscape and locate the best places to set up their exploration drilling. We pass over the flowing Arrowsmith River, which will be very badly affected as the planned seismic vehicles are estimated to cross the river over 90 times. This process will see a very large surface area covered via a grid pattern. Bulldozer type vehicles will destroy all before it in this grid, not deviating for endangered species, and thumping the ground with massive pads, crushing all above the ground and under it in their path. I register the silent scream coursing through my body as I envisage the devastation to the unsuspecting wildlife and flora. I stem the flood of tears which may otherwise hinder my observational keenness. At the same time, the wild beauty of this land; the colours; the fragility and the strength, are vividly imprinted on my psyche.

We are given a wonderful nature study tour of our campsite. Our guide's knowledge is as impressive as his love of the land and all it holds. Following the tour we are taken to his 'laboratory' to view via his microscope images projected onto a screen of plant structures we could not see with our naked eyes: Worlds within worlds.

A visiting etymologist later regales us with his vast and enthusiastic knowledge of moth species. He travels the southern hemisphere for the CSIRO recording the interdependence between his beloved moths and the plant species which each variety of moth is uniquely

responsible for pollinating. I am reminded of an intimate experience in sharing my cushion with a moth at a Zen sesshin at Mt Helena.

We visit the fenced Arrowsmith drill site. The drilling has long ceased but the massive footprint is mind boggling. We remember that this is only one site, whilst many hundreds may follow in our mid-west. We see the plastic lined waste holding ponds, already showing signs of damage. We notice bird and animal tracks and wonder at their fate. We note there is a pressure gage on the fenced of well head. After abandonment the pressure remains.

Around the 'barbecue' fire that evening we enjoy a delicious shared meal. Conversations and shared reminiscences are enjoyed to the sounds of guitar, ukulele and didgeroo. We retire to our tents, and dongas, tired but satisfied with our day.

On Sunday morning after breakfast, we travel to meet with an Eneabba vegetable farmer. He has been long negotiating with the current mining lease holder for restoration of an 'old technology' polluted well pad which is taking a large slice of his otherwise fertile land. Progress is slow. Whilst denying the frackers the social licence to destroy his safe food producing livelihood, he is legally helpless to stop fracking proposals on his borders. The fracking company threatens to surround him and send their tentacles deep under his property and his water supply. We photograph the sharp contrasts of the destroyed waste land of the well site with the lush green of his current zucchini crop.

These are the choices facing both our farmers and our city folk who depend on them for sustenance. It should be no choice at all.

We pack up and head home via our last important visit: - the Drover I exploration drill site.

This sits on the edge of the beautiful Mt Lesueur National Park. The main entrance is guarded and entry forbidden. We travel down a dirt road and locate via satellite, a bush track which will take us to an unguarded perimeter fence with a good view of the drilling action. We walk the two kilometres, through wonderful exotic flower-filled landscape after carefully cleaning our shoes to avoid spreading dieback. Our kite held camera, which is set up to obtain an aerial view, attracts two site staff to investigate. They appear relieved that we give a "No" response when asked if we intend to enter. They attempt to minimise the effects of fracking, and are soon made aware that we know these statements are baseless. We are too well informed to allow that to wash! They are unconcerned that the site is within 4 kilometres of the water bore site that is an essential supply for the local community of Green Head.

Meanwhile the sound of the drill continues as it ploughs through our underground formations. The workers inform us that they are already at 1700 metres; only 1000 to go before reaching their target. They are dismissive of our banners. We photograph them and they photograph us. They depart, and just as we are ready to go also, they return with a company information and publicity pamphlet: a small piece of evidence that they are concerned about our actions. We return to our vehicles. Some members will stay for a few more days taking opportunities to talk with locals and establish contacts, and the degrees of concern. Those in each vehicle bid farewells and head back to Perth, tired but campaign ready after first hand witnessing."

James Baraz, Meditation teacher and leader of 'Awakening Joy' courses in USA, said during the earth care week, "We must wake up and realize how precious life is and how much we love this planet and all life on it. We can discover a new way of living together where greed



is not the main principle of success, oil is not king and huge corporations run by a small group of the rich and powerful aren't the ones who make the rules for the rest of us.”

How can we demonstrate our interconnectedness in life enhancing ways?

How can we promote green living as a dimension of Dharma Practice?

Meditation can assist our insight and awareness. Action for many of us is a natural corollary to this insight.

I like to wash

By way of experiment

The dust of this world

In the droplets of dew.

Basho

#

### *Loss*

- Wendy Jacobsen

Cry and remember

Weep and recall

Relive the moments

And have a ball

#

# 16 Bodhisattva Precepts

- Richard Davis

## Three Vows of Refuge

### *I take refuge in the buddha*

into buddhas I go  
the roar of the wave,  
my son's laughter,  
limestone reefs,  
scrabbling pen.  
Each perfect, each my guide.  
each holding buddha-nature,

### *I take refuge in the Dharma*

Into the dharma I go,  
practising at every moment  
with rusting gutters,  
sleepy students, a gentle wife.

Each manifesting the dharma,  
interdependent, impermanent.  
I seek to embody their teaching.

### *I take refuge in the Sangha*

Into the sangha I go,  
nurtured by my dharma family, kin,  
falling leaves, and the beings I encounter.  
They awaken me, that I may awaken others.

## The Pure Precepts

### *I vow to maintain the Precepts*

I vow to accept the nurturance of the precepts..  
When discriminatory thought takes hold I will  
look to the precepts to guide me back to my  
nature that is no nature.

### *I vow to practice all good dharmas*

I vow to be more attentive,  
less grasping,  
to tread lightly  
on the world,  
to give more than I take,  
to walk past accumulation,  
to care.

*I vow to save the many beings* I vow to be open to each moment. To each encounter, rather than be small, prudent or ignorant. This really is joyful this openness to all beings. I vow to save them.

## **Ten Grave Precepts**

### ***I take up the way of not killing***

I vow to affirm life through  
my deeds and thoughts.  
I vow to embrace the reverence  
of all things, even as I consume  
other beings to sustain my life.

### ***I take up the way of not stealing***

I vow to let go, to not grasp, to avoid attaching to me what is interdependent. In grasping I create permanence and disavow the impermanent nature of the universe.

### ***I take up the way of not misusing sex***

I vow to treat sexual intimacy  
as an affirmation of love  
and respect  
for my lover  
and joy for my  
and others  
bodies and minds.

### ***I take up the way of not speaking falsely***

I vow to speak with care, to nurture with words, to speak truly when it is most required and to be attentively silent as what is before me opens up. Lies and hurtful words come from ignorance and carelessness.

I alone am responsible for the path of my  
speech.

### ***I take up the way of not giving or taking drugs***

I vow to  
be clear  
and  
present in  
each  
moment;  
in doing

so I  
honour all  
beings. I  
will not  
intoxicate  
myself,  
for to do  
so will  
cloud my  
mind and  
close my  
body.

***I take up the way of not discussing the faults of others***

I know that to find fault is to injure others and that  
such a desire comes from my own hurt. I vow to  
acknowledge this hurt and not visit it upon others.  
In this way I seek compassion and intimacy.

***I take up the way of not praising yourself while abusing others***

I vow to acknowledge and respect you,  
you are forgotten.  
at your expense and  
By extension I elevate myself  
I am critical and I taunt.  
When I forget this  
you are the Buddha.

***I take up the way of not sparing the dharma assets.***

I vow to be generous, to be otherwise is to hoard. My time, my attention, my skills, my labour, my wealth,  
they are ours

***I take up the way of not indulging in anger***

I vow to honour your intentions and motivations. My anger is a  
form of domination where I seek to make you into an unwilling  
version of me. No surer way is there to stall the Dharma wheel.

***I take up the way of not defaming the three treasures***

I vow to revere  
the Buddha,  
and the Sangha.  
awakening.  
ancestors,  
tyre screech,  
of friendship.

the Dharma  
This way lies  
There in my  
there in the  
there in the risk



## **A matter of time**

- Kathy Shiels

Scrambling over leaf litter, pungently sodden on the path, I reach forward to touch the ancient mound. Silent for its 2,756 million years the rock accepts my curious finger tips patiently. Embroidered with lichen the mound's creases and curves cradle freshly fallen rain.

Ella's twelve week old nose halts in honour of the ancestors. A chorus of clapping sticks and Noongar chants, long caught in the Karri trees high branches, muffle down to us. Filled with awe I find a foot hold on the rock just slightly above my elbow. I begin to climb beside iridescent moss nestled in rock pockets. Careful not to disturb the moss' breath I pause on the edge. Ella finds a sidelong ledge perfect for four little paws.

The magnetism of the granite binds us to its surface. With no fear of falling, we climb easily to the scull of its summit and sit. Ella's tongue lolls to one side as she pants and grins wide – so proud of herself. I stretch my legs in front and rest both arms behind. Muddy boots have no place here I sense and remove them effortlessly. Ella delights at the sight of unaccompanied socks and yips at one before I scoop them up and tuck them into my boots.

The wind picks up and Karri leaves chatter above. Lifting my head to the sunlight sliding down between the leaves I breathe in its timely arrival. Then I lower my chin as a deep stillness settles on the wind. Ella drops down onto her belly and rests her velvet head on one paw. We both feel the lightness of sanctity, the weight of history – of those gone.

Gazing straight ahead, the granite drops into a wide flat yawn of silver water. The inlet laps at the granite's edge. Lapping, lapping, caressing the years long gone – the squealing, glistening black bodies of children plunging. The knowing wrinkled hands checking watery fish traps. Lapping, lapping the inlet caresses time long gone of spearheads, kangaroo skin capes, the law and the laughter. Lapping, lapping the inlet laments hearts long gone walkabout, piccanninies long gone with fever, elders long gone with stories, words long gone with their meaning, songs long gone with their singing. Lapping, lapping the inlet laments long gone laughter, women squatting, giggling, slapping wriggling fish down onto rock, and cuddling coolamons while chewing berries.

My legs ease their way into a Noongar leg cross. Using the toes of my boots for a zafu I sit. Little Ella's wet nose sniffs my hands cupped below my belly. She rests her nose on my thigh and lolls into a puppy drop down sleep. Time passes secretly; stealing away between the wind, sun's warmth and the gentle granite.

All is still. All is at rest until a shadow sweeps over us and a whack of wings sheers the silver water. My eyes open fully to a pelican mid landing. Charcoal grey ribbons of water ripple outwards. Its huge beak, pink and ponderous hangs below its perfectly round small yellow eye. Another shadow sweeps the granite, another and another. In moments of timeless ritual seven pelicans grace the inlet and assert their rightful tenancy. Ella is on her feet and wriggling with glee. Her little tail swings ecstatically as I quickly draw her into my chest with one gentle arm. She wriggles. Sit! Sit! I say firmly. Just watch! Just look!

And so began our ritual practised whenever we get a chance. We sit together, in the midst of nearby parks' duck business, in the midst of local larrikin Corella business, in the midst of

squawking seagull business, in the midst of strident swans' business. We sit together, deeply humbled to just be together in the freshly arrived ancient.

There was a time when Ella sat alongside me because she needed a puppy drop sleep or I held her lead and insisted, or I cajoled her with a treat. But that time has long gone. Nowadays Ella rarely needs to be on a lead. She sits leaning into me because the walk has tired her. No longer twelve weeks old she's now twelve years old; almost thirteen and she insists on when we sit together. The time has passed when I needed to call her back from scurrying after some intoxicating smell or the sight of feline fur. These days she meanders along behind me or if I'm chatting with a neighbour, she goes on ahead but then turns, sits and waits for me. By dog calculations she's almost ninety one years old and some time ago we found a new place to sit together. It's in the room of an aging relative who lives at the far end of a fern filled walkway in a residential care facility. We go each Thursday morning and enjoy another timeless ritual. It goes like this:

*How old is she?* The cultured voice of my relative with advanced dementia asks.

*She's almost thirteen!* I reply.

*Ah, that's a grand age!* She offers into the room and then becomes silent.

And like this:

*How old is she?* The cultured voice of my relative with advanced dementia asks.

*She's almost thirteen!* I reply.

*Ah, that's a grand age!* She offers into the room and then becomes silent.

Then again like this:

*How old is she?* The cultured voice of my relative with advanced dementia asks.

*She's almost thirteen!* I reply.

*Ah, that's a grand age!* She offers into the room and then becomes silent.

Time rests as we enjoy our visit. Ella's head lifts anew, grinning widely each time we speak into the silence, and surprisingly I find my words fresh with every utterance. After some time, lunch time approaches so we say our goodbyes and make our way back past the ferns and opening doorways. Silver waves lap at foreheads above time lost eyes, smiling up from wheelchairs or walking frames. We join them en route to the dining room. Pale wrinkled fingers reach for a pat of Ella's head. She moves closer and sits leaning her head towards the shaking fingers. But it's lunch time so wheels turn, walkers move and Ella swings her tail high with a youthful spring in her gait. Beside her I feel thoroughly warmed and enlivened by our sacred glimpse into my community's secret ageing business. After all Ella and I know we're in the thick of it. It's just a matter of time.

## **Instructions for Returning**

– Brigid Lowry

Walk away from the crumbling palace  
of your ideas about yourself,  
past the crumbling car-wreck of your vanity.

Trust instead the lemon-slice moon,  
the infinity of stars,  
the safe haven of a cup of tea  
the breathing Now of your body.

Enter through the door of the fragrant soup.

Enter through the door of the dancing leaves

Step lightly,  
with birdsong,  
softly through the gateless gate.

#

## **Old Man In Profile**

-Nick Arnold

(This was written at Brigid's Sit Walk Write: A Sacred Ink Workshop, at the end of May, which I really enjoyed and recommend.)

The old man has a bent back. The old man's hair is grey and flies backwards like he has been in a great wind that has pushed his hair back so long it stays there now, fixed, pulled straight.

He's whistling and tapping with his right index finger a beat on his knee. Or is remembering a thought, a face, a theory. Or composing music. Or singing. He is sitting anxiously waiting for his doctor's appointment, dentist, the results of tests, a prognosis, news from long away. He sits in his kitchen waiting for a phone call from his son, or brother, his ex wife who calls him once a week at the same time and they share their problems, their fears, their worries and illnesses, their pains and aches, how their bodies are slowly stopping. The progression of little misfortunes. She lives now on the other coast of their homeland, widowed to her second husband, he alone since their divorce, and only now, years later, they have begun to speak again, once a week by phone, in his kitchen, at this time.

He is a composer, but has lost his mind and has forgotten the structure of music. He is a painter but is too arthritic to hold a brush. He is a sculptor but is too weak to wield his chisel. He has lost his sense of beauty, of timing, of balance, of structure. He can no longer create anything. He has no



more reason to.

He is a poet and composer and painter and sculptor, and plays soccer, and has great kindness for all that live in his poor village. He runs a second hand bookstore. He is a librarian. He is a weaver and dyer. He makes shoes, slowly, by hand. Cuts the pieces of leather, pushes holes through them using ancient pristine tools with wooden handles, kept bound together in a leather pouch. He sews leather pieces together with thick heavy needles and binding. Glues them, buffs them, works the hard fabric to softness. Replaces soles of old worn out shoes.

#

### **Where Am I now?**

- Paula Inayat-Hussain

Why do the moons  
Wax and wane  
So soon  
Nowadays?

What promised abundance  
Was that  
Whose traces I followed  
With trust

Must I wake and die  
In the dark  
And listen alone  
To the magpie cry?

Wide-eyed  
When so much more air  
Moved in and out  
Of my lungs?

And the slippers shuffling  
In the kitchen  
With the kettle boiling -  
Can that be me?

If only in me, then  
What was it  
That's left me here  
To these greyer, less limber days?

#

## Sesshin Poem

-Mark Edwards

One sky in the floor  
One step  
One more

One breath in the trees  
One bum  
Two knees

Four teachers in a row  
Two millipedes  
One toe

Two laden bushes  
One white  
One pink  
The coffee, the tea  
One body  
One sink

Two true words  
Spoken to power  
Nothing holy  
One rain shower

One skull  
One cup  
Undifferentiated  
All thrown up

And countless black bellies  
All facing in  
No reasons  
No words  
Not even  
Who is hearing  
The birds, the birds



## Being Good Is Bad

### Are you a good parent?

High School student Brittany Spicer investigates.

IT is an early Saturday morning, and a young girl sits in her family's living room watching cartoons on her parents' new 24 inch TV. The cartoon program she is watching takes to a break, and an advert of a pink portable doll house comes on: "Barbie Glam Vacation House! Goes wherever you go! Only \$39.99 at Target now!", mesmerizing the young girl.

Later in the day, the young girl is with her mother out shopping for groceries. As soon as they walk past the Target store, the young girl asks if they can go inside.

Mother: "Why?"

Young girl: "Because I want to get Barbie's Glam Vacation House!"

Mother: "No, we can't go inside. I have things to do, and you have enough toys already."

The young girl pouts her lip and looks at her mother with now watery eyes.

Young girl: "But it's only \$39.99 and I want Barbie to go wherever *I* go."

Mother: "...I suppose it won't hurt anyone and will make you happy. But just this time only, honey."

That Saturday, the young girl walked out of that store with the product that the advertisement said she needed, and her mother walked out feeling like a loving and kind mother for compromising.

Over recent years, modern marketers have discovered a business-booming advertising strategy, that - according to the best-selling authors, Clive Hamilton and Richard Denniss, in their most recent book, *Affluenza* - can directly influence how large sums of a family's income will be spent: Children.

In advertisements, marketers often will focus on appealing to children rather than their parents because, as Clive Hamilton puts it, marketers know that the children of a family are the weakest links against modern day marketing. He goes on to say, "One industry estimate has it that 67 per cent of parents' car purchases are influenced by children... When this was realized some years ago, ads for products usually chosen by adults began to be targeted at children."

Marketers now know that children are unable to distinguish the difference between wants and needs, as adults are able to do so, and that children are easily persuaded that items on display in commercials are in fact needed rather than wanted. Clive Hamilton even goes as far to suggest that children are able to play on their parent's weaknesses and coax them into buying a product in question. Debbie Smith, manager of Shoes and Sox, a children's shoe store located in Melbourne, says that it is the kids, not the parents who decide what they buy.

Cameron Stewart, a writer for *The Weekend Australian*, suggests that kids are also skilled at using "pester power", the nagging and repetition of certain requests, in order to get what they want. In Cheryl Idell's study surveying the influence of pester power on parents' buying decisions, half of the 12 and 13 year olds surveyed were successful in convincing their parent's to buy an advertised product, even if their parents didn't want them to have the product. The study concluded that the majority of today's parents are in fact influenced by

their children's repeating of their requests. As one saying puts it, "What a child wants, a parent gets them." But do parents do this out of love for their children or do they do it to feel better about themselves as parents?

**“One industry estimate has it that 67 per cent of parents' car purchases are influenced by children.”**

As today's society becomes more and more technologically advanced, parents often seem to lose touch with the ever-changing latest gadgets, toys and fashions. "The kids decide what's cool, and parents don't want to seem out of touch, so they listen," says one owner of a string of car dealerships in the United States. A result of this occurrence is parents gaining a sense of identity through their children.

In this manner, parents believe that through their children, they communicate to the world the type of person that they want to be seen as. "This might be seen as harmless fun...[parents] telling themselves that they are using designer brands to give their children an 'individual' identity, but in reality [they are] passing on their own insecurities [to their children]," says Clive Hamilton.

Many parents feel they're of a higher social class, for example, when their children attend a private school; do various forms of afterschool and extracurricular activities; wear the latest fashions; or own the latest (and often expensive) toys or gadgets.



One study by Christine Carter found that there are two things that influence how materialistic children are: parents, and the degree to which needs to be filled. Lan Nguyen Chaplina and Deborah Roedder John found that when parents model materialism and focus on material goods as a source of life satisfaction, they communicate a sense that one's worth is tied to material possessions. More enduring sources of self-esteem, such as pride in one's achievements or close relationships with family and friends, receive less emphasis in the household. Without a balanced view of life, adolescents with materialistic parents suffer from lower self-esteem. As a result of having lower self-esteem, they rely on possessions to compensate, causing a vicious cycle to develop.

Parents are often viewed by others as 'good parents' when their children have all the latest stuff and do all the latest 'cool' things, making them 'wealthy', 'good', and 'loving' parents in the public eye. In *Affluenza*, Clive Hamilton describes that our children and pets are becoming a "reflection of our lifestyle choices", and refers to them as the "image that we want to reflect to the world". "Parents -- usually mothers -- [try to] live vicariously through their children...[promoting] their grades and extracurricular accomplishments as a sign of what good parents they are," says Cameron Stewart. He puts it that parents believe that it's good for their kids to be stimulated by doing a various range of activities, but the fact that they are causing their children to be busy also helps to counter any guilt felt by parents for not being able to spend time with their children.

**“Our children and pets are becoming a reflection of our lifestyle choices.”**

"Parents often try to compensate for spending too much time away from their children by buying them things," explains Clive Hamilton. This approach often leads to developing materialistic attitudes within children.

"[Parents] feel guilty about purchasing items...which they believe are bad for their kids, [however], they worry that by constantly saying 'no' they will increase their child's depression or worsen an already strained parent-child relationship," says two practicing psychologists.

Cameron Stewart suggests that each generation is prone to exaggerate its own deprivations compared to those of its children. As a result of this, most parents today try to provide for their children what they themselves were not provided with. Since many opportunities are available to children today, most baby boomers and generation X parents see the endless amount of opportunities available for their children and try to make their children seize every opportunity, rather than allow the child to decide which opportunities he wants to take and which he doesn't.

Perhaps in this day and age we spend too much money on our children, but is this something that should just be expected in order for us to show our love to our children? "Material things are neither bad nor good," comments James E. Burroughs, a professor at the University of Virginia's McIntire School of Commerce. "It is the role and status they are accorded in one's life that can be problematic. The key is to find a balance: to appreciate what you have, but not at the expense of the things that really matter -- your family, community and spirituality.



## **Excerpt from The Queen of Everything Soup, a work-in-progress**

by Brigid Lowry.

For Pedro, who asked for my soup recipe.

I am The Queen of Everything Soup, but feel free to call me Madame Teapot, Moonbeam or Pencil Brain. I amuse myself by choosing a new creative name each day, inspired by the guy in Melbourne who changed his name to Very Impressive by deed poll in 1992. Go ahead, you can play too. How about Nasturtium, Shoe Dude, or Blue Happy?

Beyond my name, I am sixty-one years old, a woman living in a time and place moving so rapidly that I can't keep up. Have you heard the story about a man riding very fast on a horse? As he galloped past, his friend yelled, "Where are you going?" "I don't know, ask the horse," the rider replied. I don't have a horse, but you get my meaning.

It's raining, and I'm making soup. This is my recipe.

Everything Soup. Choose your two oldest onions. Fry them gently with garlic, ginger, cumin, paprika, turmeric. Be lavish with spices. Chop whatever is in your crisper drawer: the shabby remnant of cabbage, half a withered capsicum, two carrots ...All vegetables are welcome here. Cover with water, add a tin of tomatoes, some frozen peas, a slosh of sweet chilli sauce, a blob of curry paste and a tablespoon of tomato paste if it hasn't gone mouldy. Herbs are excellent: basil, parsley, spring onions, those last limp coriander leaves and stalks. Lemon zest, a can of chickpeas, leftover chicken if you're that way inclined. Bring to the boil and simmer gently. When the veggies are cooked add some miso. Dissolve it in a cup with some hot soup broth first so it doesn't remain a big lump. Serve in your favourite bowl, sprinkled with parmesan. It's divine with sourdough toast if you haven't given up an entire food group, such as dairy or carbs. My thought about this, by the way, is that unless you swell up and die when you eat something, there's no point avoiding it. Here's the thing. No matter how many gym visits or green smoothies you make, or vitamins you swallow, you won't escape old age, sickness and death, unless of course you die young. Meanwhile, why deny yourself cream on your pudding or yummy oily pizza? Just saying. My views on this make me a tad unpopular with some of my friends and relatives, as you can imagine. Anyhow, what I was going to say, and forgive me for employing an obvious metaphor before we've got to know each other better, is that life is crazy abundant with all manner of things: haiku, petticoats, cancer, global

warming, cucumbers, mountains, small children, slippers, turtles. There is Facebook and there are mice. It is Everything Soup, guys, and we are in it.

Fresh vibe, flower moon, strange path of life leading everywhere and nowhere...

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## ***A Dharma talk by Ross Bolleter on the Sixth Grave Precept: I take up the Way of Not Discussing the Faults of Others***

*Introduction: A brief overview of the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts*

A Bodhisattva is someone who is originally enlightened, who is becoming enlightened, and who is enlightening others in the midst of the passions and suffering of this world. The Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts support each of us Bodhisattvas as we travel the path. They help us to reduce the harm we do to others and ourselves, and they provide an ethical ground for wisdom and compassion. The sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts are:

*The Three Vows of Refuge*

I take refuge in the Buddha

I take refuge in the Dharma

I take refuge in the Sangha

*The Three Pure Precepts*

I vow to maintain the Precepts

I vow to practice all good Dharmas

I vow to save the many beings

*The Ten Grave Precepts*

I take up the Way of:

not killing; not stealing; not misusing sex; not speaking falsely; not giving or taking drugs; not discussing faults of others; not praising myself while abusing others; not sparing the dharma assets; not indulging in anger, and not defaming the Three Treasures.

With regard to the Three Vows of Refuge, when we take refuge (or find our home) in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha we commit to the Zen Way and seek to live it in our daily life. The Three Pure Precepts provide us with broad ethical guidelines to support us in our vows of refuge. The Ten Grave Precepts give us a more detailed and gritty account of what the Three Pure Precepts mean as we live them through our conduct, speech, thought and feeling.

Overall, these sixteen precepts provide guidelines (rather than rules) that are helpful when we are in dilemma and crisis. They also provide a foundation for compassionate activity, and are a guide for how we should treat others. They are the golden thread of love that binds us to the Way. The Bodhisattva Precepts are not about cultivating Pollyanna consciousness, or goody

two shoes activity, and we may keep the precepts but still get things terribly wrong. We're not proof against that.

The Precepts protect our practice. They encourage us to be aware of what arises in our heart, and to become conscious of our behaviour and its effects. They provide a necessary check to our self righteousness, and, more generally, to the three poisons: greed, hatred and ignorance. They are not a rod to beat ourselves with. Or others. They are written in something more fluid than water.

The Bodhisattva Precepts are taken up publicly in the Ceremony of Jukai, where friends, family and Sangha members gather to witness and support the student as he or she makes their commitment to the Buddha Way. In taking Jukai, the student makes conscious what is already clear in their heart, and he or she states their personal responses to each of the sixteen precepts.

*The Sixth Grave Precept: Not Discussing Faults of Others*

Tonight, I will take up the Sixth Grave Precept, that of Not Discussing Faults of others. This is a challenging precept, and one that I find hard to maintain. I suspect, in fact, that it's challenging for all of us.

It's hard not to speak of the faults of others for there's surely pleasure in such talk. If we feel we don't measure up, it can be satisfying to cut others down to size. Then perhaps we feel that we measure up better. Bagging others also gets cultural support here for Australians are a nation of knockers, debunkers and loppers of tall poppies.

In Australia we also live in a culture of complaint (where, relative to the vast and suffering world, there is so little to complain about) and are prone to discuss the faults of others under the guise of telling it like it is. This is often an excuse for running down our friends, let alone our enemies. Sometimes people take refuge in the culture to say really hurtful things, often concluding the putdown with "Can't take a joke, eh." At such times who needs enemies?

After a night of backbiting, and backstabbing it's hard not to feel that we've violated something in ourselves—most likely our decency, or even our integrity. Sometimes we may realize that our backbiting is somehow not about others after all: that what we most dislike in others can be a clue to the unregarded parts of ourselves. When we are feeling critical of others, and are running them down, it's useful to take a look at how such condemnation reflects parts of ourselves that we don't like.

In some ways discussing the faults of others can be linked to *Schadenfreude*: that feeling of joy or pleasure that we have when we see another fail or suffer misfortune. And when we discuss the faults of others, we may indeed become the agent of another's misfortune. That is of course the purpose of much malicious gossip.

Zen practice encourages us to be aware of our speech and its power to hurt, even to destroy others. Four of the Ten Grave Precepts are concerned with speech (five if we include the Precept of Not Indulging in Anger). This weighting indicates the importance of guarding our mind, or at very least our tongue, so as not to harm others. It's good to try out this precept literally, but don't try to be too perfect. There is a bow wave travelling out from perfection, and, carried along on that wave, people will surely get to explore your faults, true or imagined.



Restraint in terms of discussing faults of others purifies the heart, and helps to build a largeness and tolerance of spirit as exemplified for me by my first accordion teacher Harry Bluck, who was a person of surpassing generosity to students and to the community of musicians in Perth, generally. He allowed me the run of his studios during school holidays, and I learned a lot of Verdi, Gershwin, Chopin and Fats Waller from his well-stocked music library.

Harry was musical director at Channel Seven for a time, and that job entailed writing big band arrangements: massively time-consuming work that would have him up all night fueled on Turkish coffee, filling hundreds of sheets of manuscript paper with his bold notation. The next day he would front the band, only to hear them muttering “Who wrote this crap?” On being interviewed about this, he said: “Well, it hurt to hear this, but playing the arrangements provided them with a gig, and got them some money. And there was a lot of satisfaction in that.”

Constantly complaining about the faults of others fosters the delusion of *I am in here, and you are out there* – what Yasutani Haku’un called, “the fundamental delusion of humanity.” Cultivating this delusion and indulging it hardens its arteries.

Correspondingly, harping on the faults of others is a way of contriving reality for the self. In running others down, we enthrone the small self on some imaginary high moral ground where it sits in judgment on others. This undermines our intimacy with friend and enemy alike.

Wumen writes in his verse to Case 18 of the Wumenkuan:

Words are intimate, mind is yet more intimate.  
When you argue right and wrong  
You are a person of right and wrong.

“When you argue right and wrong, you are a person of right and wrong.” Limited like this we are caught in the dualism of self and other, right and wrong, and a host of other dichotomies. In that place we lose track of the intimacy of words which cuts deeper than our adversarial notions of right and wrong—even as it includes them—and we lose contact with the mind in its timeless vastness dwelling deep down all things, including our own heart.

It’s good to unhook from unnecessary judgment. Why get involved in fault-finding at all; surely, life is too rich for that. Or indeed in praising others, or oneself. Our achievements speak for themselves – or fail to.

And yet sometimes we must criticize, and call people out. What comes immediately to mind is the sexual abuse by children by the clergy in the various Christian churches, and the ensuing cover-up to protect the institution, at a terrifying cost to the victims.

Especially within religious organizations there are dangers in not expressing our disquiet when we think that there is something going on that’s wrong. When there is abuse of power, often the community deals with it in ways that look those of a dysfunctional family—enabling, covering up, denial—or the obverse, ill-judged accusation. But in the culture of Zen in the West, we are learning by degrees how to empower ourselves to uncover the abuses of

power in the Sangha. To that end, in the ZGWA we have our own grievance procedures guaranteed through our Constitution.

More generally, it is impossible to run an institution without critical evaluation of the work, at least, of those who run it, and those who work in it. Learning to give criticism is the art of a lifetime, and many of us spend a lifetime trying to become skilled at this. Timing is all – or almost all. Taking advantage of the opportunity as it presents—and *zazen* surely helps with developing the gut sense that informs such timing. Writing the letter, then allowing time for our feelings to settle before sending it – or deciding not to send it at all, are key aspects that also relate to how we proceed with the delicate process of criticism. Also, deciding on the right mode of communication – formal letter, e-mail, text? – there are many options on offer these days, and the mode we choose nuances what we are communicating.

Regarding criticism: sometimes it may be easier to receive than to give. The old teacher Deshan Xuanjian (819-914) is our model here:

Deshan one day descended to the dining hall, bowls in hand. Xuefeng asked him, “Where are you going with your bowls in hand, Old Teacher? The bell has not rung, and the drum has not sounded.” Deshan turned and went back to his room. (The old teacher’s response is so seamlessly light, nothing clinging to it. He doesn’t pull rank, not for a moment – none of that *West Wing* stuff, like “Indulge me. I’m the teacher.”)

Xuefeng brought this matter up with Yantou. Yantou said, “Deshan, great as he is, does not yet know the last word.” (Xuefeng, the cook in this story, had struggled to awaken over many years, but to no avail. Yantou, on the other hand, had great capacity for the Way, and had come to awakening with relative ease, being what musicians call “a natural.” In this story he conjures this notion of “the last word,” maybe to enlighten Xuefeng, but probably out of pure delight – and a measure of mischief.)

Hearing about this, Deshan had his attendant call Yantou. “You do not approve of this old monk?” he asked. Yantou secretly whispered his meaning. Deshan said nothing further. (I imagine Deshan—the silent bulk of him—just opening one eye.)

Next day, Deshan ascended to the rostrum, and his presentation was very different from usual. (Yes, animatedly cracking jokes where he had been formerly silent.) Yantou came to the front of the hall, rubbing his hands and laughing loudly, saying, “How delightful! Our Old Boss has got hold of the last word! From now on, no one under heaven can out-do him!”

There’s not a trace of judgment in any of this, not a whiff of the faults of others. It’s pure puffball light. Divine play. When the wind blows the downy willow-seed floats away.

When it’s beyond all judgement and comparison, why judge? When there’s no need to judge others, why judge them through gossip and haphazard words? On the one hand, gossip is a source of vital information about the tribe. We need to know what’s going on, not least so that in an emergency we can help. On the other hand, gossip can be destructive. It is said that

one of Nyogen Senzaki's groups was destroyed by malicious gossip. Such malice can be sensed in a phrase like "If it's true why not tell it?"

Forbearance: the indefinite suspension of a final judgment can bring beneficial changes, not only in Sangha, but in our lives more broadly. Finally, however, when we have to judge, when there's no choice and we have to call it what we must follow through, or we threaten the lives and well-being of those who depend on us, and destroy our own integrity.

Wumen wrote a verse that accompanies case 45 from the Wumenkuan, where Wuzu Fayan asks us: "Shakyamuni and Maitreya are servants of another. Who is that other?" The verse goes:

Don't ride another's horse.  
Don't draw another's bow.  
Don't discuss another's faults.  
Don't explore another's affairs.

These statements are cast in the form of moral injunctions, but they go deeper than that, enabling us to touch the realm that lies beneath considerations of right and wrong, which is none other than our timeless essential nature. With regard to "Don't discuss another's faults," can you give expression to that nature?

Ross Bolleter, Spring 2014.

#

## **HEART**

**- Phillip McNamara**

Watch the flaming heart  
At the centre of the wick.

It doesn't ripple  
With each wave of wind  
But bends.

**ZEN GROUP OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
MEMBERSHIP/PLEDGE FORM FOR 2014/2015**

The fee structure for the Zen Group of Western Australia for **2014/2015** is as follows.

**Full Member - \$200 Health Care Card/Pension/Student - \$90 Out of Town - \$160  
Family - \$230 Friend (suggested) - \$90**

**\*Pledge – a lump sum or per month, in addition to membership. See below.**

**If you would like to join but cannot meet the annual fee please contact the ZGWA Treasurer.**

The money raised through membership and pledges goes towards maintaining the Zendo and Dana for Teaching. Members have the opportunity to be nominated for council positions and to vote at general meetings. As a member you also have a right to a reserved place and discount for sesshins, ZGWA magazine subscription, receipt of mail outs, and use of the library.

**\*Pledge:** We have a group of **members** who pledge monthly, over and above membership. These pledges are vital to maintain the zendo and our teacher, and keep the doors open for everyone. If you can afford it please consider. Pledges can be made throughout the year, or in a lump sum. But this is different from a donation. Pledges are a scheduled payment, and the Treasurer is notified in advance of your commitment.

Regular payments can be made by cheque or by arrangement with the ZGWA Treasurer. The membership fee should have been paid by **1st July 2014**. If you wish to continue your membership or to join us as a member please do so now. To become a member or friend of ZGWA, and to register your pledge, please complete the form below and either give it to the Treasurer or a Council member at the Zendo

**Or** post it with your payment to:

**The Treasurer, Zen Group of WA, PO Box 442, Fremantle 6959**

**Or by Email and Bank Transfer to: BSB: 126568 Account No: 43331663 (please note name/AM)**

**If you have a query regarding membership please contact the Treasurer by:**

**Email: [plwilson@iinet.net.au](mailto:plwilson@iinet.net.au) Mobile: 4011 835 406**

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I wish to be a member of the Zen Group of Western Australia for the **2014/2015** financial year.

Please tick:

Full Member - \$200 Health Care Card/Pension/Student - \$90 Out of Town - \$160

Family - \$230 Friend (suggested) - \$90

If you also wish to pledge a regular amount to ZGWA please indicate below.

Monthly pledge of \$..... Other (please specify) .....

**Please fill in your up-to-date contact details below.**

**Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:**

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-Mail:**

**Signature(s):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**

**THANK YOU**