

Zoom Zazen - Saturday 21 January 2023

Look thoroughly within yourself, during zazen; that is to say, be aware of what crosses the space of your mind at each moment. It is not **your** mind but [simply] the place where things manifest the world, where phenomena flow. Whether it is the perception of sensations, sounds, smells, emotions or feelings, thoughts of all kinds, all these manifest spontaneously [and] naturally in the mind and disappear in the same way.

Knowing the true nature of things, Master Wanshi tells us:

"Birth and death originally have neither root nor stem; appearing and disappearing originally have no defining signs nor leave any trace."

This is an invitation to examine, with a sincerity as objective as that of a scientist, how the creation and dissolving of things occur within ourselves. It's a matter of becoming fully aware of the nature of our own existence.

When we consciously look at things as they are, during zazen, it is indeed in their ungraspable purity that we see and perceive them. They are nothing other than sudden appearances which disappear immediately, like the cry of a bird. Outside of the present moment, things have no more reality than mirages, and leave no trace when they disappear.

But our vision is warped [twisted]. By naming things, our discriminating mind attributes to them a reality, a longevity and a solidity that they do not possess. Things have no substance of their own. The mind constantly deceives us in trying to latch onto them and make them true for the self, which is itself also illusory. It is a never-ending game [inter-play] based on a false vision and therefore it produces frustration and suffering.

One day a monk asked Master Ekaku:

"It is said that the whole universe is empty and pure and thus shows its original form. How then is it possible for it to manifest the Earth, mountains and rivers?"

Master Ekaku replied:

"It is said that the whole universe is empty and pure and thus shows its original form. How then is it possible for it to manifest the Earth, mountains and rivers?"

By repeating the monk's question, Master Ekaku told him that this is simply how things are. They appear and disappear, and are unreal, empty. Is there an origin of the Earth, mountains and rivers that our limited minds can reach? To see the origin, one must go beyond words and hold oneself in the peaceful non-duality of zazen. *Hishiryō*.

And yet, things have their truth: they endlessly expose the ineffable grandeur of Reality. The original form and purity of the universe is nothing other than the Earth, mountains and rivers.

This is what Master Wanshi explains:

"Birth and death originally have neither root nor stem; appearing and disappearing originally have no defining signs nor leave any trace."

Zen practice is nothing other than a continual apprenticeship in seeing the true nature of birth and death. The ignorance of the thinker, who falsely believes in the reality of things, must be illuminated in order to be dispelled. It is our attention itself that enlightens and puts an end to [our] blindness. It is the light of the pure gaze of our Eye-Treasure that illuminates things and teaches us to see their true nature.

The Lankavatara Sutra says:

"Like sparks of light, things are free from birth, duration and cessation; they are free from permanence and impermanence, as well as from both stain and purity."

"When one sees the essence of things, it is no longer necessary to try to dispel ignorance."

"When one realises that the essence of things is unborn, one attains liberation."
