

Zoom Zazen, Saturday 25 November 2023

In winter, the tree ponders what it will soon produce. It unconsciously prepares for spring without knowing if it will come. Perfectly present to itself, creating itself within itself in the cold of winter. In this way, a transmission takes place in which nothing is transmitted. And yet it awakens and blossoms every day.

The poet asks the tree:

"What's new today?"

"Everything!"

The simple fact of being is, of course, neither yesterday nor tomorrow. This is the Way, where nothing is passed on. And yet it is always *now* that this transmission takes place. It is this zazen, *now*, where the goal, the effort and the 'me' [self] are forgotten, where only a living and paradoxically empty presence remains. The mystery of Presence-emptiness is revealed when there is no one left. That's when the transmission shines in all its brilliance for our Eye-Treasure.

Let's listen to Master Wanshi conclude his teaching on transmission:

"The Buddhas welcome all the transformations that spread their Buddha bodies like flowers, roots, branches, leaves, or dust."

Nothing belongs to us and nothing *can* belong to us. We are never apart from the source from which all things including ourselves arise while being reabsorbed, expressing through our bodily appearance the elusive presence, the emptiness of our own nature. Like a great tree that belongs to and cares for the smallest of its leaves. Each leaf, each branch is the result of an attempt, a hesitation or a failure on the part of the whole tree [reaching] towards the light of the sky.

And even when the leaves return to the earth in autumn and disappear under the snow, the tree remembers them as it dresses itself anew for Spring.

Nothing can go wrong in this motionless transmission of nature, without goal, without profit.

What zazen teaches us is to forget the conditioning, the veils that lead us to confusion and to forgetting this living transmission. In a movement of natural purity, we learn to let our childlike heart come to the surface. The unconditional acceptance that all things are in their proper place leads to peacefulness and wisdom.

"This wisdom penetrates the three times," concludes Master Wanshi, "and the ten thousand transformations can no longer disturb us. We realise that there is not a single speck of dust outside us. This marvellous achievement surpasses the content of thousands of religious texts. So why should we want to grasp what belongs only to the world of reflections and shadows?"

Master Obaku answers this question by explaining to his monks:

"Awakening, the absolute, truth, sudden enlightenment and everything else, right up to the state of sanctity and wisdom, are mere concepts. They have nothing to do with the authentic awakened mind. They are useful to help us climb the tree of life and death, and to climb it, you just have to avoid getting lost in analytical, conceptual and dualistic thinking."
