

Zoom Zazen, Saturday 22 June 2024

*"Each moment," says Master Dogen, "holds birth and death in its hand."*

When we remain in the pure awareness of Presence, we are in the living of things, between birth and death, in the hand of the present moment. Between birth and death, there is That, buddha-nature, which has neither beginning nor end. This is the mystery that reveals itself spontaneously during zazen, without any effort on our part other than to remain open to contemplating life which passes through the limitless field of our perception like the cry of a bird, the gurgle of a stream, the buzzing of a bee.

Master Wanshi explains to us how we should practise:

*"By day, the sun, and at night, the moon. When it's their turn, neither blinds the other. The monk who wears the kesa, who has neither limits nor characteristics, practises in this way, without interruption. To achieve such a regular practice, you must know how to withdraw completely from the turbulent fog and the continual linking [chaining] together of your conditioned ideas."*

And how do we withdraw from this constant noise that our mind superimposes on the silence and space of our [true] nature?

There's no recipe, no alternative other than taking refuge in silent Presence, between birth and death. It is *there* and only *there* that we are alive. This is where we live, the homeland we reach when we no longer believe in anything. Time loses its meaning. No more waiting, and therefore no more frustration. *There*, between birth and death, I become one with the ten thousand things; *there*, I appear when I myself disappear; *there*, I see that each moment holds birth and death in its hand; *there*, a bird sings and the whole universe listens; *there*, I experience nothingness and realise that this is what I am; *there*, I for ever plough the field of emptiness.

No one else can go *there* in our place.

There is, in fact, no path to follow to reach what we already *are*.

Let us leave our beliefs behind, without regret. As long as we maintain the notion of being a name, a form, someone important, with goals to achieve, we will remain stuck in our own concepts.

The real question is "*Why am I here?*" There is only one answer we can find: *Not two*.

We alone can understand why we are here! And to do that, the prerequisite for our spiritual practice is confidence in ourselves. It is a firm faith in ourselves that allows us to take refuge in our own presence, between birth and death. When we let go of our *persona*, we receive the grace of the Buddhas and the gift of true knowledge.

Presence! Let us understand without [using] our eyes what lies beyond this word and what it designates.

Master Dogen tells us what we must understand beyond this word, with all our hearts.

*"Study this moment diligently. This moment is the instant in which the whole world and life are one and the same. Everything, the sky, water, the earth and life are one and the same moment. So we can say that life is the life within us and that we are ourselves within life. The moment of our coming to life is the moment of the opening up of our whole nature, our body, our heart, our innermost spirit and everything that surrounds us."*

We sit in order simply to see, to listen, to contemplate the transience of this moment which contains us entirely without ever retaining anything of us.

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