

Zoom Zazen Saturday 20 July 2024

When we live the truth of the Great Wisdom sutra, both during zazen and in our everyday lives, we become aware that heaven and earth are one and the same thing. We know what this unity means: *Ku sokuze shiki* and *shiki sokuze Ku*. There is no emptiness without the ten thousand things, there is no earth without heaven, no life without death. And there is no Nirvana outside of Samsara. With this understanding, we come naturally to evolve harmoniously with each other in an inexplicable balance, where everything is in its place.

"Your life arises from the field of emptiness," explains Master Wanshi, "and it is in this field that it is fulfilled. It's the same for every being. Go forward and try to see. Those who know this truth nod their heads with understanding."

In the teachings of the Buddhas, heaven and earth are one indivisible reality. It is the only reality, without before or after, that unites without ever separating them, the unconditioned essence, the unborn, and the conditioned impermanence of things. This reality is our nature itself. There is no duality between earth and heaven, between ourselves and Buddha. It is only apparent.

The Buddha and the Masters teach that we must not become attached to either heaven or earth. And if we become attached to only one side of this apparent duality, we have to rely on the other to get out of it.

When we are at the very heart of zazen, we see: this reality is just self-evident, and we can nod our heads in understanding.

One day, when Master Gensha was teaching, he heard the swallows calling. He said to the monks:

"They speak deeply of the real form of this world and indeed they preach the essence of the teachings."

Then he came down from his pulpit.

There was a monk there who didn't seem to have understood and who asked him to say more. Gensha replied:

"Get away with you. No one will be able to believe that you don't understand."

How could anyone not understand the emptiness of the swallow's cry in the empty sky? The ungraspable transience of this cry reveals reality, clear and immediate, present at every moment.

This is Master Dogen's 'right moment', *just as it is*. A double-sided moment, as he says, that contains the multitude of entities. This is the moment, *just as it is*, into which we are invited to disappear during zazen, in order to see the obvious¹: the double-sided Presence where heaven is earth and earth is heaven, without any duality. It is this moment *just as it is* that opens the door to the unborn, the centre of the field of emptiness.

Master Ōan Donge said one day to Tokuki:

"If you need to understand easily, simply put yourself in the middle of the twelve hours, where the heart springs forth and the moment stirs. Back and front are one. Knowledge and its object both vanish together. Deep meaning and understanding both disappear together. Past, present and future are one and the same instant. When you arrive at this field, you are called an awakened being - and you have nothing more to learn, nothing more to do."

There where the heart springs forth and the moment stirs. It's there that we can hear the swallow's cry and truly see the flower turning in the Buddha's fingers. This is the place of the obvious, at the centre of the field of emptiness.

¹ or *self-evident*