

NEW
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Dharma Adviser

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BUDDHIST BELIEF

In this issue Stephen Batchelor addresses an issue that may resonate with many Zen practitioners. Namely, what is the nature of Buddhist belief? What do we have faith in? What do we know or think we know? Both this article and our piece by Shi fu explore the role of going beyond faith and surety on the path and how freedom can lie in "not knowing".

In this issue we are happy to be able to announce the creation of the Western Ch'an Fellowship. Following the proposal for such a fellowship outlined by John in NCF 12 an assembly of practitioners has met at Maenllwyd in July 1996 and February 1997 to work out the details of a more formal institutional structure to support our disparate network of practitioners. An account of the deliberations of the first of these meetings is included. In issue 15 we plan to talk about the fellowship and the issues arising from its creation at greater length. In the interim, if you have any feelings about this or comments to make it would be very helpful if you could make them known to John.

Also in this issue we include a contribution resulting from the points raised by both John and Ken Jones in issue 14 on authenticity in practice. As well as this we have the usual mix of retreat reports, poems and information on retreats and groups around the country. This issue also contains include a new book review feature and a brief guide to a few useful Ch'an internet resources.

It is also with great sadness that we include the obituaries of two much loved retreat companions.

Before finishing apologies are in order for the long gap since issue 13. We are attempting to improve matters through, among other means, a few technical improvements and the appointment of another editor. We are therefore happy to welcome Simon Child to our small editorial staff. Simon will be particularly responsible for the layout and design of NCF and is it thus to him that pictures should now be sent. An up to date address list for submissions is given on the back page. As ever any articles, poems, reviews and particularly photographs and pictures are very welcome.

EDITORIAL FROM THE CH'AN HALL

The articles in this issue circle around a number of concerns that are occupying those of us attempting to see more clearly how Ch'an can be taught and practised in Britain. A number of us recently met at Maenllwyd and decided to create an institutional structure to help with these matters. It is to be called **The Western Ch'an Fellowship** and a report of our first deliberation forms part of this issue. The New Ch'an Forum itself is to become the journal of our new body. In February 1997 we met again to establish an executive committee prior to seeking charitable status. We intend to devote a large portion of the following issue to the new fellowship and many of the matters arising from our deliberations.

The creation of our fellowship raises issues concerning the points in Buddhadharma and in practice which we wish to emphasise. Basing our approach in the teachings of Master Sheng Yen gives us authentic roots which we need to water regularly. But, as Shi Fu has already impressed on me, we in Britain, with our distinctive culture, have to find our own way to be creative in our expression of the Dharma - just as the Chinese did when Indian Buddhism first began to spread in China.

It is with joy therefore, that I welcome Stephen Batchelor's article in this issue. We need to experience for ourselves the extraordinary discovery that "everything is as it is"; that the Buddha never said anything religious; that he realised for us that religious belief can be highly illusory predicating properties on the mind and the universe which cannot actually be found there. The mind in its ignorant search for identity, security and perseverance imputes properties to itself and the objects and persons that come within its ken. These are actually no more than the predications of the mind itself and the realisation of this is both alarming and freeing. Indeed the opening to such "emptiness" in full force is, as Stephen says, truly shocking. Enlightenment is just such a shock. To realise that "not knowing" is the root of being and creativity is an extraordinary liberation yet one difficult to come by because of our "need to know". As Krishnamurti so often says, freedom lies in going beyond the "known" for the known is a trap that ensnares us all in hope, fear and, ultimately, in a consolation in pretence. Institutions that foster such illusory certainty are ultimately devious.

Stephen's use of "agnosticism" as a theme is thus of the greatest interest and Shi Fu, in his talk after my first retreat in New York in 1986, is saying very much the same thing. Not knowing, freedom in the suchness of things and creativity, seem pivotal points in the dharma to be worked upon in our new fellowship.

The New Ch'an Forum has not been tardy in attempting to clarify some of the concerns of Buddhists around the scandals that have affected us all in recent years. Reform depends on social critique and in our last issue Ken Jones extended this to some British Buddhist institutions (although without imputing scandal to them). Not surprisingly, we have had a vigorous response from one of them. We welcome this sharing of views but do not want it to descend into acrimony or personal comment. The texts on this subject are the last for a while - it will be interesting to see if our social criticism leads to any positive effect.

A happy 1997 to everyone.

John Crook

THE AGNOSTIC BUDDHIST

Stephen Batchelor¹

Something I've noticed over the years is how, although we may start out at a young age rebelling against Christianity or our Jewishness and then finding in Buddhism a vindication for our rebelliousness, as we grow older, we begin in a strange way to recover our past. I was not brought up a Christian. In fact, my grandparents on my mother's side formerly broke with the Christian Church, even though my great-grandfather was a Wesleyan minister. Under my mother's influence I grew up in an anti-Church environment, one which might loosely be termed humanistic. Now I find that I am coming back more and more to that culture in which I grew up. Although I admire many of Christianity's ethical values, I have no natural sympathy with the Christian tradition. But I do find myself increasingly sympathetic to my own childhood experience as a humanist, a secularist, an agnostic. I'm even beginning to reconsider positively what it means to be a materialist -- a term that has a rather bad press in Buddhism.

The term "agnostic" is the one I identify with the closest. Yet few people realize that it was only coined in the late 1880's by the biologist Thomas Huxley. And it was coined as a joke. Huxley belonged to a small philosophical circle in London in which he increasingly felt out of place. While everybody else in the group could readily identify themselves as a Christian or a Rationalist or a Schopenhaurian, or whatever, he felt perplexed that no such term seemed applicable to him. So he decided to call himself an "agnostic" in order that he too could "have a tail like all the other foxes."

Huxley began to develop the idea. He saw agnosticism as demanding as any moral, philosophical, or religious creed. But he refused to see it as a creed in the traditional sense of the word, and saw it far more as a *method*. The method he had in mind is broadly that which underpins scientific inquiry. It means, on the one hand, taking one's reason as far as it will go and, on the other, not accepting anything as true unless it is somehow demonstrable. Here there are very clear parallels with the Buddhist tradition. Although we may not find it so much in Zen, in the Indo-Tibetan tradition there is a strong emphasis on rational inquiry. I spent many years as a young monk not working on koans but studying formal logic and epistemology with Tibetan lamas. It is a very strong, rational tradition and I'm immensely grateful to have had that training. All traditions of Buddhism agree that one should not believe something simply for the sake of believing it, but only if it can somehow be demonstrated as true, if it can be realized in some practical way.

Huxley even described his view as "the agnostic faith," thus giving it the kind of seriousness that one might otherwise expect only amongst religious people. And within fifteen years of Huxley coining the term, "agnosticism" was already being linked with Buddhism. It was first applied by a man called Allan Bennett who became a *bhikkhu* in Burma in 1901 with the name Ananda Metteyya. Bennett was the first Englishman to be ordained as a Buddhist and the first European who tried to articulate his understanding of the Dharma as a practising Buddhist rather than merely a scholar of Buddhism. In a magazine he issued in Rangoon in 1905, he spoke of Buddhism as "exactly coincidental in its fundamental ideas with the modern agnostic philosophy of the West."

At the beginning of the century, when Westerners were only just starting to embrace the teachings of the Buddha, why would this young English monk have regarded Buddhism as agnostic? I suspect that one of the key sources may have been this famous passage from the *Cula Malunkya Sutta*, the sixty-third discourse in the *Majjhima Nikaya* of the Pali canon. The Buddha says: "Suppose Malunkyaputta, a man were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions brought a surgeon

¹Edited version of a talk given at the symposium "American Buddhism Today" to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Rochester Zen Center, Rochester, New York, June 22, 1996.

to treat him. The man would say, 'I will not let the surgeon pull out the arrow until I know the name and clan of the man who wounded me; whether the bow that wounded me was a long bow or a cross bow; whether the arrow that wounded me was hoof-tipped or curved or barbed.' All this would still not be known to that man, and meanwhile he would die. So too, Malunkyaputta, if anyone should say, 'I will not lead the noble life under the Buddha until the Buddha declares to me whether the world is eternal or not eternal; finite or infinite; whether the soul is the same as or different from the body; whether or not an awakened one continues or ceases to exist after death,' that would still remain undeclared by the Buddha, and meanwhile that person would die." This passage shows quite clearly both the pragmatic nature of the Buddha's teaching, as well as its agnostic bent.

It is important to distinguish between those questions that are addressed by the core teachings of the Buddha, and those which are not really of central concern. I was listening on the radio not long ago in England to a discussion about religious belief. All of the participants were engaged in a heated discussion about the possibility of miracles. It is generally assumed that being a religious person entails believing certain things about the nature of oneself and reality in general that are beyond the reach of reason and empirical verification. What happened before birth, what will happen after death, the nature of the soul and its relation to the body: these are first and foremost religious questions. And the Buddha was not interested in them. But if we look at Buddhism historically, we'll see that it has continuously tended to lose this agnostic dimension through becoming institutionalized as a religion, with all of the usual dogmatic belief systems that religions tend to have. So, ironically, if you were to go to many Asian countries today, you would find that the monks and priests who control the institutional bodies of Buddhism would have quite clear views on whether the world is eternal or not, what happens to the Buddha after death, the status of the mind in relation to the body, and so on.

This has led to Buddhism as it comes into the West being automatically regarded as a religion. The very term "Buddhism," a word for which there is no exact equivalent in an Asian language, is largely an invention of Western scholars. It suggests a creed to be lined up alongside other creeds; another set of beliefs about the nature of reality that we cannot know by other means than through faith. This assumption, though, tends to distort or obscure the encounter of the Dharma with secular agnostic culture. And another problem is that today the very force of the term "agnosticism" has been lost. If somebody says they're an agnostic, although they know it means that one claims not to know certain things, it usually goes hand in glove with an attitude that seems not to care about such things. "I don't know what happens after death" becomes equivalent to: "I don't care; I don't really want to know; I don't even want to think about it." Modern agnosticism has lost the confidence that it may have had at the time of Huxley, and lapsed into scepticism. Buddhism too has lost that critical edge that we find in the early Pali discourses, and, of course, in the Zen koans. Very often Buddhism as an institution has tended to lapse into religiosity.

So, what would an agnostic Buddhist be like today? How would we even start to think about such a stance? Firstly, I would suggest that an agnostic Buddhist would not regard the Dharma or the teachings of the Buddha as a source which would provide answers to questions of where we are going, where we are coming from, what is the nature of the universe, and so on. In this sense, an agnostic Buddhist would not be a believer with claims to revealed information about supernatural or paranormal phenomena and in this sense would not be religious. I've recently started saying to myself: "I'm not a religious person," and finding that to be strangely liberating. You don't have to be a religious person in order to practice the Dharma.

Secondly, an agnostic Buddhist would not look to the Dharma for metaphors of consolation. This is another great trait of religions: they provide consolation in the face of birth and death; they offer images of a better afterlife; they offer the kind of security that can be achieved through an act of faith. I'm not interested in that. The Buddha's teachings are confrontative; they're about truth-telling, not about painting some pretty picture of life elsewhere. They're saying: "Look, existence is painful." This is what is distinctive about the

Buddhist attitude: it starts not from the promise of salvation, but from valuing that sense of existential anguish we tend either to ignore, deny or avoid through distractions.

Buddhism is often misrepresented as something nihilistic or life-denying. This fails to recognise that the project of the Four Noble Truths is about resolving the dilemma of anguish, not about indulging human suffering. Again it's a praxis; it's something we can do. It starts with understanding the reality of anguish and uncertainty, and then applying a set of practices that work towards a resolution. But this kind of agnosticism is not based on disinterest; it's not saying, "I just don't care about these great matters of birth and death." It is a passionate recognition that *I do not know*. I really do not know where I came from; I do not know where I'm going. And that "don't know" is a very different order of "don't know" from the scepticism and fear of a superficial agnosticism.

This process of stripping away consolatory illusions by holding true to this agnostic not-knowing, leads to what we might call "deep agnosticism." I like to think of Buddhism as the practice of deep agnosticism. This both leads away from the superficiality of contemporary Western agnosticism, and begins to tap a dimension that seems essential to the heart of Dharma practice. To illustrate this, here is a koan; case forty-one from *The Gateless Gate*:

Bodhidharma sat facing the wall. The Second Patriarch, standing in the snow, cut off his arm and said, "Your disciple's mind is not yet at peace. I beg you, master, give it rest." Bodhidharma said, "Bring me your mind and I will put it to rest for you." The Second Patriarch replied, "I have searched for the mind but have never been able to find it." Bodhidharma said, "I've finished putting it to rest for you."

This deep "not-knowing," in this case the Second Patriarch's inability to find his anguished mind, takes the notion of agnosticism down to another depth. One might call it a contemplative depth. Such deep agnostic metaphors are likewise found in such terms as *wu hsin* (no mind), and *wu nien* (no thought), as well as in the more popular "Don't Know Mind" of the Korean Zen Master, Seung Sahn.

Another striking feature of this koan is its similarity with the process of understanding emptiness as found in the Madhyamaka philosophy of India and Tibet. "Emptiness" is a singularly unappetising term. I don't think it was ever meant to be attractive. Herbert Guenther once translated it as "the open dimension of being," which sounds a lot more appealing than "emptiness." "Transparency" was a term I played with for a while, which also makes emptiness sound more palatable. Yet we have to remember that even two thousand years ago Nagarjuna was having to defend himself against the nihilistic implications of emptiness. Many of the chapters in his philosophical works start with someone objecting: "This emptiness is a terrible idea. It undermines all grounds for morality. It undermines everything the Buddha was speaking about." Clearly the word did not have a positive ring back then either. I suspect that it might have been used quite consciously as an unappealing term, which cuts through the whole fantasy of consolation that one might expect a religion to provide. Perhaps we need to recover this cutting-edge of emptiness, its unappealing aspect.

Let's go back to Bodhidharma and his disciple, the Second Patriarch. It seems as though the pain of the disciple's dilemma was so extreme that he was prepared to cut off his arm to resolve it. This pain was centred around some kind of nugget of anguish within his own mind, his most intimate sense of who he was. Yet by inquiring deeply into this painful, isolated self-identity, he could find nothing he could ultimately grasp hold of and say: "That's my mind. There it is. I've got it. I've defined it. I've realized it." Instead, he discovered the ultimate unfindability of the mind, and by implication the ultimate unfindability of self and things. And this gives us an important clue to understanding the notions of emptiness and "no mind." They do not mean that there is literally no mind; they're saying that if you try to understand the nature of anything in the deepest sense, you will not be able to arrive at any fixed view that defines it as this or that. The Dalai Lama uses a quaint expression in colloquial Tibetan: *dzugu dzug-sa mindoo*, which

means literally: "there is no finger-pointing-place." Or as we would say: "there's nothing you can put your finger on." Again this does not imply that the thing in question does not exist at all. It simply exposes the fallacy of the deeply-felt, almost instinctive assumption that our self, the mind or anything else must be secured in a permanent, transcendental basis. Yet the uniqueness of a person's mind or identity, the uniqueness of a flower that's growing in the garden outside, does not require any kind of transcendent basis that's peculiar to that thing. Emptiness indicates how everything that comes about does so through an unrepeatable matrix of contingencies, conditions, causes, as well as conceptual, linguistic and cultural frameworks. Everything arises out of an extraordinarily complex combination of transient events that culminate, in this particular instance, in my saying these words to you.

Now, whether we follow the Indo-Tibetan analytical approach or the Zen approach of asking a koan like "What is this?," such meditative inquiry leads to a mind that becomes more still and clear. But paradoxically this does not mean that things then become more clear-cut, that you reach some final understanding of who you are or of what makes the universe tick. Because, at the same time as such things become more vivid and clear, they also become more baffling. One encounters, as it were, the sheer mystery of things. A deep agnosticism would be one founded on this kind of unknowing: the acknowledgement that, in terms of what life really is, I really do not know. And in that unknowing there is already a quality of questioning, of perplexity. And as that perplexity becomes stabilised through meditation, one enters increasingly into a world that is mysterious, magical in a sense, and not containable by narrow ideas and concepts.

But this is not where the practice ends. This is only half the project. What we also discover in this open space, in this mysterious experience of non-self, are the wellsprings of creativity and imagination. In Mahayana Buddhism particularly the Buddha is not just someone who had a wonderful mystical experience, whose mind is freed, but also this being who spontaneously and compassionately manifests and is embodied in the world through the *nirmanakaya* ("transformation body").

I like to think of the Buddha's awakening under the Bodhi tree not as some kind of transcendental absorption, but as a moment of total shock. Neils Bohr once said about quantum mechanics: "If you're not shocked by quantum theory, then you don't understand it." I think we could say the same about emptiness: If you're not shocked by emptiness, then you haven't understood it.

The Buddha's awakening is followed by this strange period where, according to tradition, he hesitates for about six weeks before being prompted, by a god in this case, to go out into the world and do something. This process is similar in many respects to the process of artistic creation. When faced with the task of articulating a deep intuitive vision in words, clay or paint, one might experience that same intense trepidation that one finds in meditation when the mind is very still but at the same time tremendously resistant about pursuing the inquiry any further. At this point the meditator usually lapses into fantasy and daydreams and drowsiness, which you're probably familiar with. The writer (one of my other personae) usually has an urgent compulsion to tidy up his desk. But it's the same kind of evasion; it's the same kind of hesitation in face of what is rather awesome.

For here we stand on the threshold of the imagination. We are challenged to imagine something that has never quite been thought of in that way before. The Buddha's genius lies precisely in his imagination. I don't believe that when he experienced awakening, suddenly the Four Noble Truths appeared -- 1, 2, 3, 4 -- in words of fire in the sky, or anything like that. Rather, his awakening did not become real until he had to stammer it out to his first disciples, the five ascetics, in the deer-park in Sarnath. The model of awakening in Mahayana Buddhism is that of a process which is perhaps never completed. The process of articulating the Dharma goes on and on according to the needs of the different historical situations that it encounters. We could read the whole history of Buddhism, from the moment of the Buddha's awakening until now, as a process of seeking to imagine a way to respond both wisely and compassionately to the situation at hand.

All of us have experiences of what it means to imagine and create something. In Korea, after sitting for three months in the zendo, struggling with a koan, we would then have three months when we would sit much less, without a formal schedule, and I would write. It struck me very forcibly one day, as I was sitting at my desk in front of a blank sheet of paper, that preparing myself to put into words what had not yet been put into words was to enter a very similar frame of mind to that of sitting on a cushion in a zendo, asking: "What is this?" The creative process seemed very comparable to the meditative process. Awakening is only complete -- in the same way that a work of art is only complete -- when it finds an expression, a form, that translates that experience in a way that makes it accessible to others. That again is the balance between wisdom and compassion. The creative process of expressing the Dharma is not just a question of duplicating in words something etched somewhere in the privacy of my soul. The living process of understanding is formed through the encounter with another person, with the world. You've probably all had the experience of someone coming to you in a state of distress and blurting out their problems, and you suddenly find yourself saying things that you were quite unaware you knew. The process of awakening is one of valuing and connecting with that capacity to respond in authentic ways to the suffering of others. The imagination is the bridge between contemplative experience and the anguish of the world. By valuing imagination, we value the capacity of each person, each community, to imagine and create themselves anew.

Dharma practice is like creating a work of art. Our five skandhas -- body, feeling, perceptions, impulses, consciousness: they're the clay that we mould and form through our practice into a bodhisattva, or whatever we aspire to. Our very lives become the raw material of our imagination.

In the contemporary world Buddhism encounters a culture that places a positive value on the power of each individual's creativity and imagination. It's interesting that in most Buddhist traditions these things are not strongly encouraged, or, if they are, it's usually only within highly formalised settings. I like to think of Dharma practice today as venturing into a world of imagination, one in which each individual, each community, seeks to express and to articulate their vision in terms of the particular needs of their own situation. Buddhism would then become less and less the preserve of an institution, and more and more an experience that is owned by ordinary people in ordinary communities.

Of course, there are dangers here. But these are hardly new. Historically, Buddhism has always had to find ways of responding effectively to the danger of becoming too acculturated, of becoming too absorbed into the assumptions of the host culture. Certainly such a danger exists here in the West: Buddhism might, for example, tend to become a kind of souped-up psychotherapy. But there's the equal danger of Buddhism holding on too fiercely to its Asian identity and remaining a marginal interest amongst a few eccentrics. Somehow we have to find a middle way between these two poles, and this is a challenge which is not going to be worked out by academics or Buddhist scholars; it's a challenge that each of us is asked to meet in our own practice from day to day.

Buddhism is not some ethereal thing that is magically transferred from Asia and then one day appears in the West. Titles of books like *The Awakening of the West* might suggest that Buddhism is a thing that has this almost mystical capacity. But what is it that is transmitted? The only thing that is transmitted is the understanding and the way of life of those people who practice it, people like you and me. No one else is going to do it for us. The responsibility is ultimately our own.

We need to be particularly wary today of the modern conceit which assumes that because of our broad education, our easy access to information, and the sudden emergence of a readily available literature on Buddhism, that this is somehow going to speed the process up; that we'll arrive at an American Buddhism or a Western Buddhism or a whatever Buddhism much more quickly than in the past. I think this is a serious misreading of cultural transition and change. A culture like Buddhism is something organic.

For example, we may have a great deal of scientific understanding about oak trees, but that knowledge in itself, and our access to that information, is not going to speed up the growth of oak trees. Historically, we can see that Buddhism has never managed to root itself in any culture until several generations have passed. This is a sobering reminder for individualistic Westerners who are proud of their capacity to solve problems quickly. We prefer to think that some bright spark will sooner or later figure out what needs to be done to create a Western Buddhism, rather than emphasising our own *doing* of it, our own cultivation of the wisdom and compassion that are at the core of Buddhism. Perhaps we have really to trust in the practice and find the humility to accept that we will probably not live to see a Western Buddhism. Maybe our children will, or our children's children. We need to acknowledge that we live in a time of transition, a time in which the Dharma is in crisis in Asia, and yet has not really found its feet here. It's an exciting time to be in: one in which something is being created, and we are the participants in that creation.



A Lane in Kent, linoprint by Ann Brown

FALSE AND TRUE SELF

Master Sheng-Yen ²

Ananda asks the Buddha about the nature of the self. Is there an all-encompassing ego, a true self that unites everyone in the world, or is there a self at all? I'm going to talk about this question and discuss how it is dealt with by "outer path" systems of thought and religion and how it is dealt with by Buddhism. Schools of philosophy and religion other than Buddhism are categorised as "outer path" because the adherents to these views attempt to look outside the mind for solutions to the problems of the world.

When we use the words "outer path" there is no connotation that such views are bad or heterodox. The idea of outer path simply signifies the idea of looking outside to resolve problems; not looking inward.

In a retreat that ended here at the Centre recently there was a psychologist from England who told me that he heard things at the retreat that he had never heard before and he believes that this knowledge will be of great use to him. I asked him, "What did you learn?" "Four lines in the evening service," he said, " really impressed me: "To know all Buddhas of the past present and future, know that Dharmadhatu nature is all created by the mind." I asked, "How do they help you?" And he said, "For example, if your legs hurt you need not be afraid of the pain. You can concentrate on it and it will eventually turn to coolness. Pain is created by the mind, so it can be ended by the mind."

The psychologist told me that what Western psychologists usually do to help patients is either to use talk therapy or administer drugs. But he had never before understood that to accept pain is a way to resolve it. So I asked him if he thought this method would apply to everyone. " Probably not" he replied, "it would only be useful to a strong-willed, goal-oriented person. Otherwise I doubt that the method would be useful."

This method may not be applicable to everybody, but the principle behind it is valid. This is to say that problems must be seen as existing in the mind. Certainly if you get a flat tyre or you are wounded then that is a problem, an unforeseen occurrence which must be taken care of. But usually the reality of what must be done is nothing compared to the way such occurrences are seen and exaggerated by our minds.

There are so many things we normally perceive as problems which have no basis in reality, which are entirely created by our minds. To someone whose mind is clear, an event which might strike another person as an "objective" problem will have no existence at all. Buddhadharma considers other philosophical and religious approaches to be "outer paths" for the following reason: these schools of thought perceive a variety of things or phenomena as problems and they see the origin of these problems in a variety of conceptual factors that lie outside the true domains of the mind. Thus they will attribute the cause of a given problem to any number of factors: physical, psychological, social, familial and so on. such perceptions are not accurate. In the view of Buddhadharma, all such problems and their causes exist within the mind.

Outer path views which seek solutions outside of the mind have an understanding of the self that is different from that of Buddhadharma. Some view the true self as something internal, a sort of primary

²Reprinted with permission from Ch'an Newsletter, 69, 1988 and lightly edited. Based on a talk given on JHC's first visit to Shi Fu.

essence. Others see it as something external like a great oversoul that unites everyone and transcends the personal self. People who hold this view consider the true self to be something that pervades the ten directions. To look for the answer outside the mind in this manner is to be on an outer path.

There's a joke that shows how people live inside their narrow views. Note that in China surgeons are called "external doctors," since they approach the body from the outside. Others who treat disorders with medicine are called "internal doctors." The story is this: a surgeon, an external doctor, visits a patient sent to a hospital with flu. The doctor takes one look at him, cuts him open, finds nothing amiss and leaves, saying, "I've done all I can. It looks like you need an internal doctor." The internal doctor arrives and asks, "Do you feel any pain?" The patient says, " You bet, the pain is killing me." The internal doctor finds the patient's reaction to a mild case of flu to be bizarre. He tells the patient, "You're suffering from delusions. I'm going to recommend a psychiatrist." The psychiatrist enters and asks, "What do you feel?" The patient answers, "Pain, a lot of pain, right here where the surgeon opened me up." The psychiatrist says, "That's not my turf. You'd better call back that external doctor."

What is the problem here? Each doctor treats the patient according to his own speciality. No one tries to understand the problem in its totality. Each acts according to what he knows, not what troubles the patient.

Let me return to the concept of true self. It is not something generally understood by ordinary people who tend to know only their personal selves and what they can see, hear, taste, touch and smell. This is really a very limited domain. What is beyond this realm of the individual and the senses? Is there a self beyond what we know, beyond what we can perceive?

It may seem that there is a true self which can reach through all space and time. Certainly ordinary people do not have the vaguest notion of the concept of such a true self. Only people who have practised hard or read and thought deeply in philosophy arrive at such an understanding. A religious practitioner may be able to experience a higher plane of existence outside of himself. A person with deep philosophical understanding can deduce a self beyond himself. Only such people as these can try to come to an understanding of a true self.

The other day I read about a man who received an artificial heart. He found out after the operation that the heart was not mechanical but was that of an animal. He may have thought, "What am I really, an animal or a human being?" He also lost a lot of blood and had several transfusions. Most of his blood was other people's. So he might have thought, "Who am I now?"

What do you think, is he his original self or not? Maybe there will come a day when even brain tissue can be replaced. Who knows? We might be able to become smarter. Or perhaps someone in an accident might suffer brain damage and his brain will be replaced by a computer chip. Who would he be then? People will have to reflect on questions such as these. Usually, when you refer to a true self, ordinary people will point to themselves and say, "This is my true self. No doubt about it. Every part of what you see is me." But then when parts of the body start to get replaced people may begin to wonder.

When I first met westerners I was a child in China. There was something about the way they smelled that I had never experienced before. Later I understood that it was a question of diet. I, and those around me, had not grown up on a diet of meat and milk. That's why I thought some of these westerners smelled like cattle. But now I also drink milk, and I'm around many other people with a

similar diet. I don't sense anything different now. Who knows? Maybe I have the same kind of smell as the first westerners I first met.

Your body was given to you by your parents. First you were a baby; now you're grown. During these years you may have eaten all manner of different things: beef, pork, chicken, milk, cheese. You used the nutrients from these sources to build your body but you do not doubt what you are. You are a human being even though parts of many animals have been introduced into your system and worked to transform your body.

Milarepa, the great Tibetan master, lived in the mountains in a place where there was nothing to eat but wild grass. As a result his body turned green. I lived in the mountains also, and for a few years I ate nothing but potato leaves. People asked me why I didn't turn green. It was because I cooked the leaves first.

A lot of people assume that their body is their self. This cannot be. Before you were born you did not exist in your body. After you die the body cannot accompany you. In what sense therefore do you really exist?

Questions such as these cause us to distinguish between a self, meaning the self you can see and feel at the present moment, and a true self. Do you believe that there is an existence before birth and death? Why do you believe what you do?

A Christian asked me what my views of heaven and hell were. That brings us back to the beginning of this discussion when I said that everything is created by the mind. You have your heaven and I have mine. You have your hell and I have mine. You may see me in your heaven and I may see you in mine. Nevertheless, they're not the same. We're all here in America but I have come from China. The America I see is different from the America you see. Even a couple who share the same bed really share two different beds. And the world we live in? Are we in the same world?

Some of you seem to think that we all live in the same physical world, that we all see the same rain outside. Actually the rain that falls on you will not fall on me. Hence what you feel and see is not what I feel and see. Perhaps the simplest example of that is a chair. If I sit here you have to sit somewhere else. And, of course, the seats we sit on are different to begin with.

Only advanced practitioners, through much hard work and practice can live in the same world. They must achieve the exact same mind. If your mind is scattered you can't live in or experience the same world as another person.

Up until now I haven't really spoken about the true self. What most of us believe to be the self is an emotional self, so to speak. This is the self that we know when we are under the influence of emotions, feelings and moods. This is not the self that wisdom can see. Only someone no longer troubled by his emotions can seriously try to know his true self.

Some people come along to the Centre hoping to find enlightenment immediately. They hope I will provide a wonderful method to lead them to liberation but I never do this. What I do is to first give a method that can be used to quiet the emotions. When there is some relief I may then give a method to seek the true self. I might give the *hua t'ou*, "Who am I?" or "What is *wu*?"

Although I give methods to seek the true self this does not mean that Buddhadharma accepts the doctrine or the existence of a true self. Of course, this search for the self is central to many outer path

beliefs. In Ch'an this search is also a necessary step. This does not mean that there is in fact a true self to be found. Many methods of Ch'an practice are devoted to the discovery of the true self.

If you ask an ordinary person about his conception of the Buddha he might come up with something like: the Buddha is what is unchanging, all-pervasive, and most perfect, the ultimate true existence. The purpose of Ch'an practice is not to discover the Buddha. In the course of practice you may try to use your power of reason and your understanding of Buddhism. To the question, "What is Buddha," you might answer that he is the awakened one, or the most perfect one. Such answers are wrong.

All such answers - that Buddha pervades through all time and space, that Buddha is that which never changes, the eternal and the unmoving - are wrong. The opposing viewpoints - that Buddha is not space or time or is outside all concepts - are equally wrong. You must try not to cling to either extreme and to let go of the centre, as well: this is madhyamika, the middle way. Could this be the way to find true self?

If you continue to hold on to a concept such as true self, or an idea of something that pervades through all space and time, then you are holding on to an attachment: an attachment to an idea predicated upon or imputed to an object. The object remains no more than such as it is.

OBITUARIES

In the last few months old hands at the Maenllwyd have lost two much loved retreat companions. Don Ball and Jane Turner had been coming to the Maenllwyd ever since we started retreats there. They both knew the days when accommodation consisted of a barn with an much holed roof through which snow might drift or an owl come in to share the shelter. They both knew the crowded retreats we used to have in the Buddha Room and the early morning runs in rain up the hill. Both worked hard at their life koans and loved to return again and again to Western Zen Retreats. Don indeed never tried anything else at Maenllwyd but Jane "graduated" to Ch'an Retreats and Shi Fu from whom she learnt much.

I was very fond of Jane, we shared bird watching interests and the love of countryside. Although often troubled by tensions and anxieties her inner life gradually became more peaceful so that during her last years she discovered a truly spiritual stance in life which brought her much joy and peace. I was very happy for her and our last interviews were as much an inspiration for me as they were helpful to her. Jane, I shall miss you and feel your spirit still with us in the quiet moments of retreat. Her daughter Sue has written the article that follows.

Don too was a tireless explorer. He loved the koans of Western Zen Retreats and stuck doggedly to them, often finding a resolution some days after ending a retreat and writing to me about it. As the years passed he emerged from struggle into light and was often an inspiration to his many friends. Again some of the interviews I had with him in his last years were as insightful to me as to him - maybe more so. Once he was working on "Who is God?" Near the end of the retreat we sat together in Interview and I asked him his question. "I am your friend!" said Don.

His exemplary death, described in the obituary to follow, showed how his training had moved him to a point where he could accept the last journey with an equanimity that has moved all who knew him. I am grateful to his son, Veda Ball, for the details of his early life. Don's spirit too floats in the zendo as we sit together. "There is no time. What is memory?" Don would have given a sprightly answer to that.

Don and Jane continued coming to retreats into great age. Neither was ever troubled by the tough rules and hours yet both suffered as much as anyone on the first days. They knew their value. Youngsters who want an easy time take note !

John Crook

ENJOYING DYING

Don Ball 1914-1995

Don Ball, a great supporter of the Maenllwyd and a personal friend for many years died, peacefully on December 14th 1995 in a way that fulfilled with a quiet heroism his many years of spiritual quest. His was an unorthodox Zen training that went all the way to the end.

Don was born on March 25th 1914 in Hampstead, London, the oldest child of four, a brother Keith, who was later my team doctor on a research expedition to Ladakh, and sisters Jeanette and Heather. His parents were Leonard and Eileen who followed the Baptist Christian faith.

Don and Keith both trained as doctors at the Middlesex Hospital in London. Called up in World War II, Don sailed in a convoy for Burma but his ship was diverted to Bombay when Burma fell to the Japanese. He spent the war in India and loved it, later bequeathing that love to his whole family. He worked as a medical officer rising to the rank of major in the RAMC. He saw service at the key military bases in Poona, Deolali, Madras and North India.

Don married Margaret Reid on July 29th 1941 in England. Margaret stayed behind in the UK for the duration of the war and the eldest boy, Luke, did not meet his Dad till he was four. When the war ended Don, joined now by his wife, stayed on for three years teaching medicine at Vellore Christian Medical College where his second son, Veda, was born in 1948. Later there was a daughter, Neera. At this time Don's spiritual interests were quite orthodox middle class Christian.

After 1950 Don returned to England by ship and remained one year before taking up an appointment at Makerere College, the University of Uganda, where he taught medicine and wrote a thesis on chest disease which was to become his speciality. On his return to the UK in 1955 he took a consultancy at the Miner's Chest Diseases Treatment Centre in Cardiff and established a beautiful home in Dinas Powys.

Luke also trained as a doctor and while at medical school met the woman he was to marry. As so often happens, when the original family begins to expand to include newcomers a difficult period of transition occurs. During this time Don and Margaret went through several years of reassessment of their lives and values. This was to become the first step on a path of personal growth that continued ever since.

Don's interest in Quakerism led to an involvement in "T" Groups which he came to know through the Anglican Franciscans of the Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield. T groups gave him access to the whole range of the Humanistic Psychology movement then burgeoning in Britain. In a deep and what was to become a prolonged search for spiritual values Don became interested in the ideas concerning human potential coming from Esalen, California and especially in the many forms of encounter group available at the training centre in London, Quaesitor. He experimented with LSD therapy, worked with Frank Lake and also took part in the People not Psychiatry movement led by Michael Barnett and experimented with communal living. Margaret also participated in these explorations with an approach more private and with a more cautious understanding than Don's adventurousness was to allow. These contrasts were to lead to their eventual separation. Their children, growing up in the hippy atmosphere of the time joined in these activities becoming ardent also in their quest

When the encounter movement started taking an interest in Indian and eastern spirituality, Don's experiences in India stood him in good stead. He heard of Bhagvan Shri Rajneesh in 1971, well before this teacher was known by this title and attended his camps in India before the founding of the institution in Poona. For a time, indeed, he functioned as Bhagvan's personal physician. His children were to follow him to Poona but Don did not at first take the sanyas (vows) that Bhagvan gave his followers. That came later, but Don was perhaps never totally submerged in the Rajneesh movement although he contributed much to it both personally and financially. He visited Rajneeshpuram in Oregon before the troubles started there and was impressed by the enormous dedication of the whole movement before wealth, corruption and Bhagvan's failure either to control developments or perhaps to understand America led to the ultimate catastrophe. Don was saddened but not

distraught. By that time he had deepened his understanding to the degree that he was able to use the positive side of his Rajneesh experiences and let go the rest. He began coming regularly to the Maenllwyd and, elsewhere, led some group experiences himself.

I had first met Don when I was training in Encounter, Gestalt therapy and Sensitivity Group methods at Quaesitor. We kept bumping into one another at groups and especially on the Enlightenment Intensives created by Charles Berner and brought to Britain by Jeff Love. In the heady atmosphere of the time these intensives were magical experiences. There was little doubt or pessimism in the air, anything seemed possible and on those retreats it seemed to happen. Perhaps it did.

When the charismatic founder of Quaesitor, Paul Lowe, and Michael Barnett both went off to India to become two of Bhagvan's most influential early followers, Don moved his focus there too. I also was attracted by the Rajneesh movement and later visited Poona where I was amazed and delighted by the extraordinary energy of the place, for it seemed as if human potentials were at last being fully expressed and explored. Yet I also noted that no one seemed to have a mind of his or her own. Every conversation began with "Bhagvan says..." The hypnotic influence of that man seemed total. I was too bloody-minded a loner and wary of psychological invasion to be convinced.

Having attended groups in California and at Quaesitor I had founded the Bristol Encounter Centre together with Ken Waldie and Hazel Russell. In the early 70's we offered a wide range of groups and intensives to become briefly the third largest such organisation in the country. Jeff Love taught me how to run Enlightenment Intensives and approved my plan to draw these nearer to their origin by creating the Western Zen Retreat which places Berner's communication exercises within the framework of an explicitly Zen retreat.

Work with the communication exercise focuses on the question "Who am I?" and related themes. It can lead to an experience of authentic being in which the games of life are set aside giving rise to a renewed confidence and sense of self worth with accompanying openness to others. People work through and beyond words to a direct experience of self perhaps, in a few cases, identical to that known as Kensho or Satori in Japanese Zen. Don's work with these questions was characteristic. He remorselessly ploughed through the story of his life, complete with long anecdotal digressions, journeys down cul de sacs and vague intellectuality commonly without focus. I often despaired of him as he seemed lost in the complexities of his own mind. But his process often worked its way through to a conclusion that brought him much peace and happiness. He had the knack of allowing his thinking to become increasingly lateral so that he surprised himself with new insights again and again. I believe it was this capacity for inventive insight that allowed him so much success with his admittedly rather heady approach.

Once Don came on retreat following a severe heart attack and a period in hospital. He arrived wan, tired and worryingly unfit for the intense work entailed on the retreat. He told me,

"I shall work on the question "What is death ?"

And he set to work, exhausting himself until I became concerned for him. Then quite suddenly he broke through. The way he expressed it was to say,

"Death is Now".

The question fell away from him and with a profound sense of the interdependence of all things and times, he drove off rosy and full of renewed health.

In his last years Don suffered from Parkinsons disease, the shaking sickness, which must have troubled him greatly. But he did not allow it to get to him: practicing his Zen attitude with characteristic fortitude he set up a joyous eightieth birthday celebration just over a year ago. A short time before Christmas 1995 I was rung by friends to tell me Don was terminally ill. So I went to visit him.

Don's condition had reached a point where he could no longer swallow. He had the choice either of being put on a drip as his life slowly and speechlessly failed him over a number of weeks or months, or simply ceasing to take nourishment and pass into a final coma of his own volition. He chose the latter course saying that it was better to go that way with all senses alert than by the alternative. He decided to let his own life come to its natural conclusion.

When I reached his room the frail old man was in a chair attended by his son Veda and Veda's wife who had come over from Boulder, Colorado, where Veda is a therapist. They showed me a paper to which Don had given his signature to his decision. Don could hardly speak but through Veda, who could read his lips and sounds, conversation was possible and I soon learnt to understand him.

I asked Don if he remembered the retreat on which he had worked on "What is death ?"

Don's eyes took on more life. Yes, he did.

"Do you remember the answer ?" I asked him.

Don said, "On what one cannot speak on that one should remain silent"

Bowled over by this quotation, the last lines of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, I remarked, quite unnecessarily, that the German verb for "remain silent" (*schweigen*) could have the very strong sense of "Shut up!"

Don's eyes sparkled "Why don't you shut up then ?" he smiled. We held hands together allowing the stillness of the room to grow upon us.

"Don," I asked, inquisitive as usual, " Do you remember the words you used at that retreat when you dropped that question ?" "Yes," said Don, "Now !"

Later that afternoon, Don's last, he remarked to Veda,

" You know I am enjoying dying !"

" I will tell your friends that"

" They will never believe you !"

" Coming from you - they might."

Don had achieved dominion over his own death and went out fully aware and joyous in his self determination. Such deaths are rare. We read of them here and there in the lives of lamas and masters. Most of us lack such a focused understanding of the appropriate and the timely. Many of us do not have the good fortune to be able to make the choice. When it is possible and comes about where then has death a victory?

John Crook

FINAL JOURNEY

Jane Turner

In the Hospice she had a room to herself with windows looking over a garden full of birds, plants, trees and other wildlife. She had slept peacefully the night before and with the dawn she awoke and decided it was time. It was her decision - she was ready.

Two of us sat with her through the day. I was aware of her in some sort of way, but the feeling was just one of peace. The windows were open; the room was full of fresh cut flowers; the geese arriving a few days earlier had signalled the change of season; the sun was warm but Autumn was here. The two of us sat either in meditation or quiet contemplation. It was a beautiful time. As we sat the body on the bed slowly cooled and became less person, more empty shell. At 5.30 the sun shafted into the room lighting up the flowers. We read aloud, we said good-bye.

Although she had been losing weight for a while it was only five weeks before that she had been taken ill with acute stomach pains. From a brief visit to the doctor it was straight to the local NHS hospital. The diagnosis of melanoma was accompanied by strong pain killers with equally strong side effects. These, together with a malfunctioning liver which affects brain power, made a very distressed patient. Scans confirmed diagnoses, she was moved to a back ward, one marked for renovation years ago but still waiting. Unglamorous surroundings, cared for by superb but totally over-stretched nurses. A change in drugs brought considerable relief and spells of communication became once more possible. Letters from friends and family, news and some conversation. A bed then became available in the hospice and so we took her there. What a difference. Colour, pleasant surroundings, staff levels, food, attitude, everything. A few days of enjoyment and then a further necessary drug change meant that Mum became less available to us. Selected communication still possible but physically weakening. And after ten days there, she died.

When Mum took ill I took leave from work and was able to spend a great deal of time with her. She was however always a very private person; I have learned much about her while watching her dying and even since her death. People ask whether it brought us closer - the answer is no. But I understand something more of what she was than I did before and respect her for it. I am not a Buddhist, more to the Quaker end of the Christianity spectrum. She would never have given me the authority to speak for her, so any observations have necessarily to be those of the involved and far from unbiased observer.

Mum was used to going on journeys. She knew exactly how to pack, read up on the culture and language of the destination, and just as important, how to leave behind an ordered house. People talk of death as a journey but it shook me to realise how much of Mum's recent life was an active part of the same journey. She had long since disposed of all her surplus possessions, the contents of her house were designed for use or for enjoyment. Everything was consciously arranged. She painted with water-colours - which she had done for many years - but also learned to explore new dimensions with vibrant fast oils which she found difficult but rewarding. Her biggest canvas though was her garden. Not only did she grow all her own vegetables and have cut flowers all year round but the small area was filled to intensity with colour and power. When she died it was at its best. She was a genuine lover of the natural world and all in it. And on the spiritual side, her Buddhism, strengthened by her visits to Maenllwyd, I know she worked on continuously.

I do not know at what point in her illness she realised there was no cure. The human spirit lives on hope against illogical odds. The initial drug doses meant that she was not always receptive to information. On the other hand no one was going to say directly. To begin with she hoped they would operate on the cancer and all would be well. Simultaneously she knew cancer of the liver is fatal. She reacted when she found an operation was impossible. She took new hope from the fact that the Hospice has drug expertise.

When she realised at a different level they could not cure her she became very restless. She was still physically mobile and it took the uninitiated a while to realise she was seeking her meditation routine. From then on, as long as physically possible with nurses helping, she would get into her meditation position for varying lengths of time - she always seemed much calmer afterwards.

I tried reading excerpts from "The Snow Leopard." She seemed to find that helpful but needed something more. She lay one day and muttered, "What must I do?" A local Maenllwyd regular came to my rescue and we talked together across the bed about many things - Buddhism, Maenllwyd experiences of faith, love of

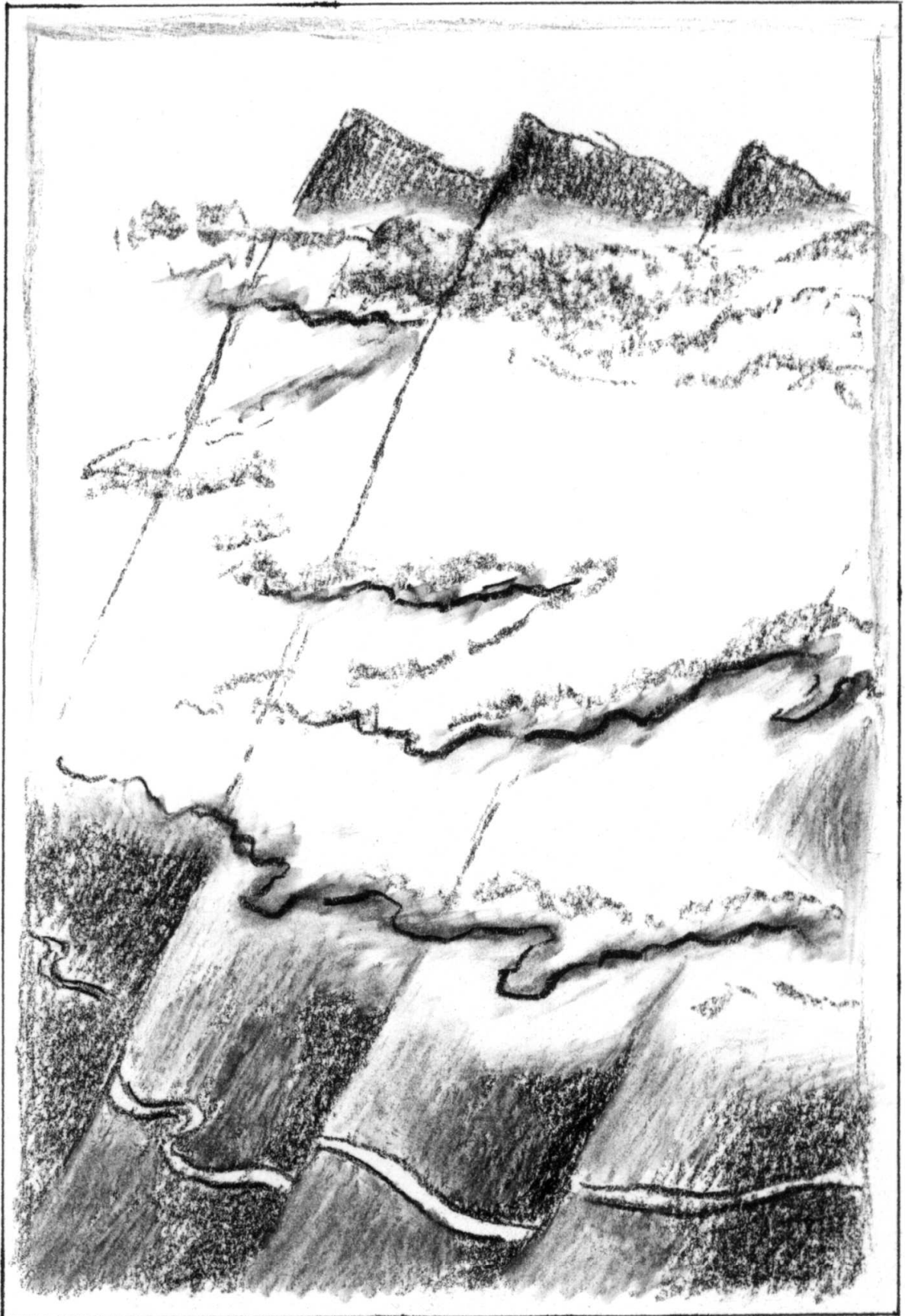
nature and much more. She could obviously hear us and afterwards was much more peaceful. I do not know whether it was what we said or just the knowledge of minds and kindred spirits. The Buddhist way is in many ways a lonely one. He left me various readings which would have been familiar to her and I used them when needed. A few days later she seemed to have made her peace and a few days after that she died.

What a change from the person who I saw at one stage in the hospital. She had been suffering from drug side effects making her very withdrawn. At one point she became very agitated and treated all comers as enemies. Only when given some solitude did she calm down. My understanding of this was that Mum lived alone and she was used to spending hours, even days completely on her own. She was not used to physical contact having had little for years. We recently had a conversation on the Samye Ling students who spend three years in retreat and for the first three months are not permitted to wash. Now I would challenge anyone of those students to be suddenly transported, as Mum was, from personal control to a situation where one's space is being invaded, one is being constantly handled, one is expected to make verbal response to even the most trivial of questions and one is never given more than 20 minutes between human interactions. I think they would find it far harder than not washing.

The contrast between the hospital and the Hospice was not just one of cash but of culture. According to Florence Nightingale the purpose of a nurse is to remove from the patient anything which may distract them from the important business of getting well - or dying. Thus physical conditions, environment, the patient's mental and spiritual well being should be looked after in such a way that the patient is unaware it is ever being done. That is what Strathcarron Hospice did for Mum. In addition, they realised she wished to stay in complete control and used medication that enabled her to be. Nothing was too much trouble for them, and the surroundings all added to the gift they gave to her and us.

And it was a gift. I will doubtless miss Mum for a thousand small reasons. I haven't had time to reach that stage yet. But the overall experience of the last few weeks was full rather than sad - and yes, we gave her a good send off at the funeral. She would have approved.

Sue Pringle
(30/09/1996)



mountain mist

Ros Cuthbert

SOCIAL CRITIQUE AND BRITISH BUDDHISM

We are grateful to Vishvapani for his response to Ken Jones' critique of "movements" (FWBO, Soka Gakkai and NKT) in British Buddhism (NCF 13) and my own editorial comments.

I am sure most Buddhists would agree that Western Buddhism is going through a phase of re-assessment after scandals concerning both Zen and Tibetan teachers of both western and eastern origin. Social critique is an essential part of reform and in the New Ch'an Forum we have several times addressed this issue. In my view it is just as important to pursue a critique of contemporary institutions as it is to focus on individual failings. The purpose of such critique is to ask questions, to speak out firmly but in such a way as to encourage debate rather than acrimony.

Vishvapani argues that it was absurd for Ken to "tarnish three movements with the same brush". There are however similarities as well as contrasts between these institutions and, although we both recognised that there are indeed contrasts between the three, the point was to focus on wider generalities. Furthermore, there are indeed many positive aspects of the FWBO which we readily celebrate. In particular, the Karuna project assisting new Buddhists in India, is especially praiseworthy. Our point was to bring into sharper light some current objections which are by no means only our own but generally discussed by "open" Buddhists.

Who are "open" Buddhists? I refer here to those whose orientation and affiliation is to a main stream tradition of practice, whether it be Ch'an, Zen, Tibetan or Theravadin, but without the formulation of tight rules of membership, obligations to particular charismatic leaders and an obvious competitive sectarianism such as does indeed characterise the institutions we discussed. We are perhaps especially aware of these points as we ourselves are attempting to create a democratic fellowship of Ch'an practitioners.

Open Buddhists view the trends shown by these movements with some suspicion and may indeed suggest that some of them, such as those shown by NKT over the Shugden dispute, cannot be conceived of as having been remotely favoured by the Tathagata. Such posturings are clearly harmful to Buddhism as a whole and it is shocking to see such matters pursued more by Western adherents than anyone else.

Rather than being over sensitive to our critique we would invite FWBO to consider our points more openly. There are widely voiced objections here which the organisation might well consider in its own time. Neither Ken nor I have any wish to "beat other Buddhists". This is an absurd suggestion that fails to see the spirit in which our critique was presented. Those interested in a full statement of the FWBO's position may care to read the 48 page document by Sangharakshita entitled "*Extending the hand of Fellowship. The Relation of the Western Buddhist Order to the Rest of the Buddhist World*", Windhorse Press. That so lengthy a justification was considered necessary is perhaps an indication of a felt need for a cautious reassessment of some features through which the FWBO presents itself to the world.

In a covering letter Vishvapani points out to me that many Buddhist organisations are faced with genuine problems of scale. How do we cope with success? he asks. The question is very much on the agenda of the FWBO and many of the ways in which the FWBO has evolved are attempts to deal with it. I respect this endeavour. Peace to all beings.

John Crook.

WHEN DID YOU STOP BEATING OTHER BUDDHISTS?

(A response to Ken Jones and John Crook from a member of the Western Buddhist Order)

Vishvapani

In the last Ch'an Forum Ken Jones dispensed summary justice to the three largest Buddhist movements in the UK - the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT), the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) and Soka Gakkai (SGI). With the support of John Crook in an accompanying editorial, he tarred all of these movements with the same, broad brush. I am a member of the Western Buddhist Order so I cannot speak for SGI or NKT, but I would suggest that it is absurd to lump together three such different movements. They have different structures, doctrinal positions, histories and characters, and they surely require separate consideration. Criticisms of one no more apply to the others than to the Ch'an community or anyone else.

The suggestion which rankles most that our involvement in the Network of Buddhist Organisations (NBO) is 'entryism'. The NBO was co-founded by the FWBO, so I cannot see why we would wish to 'enter' it like Trotskyites infiltrating the Labour Party. But Ken Jones places us in a double-bind. We are damned if we do join in ('entryism') and damned if we don't ('exclusivism')! I see a genuine desire on the part of Order members to engage in friendly dialogue with people from other traditions, even if that sometimes reveals disagreements. Our participation in the NBO is an expression of this spirit and Ken Jones would be most welcome to join with us in such meetings. But dialogue and mutual understanding can only progress with a degree of initial trust.

I simply do not recognise in these comments anything remotely resembling what I have personally experienced in the FWBO and I wonder how it is that two apparently intelligent men like Ken Jones and John Crook can engage in such misrepresentation. I suspect a clue lies in Jones' use of political language 'entryism', 'party line', 'Orwellian' etc. Perhaps he perceives these movements as political entities and, unsurprisingly, reacts against his view of them. But political language presupposes an unbuddhistic context of power. It is as such at variance with how people in the FWBO understand their own activities; and its use effectively pre-empts meaningful communication. It is hard, therefore, to know how to respond when John Crook speaks of 'cult-like mega institutions based on the deviant teachings of modern charismatics.' Such language reveals a clear set of preoccupations which suggest that since the FWBO is organised it must be an organisation, and must *ipso facto* subordinate the freedom of individuals to organisational imperatives.

I would suggest that to avoid misunderstanding other Buddhists we should judge them in the light of the Dharma, and not in terms of our personal preoccupations. For Sangharakshita and the FWBO, the Dharma (including Sangharakshita's own formulations and the FWBO's institutions) is a raft. The questions Order members ask of the FWBO are: do our activities help people to practice the Dharma? Are our institutions the most appropriate ways to live and practice? Will they help us to move towards Enlightenment? And behind these lie further questions which the FWBO faces in common with all Western Buddhists. What are Westerners' most pressing spiritual needs which the Dharma needs to address? What should we take from Eastern traditions to address these needs and what can we leave? What in the Dharma is central and trans-cultural, and what is peripheral and culturally specific?

No-one can claim to have complete answers to these questions, and the FWBO most certainly does not make such a claim. Neither is it 'impermeable to debate'. But we do have a distinctive approach in our insistence on going beyond the forms of practice to discern the essential principles which underlie them. It is not enough simply to transplant Eastern forms of Buddhism to the West as their significance changes in their new context. From the FWBO's perspective the truly 'open' Buddhism is one based firmly on the essential principles of the Dharma and the spirit of *vimmutti*, or liberation at their core. In this the FWBO

seeks to be entirely traditional. In contrast John Crook's charges of 'deviance' seem to belong to the long history of Buddhist sectarianism whereby the Buddhist 'mainstream' is identified with one's own views.

Because it has adapted traditional forms of practice the FWBO has been criticised by those who regard those forms as sacrosanct. Conversely it has been criticised by those who see its own forms as themselves inflexible. This perception is based on the rigour of Sangharakshita's thinking and the distinctive forms of practice which have developed within the FWBO. But rigour is not closure. Basing oneself on the spirit of the Dharma does not mean picking and choosing the bits one feels comfortable with according to an uncritical eclecticism. Without great clarity the Dharma becomes lost in literalism and without shared forms Sangha cannot arise. A raft must be strongly built if it is not to disintegrate in midstream.

The over-riding need which the FWBO seeks to address through its organisational structures is the creation of Sangha. The paradigm of the monastic practitioner does not easily translate to the West and a variety of alternative lifestyles has evolved among Western Buddhists. These include the 'lay Buddhism' which John Crook discusses, and Ken Jones' de-centred approach. Many people who practice in the FWBO also follow a roughly 'lay' lifestyle, but is it enough for everyone? Is it enough for Sangha to arise?

Creating Sangha is hard work. It takes time, commitment, and it needs a context. This is what the FWBO's Centres, residential communities, businesses seek to create. From the outside they may look monolithic and forbidding, but each one is de-centralised and autonomous. My over-riding experience has been that they are infused by a deep humanity. At their best they are crucibles of mutual kindness and a framework within which mutual friendships develop. Moreover the FWBO's social vision and its Right Livelihood businesses, which Ken Jones so admires, are the products of a Sangha of individuals working co-operatively to put their Buddhist ideals into practice.

Far from being 'Orwellian', the FWBO has developed a strong collective life and contains many individuals who think strongly for themselves, follow a variety of lifestyles and engage in much discussion and debate. But they do so within the context of a shared commitment, to common ideals. Sangha creates a tension - the tension of being a disciple - between the need to think for oneself and the need to respond to others and be receptive to one's teachers. Overall, I think Order members have been remarkably successful in working with this tension and in avoiding the contrary pitfalls of authoritarianism and conformity on one side, or of individualism and unclarity.

British Buddhism has a history of petty factionalism and misunderstanding which has been powered by an extensive rumour-mill. It is regrettable to see *New Ch'an Forum* giving that mill another turn. I would urge readers who wish to understand the FWBO to follow the Buddha's advice to 'unravel what is false... acknowledge what is right' with a calm and clear mind. Bandyng terms such as 'deviant', 'cult-like' and 'fascistic' as John Crook does, will not help us develop a mutual understanding and I see no place for such language when Buddhists of different traditions discuss each other.

RESPONSE TO VISHVAPANI

Ken Jones

The only place all members of our Western Ch'an Fellowship network can discuss the problems of British Buddhism together is in this our own house journal. It is important that we feel free to do so. Vishvapani's "harmony and mutual understanding" are best served by combining honest expression of opinion with a warm hearted willingness to make such common cause as needs be. As Ven Sangharakshita, the FWBO's founder has observed, "honest collision is better than dishonest collusion" (Peace is a Fire, p70).

The predominant organisational culture of cover-up is superficially more comfortable but gives too much weight to a grapevine of truths, half truths and falsehoods. It has already been responsible for much damage to Western Buddhism. To open up sangha to how it sometimes is still requires investigative journalism, lawsuits or last resort whistle blowing.

One does not have to be a sociologist for The Big Three movements on the UK Buddhist scene to feel distinctly different from, say, the Throssel Hole, Amaravati or Gaia House organisational cultures. The different kind of experience is more immediately important than doctrinal and historical distinctions. That experience is distinguished by an overriding loyalty to The Movement. This is why ex-members need so much time to work through to being on their own again. Movements do, of course, Get Things Done (including very worthwhile things like FWBO's Karuna project in India). But history suggests that in the long term the price can be high. As a former lecturer in organisation theory it came as a sad surprise to discover how little difference there appears to be between the organisational patterns and behaviours of "sacred" as compared with "profane" organisations. And members inside the belly of the whale as always find difficulty in seeing the whale. A Buddhist analysis of movements and ideology will be found in my book *Beyond Optimism: a Buddhist political ecology*.

The FWBO is much the softest movement of the three, glued together more by ideology rather than structure (though, following a recent initiative by president Ikeda, Soka Gakkai is also moving in that direction). On the missionary scale, for example, the FWBO's famed ability to proliferate new centres is now quite overshadowed by the New Kadampa Trust (NKT). It is not surprising that mature, softer movements tend to opt for "entryism" (whether into the Network of Buddhist Organisations, TUC or RSPCA). Young hard ones, like NKT, tend to put their energies into rapid growth.

Vishvapani says virtually nothing about key FWBO notions that have aroused most controversy and which are highly relevant to the Order as a movement. The FWBO organisational personality is that of the Angry (or, rather, vehement) Young Man (of all ages), reflecting a certain European tradition most dramatically exemplified in Nietzsche. According to Subhuti, a prominent member of the Order, "the Dharma...seeks to help the individual to become free. The group is usually the enemy of the individual...[It] is the human version of the animal herd". (Buddhism for Today, p9). FWBO prejudice against the family is particularly noteworthy, though it is their misogyny that has become notorious, with Subhuti's new book *Women, men and angels* likely to prove particularly embarrassing to the Order. The title is from an aphorism by Ven Sangharakshita: "Angels are as men as men are to women -- because they are more human and therefore more divine". In the first issue of Lotus Realm, the new FWBO women's magazine, editor Kalyanaprabha duly toed the patriarchal party line of women being spiritually disadvantaged on account of their "lower evolution, their biological nature." She received a strong rebuttal from Christina Feldman, teacher and writer on women's spirituality: "Is the implication that anyone currently a parent, in a relationship, or involved in caring for a family is disbarred from enlightenment?". Images of muscular masculine beauty abound, including the standard issue Buddha rupa. The archetype of the Golden Boy is indeed a compelling one. As would be expected of a such a movement, the FWBO has emphasised virya (energy, forcefulness) at the expense of ksanti (spiritually creative humility and acceptance), and "True Individuality" to the

neglect of anatta (no-self). This can lead to an egoic spirituality "with a lot of attitude"! Another FWBO article of faith is their unqualified hostility to Christianity.

All this has little to do with Dharma and everything to do with the founder's personal preoccupations (again very typical of movements and cults). And yet Ven Sangharakshita has contributed a uniquely valuable body of Buddhist scholarship and a great deal of sensible practical guidance. I repeat: this is not a black and white debate; it concerns a very complex phenomenon. I could happily write an essay on the FWBO's many merits (like its work to create a contemporary Buddhist aesthetic). But my concern here is about its dangers (not least to itself) in being too much of an intrinsically conformist and ideologically driven movement and too little of an open yet purposive fellowship. I believe that what I have written here would substantially be the view of most Buddhists outside The Big Three movements. Can we all be so mistaken in our perceptions?

And yet there is something oddly endearing about these bodhisattvas of the locker room. Most of the individuals I have known have been likeable, robust and down-to-earth characters. However, as with all movements, there is so often an oppressive earnestness. Emptiness is all, and its human face is playful ambivalence. Only thus can we be truly serious. Let Ven Sangharakshita have the final word: "It is not enough to sympathise with something to such an extent that one agrees with it. If necessary one must sympathise to such an extent that one disagrees". (*Peace is a Fire*, p60).

THE WESTERN CH'AN FELLOWSHIP: CONSTITUTIONAL DISCUSSION. (First meeting June 1996)

In June 1996 John Crook called an assembly of Ch'an practitioners to a meeting at the Maenllwyd to consider his proposal to respond to numerous requests for a development in the field of Ch'an practice in the UK by setting up a charitable institution to promote Ch'an in Great Britain. The following persons attended:

Tim Paine	Frank Tait
Caroline Paine	Simon Child
Sally Masheder	Alec Lawless
Mike Masheder	Iris Tute
Bruce McLaughlin	Ken Jones
Peter Bannerman	Eddy Street (first afternoon only)
John Senior	Nick Salt

The following were invited but were unable to attend: Jake Lynes de Ver, John McGowan, Tim Blanc, Bruce Stevenson, David Brown, Guido Montgomery, Ros Cuthbert, Hilary Richards, Alison Jones, Charles Vincent, James Monks, Peter Howard. Some of these sent in written views for consideration at the meeting.

CONSIDERATIONS

The agenda focused on the proposal from John in the New Ch'an Forum 12 (Autumn 1995) to establish a charitable fellowship in response to requests for greater continuity, community and interaction between those who participate in the Maenllwyd retreats and who practice Ch'an (Zen) on an intermittent or daily basis.

The meeting began by asking the question: What is missing from the present arrangement of occasional retreats supported by small city groups around the country?

The responses to this question took the following form. People have valuable experiences in retreat at the Maenllwyd but many face the problem of establishing some continuity between retreat and daily life and from one retreat to another. There is a yo-yo effect whereby a good retreat experience may be followed by the attrition of daily life which negates the benefit until attempting another retreat, or in some cases giving up or looking elsewhere. The notion of "fellowship" was attractive in that it implied sharing experiences in a communality of commitment; travelling together on a common path; a sharing of problems along the way.

Intensive retreats offer opportunities for self acceptance, forgiveness, contact in equality with others, experiences of what we may term 'grace' or 'realisation' to varying degrees of depth or clarity. Sharing in group silence was particularly stressed as a valued aspect of retreat. After retreats there is a felt need to share the difficulty of NOT sharing such things during one's everyday life.

A fellowship could allow opportunities through various means and media to: share experiences; share the difficulties of not-sharing in daily life; share "ordinary life Zen"; express personal difficulties in times of mutual trust, caring and hospitality. The assembly concurred in expressing a felt need to relate concerns regarding social responsibility and community to those of personal, maybe solitary, practice and depth experience on retreat.

PRIME TASK

The prime task was defined as the attempt to bring the themes of solitary endeavour and communal practice together. In that Zen has been primarily a monastic pursuit there is a need to adapt ancient monastic methods to what may be possible in a lay community integrating outer and inner paths in a laity based middle way. It was agreed to set up a fellowship to carry forward these hopes and endeavours. After some discussion the title "*Western Ch'an Fellowship*" was chosen as a name.

INSTITUTION

The required institution was seen as resembling a mandala with a central core and a number of peripheral activities all connected as a web. The activity in such a web would constitute a "net-working." At the centre of the mandala lies the silent retreat process at Maenllwyd with its opportunities for receiving practical teaching, interviews with teachers, self confrontation and transcendence and in-depth realisation. Around the periphery were such systems and organisations as:

- the network of city groups
- the New Ch'an Forum as both journal and newsletter (perhaps involving two publications).
- Dharma study groups and advice on reading.
- Address lists and sources of contact, tapes and books including a supply of resources for regional groups.

It was argued that the Maenllwyd retreats lay at the core of the structure because here the focused silence provided opportunities to drop concern, allowing "things" to fall away without the need for any egoic reference or social framing. As concentrative ability develops in retreat (*yoriki*) the practice focus of the regime makes it difficult to evade oneself in self confrontation. This facilitates a view of the path in direct experience, a taste of "the state", a touching of the "mysterious principle."

The city groups were seen as providing opportunities for isolated practitioners to get together in practice sessions with someone capable of teaching basic methods, posture and attitude together with the provision of appropriate reading and opportunities for conversational sharing.

The executive would be required to supply suggestions for readings, tapes and taped dharma talks for use by the city groups and to offer training weekends for those leading them.

CITY CENTRES

These needed an enthusiastic initiator competent to present basic instructions in sitting, posture and attitude. The provision of a suitable location would be vital. The initiator would create a nucleus of practitioners which would rise in number to a critical mass at which time the formation of a city group under the umbrella of the WCF would be appropriate. Following training leaders may become qualified to offer local retreats.

MAENLLWYD ACTIVITIES.

These would be centred upon the introductory Western Zen Retreats leading to Ch'an retreats and hence to focused retreats on such themes as Silent illumination, Koans, Mahamudra or Tantra. The central practice would be Ch'an

In addition the new facilities at the Maenllwyd could be available for Dharma Study Retreats, Discussion Retreats or Mini-conferences, Solitary Retreats or longer term low number (say 4 persons) communities in an extended monastic retreat. In addition a month long community in monastic form containing two weeks intensive practice and two weeks looser communality was proposed.

FUNCTIONS OF THE FELLOWSHIP

The functions of the proposed fellowship were envisaged as follows:

Primary focus -

1. To promote training and practice in Buddhism
2. To promote and support training specifically in the Lin Chi lineage of Ch'an under the Dharma leadership of Master Sheng yen
3. To provide opportunities for ancillary practices furthering the above aims.

The means of accomplishing these main purposes would include;

- Employing a recognised master or teacher (at present John Crook).
- Renting buildings (i.e. Ch'an hall at Maenllwyd).
- Receiving and managing membership fees and fees for retreat attendance.
- Requesting an appropriate programme of "spiritual" instruction from the master/teacher and putting it into effect.

Further aims

- To sustain contact with the Chung Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture through Master Sheng Yen.
- To be mindful at all times of the Four Vows.
- To publish a journal and solicit appropriate materials for same.
- To raise funds for use in realising these objectives, providing an educational and/or research programme, assisting local groups, supporting low waged and retired practitioners through bursaries, financing teachings abroad, hiring or purchasing property.
- To initiate pilgrimages to Buddhist lands to increase understanding of Buddhist culture, history and origins.
- To engage an advisory board to comment on the Fellowship's activities, such a board to include at least one "devil's advocate".

THE TEACHER

The task of the teacher will be to supply an appropriate programme of retreats and education meeting the general aims set out above. As a lineage holder he/she would anchor the approach within the Ch'an tradition of China descended in this century through Master Hsu Yun to Master Sheng Yen. The teacher may however also use other methods from Western and other Buddhist sources to attain this end.

The teacher will be responsible for providing opportunities for practitioners to take some (at least) of the Buddhist precepts, offering event specific liturgies, training city group leaders and initiating training for those interested in, qualified to and capable of running retreats.

The teacher holds authority regarding the spiritual orientation of the Fellowship under its constitution while being responsive to democratic feed back from members and the advisory group. In the event of severe and justified criticism the teacher will be expected to 'consider his/her position' and to withdraw from the organisation.

The institution however has no power to transmit the lineage of Lin Chi Ch'an to another teacher. This power rests solely with the teacher in communication with Master Sheng Yen.

In the event of a need to appoint a successor it will be vital to appoint someone able to sustain the lineage within which the Fellowship works even if such a person is not a transmitted teacher. If the retiring teacher had not yet appointed such a person it would be highly desirable to find one. Under the constitution the WCF cannot change its lineage orientation as expressed above.

MEMBERSHIP

It is proposed that membership be open to practitioners who have attended at least two Maenllwyd retreats or their equivalents and who have taken some (at least) of the Buddhist precepts.

ORGANISATION

The WCF will require the usual organisation of a charitable institution namely trustees, an advisory board and an executive committee consisting of at least a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Journal Editor, Retreat Co-ordinator and other persons appointed or co-opted for specific purposes. The executive committee, in the first instance appointed by the current teacher, will be subject to election at subsequent Annual General Meetings in the manner usual for such institutions with some members up for re-election every three years.

PRESENT PLANS

Following the assembly it was resolved to consider the WCF as established, circulate the present document for comment among members of the assembly, publish an appropriate statement in the New Ch'an Forum and to proceed to negotiate charitable status based on a constitution framed from the above considerations.

The second assembly took place on February the 21st to 23rd, 1997. An account of our deliberations will appear in the next issue of New Ch'an Forum

John H Crook

BOOK REVIEW

One of the functions of the Sangha for many of us is the exchange of books which we have found inspiring or helpful as we go along the path of the Dharma. In this issue we introduce a new book review feature in the same spirit. The intention of this that members of our fellowship and our readership can review Zen or Buddhist books which have found important and wish to share. If there is such a book that you would like to review (it doesn't have to be a recent book) all contributions are gratefully received. Many thanks to Chris Gardiner for getting us started.

THE GOOSE IS OUT

by W. J. Gabb

The Buddhist Society, 1956,

Christopher J Gardiner

"a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his life as if he were telling a story"

Jean-Paul Sartre

I have always been fascinated by the art of story telling and this short book was my first "taste of Zen" through the medium of the story. It is a compilation of a series of articles written for the Buddhist Society by Mr Gabb and a later booklet called "Tales of Tokuzan". Tokuzan is a composite name derived from Shi-Toku and Kan-Zan two amiable Zen lunatics who lived about a thousand years ago.

Part 1 of the book is the story of the author's personal experience and for me was an indication of how the experience of Zen could be indicated obliquely through the telling of a life story. The chapters cover a variety of life experiences which may befall us all at some time. The overcoming of pain in its many forms by acceptance; the part that "hazard" plays in our fortunes; how help and guidance can come from unexpected quarters; the importance of patience; learning when to push and when to harmonise with circumstances.

Part 2 is the "Tales of Tokusan". These are short and pithy examples of Zen in action, stories to savour and reflect on. The titles may give some indication of the flavour. "How So-So saved the pig", "Puss in the Pulpit", "The Monk who got drunk on tea". Mr Gabb is also a poet and many of the tales end with a verse. My favourite verse is at the conclusion of a conversation in a rose garden between a priest and Tokusan about the nature of the Tao.

roses is good,	To prune
priest is better.	To prune a
his head,	Cut off
heart will speak.	Then his

To quote from the author... "some of the tales may seem more reminiscent of murder and sudden death than meditation in a monastery garden, the reason is that a Zen Master was also an astute psychologist, capable

of recognising that a sudden shock at a given moment would do more for a pupil than a month spent on a meditation mat..."

These stories are idiosyncratic and convincing, they ring with authenticity and for me were a delightful, original introduction to Zen, its inner spirit and application to daily living.



RETREAT REPORT

We are grateful to retreat participants for writing so honestly about their experiences on retreat. This gives us valuable help in understanding the retreat process. These reports also provide some insight into the difficulties and benefits of attending a retreat. We continue to publish these accounts anonymously. We regret that we are unable to publish everything that we receive.

An Empty Chair

WZR, Summer 1996

The six gates, gradually unfolding like the onion, let us into Maenllwyd yard in the rain. High spirits, matey atmosphere, queasy anticipation. What a lark - too late to back out now. Would I be up to it? The verse in the opening ceremony proved prophetic - path to peace going through hell, alone in the snow, the fool and his burden at the signless signpost.

Five am start and the run up the hill, surprising, beautiful, not too difficult; expected it to be worse. Into zazen, time blurring, fatigue, enjoying the chanting of the service in Chinese and the silence at mealtimes; each break going outside thrilling to ever changing views. The distant wind farm; deepening attentiveness inside and out; arriving; settling.

Rain the next morning, sun to follow, slowly wheeling through the day. Encouraging talk given, rules explained, communication exercises started. For the first five minutes I was stared at in almost complete silence. I imagined making a bolt for it across the fields. What the hell was this? I felt as if I had come to the wrong party, someone was going to get sacrificed or something.

The five minute periods rolled by and the ice began to melt, deeper emotions and deeper again, unlaughing, shocked by the alternation of expression and listening, each answer dropping away into the misty cloud of forgetting. Staying in the unknowing, building tension, something is coming. Is it enlightenment or an execution?

Delighted by the change of pace in the shaking, the dancing, the listening afterwards. A waking dream vision of my father in a meadow. How I loved him. Acceptance of his inability to express himself and the realisation that what is hidden is not absent, just hidden.

All serene and peaceful. Or was it? Semi-conscious with tiredness, screaming neck muscles. No comfort here. Poor sleep. Koan saturation everything. Waves of childish innocence interleaved with guilt, doubt, anger, fear. All the nameless variations of distress. Asleep. Awake. Rolled into one, leaden on the cushion awesome and awful, the mind at the bottom stilled; dark shapes gliding beneath the surface. About to put my head in the bush and fully expecting to get it bitten off. Awareness penetrating the world, my body, my mind - becoming phenomena minutely seen. The wetness of water, the heat of soup, taste, brightness, mind movements. I am experience. The word "experience" expanded, the whole world was my experience. I was the Universe, exciting, normal, very calm.

Humming exercise. Vast. The hum truly humming me, hand movements afterwards very slowly, hands parting, vision of a burst of light, white dove flies out, epiphany, heart bleating, painful peaceful pain. Another vision; a rocking chair looking at a landscape. Everything that I was and had ever happened to me was in that chair and the chair empty. *Anatta* then? A strange calmness understanding the contrasts in myself mirrored by sunshine and shadow, the split between IS And MIGHT BE.

I asked for an interview and the moment John asked me if it was OK being me I knew this was not *kensho*. Relieved as well as disappointed. Everything had a binary nature, a tension of opposites. No it wasn't OK, not entirely. "The Gatekeeper has stepped aside" said John. Confusion everywhere; a tense peace at the centre; mistakes made; people upset; many tears.

On the last day - the moment of awakening. I saw the signpost pointing with "I am" on one pointer, "destiny" on another, "doom" on a third. Chills up my spine. Sisiphus on his rock rolling backwards down to the bottom. All my problems rejuvenated, all the conflicts had their teeth sharpened. Failure, heaviness, no courage, split, needing to talk but nothing to say except "sunshine and shadow" or "rain falling in an empty field."

Suddenly all over. Anti-climax, chattering all the way home. Next two days - exhaustion, life in chaos, couldn't find words for it. Now I've tried everything. Phone John? Nothing to say. I have to find the nerve myself. Filled with dread, an alien, how to cope and not crumble? The retreat wrung me out, chewed me up, spat me out. "Who am I?" deafening me like an acid trip of my youth. Sunshine and shadow. I am sunshine. I am shadow.



Photo by Roger Green

Offerings

Tops of sycamores against the sky
Small birds fluttering
Breakfast !

Like the Dharma
Ravens go straight for the target
Like my thoughts
Martins all over the place.

Around the house
farts echoing
reincarnations of departed
beans.

Bird orbits the zendo
and departs--
If only my distractions were
so brief.

A Honda named REAL TIME
squats in the row of cars.
Which bugger drives that ?

Under the alder with foxgloves
at my feet. The wind
blows all of us.

Cliff Henty

PROGRAMME AND EVENTS

Retreats

The new programme for Maenllwyd for the latter half of the year is currently being worked out and will be sent to every one on the mailing list shortly. For now, here is a reminder of the programme as it stands at present and a note of short retreats run by the Bristol Group.

Scheduled events are as follows:

Maenllwyd retreats: 1997

Ch'an Retreat	May 14th-21st
Zen-Gestalt Workshop	June 12th-17th (Run by John and Malcolm Parlett)
Introduction to Tantra	July 10th-15th.

Bristol Ch'an Group short retreats

Dzogchen approaches to quiet sitting 12-13th April (**Run by James Lowe**)

What is This? 22nd-23rd Nov (**Run by Stephen & Martine Batchelor**)

Ch'an and Introductions to Tantra are open to those who have already attended a WZR or an equivalent retreat. Details required on application. The Zen-Gestalt Workshop is open to all interested in self exploration, preferably with some experience of such work.

We are currently holding prices steady:

Intro to Tantra...	£125
Ch'an.....	£150
Zen-Gestalt Workshop.....	£200

Details regarding these retreats and journeys (also featured in this issue) are or will be available from John Crook at Winterhead Hill Farm, Shipham, Avon BS25 1RS shortly. Please write to book retreats (deposit £30) or to state serious interest in a journey.

RETREATS WITH SHI-FU Ch'an Center New York

For information about retreats in New York contact:

Ch'an Meditation Center,
Institute of Chung Hwa Buddhist Culture,
90-56 Corona Ave.,
Elmhurst,
New York 11373,
USA

Tel. 001 718 592 6593

Fax 001 718 592 0717

Be sure to apply early for all retreats as they are often over-subscribed. Further information about the Ch'an Centre is available via their web site. Please see back page for details.

Journeys

KAILAS: THE TIBETAN HOLY MOUNTAIN

*John has been invited by **Himalayan Kingdoms** to lead their second pilgrimage to the most famous of all Buddhist holy mountains - Mount Kailas in western Tibet. This extraordinary opportunity becomes with John much more than a mere mountain trek. It will be possible to treat it as a true inner journey through self-enquiry and active meditation; circling the mountain together with Indian and Tibetan pilgrims. The journey is of course a tough one making considerable demands on fitness. At the same time it will be very well supported by an excellent Sherpa team, themselves on a pilgrimage. We cross the Himalayas on foot by a remote and little used pass in Humla (West Nepal). At the Tibetan border we transfer to jeeps for a tour of the ancient capitals of the old Kingdom of Guge with its famous temples and stupas, in an extraordinary montane desert landscape (see Lama Govinda **The Way of the White Clouds**). Well acclimatised, we then circumambulate the mountain visiting gompas en route and crossing the famous Dolma La Pass at nearly 19000ft where you can 'die' and be 'reborn' if you wish. We return again on foot through Humla.*

This is not a low price journey but for true pilgrims it is a remarkable opportunity. John gets a free trip but no wage for his participation. Please recruit with John from this journal. Party almost complete so ring immediately.

Dates Sept 17th-Oct 17th 1997

Cost £3195

LADAKH PILGRIMAGE

John will also be taking a party to Ladakh and possibly Spiti to view the Buddhist culture of these lands (monasteries, temples, art, architecture, meeting lamas etc, with short treks and retreat). Date delayed by the above venture. It is not however too early to express your interest. Probably early or late summer 1998. Estimated cost around £2000. Write soon as already several names are listed.

Groups

BRISTOL MEDITATION EVENINGS

The Bristol Ch'an Group continues to meet on Wednesday evenings 7.30pm until 10.00pm at the Iyengar Yoga Centre, Denmark Place, Gloucester Rd., Bristol. John is available occasionally for personal interviews. Contact Caroline Paine on 0117 924 5332 for further details

CARDIFF GROUP

Eddy Street runs the Cardiff group which meets on the last Tuesday of every month at 19 Velindre Rd., Cardiff CF4 7JE. For further details contact Eddy on 01222 691146.

SWINDON GROUP

This group currently meets on Monday evenings. For details contact John Senior on 01793 487402 or Dave Horsley on 01793 487402.

MANCHESTER GROUP

Simon Child is organising a group in the North West. This group is currently meeting on Friday evenings. For further details contact Simon on 0161 761 1945.

EDINBURGH GROUP

The Edinburgh group hasn't been running for a while though may soon be picking up again. For further details contact Frank Tait on 01721 721146.

YORK GROUP

A group has started in York. It is currently meeting on Wednesday evenings. Please contact Jake Lynes de Ver on 01904 728419 or James McCarthey on 01904 784848 for more details.

DHARMA STUDY GROUP

Tim Paine is co-ordinating this group running in Bristol. Contact him for more details on 0117 924 5332.

ABOUT THE NEW CH'AN FORUM

Please send articles, poems, letters, and book reviews to **John Crook**, Winterhead Hill Farm, Shipham, Winscombe, North Somerset, BS25 1RS (Tel. 01934 842231) or **John McGowan**, Experimental Psychology, Biology Building, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9QG (Tel. 01273 606755 Ex 2875). Articles are welcome on disk (we can take both IBM PC and Apple Macintosh documents). Emailed articles can also be sent to John McGowan at jmcg@biols.susx.ac.uk or Simon Child at wcf@child.demon.co.uk.

Please send drawings, photographs and slides to **Simon Child**, 24 Woodgate Ave., Bury, Lancs, BL9 7RU (Tel. 0161 761 1945). Please state whether you have any objections to the images you send being displayed on the Internet. Subscription requests, payments and changes of address should be sent to **Peter Howard**, 22 Butts Rd., Chiseldon, Wilts., SN4 0NW (Tel. 01793 740659). Please also contact Peter if you have any delivery problems.

Under the terms of the DATA PROTECTION ACT we would like to remind regular recipients of the NCF that their name and address are held in a personal computer database for the sole purpose of producing a mailing/ contact list. Anyone not wishing to have their details stored or used in this way, or who no longer wishes to receive the NCF, should contact Peter Howard

Ch'an goes electronic

The New Ch'an forum is not being left behind by the information revolution! The Ch'an centre in New York now has a web site (URL below) and the Western Ch'an Fellowship has both web pages and a small email list intended to facilitate contact between practitioners. The WCF Web site is contains a range of interesting Ch'an related titbits and is particularly recommended. The Ch'an email list is a utility by which members can post one message to all subscribers via a central distributor. Get surfing!

Ch'an Centre Web site:	http://www.chan1.org/
Western Ch'an Fellowship Webpages:	http://www.child.demon.co.uk/wcf/ Maintained by Simon Child at: wcf@child.demon.co.uk
WCF-L Ch'an Email list:	Contact John McGowan at jmcg@biols.susx.ac.uk as above.

LOST AND FOUND

Mistaken Identity at Reb Anderson's Retreat

I took my Lowe Alpine Fleecy jacket (dark blue and purple) on this retreat and it probably had an unusual enlightenment experience because when I got it home it had changed from an **XL** into an **L**. If you think you have my jacket and I have yours please let me know because yours is too short in the sleeves for me! (**Eddy Street, 01222-691146**)