

Mirror Flower Water Moon

FALL 2019

鏡花水月



DHARMA REALM
BUDDHIST UNIVERSITY

Dear readers,

We present to you the Fall 2019 edition of Mirror Flower Water Moon (鏡花水月), guided by your reflections on “authenticity.” Our contributors have provided a plurality of insights, feelings, and images conjured by the question, “What does it mean to be authentic?” When a variety of people write on the same concept, feeling the different ins and outs of a universal and yet personal theme, it raises the following questions: is it possible to form a collective definition of the word, or is authenticity an entirely intimate concept?

What is unique and integral to one person may be commonplace and useless to another. Perhaps authenticity, or a sense of originality, necessarily excludes other people from the concept. But your contributions seem to demonstrate a different matter: there is some semblance of familiarity and connectedness that interweave the community’s thoughts on authenticity. For some, it is serenity; for others, it may be an intuitive virtue or original will. But through it all is a *shared* feeling of authentic possibility. We all strive towards it. We are not entirely sure what *it* is, but we are not alone in cultivating it.

As always, we thank you for everything you give us, and hope you enjoy the read.

Your editing team

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Authenticity

Quinn Anderson

If I watch my mind carefully enough, I can see the story playing out. Here is me; here is the thing I see; here is the thing I don't see, but want to; here is the thing I think I see, but don't. It's all a quality of observance: how do we take in what we take in around us? When your mind starts whirring, where did it start? The smallest seed can conjure an hour's worth of content. Even a full day can be lost to such a thing. The smell of coffee or toast. A cold breeze on the face. The sound of a beloved friend's voice. How many stories do we tell in a given moment?

This week, as I was circumambulating in the Buddha Hall, I was told, "Drop the act." A fistful of memories smashed into my awareness: all the falseness of my egoic self, playing out in subtle ways. Layer by layer, as the stories rose and fell away, this egoic self dissipated, and I reflected on how, when we tell our story to ourselves and others, our story of self, it relies upon our deeper motivations. Do we wish to be seen, to be loved, to be understood? Do we wish to gain something, to have something taken away? Do we wish to be larger or smaller? Comforted? Desired? Embraced?

These volitions, constructed and impermanent, rise and fall throughout our days, at a moment's notice. They flash into and out of being, and, upon contact with our awareness, they either manifest into gargantuan problems or dissipate as quickly as they came. The presence or absence of a story dictates the outcome. Tell the story, feed the problem; ignore the story, find your freedom. I wish to be loved; won't someone hear my woe? I have taken on too much; can you relieve my burden? I'm too much for other people; how can I make myself disappear?

Whatever it is in that moment, our stories beget our actions, and our actions encapsulate the manifestation of our being. Our authentic nature is obscured in a fog of mental consequences; stress, tension, anxiety, grief, passion, fervor, enticement, heedlessness. Soaked in the sweat of effort, we weigh ourselves down with narrative constructs, and struggle needlessly against their burdens.

So what *is* this authentic nature that is so hidden from view? I might venture to describe it as the liminal space of non-being: a space wherein your stories are fully seen through, clarified as false, and released to nothingness. It is also the space of seeing. If we want to know,

**Soaked in the sweat of effort,
we weigh ourselves down
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their burdens.**

we must look, and to look, we must defog our glasses of the mists of catharsis. When a narrative arises, we first do not buy in, and second, we seek to know its source. Then, with all of this understood, we let it go. Again and again, we repeat, until clarity is known. The clarity of a moment without a story—a moment without a volitional quality, a moment without the haze of passionate becoming: this is when authenticity is present. Without any discernible quality, yet fully and entirely manifest, it breathes alongside you and rests in your every movement. So drop the act; see for yourself. How far do you want to go?

This body is a stubby pink tube. Squeeze it & it sings. Or, like a donut, thick jelly comes gushing out. It needs, therefore, be covered in a fine bleached powder. The body is decidedly like this: hollow, and full of fluids. Perhaps it is the casing of a telegraph cable along which are the earth and sky unremittingly hammering out their triply-encrypted communiques. As though something were indeed going on. Or such an image not entirely in excess.

It's because of what I've done I have to drive this stupid truck around, all the while watching the world go sliding by outside its magnificent windshield. No matter how crudely, how loudly I speak—or, like a broken insect struggling home, venture garbled assays—my every inarticulate sound is gathered up & pacified by this ponderous dome of glass. And gasoline is expensive.

Overcome with drowsiness, I guess one day I'll ease the trembling frame of this long-enduring vehicle onto the gravelly shoulder in search of a nap. Though quickening at evening's advent, it's only somewhat sluggishly that wakefulness like a purple syrup cold and congealing should be able to resume. Then what will it be said I had been doing all that time, while the drool kept collecting unabashed on my chin? Or shall it be the condescending rap of knuckles on the window summoning me from slumber?, or the tap-tap-tapping of the eager black baton

of some pristinely-uniformed highway patrolperson?, the fundamental nature of whose not-entirely-unfriendly concern is, whether by inches or miles, without a doubt beyond my comprehension.

Absolutely, Officer, I completely understand. Thank you for the warning. It will not happen again. After all, it's as you say: this is a public thoroughfare (—the principle or the pertinent application of which I will, in either case, be quite unable to discover any disagreement with.)

—Justin Howe



Photography: Hui Xuan Ooi

A Disappointing Sunset and a Pointless Practice

Koji Dreher

It's an easy mistake to make. It's the mistake the world seems to be begging of me: *I may rest in satisfaction by way of accumulating pleasant experiences.* I have plenty of glib mottoes to refute this premise, but often, these are balms for times I find myself challenged or crestfallen. As baseless as this satisfaction equation may be, I tend to keep it close, like a pet bird in my breast pocket who lies to me. Despite my tenacious wrongness, truth wedges its way into my heart from time to time. Though most of my realizations are forgotten, I enshrine some as memorials to those which fell out of my mind.

My family has never been big on travel. My parents inherited their ancestors' old world anxieties. Airplanes were out of the question. The Carnival Cruise is the preferred vacation of Monterey's thrifty, sky-fearing Sicilians. Every couple of years we'd drive en masse to Long Beach where we'd board a massive white ship heading for the Mexican Riviera. If you've never heard of the Mexican Riviera, it's because that term is exclusively used by cruise lines. Much of what takes place on a cruise is insufferable to an angsty teen who craves authenticity and depth. There is, however, the ocean stretching endlessly in all directions. I would find a quiet slice of deck and gaze outward, not just at the ocean, but at the glaring lack of land. This is how I enjoyed myself. There was just one problem: I expected

the beauty to make me happy. Isn't that the agreement, the point of all this?

I remember one evening distinctly. I was drinking hot Lipton tea—the least tacky thing I could find to drink—as I sat on the starboard side of the lido deck, watching the sun set. I was trying to have a *moment*. It looked like the sun was melting into the ocean and turning it gold. It was beautiful. I can still see it. Even the ubiquitous hum of the engine seemed to add solemnity to the scene. Yet, dwarfing my awe was a sense of disappointment, like the shameful feeling of getting a toy you've irately begged for. Why isn't this sunset touching my heart? Such sights are supposed to be breathtaking, but my breath hadn't been taken anywhere. Had I been lied to? Did anyone else know that beauty doesn't kindle pleasure, that pleasure doesn't kindle happiness? Was the problem in my expectation: the unwritten agreement I had with objects in my world?

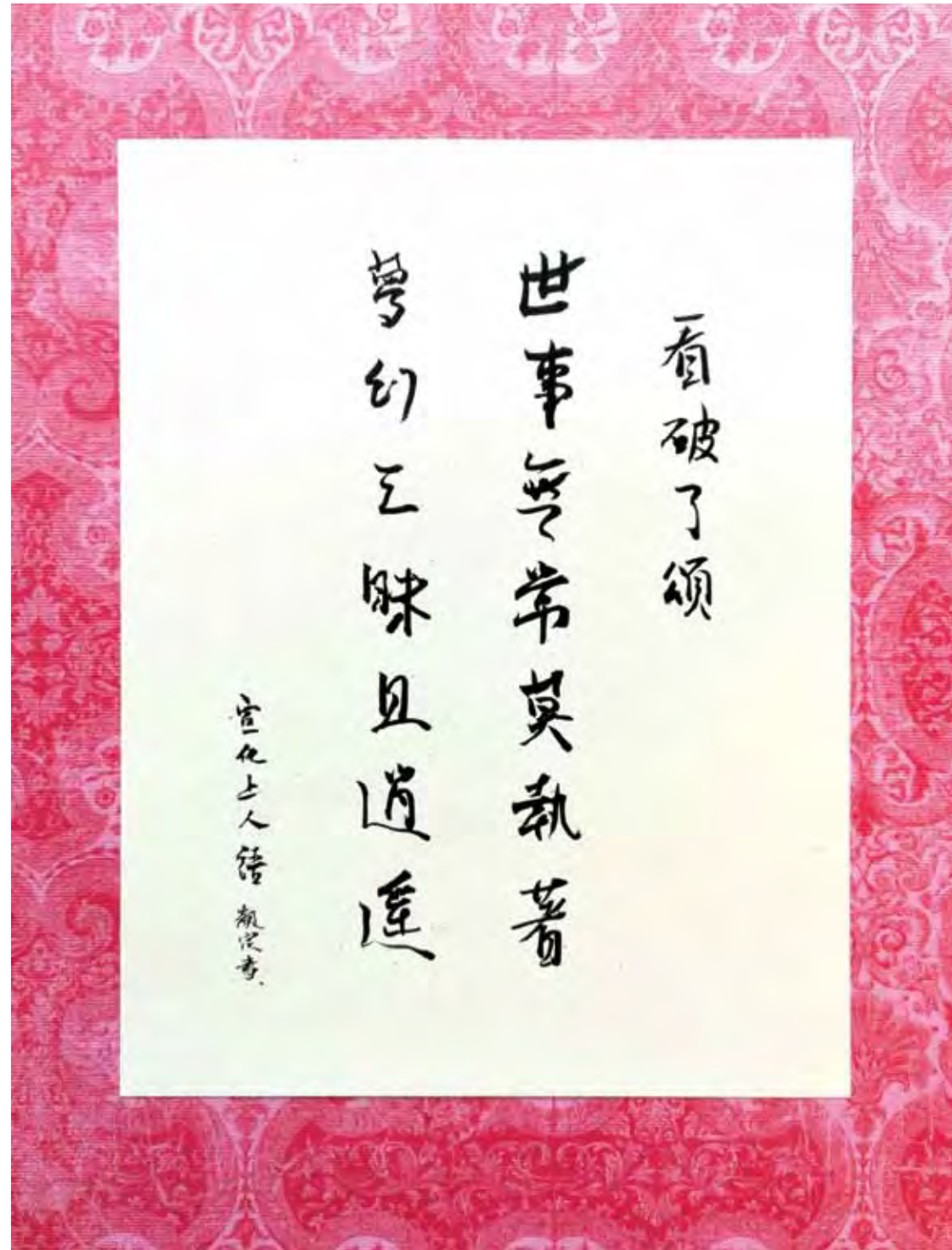
Put me on that boat again now and I'll enjoy it. The sunset is not the issue. What happened that day was potent with its ramifications enduring because, for the first time, my own

There was just one problem: I expected the beauty to make me happy. Isn't that the agreement, the point of all this?

capacity for happiness was called into question. The external factors were all in place, yet something inside me wasn't available to harmonize with them. This left me to wonder whether I was a suitable vessel for satisfaction. From that day to this one, the question of contentment and my ability to avail myself to it is what drives my life. Ironically, this inquiry itself often manifests as a rejection of my life situation as it is. The thought that I have to do something in order to become someone who can be happy is remarkably similar to the thought that experiences can make me happy. It seems that whatever has to occur lies

somewhere between *trying* and *not trying*. The resultant feeling can be like looking hungrily into a well-stocked refrigerator and still walking away empty-handed. My response, then, was to move to a monastery.

I picked the worst monastery: nobody seemed special and there was no charismatic leader. Striving for awakening or even talking about enlightenment was frowned upon. The basic practice was sitting still with no personal agenda whatsoever. I didn't count my breath; I didn't label my thoughts; I neither focused nor quieted my mind. I just sat there. The closest thing to instruction I received was, "don't *make* anything, only *don't know*." I sat facing a wall in a room in the middle of the mountains for several years and nothing special happened. Why didn't I leave? Perhaps I wasn't creative or ambitious enough to think of something better to do with myself. Looking back, I think I knew something important was happening. The problem with transformation is that it can be so incremental that it's invisible to us even though we are right there as it happens. My teacher said, "Don't expect the bottom of the bucket to fall out: our way is like walking in the mist and finding out your sleeves are soaked through." That is to say, pushing for some *religious experience* is to set yourself up for disappointment (or worse, a belief in attainment). Rather, I was to just relax all of my expectations. Imagine what effect it might have to wholeheartedly engage in a spiritual practice with no concept of development or progress. What if, while sitting on the starboard side of the lido deck drinking Lipton tea, I was pleasantly surprised by the sunset and I wasn't trying to employ that experience for my own joy or betterment? This story may seem like it should end with a tidy and satisfying *a-ha!* moment, but that would undermine the point. I will, however, say that I greatly appreciate my disappointing sunset and where it continues to lead me.



Artwork: Yenfu Li

回春醫療保健操動作、要領、作用與圖解

INSTRUCTIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS FOR PERFORMING THE
MOVEMENTS OF THE RETURNING TO SPRING EXERCISES
FOR CURING AND MAINTAINING HEALTH AND DESCRIPTIONS
OF THEIR FUNCTIONS

Translated by Bhikshuni Heng Chih et alia

These exercises are part of an ongoing series, the first ten of which were published in the Summer 2018 issue. The editing team would like to apologize, as the images for those exercises were accidentally left out of the print magazine. However, they appear in the PDF available at DRBU's website.

21. 搖轆轤

動作:: 右腳前跨一步，兩手如握轆轤把，由上向下搖，兩膝微曲成弓步搖32次。

作用: 活動肩、肘、腰、關節，疏通任、督、帶三脈。促進胃腸蠕動，增強心、肺、腎功能。

防治: 腰、背痛、骨質增生、疝氣、赤白帶下。

WINDING IN THE PULLEY

Motion: The right leg is extended one step. Arrange the two hands as if they were yanking a pulley-cord down. The motion is repeated 32 times with the knees bending slightly.

Function: Exercises the shoulders, elbows, waist, and joints. Clears three of the Extra Channels: the ren (responsible), du (governing) and dai (belt). Improves the oscillations of the stomach and intestines. Strengthens the functions of the heart, lungs and kidneys.

Preventative cure: Pain in the waist and back, strengthens the quality of the bones, hernia, white discharge (leukorrhea) from the genital organs.





22. 放轆轤

動作：左腳前跨一步，兩手如握轆轤把，由下向上搖，兩腿成弓步搖32次。
作用：同21節。
防治：上肢和心肺疾病。

RELEASING THE PULLEY

Motion: The left leg is extended one step. Arrange the two hands as if they were releasing a pulley cord in an upward motion. The motion is repeated 32 times with the knees bending slightly.

Function: Same as #21

Preventative cure: Pain in the upper arms, heart and lungs.



23. 摸魚

動作：右腳前跨一步，伸直左腿曲膝，曲肘，兩手平伸與腰齊，兩臂隨腰轉動，由左、前、右，水平轉32次。再左腳前跨一步，同法，方向相反轉32次。
作用：活動腰、膝、肩，肘關節，疏經活絡，強腰健腎。
防治：腰痛、腰肌勞損、骨質增生。

SIDE-BENDS AT THE WAIST

Motion: The right leg is extended one step. The left leg is held straight, but the knee bends and so do the elbows. The two hands are held even and extended out level with the waist. Arms and waist follow the movement of the hands, as if gliding through water, from left, past center, to right and back again 32 times. Then the left leg is extended one step and the motion is repeated in the opposite direction 32 times.

Function: Exercises joints of the waist, knees, shoulders, and elbows. Clears the Principle Channels and stimulates the Connecting Channels. Strengthens the waist and arms.

Preventative cure: Pain in the waist. Fatigue or injury of waist muscles. Increases production of bone matter.

24. 大晃腰

動作：兩腳分開與臂同寬，兩手直臂由左、下、右、上旋轉，(不低頭、彎腰)8次。再反方向旋轉8次。
作用：活動腰、脊、胸椎，疏通任、督、帶三脈，促進血液循環。
防治：腰背痛、腰肌勞損、脊柱強直、疝氣、帶下、強腎。

EXTENSIVELY ROTATING THE WAIST

Motion: The two feet are spread in a stance equal to the width of the arms (when they are hanging naturally). The arms are kept straight while the hands move from left to right in a large circle 8 times (without lowering the head or bending the waist). The repeat the motion 8 times in the opposite direction.

Function: Exercises the waist and the spinal and thoracic vertebra. Clears the three Extra Channels of ren (Responsibility), du (Governing), and dai (Belt). Improves blood circulation.

Preventative cure: Pain in the waist and back. Fatigue or injury of the waist muscles. Strengthens and straightens the spinal vertebra. Helps with hernias and sagging belt. Strengthens arms.



25. 挖泥

動作：兩臂抬起，手心向前置頭側，兩手隨身下蹲，手心向下達腳前，翻掌如托物隨身起達頭前，翻掌心向前蹲8次。
作用：活動腰、膝、踝關節，疏經活絡，活血化癥，增強腿力。
防治：關節炎。

SCOOPING UP MUD

Motion: Lift the two arms, placing the two hands, palms out, in front of the eyebrows. As the two hands are lowered, the body squats down. When the hands reach the feet, cup the palms, as if scooping up something and lift the two cupped hands up over the head. Then begin the same motion again, repeating it 8 times.

Function: Exercises the joints of the waist, knees, and ankles. Clears the Principle Channels and Connection Channels. Stimulates blood circulation and heals bruises. Increases strength in the legs.

Preventative cure: Inflammation of the joints.



26. 打膝

動作：彎腰鬆肩垂臂，兩手交替拍打犢鼻、膝眼穴。
作用：活血化癥。
防治：膝關節疾病。

SLAPPING THE KNEES

Motion: Bend the knees and relax the shoulders, letting the arms hang down. The two hands alternately slap the two points of dubi (calf's nose) and xiyan (knee eye).



Function: Stimulates circulation and heals bruises.

Preventative cure: Pain in the knee joints.

27. 看足根



動作：曲肘，兩手平伸與腰齊，兩臂隨上身右後轉眼看到兩足跟時，兩手下按。左右交替進行16次。

作用：活動腰、脊、頸椎。

防治：脊柱強直，頸椎骨質增生，腰痛。

LOOKING AT THE HEELS

Motion: With elbows bent, place both hands in front, level with the waist. Swing the two arms back beyond the right side, while turning the head so the eyes can look at the two heels. The hands should hang down naturally. Repeat the motion to the left and right 16 times.

Function: Exercises the waist, spine, and neck vertebra.

Preventative cure: Strengthens and straightens the back, increases the production of bone matter in the neck vertebra. Helps with waist pain.

28. 大彎腰



動作：兩腳分開與肩寬，兩手指交叉手心向上舉過頭，直伸三次，再彎腰下伸三次，重複三次。同法，先右，後左種伸三次，重複三次。(經過鍛練，下伸逐步達腳面。口令1、2、3、下伸腿要直。)

作用：能。

防治：腰背痛、骨質增生、閃腰岔氣。

MAKING DEEP WAIST BENDS

Motion: Spread the feet to a distance equal with the shoulders' width. Place the hands above the head with the fingers laced together and the palms up. Stretch upward three times. Then make a deep waist bend and stretch three more times. Repeat the entire motion three times. Then, using the same method of stretching three times up and three times down, repeat the entire motion three times while twisting to the left and then three times while twisting to the right. (After practice, one should be able to touch one's feet for the count of 3 on the downward stretch, while keeping one's legs straight).

Function: Clears the Principle Channels and stimulates the Connecting Channels. Regulates the balance of yin and yang, improves the functions of the viscera and bowels.

Preventative cure: Helps with pain in the waist and back. Increases production of bone matter. Helps with twisted back and blockages of the qi (energy).

29. 前後彎腰

動作：兩手抱肘於後腰，彎腰身下俯，再後仰16次。

作用：活動腰跨關節，疏通經絡，強腰固腎。

防治：駝背、腰背痛、便秘、帶下。



BENDING THE WAIST TO THE FRONT AND BACK

Motion: Putting the arms behind the back, each hand grasps the opposite elbow. Then bend the waist forward and backward 16 times.

Function: Exercises the joints of the waist and thighs. Clears the Principle and Connecting Channels. Strengthens the waist and arms.

Preventative cure: Helps with hunchback, with pain in the waist and back, and with constipation and sagging belt.

30. 晃腰

動作：兩手叉腰、膝稍彎，晃腰轉胯，先由右向左轉32次，再從左向右轉32次。

作用：同第二節。

ROTATING THE WAIST

Motion: The two hands clasp the waist. The knees are bent. Rotate the waist, turning the thighs, first from right to left 32 times, and then from left to right 32 times..

Function: Same as #2.





Photography: Bhikshu Jin He

AUTHENTICITY IN NIETZSCHE'S *GENEALOGY OF MORALS*

Warren Chew

What does it mean to be authentic—to be true to yourself? Authenticity is often associated with a system of values. Morals, beliefs, and values dictate the way we live our lives. For some of us, authenticity is about understanding morality and living according to it. But the *value* of morality is not often scrutinized. Do we benefit from labeling things as good or bad, and does living according to these value judgements reflect authenticity? More importantly, where do these values even come from? By examining the origins of commonly-held values, especially the value of beauty, we can understand their influence on our morality, and in effect, our authenticity. Our vision of beauty reflects how we think about ourselves, and this relation is central to the question of authenticity. Nietzsche's genealogy of beauty and his investigation of related concepts in selflessness, guilt, and conscience provides an answer: authenticity resides in affirmation of oneself, and in understanding the power of a deeply misunderstood concept—selfishness.

On the *Genealogy of Morals* by Friedrich Nietzsche calls into question the value of morality. In a series of three essays, he examines and refutes modern ethics. The second essay, on guilt and the bad conscience, also explores the origins of beauty and selflessness. Upon examination, these values demand that we deny ourselves, and this self-denial creates beauty: “what would be ‘beautiful’ if the contradiction had not first become conscious of itself, if the ugly had not first said to itself: ‘I am ugly’” (Nietzsche 88)? Beauty originates in a contradiction; meaning, for something to be beautiful, ugliness has to exist. Furthermore, ugliness has to be “conscious of itself”: we have to claim “I am ugly” in the face of beauty. If we internalize this contradictory ideal, selflessness arises. We have to reflect on the concept of “doing good” for others if it stems from this self-denial. Striving towards beauty because of the belief that we lack it is a painful contradiction. Nietzsche's philosophy presents an answer to this problem, to this feeling of *lack*: affirmation of oneself.

In order to examine what affirming oneself means, we need to examine what it is not through its relation to guilt and the bad conscience. The bad conscience is characterized by ugliness directed towards oneself: “all instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward*—this is what I call the *internalization* of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his ‘soul’” (84). Without an outlet to discharge our instincts—the instinct for freedom specifically, or what Nietzsche calls will to power—these instincts “turn inward.” Our will becomes fueled by “a soul voluntarily at odds with itself that makes itself suffer out of joy in making suffer” (87). This “bad conscience” is in constant guilt; it is a feeling of *lack* that drives us to be selfless and deny ourselves, to do good before others and appear altogether humble and diminutive before society. “Joy in making ourselves suffer” stems from the feeling that we are not good enough. Happiness is perverted into the idea that we have to suffer hardship to achieve it. Thus arise the concepts of beauty and selflessness: we have to prove we are good under the values of goodness imposed by others, when we have not created values ourselves. The bad conscience is contradicting oneself, and the abovementioned will to power is affirmation of oneself.

Will to power and affirmation are rooted in the concept of becoming master: “all events in the organic world are a subduing, a becoming master, and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous ‘meaning’ and ‘purpose’ are necessarily obscured or even obliterated” (77). Nietzsche is speaking of an inherent drive within ourselves to dominate and create values, to not give credence to established “meaning” and “purpose” without first establishing our own. Hence Nietzsche’s scrutiny of beauty and selflessness. He implores us to question: to question why we regard something as beautiful or something else as ugly, and to question why we have to establish ourselves as “good” and selfless in the eyes of others. The spirit of questioning leads to affirmation of oneself, and to a true understanding of what we *personally* deem to be good or bad. When we override meaning and create “fresh interpretations,” we are combating self-denial and the feeling of *lack*. Because suddenly, we are no longer lacking in the images of beauty and selflessness that society imposes on us; instead, we live up to our own images, become master, and affirm ourselves in what we create.

I do not deny that Nietzsche’s affirmation seems remarkably close to selfishness. In fact, he lauds selfishness, perhaps hyperbolically, in *Ecce Homo*, the autobiography in which he interprets themes and philosophical questions in his other works: “at this point, the real answer to the question, *how one becomes what one is*, can no longer be avoided. And thus I touch on the masterpiece of the art of self-preservation—of *selfishness*” (253). Affirmation as it is in relation to selfishness, then, is self-preservation. We preserve authenticity by calling into question what others and ourselves think to be true or

“good.” He goes on to elaborate that to “know thyself” is the recipe for ruin, and forgetting oneself, misunderstanding oneself, is reason (254). In this context, “knowing thyself” implies an identity or morality we uphold; it is ruinous because knowing thyself restricts questioning of oneself. To forget and to misunderstand is to avoid establishing a “truth” in what we are. When our self-image is free from a societal or moral identity, we are free from establishing what we are to others. This is a very particular kind of selfishness; it does not demand us to be materialistic or concerned with how much influence we have over others. Stereotypical selfishness is living in service of society’s ideals—trying to prove ourselves to others by showcasing what we are on the outside. Nietzsche’s selfishness is authenticity—affirmation of what we are on the inside. These comments from Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo* give “affirmation of oneself” some added nuance: affirming oneself isn’t necessarily establishing an identity, it is more of a persevering against established values. Moreover, affirmation isn’t the selfish pursuit of an identity under society’s ideals; it is an authenticity of your own making.

I ask again, this time to myself, what does it mean to be authentic? Although Nietzsche paints a clearer image of what not to do, he is less clear about what we *should* do to be authentic. He does not clarify the values of the affirmer, besides the idea that they stem from a will to power. Perhaps this is for good reason: Nietzsche doesn’t posit the values of the affirmer because we are meant to create our own. This absence of an objective right or wrong makes authenticity an incredibly personal, creative, and powerful concept. My personal vision of authenticity is in overcoming the feeling of *lack*, of the feeling that I am not good enough for the beauty and selflessness established by others. Perhaps Nietzsche is painting a specific portrait of authenticity, carrying a message for those that are like myself, who need some selfishness to affirm that who we are as a person is not dictated by an outside will. For others, Nietzsche appears to be lauding a stereotypical selfishness that devalues the will of anyone but the individual. But this is a misconception. Nietzsche’s selfishness is more akin to empowerment than rejection. It gives value to the one will that must never be devalued—your very own.

Affirming oneself isn’t necessarily establishing an identity, it is more of a persevering against established values. Moreover, affirmation isn’t the selfish pursuit of an identity under society’s ideals; it is an authenticity of your own making.

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The Girl in Red, The Boy in Black

Phoenix Winters

Being cast as eye candy is a very interesting experience. It's a performance in and of itself, even if one is required to have very few lines, because you're a piece of the scenery. As someone who blatantly and almost painfully strives to be seen, you'd think I would enjoy such a role.

In 2015, I was cast as a background character in a swing-era musical production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, by William Shakespeare. If that sounds like an unusual production to you, you wouldn't be off the mark. My high school theater class had only three weeks to put the production together, seeing as we'd wasted most of the semester working on a Greek tragedy that we ended up abandoning. So the project was not only unusual, it was rushed.

My role technically had a name, but I don't recall it, nor the three short lines of dialogue I was kindly given. But that didn't really matter. I wasn't there to talk. I was there to look good. Learning how to speak my handful of words mattered less than learning how to sit, stand, faux-whisper, and dance. These days, I just call my character "the girl in red."

When you see a party in a movie or play, what's in the background? People. People who don't matter to the story, but have to be there all the same, because if they're not, there's no party. That was me. I was the party, or rather, a small,

nameless piece of it. I was "pretty girl laughing and sipping drink"; I was "innocent dame being flirted with by soldier"; I was "part two of dancing couple three."

My short black hair was carefully curled and styled with a handkerchief tied into a neat bow on my head. I was given a deep red dress with a narrow waist and dance-compatible skirt. I decided, as a character choice, that the girl in red liked red lipstick too. I was a 1930's Snow White, sweet-faced and silent.

The most exciting scene I got to be in was the main dance number. Our three weeks of preparation meant most of us couldn't do the complicated swing moves you see in Broadway musicals, but a few of us had taken on the challenge of learning a few more complicated steps, and I was one of them. My partner was the same polite blond soldier boy that the girl in red was supposed to flirt with later in the party scene. I liked to imagine she'd walk home with him, he'd shyly kiss her cheek and ask for her address so that he might write to her once he was sent off to war again. But for now, in this sliver of their lives the audience got to see, they would dance together.

The girl in red, I knew, loved the moment in the literal spotlight. The second we took center stage, our customary waltz-like stance opening

up to dance the Charleston while holding hands and switching directions rapidly (sometimes referred to as "barn doors" by real swing dancers), she was grinning like she'd won the lottery. And maybe, for her time, she had. She was pretty and young, caught the eye of a handsome, noble soldier. Assuming he made it home alive, maybe she'd even marry him.

The girl in red enjoyed being eye candy. In some ways, so do I. But not in the way she did. And maybe that's why playing her sticks in my mind so much, more than any of the many random, back-of-the-room roles I've had throughout the years. The girl in red wanted to be taken care of. She wanted a fairy tale, or as close as she could get. A brave knight in shining uniform, a moment in the spotlight, a second on the dance floor where she was the prettiest thing in sight. She was too humble to want more than that; naturally, it was the more important ladies, like Beatrice and Hero, who deserved to be revered as main characters. But for a second, the girl in red would sparkle like a ruby, beam out at the audience, and silently say, "I am here. I exist. I am happy."

I, however, am not so easily contented. I'd rather crash across the stage like a falling star, burst into a firework and burn out in a puff of black smoke. When I demand the spotlight, I don't demand it to be centered on my ability to appeal to others; I demand it to show who I am, every raw, sharp, burning edge of me. I don't need to be admired; I don't even need to be liked. I just need to be seen, authentically seen for who and what I am. Only then am I content to melt back into the shadows and re-join the party.

It's hard to express how wrong I felt, playing the girl in red. Don't misunderstand, I gave it my all, as any actor will if they're really committed to their art. But even so, every step of her shiny black shoes took effort. Perching daintily on a barstool and crossing my legs felt wrong. Shrieking with giggles as someone whispered gossip into my ear felt wrong. Feeling the soldier boy's hand on the small of my back, and his shoulder under my hand, felt wrong. "No," my mind seemed to whisper, as my heels kicked

up merrily. "This is wrong. This is a nightmare." I struggled to ignore it, spinning into the arms of my dance partner. "Get me out, get me out!" I smiled up into his face, honest blue eyes oblivious to my discomfort. "I can't do this, I can't breathe!" We skipped stage left, and I had never felt so relieved to be in the back row of a scene.

After the final performance ended, I rushed backstage to take off my costume. I tore the sheer tights off with my bare hands - they were old, and itchy, and falling apart, and they made me feel like I couldn't breathe. I tugged the dress off as quickly as I could without damaging it. I ripped the bow from my hair and raked my hands through the hairspray-heavy curls, desperate to be less perfect, less dolled-up, less *eye candy*.

Civilian clothes on, I shuffled over to the makeup tables, grabbing a makeup-remover wipe and scrubbing it over my face. I stared at the resulting sight in the mirror. My lips were flushed, as if I'd been punched in the mouth. Eyeliner residue ringed my eyes, making them hollow and tired. I looked sick. The ghost of a boy struggling to pilot the identity of a girl. It was the most real I'd felt in weeks.

My fellow actors shrieked and chatted around me. Costumes littered the floor. Congratulations, praise, and relief permeated the air. I zipped up my black jacket and pulled up the hood, stepping outside into the warm May night. I didn't say goodbye to anyone. I started to walk home, head down, hands in my pockets. I breathed a sigh of relief as I left the girl in red behind, once and for all. I held nothing against her. She was fun, uplifting in her own way. But she was so far from me, so painfully opposed to my reality, that I knew I'd never play a character like her again. No more tight-waisted dresses. No more empty giggles. No more dancing as the follow. The next time I took the stage, I decided, would be the day someone, anyone, finally let me play the soldier.

I'd rather crash across the stage like a falling star, burst into a firework and burn out in a puff of black smoke.

Urumi

Yanik Davison

Land Ho!
We've goods for trade, in foreign lands of plenty
Olive oil, fine aged wine
I'll give you what is mine
Take me to the market shade
Where dark dealings can be made
In Sicily I sell to many
For over here it costs a penny
My home is far from Bangladesh
Yet here I am in search of flesh
Some I buy cheap, for some, I spend more
Most of my slaves are prisoners of war
I browse the selection, here's one that will do
Looks healthy, stands straight, he's a warrior too
Perhaps he'll seize glory, within the arena
I pray for safe passage to goddess Athena
A barrel of salt meets faces of glee
She looks good, that one's nice, I say "give me
all three"
I can't wait to be sailing, back to my home
Loaded with cargo that's destined for Rome

Under the deck in shackles I squat
Wondering "*what if I didn't get caught*"
Traded for salt, not even gold
Beginning this long journey so cold
The brine cakes my dreadlocked hair
My destination I know not where

In isolation, my nails keep time
I fell asleep and dreamt of a lime
Waking up seasick, frail and white
My fever shivering, all through the night
Nothing to explore but the depths of my mind
Suffering and anguish is all I can find
On this journey of dreadful sorrow
I wait for something new tomorrow
In the morning I woke, to a trumpet of horns
Here the sound welcomes, at home the
sound warns
Peering through a crack in the hull, I see land
It's been so long since my feet touched the sand
Brought up on deck, to the first light of day
Ahoy landlubbers! The shores of Pompei!

That last bout was rigged! Two against one?
My man stood no chance, they made it look fun
Have you spare coin to loan for your brother?
Then it's off to the block to purchase another
A ship has returned from on the silk road
Gold lines my pockets, so show me her load
From barbarous lands comes exceptional stock
This one looks fierce, take off his lock
With hand on his jaw, I examine the beast
His complexion is dark and he hails from
the east
Some men are big, some men are spry

But really I search for that look in their eye
This one has killed, I can tell by his gaze
He softens his visage but his pupil betrays
I reveal gold, the seller, his seal
We melt some wax to be done with the deal
I buy the man without second thought
It appears in fact, looks can be bought

They shaved my head and gave me a name
The gladiator's life of fame
Upon that day of my arrival
My only goal has been survival
I've seen many, come and go
They reach for the top, yet are buried below
My body aches, yet I'm forced to fight
The master's whip I've learned to spite
A life in the pits, is just a death sentence
I've done wicked things, yet I have
no repentance
Making my way to the overseer
In my heart, there exists no fear
Show no mercy, spill their blood
Turn the arena sand to mud
I take my chance to gut the slaver
The death of a man can be the ultimate favor
I look around the yard, few are displeased
Submitting myself, I hold to be seized
No one would kill me, this much I know

Does the playwright harm the star of the show?
Still for appearance, I must be reproved
From all forms of life, they had me removed
A rebellious slave, in need of alignment
Sent to a cell for solitary confinement

Alone I sit in self contemplation
Resting in the silence of prolonged isolation
Concrete walls prevent my escape
There's hardly room for a plan to take shape
Inside is pure darkness, as if you were blind
Have you any idea the effects on the mind?
There's been nothing to eat for quite
some duration

So I gain sustenance through deep meditation
A true sense of freedom enters my soul
A power that lets me be one with the whole
The ground starts to shake, I hear
something terrible
For those left outside, it must be unbearable
Within a stone cell, I can still feel the heat
There's only one thing that would cause
such a feat

From great Mount Vesuvius, brimstone does rain
Cast into exile, I avoid being slain
Who is a foe and who is a friend?
Perhaps it is foolish for us to pretend.



Artwork: Jackie Farley



Artwork: Yanik Davison

“Dedicated to Opa and Nona”



Photography: Yang Liu

Artwork: Space







*When I see high mountains,
I think
May all living beings
Have transcendent good roots
Like a summit that no one
can surpass.*

– AVATAMSAKA SUTRA
CHAPTER 11: PURIFYING PRACTICES

A Dharma Talk

Thao Amanda Phi

All Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Venerable Master, Dharma Masters, wise teachers, and Dharma friends: good evening. My name is Thao Amanda Phi. This fall begins my sixth year working at Dharma Realm Buddhist University, but it feels like I've been a part of this community for lifetimes.

I wanted to start my Dharma talk tonight with a line that is commonly repeated in the *Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang*.

"Today, we are here in this Bodhimanda due to our shared karma."

Last summer, a woman from China shared a reflection at the end of a weeklong retreat at Buddha Root Farm. She compared how people who use the same ferry to commute to work have shared karma and affinities. How many more affinities do we have when we spend a week together cultivating?

Her analogy deeply resonated with me. It made me think of the affinities we must have with each other to all be dedicated to the Dharma and choose to center our lives at or around City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB). We must have been doing this for lifetimes.

About a month ago, I came back from Europe. The last time I spoke in the Buddha Hall was three years ago, also when I had just come back from Europe. The experiences were both similar and completely different. When I went to Europe in 2016, it was for an academic seminar. This year, it was to be part of the DRBA France Delegation. Both experiences brought me back ready and willing to be a better human being.

Living in CTTB, I began to feel more comfortable practicing different Dharma doors. Working at DRBU and being in the community gave me the opportunity to try different practices. Growing up, the Guan Yin session was the Dharma door I chose. However, when I moved back here almost five years ago, I thought it would be opportune to try out different practices. I began to regularly attend evening ceremony, meditate in the mornings at DRBU before work, and try out other sessions such as the Earth Store session and Chan sessions.

I have particularly grown to really appreciate the Ten Thousand Buddha Repentance every spring. I try to participate in as much of it as I can but am not able to do the whole repentance since I have other responsibilities going on.

One of the hallmarks of the Ten Thousand Buddha Repentance is that it is greatly melodic and beautiful. I asked a *bhikshuni* if there was any other practice that was as melodious as this repentance, and she told me about the *Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang*. I mentioned it to my friend, who bought me the English translation of the liturgy. I found it very interesting and serious. Although I read the English translation, I could not remember actually participating in the repentance previously.

Working at DRBU has given me the chance to spend a lot of time with Shr Fu's senior Western disciples, mostly at the local coffee shop. Dr. Ron Epstein will often share old stories about Shr Fu, discuss local politics, or talk about what's going on at DRBU. He has been highly influential

to me, and one of the most important parts he has emphasized is why Shr Fu put together the Sangha community and the lay community on one shared campus: The laypeople are to serve as Dharma protectors for the Sangha.

These things all became influencing factors in my decision to attend the France Delegation. I came to the delegation with several intentions: to be a Dharma protector and support the Sangha, to participate in the Emperor of Liang Repentance for the first time, and to experience the cultural nuances of Buddhist practice in communities around the world.

When we arrived in Paris at the beginning of July, it felt like extended Dharma family and friends reuniting. There were more than eighty people who flew in from all over the world to partake in this delegation, including twelve Sangha members. There was so much harmonious energy from the beginning. After spending a few days in Paris, we headed south to the town of Grenoble to host the Emperor of Liang Repentance.

I had a very idyllic and romantic idea of what I thought it would be like to do the Emperor Liang Repentance in France. I did not realize how much hard work or how intense it was actually going to be.

The delegation schedule was action-packed and ambitious. Sometimes, it felt like it would be impossible to achieve everything on the schedule. However, with great organization and the support of good-knowing advisors and Dharma friends, the France Delegation went as well and smoothly as it could have.

A *bhikshuni* described participating in the Emperor of Liang Repentance as a rare and fortunate opportunity. Another unique part of the delegation was that all the members of the delegation contributed to turning a regular convention center into a *bodhimanda* for the next eight days. It made it possible for those in the delegation to partake in a noble endeavor and to hold space for our European friends to do the repentance as well.

The evening before the repentance ceremony, we visited Hoa Nghiêm Temple, a

continued on pg. 36



Photography: Thao Amanda Phi

The Forest Trail of Mountain Monks

Half an Apple

As I walk through forest evergreen, smelling the scents of spring,
a small creature chances upon a branch to stop a while and sing.
The lovely dove, as white as snow says "Listen, passerby,
I have a tale to teach you, how not to go awry."

He opened his beak and spoke in verse, "This is how our story begins,
Thus I heard in this very grove, a story whispered by the wind.
She said that once an age old being left, yet never came.
He taught her that the form and void are naught and brothers twain.

Together with this mighty being, were those whose minds reached beyond the sky,
Yet when he spoke of vehicle one, they could not fathom why.
For years and years these great men toiled, striving for release,
But as their minds pursued its goal, their thinking never ceased.

He told them that the vehicles three are naught like dust in wind,
He taught to them that ten good deeds are the substance of their sin.
The *Bhikkhus* scoffed and turned around, five thousand left that day.
The Buddha's path is long and hard, but it is the only way.

All who stayed, solemn and still, humbly waiting just to hear,
That although this path is long and hard, there is nothing left to fear.
Our father's come from far away to tell us to leave home,
for in our house a terrible blaze hunts all who freely roam.

Although we play with snakes and fire, our father clearly sees
and so he tells us that he's got new toys! There's enough for you and me!
So we flew from *Samsāra*'s halls to meet old Dad outside,
yet at the crossroads he tells us, all our toys are found inside.

Not within the burning house but deep within our minds,
and so we stop and wait a while, to see what we will find.
My sister found a boundless light which filled all empty space.
My brother saw a forest grow, then disappear without a trace.
My aunt then told us of the hells and those who are left behind.
My uncle said he just asked "Who", but there was nothing there to find!

We turned to our father and asked three times, "Which way shall we go?"
He told us all stop and think, he said we already know.
And so we waited and saw great wonders pass before our eyes.
Entering wonderous states and transformed cities, but all were behind.
Just when we thought "We've seen it all," we took another step.
A grand old beast then caught us, the moment that we leapt.

His hooves were tough, his horns were long, covered in jewels from top to tail.
Pure and white with deep blue eyes, he said, "I know the way which never fails."
He told us in a deep low tone, "If you wish to reach the other shore,
you need not even to set sail, do not look for something more.
Change your mind and with humble heart, free from ignorance and blame.
Toiling here year after year, what a waste and what a shame!

You've seen through earth and self, I know, you're free from form and name,
but you've yet to see that burning house and pure land are the same.
So in feverish rush you scrambled out to find a place beyond the pines,
but in that struggle you made things dual, you made a border, drew a line."

"But our father told us to leave all suffering after it's clear and known!"
The white ox told us with gentle smile, "You've never left your home.
It's with you while you suffered, and it's still here with you now,
whole and complete, you've found yourself, not sheep or deer or cow.
All Buddhas come from just one place and it's nowhere to be found.
The other side is here right now, there's nothing to expound!"

The dove then sighed and closed its eyes, taking a sharp inhale of breath.
I said, "I wish to find this teacher, to transcend my birth, sickness and death."
"Didn't you hear a word I said?" the dove then sharply snapped,
"You already are the teacher," then flew off while he laughed.

I often reminisce upon that day and in that forest I now dwell,
I sit and ponder in my hut, "How do I transcend heaven and hell?"
One day as I sat in stillness something caught my eye,
The red robe flashing by my door says "No problem, all is well."

temple Shr Fu visited in 1990. The Sangha and lay people there were warm, welcoming, and generous. As the sun was setting, casting a glow on the town's surrounding mountains, several Sangha members spoke Dharma, and the outdoor space was filled by devout and sincere disciples. I knew in that moment that the Dharma is alive and well as we followed Shr Fu's footsteps through Europe.

A few days into the repentance ceremony, we went on an excursion in the evening to Mt. Bastille. Atop this mountain, we were able to have small group discussions led by Sangha members. I asked about the purpose of repentance. Without repentance, no matter how much goodness we do, our efforts would be tainted by our bad habits. Repentance was described as a way of purifying ourselves—so that we can break away from our harmful habits to go forward on the path of cultivation.

I remember a thought I had on the first day the repentance: "I really want to come back a better person; I want to come back renewed." I was determined to do the whole session. My lack of sleep, physical exhaustion, and pain would not deter me from attending every scroll of the session. Eight days later, I completed the repentance ceremony alongside everyone else.

It is embarrassing to admit that while I have attended sessions since I was a little kid, I have never followed the schedule to do the entirety of a session.

It is very easy for me to forget the other important half of repentance: after repentance, there is renewal. It is not often we get another chance.

It was from doing a repentance in a far-away country that I was able to do the whole session.

As tired as I was from pushing myself to do the whole repentance, I was still happy in my heart of hearts. I suppose the pain and

sadness I felt during the delegation could be described as compassion: it was not so much my own pain or sadness; I felt for the suffering of others. Perhaps doing the repentance, also titled *Repentance Dharma of Kindness & Compassion in the Bodhimanda*, opened up my capacity to feel

for others more but not take it on as myself—to be engaged and not attached. At the same time, it made me reflect on where I am actually at compared to where I would like to be.

It was hard to be away from home, and I knew it'd be hard coming back. It was very difficult for the first few weeks on every ground: physically, mentally, and emotionally. Suddenly, nothing felt familiar. I felt like each step I took was on unstable ground. It was like I couldn't remember who I was before attending the repentance.

In my experience and practice, I feel that I do not understand much about repentance. Not only do I understand little about it, but it is very easy for me to forget the other important half of repentance: after repentance, there is renewal. It is not often we get another chance.

After coming back to California, I continued to ask senior disciples about the purpose of repentance. People shared different answers that I found both meaningful and helpful. In my own naivety, I did not understand that repentance is quite an intense practice. The reaction I got from others when I told them I went to Europe to do a repentance told me that the practice is equally difficult and valuable anywhere.

The disciples reiterated that everything is created from the mind and how repentance gets you out of your constructed self. It disrupts the normal story we tell about ourselves and that is where progress is made. Repentance gives us the chance to really change so that we have the potential to become a Buddha.

I would like to express my gratitude for CTTB and the Sangha members. I am humbled and privileged to have attended this delegation in France, and my life has changed for the better from being part of it.

"When I look back on it, I did exactly what I had set out to do. I changed my life. I woke myself up. I rediscovered passions of every variety. I forced myself to take a little time. I found a way to bring some of who I used to be into who I am."

Thank you for listening. Amitufo.



The Making of Asian “Great Books” Programs in the 21st Century

Franklyn Wu

This was presented at the 2019 Asian Core Texts Conference in Irvine, California.

In 2010, Dharma Realm Buddhist University (DRBU) presented me with an opportunity to join its community as it began an extended self-study to reimagine the entire institution and its programs. The self-reflection and the ensuing transformation were deemed necessary¹ for DRBU not only to continue to exist, but also to expand its reach beyond a small community of monastic and lay students whom it had served since 1976 and to fulfill the vision of the late founder, Buddhist Master Hsüan Hua. The result of this self-study are two “Great Books” style programs—one Bachelor’s and one Master’s—that prominently feature Buddhist and other core texts. DRBU launched these two programs in 2013 and 2014 respectively, and received initial accreditation in March 2018.

Having had the privilege of coordinating DRBU’s regional accreditation efforts and serving as the lead drafter of the university’s institutional reports, I have written and spoken extensively to describe, explain, justify, and clarify all aspects of DRBU and its programs in more ways than I thought possible. Today I will start with Edmund Husserl’s *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*—undoubtedly a curious choice for discussing Asian core texts

programs, but soon, I hope, you will agree that it is relevant not only to our programs, but to this weekend’s conference.

Claudia Hauer, a tutor at St. John’s College Santa Fe and one of the main drafters during the college’s last re-accreditation efforts, introduced me to the *Crisis* as one of the foundational texts for St. John’s College. After realizing that the accreditation review process is largely an exercise in comparison, DRBU carefully studied St. John’s College and a small group of other “Great Books” colleges and adopted their model and many practices. From this DRBU has gained tremendous practical benefits from the *Crisis* indirectly, insofar as SJC’s programs are an outcome of the *Crisis*, at least teleologically, if not historically. A brief discussion of the text is needed to uncover its more nuanced influences on DRBU’s programs.

In his major final work, Husserl was concerned with the “critical scientific and philosophical situation” in Europe. He began his analyses with the works of Galileo, which he believes exemplify the beginning of modern philosophy and the origin of the “crisis.” Galileo took for granted the mathematization of actual shapes and forms in geometry that he inherited and extended that to the mathematization of the “life-world,” which Husserl defines as “the world constantly given to us as actual in our concrete

world-life” (51). According to Husserl, in this Galilean mathematization of the “open infinity of possible experiences,” which is aimed at obtaining “objective scientific truths,” we create numerical indices for all of our sensual experiences to establish the possibilities of “predicting concrete occurrences in the intuitively given life-world, occurrences which are not yet or no longer actually given” (51). Galileo further defined nature as a “self-enclosed world of bodies” and included in it only “what appears to the senses and is mathematizable,” thereby leaving out the entire arena of human experiences including cultural, conscious, spiritual, and psychic life, and paved the path for the dualism that soon emerged. For Husserl, this dualism then led to the problematic of reason, the specialization of sciences, and the founding of physicalist psychology (61).

It’s important to point out that Husserl is not anti-science—he wrote that the method of mathematization is “perfectly legitimate, indeed necessary” (47)—and he praised the ingenuity of scientific thinkers and celebrated their achievements. What concerned Husserl is that the method is not “understood and practiced in a fully conscious way”:

[Care must be] taken to avoid dangerous shifts of meaning by keeping always immediately in mind the original bestowal of meaning upon the method, through which it has the sense of achieving knowledge about the world. Even more, it must be freed of the character of an unquestioned tradition, which, from the first invention of the new idea and method, allowed elements of obscurity to flow into its meaning. (47)

In other words, without careful reflection on the meaning and intention of their establishment, modern natural sciences, which were born out of philosophy but have usurped it as the “all encompassing science,” have become merely a tradition handed down reflexively to generations of practitioners. Now hidden, the assumptions that Galileo inherited as well as the ones he

made have become “instincts” (52) or attitudes not only for scientists, but also for the wider public. These attitudes, which are ideas that we take for granted, include the universal applicability of mathematization; the physicalist nature of the “world”; the notion that one can approach the world or nature “theoretically”; and the very idea of “science” and the project of locating objective truth about the world or nature as such.

Husserl attempts to develop a new “transcendental phenomenology” to reorient philosophy and diffuse the critical situation. He saw scientists and philosophers as “functionaries of mankind,” and therefore responsible for developing the capacity to:

...inquire back to the original meaning of all our meaning-structures and methods, i.e., into the historical meaning of their primal establishment, and especially into the meaning of all the inherited meanings taken over unnoticed in this primal establishment, as well as those taken over later on. (56)

Doing so would allow the “original intuitions,” or intuitions of the pre- and extrascientific life-world, to come to the fore and to eventually take shape in us as the “phenomenological attitude” that will serve to liberate us from our prejudices.

SJC’s use of the *Crisis* to lend philosophical support and justification for its model and practices is illustrative of how we might locate among the large Buddhist corpus source texts to serve in a similar function for DRBU—not only to help us explain and justify our programs and practices externally, but to provide meaning and inspiration for ourselves. For example, SJC’s mission states that the college “seeks to free a learner from the tyrannies of unexamined opinions, current fashions and inherited prejudices” (sjc.edu), a pursuit we can gain a deeper appreciation for given the meaning provided by the *Crisis* for terms such as liberation and inherited prejudices. In addition, to allow as much as possible the “original intuitions” and motivations of the thinkers to come to the fore, the practices of

1. See California SB-1247, which requires that postsecondary institutions granting

academic degrees undergo regional or national accreditation as a condition to operate.

focusing on the primary texts and having classroom instructors eschew lecturing are needed to facilitate in students as direct an engagement with the thinkers as possible.

Moreover, Husserl's approach to historicity in the *Crisis* may open up space on this issue for core texts programs, especially those that adopt many "Great Books" practices. Husserl calls his project a "teleological-historical reflection" to find the origins of the *Crisis* and to establish "the necessity of a transcendental-phenomenological reorientation of philosophy" (3). David Carr points out, in the introduction to his English translation of the *Crisis*, that Husserl believes his

These two aspects of wisdom form a virtuous cycle: through cultivation, wisdom grows in effectiveness as a tool on the path of learning and inquiry.

inquiry, which consists of expositions on a series of philosophers in chronological order, is not conventionally historical, i.e., concerning authors

and their philosophies and theories based on documentary or archeological evidence. Rather, Carr writes, "all the historical developments described by Husserl, have merely an 'exemplary function,'² they can be seen as serving an inquiry into the essence of history as such rather than one concerned with facts directly" (xxxvi).

Consequently, when it comes to text selection for its curriculum, a core texts program that aligns itself with the telos of the *Crisis* may concern itself less with conventional historicity than how certain texts exemplify and facilitate inquiries into the essence of history. One implication for a core texts program of framing texts as exemplifications rather than documentary evidence is the move away from a fixed canon to a more flexible curriculum without departing from the program's mission. This implication has added importance for DRBU.

DRBU's careful study of St. John's College (including the college's use of the *Crisis*) contributed to the reframing of DRBU's mission statement and reinforced efforts to identify a

collection of Buddhist source texts for the purpose of providing philosophical foundation and meaning for DRBU's model and practices. While these efforts are ongoing, the following reflection is an example of our attempt to clarify the meaning of wisdom, which DRBU's mission statement identifies as a high-level marker for DRBU's vision of Buddhist liberal education, and how it impacts the selection of texts in our programs' curricula.

Wisdom is a word many western scholars use to translate the Sanskrit word *prajñā* (Pali: *paññā*), to distinguish it from knowledge and understanding that is limited to an object or a subject. It can be rendered loosely as "the act of knowing or understanding." Various classical texts have analogized *prajñā* to a "bright light" (Bodhi 519), a "sharp knife" (Thanissaro, Nandakovada Sutta), and a "perfectly reflecting mirror" (Heng Sure and Verhoeven 74).

The perfect mirror analogy describes a refined state of wisdom where the mind reflects the objects of its consciousness free from distortion and retains no trace of them after they pass. The knife and the bright light analogies point to the aspect of wisdom as a tool or skill of inquiry and learning. These two aspects of wisdom form a virtuous cycle: through cultivation, wisdom grows in effectiveness as a tool on the path of learning and inquiry; the use of this tool leads to further penetration into the nature of things and ultimately leads to a liberated mind accompanied by "perfect-mirror" wisdom—the ability to truly "see things as they really are."

Classical commentary on the *Sammāditṭhi Sutta* labeled these two aspects of wisdom "conceptual right view" and "experiential right view" (Bodhi 303), where right view is an alternate term for wisdom. Conceptual right view refers to an intellectual command of the Buddha's teaching or philosophy through deep questioning, rigorous analysis, and precise and nuanced conceptual exercises. The capacity to assiduously apply conceptual right view clears and sets the stage for direct, unmediated insight—or experiential right view—to emerge from one's own experience. In a classic metaphor, the nature of

2. Alluding to his analysis of Galileo as an example, Husserl writes, "our investigations are historical in an unusual sense, namely, in virtue of a thematic direction which opens

up depth-problems quite unknown to ordinary history, problems which, [however,] in their own way, are undoubtedly historical problems." Therefore, Husserl's description

and analysis of the problems around Galilean geometry "take on an exemplary significance" (Husserl xxxvi).



Photography: Hui Xuan Ooi

things is like an object grasped or pointed to by the hand that is conceptual right view, and experiential right view are the eyes that behold the object.

In the section on right view of the *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta* (Thanissaro), the elder Shariputra points to several structures a person can use to observe and analyze her experiences and make changes to her attitudes and actions. In traditional texts, these structures and several others are referred to as the “soil of wisdom,” and they are among the most well known conceptual tools and the most elemental building blocks used for constructing bigger, more complex edifices. The domains of the soil of wisdom include:

- The nature of human existence, consciousness, and the objective realm (the Four Noble Truths, the twelve links of dependent origination, the five aggregates, and the four elements)
- The mechanisms of causality (the twelve links of dependent origination)
- An individual’s interaction and interconnection with others and the world around her (the six sense bases, the four elements, the taints, and the nutriments).

Thorough and careful study of these structures has been a standard part of training for generations of Buddhist learners, and a strong intellectual grasp and mastery of these structures is often considered to be a precursor, if not a prerequisite, to their penetration by experiential wisdom. The examination of the soil of wisdom, which requires the application and development of intellectual skills and capacities, is thus well suited for the arena of higher education. Further, the different categories of the soil of wisdom—the nature of human existence, mechanisms of causality, and the relationship between self and the world—are recurring themes that can be found in many seminal and

abiding works from different traditions. This is a useful criterion for selecting texts for the DRBU programs, namely, whether a text provides important insights and stimulates significant questions or deep reflections about one or more of these themes.

I had some trepidations about allocating so much of my presentation on talking about Husserl, given that DRBU has made a strong argument for reading Buddhist texts using Buddhist lenses and has cautioned against the effects of non-Buddhist framing of them. Because of this, I want to emphasize that my reflections on Husserl are about contextualizing the creation of the institutional container for DRBU’s Buddhist liberal education programs.

For the past decade, DRBU has been developing and justifying its existence as a modern, western institution of higher education through the accreditation process. As one of the first American Buddhist universities, DRBU necessarily has to find a mold to fit into. Although the study of Buddhism has become mainstream in academia (and in society in general), Buddhist universities are still rare as only a handful of “Buddhist” colleges and universities exist in the US, and as far as I know, none (besides DRBU) offers a core texts program, nor have I been able to find these institutions’ articulation of their model and educational vision and philosophy.

DRBU’s commitment to the study of primary texts led us to St. John’s College. Although the two institutions have different motivations, St. John’s College as a Husserlean project of transcendental phenomenology provided DRBU with the most flexibility and compatibility as a model. As we become able to fully articulate and justify our model and practices in Buddhist terms, we hope to serve for future aspiring core texts programs what St. John’s College has for us: a philosophically grounded, serious, interesting, and space-opening model.

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Photography: Jerry Hsu

Coming to an Authentic Stand Still: Spinning with the *Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali*

Lisa Liang

Have you ever spun so quickly that you started wobbling beyond control, unable to stand your ground? Whether we run around in circles or whirl in a swivel chair, our system reacts and we may begin to see distorted images. We become disoriented. If you have not experienced this discombobulation, how about the turbulence on an airplane, roller coaster, or bumpy ride which similarly throws us off? We may also experience delirium while trekking under the harsh rays of the sun or in an elevation of 10,000 feet. This process of disorientation is similar to the spinning of thoughts in our minds.

Likewise, the *Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali* (YS) also emphasizes the turning of thoughts, which spins us around uncontrollably, producing a befuddling state of mind. Patañjali defines yoga as the cessation (*nirodha*) of turning (*vṛtti*) of thought (*citta*) (YS 1.2). Here, the turnings of thought refer to mental disturbances that obscure our true nature, i.e., *puruṣa*.² I interpret cessation of the turning of thought as letting go of wound-up attachments to emotions, feelings, desires, labels, and stories in our heads. When we let go, we are able to observe the turnings of thought without identification. Thus the sūtra says, “when *citta* ceases, the observer (*draṣṭuḥ*) stands (*avasthānam*) in its own form (*svarūpe*)” (YS 1.3).³ The observer no longer misapprehends reality through imagination but instead apprehends things as they are without distortions. She stands still amidst the turnings. Like a bright mirror, in this undisturbed state, the observer is able to reflect the autonomy of her intrinsic nature, authentic self (*puruṣa*). This liberation is the reflective wisdom that grounds us.

According to YS 1.5, the turnings of thought can be afflicted or unafflicted.⁴ The afflicted

turnings take us away from authenticity. As such, misunderstanding arises. When affliction grows in the field of ignorance (*avidyā*), we misunderstand things as they are (YS 2.4). In other words, we give rise to misapprehension or inauthenticity due to our ignorance. We lose touch with our true nature and therefore, suffering arises. The sūtra defines ignorance (*avidyā*) as misapprehending the impermanent as permanent, the impure as pure, suffering as happiness, and the view of nonself as self (YS 2.5). These misidentifications create forces that spin us out of control and cause misalignment. In turn, the misaligned forces also affect our thoughts, speech, and actions.

How do we respond to misalignment? Luckily, it is only temporary. For Patañjali, suffering arises from ignorance (*avidyā*), egoism (*asmitā*), passion (*rāga*), hatred (*dveṣa*), and will to live (*abhiniveśāḥ*) (YS 2.3). Therefore, through tracing its sources, it is crucial to abandon the roots of suffering (YS 2.10). Patañjali would probably agree that we need to stop spinning. Without stillness, we cannot steer in the right direction. Thus, Patañjali suggests creating forces that steer us on the right path, which are practice (*abhyāsa*)⁵ and dispassion (*vairāgya*)⁶ (YS 1.12). These forces will allow us to take full control of our mental and physical coordination. When mind and body are regulated, we remain firmly grounded without being swayed in every-which-way. We come to a stand still wherein all may be seen clearly in full authenticity.

These misidentifications create forces that spin us out of control and cause misalignment.

1. Here, I translate *vṛtti* as “turning.” Throughout, I will use “spinning” or “turning” interchangeably.

2. *Puruṣa* is also called the observer “*draṣṭṛ*,” see YS 1.3, 2.7, 2.20. Cf. 4.23.

3. The phrase *draṣṭuḥ svarūpe'vasthānam* literally means standing in the form of the observer.

4. There are five turnings of thought: valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*), misapprehension (*viparyaya*), mental construct (*vikalpa*), sleep (*nidrā*), and memory (*smṛtayah*).

5. *Patañjali* explains that on account of *abhyāsa*, there is stillness. In other words, through *abhyāsa*, the observer is established in her true nature or authenticity,

where the turnings of thought cease/become still. See YS 1.13-14.

6. *Vairāgya* or dispassion refers to restraint of craving over sensual pleasures. See YS 1.14.



Letting it Be

Hui Xuan Ooi

A year ago, I found myself feeling as if I was at the bottom of a well, surrounded by a profound loneliness. My negative thoughts would echo off the walls of the well and ricochet back into my mind. I took to reading and writing in my diary to decant what I was experiencing, attempting to alleviate my mental suffering. I noticed that I had a tendency of collecting and adding to a list of compliments that I had received to boost my often negative self esteem. A thought struck me: “Have I been stringing together the words of others to construct a net of reassurance as my only positive outlook of myself?” No wonder I felt lonely! Once there was no one by my side, I was left without protection or kindness from myself.

I grew up as the oldest of four sisters. Naturally, we got compared in almost everything we did. In my memories, I was often deemed to have fallen short: the worst at public speaking, the lowest IQ, the one who should know better. I internalized this constant comparison mindset as my norm throughout my life, crying and mentally beating myself up over my supposed shortcomings and failures. I held these intense, negative thoughts as a weight on my heart and mind. Even in my first semester of graduate school at Dharma Realm Buddhist University (DRBU), I found myself harboring this mindset despite my professor’s advice: “Don’t beat yourself up.”

I remember an enlightening conversation I had with my classmate Hasan. I confided to him that I had no idea of who I was without referencing or comparing myself to other people. He told me that he would usually return to experiences he has had in the mountains or by the ocean and remember what it was like to be in the moment, absorbing the scenery with no thoughts, let alone thoughts of who he was. “Do you have any experiences like that?” For a moment I sat there in awe of the idea of not being overtaken by any thoughts of self-worth or worry.

I had experienced what he had described. A few months before that conversation with him, I had gone to Buddha Root Farm, a weeklong Chan retreat in Oregon that immersed partici-

Absorbing the scenery with no thoughts, let alone thoughts of who he was. “Do you have any experiences like that?” For a moment I sat there in awe of the idea of not being overtaken by any thoughts of self worth or worry.

pants in meditation, Dharma lectures, and camping in the wilderness of Turtle Mountain. It was a major shift from my job at a law office that I was deeply unhappy with. Midway through the retreat, I made the decision to leave my occupation and pursue a Master’s degree at DRBU, which quickly became the university of my dreams. From that liberating choice, I suddenly was able to trek up the semi-steep hill with a lightness that came from my newfound illuminating hope. I reached the top, all alone, listening to the wind rustling through the trees, feeling the cool air.

I have experienced that total internal peace and clarity of mind once more since then. I returned a year later to Buddha Root Farm. I had just finished setting up the tarps on the grass for lecture on the last full day of the retreat. I laid down unnoticed and looked up into the clear sky. Gentle sunlight barely broke through the leaves on the trees which danced in the

song of the breeze. The smell of grass caressed me. I typically only notice the smell of grass when it is being cut, yet there the familiar and sweet scent was—no intervention needed. I was totally engulfed by just being. No thoughts. This moment lasted until someone arrived and began speaking to me.

Fleeting moments of total serenity are the closest I will ever come to understanding authenticity. In my experience, the truest authenticity stands completely outside of doubt, fear, anxiety, worry, and any form of identity. It is a “letting it be.”



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Authenticity in Virtue: Reflections Intrigued by Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Idea*

Xiaojuan Shu

Imagine living without the expectation to be virtuous; society doesn’t govern your behavior, friends and family only wish that you enjoy yourself freely, and you don’t hold the belief that doing good deeds is the path to heaven or to the Pure Land. In short, you are not burdened with the obligation to be virtuous. Are you still inclined to be a virtuous person? By “virtue,” I mean *genuine goodness*. In *The World as Will and Idea*, Schopenhauer states that it is foolish to expect a moral and ethical system to inspire virtue and nobility in humankind. He writes, “Virtue cannot be taught any more than can genius” (175). He goes on to state, “The will, considered purely in itself, is without knowledge and is merely a blind, irresistible impulse,” and that life, the visible phenomenal world, is “only the mirror of the will” (176, 177). What is Schopenhauer’s argument at its core? All that happens in the phenomenal world is a reflection of the will. If “virtue cannot be taught,” life is “only the mirror of the will,” and “will... is a blind, irresistible impulse,” then the true virtuous acts experienced in life must arise from *free will*. But before jumping to the conclusion that humans are innately good, it must be acknowledged that immorality also arises from the will.

I will borrow the popular analogy of the inner garden. Imagine virtue as the beautiful flowers and immorality as weeds. No discrimination is intended against weeds as a type of life form. This distinction is used only for the sake of the comparison. This analogy leads to a series of questions: How do I tend my inner garden under the influence or even dictation of a blind and impulsive will? Is the will immutable or subject to change? Can virtue be cultivated in the garden of will?

VIRTUE AND WILL

Why do all sentient life forms, small or big, *want to live*? Have you ever observed ants? Busy ants around an anthill once caught my attention. They hurried in and out of the entrance frantically as if a supreme guest was due to arrive. The route set out by the ant gatherers stretched far. Out of curiosity, I walked off the road and followed their path, but I could not see the end of it. My eyes settled on one ant carrying a large white shell which was almost three times larger than the ant’s own body. The ant went up and down under the blazing sun unceasingly, over dry leaves and twigs. Talk about a bumpy road! It was truly a long journey home. Up and down... up and down... up and down... I began to root for that ant while following along. Finally, home was close! As the ant approached the entrance of the anthill, no one was waiting there to applaud its admirable endeavor, though it was a heroic act to me. After the ant quietly disappeared into the entrance, I looked back at the trail. Several ants were approaching home, all carrying shells or grains larger than their own bodies. Though there was no fanfare to herald their arrival, they were determined.

What motivated the little ants to work so hard? Schopenhauer would probably answer that it’s “the will to life,” which gives the ants the key to the actions of their bodies, which are just a condition of the knowledge of their will (32, 34). “What the will wills is always life,” and “life is nothing but the representation of that willing.” The “will to life” could mean an innate force that propels sentient beings toward their vital existence to the best of their knowledge or their instinct. To use my own mundane existence as an example: If I am thirsty, I’ll look for water;

if I am hungry, I'll look for food; if I feel fear, I'll flee or fight. I breathe in, breathe out, breathe in, breathe out in a rhythm that's not agreed upon based on my conscious consent. In a sense, I am being *kept* alive. The "will to life" is in me, in you, and in all sentient beings.

Do sentient beings run on separate wills to life? Am I being led by *my* "will to life," you by yours, and them by theirs? If this is so, the world would be a competitive, conflicting, and chaotic place with all the separate "wills" competing to run the show by controlling their respective "puppets," a myriad of living forms. True, there is no shortage of violence and hypocrisy in this human world that competes for control, but virtue, or *genuine goodness*, also exists, even prevails in some places. There must be an instinctive pull in toward virtue. If a virtuous act is stripped of the karmic veil, fantasies of the future rebirths, social norms, and mere courtesy, what remains in it? To put it plainly: would you lend a hand to a complete stranger purely for the sake of the stranger's wellbeing?

When I traveled alone in central Italy years ago, I boarded a train as the only passenger. Neither the train operator nor the conductor spoke a language I could understand. I asked if I could sit in the operator's room upfront to watch the train tracks. They welcomed me. It was late at night when I arrived at a small and dark station, with not a single soul in sight. I could hear wild animals howling in the distance. Without being asked, the operator and the conductor both got off the train and made a long phone call with my local contact to make sure someone was coming to pick me up. After receiving a confirmation, they left. Why would they leave me without knowing I would be safe? They treated my safety as if it were their own.

In their voluntary effort to help me, I saw no sign of any religious fervor or an expected gesture of courtesy, only authenticity. That authenticity must come from "a direct intuitive knowledge, which can neither be reasoned away, nor arrived at by reasoning" (232). It has to be a deeply *felt* inner movement that is beyond a

view, an idea, or a sense of guilt or fear. It's very unlikely that I would meet the train operator and conductor again, yet their no-strings-attached kindness will always stay in my heart. Stories like that consistently bring me back to the vision of humanity tending to a collective inner garden filled with virtue. Granted, there is no shortage of weeds, but the same applies to the flower seeds. Imagine that all sentient beings sow their flower seeds in this collective inner garden, and water them together. With all the attention continuously going to the growth of the flowers, a beautiful garden will take shape with all kinds of flowers flourishing, fragrance permeating the air, bees and butterflies hovering.

VIRTUE AND THE WEB OF LIFE

What enables sentient beings to connect with one another? Schopenhauer uses a lantern metaphor to illustrate the relationship between a multitude of phenomena and "the will to life." "Just as a magic lantern shows many different pictures, but it is only one and the same flame which makes them all visible." There is only *one will* that manifests itself in "the endless diversity and variety of the phenomena" (79). If there is only one will to life, then all phenomena and beings must be interconnected in a way. That means to judge if an act is virtuous or not, we must assess it among all things in the web of life. For example, I cannot say I'm virtuous by offering a hungry person experiencing homelessness a sandwich everyday purchased with the money that I stole from another person. In *Responsible Living*, Dr. Ron Epstein tells a story about a Chinese-American woman who ran a lucrative business with her husband to sell barbecued poultry in San Francisco's Chinatown. Meanwhile, she made daily respectful offerings at a temple for years, but couldn't escape her fate of being barbecued to death with her husband in a fire like fried chickens in their own apartment (20). Therefore, true virtue must arise from the consideration of the whole web of life where all beings and phenomena are interwoven.

Does virtue have a limit? Someone might say, "I can only be virtuous to this extent or be kind to this many people in my own community. I've reached my limit." *Should* virtue have a limit? Schopenhauer thinks not, for "accord-

I became aware that so much of production, waste, competition and violence are due to greed, not necessity. I began to think critically: Where do material goods come from, and where do they end up when no longer considered useful? .

ing to the true nature of things, everyone has to regard all the suffering of the world as his own... as long as he asserts life with all his energy" (218). "*Everyone has to regard all the suffering of the world as his own.*" What a bold statement! Does "has to" mean any one of us has no other choice, but must pay attention to all the suffering as if they were our own?

I once visited a Chinese environmental filmmaker who was filming the plastic recycling facilities in a Chinese village. The whole village was like a giant dump: dead fish floating in a dark foamy river, the smell of trash and burned plastics hanging thick in the air, and running water that was unsafe for cooking. In the piles of plastics processed at one family facility, I saw brands from Trader Joe's, Safeway, and Whole Foods. How did they get here when these stores are located on the other side of the planet? After the plastics were washed, the dirty water went back into the river. Non-recyclable plastics were burned next to the rice fields causing black smoke to rise high into the sky. A tall billboard stood in the middle of the village which read: The Center for Renewable Resources. The billboard boasted of tidy facilities, green trees,

and a beautiful blue sky; yet, the sky above the billboard was gray, and the village was overrun with garbage. That experience shook me deeply. Later, I read about a whale found dead on Stinson Beach, its stomach full of plastics. I cried that quiet night for the pain was deep. I became aware that so much of production, waste, competition and violence are due to greed, not necessity. I began to think critically: Where do material goods come from, and where do they end up when no longer considered useful? How much harm was caused during their extraction, manufacturing, consumption, and discarding? Even a single-use plastic straw could contribute to the death of ocean creatures. Thus, true virtue goes beyond friends and family in our own community, beyond the human-centered civilization or de-civilization, but *must* extend to all beings in the web of life.

CONCLUSION

If Schopenhauer is correct, virtue cannot be taught. It exists even when there is nothing to be gained by being virtuous. It exists outside of social burdens or religious connotations because Schopenhauer's idea of virtue springs from his concept of will and "the will to life." He interprets life, the entirety of the visible phenomenal world, as the manifestation of the will—a "mirror of the will." All the true virtuous acts in the world must come from that will, not imposed by teachers, religion, or other constructs of society. The phenomenal world and virtuous acts that individuals perform within it are all connected under *one will* in the web of life. It is all in the same garden. Within this interconnectedness, can an individual be authentically virtuous and also be virtuously authentic? Clearly there is no simple answer, but the inquiry into the authenticity in virtue itself may increase the potential of cultivating a collective inner garden of virtue and living in harmony with all sentient beings in the web of life.

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The Weaver

Potato Half

Run! Run,
 Until your legs give up
 Until your heart shatters on the floor
 And your mind is gasping for air.
Run. Run,
Across the fabric of existence
 Where the morning clouds roll down
silently,
soundlessly.
sifting slowly these layers

A gentle light parts the air
Look look! An orb smiling pure and fair,
Oh so joyful
Oh so bright!
You reach out but,
Was the shadow ever there?

Looming above it all,
watching, waiting,
With pointed legs It springs,
Weaving, twisting, twining,
Twirling the orb in its embrace.
Howling and whining,
Luminous colors flash in empty space.

Obscurity rushes in inquiring,
Have you seen the light?

The Weaver's eyes glow black with hate,
Alighting your soul ablaze.
As dawn's last light evaporates
A hanging orb gently sways.
Releasing light of shades and hues
The moon flees the chasing rays.
The Weaver sits upon Its throne,
The dark hand behind us all.

Dismay shrouds the heavy heart,
Grasping at straws that promised more.
Another smile I must bear,
Another mask I must wear.
Draw forgiveness across my face,
An empty husk, a false facade.



UNEARTHING LUMINOUS AUTHENTICITY: THE PARADOX OF THE MIND-GROUND

Brianna Morseth and Lisa Liang

If this is supposed to be not an actual absurdity
but a paradox that can be resolved,
what other method could help us achieve clarity
than the interrogation of our inner experience
and an analysis carried out within its framework?¹

Is there clarity to be found in the convoluted? Much of what we read about in treatises composed by the “wise”² tends toward ambiguity³, making them a challenge to relate to personal experience. Similarly, our deluded minds are muddled and, often, a hassle to untangle. As such, the process of cultivation is crucial to clarity.

Yet if one’s nature is originally whole and complete, what need is there to cultivate? Notorious for pushing boundaries, the Sixth Patriarch unabashedly proclaims such paradoxes as “affliction [*klesā*] itself is *bodhi*”⁴ while rhetorically inquiring:

The mind regulated and subdued, why toil following rules?
Your ‘steps’ straight and true, what use is sitting in
meditation?⁵

Even Dōgen, who extolled the method of sitting meditation as the penultimate expression of the way, poses a similar quandary in the “Fukanzazengi”:

The way is originally perfect and all-pervading. How could it be contingent on practice and realization? The true vehicle is self-sufficient. What need is there for special effort? Indeed, the whole body is free from dust. Who could believe in a means to brush it clean? It is never apart from this very place; what is the use of traveling around to practice?⁶

Yet such statements come with caveats. In spite of all their edginess, both concede that cultivation is crucial. Perhaps the point to their paradoxes may be to pry the listener free of the tendency to cling to cultivation, turning medicine into poison.

Relating such reflections to our inner and outer experiences with cultivation, farming seems an apt analogy to invoke. We cannot expect a garden to flourish without putting in the effort to maintain it.⁷ To smother its flowers is equally as problematic as letting weeds run rampant.⁸ In cultivation, meditative absorption “moistens” contemplative insight, in like manner as rain that moistens seeds in the earth. Yet in excess, flooding causes crops to wilt. Insight alone leaves the garden dry. Parched earth grows brittle and burns under the sun’s heat. Uprooting weeds (*kleśa*) while nourishing flowers (*bodhi*),⁹ one may at some point transform the former into the latter through a pivot in perspective without any need for disturbing the soil. After all, they inhabit the same mind-ground.¹⁰ Yet when light appears to dispel darkness, darkness undergoes no dissolution, nor has light illuminated itself.¹¹ Tending the garden attentively¹² with an eye for the proper balance of conditions will bear fragrance, allowing its luminous potential to bloom into authentic beauty.

Cultivators have long tilled the soil of the mind-ground¹³ in search of gold. Indeed, the fundamentally authentic mind has been sought by contemplatives across the globe for millenia.¹⁴ With their guidance, we propose that human “nature” is originally pure, clear, and undifferentiated, yet due to our proclivities toward erroneous thinking, we give rise to inauthentic expressions of existence. For instance, the “Pabhassara Sutta”¹⁵ suggests that the mind is originally luminous, yet defiled by adventitious defilements:

Luminous, *bhikkhus*, is this mind, but it is defiled by adventitious defilements. The uninstructed worldling does not understand this as it really is; therefore I say that for the uninstructed worldling there is no development of the mind.

Luminous, *bhikkhus*, is this mind, and it is freed from adventitious defilements. The instructed noble disciple understands this as it really is; therefore I say that for the instructed noble disciple there is development of the mind.¹⁶

While these passages have been scrutinized for lacking parallels in other discourses from the early Buddhist texts,¹⁷ we include them here for comparative purposes,¹⁸ as they seem to have planted a seed from which various Mahāyāna notions sprouted.¹⁹ For clues as to its meaning, we may survey other uses of *pabhassara* in the vast field of texts available to us. Interestingly, *pabhassara* also features in descriptions of gold, the smelting of which is invoked in the Pāli Canon²⁰ as a simile for the process of refining impurities that obscure the natural radiance of mind. This luminous mind is the gold sought by cultivators and entails a freedom from the defilements of greed, anger, and delusion. As with refining gold, the

cultivator refines and smelts the mind (e.g., in *samādhi*) until it becomes authentically radiant.

Similarly, all beings have an enlightened nature, which is simply clouded over by afflictions. While the “Pabhassara Sutta” is an anomaly in the Pāli texts, it is a beautiful one nonetheless. Importantly, it ought not be taken as an excuse to be lazy, nor as support for the ego to entertain delusions of grandeur, priding itself on inherent enlightenment. Rather, such luminosity, which may be likened to the Mahāyāna notion of Buddha nature, is an invitation to turn inward rather than rely on externals or seek outside oneself for enlightenment as if it was something to “get,” “acquire,” or “obtain.” Its seeds simply need nurturing in order to bring it forth in its full authenticity.

In addition to the early Buddhist texts and Theravādan commentarial perspectives, Yogācāra provides further tools for understanding the luminous mind in a more expansive light. Such light grows through the relationship between unreal imagination (*abhūta-parikalpa*)²¹ and emptiness (*śūnyatā*) in the *Madhyāntavibhāga* (“Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes”) containing verses attributed to Maitreya, although possibly authored by Asaṅga. Such verses are accompanied by Vasubandhu’s commentary, which at times sheds light on the subject.

According to D’Amato, Mahāyāna posits the fundamental doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) or “ultimate reality” (i.e., authenticity)²² to mean the absence of subject-object duality.²³ Meanwhile, while duality does not exist in unreal imagination (*abhūta-parikalpa*), emptiness (*śūnyatā*) exists in it.²⁴ In the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, emptiness and unreal imagination are said to be neither the same nor different.²⁵ Reflecting back to Husserl’s point, let us hope this is not an actual absurdity²⁶ but a paradox that can be resolved, perhaps through an interrogation of our inner experience through cultivation.

In everyday life, we observe the mind may manifest as either affliction or purity. A mind-ground riddled with weeds can be cultivated into a flourishing garden whose vibrancy may then be muddied at the next moment. Back and forth we go. Perhaps emptiness (*śūnyatā*) refers to the luminous mind present in every moment despite the afflictions layered over it. Ultimately, it is no different²⁷ from the ordinary mind. No doubt drawing from ideas expressed by the likes of the “Pabhassara Sutta,” the *Madhyāntavibhāga* elucidates that emptiness is only afflicted (*saṃkliṣṭa*) in the presence of taints (*mala*) but pure in their absence:

[1.22ab] It [emptiness] is neither afflicted (*saṃkliṣṭa*) nor unafflicted, neither pure (*viśuddha*) nor impure.
How is it not afflicted or impure? By its very nature—
[1.22c] Due to the luminosity (*prabhāsvara*) of the mind.

In the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, emptiness and unreal imagination are said to be neither the same nor different.

How is it not unafflicted or pure?

[1.22d] Due to the adventitiousness (*āgantuka*) of affliction.²⁸

Emptiness (*śūnyatā*) undergoes no alteration whether afflicted or unafflicted because the mind by nature is non-dual and luminous. The nature of emptiness is like the “purity of the ocean, gold, or space.”²⁹ Thus, the ordinary mind is said to be luminous when defilements are transformed. Without a nature of their own, “affliction” and “purity” are provisional concepts. The mind’s nature, although originally pure, is not fixed, yet to speak of a nature at all might not even apply.³⁰ Ultimately, despite employing them skillfully for communication’s sake, one must transcend these categories all together.

From examining the texts above within the framework of our inner experience, perhaps we may dissolve the dualities that obscure the luminous mind, our originally authentic nature. Through cultivation, we uncover what has been covered over and recover what has long been forgotten. From time to time, we catch glimpses of clarity, which cannot help but shine through cracks in the wall to illuminate dust in the air.³¹ With persistence, we clear the dirt and unearth the radiance, even though the bright mirror and obscuring dust were never there in the first place.³² Cultivation is a means of returning to this fundamental authenticity. All that remains is non-dual luminous awareness.

1. Edmund Husserl, tr. David Carr, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 202. While Husserl’s statement, in context, serves as a reaction to the German Idealist philosopher Fichte’s proposed bridge (i.e. “ego”) between the transcendental and empirical, we invoke it here in a broader sense to invite a first-person contemplative approach to the reconciliation of perceived dualities.

2. By “wise,” we allude to philosophers whose so-called “love of wisdom” gets the better of them—their infatuation with the complex confounding their capacity to communicate clearly. Likewise for dense manuals of logical contortions by ancient sages. While certainly many of these writers are truly wise, the texts they left behind can seem impenetrable, leaving us in the dark. Cultivation helps us return the light (迴光返照).

3. This is certainly as true of us worldlings as it is of any of these sages. We hope readers will nonetheless find some clarity amidst the ambiguous.

4. 煩惱即菩提。 English translation from Rev. Heng Sure et al., *The Sixth Patriarch’s Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra*, (Ukiah: Buddhist Text Translation Society, 2014), 27.

5. 心平何勞持戒，行直何用修禪。 Ibid., 42.

6. 原夫道本圓通、爭假修證。宗乘自在、何費功夫。況乎全體迺出塵埃兮、孰信拂拭之手段。大都不離當處兮、豈用修行之脚頭者乎。(流布本)。 English translation from Taigen Dan Leighton and Shōhaku Okumura, *Dōgen’s Extensive Record: A Translation of the Eihei Kōroku*, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010), 532.

7. We are reminded of Tao Yuanming’s poetic reflection: “I am going home! My fields and gardens are choked with weeds. Why should I not return?” 歸去來兮！田園將蕪胡不歸？ English translation from BTTS, recorded in a 1958 Dharma Talk by Venerable Master Hsuan Hua.

8. Indeed, Mencius also points toward an originally pure nature that has undergone metaphorical deforestation, whether on the mass scale or miniscule. Virtues once present in the mind have been hewn away like trees hacked down on the mountain. While they may be rekindled from seedlings, once the sprouts begin to regrow, one who hastily yanks at their delicate leaves and stems in an effort to speed their progress only

does them harm. See “Cow Mountain” and “Pulling up Sprouts,” available in multiple translations.

9. In the “Genjōkōan,” Dōgen reflects, “The buddha way is, basically, leaping clear of the many and the one; thus there are birth and death, delusion and realization, sentient beings and Buddhas. Yet, in attachment blossoms fall, and in aversion weeds spread.” 佛道もとより豊儉より跳出せるゆゑに、生滅あり、迷悟あり、生佛あり。しかもかくのごとなりといへども、花は愛惜にちり、草は棄嫌におふるのみなり。 English translation from Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen*, (New York: North Point Press, 1985), 69.

10. See Nāgārjuna’s discussion of light and darkness in the *Vigrahavyāvartanī*. Such discussion appears to orbit around the Nyāya epistemic notion of *pramāṇa* and *prameya*, corresponding roughly to *noesis* and *noema* in Husserl’s phenomenology, or *grāhaka* and *grāhya* in Yogācāra, all of which refer to subject-object duality to some degree.

11. See Nāgārjuna’s discussion of light and darkness in the *Vigrahavyāvartanī*. Such discussion appears to orbit around the Nyāya epistemic notion of *pramāṇa* and *prameya*, corresponding roughly to *noesis*

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12. See Husserl’s discussion of attention, light, and illumination in *Ideas I* and William James’ discussion of attention (e.g., “My experience is what I agree to attend to.”) in *The Principles of Psychology*.

13. In metaphorical form, cultivation is often depicted in Chinese as 耕, which features in the Āgama parallel to the “Kasibhāradvāja Sutta.” The Taishō Tripiṭaka records it under various guises (e.g., 耕田, 耕耘, 耕種, etc.) across myriad contexts, including Huayan Master Chengguan’s commentary on the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* 《大方廣佛華嚴經疏》, which specifies to till or cultivate the mind-ground, “耕於心地。” The cultivation (耕) metaphor also features prominently in the work of Chan Master Hongzhi, whose *Extensive Record* has been translated in part in *Cultivating the Empty Field* by Taigen Dan Leighton.

14. We further acknowledge the prevalence of luminous imagery in the Vedic and Abrahamic traditions.

15. *Pabhassara* refers to the radiant or luminous aspect of the mind. According to the *Pāli Text Society’s Pāli-English Dictionary*, *pabhassara* means “shining, very bright, resplendent.” Pāli Text Society’s Pāli-English Dictionary, (Chipstead: Pāli Text Society, 1921-1925), 415.

In Sanskrit, *prabhāsvara* comes from feminine √bhās (“to shine or be bright; appear, occur to the mind, be conceived or imagined, become clear or evident, to make shine, illuminate”) or √*prabhās* (“to shine, glitter, brilliant, to irradiate, illuminate, enlighten”). Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 755-756, 684.

A related term is *prabhāsvaratā* (Chinese: 光明), which according to *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, means radiance. In some sense, *prabhāsvaratā* has the meanings: “bright light; a symbol of the wisdom of a Buddha or bodhisattva; expresses the destruction of the darkness of delusion and the manifestation of the reality-principle.” Charles Muller, “*prabhāsvaratā* 光明,” *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*.

16. “*pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ. tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ. taṃ assutavā puthujjano yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. tasmā ‘assutavato puthujanassa cittabhāvanā natthīti vadāmi’ti.* (AN 1.51).

“*pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ. tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi vippanuttam.*

taṃ sutavā ariyasāvako yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. tasmā ‘sutavato ariyasāvakassa cittabhāvanā atthīti vadāmi’ti. (AN 1.52).

English translation from Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), 97.

17. For instance, Ajahn Sujāto regards it with some suspicion. Nonetheless, various contemplatives from the Thai Forest Tradition, including, Ajahn Chah, Mae Chee Kaew, Ajahn Mun, etc., draw on this passage to support the originally luminous quality of mind.

18. As one example, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* states, “in its essential original nature thought is transparently luminous” (*prakṛtiś cittasya prabhāsvarā*). English translation from Edward Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary*, (Bolinis: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973), 84.

19. According to Bhikkhu Bodhi in his translation of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (1597-8), commentarial sources suggest a connection between the luminous mind and the *bhavaṅga-citta*, a background consciousness and fluid process, bearing some resemblance to the *ālaya-vijñāna*.

For further fun in this realm, see: 1) Lambert Schmithausen, *Āyavijñāna: On the Origin and Early Development of a Central Concept of Yogācāra Philosophy*, (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1987).

2) Bhikkhu Anālayo, “The Luminous Mind in Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka Discourses,” *Journal of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies* (13) 2017: 10-51.

20. See “Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta” (MN 140), “Paṃsudhova Sutta” (AN 3.101), “Nimitta Sutta” (AN 3.102), “Upakkilesa Sutta” (AN 5.23), etc.

21. *Abhūta-parikalpa* is a key technical term in the *Madhyāntavibhāga* that denotes the process of how we perceive the constructed world according to our conditioned habits of imagining.

22. We invoke authenticity in relation to luminosity and liberation. Relatedly, the text provides a list of synonyms for emptiness, which include thusness (*tathatā*), limit of the real (*bhūta-koṭi*), signless (*animitta*), ultimate (*paramārtha*), and the “ground of phenomena” (*dharmā-dhātu*). According to D’Amato’s fn. 20, *Stīramati* included other synonyms for emptiness: “non-duality (*advayatā*), the realm without conceptual discrimination (*avikalpa-dhātu*), the nature of things (*dharmatā*), the

inexpressible (*anabhilapyatā*), the unceasing (*anīrodha*), the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*), and *nirvāṇa*” (Yamaguchi 1934: 50). Mario D’Amato, *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes: A Study and Annotated Translation of the Madhyāntavibhāga*, Along with its Commentary, the *Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya*, (New York: The American Institute of Budd

23. Ibid., 14.

24. Ibid., 117.

25. Ibid., 125.

26. We apologize if this (or our bountiful use of footnotes) has caused any of our readers’ brains to explode, as ours have in reading this text. Although we try to clarify some ambiguous statements, this process largely relies on steeping in the profundity and bringing the meaning to life through cultivation. We invite readers to consider these statements in contemplative contexts, not as mere words on the page or concepts floating in space where they are likely to remain stagnant and stale, but as potentialities to be experienced and authenticated for oneself.

27. In actuality, neither the same nor different nor both nor neither.

28. Ibid., 129-130.

29. Ibid., 127.

30. Those of the *Madhyamaka* persuasion, for instance, might object to this as reification, rejecting the notion of *svabhāva* all together. At first glance, such a move runs counter to the central Chan notion of the essential nature (自性), but perhaps these notions are not as contrary as they initially seem.

31. See the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*’s comparison of afflictions and dust, illuminated by light pouring in through a crack in the door. Perhaps what may feel like a wall crumbling is actually this door opening. Fundamentally, the air remains still. Like the luminous mind, it is ungraspable.

32. Inherently, that is. See the Sixth Patriarch’s verses inscribed on the wall of the south corridor at Dongchan Monastery in Huangmei, thus chipping away at its foundation, opening the first cracks for light to shine through.



Photography: Lan Huang



Photography: Stan Shoptaugh



*Medicine
Master
Buddha
Recitation
at DRBU*

*After Mindfulness
Retreat in Berkeley*

Bhikshu Jin Chuan and Bhikshu Jin Wei lead Three Steps One Bow encircling U.C. Berkeley's Campanile as part of the Global Conference on Buddhism.





Photography: Yang Liu

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Good and Wise Friends, we want to hear from you! This magazine is what you make of it. We cherish your work and want to see it in print. The theme of our upcoming Spring 2020 issue is VULNERABILITY. Let it inspire you, but don't be beholden to it! Please send us your:

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The Six Destinies	
Deva Realm	9 mil years - 500 eons
Asura Realm	36 mil years
Human Realm	80 years
Animal Realm	unfixed - 120 years
Ghost Realm	unfixed
Hell Realm	unfixed
The Three Poisons	
Greed	100%
Anger	100%
Confusion	100%
The Four Sufferings (human)*	
Birth	yes
Old Age	depends
Sickness	usually
Death	guaranteed

*Actual experience may vary depending on causes and conditions.

The entire cosmos, from top to bottom, encompassing all its fascinating and terrifying variety, is saṃsāra. It is the arena of all manifestation, action (kamma) and result of action (vipāka). It is dependently arisen, contingent, imperfect, and all forms within it are impermanent and subject to change and dissolution. Every realm, every being, every formation (saṅkhāra) is marked by the three characteristics of imperfection (dukkha), impermanence (anicca) and emptiness of any self-essence (anattā). Saṃsāra is suffering and change and it is all, in the last analysis, void. The noun saṃsāra is derived from the verb saṃsarati, “to move about continuously, to come again and again.” This is the essence of the idea of saṃsāra, that all the beings in the cosmos are continually engaged in endless transformation and movement. There is no real satisfaction to be found anywhere within it, all this “faring on” is ultimately pointless. The goal of Buddhism is not found anywhere within these fantastically multiplied struggles and changes, but in making an end of it all and leading others to the ultimate peace and quiescence of nibbāna.

ATTENTION: May cause anxiety, greed, anger, aversion, foolishness, stupidity, arrogance, doubt, improper views, wrath, hatred, enmity, rage, irritation, maliciousness, vexation, contentiousness, covering, deceit, flattery, guile, conceit, jealousy, envy, stinginess, parsimony, selfishness, lack of remorse, unscrupulousness, lack of faith, laziness, laxness, carelessness, torpor, mental fogginess, restlessness, distraction, forgetfulness, improper knowledge, lack of self-awareness, hostility, shamelessness, negligence, and other afflictions. Please consult the Dharma if you have any questions regarding your existence. For life & rebirth emergencies, seek refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha.