

Zensho W. Kopp

Awakening the heart-mind

The essence of the spiritual path

Final dharma talk from Saturday 30.06.2018

What is the essence? What is the most important thing on the whole of the spiritual path? – That a person experiences himself in his true essence and that he perceives, lives and experiences what he truly is.

For that which a person normally experiences – most people, almost all people – is not that which a person truly is. In fact, what a person truly is, is the reality beyond all concepts, beyond all accepting, assumptions, beyond all memories, all speculations – in short, beyond space and time – it is timeless reality. Yet what a person experiences as himself is nothing other than the whole interwoven memories of his dead past, beginning with his earliest childhood right up to the present day.

That is what he identifies himself with and that is what he is one hundred percent convinced of really being. And that is indeed this factor which prevents a person from experiencing what he truly is. It forms a thick screen, which is effectively a thick, impregnable curtain. In Buddhism and Vedanta, one speaks of “Maya” – “Maya”, the great veil of illusion. If you really wish this veil to fall, this curtain of great illusion, then there is only one way. In the words of Meister Eckhart:

A person must reach a forgetting of himself and all things.

And then the veil of illusion tears from top to bottom and reveals the Holiest of Holies, your radiating essence.

It is possible for each person on the spiritual path to reach such a state of realisation that he experiences himself more and more in his essence and no longer just experiences and understands himself through his state of illusion. The illusion is what in reality covers your true essence. And this covering is the great illusion of the personality, the “I”, the ego – the intellect-ego. However, behind this thick veil the clear light of your true essence shines, “your true person”.

The word “person” comes from “persona” and means “to ring through”. We could also say “to radiate through”. The more you become transparent, the more it radiates through the curtain, right up to the point where ultimately, the final identifications, the final concepts all fall away and you deliver yourself to the divine

Universal Mind by completely giving yourself. Just like Jesus on the cross:

Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

In the gospel, it is written, “He inclined his head to one side and yielded up his spirit.” This means that the moment you utterly deliver yourself, the following takes place which is described further on in the scripture:

In that moment, a great earthquake came over the land and a great darkness. And the veil of the temple tore in two from top to bottom.

The great darkness is the great void. It is the divine darkness, this absolute void for the human consciousness, to which a person must deliver himself – dying into the void in boundless trust. Then, in this instant, in this process of boundless surrender, this dying into the void becomes the dying into the fullness of the boundless light of the One Mind.

You must not think, as many on the Zen path do, “Well, we read the Zen texts, meditate, and then sometime it will happen.” No! Now, this instant, it must happen. Right now, this instant! There is no space, there is no time, and therefore, that which Is – that which is the reality of pure being, is now.

It is the thunderclap in a clear, blue sky, which you nonetheless cannot hear, since in the end, you are just caught up with yourself, with your thinking, with your intellect and with all your notions. The soul has many foreign guests and that is why we read in the Christian gospels that Jesus goes into the temple and chases out all the money changers, overturns the tables and calls out, “Get out, you vermin! You have turned the house of my father into a den of thieves!” – Yes, those are the many thoughts and many concepts which are at the base of your heart. That is to say, in your thoughts. And thus, the mind is filled with them and polluted.

In Chinese, the word “Shin” means “heart” and at the same time “mind”. When the mind is pure and free, the heart is pure

and free. Then heart and mind are one. For this reason, one speaks in Zen of “heart-mind”. Yet when the mind is filled with thoughts and concepts, mind and heart are basically as two, they are separate even though it is a unity. Thus it is important during meditation to sink the mind into the base of the heart.

Each person has the possibility to experience his true essence, his true self. At the beginning, perhaps only very vaguely, very subtly, yet with increasing devotion, the presence of your true self becomes more and more a great experience. You become more and more filled with it. Your consciousness shifts from your head to your heart. And the more this happens and you live from out of the Self, the more you are sensitive to the Self in all beings, for everything is the One Mind, beside which nothing else exists. And this means nothing other than – your self and the self of the other beings is one being. Through this you achieve consubstantiality.

From this experience, through this experience of consubstantiality, your affection for other beings is truly filled with compassion – with all-embracing compassion – and only then can one speak of compassion. Then it is vivacious pity since no suffering is involved, in which you complain together with the others and say, “Oh, what a bad state you are in“.

Instead, it is the experience of consubstantiality in which you feel so One with the other person that your loving affection takes place quite naturally – it does not happen with intent. And that which results is true acting from out of the divine ground, from the divine self. Then all of your deeds and activities are the deeds and activities of Buddha.

Silence

To finish with, I would like to say that an essential access to this experience (and this is very important) is that you experience yourself in your entirety. And this means: how do you wish to perceive your true essence when you cannot even perceive your body, when you drag yourself around like a zombie and just speak of transcendence, high mystical inspiration and experiences and all that – and you ramble on about viewing your intrinsic nature and Enlightenment.

Perceive yourself in your entirety. Feel your body, feel your breathing. If you do not feel your breathing, you also cannot feel the power of the life-breath which gives life to all life as the life-force. The life-breath is the connecting link between the true self and the breathing. When you attain this awareness, all illusions dissolve away. There is no breathing and no life-breath and no true self. Then there is just the one, pure, radiating bliss, existing of itself; in the language of Vedanta: Sat-Chit-Ananda – pure being, pure awareness and endless bliss.

The word “Ananda” also means “love” – bliss, love – since this realisation and self-awareness of your true essence includes everything in the realisation and experience of the One Mind, beside which nothing else exists.

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During his many years as an active spiritual master, a large community of students have come together whom he regularly instructs.

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