

# Primary Point



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MUSANGSA 2023-2024

*Kyolche*

*Winter*  
*Summer*

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MAY 22, 2024 - AUGUST 19, 2024



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2024**

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[www.kwanumeurope.org/wkc2024](http://www.kwanumeurope.org/wkc2024)





Primary Point  
99 Pound Road  
Cumberland, RI 02864-2726 U.S.A.  
Telephone 401/658-1476  
www.kwanumzen.org/primary-point  
online archives:

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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sas, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive *Primary Point*, see page 31. The circulation is 1,400 copies.

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Cover: Lanterns in the Buddha Hall at Musangsa Temple, South Korea.  
Photo by Jiří Lněnička.

## INKA CEREMONY FOR

# Agata Hae In JDPSN

*On April 23, 2023, Agata Hae In received inka at Wubongsa Temple, Poland.*

### DHARMA COMBAT

**Question:** Sometimes, you are Agata, and sometimes, you are Hae In. What is your real name?

**Hae In PSN:** You already understand.

**Q:** Actually, not really . . .

**HI PSN:** And how do you call me?

**Q:** Agata . . .

**HI PSN:** Hi, Grzegorz!



**Question:** I wanted to ask you: Do you find joy in teaching others?

**Hae In PSN:** You already understand.

**Q:** Not really.

**HI PSN:** *[Smiles very widely and laughs.]*



4]

**Question:** The precepts teacher warned us that there can be some hitting here. But so far it's peaceful and lots of love, right? So I hit you thirty times! What can you do?

**Hae In PSN:** You already know!

**Q:** No!

**HI PSN:** Ouch!

**Q:** . . . sorry!

### INKA SPEECH

*[Raises the Zen stick over her head, then hits the table with the stick.]*

The mind is already an infinite space filled with original silence and light.

*[Raises the Zen stick over her head, then hits the table with the stick.]*

There is no mind, space, silence, and light.

*[Raises the Zen stick over her head.]*

Do you see?

*[Hits the table with the Zen stick.]*

Do you hear?

*[Puts down the Zen stick.]*

Do you feel?

KATZ!

Today I feel happy, moved and a bit anxious. I think that even a couple of years ago I wouldn't admit to feeling anxiety. My spiritual pride wouldn't allow it, my incorrect view and one of the three main desires pointed out by Buddha Shakyamuni—a deep desire for nonexistence, to push away and negate this sentient being. I understood the Buddhist doctrine of *anatman*, which means no-self as the denial of self, the denial of all needs and individual expression. In 2008, I went to Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, which is in Jakusho Kwong Roshi's lineage, represented today by Roshi Uji, who is here with us today—thank you for coming! I spent two years in training there,



Photo: Grzegorz Piaskowski

and then left for Korea to start traditional monastic training there. This means that I put down all my material possessions, my education and intellectual interests, as well as my femininity. But what is the true meaning of “putting down”?

### Using *samadhi* to create a new world of opposites

My offense wasn't just my incorrect views. The eightfold path consists of more factors than just that. I was also practicing incorrect *samadhi*—that is, wrong concentration. During twenty years of practice, I learned how to achieve states of high concentration. And I learned how to use them to directly influence my nervous system in the service of pushing away and denying the self of this sentient being. I learned how to calm my heart rate in meditation, to affect my brain waves, to completely reduce any reactivity to sudden sounds, the startle reaction. When my body was falling asleep, my mind light was still shining. All of these things can be measured with various bio- and neurofeedback devices. It can sound alluring, but we already live in the world of opposites, and I was using *samadhi* to create a new world of opposites: calm, formless mind versus chaotic, changing body.

This is what happened in meditation. But meditation is just the beginning of practice. Therefore, similar to how I learned to ignore sudden, loud sounds, I also learned how not to react to aggressive people: “Don't check others.” I learned to suppress all my needs and focus only on a certain kind of internal bliss: “Only for others, not for myself!” I pretended not to have my own reflections and opinions: “Go before thinking!” I was criticizing people close to me for excessive sensitivity and in particular, I was pressuring myself to become more and more disciplined, more stable, to not need anything nor anyone: “Keep a non-moving center moment to moment!”

During meditation, I was directing the mind's light inward onto the tightness or internal chaos; within a few minutes, I was able to dissolve all the emotions and seek refuge from the world and from myself in the vast, silent, conscious space. But one more step is necessary. Incorrect *samadhi* in the service of incorrect view leads to incorrect wisdom, and, therefore: to ignorance.

### “Crystal Palace” melts into “Action Samadhi”

The patriarchs of the Tang and Song dynasties had a name for such a condition: “living in the black demon's cave” or “living in a crystal palace.” This is exactly what Zen Master Seung Sahn meant when he said “You understand one, you don't understand two.” I think these are ancient ways to describe a phenomenon that modern psychology calls “spiritual bypassing,” which is spiritual resistance to experiencing feelings. Eventually, the concepts of self and nonself are two sides of the same dualism.

The twelfth-century Zen master Hongzi, the creator of “silent illumination,” wrote: “Within the space of one

hundred fifty hectares there is only cold, pure, shimmering snow.” I focused only on this piece of the teaching. But if you look into his book, translated by our abbot, Robert, you will find the next statement: “Afterward, turn around and go back to the world, wander and play in *samadhi*.” I believe that this “*samadhi* play,” which later became an important teaching phrase in Zen, is what Zen Master Seung Sahn used to call “action *samadhi*.” There is the *samadhi* of laypeople, the *samadhi* of nuns and monks, the *samadhi* of men and women. There is the *samadhi* of the cultures of Tibet, China, Japan, Korea. There is the *samadhi* of the five senses, and the *samadhi* of intellect and emotions. There is space for all of them, and no need to deny them—just don't get attached to anything.

We even have kong-ans that talk about it: An old woman supports a monk for ten years. At the end she wants to test him, and she sends her daughter, who sits on his lap, embraces him and asks: “How are you feeling now?” He responds: “Rotten log on cold rocks.” He is the one living in the black demon's cave. He needs to take one more step. Zen Master Seung Sahn repeats: “The absolute, consciousness, emptiness, energy, space, the land of stillness and bliss—these are all names and forms. The primary point doesn't have any form, even most subtle.”

When I was a nun, I was working and practicing for many hours every day completely in a selfless way. But that was an ego trip of my spiritual self. So, I got sick, and my immune system produced three different autoimmune disorders, and I used *samadhi* to suppress the pain signals and discomfort in my body. Finally, I had difficulties walking, and that was impossible to ignore. I had to return to Poland and rested my monastic precepts. I met love, disappointment, loss, guilt. And I learned from my mistakes.

It seems to me that the utmost Zen teaching of the sudden enlightenment and immediate path is very difficult because we receive the right view and the right method all at once. Pointing directly to the mind: *Silence and the sounds of birds*. The birds are chirping . . .

### How can we work with emotions and with the body?

If this is enough, that is wonderful. But many of us need the intellectual knowledge of Buddhadharma and the gradual instructions on how to practice correctly. So, I returned to the eightfold path and started searching for detailed knowledge about the correct view and correct cultivation of *samadhi*. I grew my hair, returned to my philosophical interests, and I returned to myself as a woman. I think that intellect and femininity are sometimes undervalued qualities in practice, perceived more as hindrances than expressions of the *samadhi* play, of action *samadhi*.

At the end, I want to offer my gratitude. We spent much time with Zen Master Dae Bong discussing how we

can work with emotions and with the body in the Kwan Um School of Zen. We received the teaching on how to engage the energy of breath, called *gong gi* or *prana* or spirit. Energy of breath connects body and mind. Zen Master Dae Bong said that we can perceive our *karma* clearly, see how this *karma* is reflected in our body's condition when energy is going up, when the energy of "wandering mind" or "holding mind" moves toward our head or chest. Then using the breath, instead of pushing it away, we can harmonize, calm, and settle down this energy, giving it direction toward the center. Perceive, connect with your habits, become one, give it direction to the center using the energy of breath.

My second teacher for the integrity of body and mind is Gosia Bright Pearl, [*pointing towards the translator*] who has been telling me with great patience for twenty years, when I was describing to her my unusual experiences, that

these are maybe just my feelings. [*Laughter.*]

My partner, Radek, showed me that the idea of emptiness is also empty, and that I behave like a Hindu goddess stuck in formless heavenly realms. And that I'm grasping the empty nature of mind, making emptiness into a place, a state, or even a thing.

Kwong Roshi from the very beginning, when I kept asking "What is this mind light?" answered, "It is you!" But I pushed: "This small I? Or this vast, big I, which reveals itself when I disappear? This spacious awareness, this mind clear like space, in which one can find a refuge?" And he would say, "There is only one." Thank you, Roshi!

One day, when I confessed to my inka teacher, Zen Master Joeng Hye, my "successes" in separating this pure, subtle, spacious silence from the chaotic, changing impurities, he replied, "The light knows its way, just put it down!" But to "put it down" does not mean to "push away and deny." If I understood correctly, by "put it down" he meant to allow the natural mind to appear in a spontaneous way without making anything.

Twenty-first-century science has already described the mystical, transpersonal, nondual states of mind quite well, but it also knows the experiences of dissociation and depersonalization. So, since there is such an open scientific debate about it, in the Zen world we could also go beyond the taboo of not talking about meditative experiences. Such conversations may show us if we hold an incorrect view and incorrect samadhi, and they can help all sentient beings, not excluding our own selves.

So, if I confused this one mind of Zen Master Seung Sahn, this unified mind with his concept of clear mind, then what is the clear mind? My intellect answers: don't know . . .

KATZ!

Phew! [*Smiles and laughter from the audience.*] ◆

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*Agata Hae In JDPSN received inka from Zen Master Joeng Hye in April 2023. She was born in Poland and has been practicing Zen since 2000, initially under the guidance of Soto Zen Master Jakusho Kwong Roshi. She spent more than four years on intensive silent meditation retreats. For fifteen years she has been a resident in Zen centers and temples in Poland, the United States, and Korea, where she pursued monastic training. She has master's degrees in Western philosophy and in psychology, and works as a psychotherapist. Her special interests are the effectiveness of concentration techniques, the psychophysiology of self-dissolution phenomenon, and spiritual bypassing. For eight years she served as the director of the KUSZ European office, facilitating the democratic changes in the administrative structure of the sangha.*



Photo: Grzegorz Piaskowski

# Prajna and Psychosis

Zen Master Jok Um (Ken Kessel)

*Note: The following letter was to a student who has strong mental health support systems and finds meditation practice grounding rather than destabilizing. Please know that for some, at times, the experiences of both opening up and intensity that come with practice—and particularly the more rigorous practice of retreats—can open doors to fears, confusion, depression, heightened anxiety, or loss of touch with reality. Should you experience these, please speak with someone who is helping to guide your practice, please seek professional guidance, back off on the intensity of your practice and find safe spaces. If you've been practicing entirely on your own, please seek a senior and reliable practitioner who you trust. Cheetah House (cheetahhouse.org) is an organization that is familiar with these phenomena and can provide guidance and counseling on a sliding scale. Thanks to senior dharma teacher Mark Brenner for helping edit this article.*

Thanks for your question about prajna and psychosis. I've always admired how your intellect supports your practice, so here's another opportunity.

One way to see prajna is as clear discernment. One way to see psychosis is as distorted discernment. If you think of dharma as transformation, then we're looking at transforming distortion into clarity. This is the same process for any deluded view, so why not psychiatric conditions? One element of prajna here is seeing clearly that something is being distorted, what the distortion is, what conditions support that, and what conditions heal it. Then, even your question about prajna and psychosis is a first step toward seeing that something is off-base and creating distress.

If there is enough distance to see this, it's worth noting what kind of distress is happening, how it appears, what it affects, and what soothes it in a healing—rather than purely distracting—way. Certainly, in the midst of distress like psychosis, there's a feeling of being overwhelmed, which is natural, given its intensity. Looking solely for methods to address the most intense and frightening moments misses opportunities to practice prajna in the quieter moments and gain strength there. This, of course, gives anchors for when things get bad as well as calming the waves, so that they don't get so bad.

Here are two points to consider:

First, know that isolation is one part of psychosis—not knowing what or who to connect to or trust. It's therefore important to have people and things to connect with who appreciate your needs and who you know are reliable—both the people and the things. I just saw an article online today about “glimmers”—the counterweight to triggers. These are small things or occurrences that brighten your life: a flower, the breeze, a bird, a sound, a thought, a memory, and so on. These glimmers are unique and individual to each person. Noticing and appreciating them as they appear can help to create a flow of connection and healing.

Second is to have a sense of what grounds you and what

makes things off balance. It's not unusual that prolonged periods of silent or intensely focused practice can be destabilizing. There are several reasons for this. One is that the quiet can be “too loud,” which means that the scary things have more room to be seen. Another reason is that practices that create energy will give energy to everything, so that distortions can also become stronger.

Because of these things that throw you off balance, it's good to have shorter and softer periods of practice, such as a minute of quiet breathing, or just counting your breaths to ten and then resuming your activity, or a minute of mantra practice, or quietly chanting one chant, then moving on. It may help to do this periodically and regularly during the day, to create a series of anchor points. But again, this is individual to each person, and it's best to do this in consultation with a trusted guide. It may also be that methods that are useful will change over time, and it's good to be sensitive to reading

your own flow well.

It's worth reflecting that change or progress is likely to be gradual and not all at once. Seeing this has some benefits. One is to have reasonable expectations. Another is to know how to experience progress with a micrometer and not a yardstick. A little better than before is still better.

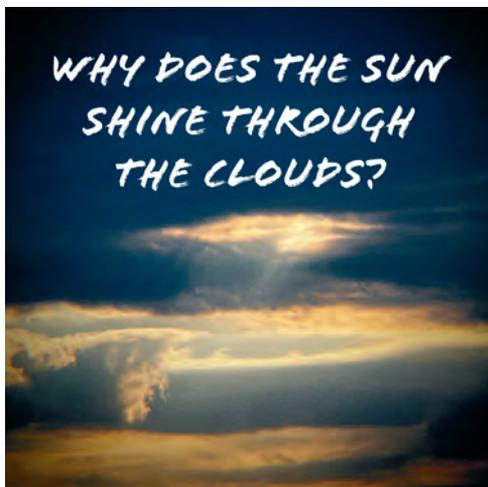
It's important to recognize that meditation in and of itself is unlikely to be sufficient to address all of this. Having supportive connections and activities, professional mental health guidance, a safe place to be, safe things to do, knowing how and when to rest—all of these are also vital.

If you are able to reflect on your own experience constructively through diaries, drawing, conversation, therapy, and so on, that may also help you have something reliable to hold on to, like a guide-rope in a maze.

I hope these thoughts are useful for you. They're certainly not comprehensive, but a place to start a conversation.

Take care,

Ken



# Keeping the Dharma Is More Than Looking for Success

*Interview with Arne Schaefer JDPSN, who strives for mindfulness ecologically and economically with his Berlin-based small business.*

*Primary Point talks to the teacher about competition and common wealth orientation, about the concept of “success” and about being able to let go. Whether his business, Mindful Sweets, can make the world a better place may be left open to interpretation. What is certain, however, is that small businesses also create good jobs for people, but at the same time having employees means a lot of responsibility, as Arne painfully recounts.*

*The interview was conducted on June 16, 2023 via Zoom by Martin Regener.*

**Primary Point:** I read on our webpage about you: You are trying to combine Buddhism and being a business leader. What does this mean to you?

**Arne Schaefer JDPSN:** It is not only about Buddhism, but about being responsible in this world. The topic has been important to me for a while. As a consumer I have always tried to create a low negative impact on the planet. As a member of an industrial family, I decided not to join the tradition but instead follow my own intuition. Today I sell gummy bears and call them “Buddha Bears” to bring something positive into the world. They are organic and vegan. The small business is focused on the common good, and is so far successful in this niche.

**PP:** How do you define success?

**Schaefer PSN:** Not merely financial success—in that field I am just kind of successful. It is more about keeping up with suppliers, the workforce, and customers. We don’t just focus on ourselves, but on the whole. All the partners I work with share the view of being oriented on common wealth, what we call common wealth orientation.

**PP:** This is something I know from practice: “Why do you do this and that?” “For you!” or “For us!” Is your business nonprofit?

**Schaefer PSN:** No. Not nonprofit, but it is not oriented on profits, but rather on success for all. The question of becoming nonprofit has arisen for me, and maybe I will change into that later, especially when I retire and hand the company over to somebody in the same spirit.



*Photo: Courtesy of Arne Schaefer*

**Acting together instead of competing**

**PP:** To me, it seems like the orientation on common wealth is the core of what we are talking about here. It reminds me most of what we are doing on the cushion in our practice. Do you agree?

**Schaefer PSN:** Yes, and I strive to improve every day. Our bank is the ecological GLS bank, which invests its money only in sustainable and ecological projects. Our suppliers, staff, and customers share the same spirit, and it is a joy to be working in this environment, in which we can agree on the

same values. When I attend a fair with other organic producers, there is an atmosphere of acting together instead of competing. Anyone who works with us is included in our trying to improve everyone’s situation, to be fair and not focus only on our own advantage. It is not always easy, because the market is under pressure especially now since all the prices went up and other businesses are starting up. For example, now we have to compete with the conventional trade with the large supermarket chains and discounters who are hoping for better margins with higher priced organic products.

**PP:** Is this problematic to you? If I heard that a big retailer was putting organic food onto their shelves, and starting to act for the common good, I would be happy. Is that greenwashing to you? Do you think these chains are greenwashing their image?

**Schaefer PSN:** The truth is that they will come regardless. It looks like they only meet the minimum requirements to participate in the organic market. Organic is not part of their DNA, as it is with all the

smaller organic market participants, who have deliberately built up this sector since the 1970s as an alternative to this existing trade. They also see that something has to change fundamentally in the way we deal with our food production and food supply, but it is not their core understanding of economic activity taking into account all market participants in the sense of an orientation toward the common good. For them, it's more of an add-on business. They get to call themselves organic, and can now offer organic products to their customers. At the same time, it is good if organic products reach more people, and we have to wait and see how it develops. I live in the middle of Berlin, and there are plenty of organic stores within walking distance. It's different in the countryside, where there are often only the usual supermarkets. So how do you connect those customers to the green business?

**PP:** What if the bigger stores took over their portfolio and offered it at competitive prices?

**Schaefer PSN:** I'm glad this is happening now, with more customers who can shop organic. I am a little concerned about the suppliers and the whole idea behind it. The discounters look primarily at the price and do not have the spirit with which the organic stores once started as a counter-movement.

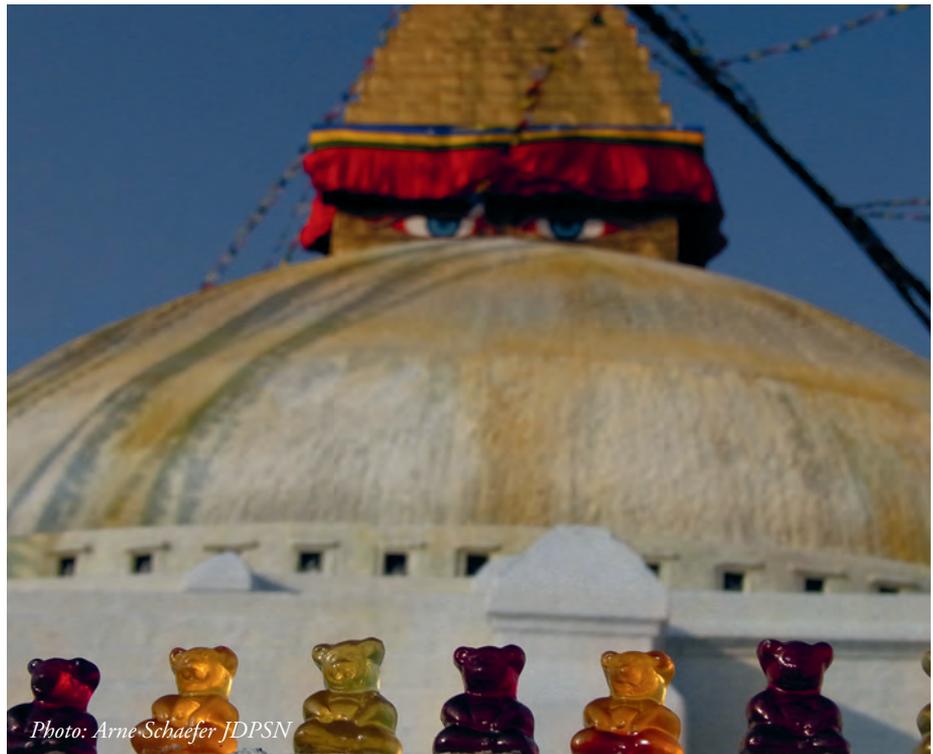
**PP:** I remember going to organic stores with good intentions, but finding half-rotten fruit and vegetables because not enough people bought produce at such stores.

**Schaefer PSN:** This happened most probably not only because of a possible lack of customers, but also because organically oriented farmers do not use chemicals to improve fertilization and the mere appearance of the products. But things were different back then. Business practices and living standards are changing, and I wonder if I will still be in the right place when supermarket chains get into the organic business that is emerging.

### Keeping "try mind" and a broad vision

**PP:** You have talked about what you do and how you do it. Can you say that you have made an impact on the business?

**Schaefer PSN:** All I can say is that I feel well-being



*Photo: Arne Schaefer JDPSN*

in my place. Being with people focused on common wealth orientation makes me happy. I am satisfied that I am acting in this market, being able to turn things into the right direction, being fair with everyone.

**PP:** So being oriented toward common wealth is the value that drives you in your work life? Would you recommend that to other entrepreneurs?

**Schaefer PSN:** Absolutely. Before entering the organic business, I was a business coach and experienced how it is to be in a competitive environment and what pressure it creates. My way includes all people engaged, not only profits and customers. Right now, after the pandemic and with all the struggles we face, I am in a more challenging situation again. I had to let go of one of my staff. It was important to me to let go of her in a spirit of trust and cooperation. My dharma is helping me to cope with difficulties, keeping "try mind," keeping a broad vision, and being able to let go. Even if the company fails, I will let it go. I would be sad but accept it. Keeping the dharma is more than looking for success. It's easy when things go well, but when times get hard is when our dharma shows.

**PP:** You have been doing this for a long time now. What is your conclusion?

**Schaefer PSN:** Well, as far as this little company is concerned, that's only thirteen years. It's not an eternity, just part of my lifetime. By now, I can say I am happy about what I have done and what I do. Being with the people I work with on all levels fulfills me.

**PP:** Thank you for your insights!

**Schaefer PSN:** I am grateful for your interest! ♦

# Dharma Note: The I-My-Me Headphones

Knud Rosenmayr JDPSN

There is so much violence and conflict going on at the moment. It echoes and screams out of the news and from people's reports. Unthinkable things suddenly become a bare reality, showing us what human beings are capable of doing. Many questions may arise out of this: Where does this come from? What is this? What is my responsibility in all this?

When we hear the news from people who are suffering so much, a feeling of injustice may come up fast, and emotions like anger, hate, and violence sometimes appear with it. We notice the body tightening up, and everything seems small and worrying.

## The I-my-me headphones

How can we listen to this? Let's start right here and now: There is a lot of violence and conflict in different forms inside and outside. We usually care about a good life for ourselves and for those close to us. We want to be heard, and we like to listen to those we love. However, whenever there is *I-my-me* energy appearing, the caring quiets down, and we mostly hear only ourselves: how my world should be and how this "I" wants it to be. *My* hurt, *my* knowledge of right and wrong, *my* knowledge of being correct. It may be subtle, but it can be experienced every so often in our everyday life. We put on our *I-my-me* headphones and listen to the sounds of *my* good opinion and *my* story voice. We hold on to *my* hurts and those we identify with, those we feel for. With time, we will even get better headphones—it just seems to happen by itself—and these new headphones now have noise reduction. Excellent sound quality, amplifying what we want to hear. We completely immerse ourselves in our *I-my-me* stories, and we don't hear almost anything around. To get through to you, people must shout loudly enough that you hear the shout through such headphones.

## What do you hear now?

Do we need to follow that impulse to put on these headphones? What if we don't follow this impulse—not suppressing it, just not following it—and not go along with it? Can we listen to what's happening right now? The sound of breathing, the computer fan, the smell of the air. Can we stay with it for a moment? Right now.

*Do you hear?*

*Is it possible to stay with it and not follow "anything"?*

*What do you hear now?*

Without labeling it with a name and a form, what is it? Keep returning to the listening, then compassion may

arise by itself, and we notice something like an opening, a clarity that settles in. Then what?

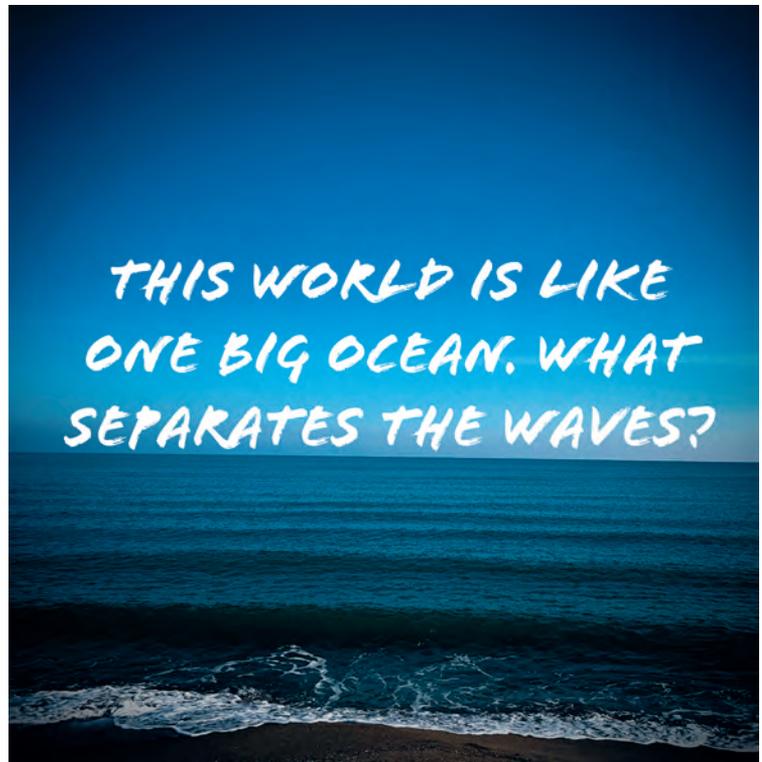
## How can you help?

Someone asked what should we do when there is the feeling that we cannot do anything? Sometimes we just cannot do anything to help—then what? Zen Master Wu Bong used to ask a question: "A person that can't see, hear, smell, taste, and feel—how can you help?" All gates are blocked. What can you do?

There is still something we can do. What is it? It comes from deep within. Please find it and help this world! ♦

*This Dharma Note originally appeared as part of a series on the website of the Vienna Zen Center: <https://www.zen-meditation.wien/en/category/dharma-note-2>.*

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*Knud PSN not only writes Dharma Notes regularly but also adds questions to photos, which he calls Dharma Cards. These cards serve as tools for kong-an interviews, and many of Knud's students, both in person and online, are familiar with them. The editors of Primary Point have scattered some of these Dharma Cards in the current issue. Write to us, dear readers! Let us know how many such cards you find in this issue—but above all, share how you personally answer the questions!*

# *This Place Makes It Possible to Reconnect*

## Sitting Zen in midst of the wilderness near Wisła, Poland

*An interview with Igor Piniński JDPSN conducted by Martin Regener via Zoom on September 5, 2023.*

Every year, the meditation site close to Wisła in southern Poland offers retreats in the mountain range. I had been pondering the idea and was wishing to go until, at last, I made the decision. Right upon arrival, I was so glad that I did—these mountains are a natural wonderland that attracted both my nature enthusiasm and my wish to meditate with like-minded people. I had chosen to walk up the hill and had a good impression of the landscape. Later, when I pitched my tent and was shown my meditation spot, I was in awe of the beauty of nature.

Practice started early with a wake-up at 4:30 in the morning, and we spent long hours on our cushions. During changing weather conditions, we were protected by a tarp, wearing clothes ranging between warm jackets and

for another week. Unfortunately, my time was over for the moment. There was one highlight at the end: Zen Master Dae Kwang gave a dharma speech, and I very much enjoyed his originality and humor. On the way home, I felt I was sure to come back next year. Also, I wondered about the specifics of the place, and I asked Igor if he would be willing to answer a few questions for *Primary Point*.

### **It all started with just a trailer...**

**Primary Point:** Igor, what is the story behind this place?

**Igor Piniński JDPSN:** Twenty-eight years ago, a practitioner from our school who owned a piece of land in the mountains near Wisła offered it to the KUSZ

monastic community to build a monastery. Hyon Mun Sunim showed a 3D map of this place to Zen Master Seung Sahn, who was a specialist in feng shui, and approved it as a great place for a meditation site. Not much happened after that for a long time, until Chon Mun Sunim got involved. In 2015, together with two other Polish monks and some Polish students, they founded the UNSU Foundation to run and develop this place. At the beginning, Chon Mun Sunim decided that instead of asking for donations, they should start with intensive Zen practice. Since then, there has been a full three-month winter Kyol Che there every year. For the first few years, there was a three-month summer Kyol Che as well. At the moment, the place is used to offer forest intensive retreats in the summer, which are part of the European summer retreat program. It all started with just a trailer, and developed into what it is now step by step.

**PP:** Was everything here built by students, for example, during working meditation?

**Piniński JDPSN:** During meditation retreats, the work period lasts only one hour, so not much can be done. Most of the work was done by Chon Mun Sunim with the help of some students between the retreats. His project is still to create an environment where monks can live year-round. Right now, there is a Kyol Che every year, and sometimes people do solo retreats—another of the great possibilities of this place.

*(Continued on page 26)*



T-shirts. Putting down my awe for the beauty and returning to my practice was something I had to focus on. Igor JDPSN led the retreat and seemed at first very serious. Later on he turned out to be a very kind and loving person. Chon Mun Sunim JDPS did most of the cooking and prepared great-tasting meals, so I was struggling not to eat too much.

After one week of bowing, chanting, sitting, interviews, and the daily walk through the hills, I was ready

# Beaver Park, Wind River Range

Paul Bloom

I first hiked across the treeline in New Hampshire as a teenager and exclaimed “Oh my! What is this?” It was a first and absolutely unanticipated step into the search for a spiritual path. Even the unrehearsed exclamation “What is this?” is interesting—a phrase often pointed to as the core underpinning question of Zen practice.

That was many years ago, and it was more than a decade later that Buddhist masters started to come to the West in greater numbers from Asia. I met Zen Master Seung Sahn in New Haven several years later in the late 1970s, having been unsuccessful in finding a teacher before that. And Zen Master Seung Sahn’s teaching soon made the union of wilderness and practice clear. *Put it all down—your opinion, your condition, your situation. Only go straight—don’t know.*



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Blessed mother wilderness, wilderness of the high mountains, brothers and sisters to which we must return. Humans are visitors to backcountry. The ancient forest teaches us the generosity of the life cycle—in life, trees give habitat and oxygen; in death, they give nutrition and new earth. Even the cougar, when it eats the deer, participates in the dance of host and guest, the eternal centering dance of wilderness.

How can we humans fit, with our engines and electronics? Where is the balance we bring with war and I-me-my, qualities necessarily left behind as we walk the backcountry? The native peoples have their place, if tenuous. Our national culture, with its astonishing artifacts, is distinctively self-referential. Western culture behaves as if mountain, river, elephant, and pine tree are its pawns.

The blessing we humans are given is the ability to speak perception—the curse an *obligation* of choice. The blessing is also an obligation of choice—the human route. *For me equals for you*, the dance of host and guest. The deer is sometimes eaten; the rain with its rivers carves the deep canyons. The dance of host and guest.

Wilderness does not care or choose. But humans need wilderness—tree oxygen, mountain snowmelt. Also petroleum deep in the wilderness rock.

When my nation needs your nation’s petroleum, will we destroy wilderness? Will we destroy each other with armies and killing? Choice is the blessing and the curse. Wilderness continues to offer its blessings mindlessly when we manage to let it work its thoughtless magnificence and remember that destruction of wilderness is the destruction of self. High mountains are brothers and sisters to which we must return.

In the Zen Buddhist tradition it is said that “Don’t know mind is our original self.” The activity of wilderness is no different.

Coming back to mother wilderness herself, the accompanying drawing offers a visual stage on which the cousins of wilderness and don’t-know mind can dance together for all to see. ♦

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*Paul has been a practicing Zen Buddhist since 1975, studying first directly under Zen Master Seung Sahn. He is a senior dharma teacher in the Kwan Um School of Zen, and currently serves as abbot of the New Haven Zen Center. Paul’s wider background includes backpacking in the White Mountains, the Sierras, and the Rocky Mountain high wilderness since he was fourteen. Paul was trained as an architect and spent a long career working as an interior and custom furniture designer. In addition, he has been engaged in peace and justice activism since his teens, following in the footsteps of his parents.*



*Drawing: Paul Bloom*

# A Sign!

Sheila Bayne

*Introductory talk given at Cambridge Zen Center, July 20, 2023*

I recently returned from a visit of several weeks to the Pacific Northwest that had a strong impact on my practice. My husband and I are both from Washington State. Although we haven't lived there for many years, we have stayed in touch with our siblings and good friends in the area from high school and college.

When our parents were alive, we used to go back to Seattle every year or two, sometimes twice a year. But recently, due to the pandemic, we were nervous about traveling, and had not been back to the Pacific Northwest for three and a half years. Planning for the trip, I knew that some of the relatives and friends we wanted to see had serious health problems. But our practice gives us a direction, no matter what, to save all beings from suffering. I also remembered something I learned in a yoga class. The teacher said we could set an intention for a session of yoga—for example, “I dedicate this session to my mother.” So approaching this trip, I set an intention: This trip will not be about me; it will be about making life better for the people I am going to see, especially those in challenging situations.

Arriving at SeaTac airport, we picked up a rental car and drove south to Olympia, my husband's hometown, and spent five days there visiting his siblings and old friends. Some of his siblings were fine, but one of his sisters has advanced Parkinson's disease. Also, his best friend, who has been living with schizophrenia for many years, now also has physical health issues. Another close friend had just had his leg amputated due to diabetes. We visited all of them. It was a powerful teaching, and it challenged my intention. What did I have to offer them? As it turned out, they had much to offer me: a lively conversation, a piece of original artwork, some old family photos. Just being present for the interaction seemed valuable on both sides.

After that, we spent a couple of days near the Pacific Ocean. I was digesting the experiences of the last few days. Our condo unit was on the ground floor, in front of a raised, grassy dune between us and the beach. Just outside of our condo was the entrance to a trail through the dunes that guests were supposed to follow in order not

to trample the dune grass. On our first morning there, I went out into the living room to meditate. I pulled up a chair in front of the glass door to the patio. I was breathing in, breathing out, but at the same time thinking about the people we had seen the last few days and about my direction and intention, and how that worked, or not. I was doing a lot of checking. Did I say the right thing? Did I ask the right questions to show concern, but not be invasive? Would the book I gave someone be seen as comforting, or would it seem preachy and didactic?

At that point in my meditation, I looked up and saw a sign outside the glass door at the entrance to the trail. It was a clear sign with blue letters on a white background that read, “PLEASE USE PATH.” I thought, “This sign is meant for me!” It was succinct, it was clear, and it spoke to me. Later, I went out and took a picture of it and made it the screensaver on my phone. So now I see those words every time I pick up my phone. It gives another dimension to the idea of direction. The important thing is not just having a direction; it's about using the direction and following it without checking. I say the four great vows every morning, and that's helpful, but

the point is to carry those vows into the day and use them confidently.

Our trip continued after that for three more weeks. In the Seattle area, we visited family members and old friends, and I came into contact with many people, some facing obvious challenges, some not. The Dalai Lama has said, “Be kind, because everyone you meet is carrying a heavy load.” I try to keep that in mind. I also keep in mind the clear saying I brought back from that trip that I want to share with others: “PLEASE USE PATH.” ♦



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*Sheila Bayne holds five precepts in the Kwan Um School of Zen. She has been a member of Cambridge Zen Center since 2001. She has served on CZC's board of directors and participates in its Social Justice and Diversity Initiative. She lives with her husband in Massachusetts, where they have a son, a daughter-in-law, and a granddaughter.*

# Inside Eye

## Tips for Beginners

Edahn Small and Mat Wooller

If you're just starting your Zen practice, congratulations. Something has called you to Zen. Who knows what? Karma? Chance? Search engine optimization? Whatever the reason, you're here and that's special. Embarking on the path is a significant step. It *will* alter your life in ways subtle and profound if you dedicate yourself sincerely. There are obstacles along the path, but some of the trickiest ones can be at the beginning, because we don't have the benefits of practice to help us navigate through them just yet. Our school provides multiple forms of practice—chanting, sitting, kong-ans—that bolster our wisdom, concentration, and positive behavior over time. Edahn and Mat met with the idea of putting together a few tips based on their experiences with a goal of helping beginners and newcomers to practice. Here are some tips they hope will help.

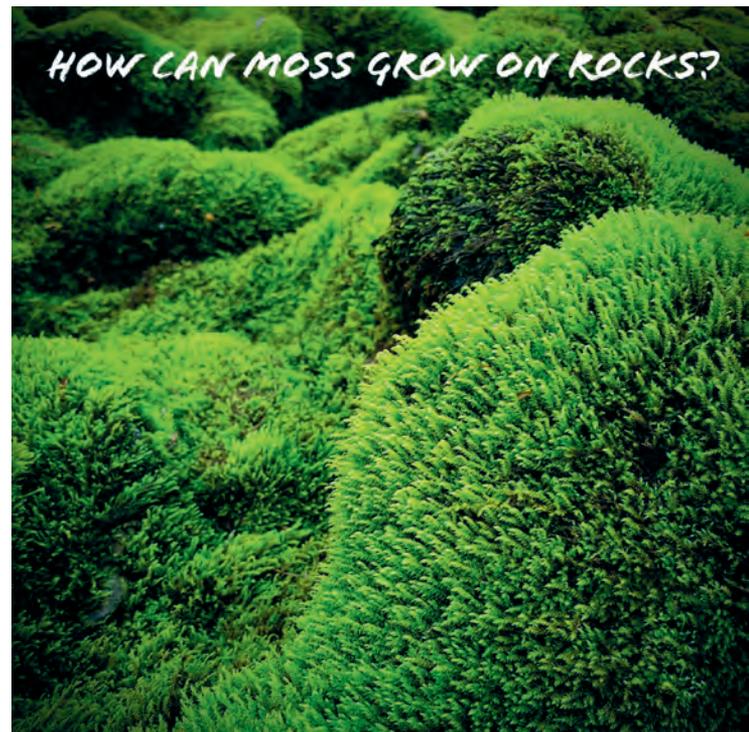
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**Make it meaningful (Edahn):** Embarking on a spiritual quest can be a life-changing ordeal. Dedicating yourself to seeking truth, alleviating suffering, and finding your direction in life is a sacred decision. It's the same decision Buddha made 2,500 years ago when he abandoned the comforts of his life in pursuit of answers to his big questions. What are *your* big questions? What's motivating you to practice? Truth? Overcoming self-doubt? Greater intimacy? Finding purpose? Or maybe it's just attaining the meaning of these seemingly bizarre Zen stories. Whatever it is, treat your practice as something sacred, because that's what it is. Dedicate yourself to your spiritual aspirations. Make your quest meaningful.

**Don't worry or question your practice too much (Mat):** I can remember starting out practicing meditation as a beginner. I recall a lot of questions and self-doubt: "Am I doing this right? Am I sitting correctly? Wow—my mind is super busy and unsettled! This can't be correct. I must be doing something wrong. Shall I try a different breathing technique?" And so on. So my advice is to try not to worry or question your practice too much. If you are practicing with a group, just follow the group. If there is a teacher present, then follow the instructions. If you are practicing by yourself, just practice—just do it! Labeling things as right and wrong is not helpful—and kinda wrong thinking anyway. At the outset of the wonderful book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, Shunryu Suzuki offers some clear and pragmatic guidance on practicing meditation: sit like this, breathe like this, put in the time practicing. I found that guidance super useful. It's hard not to have self-doubt when starting to practice meditation, always questioning whether one is doing it right or wrong. To be honest, questions

and self-doubt will arise, as they still do for me today. But rather than interact with or pay much attention to these questions and doubts, I just try to just watch these mind activities. A few years ago, I was describing watching one's own mind to my then-eight-year-old daughter. She piped up with an excellent question: "Dad, how do I *watch* my own mind?" Without thinking I answered "By using your *inside* eye." This answer surprised me, and a little self-doubt leapt in: "Will this mean anything to her?" After a pause, she said "Oh, OK." I was so relieved. "Phew!"

**Make friends in the sangha (Edahn):** Establishing a consistent meditation is a challenge when we have infinite distractions competing for our attention. You may have to hack your own habits to make room for meditation. To-do lists? Annoying alarms? A wrist tattoo that says *pay attention*? Do whatever works. One thing I've found helps tremendously is sangha—the group of people we practice with. Whether in-person or virtual, pick a practice session and try to show up *sincerely*. That means not just showing up consistently, but also showing up authentically, with your humor, your questions, your aspirations, and your struggles. Your sangha is a place where you're encouraged to be yourself just as you already are. Genuine friendships arise naturally when you show up sincerely, and that gives you more reasons to keep showing up.



**Muddle along with chanting practice (Mat):** Chanting meditation can feel awkward and uncomfortable, but muddle along. We are all just trying to do our best, and it's OK to make mistakes along the way. I distinctly remember starting meditation practice with the Kwan Um School of Zen and feeling distinctly uncomfortable practicing chanting meditation as a group. I thought that everyone else was paying attention to my mistakes and slip-ups. I was uncomfortable chanting things in a different language in which I had no idea what was being said. However, I have come to see a lot of the practicalities of chanting meditation both for beginners and for folks who have practiced for a while. Again, just roll with it. It's helpful to realize that everyone is not actually paying that much attention to you; they are all concentrating on their own chanting. In some ways, chanting can seem like one of the toughest forms of practice for a beginner—that and kong-an practice, but we'll save that for another time. However, it seems that chanting has been perfectly designed to help meditation practice, and particularly for beginners. This is because the chanting grabs hold of our concentration. There is no extra bandwidth to have questions, thoughts, or feelings. We are just trying to keep up and pay attention. The breathing that we pay attention to in sitting meditation happens naturally during chanting. To help me feel more familiar with the chants, I remember downloading copies of them from the school's website to my phone. With earphones I

would play them while walking our dog or in the supermarket, allowing them to seep in. Eventually I got over the need to know what they were all about. It just seemed so much less important with the passage of time.

**Don't expect the extraordinary (Edahn):** When we start a meditation practice it's tempting to think we're supposed to have magical, extraordinary experiences. This can lead to creating expectations, steering one's meditation experience toward a goal, and rejecting or becoming frustrated when reality doesn't live up to the goal. All of this is really just thinking born of desire, and in Zen we're simply resting at that before-thinking state. Put down your goals and expectations, and look at how things already are right now, simply, even if it doesn't fit your idea of what meditation is supposed to be. What's it like just now? Intimacy with this moment, without judgments and goals, can be extraordinary in its own way, despite being very ordinary.

**Just practice and shift your life's arc (Mat):** I remember a number of years ago listening to a talk by Zen Master Hye Mun (Barry Briggs) who was visiting us in Fairbanks, Alaska. He was giving a talk about "just do it, just practice, don't think or question too much." Barry described an image that resonated with me back then and still does today. He described the arc of a curve representing the trajectory of our lives. He said that by simply practicing meditation over time, we shift ourselves subtly onto a slightly different life trajectory. This shift in life trajectory gradually increases the further along the trajectory we go, pushing us toward a path of ever greater love and compassion. Now, with some hindsight and time, I can see my own life trajectory has altered as a result of practicing meditation—and only in positive ways and to the benefit of myself and to those around me. Stick with it! ♦

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*Edahn Small is a dharma teacher in Los Angeles. He's been practicing at Dharma Zen Center since 2017. He works as a therapist and information designer, and was previously an attorney before realizing it was awful. He's a proud uncle and likes to drum at the Venice Beach Drum Circle on weekends.*

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*Mat(thew) Wooller (he, him, his), is originally from the UK and has lived in Fairbanks, Alaska, for about twenty years with his wife, Diane. He has two wonderful kids who were both born in Fairbanks. Mat is a senior dharma teacher (with the dharma name Ho Shim) with the Cold Mountain Zen Center in Fairbanks. He has developed an interest in helping lead the promotion of happiness and well-being on the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus, where he works as a professor teaching chemistry. He also teaches a class on the science and practice of happiness and well-being to students, staff, and faculty, and he maintains a physical space dedicated to this practice.*

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# Becoming Human

*Won Il Sunim*

My practice life roughly coincided with Buddhist chronology in that the beginning was Theravadan, more focused on rules and precepts and bringing my life into alignment with the teaching. Much later it opened up into the boundless fields of awareness and freedom of the Mahayana. I don't think I'm alone in this. It seems to be a human quandary that we grow up and form our persona through the example of our parents, friends, peers, and of society at large. All of these influences over many years inform one's persona without wisdom, creating a self we may see as mature. Then comes the hard work of putting everything in order, refining, becoming a human being.

I started on the Buddhist path shortly after reaching adulthood. Perhaps the conditions of my life did not allow an easy transition into adulthood, and the self that I had created was faulty. I'd begun a structured practice life by my late teens, and started Zen practice at twenty-one. I practiced on my own at first, in a rural area of Louisiana. I had no choice. Apart from a small-town library, there were no resources available. It took about three years before I hit a wall. Though I was sitting a few hours of meditation every day, I couldn't progress well on my own. I needed to be in a community, to be around people more experienced than I was.

I moved to Providence Zen Center in 1990. It was marvelous, and still is. It's given me so much over the years. I spent six years there, doing Kyol Che every year. This led to my eventually becoming a monk and training in Korea. After I finished the initial part of the training, the sami ordination, I returned to the United States and started working in Los Angeles. I had to reorient myself and start making money, due to my father's illness. It was the first time I'd tried to make it on my own. At first it was a struggle just to survive, but Los Angeles is a strange place. I eventually found a way both to work and do long retreats. This is where the story begins.

After six years of my working as a carpenter, and not practicing at all, Zen Master Seung Sahn died, and there was a big fire at Taegosa Temple, the monastery in the Mojave desert where I'd first taken monastic precepts. That was the twenty-year mark of my practice life. I had completed ten Kyol Ches by then, lived in Zen communities for ten years, had become a monk, and I felt I'd absorbed all of the teachings. The path was deeply embedded in my consciousness. However, when I returned to the dharma room, I was in a low place. A year before, I'd suffered a knee injury and wasn't able to work. I was destitute at that point. My grasp on life was tenuous. It turns out that this was a very good place to be.

I went back to Taegosa to help repair the damage from the fire—but my own damage was greater. We didn't finish cleaning the place up until winter. The rest of the sangha wanted to do a Kyol Che. I had nowhere else to go. My re-

turn to practice—it was not elegant. I didn't remember any of the teachings. I wasn't using any kind of technique, just staring at the floor and wondering how I'd survive the next three months. Gradually, over the course of a few hours, it became resonant, the breathing in and out, the sunlight on the floor. It was wonderful to observe at some remove the anguish and suffering of my life. I quickly realized that I was done with it. My mind was ready. I felt I could, for the first time, put it all down. This is important. It's one of Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching phrases, to "put it all down." I can't be certain this is what he was referring to, but it was the key for me. Relinquishing my life, my mind softened. It felt easy to penetrate deeply, much deeper than I had before. In fact, a whole new world opened to me that I had been oblivious to, even after all the years of practice. Suddenly everything was bright. I began doing Kyol Ches every year and finished three one-hundred-day solo retreats before buying a ticket back to Korea. I wanted to rejoin the lineage, to finish the monastic training. I needed to be in a sangha, with some kind of framework, to heat up and hone myself in Dahui's furnace, not just leave it to a single experience in the desert.

Now I've returned to Providence Zen Center, where I serve as head dharma teacher. I do all the retreats and help the Zen center where I can—a lot of carpentry these days—and streaming video teachings. It's really the best life for me. I'm truly grateful for all the choices I've made. About this, last winter I was sitting Kyol Che, and the abbot was leading the retreat. During interviews, I told him about the experience I had in the desert over the past twenty years, and how grateful I've been. It finally occurred to me, as I was sitting in meditation, that I have to stop doing this. I'm making something. Who is grateful? To whom?

Though it's been nearly twenty years since that opening in the desert, I've remained in an ecstatic state. I can't explain it. I can't share it with anyone. I had to find it on my own, through experience, not the teaching words. Though there's a brilliance to the teachings we follow, intrinsic to the method is the understanding that words are a hindrance. We train with kong-ans to develop the "before thinking" mind. We all struggle with attachment to name and form. Once we've assimilated the teachings, we can become limited by them. The true self operates perfectly, regardless. Trust it. Allow it. The words will find their place, later. ♦

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*Won Il Sunim has been involved with American Zen since the late 1980s. A resident of Providence Zen Center for several years, he also trained at Dharma Zen Center in Los Angeles and Taegosa in the Mojave Desert before moving to Korea to become a monk. He recently completed training at Baekdamsa Temple and is now a bhikkhu in the Chogye Order.*

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# Do Zen Masters Cry?

George Fernandez

“I need you to be *strong*.” The warning came in the form of these words. I was then told that my father had died. First there was shock, and a sort of numbness that lasted a few hours. The tears and waves of emotion came later. I was sixteen years old, and my relationship with my father had been complicated. He had appeared and disappeared throughout my life up until that point. I don’t recall seeing him at all when I was very young. I do recall once asking my mother why I didn’t have a father. It was shortly after that time that he started coming to visit—rarely. He would stay for a while, and then he would leave. An acute emotional pain would then appear. I wouldn’t see him again for months, and he’d promise to come by, but he often wouldn’t show at the designated time. As I got a bit older, I spent weekends with him, and this produced nice memories. Little did I know that he was struggling with substance use disorder. He was an affectionate and sweet man when he was around, but looking back on it, I believe he also struggled with guilt and shame. I

clearly recall him becoming tearful on several occasions as he said to me, “I know I’ve been a shitty father, but I love you.”

Where did he go? What is it that died? Most might say that his body was him (the old “skin-barrier” rationale). This is true from a certain point of view. But that’s not the *whole* truth, is it? When I think of my father, what I recall is the vast emotional and sensory experience I had in his presence—the smells, the sights, the sounds, the touch, the feelings, and the memories. Today my father lives on in these, and in the influence he continues to have on me. He lives in my DNA, and even in my son’s. So where did *he* go? Is he gone? Should I have cried for the loss? If I think of him and talk about him long enough, should I still feel emotional pain?

This reminds me of Zen Master Seung Sahn’s exchange with Gita, the seven-year-old girl who asked him about the death of the cat named Katz (great cat name!) that lived at the Cambridge Zen Center. She too was wondering where Katz went. He gently explained to her how everything in this universe is made of the same substance, and he used the metaphor of a cookie cutter to explain how different forms are made from this universal substance. I also like the metaphor of the ocean and its waves, which points to the same fundamental fact. A wave appears and disappears, but it is not really different from the rest of the ocean. All of this universe is the same substance, and really, the only cookie cutter is our thinking mind. So, Zen Master Seung Sahn’s brilliance shines brightly when he says that *before thinking*, everything is experienced as one.

But wait, does this mean that the emotional pain I feel when I think of my father’s death is a result of my attachment, my delusion, and my grasping for something which I cannot hold on to? Should I simply tell myself that his death is nothing be-

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cause he never *really* died? This points to the illusory conflict between what we see as ultimate truth and relative truth. The birthplace of dukkha, or suffering, is the intersection between our biological imperative to have predictability and control over our environment (relative truth), and the true nature of the universe as we experience it (ultimate truth). As Zen Master Seung Sahn repeats endlessly in his book, *The Compass of Zen*, “Everything is always changing, changing, changing.” (Is *it* changing, or is our mind changing? OK, I need to put *that* down.) Our survival instinct wants things to stay predictably the same, which increases our chances of survival. Biologically speaking, it is advantageous to have a kind of “I,” because it creates the motivation to stay alive. But ultimately, we know there is no real enduring “I.”

I have a body. This means I have karma, and as the Buddha bluntly and clearly stated, “life is suffering” because of this. To tell myself, or pretend, that I can come to a point of enlightenment in which I no longer suffer is delusion. In fact, my attachment to this belief quickly becomes a new layer of suffering. My father died when I was sixteen years old, and it hurt like hell. It still hurts if I focus on it long enough. The question then becomes, “What can I do with this hurt?” My practice can’t just be a clever form of escapism. Hopefully, I come to the point where I realize that this pain gives me the ability to connect to others’ pain and help them with their suffering to some degree.

My experience with my father, my experience with my son, my experience with my mother, my wife, and my life in general is all karma. It is real and not real at the same time. Zen Master Seung Sahn’s Zen Circle teaching captures this apparent paradox clearly. I’ve heard some people fault the philosophy of Zen because it often leads to paradoxes. In truth, however, paradoxes appear only because of truths that language cannot encapsulate. So, in the Zen Circle teaching, some attach to name and form, some attach to emptiness, and some attach to freedom. Ultimately (or *hopefully*), we arrive at that point where what appears is what appears—“Form is form; emptiness is emptiness.” This view encompasses the relative and the ultimate at the same time. With this view, everything that appears can be seen as useful to save all sentient beings.

It was a special moment for me when I discovered how much Zen Master Seung Sahn referred to the *Tao Te Ching* in his teachings and his kong-ans. As a teenager, I discovered that text and immediately felt a powerful connection to it. I was also happy when I read that Stephen Mitchell, the author of my favorite translation of the *Tao Te Ching*, compiled and edited Zen Master Seung Sahn’s *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*—another book that has had a profound impact on me. The *Tao Te Ching* often

points to the ten thousand things, and the nameless void out of which the ten thousand things appear. This points to the same nameless universal substance and the many forms that appear out of it. We cannot discard one without the other because they are not different, unless we are thinking and making distinctions.

My father was form, but I can also perceive that what he *really* was has not died. He is alive right now as I write this. *This is his impact on me, and even on you as you read.* If I have a desire to be rid of the emotional pain of his death, however, I am attached to being pain free. This truth applies even to my thinking. I remember that for quite a number of years, I thought meditation was all about not thinking. I was attached to clear mind. The truth is that everything that appears—every form, every thought, every feeling—is Buddha, *if my relationship to it is correct.* How do I use what appears? How do I react to what appears? What is my correct function when anything appears? I am still learning that.

I am fond of the following lines from chapter 28 of the *Tao Te Ching*, as translated by Stephen Mitchell:

The world is formed from the void,  
like utensils from a block of wood.  
The Master knows the utensils,  
yet keeps to the block:  
thus she can use all things.

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*All things*—thoughts, feelings, forms, experiences, events—can be used to save all sentient beings. I am forty-seven years old, and I have a thirteen-year-old son. How I wish my father could have met him. But then I remember that he is still with me—in my thoughts, my feelings, and my memories. From a certain point of view, he *has* met him. I’ve heard that wounds in a relationship between father and son can be healed within the following generation’s relationship between father and son. I have found this to be true. In fact, through the loss of my father, the love I have for my son takes on a unique quality. I’m not sure that quality would exist had I not experienced the emotional loss my father’s death caused when I was a kid. What a great realization! What better result of practice can there be? I don’t know if Zen masters cry, but if I ever become one, I hope that I do. I think healthy tears fertilize the emotional soil upon which love and compassion can grow. ♦

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*Bo Shim (George Fernandez) is a dharma-teacher-in-training and works as a licensed clinical social worker in South Florida. He is a husband, father, son, brother, grandson—and a member of the South Florida Zen Group. A music lover and former musician, he’s interested in technology, exercise, and nutrition.*

# *The Great Matter of Birth and Death— Apparently, It Can Be Settled*

A dialog on becoming new parents

*Christina Sullivan and Malik Salam*

**Christina:** One day it happened. A pulsating, tiny little speck of a human lit up inside of me, and I felt the immediate need to care for and protect it. It wasn't there, and then it was, just like that. I was elated and humbled.

**Malik:** When Christina became pregnant, I got interested (obsessed maybe) in the idea of birth in our teaching. The great matter of Birth and Death. Apparently, it can be settled! Well, we have a birth coming up soon, maybe I can settle it? So questions came up, like When will he be born? When was he born? What will be born? What does being born even mean?

**C:** Meanwhile, I was nauseated. And so hungry. The sensations always came together, at odds with each other. The nausea would make food look and smell revolting, yet the only way to get rid of the nausea was to eat. So I ate. I craved fruit, and it was summertime. Malik would spend over fifty dollars on fruit and it'd be gone in three days.

**M:** As I was carrying fruit back from the market, I thought: "He will be born when he leaves his mother's womb." That felt like a good enough answer. And certainly the accepted wisdom. Also useful to know, when people inevitably asked me, "Oh how cute! How old is he?" Yet somehow, it felt incomplete. He was already with us in so many ways.

**C:** And then I felt him. We were in Oregon for a good friend's wedding. I was resting in bed before the post-rehearsal drinks, reading. It was so subtle. Was that me, or him? I can still feel it now; my body remembers the movement. I can conjure the sensation from memory. Euphoria. I found that he'd move when I was still. So I'd sit. I'd sit still, often on the couch with Malik, tune into my body, and we'd wait for him to engage.

**M:** Soon enough, he had a name: Jad. He started to react to music, to light. When I would place my palm on Christina's belly, I would sometimes feel a punch—or maybe it was an elbow.

**C:** Jad wasn't much of a kicker; instead, he would make slow, sweeping movements with his limbs, like he was conducting an orchestra. He'd also tilt his head back, like he was stretching his neck, and his skull would press firmly into the taught skin of my abdo-

men. I'd cradle his head in my hand, imagining his hair between my fingers.

**M:** He already had such a strong, specific personality. Toward the end of the gestation period, most human babies turn head down to prepare to descend through the cervix, into the vaginal canal to join all of us in this bright and dry world. Not Jad! He continued to sit upright, butt down, head up.

**C:** Most doctors won't do a vaginal birth unless the baby turns, and I wanted a natural birth. We'd hired a doula, took a bunch of birthing classes, I even read a whole book on what's called hypnobirthing. I thought, "I'm a Zen student! I can do this; I can be in the moment." But also: "I'm in control." So, we tried everything to get him to turn. Music, temperature stimulation, visualizations, headstands, sound meditation, something called Spinning Babies (sounds scarier than it is), and moxibustion (you can look it up).

At the thirty-six-week scan, when he was, maddeningly, still sitting in the same exact position as always, I was crushed. I let the disappointment and deep sadness run through me. Then there was a shift, an opening of deep compassion and love. I realized I had been focused on preparing for this one moment. But the birth was unfolding in each moment we shared, and this was one of them. I felt closer to him than ever.

**M:** The last step we tried is what's called a version. It is an ancient procedure, more like a ritual. A kind and skillful Iraqi doctor tried three times to manually turn him. He did not cooperate. We trusted he knew something we didn't and opted for a C-section.

We told ourselves he was stubborn! Where could he have gotten that? Maybe that too is an ancient ritual. Or maybe he is compassionate, a wise practitioner of clear discernment. His head is in the ninetieth percentile; maybe he was sparing his mother the pain of pushing through. Correct assessment of head size, correct love for mother, correct refusal to turn.

I'm sure it won't be the last time we have an idea about what he needs, yet he does what he does regardless. We will be left to trust that he knows something we don't.

At a dharma talk at the Chogye International Zen Center in New York, I asked Zen Master Jok Um:

“When was Jad born?” He answered: “Before the beginning of time.”

**C:** In the end (the beginning?), it was quick. We scheduled the C-section for a Monday morning at 8:00 a.m., which meant we needed to arrive at 6:00. In true form, we showed up thirty minutes late. My doctor, Lana, came into the prep room at some point and said, “You were late?!” Maddeningly, this was the same woman for whom I had blocked out two hours for each prenatal visit, knowing she’d make me wait for at least forty-five minutes.

The birth unfolded like a performance. I was sitting on a cold table in a huge operating room, with over a dozen people, about to have a huge needle inserted into my back so they could begin cutting. Lana, impeccably dressed and made up, even in the delivery room, came over to me and squeezed my hands. “You got this.”

It took about fifteen minutes to get him out, and forty-five to close me back up. I wanted to see him come out; I wanted him on my chest right away. That first hour is supposed to be crucial for bonding and for breastfeeding success. His garbled screams, purple limbs raised up high, and minutes later he was placed on me. Tears streamed, but also: “Oh, I get why they wanted to clean him first.” And then they did.

**M:** I followed Jad and the nurse past the curtain, barely resisting the urge to take a peek at Christina’s insides, still splayed open on the operating table. Ninety-three, ninety-five, ninety-three. “Come on baby.” Ninety-nine! Oxygen levels were stable enough, and the nurse handed me my son. I was quickly ushered into the recovery room. It was dim and quiet. I took off my shirt so our skins could touch. “Is his oxygen really OK? How do you know if it dips back down?” “Oh he would turn blue. You’d know, don’t worry.” The nurse left us there. Didn’t tell me what to do. I was scared to hold him wrong. That I might hurt him. Then he looked up at me and held my gaze. I was soothed. He wasn’t in pain or in danger. He could let me know if he was.

I was reborn in these moments. In that way, Jad is my father too. He fathered my fatherhood. In Arabic, *Dad* is *Baba*. But the usage is reciprocal: it is a designation of the relationship, not the person. Children call their fathers *Baba* just like Americans call their fathers *Dad*, but Arab fathers call their children *Baba*, too. I don’t know the origin of this, but for me it has become a recognition of our two-way relationship. We both became *Baba* when Jad looked up into my eyes, after we were left alone together. Maybe that’s what was born. This new relationship. This care, this love.



Photo: Jiří Lněnička

**C:** It seemed so huge, so major, becoming a mother. This dramatic climax resulted in the birth of this little human, wrinkled and sleepy and completely helpless. He needed me in a completely different way than before. I didn’t know what I was doing, but I also did. I felt sure that I could be his mother, simply because I was.

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**M:** How else would we survive, but for generation after generation of love and care? We are so helpless right out of the womb, and the presence of each and every one of us is proof of an unbroken chain of love stretching back to the beginning of time. Conception, a fetus, a name, a reassuring baby, a relationship. None of these feel like a beginning, something out of nothing, a birth per se. They are all a continuation, an inheritance, a vital force branching into a new stream, already present well before any of us called anything anything.

**C:** And so it goes. Jad is awake, *gooboo*-ing softly. He wants milk—or *muhh?* in his words.

**M:** Jad is my father, he is my son, he was born on January 31, he was never born and will never die. What’s the point? Today Jad has a dry red rash on his face. He clings to us for comfort. We put oatmeal cream on his itchy cheeks. ♦

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*Christina Sullivan and Malik Salam have been practicing in the Kwan Um School since 2020. They and their son, Jad, currently live in Brooklyn and practice at the Chogye International Zen Center. Christina is a finance professional working in podcasting. She loves sweets, and sometimes will bake them if asked to do so. Malik is currently seeking entry to a masters program in mental health counseling.*

## Book Review

### The Circle of the Way: A Concise History of Zen from the Buddha to the Modern World

By Barbara O'Brien

Shambhala Publications, 2019

#### Review by Jess Row

Twenty years ago, when I was in graduate school for creative writing and taking Buddhist studies courses on the side, I emailed a professor I'd never met to ask if I could take his graduate course on the Chinese Buddhist canon. "Let's talk on the phone," he wrote me, and when I reached him in his office, he said, somewhat abruptly: "You'll need to read some of my writing first. Zen students usually don't want to work with me."

The professor's name was Robert Sharf; in the academic world of Buddhist studies, he was already notorious for an essay called "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," which dismisses the idea that meditation was ever at the heart of Buddhist religious practice, that Buddhism is rooted in the goal of a "transformative personal experience" of enlightenment, even that Buddhism is concerned with consciousness in the way that modern Westerners understand the term. Zen, Sharf argues, is hopelessly overvalued in the West, spreading the idea that a person can be Buddhist simply by meditating, without belonging to a sangha with its own rituals, canonical texts, and ordained clergy.

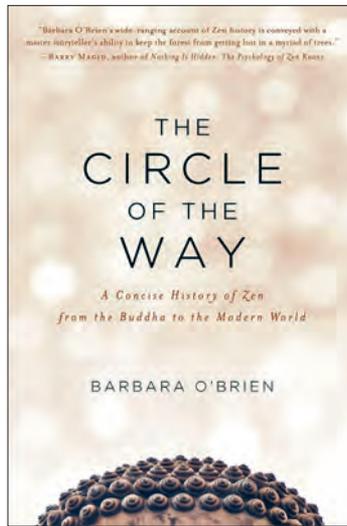
That encounter was my introduction to the often fractious and bitter relationship between contemporary Zen practitioners and scholars of Zen. "A remarkable number of current scholars specializing in Zen history seem not to grasp anything about what Zen is," Barbara O'Brien, a Soto Zen student, writes in the introduction to *The Circle of the Way*. "Academic histories dealing with Zen . . . are like books about the history of opera written by tone-deaf people [who] hate opera and don't know why anyone listens to it." A young professor of Japanese Buddhism I know put the opposite position this way: "Many scholars, like me, began as longtime meditation and Zen enthusiasts, but then took the time to learn the languages . . . [and] realized how much they had misunderstood, and then returned to write articles and books telling people that if we don't look more broadly we are missing out. The problem is that many people don't want new information, many just want to hear what they already think."

That last part, in my experience, is not true: most of

the Zen students (and teachers) I know *are* quite curious about our shared history, but they struggle to read texts that don't acknowledge Zen as a living tradition today. *The Circle of the Way*, in fact, is the first overall history of Zen written by a Western practitioner and intended for a general audience; the only previous book like it is *Zen Buddhism: A History*, published in the 1980s by Heinrich Dumoulin, a Jesuit priest and theologian who lived in Japan for many years. Thus *The Circle of the Way* takes on a huge task—or, more accurately, tasks. The first is to tell the story of how Zen came to be in historical terms, relying on archaeological and documentary evidence patiently pieced together by scholars over the last fifty years. The second is to describe how the Zen tradition, now nearly two thousand years old, continues to exist down to the present—not as a single school but as a global phenomenon.

The most useful and informative part of *The Circle of the Way* is that first task: the early history of Zen as scholars think it actually happened. It goes something like this: Sometime in the fifth century CE, a new Buddhist doctrine evolved in southern China that claimed it was possible to achieve direct access to one's Buddha nature (or Mind, or the Tao, or even enlightenment) through contemplation in sitting meditation. This doctrine, which eventually took on the name *Chan*, had different teachers and interpretations; one of the earliest was Bodhidharma, long thought to be a legendary figure, but now widely believed to have existed—if only as the writer of a small number of surviving texts.

Chan persisted long enough to take on the characteristics of an independent school in the ninth century, when a number of influential monks began to try to codify its doctrines and invented the legend of a line of succession of mind-to-mind transmission stretching back in time through Bodhidharma to the historical Buddha. In this period, the early-to-middle Tang dynasty, Chan still lacked the rituals and forms we recognize today, but it was being taught more widely, by hugely charismatic teachers like Mazu (Ma Jo) and Zhaozhou (Jozu), and a large oral tradition evolved involving stories and sayings of the mas-



ters, in addition to a small number of widely circulated texts, the most famous of which was *The Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (most likely fictionalized by a highly partisan monk, Shenhui, about a century after the death of the Sixth Patriarch, Huineng). This Chan tradition was still hugely diverse; it involved everything from tales of magic to encounters with legendary figures to intricate philosophical discourses to witchcraft, and it filtered into the independent orders of Buddhist nuns, with some nuns becoming charismatic teachers in their own right.

Only several hundred years later, in the Song dynasty, amid the blossoming of Chinese intellectual culture and the spread of printing, did Chan become anything like Zen as we know it today. The practice of face-to-face encounters between teachers and students, where a Zen master challenged a student's understanding through a riddle, a shout, or a gesture, may have existed in monasteries for centuries, but it became central to the tradition only when stories of these encounters were first recorded and published in the eleventh century as *gongan* (kong-an)—that is, “public cases”—or *yulu*, “recorded sayings.” These first written records of Zen encounters, speeches, letters, and poems were known as the *Transmission of the Lamp* anthologies; later the collected sayings of individual masters and collections of popular kong-ans, the *Gateless Gate* and *Blue Cliff Record*. The idea that a Zen student should study these kong-ans and review them in private interviews with a teacher evolved slowly in the later Song dynasty, and became the Zen “curricula” (like Zen Master Seung Sahn's Twelve Gates) that we know today.

In this era, Zen in China became enormously popular, both with the Song emperors and the literati—that is, aristocrats who often used public posts to support their interests in poetry, painting, and other arts. Prominent Zen masters and lineages competed for enormous donations, built huge temples in major cities, and recruited thousands of monks (this is the period dominated by what the scholar John McRae calls “Zen and the art of fundraising.”) The same pattern repeated itself, in different ways and with very different consequences, in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, where major schools of Zen blossomed from the thirteenth century on. In time—six centuries of East Asian history, the rise and fall of dynasties, shogunates, kingdoms—Zen folded into the broader Buddhist culture of each country, sometimes in a dominant and powerful role, and sometimes practiced in a rote and symbolic way, a minor element in institutions that were more focused on the ritual lives of laypeople and the practical needs of large populations of monks and nuns.

For the most part, Barbara O'Brien does an admirable job of outlining Zen's premodern history. People who have studied the subject deeply will be annoyed at her brief summary of the role of nuns in premodern Zen (only three pages?) or her brisk and casual summaries of important texts, but that's the role of a concise history—it serves

as a pointer for those who want to know the basics. As a journalist who doesn't read Asian languages—and who isn't an authorized teacher herself—O'Brien focuses more on the how than the why—that is, the facts revealed in the historical record rather than the essence of the teachings.

The least satisfying element of *The Circle of the Way* is in its last chapter, “Zen in the Modern World,” which attempts to tell in forty pages the story of how, as O'Brien inelegantly puts it, “the tradition left Asia and smacked into Western culture, for better or worse.” Here, it's not really possible to separate how and why. No one disagrees that there was a school of Buddhism called Zen, with a unified set of teachings, that flourished in East Asia for fifteen hundred years; but many in the world of academic Buddhist studies—scholars, cultural theorists, and philosophers—refuse to believe that Zen as practiced around the world today has anything to do with it.

Why? In simple terms, the dispute boils down to an academic term O'Brien never brings up: Buddhist modernism. The great majority of scholars today accept the idea that Asia's contact with the West—the imperial and colonial era of the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries—created “new” or “reformed” or “Westernized” institutions that adapted Buddhist teachings to Western values: rationalism, scientific objectivity, democracy, human rights, Protestant-capitalist individualism and self-reliance. From their point of view, Buddhist modernism is inherently different from Buddhism as it's traditionally practiced in Asia. From this critical perspective, the Kwan Um School of Zen is a perfect example of Buddhist modernism: it was founded by a Korean monk who was raised as a Presbyterian, had a secular education, and converted to Buddhism as an adult; and who in the United States taught American students with no previous background in Buddhism, devising rituals and practices for laypeople that are completely unlike traditional Korean Zen, which is practiced only by small numbers of dedicated monastics.

As a Zen student who's taken the time to read these academic critics, I think they have a point—even if I come to the opposite conclusion. Zen Master Seung Sahn was never shy about seeing himself as a reformer, characterizing his teaching method as (his words) a Zen revolution. Most American Buddhists (I'm referring to anyone born or raised in the US, whatever their racial or cultural background) know well that they approach Buddhism with their own values and assumptions; they know that practicing Zen isn't a time machine. Moreover—as we have seen in the history of the Kwan Um School—Western Zen institutions have learned over time that they have to be accountable to their members; they have to market themselves to a lay public; they need to think about inclusivity, about issues of race, gender, class, and culture. Like it or not,

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# Book Review

## Science and Philosophy in the Indian Buddhist Classics, Volume 1: The Physical World

Edited by Thupten Jinpa  
Wisdom Publications, 2017

Review by Dhananjay Joshi

Monks and scholars, just as you test gold  
By burning, cutting, and polishing it  
So too well examine my speech.  
Do not accept it merely out of respect.  
—*the Buddha*

The Buddha said to accept the validity of what he taught only after direct experience; the mere testimony of scriptures is not sufficient. The examination of the nature of reality is real only when it is accompanied by direct perception. Scientists take a similar approach, with experimentation and mathematical logic as pillars of inquiry. Buddhism and science thus share this mode of critical inquiry, which draws its conclusions from evidence and reasoning. In Buddhism, however, empirical observation has a wider scope than the range of the five senses, and includes experiences arising from meditation practice.

This, the first of a four-volume series, presents classic Buddhist scientific and philosophical explorations of the nature of reality for the contemporary reader. This series was conceived by the Dalai Lama and compiled under his supervision. The ancient Buddhist treatises identify three domains: the scientific, the philosophical, and the religious. The first two volumes in this series cover the scientific domain, with volume 1 presenting the physical world and volume 2 presenting the mind sciences.

Buddhism has two things that have great potential to serve everyone, regardless of their faith, as the Dalai Lama explains in his introduction. The first is the presentation of the nature of reality (or science), and the second comprises the methods for training the mind to alleviate suffering and discover inner peace. Four principles of reason characterize the Buddhist outlook on the world: the principle of nature (that is, the way it is); the principle of dependence (cause and effect); the principle of function (those we perform and those we support); and the principle of evidence (drawing inferences: if such is the current state, such will be the future state). Contemporary science gives us the Big Bang theory for the emergence

of the universe, but the Buddhist sources answer further questions, such as “What is the relationship between the natural world and the sentient beings that came to evolve with it?” The presentation of the nature of reality in Buddhism is fourfold: (1) the nature of the objective world; (2) the presentation of the mind, the subject; (3) how the mind engages its object; and (4) the means (the science of

logical reasoning) by which the mind engages its object. This framework has been adopted for volume 1.

The depth with which volume 1 is presented is astonishing. The exploration is divided into six parts: “Overview and Methodology,” “Knowable Objects,” “Subtle Particles,” “Time,” “The Cosmos and Its Inhabitants,” and “Fetal Development.” Each part is introduced by Thupten Jinpa (the editor of this volume and the Dalai Lama’s principal translator) and provides a list of further readings in English. It is almost impossible to describe what each part entails in a short space. I was especially interested in causality and time.

The impulse to avoid pain is our nature, and being conditioned beings brings forth suffering (the first noble truth). Suffering necessarily has a cause (the second noble truth). The ultimate cause of suffering is ignorance, but ignorance can be resolved (the third noble truth). The cessation also has a cause (the fourth noble truth).

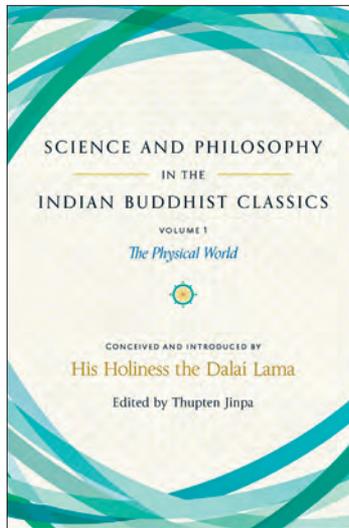
The section on cause and effect in this volume is enlightening. Dharmakirti’s treatise *The Exposition of Valid Cognition* states:

Where *it* exists *that* arises  
And when *it* changes *that* changes as well  
This is referred to as the cause.

The section on time says that it is posited on the basis of “three states of conditioned things”: (1) that which is not yet risen; (2) that which has arisen but has not yet ceased; and (3) and that which has arisen and ceased. This in turn relates to “entities of cause and effect that have already come, are coming, and will come into being.”

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# Shattered

Robert Lockridge

Bitter training  
Breeds sweet result.  
But maybe not what you seek.

Leave behind the faculties made  
To cradle and suckle your fantasies.  
Watch them flow away  
Like water through open fingers.  
Wide-eyed in horror  
Like you have seen graveyards  
Where flickering shades  
of risen phantoms  
Are reflected  
in the polished tombstones  
of dead lovers.  
Watch your mind grasp at fluid specters,  
Scratch and claw at earth,  
Reach to the sky  
To contain the wind,  
Grip and clutch  
White-hot coals  
In utter and futile hysteria,

Again  
And again  
And again.

Do this without relief  
Until desperate utility  
Rules your aimless passion,  
And imploding into your heart  
Breaks through the wall of self.  
From this no effort survives.  
No grasping is possible.  
No comfort remains.  
And absent that blinder'd toil,  
The making mind is shattered  
Like a glass goblet  
On the stone steps of a great temple,  
And the universe fills  
With the light of a thousand eyes.  
Not transformed or transcended  
Only this, right now, remains  
To be used as fuel for  
The furnace of your heart.

Sweet result,  
Bitter burden.  
Maybe not  
what I  
Am seeking.

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(Continued from page 23)

they have to be modern in ways that make them almost unrecognizable compared to the Buddhist temples that housed the original Zen masters of the Tang and Song dynasties.

And this brings up the most fundamental question: *Is there a circle of the Way?* O'Brien takes it for granted that Zen made the leap from Asia to the West essentially intact; she focuses on the names and dates of key figures, like Ruth Fuller Sasaki and D.T. Suzuki, with little discussion of the mistranslations, distortions, and cultural prejudices that have plagued Zen in the West since its earliest days. She pays little attention to the tensions that arose when Western women were first ordained as Zen teachers in the 1970s, and doesn't cover the modernization of Zen in East Asia, the spread of Zen in other parts of the world, or the controversial relationship in the West between Zen and the cognitive sciences.

In short, *The Circle of the Way* doesn't fully make the

case O'Brien wants it to make: that Zen as we know it today represents one continuum, that Zen is an ancient tradition that still exists. Scholars of Western Zen—including those who think we're not practicing Zen at all—might actually be more helpful. What if the level of commitment and total self-abandonment Bodhidharma called for, when he originally defined “wall-sitting” (*biguan*) in the sixth century, just isn't possible in the twenty-first? If the record of continuous mind-to-mind transmission from the Buddha to the present is mostly a legend, then what is it, exactly, that Zen Master Seung Sahn brought from Korea to the West? Serious students (and teachers) of Zen today need a book that addresses those skeptics and describes our practice in terms of continuity and change. *The Circle of the Way* doesn't quite get there. ♦

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Jess Row is a senior dharma teacher at Chogye International Zen Center in New York.

(Continued from page 11)

### Fireflies everywhere

**PP:** Is there any adventure you had while out here in the wilderness? Did a tiger ever come?

**Piniński JDPSN:** No, not that. But sleeping in a hammock in the forest is wonderful and never cold if you have the proper gear. Once, when I came here early in spring, it was minus 11° C (12° F) at night and it was not a problem. Sometimes, when the sky is clear, I remove the tarp at night, so I can see the stars. One night there was a meteor shower—so impressive! Stars are much more visible out here compared to the cities, and I didn't sleep all night. This year, I had a different kind of show: there were fireflies everywhere around me, keeping me in the light.

**PP:** Do you have a vision for the future of this place?

**Piniński JDPSN:** Chon Mun Sunim has a vision to finally build a proper monastery here, and I wish it will happen. My vision has already been realized: The place gives you the opportunity to become part of nature instead of just talking about it. Talking about climate change is one thing, but becoming one with the living creatures that inhabit this planet is another thing. We lost connection to our roots during our development in the last millennium, and this place makes it possible to reconnect. The Original Buddha Temple Project started for this purpose, right before the pandemic.

## 26] Original Buddha Temple Project

**Piniński JDPSN:** After the last Whole World Is a

Single Flower conference in the United States, which was focused on Green Dharma, after burning a lot of fuel getting there and spending time talking about it, I decided to really do something. At my home, I planted a forest on my land thirty years ago, and since then it takes back more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than I and my family will ever produce. I have solar panels and give to the grid more electricity than I take from it. So, this is just me, but the Original Buddha Temple Project was created to include everybody. Everybody who cares for the planet and does not have land for planting trees can send money to us, and we will buy land and plant a forest, which will become a living temple. It will belong to the Kwan Um School of Zen, or to organizations associated with us like the UNSU Foundation, and we hope that this forest will grow forever.

**PP:** So, this is a good end for the article: We ask students to donate?

**Piniński JDPSN:** Yes, everyone can donate, just visit [www.originalbuddhatemple.org](http://www.originalbuddhatemple.org) and click on the “Support” button in the top right corner.

**PP:** Thank you so much for all these insights, I hope many people will support planting trees!

**Piniński JDPSN:** Many thanks for your interest! Oh, and one more thing about the future: soon there will be a stupa installed for Wu Bong Sunim [Zen Master Wu Bong] on the site—check it out! ♦

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In Buddhist thought, the shortest unit of time can be thought of as a moment. The Buddhist texts describe two types of moments: (1) the shortest moment of time; and (2) the moment required to complete an action. Vasubandhu posits that the “shortest moment” is 1/65 of the time it takes a strong man to snap his fingers. One hundred and twenty of these short moments are one second.

Major sources in this work have come from Tibetan translations of original Sanskrit works, which are mostly lost. Two canonical Tibetan-language collections are used: “The precious collection of Kangyur contains translations of Buddha’s words embodied in the three baskets (Tripitaka), and the precious collection of the Tengyur contains treatises of great Nalanda masters such as Nagarjuna and Asanga.” (Nalanda University in India was the great center of Buddhist learning until it was sacked by the Muslims around 1200 CE.) Works of the Buddhist sages Vasubandhu, Dignaga, and Dharmakirti are also quoted throughout volume 1. This is an astounding effort and a rich treasure, with the Dalai Lama’s vision shining through. ♦

*The reviewer, a professor of statistics, has studied Hindu, Zen, and vipassana meditation for the past forty-five years.*

*He is a regular reviewer for Quest and volunteers in the archives department of the Theosophical Society in America.*

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For the most current list of centers and web addresses, please visit [www.kwanumzen.org/zen-centers](http://www.kwanumzen.org/zen-centers)

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kwanumzendf@gmail.com  
<http://kwanumzendf.blogspot.mx>

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dewit@fastmail.net  
<http://coldmountainzencenter.org>

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*Zen Master Hye Mun*  
Bisbee, AZ  
cochisezen@icloud.com  
<http://cochisezencenter.org>

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Scottsdale, AZ  
480-947-6101  
fraser.mnoel@gmail.com

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Little Rock, AR  
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lucyhauer@gmail.com  
<http://ebslr.org/kwan-um-zen>

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479-530-1098  
braylor@uark.edu  
<http://morningstarzencenter.org>

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Los Angeles, CA  
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info@dharmazen.com  
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831-241-3084  
scott.stillinger3@gmail.com  
<http://emptygatezen.com>

#### **Empty Gate Zen Center–**

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*Jason Quinn JDPSN*  
San Jose, CA  
viceabbot@emptygatezen.com  
<http://emptygatezen.com>

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#### **New Haven Zen Center**

*Mu Gak Sa*  
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New Haven, CT  
203-787-0912  
nhzcenter@gmail.com  
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#### DELAWARE

#### **Delaware Valley Zen Center**

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Newark, DE  
302-533-8819  
dvzinfo@gmail.com  
<http://dvzc.org>

#### FLORIDA

#### **Cypress Tree Zen Group**

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Tallahassee, FL  
ctzg@webdharma.com  
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#### **Gateless Gate Zen Center**

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Gainesville, FL  
gateless.gate.zen.center@gmail.com  
<http://gatelessgate.org>

#### **Orlando Zen Center**

*Zen Master Jok Um*  
Orlando, FL  
orlandozencenter@gmail.com  
<http://orlandozen.com>

#### **South Florida Zen Group**

*Paul Majchrzyk JDPSN*  
Southwest Ranches, FL  
954-324-3925  
southfloridazengroup@gmail.com  
<http://southfloridazen.org>

#### IDAHO

#### **Empty Gate Zen Center–**

*Zen Master Bon Soeng*  
Boise, ID  
208-661-6277  
clintonjamesmith@gmail.com  
<http://emptygatezen.com>

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director@tendirectionszen.org  
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#### **Ten Directions Zen**

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<http://tendirectionszen.org>

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Indianapolis, IN  
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<http://emptycirclezen.com>

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#### **Kansas Zen Center**

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Lawrence, KS  
kansaszencenter@gmail.com  
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#### **Kansas Zen Center–Kansas**

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*Zen Master Bon Hae*  
Kansas City, MO  
kansaszencenter@gmail.com  
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#### **Prairyerth Zen Center**

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#### MAINE

#### **Northern Light Zen Center**

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<http://nlzc.info>

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#### **Cape Cod Zen Center**

*Terry Cronin JDPSN*  
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<http://capecodzen.com>

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*Zen Master Bon Haeng*  
Lexington, MA  
781-512-2518  
openmeadowzengroup@gmail.com  
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#### **Plymouth Zen Group**

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781-733-9361  
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#### NEW MEXICO

#### **Albuquerque Open Sky Zen**

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Albuquerque, NM  
505-920-5795  
afssager3@gmail.com

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mkllo@stny.rr.com  
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### Three Treasures Zen Center

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#### Zen Group of Pittsburgh Matt Keeler JDPSN

*Pittsburgh, PA*  
abbot@zengrouppgh.com  
sites.google.com/zengrouppgh.com/  
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### RHODE ISLAND

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#### Kwan Um Daejeon Zen Group

*Andrzej Stec JDPSN*  
*Kathy Park JDPSN*  
Daejeon, South Korea  
+82 10 2031 8813  
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*Kathy Park JDPSN*  
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+82 10 2031 8813  
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http://zenseoul.org

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office@musangsa.org  
http://musangsa.org

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kyclzen@singnet.com.sg  
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hoehbeng@hotmail.com  
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+60 7 826 4848  
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https://www.kyclzen.sg/

### SINGAPORE

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Singapore  
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https://www.kyclzen.sg/

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**Minsk Zen Group**  
*Igor Piniński JDPSN*  
Minsk, Belarus  
+ 375 (25) 528-71-90  
ommani4@gmail.com  
Instagram.com/zen\_minsk

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**Brussels Zen Center**  
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http://www.kwanumzen-meditatie.be

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kwanumpraha@gmail.com  
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*Jiří George Hazlbauer JDPSN*  
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+420 776 148 494  
derossi@email.cz  
Facebook: Kwan Um Zen Tábor

#### Vrážné Zen Center Head Temple, Czech Republic

*Jiří George Hazlbauer JDPSN*  
Vrážné, Czech Republic  
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abbot@vraznezen.org  
http://vraznezen.org

#### Zlín Zen Group

*Jiří George Hazlbauer JDPSN*  
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+420 739 672 032  
krmila@email.cz  
www.kwanumzen.cz/zlin

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berlin@kwanumzen.de  
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Köln, Germany  
+49 170 456 5432  
koeln@kwanumzen.de  
http://kwanumzen.de/koeln

#### Dresden Zen Center

**Oh Sahn Sa**  
*Arne Schaefer JDPSN*  
Dresden, Germany  
+49 176 7008 2636  
dresden@kwanumzen.de  
http://kwanumzen.de/dresden

#### Frankfurt Zen Group

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+49 173 8526657  
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https://kwanumzen.de/frankfurt/

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*Arne Schaefer JDPSN*  
Hamburg, Germany  
+49 162 690 0684  
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http://kwanumzen.de/hamburg

**HUNGARY****Budapest KUSZ Zen Group**

*Zen Master Hyon Ja*  
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+36 70 457 0486  
mesztamas@gmail.com  
http://kvanumzen.hu

**Szeged KUSZ Zen Group**

*Zen Master Hyon Ja*  
Szeged, Hungary  
+36 30 586 4090  
szongdzsin@vip.mail.hu

**ISRAEL****Haifa Zen Group**

*Barbara Pardo JDPSN*  
Haifa, Israel  
+972 53 431 9816  
ofercohn@gmail.com  
http://kwanumisrael.org/haifa.php

**Hod Hasharon Zen Center**

*Yuval Gill JDPSN*  
Hod Hasharon, Israel  
+972 54 483 1122  
hasharonzencenter@gmail.com  
http://kwanumisrael.org/hod-hasharon.php

**Pardes-Hanna-Karkur Zen Group**

*Jiri George Hazlbauer JDPSN*  
+972 54 652 2812  
Pardes Hanna-Karkur, Israel  
zen.pardeshanna@gmail.com  
http://kwanumisrael.org/pardeshanna.php

**Tel Aviv Zen Group**

*Koen Vermeulen JDPSN*  
Tel Aviv, Israel  
+972 53 271 4595  
relavivzen@gmail.com  
http://kwanumisrael.org/tel-aviv.php

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Kam No Sa**

*Zen Master Joeng Hye*  
Kaunas, Lithuania  
+370 601 56350  
+370 698 29299  
108tomas@gmail.com  
Facebook: KwanUmLietuva

**Šakiai Zen Center**

**Son Kwang Sa**  
*Zen Master Joeng Hye*  
Vilnius, Lithuania  
+370 686 56392  
smirnovas.vytautas@gmail.com  
Facebook: KwanUmLietuva

**Vilnius Zen Center****Ko Bong Sa**

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*Zen Master Joeng Hye*  
Vilnius, Lithuania  
+370 675 16008  
songji108@gmail.com  
http://zen.lt

**POLAND****Gdańsk Zen Center**

*Zen Master Joeng Hye*  
Gdańsk, Poland  
+48 507 587 532  
gdansk@zen.pl  
http://gdanskzen.wixsite.com/zen-gdansk

**Głogów Zen Group**

*Zen Master Bon Shim*  
+48 502 606 713  
omczirim@gmail.com

**Katowice Zen Center**

*Chon Mun Sunim JDPSN*  
Katowice, Poland  
+48 501 430 062  
Katowice@zen.pl  
http://zen.pl/katowice

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**Do Miong Sa**  
*Zen Master Bon Shim*  
Kraków, Poland  
+48 530 677 081  
krakow@zen.pl  
http://zen.pl/krakow

**Łódź Zen Center**

*Igor Piniński JDPSN*  
Łódź, Poland  
+48 509 241 097  
lodz@zen.pl  
http://zen.pl/lodz

**Płock Zen Group**

*Zen Master Bon Shim*  
Płock, Poland  
+48 607 317 084  
alap7@gazeta.pl  
http://zenplock.pl

**Rzeszów Zen Group**

*Zen Master Bon Shim*  
Rzeszów, Poland  
+48 539 77 11 40  
rzeszow@zen.pl  
http://zen.pl/rzeszow  
Facebook: torunskagrupazen

**Warsaw Zen Center****Wu Bong Sa****Head Temple, Poland**

*Zen Master Joeng Hye*  
Warsaw, Poland  
+48 22 872 05 52  
+48 515 100 273  
kvanum@zen.pl  
http://zen.pl

**Wrocław-Wałbrzych Zen Group**

*Igor Piniński JDPSN*  
Wrocław, Poland  
+48 606 940 686  
+48 661 111 516  
zen.wroclaw@gmail.com  
http://zen.pl/wroclaw

**RUSSIA****Rostov Zen Group**

**Won Haeng Soen Won**  
*Bogumila Malinowska (Ja An) JDPSN*  
Rostov, Russia  
+7 904 504 2111  
+7 905 432 9090  
+7 908 513 5778  
mail@zen-rostov.ru  
http://zen-rostov.ru

**Saint Petersburg Zen Center  
Dae Hwa Soen Won**

**Head Temple, Russia**  
*Bogumila Malinowska (Ja An) JDPSN*  
Saint Petersburg, Russia  
+7 900 651 01 20  
contact@kvanumzen.ru  
http://kvanumzen.ru

**SLOVAKIA****Bratislava Zen Center**

**Myo San Sa**  
**Head Temple, Slovakia**  
*Zen Master Joeng Hye*  
Bratislava, Slovakia  
+421 905 368 368  
bzc108@gmail.com  
www.bratislavazen.sk

**Košice Zen Center**

**Shin Jong Sa**  
*Jiri George Hazlbauer JDPSN*  
Košice, Slovakia  
+421 903 134 137  
kosice@kvanumzen.sk  
Facebook: kvanumzenkosice

**SPAIN****Bori Sa, Retreat Center**

*Zen Master Bon Shim*  
*Barbara Pardo JDPSN*  
Alta Garrotxa (Girona), Spain  
+34 655 033 018  
+34 872 005 192  
boricentrozen@hotmail.com  
Facebook: boricentrezen

**Granada Zen Group**

*Zen Master Hyon Ja*  
Granada, Spain  
+34 671 284 810  
granadazen@gmail.com  
http://zengranada.blogspot.com

**Palma Zen Center****Head Temple, Spain**

*Tolo Cantarellas JDPSN*  
Palma de Mallorca, Spain  
+34 686 382 210  
palmacentrozen@gmail.com  
http://centrozenpalma.org

**UNITED KINGDOM****London Zen Centre****Ja An Sa****Head Temple, United Kingdom**

*Bogumila Malinowska (Ja An) JDPSN*  
London, England  
+44 774 297 9050  
london.zen.kvanum@gmail.com  
http://londonzencentre.co.uk

**York Zen Group**

*Lizzie Coombs JDPSN*  
+44 7502 607665 (Lizzie)  
kuszyork@gmail.com  
www.yorkzen.com

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Florida

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Florida Women's Reception Center,  
Florida

MCI Framingham, Massachusetts

Old Colony Correctional Center,  
Massachusetts

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## The Kwan Um School of Zen

The heart of the Kwan Um School of Zen is our practice. Zen Master Seung Sahn very simply taught "Don't Know". This

means in each moment we open unconditionally to all that presents itself to us. By doing this, our innate wisdom and compassion will naturally breathe and flow into our lives.

The Zen centers of the Kwan Um School of Zen around the world offer training in Zen meditation through instruction, daily morning and evening meditation practice, public talks, teaching interviews, retreats, workshops, and community living. Our programs are open to anyone regardless of previous experience.

The School's purpose is to make this practice of Zen as accessible as possible. It is our wish to help human beings find their true direction and we vow and to save all beings from suffering.

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-----  
*To set up a membership with your credit card, visit <https://americas.kwanumzen.org/membership>*

1. Please choose an American Zen Center (see preceding pages). If you are not located near a Zen Center, you may become a member of the head temple, Providence Zen Center.

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

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