



Prairie Wind

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KAN-FENG'S ONE ROAD

by Nonin Chowaney

Case 48 in *The Gateless Barrier*, an ancient koan collection known in Chinese as the *Wu-Men Kuan* (Jap. *Mumonkan*) is "Kan-feng's One Road." The koan reads:

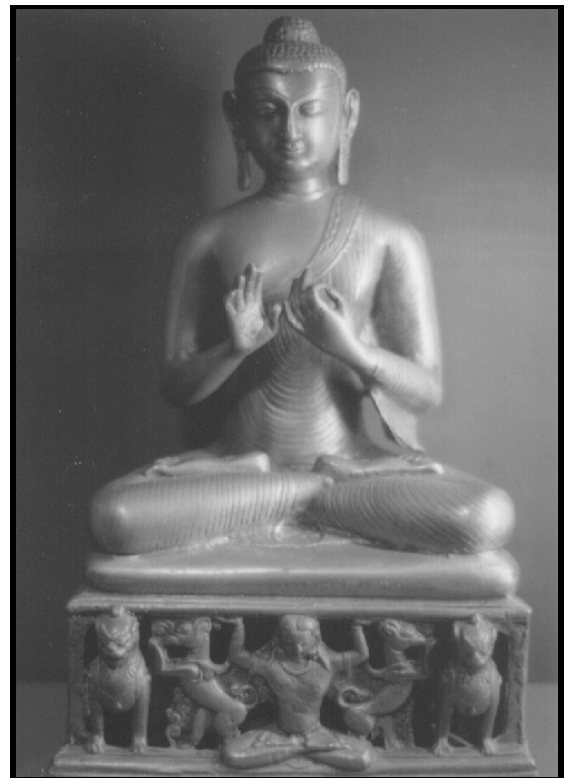
A monk asked the priest Kan-feng, "Baghavats in the ten directions, one straight road to nirvana. I wonder where that road is."

Kan-feng lifted up his staff, drew a line in the air, and said, "Here it is."

Later, a monk asked Yun-men about this. Yun-men held up his fan and said, "This fan jumps up to the Heaven of the Thirty-three and strikes the noses of the deity Shakra-davendra. Give a carp of the Eastern Sea one blow and the rain comes down in torrents."

This is one of my favorite koans. In it, Kan-feng cuts to the essence of what Zen practice is all about. I'm going to comment on each line of this koan and also on the commentary and poem added to it by Wu-men, the Chinese master who compiled *The Gateless Barrier* and published it in 1229. But first, a few words about Kan-feng.

The Zen master Kan-feng was a disciple of Tung-shan Liang-chieh, whose name in Japanese reads as Tozan Ryokai. He was a seminal teacher in Soto Zen. At Heartland Temple in Omaha, we chant his name every morning as part of our lineage. Another of Tung-shan's main disciples, along with Kan-feng and a few others, was T'sao-shan Pen-chi. His name is read in Japanese as Sozan Honjaku. If we take the "So" of Sozan and the "To" of Tozan we have the "Soto" of Soto Zen.



Heartland Temple Altar Buddha

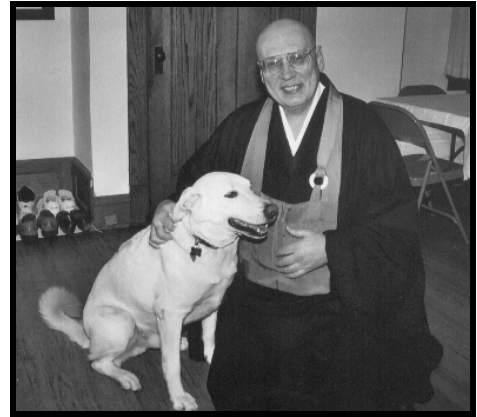
Since Kan-feng was Tung-shan's (Tozan's) disciple, he was a dharma brother of T'sao-shan's. He's not as well

continued on page 6

AROUND THE TEMPLE



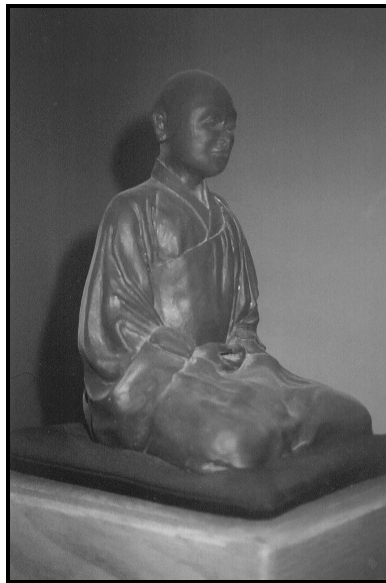
Front Entrance



Sammy and Nonin



Board Members Discussing Expansion Plans



Manjushri — Zendo Altar



Buddha Hall Bell



Rosie

NIRVANA

Various Views

The ideal that Buddhism teaches is called *Nibbana* (*Nirvana* in Sanskrit). This is absolute peace, the release from affliction, the ultimate liberation, the escape from the miseries of rebirth. While worldly joys are mutable and fleeting, *Nibbana* is firm, sorrowless, and secure. While worldly pains are piercing, unpredictable, and recurrent, *Nibbana* is altogether free from pain. It is the end of suffering, the vanishing of all greed, hatred, and delusion. It is the highest happiness, the incomparable emancipation.

Bhikku Nyanasobhano
from *Landscapes of Wonder*

The meaning of the word *nibbana* is clearly defined as freedom from *dukkha* [suffering] and as freedom from the mental defilements, which are the causes of *dukkha*. At any moment that our minds are void of “I” and “mine,” that is *nibbana*. For example, at this moment, as you sit reading, you probably have a mind void of the feelings of “I” and “mine,” because there is nothing engendering those feelings. There are just the words you are reading for the sake of abandoning “I” and “mine.” If there is some voidness (and I merely use the word “some,” it’s not completely or unchangeably void), then you are dwelling within the sphere of *nibbana*. Even though it is not absolute or perfect *nibbana*, it is *nibbana* just the same. . . . the *dhamma* which is *nibbana* lies in the mind of each one of you at the moment that you are to some degree void of the sense of “I” and “mine.”

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu
from *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree*

Nirvana is a state of mind leading to true spiritual perfection rather than a reward in the hereafter, as it has sometimes been described. This state of mind has perhaps

best been described by Meister Eckart in the words, “And a man shall be free, and as pure as the day prior to his entry into his mother’s womb, when he has nothing, wants nothing and knows nothing. Such a one has true spiritual poverty.” This is when compassionate oneness has so transcended all thought of self that not even the oneness exists.

Roshi Jiyu Kennett
from *Selling Water by the River*

The Monk’s Room, Shu-ku Monastery

At a place deep
in green trees,
a lamp’s light
burns long.

Spring pilgrims
make their way to the temple;
blossoms fall
at a monk’s closed gate.

In the mind,
the ten thousand doctrines are still;
a clear, lone spring
purls over rocks

We do not ask
about our lives, our work,
and the silence between us
we keep.

Ch’i Chi
trans. Mike O’Connor
from *Where the World Does Not Follow*

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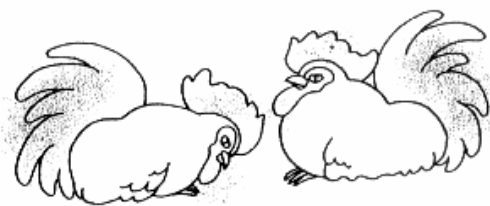
Nebraska Zen Center is a Soto Zen Buddhist Temple established for Zen practice. The center follows the tradition established in Japan by Zen Master Eihei Dogen in the 13th century and transmitted in this century by two Masters, Rev. Shunryu Suzuki, founder of San Francisco Zen Center and author of *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind* and Rev. Dainin Katagiri, who assisted Rev. Suzuki in San Francisco and later founded Minnesota Zen Meditation Center in Minneapolis. Rev. Katagiri was instrumental in establishing Nebraska Zen Center in 1975.

Rev. Nonin Chowaney, an American Zen Master, is NZC’s Head Priest and Teacher. He trained with Rev. Katagiri and was ordained by him. Rev. Chowaney also trained at Tassajara Zen Monastery in California and in Japan at Zuio-ji and Shogo-ji monasteries. He received formal Dharma Transmission from Rev. Katagiri and has been certified to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan.

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER — SANGHA NOTES

FALL PRACTICE PERIOD will begin with a **Two-day sesshin** on **September 14th & 15th** and will end with **Rohatsu Sesshin**, from **December 1st through 8th**. Practice Period is designed to **provide structure for people who wish to intensify their practice and their sangha connections for a specific period of time**. Practice period students commit to intensifying practice in three areas: (1) **daily practice at home (sitting and devotional services)**, (2) **regular involvement at the temple (e.g., specific morning or evening sittings, Sunday mornings, or work practice)**, and (3) **attendance at special events (e.g., sesshins, study groups, or ryaku fusatsu)**.

If you're interested in participating in **Fall Practice Period**, submit a list of your practice commitments in these three areas **by September 10th**. If this is your first practice period or if you're unclear about anything, speak with Nonin and submit the list of commitments afterwards. **Practice Period students will also keep a daily practice journal and will meet with Nonin as a group two or three times during the period**. Times for these meetings will be announced.



Our architect, **John Albers**, is preparing working drawings and an artistic rendering of our **expansion project** into the lot next door, which will include a **new entrance**, a **zendo seating 25-30 around the perimeter**, a deck in the back suitable for **outdoor kinhin**, and a **handicap accessible bathroom**. We intend to begin fund-raising in earnest after the first of next year. Once again, **many thanks, John!**

Many thanks also to all the sangha members who worked on **exterior painting** during the June work day. One or two more days and we'll get it done!

Special thanks to our across-the-street neighbor, **Dean Zimmerman**, a retired bricklayer, who's donating his time and expertise in **tuckpointing the bricks** in the exterior of the temple foundation. Sangha member **Doug Dittman** is helping with the project, and **our thanks go to him also**.

After leading **June Practice Period** at **Deep Spring Temple** outside of Pittsburgh, **Nonin** traveled to **Syracuse, NY**, where he gave a dharma talk and led a calligraphy workshop at **Zen Center of Syracuse**. In October, **Nonin** will be traveling to **Clouds in Water Zen Center** in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he'll be leading a study seminar in **Zen in American Poetry**, giving a dharma talk, and showing his calligraphy at the temple as part of the **St. Paul Art Crawl**. He'll also be traveling to New York in November to lead a study seminar on **Zen Master Dogen's Genjo Koan** at the **Garrison Institute** north of New York City, an event sponsored by **Empty Hand Zendo**. He'll also be showing his calligraphy and giving a demonstration at the Institute.

SESSHIN

There will be three sesshins at NZC this Fall. A **Two-day Sesshin** on **September 13th and 14th**, a **One-day Sitting** on **October 18th**, and **Rohatsu Sesshin** from **December 1st through 8th**. Fees: \$30 per day for members; \$40 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income. **Call (404) 551-9035 or e-mail heartland@prairiewindzen.org to register.**

DHARMA STUDY CLASS

Nonin will lead a **dharma study class** at the temple this Fall. It will meet on three successive **Saturday mornings** from **10 am till noon**, on **September 20th, 27th, and October 4th**.

The class will focus on **Zen in contemporary American poetry**. We will examine the dharma within the poems of Jane Hirschfield, Billy Collins, Mary Oliver, William Stafford and others. The class is **free to members**. The fee for **non-members** is **\$15 per class**.

OTHER FALL EVENTS

Sept 7	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
10	Ryaku Fusatsu
Oct 5	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
8	Ryaku Fusatsu
Nov 2	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
5	Ryaku Fusatsu

ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH – SANGHA NOTES

ZCP FALL EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 5 — Intro to Zen, 6 pm. Also on 9/26, 10/10, 10/31, 11/14, & 12/12
- 7 — World Peace Ceremony
- 9 — Ryaku Fusatsu*
- 11-13 — ZCP Closed
- 18 — Sitting at Mt. Alvernia**
- 19-21 — Two-day Sesshin

OCTOBER

- 5 — World Peace Ceremony
- 7 — Ryaku Fusatsu*
- 16 — Sitting at Mt. Alvernia**
- 18 — One-day Sitting

NOVEMBER

- 2 — World Peace Ceremony
Sangha Work Day
- 11 — Ryaku Fusatsu*
- 12 — Talk by Rev. Teijo Munnich:
Women Practicing Together
- 22 — Women's Practice Retreat
- 27-30 — ZCP Closed

DECEMBER

- 1-10 — Rohatsu Sesshin in Omaha
ZCP closed

*after evening zazen

**There is no evening sitting at ZCP on the nights we sit at Mt. Alvernia Monastery

This past May, **Mary Grace Mock**, **Tom Slater**, and **Sally Smyth**, seniors at **Sewickley Academy**, chose as their senior project the construction of a **large organic vegetable garden** at **Deep Spring Temple**. After visiting local gardens looking for ideas, they braved the inclement weather to lay out and dig the beds, erect rabbit-proof fences, and create beautiful terraces using rocks gathered from a local construction site. We deeply appreciate their efforts and are now enjoying the first vegetables from the garden. **We wish Mary Grace, Tom, and Sally all the best as they go on to college.**

This past June, Deep Spring again hosted the **Prairie Wind Practice Period**, led by **Nonin Chowaney**, Abbot of Nebraska Zen Center. Practitioners from Iowa, Nebraska, and New York came to join our sangha. During work periods, we completed the garden project and also broke ground for a handicap accessible bathroom designed by architect and sangha member **Mimi Jong**. Many thanks to **Mimi** and to **Nonin**, for not only leading practice period but also conducting a calligraphy workshop at Deep Spring.



ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

Monday - Zen Center Closed

Tuesday - Saturday Mornings

5:30 a.m. - Zazen

6:45 a.m. - Morning Service

Tuesday - Friday evenings*

6:00 - 7:15 p.m. - Zazen

*We no longer sit Saturday evenings.

Sunday

10:00 a.m. - Zazen

10:40 a.m. - Work Practice

11:30 a.m. - Service/Lecture

12:30 p.m. - Tea

1:00 p.m. - Closed till Tuesday a.m.

During July, we continued work on the bathroom, pouring the footing and laying block. Many thanks to work crew members **Karen Samms**, **Ray Jones**, **George MacDonald Tom Slater**, and **Daniel Koffman**. Special thanks to foreperson **Kyoki Roberts**, who got and kept it all going.

Our **flower gardens** have been enhanced by the violas donated by **Malissa and Joshua Smith**, the butterfly bush and wis teria donated by **Jyakunen Patricia Carpenter**, and the irises and pussy willows donated by **Dainei Jane Harter**. **Thanks to you all**, and **thanks also to John Ott** for the heirloom tomatoes, to **Kevin Coghlan**, **Tom Slater**, and **Daniel Koffman** for weeding everything, and to **Kyoki's dad, Joe Roberts**, for mowing every week with his Bobcat. Some machine!

A group from **LaRoche College** visited Deep Spring during June, and in August, **Kyoki** attended a meeting of the **American Zen Teachers Association** at Rochester Zen Center in New York.

Kan-feng's One Road

from page 1

known as Tung-shan and T'sao-shan, but he was part of the formation of the Soto Zen practice style that has been passed all the way down to us. From this koan, we can see that he was a pretty sharp Zen master.

The koan begins, "A monk asked the priest Kan-feng, 'Baghavats in the ten directions, one straight road to nirvana. I wonder where that road is.'" "Baghavat" is one of the names for Buddha. It means "Lord" or "Honored One." "Ten directions" refers to the four cardinal directions, the four other ones in between them, and up and down — zenith and nadir. In other words, the "ten directions" refers to the whole universe, all of space. So, there are buddhas throughout the whole universe, but only one straight road to nirvana. Where is that road? What the monk is asking is, "What direction should I take in practice to manifest nirvana?" "Which way should I go?"

The word *nirvana* is an important one in Buddhism. What it refers to can be hard to grasp. Literally, nirvana means "to blow out," as in a candle being blown out, or extinguished. In the mental state known as nirvana, what is extinguished are the "three poisons," greed, hatred, and delusion. When we extinguish all craving for what we don't have, hatred for what we do have (I prefer "aversion" instead of "hatred"), and all confusion about what and who we are, we extinguish the gap we have created between ourselves and others by discriminating consciousness and ego-involvement. We exist clearly and purely in the present moment with the mind at peace. This is nirvana.

Also, nirvana can be understood as the realization of perfect wisdom, *prajna paramita*, which manifests as existence as we are in this moment, without encumbrances, the greatest of which is the idea of a self. Once this idea arises — and it is only an idea — it manifests as greed, hatred, and delusion. In the earliest Buddhist texts, the Pali Canon, the teaching is that if you practice and practice and practice, you can eventually realize nirvana; it is presented as a goal

we work hard to reach sometime in the future. In Mahayana teaching, especially in Zen teaching, nirvana is the practice itself. Perfect wisdom, which is the practice of nirvana, is manifested through the selfless practice of zazen in our daily lives.

In our koan, the monk asks Kan-feng, "one straight road to nirvana. I wonder where that road is." Kan-feng lifts his staff, draws a line in the air, and said, "Here it is!" This is the one straight road to nirvana. Right here. This is it. It doesn't lead somewhere else. The one straight road to nirvana begins and ends right here, right now, in this very place. In every moment, at any place, we have the opportunity to manifest the absolute truth of nirvana.

Kan-feng's manifestation of this is drawing a line in the air. The line is not pointing anywhere. The line means nothing. He could have drawn a circle in the air. He could have picked up his staff and hit the monk with it. He could have scratched his nose. He could have done any of these things. Walking the one straight road to nirvana means to enter into this moment as it is, openly, without encumbrances from previous moments, and responding in whatever way is required of us.

The road to nirvana is everywhere and goes nowhere but here. At any time and in any place, we can walk it; we have the opportunity to manifest out of the deep part of our life that is masked by delusion, by greed, and by aversion. That deep, open place is always right here, right now and is always available to us. What we have to do is just touch it and then manifest ourselves from it.

Nirvana, then, is a state of mind where there's no gap between self and others. It's a state of mind that looks at ordinary people and sees buddhas. On the other hand, samsara, which literally means "journeying," and in Buddhist terms means journeying through various states of mind: hell realm, hungry ghost realm, fighting spirit realm, animal realm, god

WHITE LOTUS SANGHA

The **White Lotus Sangha**, a group affiliated with NZC, meets in three Nebraska prisons, **Nebraska State Penitentiary** and **Lincoln Correctional Center** in Lincoln and **Tecumseh State Correctional Institute** in Tecumseh. For further information, call (402) 551-9035, e-mail heartland@prairiewindzen.org, or write **Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave., Omaha, NE, 68131-1363**.

realm, human being realm. Journeying, or transmigrating through all these realms, is samsara.

Ordinary beings look at buddhas and see ordinary beings. Buddhas look at ordinary beings and see Buddhas. If we look at people and see ordinary beings, that state of mind is samsara. If we look at human beings, tree beings, automobile beings, and see buddhas, that is nirvana. The two are like opposite sides of a coin. True reality is the coin itself.

My master, Dainin Katagiri, used to say that you have to dig a well and keep digging and digging until water comes flowing up. This is our practice, the digging itself. He didn't mean that we practice and practice and practice and then all of the sudden something comes up. What he meant was that in the digging, water comes up. It happens here and now and is not the result of digging. Every time we sit zazen, we dig the well all the way down. Each moment of our lives affords the opportunity to live in the deep place from where the water springs.

So the monk in our koan asks, "one straight road to nirvana. I wonder where that road is." Or, how do I get on it? He is ultimately asking, "How do I free myself?" When I think of this question, I am reminded of what Seng Ts'an, the third Zen ancestor in

Kan-feng's One Road

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China, said when a monk asked, "Show me the way to liberation?" Seng Ts'an replied, "Who binds you?" The monk said, "No one binds me." Seng Ts'an responded, "Then why do you seek liberation?"

When we get locked into discriminating consciousness, also known as ego-consciousness, we create a gap, not only between ourselves and all other beings, but between ourselves as we think we are and ourselves as we truly are. To understand ego-consciousness, we have to understand how the awakened person, or buddha, views the functioning of consciousness.

In Buddhist psychology, ego-consciousness, or *manas*, is the seventh of eight aspects of consciousness. The first six depend on the senses: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These forms of consciousness arise when a sense organ comes in contact with a sense object. When the eye comes in contact with its object, a person, a car, or a tree arises. This arising is called "eye-consciousness." If no contact is made, consciousness does not arise.

Eye-consciousness is sights arising. Ear-consciousness is sounds arising. Mind-consciousness, the sixth sense consciousness, is thoughts arising.

One of the best explanations of mind-consciousness I know occurs in the following koan: A monk asked a Zen master, "Does a newborn baby have sixth consciousness?" The master said, "Like a ball on fast-flowing water." The monk did not understand. Later, he approached another Zen master and asked him how he understood the first Zen master's answer. The second master's response was, "Moment-by-moment uninterrupted flow."

A baby's manifestation of mind-consciousness is moment-by-moment, uninterrupted flow, thoughts arising and passing away. In the same way, the other

five sense consciousnesses – sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and bodily sensations – also arise and pass away. This is non-clinging. As a baby grows, seventh consciousness, or ego-consciousness, develops more and more. It arises after sense consciousness and manifests as the state of mind that forms judgements about say, a person perceived through the eye organ. That person may be a male we do not know. A negative feeling may arise depending on previous encounters we've had with other males. A judgement may be formed: "Men are no good." This is the function of ego-consciousness, and it can lead us to see the person not as he is

really live – unimpeded, free.

The last of the eight aspects of consciousness is Storehouse Consciousness, *alaya vijñāna*. Storehouse consciousness is a repository of all our experiences, and it is from there that thoughts arise and flow. In other words all our experience, and because there are really no gaps between human beings, all human experience, is available to us, right here, right now in this moment. What arises as sixth, or mind, consciousness arises from the huge, vast storehouse of human experience known as storehouse consciousness, which is always available to us because we're human beings.

A monk asked a Zen master, "Does a newborn baby have sixth consciousness? The master said, "Like a ball on fast-flowing water." The monk did not understand. Later, he approached another Zen master and asked him how he understood the first Zen master's answer. The second master's response was, "Moment-by-moment uninterrupted flow"

but as the person we think he is. A baby's consciousness is moment-by-moment flow. That's pure sixth consciousness. Things come up, things go. Adult sixth consciousness is moment-by-moment flow interrupted by ego-consciousness clinging to what comes up!

We can become intimate with this process through Zazen. If your sitting is anything like mine, then the flow is frequently interrupted by ego-consciousness. Instead of "like a ball on fast-flowing water," the ball is constantly getting hung-up on rocks and branches. When this happens, what I do – and instruct others to do – is let it go, and return to breath. Zazen is a process of letting go of all thoughts, ideas, and opinions and bringing the mind back home to here and now. Then, we can

This is what generates mind-consciousness (thoughts arising, thoughts passing away). Mind as organ comes in contact with its object, and thoughts arise. That's all. There's nothing underneath this. Mind does not exist as a separate entity, and mind objects also do not exist as separate entities operating independently of this process. What we call "mind" is a functioning, not an entity.

Also, there is nothing behind this process – no person, no "I." We may *think* there is, but in reality, there is not. What we call "I" is just an idea, and its creation – or, the arising of ego-consciousness – is what keeps us from experiencing the vast openness of being known as absolute reality, sometimes referred to as "suchness," or, things as they are. The way to nirvana, the state of mind that allows us

Kan-feng's One Road

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to experience things as they are is dropping off everything and entering the here and now free and clear. As Kan-feng says, the road to nirvana is right here.

Our practice is to keep ego-consciousness in its rightful place, which is as a mediator between storehouse-consciousness and mind-consciousness. In other words, when things come up; allow them to come up, and then allow them to leave. When ego-consciousness gets overly involved, we pick and choose what we want to hold on to as the object of consciousness and what we don't want to hold on to. We also create the "I," which fundamentally doesn't exist. We create this "I" based on ego-consciousness, and we say "my" thoughts, "my" views, "my" ideas, or "my" opinions. This is the great human disease, not keeping this unruly beast, ego, where it's supposed to be as a healthy mediator between thoughts.

As human beings, we can't help but discriminate. Katagiri-roshi used to say that we all love ourselves best, and we should. Survival is the most important thing for all beings. Healthy ego definition is something we have to have for a healthy human life. For people who don't, life is very difficult. Before you can practice Zen and begin to strip away ego-involvement, you have to have a solid ego to begin with. Most of us, however, don't have to worry about this issue. We all have very healthy egos; usually, far too healthy! What we need to do is keep the ego under wraps. See it for what it is. See that when it creates itself, that "me," it's creating a fiction. Then, drop it.

When we manifest from perfect wisdom, we realize that there is no "I," no self. What we call a self is merely a constantly changing collection of conditioned elements that ego-consciousness fashions into a fixed entity moment by moment. When we realize this and drop it, there's no gap, no separation.

This is nirvana. This is what happens to Michael Jordan when he plays basketball and all of the sudden he can't miss the

basket. His tongue hangs out, he gets a focused look on his face, his teammates feed him the ball, and it ends up in the basket. Athletes call this phenomenon being "in the zone."

Another example of this was the famous ballerina, Maya Plisetskaya. Some years ago, Katagiri-roshi and I saw a film about her on TV. She was teaching a master class, and every movement she made was exquisite, whether she was walking, talking, or dancing. Katagiri-roshi remarked that, "Her whole body is dance. She has made her whole body into movement, into dance." When she pointed, it was dance. When she mopped her brow, it was dance. When she talked to her students, it was dance. The title of the film was *Plisetskaya Dances*. But this title implies a gap. There was no gap. She had become "dance." She had completely erased herself.

Kan-feng lifted up his staff, drew a line in the air, and said, "Here it is!" Right here. This is where we live; this is where we manifest nirvana. We are living absolute truth every moment, but we don't realize it. We think that we have to do something different, be someone different, but we don't. We think we have to go somewhere else, but we don't. We have to go anywhere. All we need to do is accord with our life as it is, accept it, and just be there, wanting nothing. That is nirvana, and it manifests right here, right now. All we have to do is realize it. I practice calligraphy, and one of my favorite sayings to write is "One path, myriad gates." There is only one path, but we can enter it through myriad gates, through any human activity, whether it's the activity of college administrator, public health nurse, lawyer, cook, or Buddhist priest.

After Kan-feng said, "here it is," the koan turns to another famous Zen master's response: "Later a monk asked Yun-men about this. When asked about Kan-feng's One Road, "Yun-men held up his fan and said, "This fan jumps up to the Heaven of the Thirty-three and strikes the nose of the deity

Shakradavendra." Shakradavendra is an old Hindu deity. Yun-men is saying that this fan can jump anywhere. The whole universe is right here. He gives the same answer as Kan-feng: Heaven, hell, past, present, future, all right here. This is the place. All heavens; all hells; right here.

Yun-men continues: "Give a carp in the Eastern Sea one blow and the rain comes down in torrents." He is referring to an old Chinese folktale. What it means is that when it rains, it rains. When you strike that magic carp, the rain comes down. In other words, when you call, the universe responds. All we can do in our life is respond to these calls of the universe, which is our life. Whenever I read this line, I think about my entry into the monastery in Japan. When teaching us how to follow the daily schedule, the novice master repeated an old Zen saying: "When the bell sounds it's the buddha hall; when the *han* (wood block) sounds it's the zendo." In other words, when the bell rings, you go there; when the wooden block sounds, you go there. When the clappers are struck, you go there. That's all. Monastic life is very simple. When the universe calls, respond. Zen monks are trained to leave their personal agendas aside and respond to the calls as they come up. When the phone rings, answer it. On Sunday morning, people gather to hear a dharma talk. So, I talk. That's it.

However, when we sit zazen, we think, "Gee, my legs are hurting and I'd like to get up from here. I wonder what I can do later, maybe go have a nice cup of coffee and a piece of cake. When I get out of here, that's what I'll do," and we continue to fantasize. Where, then, are we living? Our attitude is, "This is not enough; I have to do that, or, I'm tired of this; I should do that." Meanwhile, life is blooming moment by moment, and we miss it.

As many people are these days, a friend of mine is troubled by depression. She went to a treatment center to try to get a better handle on it. Last week, I sent her a card. It had a few lines on it from a poem by Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Zen master.

continued on page 10

bus haiku

*three empty yellow buses
in a line
in front of the school*

...

*rain yesterday
rain today
alone in my bus*

...

*two old woman
huddle together
under an umbrella*

*wet sidewalk
wet bricks
flag flapping in the breeze*

...

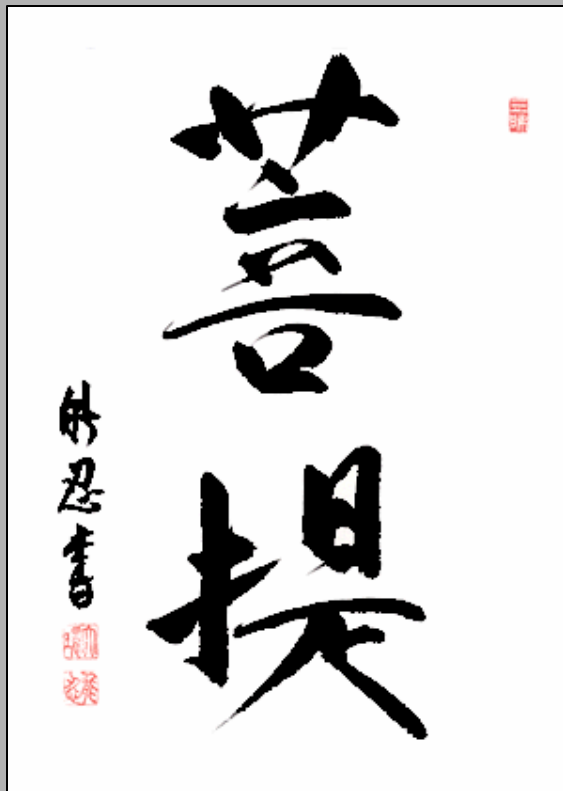
*in my bus
chewing on a toothpick
rain runs down the window*

...

*children run
around the corner
into the school*

*cars on a rainy street
whishhhh!
whishhhhhhhh!*

*nonin chowaney
1981*



Enlightenment (Bodhi)

Calligraphy For Sale

Nonin's calligraphy is for sale over the Internet.

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Kan-feng's One Road

from page 8

The lines read: "The real miracle is not to walk on water or to float in air, but to walk on the earth." That's the real miracle in our lives. The miracle of life, the wonder of life, is just to be able to stand up and walk. Do you realize what that takes – in this wonderful machine, this human body – to coordinate it all so that we can just walk. It's a miracle. What greater miracle do we need?

Every day in our lives, there are miracles everywhere. Have you ever really looked at a rose, watched it bud and then flower? What more do we need? What more do we need than to be here with each other? What more do we need than to sit down, have a cup of coffee, and quietly look out the window? It's a miracle to be able to do that. Life is moment-by-moment wonder. That's the miracle of human existence. Anything is possible, and the miracles unfold moment-by-moment.

Wu-men's commentary on "Kang Feng's One Road" is:

One goes deep, deep, to the bottom of the sea and winnows mud and pumps up the sand. The other goes high, high, to the top of the mountain and raises foaming waves that spread over the entire sky. They are like two children running from different directions who collide with each other. In this world there is almost no one who can touch the True Essence. In the view of the True Eye even these two ancient worthies do not know the road."

The one who goes, "deep, deep to the bottom of the sea and winnows the mud and puffs up the sand" is Kan-feng. He goes deep, right into this moment and mucks around freely there. The one who "goes high, high to the top of the mountains and raises foaming waves that spread over the entire sky" is Yun-men, flying high, up to the heavens, right here, in this moment. We can go up to heaven or down to hell at any moment. If I say something you don't like and anger comes

up, you're in hell. If I say something you like and satisfaction arises, you're in heaven. You can go to either place in an instant.

Wu-men's commentary continues: "Maintaining, releasing, each using but one hand. They safeguard the vehicle of the Tao. They're like two children running from opposite directions and

touch the true essence. In the view of the True Eye even these two ancient worthies do not know the road." I would say that even Buddha does not know the road because there is no road. These two teachers don't know the road because every moment in their lives they have to get on the path that's under their feet, as do we. The path we walked a moment ago doesn't exist. The path we'll walk a moment from now doesn't exist. What do we do right now? The insights we've had don't matter. All our experiences don't matter. Nothing matters but what we do now and how we live now. Where are you? I'm right here. Hello!

The Zen master Tao-shun addressed this fundamental issue periodically through the day by stopping what he was doing and saying, "Tao-shun, where are you?" Then, he would answer, "Here I am. Right here." A while later, he'd ask, "Tao-shun, where are you?" He'd answer, "Here I am. Right here." That was his teaching.

Another Zen master would appear at the front door of the zendo when it was time to eat, pick up a bowl of rice, and say "Come on, bodhisattvas," as he laughed and dancing around, "let's eat our rice." That was his teaching.

The two masters in our koan, Kan-feng and Yun-men "do not know the road," because it's not fixed. It's changing all the time. Moment by moment we have to present ourselves on it, ready for whatever comes up. That's all we can do, just present ourselves, that's all. If we can do it with a sense of humor, it helps, and it doesn't matter what we did the other day. It doesn't matter what we did five minutes ago. All the nasty things we've done in our lives don't matter. What matters is what we are doing right now and how we're doing it.

The Terms

Be aware that there's freedom in your head. Don't look down. Focus where the gesture ends.

The release should be fearless. The work is in the drawing close.

The two free gifts are the floor and the breath.

The end is not everything.

The weight is your own bones falling.

Follow the English.

Rest in the circle of your own arms.

***Michael O'Brien
from Sills, Selected Poems
Zoland Press***

colliding with each other." I really like this image. The two Zen masters are like two kids. One comes from the way of the present moment, right here, to the depths of here-it-is. One comes from the manifestation of emptiness in this particular moment. So they each come from different directions, both on the path, and then boom, they collide and fall over. In his commentary to this koan, the American Zen Master Robert Aitken says that they probably get up laughing. Ha, ha, here we come – boom! Ah, isn't that fun?

Wu-men ends his commentary with, "In this world there's almost no one who can

Kan-feng's One Road

from page 10

When he compiled *The Gateless Barrier*, Wu-men not only commented on each case but also added a poem to each. His poem for "Kan-feng's One Road" is:

Before you take a step, you are already there;
Before your tongue has moved, your *teisho* is finished.
Though your every move is ahead of the last,
Remember the vast all-encompassing crater.

"Before you take a step you are already there. Before your tongue has moved your *teisho* [formal dharma talk] is finished. Before I open my mouth it's all over. What and how I am is the dharma talk, not what I say. As soon as we open our mouths, we've fallen into the crater, because language is dualistic. Language creates a gap. It can only point to things. So the true dharma talk, the *teisho*, is finished before it's begun.

Wu-men's poem ends, "Though your every moment is ahead of the last, remember the vast, all-encompassing crater." Though every moment comes ahead of the last, no matter what we do, no matter what milestones we have in our life – graduation, awards, insights, ordinations – underlying all of this is emptiness; nothing is permanent, nothing is fixed, and nothing exists from its own side moment by moment. People, birds, trees, windows, books, and bells are constantly changing. Nothing remains the same from moment to moment. What we think we are doesn't exist. If we believe it, we're believing a fiction. What we are is created moment by moment, so just let go and create. That's it. Just let go and be what you are. That's all we can be.

Another koan in *The Gateless Barrier* is very similar to "Kan-feng's One Road." It's Case 31, "Chao Chou Investigates the Old Woman. In it, A monk asks an old woman, "What is the way to Mount Tai?" The old woman responds, "Go straight ahead." But when the monk takes a few steps down the road, the old woman says, "A good respectable monk but he, too,

goes off like that."

Mount Tai is the ancient mountain in China supposed to be the abode of Manjusri, the embodiment of perfect wisdom. When the monk asks the old woman, "What is the way to Mount Tai?" He is asking for directions to this mountain. However, the old woman gives the answer to the question "What is the way to Perfect Wisdom?" Her answer, "Go straight ahead" is the same as Kan-feng's "Here it is!" The monk, however, misses the point. He walks off towards Mount Tai. The old woman laments his mistake. There he goes, looking for wisdom over there. Too bad.

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From the editor:

We **always** need material. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, cartoons, letters, etc. The deadline for publication in our **Winter** issue is November **15th**.

NZC's Website Address is:
www.prairiewindzen.org

Our E-mail address is:
heartland@prairiewindzen.org

WEEKLY ZENDO SCHEDULE

Morning

Tuesday — Sunday

6:00 - 7:00 — Sitting Meditation
(Walking as Needed)

7:00 - 7:30 — Service

7:30 - 7:45 — Cleaning

Sunday Only

8:30 — Zazen Instruction

9:00 - 9:25 — Sitting Meditation

9:25 - 9:35 — Walking Meditation

9:35 - 10:00 — Sitting Meditation

10:00 - 10:10 — Service

10:10 - 11:00 — Dharma Talk

Evening

Tuesday — Wednesday

7:00 - 8:30 — Sitting Meditation
(Walking as needed)

Thursday

7:00 - 8:30 — Zazen Instruction
(by appointment; call 551-9035)
— Classes as scheduled

Friday

7:00 - 8:30 — Sitting Meditation
(Walking as needed)

We are closed on Monday

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