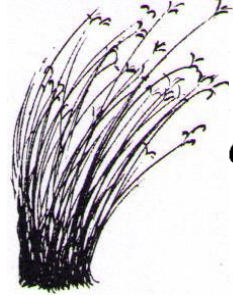


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Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Omaha, Nebraska  
PERMIT NO. 1370



*Prairie Wind*



*Published by the Order of the Prairie Wind for Nebraska Zen Center /  
Heartland Temple and Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple*

*Volume 25, Issue 3*

*Winter 2015*

# KAN-FENG'S ONE ROAD

by Nonin Chowaney

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

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 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.” “Baghavats” 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 our-

**Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** 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** is NZC’s Head Priest. 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 authorized to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan.

**Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple** is NZC’s sister temple and follows the same Soto Zen Buddhist tradition.

**Rev. Kotoku Crivello** is ZCP’s Head Priest. He trained with Rev. Gengo Akiba, the Bishop of North American Soto Zen temples affiliated with the Japanese Soto Zen system and was ordained by him at Kojin-an temple in Oakland, California. Rev. Crivello also trained in American and Japanese monasteries, received formal Dharma Transmission from Rev. Akiba, and has been authorized to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan.

**Rev. Kyoki Roberts** is ZCP’s retired Head Priest. She was ordained by Rev. Chowaney and received formal Dharma Transmission from him. She resides at ZCP and is the administrator of An Olive Branch, a Buddhist mediation and conciliation service.

*Prairie Wind* (© 2015 Nebraska Zen Center) is the newsletter for both **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple**.

**Cover: Peace** — Calligraphy by **Nonin Chowaney**

We **always** need material for *Prairie Wind*. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, etc. The deadline for publication in our **Spring** issue is **February 15th**.

Websites for **Nebraska Zen Center** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh** are at: [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org).

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## *Kan-feng's One Road*

from page 3

selves 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 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

## *Kan-feng's One Road*

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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 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 teacher 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

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## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER SANGHA NOTES

Our **Annual Sangha Meeting** will be held on **Saturday, Feb. 6th at 10:00 a.m.** We will be replacing Board members whose terms have expired and electing Officers for 2016. We will also be reviewing and finishing business from 2015. We encourage all who practice at Heartland Temple to attend this meeting.

**Winter Practice Period** will begin with **February Sesshin on the 13th and 14th** and will end with **April Sesshin on the 16th and 17th**. Practice Period provides structure for intensifying practice and sangha connections for a specific period of time in three areas: **(1) daily practice at home** (e.g., sitting and devotional services), **(2) regular involvement at the temple** (e.g., specific morning or evening sittings, Sunday morning practice, or work practice, and **(3) attendance at special events** (e.g., sesshins, study groups, or precept ceremonies. Practice Period students will also keep a **practice journal** and will **meet with Nonin as a group** two or three times during the period.



Fall Along Cunningham Lake, North of Omaha

Many thanks to **Rev. Kyoshin Wendy Lewis**, who practiced with us during the first week of December, taught a Study Group on the Heart Sutra, and led a shortened Rohatsu Sesshin. Hopefully, Wendy will return to teach again and will consider **replacing Nonin** as Heartland Temple Abbot, for he is needing to **step back and retire**.

**Thanks also to Meagan McColloch** for organizing our **Fall Yard Clean-up** and to all those who helped rake and bag leaves, put the gardens to bed, and clean the gutters.

This past Fall, **Nonin** hosted World Religions classes from **Creighton University**, **Grace University**, and **Bellevue East High School**. He also gave a talk at **University of Nebraska at Omaha**.

## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER WINTER EVENTS

### SESSHIN

There will be two sesshins at NZC this Winter: a **Two-day Sesshin on Feb. 13th & 14th**, and a **One-day sesshin on March 12th**. Fees: \$40 per day for members; \$50 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income.

**Sign up at the temple or E-mail us at [heartland@prairiewindzen](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen) to register.**

### DHARMA STUDY CLASS

**Nonin** will lead a **Dharma Study Class** at the temple this Winter. It will meet on four successive **Saturday mornings from 10 a.m. till noon**, on **Feb. 27th and March 5th, 12th, and 19th**. The subject for study will be announced later. The class is free to sangha members. The fee for others is \$15 per class.

### LAY INITIATION — RECEIVING THE PRECEPTS

A **Precept Ceremony** signifying **Lay Initiation** will be offered next April. Anyone interested in participating should talk to **Nonin**. He suggests the following for considering this step: Firm commitments to **sitting zazen**, **practicing with a teacher**, **participating in sangha**, and **continuing dharma study**. **Rakusu sewing will be on February 21st**.

### WEEKLY ZENDO SCHEDULE — NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER

#### Morning

Tuesday thru Friday and on 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

#### Evening

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

Thursday  
 6:00 - 8:30 — Classes as scheduled

Friday  
 7:00 - 8:30 — Sitting Meditation  
 (Walking as need-

We are closed on Saturday & Monday.

If you are new to the temple, you must have zazen instruction before joining us. Please arrive by 8:30 on Sunday morning for instruction.

## ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH SANGHA NOTES

If you want to receive schedule updates, news, and events notices, join our e-mail list. Go to <http://www.deepspringzen.org> and register. Or, e-mail ZCP at [kotoku@deepspringzen.org](mailto:kotoku@deepspringzen.org).

This Fall, **Kotoku** visited groups and taught at **Point Park University**, **Grove City College**, **Butler High School**, and the **Masonic Center**. He also gave an Invocation for the **Duquesne University Nostra Aetate/Interfaith Celebration** and visited **the bedsides of the sick and dying** in response to family requests.

We are now offering **Tai Chi** classes, taught by **Alex Landerfield**, and **Yoga** classes, taught by **Rachel Sanders**. Both teachers are donating the proceeds from the classes to Deep Spring Temple. **Check our schedule** for dates and times.

ZCP hosted the Japan America Society, which provided a **Bunjinga Painting demo and workshop** given by **Kato Fujyo**. (Bunjinga is a school of Japanese painting which flourished in the late Edo period among artists who considered themselves literati, or intellectuals.) Mr. Kato left this note:

*"I really appreciate your kindness during my stay. When I was in your temple, I thought I could touch the spirit of 'Zen.' In Japan, I can't experience such a feeling in any 'Zen' temple. So I was quite happy to find Deep Spring temple was full of Zen spirit. Thanks a lot."*

**Kotoku** has been asked to serve on a forum for **LGBTQIA** youth at **Chatham University**. Also, **he and wife Colleen** have been invited by the Buddhist Association of Pittsburgh to visit the **Stillpoint Zen Community**.

Please consider attending one of the **sesshins** that we periodically offer. "**Sesshin**" means "**to gather or touch the heart-mind** and is essential for the study and practice of Zen Buddhism.

Also, please know that you are welcome at Deep Spring Temple as often as you wish to visit or attend any of our events.

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Sewickley, PA 15143 tel: (412) 741-1262 e-mail: [kotoku@deepspringzen.org](mailto:kotoku@deepspringzen.org)  
website: [www.deepspringzen.org](http://www.deepspringzen.org)

## ZCP WINTER EVENTS

### DECEMBER

1-7 — Rohatsu Sesshin  
31 — New Year's Eve Celebration

### JANUARY

1 — ZCP Closed  
19 — Katagiri-roshi's Birthday  
24 — One-day Sesshin (Dogen's Birthday Commemoration)  
26 — Dogen Zenji's Birthday

### FEBRUARY

14 — Nirvana Day Ceremony

### MARCH

1 — Katagiri-roshi's Memorial Day  
20 — Avalokiteshvara's Day / Spring Equinox Ceremony

26 — One-day Sesshin / Sangha Day Celebration

Sesshin is an intense period of practice consisting of sitting/walking meditation, services, work, and dokusan (private interviews with teachers). You must sign up for this event.]

## ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

### SUNDAY A.M.

9:00 — Doors Open  
9:30 — Orientation  
10:00 — Zazen  
10:45 — Soji (Work Practice)  
11:15 — Service  
Dharma Talk  
Lunch

MONDAY  
Closed

### TUESDAY

6:00 a.m. — Zazen  
6:40 — Service

6:30 p.m. — Zazen

### WEDNESDAY

6:00 a.m. — Zazen  
6:40 — Service

6:00 p.m. — Zazen

7:00 p.m. — TAI CHI

### THURSDAY

6:00 a.m. — Zazen  
6:40 — Service  
7:00 p.m. — Intro to Zen Buddhist Practice

### FRIDAY

6:00 a.m. — Zazen  
6:40 — Service

### SATURDAY A.M.

6:30 — Doors Open  
7:00 — Zazen  
8:00 — Service  
8:30 — Breakfast  
Special Projects

10:00 — YOGA (1st and 3rd week of the month)  
Nyoho-e Sewing (2nd & fourth week)

Schedule is subject to change. Check website for updates on times and dates

## WHITE LOTUS SANGHA NOTES

The **White Lotus Sangha**, a group affiliated with NZC, meets in four Nebraska prisons, **Nebraska State Penitentiary** and **Lincoln Correctional Center** in Lincoln, **Tecumseh State Correctional Institute** in Tecumseh, and **Omaha Correctional Center** in Omaha.

For further information, see the **Religious Coordinator** at either of the above institutions, e-mail [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org), call (402) 551-9035, or write **Nebraska Zen Center**, 3625 Lafayette Ave., Omaha, NE, 68131-1363.

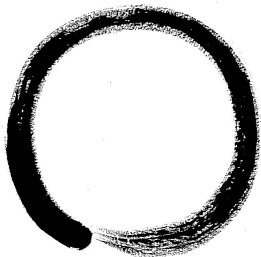
### *White Lotus Wilting*

*by Zenryu Vicki Grunwald*

It seems as if the White Lotus is wilting. Why? The reason in part is due to policy changes in the aftermath of the riot at TSCI. The administration is no longer scheduling religious gatherings there in the evening but in the middle of the day. We volunteers are working then, so we are unable to come. Hopefully, this will change in the future.

Another reason? I think the novelty is wearing off. Attendance is way down, not only at TSCI but also at NSP and OCC. Interest seems slim. While we never want to proselytize, we do want to make sure that people know about NZC and our commitment to offering Zen Buddhist practice and teaching in the prisons, so we can continue to offer support to those who want it.

If you haven't attended in a while and are still interested, consider attending. Volunteers will continue to come as long as there is a need.



## TENDING THE OX ZENDO SANGHA NOTES

A group affiliated with NZC meets weekly on **WEDNESDAY EVENINGS** at **7:00 pm** at **Branched Oak Farm, 17015 NW 70th St, Raymond, NE 68428-4041**. For further information, e-mail or call **Kanho Doug Dittman** at [dougsdittman@gmail.com](mailto:dougsdittman@gmail.com) (402-326-6954). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in advance.

Tending the Ox will offer three **One-day retreats** on the following **Sundays**:

**February 21st, March 13th, and April 24th**. These retreats will run from 9:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m., and a **mid-day meal** will be served. Attendance is limited to **10 participants**, and the fee is **\$30 per day**. **Advance registration is required**.

**Zen Meditation and Nature Workshops** will be offered on the following two **Sundays: December 20th and March 20th, from 10 a.m. till noon**. The fee is \$20.



The Branched Oak Farm Girls On a Stormy Day

## *Kan-feng's One Road*

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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 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 really live – unimpeded, free.

The last of the eight aspects of consciousness is Storehouse Consciousness, *alaya vijñana*. 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 storehouse consciousness, which is always available to us because we're human beings.

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 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

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## **SANGHA MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER / ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH**

### **Membership**

**While no one needs to formally join either temple to share in our practices, we invite you to become a member of either Nebraska Zen Center or Zen Center of Pittsburgh. Members are people who feel that Zen Buddhism is an important part of their lives and who wish to express that feeling by joining a community of practitioners.**

**If you are interested in becoming a member, please speak with the appropriate person at either temple after Sunday services.**

### **Financial Support**

**Buddhist communities have always relied on the generosity of their supporters. For income, we depend on those who believe in the good of what we do and wish to nourish it. No one is refused temple membership due to an inability to pay. We do, however, encourage members to commit to our financial support through monthly pledges.**

**We also encourage members to exhibit this support through participation in work projects.**

**The amount of your pledge is your personal decision. We ask you to support the temple at a level appropriate to your means. For those who participate regularly, we suggest a monthly pledge that reflects one hour of your earnings per week, or four hours per month. Because we are non-profit religious corporations, all donations are tax deductible.**

## *Kan-feng's One Road*

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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 of 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

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## Kan-feng's One Road

from previous page

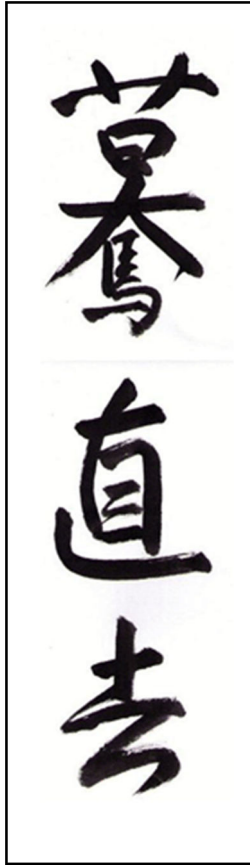
under wraps. See it for what it is. See that when it creates itself, that "me," it's creating a fiction. Then, drop it.

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 happened to Michael Jordan when he played basketball. All of a sudden he couldn't miss the basket. His tongue hung out, he got a focused look on his face, his teammates fed him the ball, and it ended 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.



Go Straight  
Calligraphy by  
Nonin Chowaney

"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

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## Kan-feng's One road

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Shakradavendra." Shakra-davendra 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. 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.

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## CALLIGRAPHY FOR SALE ON OUR WEBSITE



Mu (nothing)

Nonin's calligraphy can be purchased through our website, at [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org). Click on **Nebraska Zen Center** and go to Nonin's **calligraphy** pages.

There are **over fifty items for sale**, one and two-character pieces, longer phrases, and specialty items. All are **signed and stamped originals** and are written on high-quality paper, either Canson watercolor paper, Rives BFK, or archival matboard.

Nonin also accepts **commissions**

to write temple names, individual dharma names, and specific characters or Zen phrases.

**For further information**, contact him directly at the following e-mail address: [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org).

We sell and ship the calligraphy unframed. **Each piece can be mounted and framed by a good framer using traditional methods.**

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## Kan-feng's One Road

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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 colliding with each other." I really like this image. The two Zen masters 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 said that they probable 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 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.

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## *Kan-feng's One Road*

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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.

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,

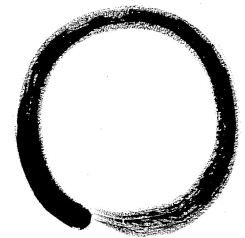
*"What is the way to Mount Tai?" The old woman responds, "Go straight ahead." But when the monk takes a few steps down the road, the old woman says, "A good respectable monk but he, too, goes off like that.*

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

## *Kan-feng's One Road*

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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.



continued on next page

## TWO POEMS BY JEANNE DESY

### *Midretreat*

*Pleasures of an empty stomach, thin tea  
taken alone in silence. The pleasure  
of silence stretching forward from this  
sunny afternoon, of day following day  
like stepped fields, like cows in the meadow  
making their easy way home at evening,  
following the one whose clanging bell  
blows seeds off the thistle, stirs  
yellow butterflies; silence like the sigh  
that follows a long-awaited death.*

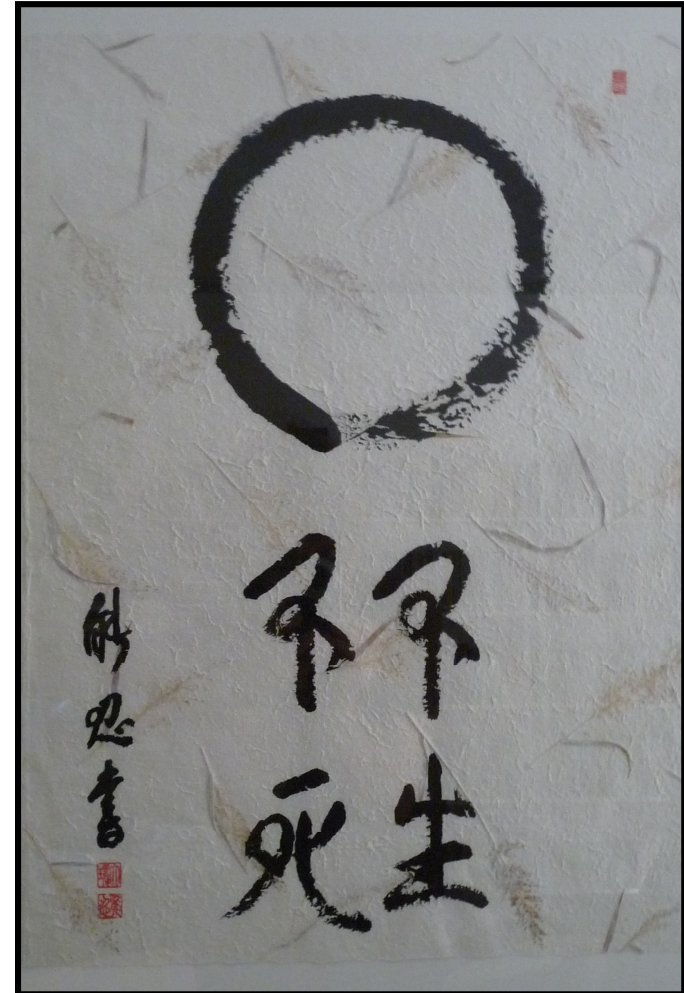
*Pleasure of empty time, empty spaces,  
sweep of breath through the mind.  
Dim lights, every seat arranged just so.  
The air of a place undisturbed, settled.  
Yes, even the air is at rest.*

### **Last Sit**

*There is no in-between retreat and home,  
and no ending of in-between spaces. We few sit  
at the soft moist edge of the hurricane. The  
late-blooming plantain lilies at the door stand still,  
except for one bloom fumbled by a bee.*

*The Teacher in his saffron robe chats easily  
with us, farewell, as the clock ticks and his plane  
descends through the haze. Next, the hills of India  
for him, closer homes for the rest of us.  
One last chant, The Great Prajna Paramita  
Heart Sutra. You could cry at the thought.*

*We all have it memorized. We sound  
like one body. These lines will carry us  
like the river to our separate lives. One koan  
says the bridge flows, the water stands still.  
On the plane, the Teacher will wear  
street clothes, he will look like anyone else.*



Enso — No Birth, No Death

Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney  
On Handmade Paper

## How Einstein Saw the Universe

The basic laws of the Universe are simple, but because our senses are limited, we can't grasp them. There is a pattern in creation. If we look at this tree outside whose roots search beneath the pavement for water, or a flower which sends its sweet smell to the pollinating bees, or even our own selves and the inner forces that drive us to act, we can see that we all dance to a mysterious tune, and the piper who plays this melody from an inscrutable distance -- whatever name we give him [or her] -- Creative Force, or God -- escapes all book knowledge.

I like to experience the Universe as one harmonious whole. Every cell has life. Matter, too, has life; it is energy solidified. The tree outside is life, a statue is dead. The whole of Nature is life, and life, as I observe it, rejects a God resembling man.

Man has infinite dimensions and finds God in his conscience. [A cosmic religion] has no dogma other than teaching man that the Universe is rational and that his highest destiny is to ponder it and co-create with its laws. The genuine scientist is not moved by praise or blame, nor does he preach. He unveils the universe and people come eagerly, without being pushed, to behold a new revelation: the order, the harmony, the magnificence of creation!

If we want to improve the world, we cannot do it with scientific knowledge but with ideals. Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, and Gandhi have done more for humanity than science has done. We must begin with the heart of man -- with his conscience -- and the values of conscience can only be manifested by

selfless service to mankind.

Religion and science go together. As I've said before, science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind. They are interdependent and have a common goal -- the search for truth.

Albert Einstein



Truth  
Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER 2016 PRACTICE SCHEDULE

<b>Jan 1-14</b>	NZC Closed	<b>Sep 4</b>	World Peace Ceremony
<b>19</b>	Katagiri-roshi's Birthday*		Group Discussion
<b>26</b>	Zen Master Dogen's Birthday*	<b>10-11</b>	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>
<b>27</b>	Precepts Ceremony		Fall Practice Period Begins
		<b>14</b>	Precepts Ceremony
<b>Feb 8</b>	Buddha's Parinirvana*	<b>29</b>	Zen Master Dogen's Memorial Day*
<b>13-14</b>	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>		
	Winter Practice Period Begins	<b>Oct 2</b>	World Peace Ceremony
<b>21</b>	Rakusu Sewing Begins		Group Discussion
<b>24</b>	Precepts Ceremony	<b>15</b>	<b>One-day Sesshin</b>
		<b>18</b>	Bodhidharma Day*
<b>Mar 1</b>	Katagiri-roshi's Memorial Day*	<b>19</b>	Precepts Ceremony
<b>6</b>	Group Discussion		
<b>12</b>	<b>One-day Sesshin</b>	<b>Nov 6</b>	World Peace Ceremony
<b>23</b>	Precepts Ceremony		Group Discussion
<b>30-4/2</b>	Lay Initiation Week	<b>16</b>	Precepts Ceremony
		<b>23-26</b>	NZC Closed
<b>Apr 3</b>	Lay Initiation		
<b>8</b>	Buddha's Birthday*	<b>Dec 1-7</b>	<b>Rohatsu Sesshin</b>
<b>16-17</b>	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>		Fall Practice Period Ends
	Winter Practice Period Ends	<b>14</b>	Precepts Ceremony
<b>20</b>	Precepts Ceremony	<b>31</b>	New Year's Eve Services
<b>May 1</b>	World Peace Ceremony		
	Group Discussion		
<b>8</b>	Remembrance Day		
<b>18</b>	Precepts Ceremony		
<b>26-31</b>	NZC Closed		
<b>Jun 5</b>	World Peace Ceremony		
	Group Discussion		
<b>18-19</b>	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>		
<b>22</b>	Precepts Ceremony		
<b>Jul 3</b>	World Peace Ceremony		
	Group Discussion		
<b>19</b>	<b>Narasaki-roshi's Memorial Day*</b>		
<b>20</b>	Precepts Ceremony		
<b>Aug 3</b>	World Peace Ceremony		
	Group Discussion		
<b>17</b>	Precepts Ceremony		

\*Special services commemorating these days will be held before dharma talk on the Sunday nearest the date indicated.

Precepts Ceremonies follow evening zazen.

World Peace Ceremonies precede monthly Group Discussion