

Acknowledging A World

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In the book *The Gateless Barrier: Zen Comments On The Mumonkan*, Zen Master Shibayama relates a poem, in Case 12: “Zuigan Calls ‘Master’”:

Those who search for the Way do not realize the Truth,
They only know their own discriminating consciousness.
This is the cause of the endless cycle of birth and death,
Yet ignorant people take it for the Original Man.

You have to understand discriminating mind to be able to see why to search for the Way (to seek it outside yourself, and including the world) is futile, given it [discriminating mind], and leads one to the same peril as anyone who discriminates the world. You simply cannot place it, you fall into the same trap, and are led astray. That is, in looking elsewhere, you’re already finding the world you started with (the interpretation, the discriminating mind) and get nowhere. It’s discriminating mind that is the ruler of its domain, and this must be penetrated, from the Zen view.

The above poem, at once, is also sarcastically ironical. In seeking the Way, in really working with it, through dedicated effort and effortless effort-putting, one does at some point drop one’s own discriminating consciousness, etc., through developing realization, and ‘noticing’. Once you become aware of the phrase, ‘the Way’, you can become sensitive to it, and start noticing it, and participating. So, perfect Zen. The ignorant notice this all, and aren’t so ignorant after all, it turns out. Dogen wrote, “Some go to the river to catch fish, some to catch the Way, some to catch themselves, and some to catch catching.” [“Moon In A Dewdrop”, edited by Tanahashi, the essay “Guidelines For Studying The Way”.] How apropos.

The dualistic view is to see things as strictly separable, yes/no, or binary un-interconnected opposites. The nondual mind sees that things are inseparable, without basis for discrimination, and without non-interconnected boundaries; but not that they are the same. Discriminating mind is to see things as strictly individual, separable, and distinct (hard-edged separable, distinct reality): “things” and “objects” that are unto themselves. To see that there is a lack of ego-substance and that there is neither being nor non-being contradicts the discriminating unfolding, and helps one penetrate to non-discriminating mind. With discriminating mind, you cannot see the depth of the relational. You cannot see the dependent arising of things (*pratityasamutpada*), or the unfolding relative (things, no-thing, and ma (Japanese: ‘the space between’) are relative to each other, and this unfolds in a continual and instantaneous way, and includes both the integers and the real numbers, at-once-and-unfolding present). And you cannot see that it is neither being nor non-being, but co-arising ‘at-once and aware’ (furthermore: the universe is an unfolding catenation) and mutually aware (like a wall and the space in a room), an illusion that is at once very actual (The Buddha, *The Lankavatara Sutra* translated by D. T. Suzuki); the fusion of the abstract and the concrete (Nagarjuna, *Fundamental Wisdom Of The Middle*

Way translated by Nishijima). With discriminating mind, one sees only grasped and grasping. To penetrate this is suddenly to become aware of ‘all of the above’, in the world, and the world unfolds dynamically, at once, the participant, the most astonishing thing, yet ordinary mind – enlightenment. And this can be deepened. Yet there are apparently 84,000 types of enlightenment, and I believe this to be the case; it’s one type after another, within another, etc. Realization in the mind is the world realized, and the world-and-I-myself (one unfolding, so dynamic, just-as) is just this expression. One can realize this for oneself.

But I wanted to call your attention to something a little while later. Shibayama writes the following paragraph:

In my training days I started to recite this poem in front of my teacher. I had barely finished the first line, “Those who search for the Way do not realize the Truth,” when he assailed me, saying “Leave aside the poem. Now what is *your* Truth?” I remember that I was quite speechless at his severe, demanding question. [p. 97]

Note that statement, the question, by Shibayama’s teacher: “What is *your* Truth?”, insistent. Perhaps this is too strong for a psych unit, to be uttered by the psychiatrist to the individual, but what of the statement as a genuine inquiry? Such things as: What is your experience? Do you have any joy, centeredness, dilemma, questions, and perspectives you’d like to share? If you care to share them, what are your mental states, emotive states, intentional states, and physical states? What are the things, ideas, emotions, feelings, and people most important to you, and in what ways? What is your thought space, energy states, perception, speech and action, and patterns of speech and action? What do you wish to bring to the table in terms of ‘reason’? What is the case, in the situation, and for you? For others? What is your objective world, subjectively, and how do you bring the subjective to it? What is the concrete world, before you, and how does that relate to your thoughts and ideas, and any sense of the relational you might have? How does the world unfold before you – and also with you as participant – day to day?

This is inquiry.[1] This is asking both the psych unit psychiatrist and the individual to dialogue[2], without judgment, simply taking an awareness of, bringing things, points of view, experience, relationship, and reason to the table.

The psych unit psychiatrist (and psych team) can bring any number of perspectives to the table, in a genuinely helpful manner. This should be dialogue. It should be dimension, vocabulary, logic, realism, and participant – and the face of compassion.

One needs to have one’s world acknowledged. Not unilateral pronouncements about one’s state of affairs.[3][4]

So Shibayama’s Zen teacher’s “severe, demanding” question, was, in the context of Zen training, quite compassionate. And it leads to the question: “Where do *you* start from?” And, “What is *your* center?” This can be adapted for use in the psych unit, and should be.

Footnotes

1. See also my paper “Establishing A Point And Field Of Inquiry”.
2. The individual might ask of the psychiatrist, “What is your standpoint on such-and-such, and why do you hold that view?” and “How do you suggest I approach this or that experiential or dilemma, or no-dilemma; attitude, thought, speech, or action?” and “How do you suggest I mediate with others, and the social-relational?” This demands a genuine psychiatrist.
3. Unilateral pronouncements and a false, biased interpretation of the objective (a so-called ‘objective view’) are the rule in American psych unit psychiatry, through to 2018. This is a time that both is modern and should be drawing from the ancients. The interplay of the subjective and the objective, an actual, dynamic space, needs to be noticed. The individual as participant needs to be 100%. (See not only this paper, but my paper [From Physics: If It’s Objective, Then It’s Participant; And A Subject Is Also Participant, Of-, From-, And To-](#).) The standpoint of both the individual and the psych unit psychiatrist must be acknowledged. They are both worlds and worlds, intersecting each other.
4. We all should have the right to our own philosophy, so long as we reinforce that right in others. (This may be consistent with Hegel, *Philosophy Of Right*.) And see the book *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* by Wittgenstein; note that in this he says that a state of affairs is a state of things and objects, and previously notes the interesting feature of things that they have a certain independence, yet later he talks about their connections: then, ‘dependent arising’, from Buddhist thought. Buddhism might also note that things are in neither state, being nor non-being. And in Wittgenstein’s books, he starts with “The world is *all* that is the case.” [Italics added.] This matters.