

Issue # 36



Fourth of 1991

The *Zen Freethinker* is devoted to a more free spirit in Zen. Our emphasis is on the natural and individual way of a pilgrim, rather than the more formal way of an organization, temple, or sect.

As exemplars of such a spirit, we turn to Daisetz T. Suzuki, Alan Watts, and Nyogen Senzaki, three important early pioneers of Zen in the West. Although they greatly loved traditional Zen, in their own lives they each chose to go a more free-ranging and individual way, remaining unaffiliated to any particular organization or sect. Nor did they seek some lofty religious title, no doubt in the spirit of Rinzai's phrase, "A true man of no rank". They then might indeed be regarded as being *Zen Freethinkers*. Others that might be well included here are Paul Reps, R.H. Blyth, Christmas Humphreys, and in Japan, those with a spirit akin to that of D.T. Suzuki.

Zen historically has affirmed and integrated with different native traditions, such as Taoism, Confucianism, and Shintoism. In the West, the best companion to Zen would seem to be the Freethinking tradition. For example, take such Freethinkers as Edward Herbert, Voltaire, Rousseau, Spinoza, Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Walt Whitman. Trying to define so varied a tradition is hazardous. Nevertheless it might be fair to say: "Freethinking trusts most deeply in natural religion, and in the natural divinity which is the inmost nature of everyone. A freethinker then is free from dependence upon revealed truth or external religious authority". Combine such a definition with a definition of Zen, if you dare, and you have a *Zen Freethinker*.

For our "subscription fee", we request a letter from you now and then for our pages. But if that is too much to ask, you might consider some small monetary contribution instead.



The Buddha and his two disciples, Sariputra and Mahamaudgalyayana.

## - [ Notice ] -

The old title of the ZF was the *Cloud-Hidden Friends Letter*. We remain somewhat hidden in the gentle fog of San Francisco, and so are fond of a verse by Chia Tao, translated here by Lin Yu Tang:

### Searching For The Hermit In Vain

*I asked the boy beneath the pines.  
He said, "The master's gone alone  
Herb-picking somewhere on the mount,  
Cloud-Hidden, whereabouts unknown."*

# THE ZEN FREETHINKER

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## EDITOR'S CORNER

1.) This issue has a new experiment format for the ZF, thanks to the very generous and expert assistance of friend Richard Wooster. However, it is already becoming clear that this involves perhaps too much extra work for us.

For the next issue, we will try a different format, with a centerfold 8 1/2" x 11".

Also, although retyping everything would be a lot of work for us, we are quite willing to do some of it if it is too difficult for you.

If you can type, however, it would be very helpful, at least for the next issue, if you would type your letters on standard 8 1/2" x 11" paper with 2" margins on sides, top, and bottom. Please remember, 2" margins on sides, top, and bottom. We will then do the cut-to-size and paste-up ourselves.

(2) And if some of you want to help in an even more important way in our fellowship, I can think of no better way than for you to volunteer now and then to personally write to someone whose letter appears in the ZF. Even if they never reply, I'm sure they would appreciate it. Even if no one ever writes you in response to your own letter, what the heck, write them anyway with a Bodhisattva open and giving spirit.

(3) Note that although the ZF is free, we wouldn't exactly refuse any modest donations to help with our budget.

(4) There has been some real resonance to Lynn Olson's letter in the last issue concerning self-ordination. More feedback from you would be appreciated. Lynn's suggestion is not quite as revolutionary as it might first appear. For example, Junjuro Takakusu, certainly one of the greatest scholars of modern times, comments that the Japanese Buddhist tradition from the very start has been one in the spirit of self-ordination. If you are interested, some scriptural sources here would be the Queen Srimala Sutra, the Brahmajala Sutra, and the Bodhisattva Pratimoksha Sutra.

(5) You might be interested in knowing that Fredrick Franck, a contributor to the ZF, has come out with a new book "To Be Human against All Odds" (Asian Humanities Press, Berkeley). His other books too are in a real ZF spirit. I found "Buddha Eye", an anthology on the Kyoto School with Nishida and all, to be a very great help. Furthermore, even though highly philosophical, it is highly readable. Also "Zen and Zen Classics", with selections from R.H. Blyth (Helian International), is a real delight, and another natural for the ZF.

Ananda Dalenberg, Editor

**SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP**

By Dharmachari Manjuvajral

Most people who engage in some form of spiritual study or practice will at one time or another consider having contact with other like-minded people. They will consider joining a spiritual community. Now what is a spiritual community? Haunted by images of mindless zombies following the slightest whim of a cult leader on the one hand, or friendly and unthreatening but uninspired Sunday meetings on the other, we do well to question the nature of a genuine spiritual community. A true spiritual fellowship should be free of any form of coercion, physical, emotional, or ideological. It is a free association of free individuals, and its members always need to be vigilant to see they are maintaining this ideal. Neither should a spiritual fellowship provide a safe haven from the harsh winds of the world; it should provide an environment in which our fixed views of ourselves and our lives are challenged, and our development as individuals is encouraged. The spiritual helps us come to terms with the insecurity of freedom. It is probably better to think not so much in terms of joining a spiritual community, but of developing individual spiritual friendships, and thereby connecting with a network of spiritual friends. There are two types of spiritual friendships. Some of our friends will be at roughly the same level of understanding, commitment, and realization as ourselves. This we call a *horizontal* spiritual friendship. Some friends, will be much more developed in each of these areas, and some will be less developed. In relationship to these friends we have a *vertical* spiritual friendship, the relative positions of each person depending on their relative spiritual development. Often, understandably, we look for a teacher, who can give us some guidance, or act as a source of inspiration. In the past twenty-five years there has been a flood of teachers and Gurus coming from the east, as well as quite a number of the home grown variety. How do we choose the "right" one? Some of them are outright charlatans, some are well-meaning but deluded, and others are genuinely wise men with valuable teachings.

Before considering what might be the qualities of a teacher, we should consider a certain weakness that is prevalent among students that makes us

a prey for charlatans, and a disappointment for the sages. We have a strong desire to find a teacher or guru who knows *the truth*, without any doubt. We want to find the one person who can give us Enlightenment.

In terms of the psychology of C.G. Jung, we easily fall prey to our tendency to project the wise-old-man archetype onto a suitable figure. There are some positive aspects of this projection, but a word of caution should be sounded. The charlatans and the deluded, consciously or unconsciously, make use of our tendency to project, when they make their claims to be holders of the One Truth. It seems that the more ridiculous the claim, the more likely it is that such people find followers. Sometimes they announce their Enlightenment, sometimes they claim the authority of God, and sometimes they claim that they are God. The genuinely wise men find themselves being squeezed into the role of wise old man by their disciples. Some have been known to fall into the trap of actually believing the projections that are being directed towards them, frequently with catastrophic consequences. Only those who are well established in self understanding are able to resist this pitfall. Many teachers, and therapists, have the unhappy task of contending with the all pervasive tendency of people to put them on a pedestal - and eventually, to pull them off. This tendency to hand over authority to another person, to relieve oneself of responsibility, is something of which all followers of the spiritual path need to be aware. No one is completely free of it, and it is frequently at the root of difficulties encountered on the spiritual path. There are two principles that can be employed in establishing a genuine relationship with a spiritual teacher. Firstly one needs to establish and continually deepen good personal communication with him, or her. Secondly, one should beware of the tendency to endow a teacher with unreasonable authority. Initially a spiritual teacher will be someone who communicates clearly a teaching that resonates with your own spiritual aspirations.

A spiritual teacher should know his material, and be able to communicate it to the listeners. I have often heard people praise a teacher whose communication is confused and unintelligible, simply because they do

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not wish themselves to be thought ignorant or stupid. The primary qualification of a teacher is that he should be able to communicate. The primary qualification of the student is to be receptive. We have to learn how to listen. We have to make ourselves pliant and open, we have to soften our hearts. Listening is a great skill that can be consciously developed.

To be receptive does not mean that we need to agree with what the teacher is saying. However, we do have to put aside our prejudices sufficiently to be able to hear and understand what is being said. Once the teacher's material has been communicated to us, we will be in a position to consider for ourselves if it is correct or useful. A teacher may be eloquent, entertaining, or charismatic. He may be able to communicate, but his teaching may be irrelevant, facile, or wrong. How are we to know if a teacher is correct? In the West we are used to relying on people's qualifications. If someone has a degree in Physics we will assume that he has knowledge of his material. In the field of religion we will tend to associate ecclesiastical position with authority on religious matters. This may well be the best way to establish credentials in practical and objectively determinable matters, but is it the only, or the best, way to determine the veracity of what a person says in the spiritual field? Ultimately we have to judge the value of a teaching for ourselves, using criteria that we develop as we become increasingly clear ourselves about the nature of the spiritual life. In the beginning we make many mistakes by adopting false teachings or by misunderstanding and misusing true teachings, but our ability to discriminate develops with our own understanding and experience. The ability to be able to discriminate the true from the false, the good from the bad, is the nature of wisdom, which we are trying to develop in our spiritual lives. The basic criteria offered by the Buddha to someone who was confused by the plethora of teaching available at that time, was that they should ask if the teaching was conducive to the reduction of negative emotions, to equanimity, to freedom, to detachment, to disentanglement with worldly activities, to simplicity, to content, to solitude, to energy, and to delight in the good. By becoming clear about the direction that we wish our spiritual life to take, we can determine with even greater clarity and

confidence the criteria that we should apply, and in this way make ever more meaningful decisions about the people with whom we wish to associate as spiritual friends. Having a spiritual teacher is important but equally important is the development of horizontal friendships. Peer friendships provide the general framework within which we develop our positive spiritual qualities. We need friends who share our spiritual perspective to be able to share our experiences. It is very difficult, for example, to discuss one's meditation experience with someone who has no experience of meditation. Some crucial moral dilemmas may seem unimportant to ordinary friends. Your meat-eating friends may not take the difficulties encountered in a change to a vegetarian diet very seriously, for example, or they may wonder why you do not leap into a sexual relationship with the attractive person who is eager to do so with you. Some people may find your description of your more profound spiritual experiences quite disturbing, since many spiritual experiences are closely akin to what is normally considered madness. It is important to be able to communicate things that are important to you, and to be able to be fully open to at least a few other human beings. Your spiritual friends may offer friendly advice. They may be ready and able to warn you when they become aware that you are taking a wrong direction. They may see you heading away from your spiritual goal, or more seriously, into dangerous psycho-spiritual regions. They can offer their advice, which you may then consider. A good friend of mine once told me that one didn't always have to follow advice, but it was always useful to get another perspective. A spiritual friend is a companion who shares your world and travels with you in the direction of Truth and Reality. A spiritual friend is also a working partner, a partner with whom one can develop the interpersonal qualities that are part of the spiritual path. On the basis of shared ideals, by being honest, and by confessing our darker sides, we can develop a very high degree of openness and trust. Out of these qualities, a spontaneous and natural affection will grow, along with the positive emotions of kindness and generosity. The closer we come to another person, the more we learn to appreciate their positive qualities, and to forgive their less attractive





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As a way of extending and deepening the knowing of ourselves. Are we all this boy who first receives then loses the golden drum? What is the Golden Drum? Is that what we seek in our desire driven struggles through life? Is the heavenly music something so very special or is it the ecstatic smile common among babies in the latter half of their first year - and is it the delicate smile on Buddha's lips? Perhaps every significant change in consciousness, even relatively short ones, are like new incarnations.

HONORABLE JOHN H. BOYD: You write "The sheer complexity of our current human predicament in the Gulf War poses enormous problems for all of us on a number of different levels, no less for Zen Freethinkers than for others". And so on and on for half a page. Sorry, but I'm not about to allow you to lay some enormous problems on me. Frankly, I don't have these problems and I don't want them. However, I'm quite willing to let you have as many of them as you care to have, and keep them as long as you wish. Also, if my attitude is a problem for you, you're welcome to that one, too. Nevertheless these words, like yours, are offered, "in the spirit of openness, friendship and love." Hairy eyeball to hairy eyeball.

HONORABLE ROBERT BRECKENRIDGE: Yes, yes, yes that was a great piece you wrote for the last issue and this one is great, too, if you don't mind me saying so - since I am I, and I am you, and you are me, and we are we together and oh my! Aren't we clever hiney bun! Too clever perhaps? Oh no...We be a little too everything now and enjoy the shining.

HONORABLE YELLOW MOUSE: after all these years of puzzling over your contributions, I had one of those sudden strokes of understanding just after reading your issue #34 piece. I could say that after years of pondering the Koan of Yellow Mouse's writing, Satori came in a flash, but even though that makes it all around very "Zen", it's really too high falutin' and besides, I am no more or less enlightened than I ever was as a result of this long and arduous struggle with your writings. You are - or at least were and were trained to be - a lawyer! Lawyers work with laws. Laws are the ultimate definitions of truth in the judicial system. Laws are written in words. Words are defined in dictionaries, and their meanings in conjunction with others, in phrases, sentences and paragraphs, is further determined by the "laws" of grammar and syntax. So for years we have had these etymological analyses presuming to inform of the truths of things

(including things that are not things, of course) and finally in the last issue we find grammatical analysis, parts of speech and so on, with a lot of talk about how words "must" be used in certain ways and so on and ultimately that "our thinking is muddled by the presences of the linguistic problems inherent in our language". What you're involved with is a legalistic approach to philosophical knowledge. It is somewhat like trying to discover the quality of the wine that was drunk by tasting the piss of the man who drank it. Well...maybe that metaphor isn't perfect but it is punchy and meanwhile "T", like all real freethinkers, will continue to use wordsing to have a good write mudding up meanings meanfully manfully hairy-eye-bally, silly-ly as it suits my fancy, while continuing to praise the godding emerging in the speak and write Chineseing, Englishing, Spanishing and all others thank youing very much.

HONORABLE ELSON B. SNOW: I think you should revise the closing poem of your letter perhaps. Try changing the word "torn" to "scorn" for it seems to me that you are indeed curling your lips with contempt. Oh, I'm sorry, I don't know, I don't get it. That's a mighty fine poem you sent us from Robert Bly and I do not think freethinkers are some kind of slimey things that crawl up out of the sewers. That printer of yours sure does do a fine job, however.

HONORABLE GREG GIBBS: I note that in your #34 letter you did as much as I am doing now - responding to others - attempting to bring some dialog into the Freethinker. And you took up a lot of space as I am now doing. There does seem to be a tone of judgements about "right and wrong" in regards to behavior and attitudes about yourself and others. The Sixth Patriarch made the transcendence of good and bad, right and wrong, a fundamental, inescapable part of his teaching. But I can really warm up to your discussion of watching Jade East dance. I'm sure that I could easily share your appreciation of her sensuality but I would be much more interested in her brother's. Likewise I do appreciate the wetness of water but have never enjoyed Kool-Aid or Scotch. I prefer Cherry 7-up and White Wine (with no interest in the very expensive, snooty, snotty kind that leaves a bad aftertaste).

HONORABLE BASCO:

Very wise. Sylvester and T. J. sety do belong and are so needed in Buddhism these days and of course they - along with countless other cartoon duos - represent the Top Dog/Under Dog dichotomy which as

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children we see in our relationship with our parents, and then as adults discover - to our dismay - that they exist side by side or on top of each other within ourselves. And Tweety, the apparent underdog, always survives just like the underdog in each of us - like the boy's golden drum - and which cartoon character was it that had that crazy laugh?

**HONORABLE EDWARD STAR:** Oh thank you dear Edward. The nice guy Top Dog in me was beginning to attack the bright sparky little wiseass genius in me for some of the less than sweetie-pie remarks I've been making about some of our fellow so-called freethinkers. But then, after encountering your bodacious blast, Under Dog tells Top Dog to read once again Edward the Star and continues on his way. Indeed I do like a good argument - especially the kind that do not get too serious. Can't we enjoy a good game of words, wit and reason without beginning to spit and exhale steam? I might add that when someone comes on with statements like, "I'm not that smart" and "an obvious non-sophisticate such as I", I sharpen my sword, prepare for the worst - meaning the best, the real joyousness of verbal combat with a warrior of the highest order. But, alas! right now, I find no likelihood that we will find much between us to argue about (unless, of course, you don't agree that Ronald Reagan is really the near-sighted Mister Magoo, and that there are still a lot of fundamentalist Christians around living under the delusion that they are Buddhists: mistaking a change in terminology and form for a change in substance and attitude). Or, perhaps we could debate the true meaning of the unexpressible truths.

**HONORABLE DON STEVENS:** You, too, present a diagnosis that something is terribly wrong and then proceed to analyse the cause of these difficulties largely in terms of issues around values. I'm reasonably sure that you know the Buddha legend as well as I or our fellow contributors but let's recall it for a moment. Several thousand years before Jesus Christ a man called Sakyamuni did something similar. He saw then, as we do now, that things are a mess and everybody or almost everybody is suffering a lot. By his analysis the problem was DESIRE and he then provided a eight-fold program for its alleviation. Since all these thousands of years have not changed the world very much with regard to messes and problems, and because old age, sickness and death will undoubtedly

remain, it seems a good idea to work on ourselves a lot, do what we can to peace, love and joy in our lives, and spread these feelings and attitudes amongst our friends and relations as best we can without losing our true selves in attachment to getting everything fixed. Like the woman who called herself "Peace Pilgrim", I prefer to change the word "problems" to "challenges" and then express gratitude to the great Tao / Goddess-God / All / It / One / Hoo Haw / etc. for the wonderful opportunity to learn, practice, wonder, feel, work on, work with, play with, love, hate, and laugh about it all and then sit down and spend some time bullshitting, elephantsitting, and postizing about, and express my gratitude to the Great Yuppies of Silicon Valley for developing these word processors that make it so easy to monkey around with words. Thank You.

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From Ken O'Neill's Corner

After a very long absence, the combined effects of once again having a personal life and Lynn Olson's recent letter have prompted me to write. I, too, have been thinking along these lines, both as a Buddhist and as a Martinist Free Initiator. Lynn proposes several alternatives to traditional ordination; having re-read his offering several times, I feel the issue is more complex than his suggestions. First, there is not a single tradition of ordination in Buddhadharmā. Instead, there is a plurality. Secondly, Lynn's radical suggestions seem seated in a reconstructionist approach that is more implied than stated; however, those unstated presuppositions are probably in the shared attitude of Zen Freethinkers.

Lynn's suggestions hit at the core of American Buddhism's awakening to its own identity, making syncretic and eclectic activities very important for us to consider.

Accordingly, I'll offer my two cents worth. I'd like to offer some distinctions I feel are important to rites and rituals of passage. In early Buddhism, the only rites of passage were ordination of monks and nuns. As time passed, additional rites were added for (1) taking refuge, and (2) lay rites.

Yet traditional Buddhism was hierarchic in that monks/nuns were regarded as superior spiritually by their vocation, and most likely candidates for the fruition of illuminatory experience. Clearly readers of this publication do not highly value that sort of ordination. To my knowledge, the Japanese and Tibetan systems came to uphold non-monastic types of ordination, and such practitioners were not ruled out from illumination. Shinran, tutelary figure of the Shin tradition, rejected ordination on grounds that in the age of Mappo (like the kali yuga, the age of utter decadence of Dharma), valid ordination was lost forever anyway.

Thus, the spiritual life was devoid of ordination altogether. Technically, we Shin teachers are deputed or authorized to teach in the place of Shinran's linear descendants, all of us passing on his tradition. So, technically Shin teachers are not ordained in any sense of Buddhist tradition prior to the 13th century. However, our tradition has a lot in common with many forms of Protestantism. Oddly enough, the primary step towards becoming a Shin cleric is the Tokudo training and ritual, that rite being a symbolic re-enactment of the tonsure in becoming a Buddhist priest.

In a Western European sense, ordination confirms one as a clergyman. In a traditional Buddhist sense, ordination confirms one as a part time (lay) or full time (monk/nun) practitioner of Buddhadharmā.

Technically, ordination functions in strict relationship to the training rules (vinaya)

followed in Buddhism. For the Christian, a sectarian confession and the duties of the clergy relate to the meaning of ordination.

Strictly speaking, those ordained in Buddhism will never teach for the most part, while Christian clerics by and large are trained to fulfill a vocational mission to save souls. I suspect most who would be interested in ordination in Buddhism wish to in some way serve Buddhadharmā, and that such work would in some manner be a ministry. Leaving comparisons with Christianity for richer world gnostic traditions, other important matters await us. If one is ordained for purely personal reasons, adopting a Dharma-name, cultivating practices, etc., then there is no more to the matter; however, if one's motive is a ministry, then we run into the matter of what qualifies one to teach Buddhism, or Martinism, or Gnosticism, or whatever. Some hold the power of ritualistic transmission is all that is needed, a view shared by Catholics, Masons, Rosicrucians, and others of the Latin tradition.

Others take transmission in a stronger interpretation, holding that if a receiver has caught the spiritual ball they then run with it. The latter position holds gnosis can be in some discerned by others who've got it.

Alan Watts described Zen as an understanding. Notwithstanding Watts' limited understanding of Buddhism, what he said holds water in numerous gnostic traditions. For example, the Nichiren branch of Shin has a system likenable to the formalized koans of Rinzai, called the Anjin Rondai. While an unfortunate theology has grown up around the Rondai, nonetheless they offer a powerful tool for cultivating depth of illumination and for probing those claiming illumination. They are a teaching tool, and a tool for assessing understanding. Traditionalists like Guenon, Schoun, and Conze hold spirituality does not exist in a vacuum, and spiritual traditions offer a "know-how" for facilitating transformation and understanding. Thus, teachers and their ministries arise in a line of succession. I partly agree while partly disagree. Shinran, Kukai, Dogen, Ikkyu, are all examples of individuals whose illumination occurred in spite of tradition and because of tradition. All worked within the system, got nowhere with it, experienced in their quest, woke up, and then taught. They are the kind of spiritual heroes we all seek to emulate in our own way. Watts' description of the Fourth Way has guided me: Sneak in the back door of the temple, steal the illumination, and get the hell out before they try to make you a member! Thus, if one is to fulfill a Buddhist ministry, then you'd better know a lot about Buddhism through having struggled with it, through having struggled with your own life,

through having in some way woken up. For most of us that means doing it outside of the monastery. Bishop Rosamonde Miller's Ecclesia Gnostica Mysteriorum organization has an interesting system. After a year of getting to know new individuals, they may begin to attend classes of illumination. Should they wish ordination, they can count on a decade of instruction. Upon completion of ordination, they are free to go do what they will with it. Louis Claude de Saint Martin died in 1803; for 80 years after his death, the Martinist tradition passed from teacher to student without great fanfare. In the early 1880s, Papus and others discovered they were both initiated as Martinist Free Initiators. Thereupon, they formed the Supreme Council of the Ordre Martiniste, initiated others, and set up an organization. Martinism has been beset with squabbles, feuds, schisms, and fragmentation ever since. I am told Martinism survives well in the Soviet Union simple because it has been forced underground, devoid of the luxury of organization and politics, certainly never a part of the Supreme Council system. I like Lynn's idea. I strongly feel if we're going to call an ordination Buddhist, we have to come to grips with what ordination means, and what minimally qualifies the ordination to be termed Buddhist. Ordination for what? What do you do with it once you've got it? Does the ordination signify the gaining of minimal Buddhist understanding? What does it permit? Teaching? Does it signify transmission? Empowerment? Hope this stirs up some discussion.

Who is Jade East? In the Realm of the Senses is now out in video format. I am surprised the Japanese censors ever let it out of the country. Apocalyptic Culture stuff for sure.

Combining ordination with levity, has anyone seen The Funeral? In video for several years, it's a parody of the Japanese Buddhist funeral and one of the funniest films I've seen in years. Of related interest is Kukai, a 2-3 major production on the founder of Shingon. The Funeral is subtitled in English, while I do not know of anything but a purely Japanese version of Kukai (read the story of his life in a language you know, and then just watch the film). Request: anybody know how to get a copy of Sto Yamashita's IROHA tape? Iroha is a composition inspired by Kukai's mystical poem of the same name. The tape is powerful, a symphonic composition using hi tech instruments on an esoteric Buddhist theme. I call it a trip through an auditory mandala.

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## SOME THOUGHTS ON RINZAI By Don Stevens

### An Old Story About Rinzaik

"Once great mystic, Rinzaik, was sitting by the riverside on the sand. A man approached who had been looking for him. He had gone to Rinzaik's place and they said, 'You may find him somewhere by the side of the river. This is the time he sits there.' The man reached, he asked Rinzaik, 'I have come from a long distance to know -- in short, because I am not a scholar and I am a simple man. Just give me the essential teaching.' Rinzaik closed his eyes and sat silently. The man said, 'Have you heard me or not?, I have asked a question, and instead of answering me you have closed your eyes.' Rinzaik said, 'That was the answer, the shortest: just close your eyes and be silent -- you wanted the shortest answer.' The man said, 'This is too short. Just a little longer will do.' So Rinzaik wrote on the sand with his finger, 'Meditation.' The man said, 'That does not help much, it is the same. Again, close your eyes and sit silently -- that is the meaning. Can't you give me a little more?' Rinzaik wrote in big capital letters, 'Meditation.' The man said, 'Are you crazy or what? -- because it is the same thing.' Rinzaik said, 'If I do anything more than that, I will move beyond the limits of truth. Then it will be a lie. If you want lies, I can elaborate, but truth is finished. The moment I sat silent with my closed eyes, that was all.'"

We don't need to do ANYTHING! And, we are better off when we do NOTHING! By doing nothing, we give ourselves the chance to BE! By sitting quietly. And by sitting quietly what occurs to us to do will be just right. One person has found sitting quietly often during the day is best. You decide how often and for how long. In addition, there are a couple of other good reasons for us to listen to ourselves. First, we don't know what is best for us; unless we first listen to ourselves. The condition our world is in is a result of doing things as if we knew what we are doing and as if we knew what is best for us. The second reason is we are given exactly what we need every day. We don't always accept what

we are given, unless it is a loss, but we are always given exactly what we need. This could be called Providence, or chance, or just a condition of ourselves. And, we can bank on it, unlike some banks, and life insurance companies. But, this is for when we have control of our lives. What happens for example, when we go to church?

Sometimes we prepare for it, and cannot listen to ourselves. Then we must get ready to go and during this process we cannot listen to ourselves, nor can we when we get to church. During church, though, sometimes there are a few moments of silence ---- sometimes. Then it takes time after church to get over church. Then, usually a church service is like being taught a lesson. C.G. Jung, the psychiatrist wrote: "Religion is a defense against Religious Ideas." Is that the lesson we learn? When we church? Then there is school. Pretty much the same thing about church can be said about school work, except kids have to associate with who they are put in class with. This results in physical and mental abuse. Then, they have to listen to the teacher and cannot listen to themselves. A study made of teachers showed they were hardly intellectuals. A study made of teacher's colleges showed they are taught to use teaching methods that retard learning. The classroom itself is arranged dictatorially instead of democratically. Most of this applies to churches as well, except churches scare kids with God. Then, we go to textbooks. Schools no longer have much good literature because they buy textbooks instead. Many studies have been done on textbooks; none approve of the textbooks school boards buy. School can be compared to jail, not learning places. Then, one has to get over school after school is over. Carl Rodgers wrote, "Nothing worth learning can be taught." Others have written much worse about what happens when we school.

Then, there is work. Everything about church and schools applies here, too. But now, we are at serious business. It is at work that we do all the things that harm everyone else in the world - this includes ministers and religious workers and teachers and workers in education. Out of the work place comes all the bad things done to the world. This is bad enough, but when bad things happen,

people are blamed, not business. So, business does all the bad things, but gets off scot free. Because people take orders. They are blamed for the bad results. There is Government and Unions and other organizations. But since they all support business, they all come under work. Then there are leisure activities like TV, radio, movies, reading, all kinds of performances, etc. All of these are mind control. When, you subject yourself to church, work, organizations, entertainment or anything else, you are subjecting yourself to mind control, and not listening to yourselves.

Luckily our minds have such great capacity, they can absorb all this control and still function! When we are told we only use 10% of our mental capacity what is really means is that with all this control, 90% of our attention is taken up leaving only 10% left for listening to ourselves. Then most of us try to find ways to fill up that remaining 10%. But the only real life we enjoy is in that 10%. If we want to enjoy life more, we must expand the 10% by listening to ourselves more. And, our only hope lies in this direction, for life can never improve as long as we church, we school, we work, we union, we organize, we drive, we TV, we read, we vote, we entertain ourselves.

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Don

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**WORDS ON WORDS**  
By Yellow Mouse

The Annealed Amos: "I believe I can be master of myself - but not of my fate." **WRONG!** Review the Aushwitz, etc. survivors to discover that to master one's self is to master one's fate. Of course, that doesn't change the poison gas, the ovens or the Nazis, but **FATE**: to speak > proclamation, reputation = the final pronouncement - of one's value not just the physical end - which is always death. "I don't believe in the reality of a separate self. I am the nucleus of an entity with no boundaries -" It's a great doctrinal stance but can the individuated one live it? "Practice peace and you'll [who?] bring peace to the world."

Whatever we practice practice is what we are and what we bring to the world.

Well ring my bell, dickie: "Ed Star's hearty imitation of a crusty ass -" Are you sure it was **JUST** an imitation or was it **JUST** our of buddy 'insef. Trust 'im - 'e's really real, whatever 'es. 'Purity?' in dependent origination" why not, is there something evil about me - ed - **YOU?** I don't believe it. Whether you will accept it or not, you're **OK (PURE) RIGHT NOW** - you always were and you always will be (wwe-amen).

Daviek: Right on, I love it: Zen + liberty = independence! Liberty = Liberation. It is independence vs. co-dependence: dependence on doctrine, beliefs, love, approval - and even truth (ouch). Last parag: "Doin what comes Natch." But discipline?: Tai Chi, Shushumna control, Breath control, Chi control, movement = **ALIVE**.

- lost hold of the string -" is an Amer-Indian metaphor. I use it each morning in my greeting to the 7 directions/arrows. I spread my arms wide, taking everything sweeping the horizon (the hands are the two poles of duality), then I shift my attention to the zenith, bring my outstretched arms up overhead as I tilt my head back and concentrate on the meeting of my hands overhead. It is I who unite the two poles as I put the palms together grasping the thread that descends from that heavenly "sky-hook"; focusing on the experience in me as I recognize how dependent I am on the continuous flow of - God - within me. Then I draw the thread down until my elbows stick out on both sides and my "praying" hands are rooted in my heart Chakra (my head has lowered as I focus on nothing, anything). I stand, my heart filling, until it moves me and rotates those hands pointing downward to the lower centers, energizing this body. As it fills me (the energy floods my body), my hands relax, fall to my sides and I **AM - YAM**.

Lyndy, baybee: Good God and we've come back, full circle, to the ULC - right

where we started.

Edster, the elder: I love yer Bubbha reminds me of one of Gahan Wilson cartoons. The buttoned-down grey-flanneled businessman has scaled heights to the mountain ledge to see the Guru. He stands there with his briefcase waiting for the answer to a question y don't know. The Guru replies: "Well, first, y have to stop saying Bull-shit every time say something." I went looking thru c- issues for your stuff and couldn't find a thing on that chevy - guess it was n., hopes talking. But I reminded myself that you are no sword talkin' thru yer hat. N Kendo sensei told of "that look" when facing your opponent with such a dangerous weapon.

You **KNOW!** Ananda: No, my book is not published and I keep editing and adding. I sent you a copy about /88 ?????? And yes it is available - if I print it out (it's on disk) About 120 pages, if anybody wants it, set about 4-5 bucks (cost of paper and ribbon cartridge) (Our own samisdat!) Claude: Deism = a belief in "somkinda God". In this case "free-thinking" is just "loose-thinking", usually refer to the "Ultimate" as "God, nature, fate, random chance-whatever" intending them to be exact synonyms, I saying: "I don't really know what I'm pointing at (that flicks finger)." "revered truth (priestly authority)" vs "turning wit" - are the same; they are neither inconsistent nor in conflict. One is simply vicarious learning and the other is direct. We must understand ourselves as well as others; we make the same mistakes in interpreting our own experience as well as misunderstanding the experience of others and/or their articulations. We tend to use vicarious experience to rationalize our own instead of learning from those "others". And we also tend to sanctify and armor our own "truth" as well as that of others, yet deny our own well-hidden "authority".

Tathagata Zen: as the monk passes by: "DER 'E GOZI" THUS Watts, Suzuki, Buddha passed through here. "Orthodox" always truth but unfortunately never speaks clearly in "modern" usage to "today's" people. And speaking in today's idiom is unfortunately always unorthodox. The only real conflict is political between partisans of the old words (status quo) and the revolutionaries who often are not very rigorous in their "thinking". Martin Luther rejected the "holy-rollers" of his time because they were not based on scripture. They had rejected scripture mainly because it took too much effort to do the scholarly work to document their "truth". Likewise too many of today's disenchanteds love to listen to a charismatic speaker, but not sit facing a wall counting breaths for very long.

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There is only <<-THEONEWAY->> found every RRR-eligion (cap R = existing established). How to articulate it successfully to the modern alienated American who isn't listening is the real problem. And we, being embedded, enmeshed in the culture, milieu, context, are not able to see the "water" for the "trees" (mixed metaphor). The unknown God, Tao, YHSWH, Brahma will do what S/HE desires. Thus we do not need "a more specifically Buddhist version", we need a more specifically AMERICAN version.

He who walks the "straight and narrow", "middle way" looking neither to the right or left - will, by definition, be hated by everyone. Those of either side, when they look at their opposite numbers, will see the man in-the-middle out in front apparently leading their enemies, and will call him traitor - and crucify him. See Alice Miller for an analysis of Freud's pragmatic compromise. Coyote, the Trickster, is ever dancing out of the Way, avoiding the arrows, attempting to convince everybody: I'm on your side, pal.

The term "Christ" is merely the title applied to a man supposedly named Jesus. We have various reports on what he said, did, etc. If some of that turns you on, then follow him (that's what he said). But that makes you a JESUSian, by definition - - not a CHRISTian. If you are a follower of Gautama, you esteem what he said and did but that doesn't make you a BUDDHIST.

Monotheism?: If one chooses the idea of there being only one "God", the problem that is paramount: Definition. People who refuse to follow the idea where it leads and who indulge in their rationalizations fail to see that ONEGOD must actually BE SUCH: there can be no devil, no material nature distinguishable from that One God: one means ONE. (That doesn't seem so hard, but it obviously is.) Taoism is montheistic. Another word for the same UNITY: to unify with the "Ultimate". (But if All is One, then, not being separate, how do we "unify" with God?) Remember, we all are our own authority whether we admit OR DENY it. Like anything else, that "thrust" in us can get out of hand and become PATRIARCHY: Jehovah, the boss instead of YHWH: the indefinable infinite. And you are correct historically, the shift that allowed the pronunciation of YHWH by insertion of the vowels of ADONAI begat Jehovah; the shift was political: the Jews longed for a King and could no longer govern themselves. And the same is evolving in this country.

vonBoyd: But "existential" purposelessness and emptiness" is itself an "ideological trap and dogmatic belief" and "the price we pay - IS enormous", as you say: "in terms of self deception, illusion, conflict (and) our inability to transcend - our personal egos". " I

personally find that it is quite possible to write, talk, think - without having to use terms that have these (RRR-eligious) connotations -." I agree, but how about the necessity of effectively communicating to the common man: the distribution of ideas and the EDUCATION [to lead out (of darkness)] to actual enlightenment. Generic religion - I love it. Henceforward, I'm a Generian - WOW ! Or maybe a generic Jesusian or maybe a Generic Philokalian (lover of Wholeness).

Bob Smith: "NoCode" indicates decision by external authority and will always be subject to error. But the actor present at the crisis nevertheless MUST make a decision, mistaken or otherwise. The subject is TRIAGE (see): the emergency choice of subjects NOT to be worked on. "When its time to quit?" As you have pointed out so well, one cannot deal with the question when it arises if the haven't previously dealt with its essentials as part of their everyday life. But that is only pointing at the fundamental American anti-intellectual bias and is true for all areas of life. The common problem for us all is, like it or not, the acceptance of our surrounding environment: That-Which-is.

Dave BEARER of the Key: no answers but a helpful ( I hope) parsing: (1) "All life is Suffering." = Suffering is the major part of life and ALL EFFORTS lead to more of the same. (2) "All suffering is caused by desire." = - caused by unconscious (and conscious) expectations based on infantile needs which become omnipotent (psychology not religious) infantile> desires> DEMANDS ! This is not simply "the will to live" but that WILL which translates one's innate thrust into its particularization: the need for food, sex, love, shelter becomes the infantile DEMAND: the so-called Victorian Will and no longer the cosmic individuated Will. Thus the last: the Way "is renunciation of desire and attachment to the physical world." = the renunciation of our infantile demands (and when I became man, I put away childish things>) - and the renunciation of our dependence on external forces ("he makes me mad."). See Co-dependence.

The essential suffering which we all are subject to is the denial of the joy, beauty and truth that surrounds us at every moment. We have unrealistically learned (in infancy) expectations that are always disappointed and then yield resentment, grief, anger, hate and violence. One Hindu (I believe) said: "The white man was historically so terrible that he was thrown out of Paradise and ever since has been obsessed with working his way back - while we of the East have been living and dancing in Paradise and Joy all the while".

Yellow Mouse, c/o Z. F.

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## Cloud-Hidden In Canada

By John H. Boyd

It is good to note in our current issue #35 that our dedicated friend Ananda is able to report a notable and revitalized upsurge in our letter writing - not only more, but apparently also more substantive in content. What more could we wish to hear?

Ironically, in his editorial comments, Ananda appears to be a little concerned that we might become "too perfectionistic" and lose some of our "amateur spirit" in the process, as we might be doubtful that "our own meanderings" could be not good enough. He then suggests that perhaps some of us might be "willing to write some real dumb letters", presumably to defuse his perceived concern that we are in danger of getting too serious and up-tight. I totally beg to differ, and personally find it a little bizarre to suggest deliberately writing "dumb" letters as a prescription for safeguarding our Z.F. fellowship health! If we are to be concerned with the fact that our collective letter writing standards are improving, then I, for one, would choose to rejoice and be well pleased by such a trend. Wit and humour are certainly always healthy traveling companions to have around on any highly introspective spiritual journey, but deliberate dumbness, is beyond me! My understanding is that as we presume to approach a state of enlightenment, we are gradually liberated from the ego's constraints on our self-consciousness and we are readily able to laugh and even make fools of ourselves as befits the occasion, without any sense of personal risk, loss or fear whatsoever. So let us be well pleased with the fact that "good letters" abound Ananda's way! I was intrigued by Wulf A's contribution of the "New American Dream". We all need to sharpen the focus of our personal and collective dreams about how we would like our world to evolve, and this sounds like a great way of getting a bunch of youngsters to really focus their collective dreams for sharing with others. It seems to me that a letter writing circle such as ours, could easily take up the task of "refining" any "dream statement" by simply passing it around our fellowship and have each one of us add or delete whatever we thought appropriate...our collective "wisdom" might pleasantly surprise us! If the refined statement strikes us as OK, then we would, of course, simply say so. In keeping with this idea/process, and when I have a couple of minutes to spare, I will try to do just that with Wulf A's "The New American Dream" statement, and put it to the test! I'm sure that the American Declaration of Independence was likely the result of some such process...distilling and distilling until you have the purest essence possible...and

thereby empower the original statement one hundred fold! Reading through our current issue, I too find much great material to feast on...too much for me to get caught up in trying to respond individually, but I do wish to express my special thanks to brothers Dave Klebert, Deneal Amos (your comment "The notion of separateness inevitably leads to identification with the image of conflict", strikes me as particularly important).

Some of you might be interested to know that a few weeks ago, I was inspired by our CHFL/ZF experience, to launch a similar letter writing circle of friends among some of the fascinating people that I have personally had the pleasure of meeting over the past couple of decades. It remains to be seen how "successful" we might be. I'll keep you posted when I have a better idea. Our first issue should be out shortly. We debate and Anguish about how or what to call ourselves - yet it is the spirit of our fellowship that really matters (plus our willingness to pay our dues by writing the odd letter Ananda's way) and not the label by the which we identify ourselves. Labels and titles of course have their legitimate and useful place in the scheme of things, but sometimes, like clothes, costumes or uniforms, we inadvertently empower them disproportionately to their purpose. It is often the case in our society, where labels (Gucci, Rolex, Calvin Klein, Mercedes Benz, Coca-Cola, Concorde etc.) reign supreme above considerations of quality - where the label becomes the product! In extreme cases, we can then become totally identified with/by a particular label or collection of labels, and not know who or what we really are without our precious labels being in place. I would urge us not to pay too much attention to what we call ourselves, and should Ananda, for his own good reasons, decide to return to our Cloud-Hidden version or stay with what now is, let it be so. If we really want to evaluate our collective views on this point of detail, let us all make a choice and let Ananda know what it is. My own slight preference would be to remain Cloud-Hidden - but I for one have more important issues to concern myself with.

It is good to see a renewed upsurge of interesting and provocative letters pulsating through our recent issue(#34). I very much seem to be a "regular", but I would gladly leave space for others to write. Where is sister Marian Mountain's voice these days? While it's O.K. to be silent, some of us miss your words of wisdom or frivolity, in the spirit of celebrating the wholeness of life.

P.S.- Having put in a call to Marian Mountain's hideaway, I'm reminded of of just how incongruous it is that our fellowship is so deprived of (at the moment) a single woman's voice. Does this not bother anyone else?

P.S.

Every once in a while most of us "stumble by accident" on something that deeply resonates within, and we are filled with a deep sense of experientially witnessing something particularly profound. We are "touched" in a way that it is not easy to express in words or tell another - yet we know that it speaks to something deep within us.

I recently "stumbled" across the poetic statement "Affirming Faith In Mind", in Philip Kapleau's book 'Zen - Dawn in The West' (pages 184 - 89) which is attributed to Seng Tsan in A.D. 606, and found myself "blown away" by its simple profundity. Just in case some of you have not yet discovered this treasure....here is a copy.

In fellowship,

John H. Boyd, 3 Canterbury Road,  
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#### AFFIRMING FAITH IN MIND

The Great Way is not difficult  
for those who do not pick and choose.

When preferences are cast aside  
the Way stands clear and undisguised.

But even slight distinctions made  
set earth and heaven far apart.

If you would clearly see the truth,  
discard opinions pro and con.

To founder in dislike and like  
is nothing but the mind's disease.

And not to see the Way's deep truth  
disturbs the mind's essential peace.

The Way is perfect like vast space,  
where there's no lack and no excess.

Our choice to choose and to reject  
prevents our seeing this simple truth.

Both striving for the outer void  
as well as for the inner void  
condemn us to entangled lives.

Just calmly see that all is One,  
and by themselves false views will go.

Attempts to stop activity  
will fill you with activity.

Remaining in duality,  
you'll never know of unity.

And not to know this unity  
lets conflict lead you far astray.

When you assert that things are real  
you miss their true reality.

But to assert that things are void  
also misses reality.

The more you talk and think on this  
the further from the truth you'll be.

Cut off all useless thoughts and words  
And there's nowhere you cannot go.

Returning to the root itself,  
you'll find the meaning of all things.

If you pursue appearances  
you overlook the primal source.

Awakening is to go beyond  
both emptiness as well as form.

All changes in this empty world  
seem real because of ignorance.

Do not go searching for the truth,  
just let those fond opinions go.

Abide not in duality,  
refrain from all pursuit of it.

If there's a trace of right and wrong,  
True-mind is lost, confused, distraught.

From One-mind comes duality,  
but cling not even to this One.

When this One-mind rests undisturbed,  
then nothing in the world offends.

And when no thing can give offense,  
then all obstructions cease to be.

If all thought-objects disappear,  
the thinking subject drops away.

For things are things because of mind,  
as mind is mind because of things.

These two are merely relative,  
and both at source are Emptiness.

In Emptiness these are not two,  
yet in each are contained all forms.

Once coarse and fine are seen no more,  
then how can there be taking sides?

The Great Way is without limit,  
beyond the easy and the hard.

But those who hold to narrow views  
are fearful and irresolute;  
their frantic haste just slows them down.

If you're attached to anything,  
you surely will go far astray.

Just let go now of clinging mind,  
and all things are just as they are.  
In essence nothing goes or stays.

See into the true self of things,  
and you're in step with the Great Way,  
thus walking freely, undisturbed.

But live in bondage to your thoughts,  
and you will be confused, unclear.

This heavy burden weighs you down—  
O why keep judging good and bad?

If you would walk the highest Way,  
do not reject the sense domain.

For as it is, whole and complete,  
This sense world is enlightenment.

The wise do not strive after goals,  
but fools themselves in bondage put.

The One Way knows no differences,  
the foolish cling to this and that.

To seek Great Mind with thinking mind  
is certainly a grave mistake.

From small mind come rest and unrest,  
but mind awakened transcends both.

Delusion spawns dualities—  
these dreams are nought but flow'rs of air—  
why work so hard at grasping them?

Both gain and loss, and right and wrong—  
once and for all get rid of them.

When you no longer are asleep,  
all dreams will vanish by themselves.

If mind does not discriminate,  
all things are as they are, as One.

To go to this myster'ous Source  
frees us from all entanglements.

When all is seen with "equal mind,"  
to our Self-nature we return.

This single mind goes right beyond  
all reasons and comparisons.

Stop movement and there's no movement,  
stop rest and no-rest comes instead.

When rest and no-rest cease to be,  
then even oneness disappears.

This ultimate finality's  
beyond all laws, can't be described.

With single mind one with the Way,  
all ego-centered strivings cease:

Doubts and confusion disappear,  
and so true faith pervades our life.

There is no thing that clings to us,  
and nothing that is left behind.

All's self-revealing, void and clear,  
without exerting pow'r of mind.

Thought cannot reach this state of truth,  
here feelings are of no avail.

In this true world of Emptiness  
both self and other are no more.

To enter this true empty world,  
immediately affirm "not-two."

In this "not-two" all is the same,  
with nothing separate or outside.

The wise in all times and places  
awaken to this primal truth.

The Way's beyond all space, all time,  
one instant is ten thousand years.

Not only here, not only there,  
truth's right before your very eyes.

Distinctions such as large and small  
have relevance for you no more.

The largest is the smallest too—  
here limitations have no place.

What is is not, what is not is—  
if this is not yet clear to you,  
you're still far from the inner truth.

One thing is all, all things are one—  
know this and all's whole and complete.

When faith and Mind are not separate,  
and not separate are Mind and faith,  
this is beyond all words, all thought.

For here there is no yesterday,  
no tomorrow,  
no today.

There was much of interest to me in the last several issues, though my responses may be largely indirect.

#### **Killing in the Desert**

While we were drinking tea the war against Iraq started and ended. While we were drinking tea, teen-age draftees were shot down in large numbers. Many were killed while they tried to escape the city-state which they had been ordered to plunder. No room for self-congratulation in this for soldiers and tea drinkers.

#### **Realization in Degrees**

John H. Boyd expressed doubts regarding a large number of people attaining non-dual states of awareness. He is amongst the many contributors who express reservations regarding the role of religious institutions and authorities. My freethinking side says: The Zen Buddhist tradition is mistaken if it construes the realization of non-duality in all-or-nothing fashion. The Hua-Yen system of 52 discernable stages of realization is more reasonable and much more encouraging. That Chinese Buddhist institution has provided us with a tool to discern the possibility of each of us arriving at a genuine, though perhaps not ultimate, realization of non-duality. Zen's realization of Kensho and Shin Buddhism's realization of Shinjin both start at least at the level of the first bhumi (41st stage of development of insight). They then open naturally (and sometimes immediately) to the level of the 8th bhumi (48th stage on the over-all schema). In the cases of Kensho, but not Shinjin, this illumination may mature to the point of full Enlightenment (annutara samyaksambodhi). That 41st stage, the first bodhisattva level bhumi, is high. Nonetheless, it is attainable. I know a dozen or so Buddhists who are at that level (not myself, of course). This clear elaboration of stages of Enlightenment in Mahayana Buddhism is one way in which the individual is empowered in his or her personal quest by participating in tradition.

#### **What is Buddhism?**

Richard Bell's attempt to reduce being a Buddhist to perspective, style, or philosophy is not too successful, I think. Style is obviously beside the point. Style is entirely determined by culture and personal psychology. Buddhism has moved through many cultures and has included all sorts of personalities. Chinese Buddhists are usually broad regarding doctrinal matters and very severe when ethics is the topic. Japanese Buddhists are very narrow in matters of doctrine but very flexible where ethical concerns are concerned. East-Asian Buddhism generally fosters a style that allows tremendous personal creativity. This

is evident in the works by Chih-I, Tan Luan, Wonhyo, Chinul, Kukai, Shinran, et. al.

South-Asian style Buddhism places no positive value on individual creativity. In our multi-cultural American context, we see a variety of styles. Kennet Roshi is very moral (perhaps even prudish) and is perceived to be somewhat dippy by some due to her esotericism. Master Hua has a similarly impeccable moral reputation, but blends it with a sparkling sense of humor.

Aitken Roshi is similarly highly ethical, but more down-to-earth and less severe as regards to the training of students than the previously mentioned teachers. Baker Roshi is not overly careful in matters of ethics and also a bit of an esotericist (though after a totally different style than Kennet Roshi). Trungpa was not moral at all, yet was very warm and genuinely kind by most reports. His Dharma Regent O.T. was a manipulative scumbag.

Where is the Buddhist style in all this? "Perspective" and "philosophy" are such broad terms that they can be expanded indefinitely (and therefore are not very helpful in determining what it means to be Buddhist). I will say what Buddhism is, as my own study and experience have revealed.

Others may agree with, disagree with, or ignore my formulation. To be Buddhist is to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. In doing this, anyone sincere about following the Buddha-way Will:

- (A.) Take refuge wholeheartedly.
- (B.) Wish to overcome the 3 marks: impermanence, absence of a clearly determined and permanent self, suffering (now or rather soon).
- (C.) Over come those three marks by following a 3-fold approach of wholesome conduct, mindfulness/meditation practice, and insight into non-duality.
- (D.) Strive for Enlightenment. Enlightenment is the thorough-going realization of non-duality. A Buddhist understands Awakening to non-substantial Oneness in terms of the concept of emptiness or the notion of the intimate interdependence of all things.
- (E.) Participate in tradition in such a way that his path has the aspects of Kyo, Gyo, and Sho.

**Kyo:** Study and teaching. This involves reading or hearing what Buddhism teaches and reflecting (that's right, intellectually) upon those teachings.

**Gyo:** Practice. There is no Buddhism without practice. Having a philosophy adopting a perspective and copping a attitude is arm-chair religiosity. There is no potential for personal transformation in that. All Buddhists practice, even Shin Buddhists.

**Sho:** Realization. This is what it's all about. One must realize non-duality moment after



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moment in experience. Recently I compared such realization to appreciating the goodness of Life. But this fundamental goodness of life beyond "good" and "bad" in their usual connotations must be realized directly in experience.

One who cannot identify all of the above aspects in their path, at least implicitly, is probably not a Buddhist. We Buddhists have always allowed that it is possible to realize (what we call) Enlightenment without taking refuge in Buddhist tradition. In fact this is very rare.

- Jade East Revisited -

Many of our correspondants are bound to find my comments above to be rigid and stuffy. I refer back to issue # 34, where I speak of my respect and affection for actress Jade East. Jade-chan, by the way, is well and as beautiful as ever. You don't have to be at an advanced stage of bodhisattva progress to appreciate her sensuality and presence. However, watching that beautiful young woman dance (or perform in X-rated films) will not bring you to Enlightenment. Practicing the Buddha-way, however, will help you to enjoy such human experience in a more wholesome way than you otherwise might. Balance; - that's what we need. When you take refuge in Buddhist tradition, really take refuge. Really study, really practice. Bend your ego to what Buddhism is and has been for over 2535 years. When you play, just play, accept the mixed Karma of playfulness. Don't rationalize your behavior the way Trungpa did. You will get hurt and hurt others if you do, just like he did. Admit what you're doing when you play, especially when it's at dangerous games. My sexual desire for that charmer, Jade East, was inflamed in a major way by watching her dance again recently. It disturbed my ability to meditate for a week, and it was well worth it. To truly appreciate the subtle worthiness of all life, every now and then, we must appreciate the straightforward goodnesses like sensuality. Besides her beautiful face and gorgeous body, I enjoyed her friendliness and her humor. It was good fun, but I'm still distracted sometimes by memory of the cute, flirtatious way she has of glancing back over her shoulder at her fans. It was a warm, human interlude going to see her again. And now I'm back to my Buddhist work again. Please practice seriously when it's time to practice. And if someone like Jade East asks you to come out and play, please say what I would: Yes! Yes! Yes!

Issue #35 was very interesting. I would like to thank Michael Canright for his beautifully written piece, "My name is Mike".

In the same issue we see Ed Star sparring playfully again. In the previous two issues he was trying to break bones; - somebody always gets hurt that way, often a couple of people. I never denied that he understood Shinshu - or - any - school - of - Buddhism intellectually. But you can't understand a non-dual perspective except by adopting it. You can understand Christianity without being a believer since it doesn't radically contradict common sense (even if it transcends it). Buddhism & Taoism leave common-sensical thinking behind altogether. It is not reasonable to view reality as non-substantially One. Buddhism believes that it is true, but it contradicts our normal views. You can only understand non-dual religious traditions from within.

John Esse says that "I do not see the individual way as contrasted with the organizational way". I am close to John's view on this. It is this bending of our egos to tradition which frightens some people. What if they had to exert the same sort of critical intelligence as John? Well, John & Greg must be wrong, neh! (This group perhaps includes Richard Bell, whose last letter read like Ed Star on bad acid.) There is, of course, a tension between Individuation and participation in a tradition. The liberal Protestant theologian, Paul Tillich, (who was vastly my intellectual superior) wrote brilliantly about the challenge of necessarily living amidst such tensions. Whether Tillich was or not, by the way, I know 1/2 doz. Protestant ministers who are clearly my superiors not only ethically but spiritually. Saying "no" to Protestantism for myself is not to "feel superior". (Also I never said "no" to NSA or to Christianity of the Catholic varieties. It seems Mr. Bell read my letter rather carelessly.) John Esse may be a bit more orthodox of a Shinshu follower than I, based on his letter. As an existential statement, "I discovered that I couldn't perform the practice necessary to achieve Buddhahood" is fine. In fact, I found his letter to be both illuminating and touching as a record of his personal religious journey. But another Buddhist is sure to see that a Shinshu follower can never be sure that he or she hasn't just given up too soon when such a confession is made. My own embrace of the Nembutsu path had nothing to do with despairing of my ability to make progress in and eventually fulfill other practices. The way fluidly and naturally listening to "Namo Amida Butsu"/"Namanda" permeates my delusion was appealing in its own right. I realized that suchness had compassionately taken form as "Namanda" to perfume my confusion. I learned to look through the voiced Nembutsu into the Ultimate just like looking into the vastness of the sky through a window. Once one gets a

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feel for this, the Vow of the Buddha to liberate all beings is encountered everywhere and the attachment to some particular verbal formulation drops away. However, John's very traditional assertion "even the Nembutsu is not necessary for salvation" may mislead some. It is through encountering the spontaneous coming forth of Buddha-nature as "Namanda" (and cognates) that we are empowered to experience it everywhere and in all things.

Wanting salvation/liberation through the Vow Power of Amida without saying the Nembutsu is a bit naive. This would be like wanting the lifeguard to save you from drowning without pulling you out of the water. That's just not the natural way of its being done. What I am saying about Jodo Shinshu Buddhism is that we have:

(A.) A teaching. (About Emptiness taking form as Amida Buddha who works to liberate all beings)

(B.) A practice. Since "Namu Amida Butsu" (& cognates) is just one way in which non-dual life breaks through our egocentricity, our practice is not fixed. After the one thought-moment in which intimately interdependent Universal Life is discerned as the voiced Nembutsu we no longer need a special form within which to discern the Buddha's liberating activity. (It could be the way in which Ian Hunter phrases a lyric or the way in which Jade East removes her clothes) Even so, the voiced Nembutsu is our paradigm of practice, the landmark which allows us to perceive the freshness of life everywhere. As such, "Namanda" sounds very beautiful to us and so we listen often.

(C.) Realization. In the moment we hear "Namanda" as the Buddha's reassuring call ("You are not alone...You are not separate) we are non-dual in relation to the realm of Enlightenment. We are neither enlightened in ourselves nor separate from the realm of Enlightenment. This is the classic Buddhist pattern of teaching, practice and enlightenment. New Age religionists may notice that samadhi, per se, is missing. No special state of concentrated mind nor elated consciousness is necessarily involved. Contrary to most streams of Hindu Yoga, Taoism & Sufism, the experience of special states of consciousness are not crucial in Buddhism. "Sun-faced Buddha/Moon-faced Buddha". "Everday is a good day". Enlightenment and preliminary realization like shinjin and kensho are not experiences, per se. Realization of the non-duality of life is the crucial thing. Sometimes samadhis, special states of consciousness facilitate this realization and

sometimes they hinder it. The crucial thing is to realize emptiness (=the intimate interpenetration of all by all) in a moment of experience. The particular experience itself is not important. This realization of the profound goodness of all life is not identical to nor dependent upon any particular sort of concentrated state/trance/epiphany.

Yellow Mouse's question about the lovely Jade East, "Is she a dakini?", is temptation to trivialize her humanity. She is very much a living, breathing (etc.) woman. A Dakini is an embodiment of intuitive wisdom. Despite her (charming) physicalness, she is Kannon/Kuan Yin for me. The Bodhisattva of Compassion is encountered in many ways. I encounter Kuan Yin as Jade East. Others may do so as well, which is not just a metaphor, but not the reduction of a real physical person to something ethereal. Even so, we must not tell that pretty young Chinese-American too often that she is the Bodhisattva of compassion. This would place a burden upon her. Her work involves almost as many compromises as being a Buddhist priest does. When told too often we are Bodhisattvas, we all tend to freeze-up and falter.

I'm sure people are getting tired of reading my opinions so I'll get back to the mundane aspects of my life. I might put on a Jade East video, but I don't have a VCR. Instead I'll cue up a Mott the Hoople album. I can't help but think of those who decry the limits of tradition when I play "Death may be your Santa Claus": "We ain't bleeding you, we're feeding you, but you're too \*#!#!\* slow!

(It cuts both ways you know. Tradition feeds the abstractly independent types).

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Greg Gibbs

**ON ORDINATION**

*By Ananda C. Dalenberg*

There seems to be quite a bit of interest expressed recently in ordination. There apparently are not many of us who are presently ordained. This is not surprising, and would be quite natural among a bunch of Freethinker types.

Apart from Buddhist ordination, maybe some other form could also play a role. Take for example a more more non-sectarian universal form of ordination such as in the Universal Life Church. The ULC will ordain anyone by mail irrevocably for life. One is then fully authorized to start a church, marry, bury, ordain, transmit, and pray for rain etc.. Furthermore it is all free, although a small donation would be appreciated. In its heyday in the sixties, there were over ten million ULC ordinations, and the IRS was often challenged with "Every home is a temple". There even was a ULC related political party. Yellow Mouse and myself found it all quite fascinating.

Although I was a Soto priest, I thought that maybe all priests everywhere should also have some form of universal ordination such as that of the ULC. You can see a Freethinking kind of spirit in:

"The ULC, as an organization, only believes in that which is right. Each individual has the privilege and responsibility to determine what is right, as long as it does not infringe on the rights of others. We do not stand between you and your God".

I'd say that the ULC is another version of the American Freethinking anti-establishment revolution, which periodically reappears on the scene, and then once more goes underground into the American unconscious. Although the ULC continues today, I think it has made a great mistake in putting so much energy into challenging the IRS, which can be a tough, relentless, and exhausting opponent.

I later went on to become a fully ordained Soto Zen priest, and although some might think I am being inconsistent, I'm quite happy with that. I'm not exactly a conventional Zen priest, but I find plenty of freedom within the Soto tradition.

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Ananda

**A REVIEW OF "ON HAVING NO HEAD"**

*A Book By Douglas Harding*

*By Ananda C. Dalenberg*

I recently read the book by Douglas Harding "On Having no Head - Zen and the Re - Discovery of the Obvious" (Arkana). It has been a major and revolutionary discovery for me. Also I'd say it is a superb book on Zen, and an excellent example of the kind of free zen spirit we have in mind. I would agree with Prof. Huston Smith, who commented: "I know of no other piece of writing as concise as the opening chapter of this book that stands a better chance of shifting the reader's perception to a different register".

I then discussed our periodical with Harding, and asked him if it would not be appropriate to publish the first few pages of his book in the ZF. His response was quite sympathetic, and he suggested also including a few other paragraphs.

I'd also highly recommend his book "Head of Stress" (Penguin/Arkana), and "The Little Book On Birth And Death".

There follows then the first few pages of his book, beginning with several of his introductory quotations:

*Suppose a man were all of a sudden to make his appearance here and cut your head off with a sword!*

HUI-CHUNG

*Behold yourself!.. Dissolve your whole body into Vision: become seeing, seeing, seeing!*

RUMI

*My soul has been carried away, and usually my head as well, without my being able to prevent it.*

ST. TERESA

*Cover your breast with nothingness, and draw over your head the robe of non-existence.*

ATTAR

*Give yourself utterly... Even though the head itself must be given, why should you weep over it?*

KABIR

*Seeing into Nothingness - this is the true seeing, the eternal seeing.*

SHEN-HUI

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**D.E.HARDING  
ON HAVING  
NO HEAD**

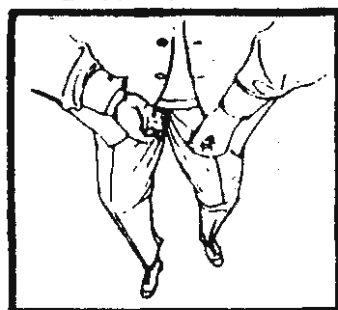
**ZEN AND THE RE-DISCOVERY  
OF THE OBVIOUS**

**The True Seeing**

The best day of my life - my rebirthday, so to speak - was when I found I had no head. This is not a literary gambit, a witticism designed to arouse interest at any cost. I mean it in all seriousness: I have no head.

It was when I was thirty-three that I made the discovery. Though it certainly came out of the blue, it did so in response to an urgent inquiry; I had for several months been absorbed in the question: *what am I?* The fact that I happened to be walking in the Himalayas at the time probably had little to do with it; though in that country unusual states of mind are said to come more easily. However that may be, a very still clear day, and a view from the ridge where I stood, over misty blue valleys to the highest mountain range in the world, made a setting worthy of the grandest vision.

What actually happened was something absurdly simple and unspectacular: just for the moment I stopped thinking. Reason and imagination and all mental chatter died down. For once, words really failed me. I forgot my name, my humanness, my thingness, all that could be called me or mine. Past and future dropped away. It was as if I had been born that instant, brand new, mindless, innocent of all memory. There existed only the Now, that present moment and what was clearly given in it. To look



was enough. What I found was khaki trouserlegs terminating downwards in a pair of brown shoes, khaki sleeves terminating sideways in a pair of pink hands, and a khaki shirtfront terminating upwards in - absolutely nothing whatever!

Certainly not in a head. It took me no time at all to notice that this nothing, this hole where a head should have been, was no ordinary vacancy, no mere nothing. On the contrary, it was very much occupied. It was a vast emptiness vastly filled, a nothing that found room for everything - room for grass, trees, shadowy distant hills, and far above them snowpeaks like a row of angular clouds riding the blue sky. I had lost

a head and gained a world. It was all, quite literally, breathtaking. I seemed to stop breathing altogether, absorbed in the Given. Here it was, this superb scene, brightly shining in the clear air, alone and unsupported, mysteriously suspended in the void, and (and this was the real miracle, the wonder and delight) utterly free of "me", unstained by any observer. Its total presence was my total absence, body and soul. Lighter than air, cleaner than glass, altogether released from myself, I was nowhere around. Yet in spite of the magical and uncanny quality of this vision, it was no dream, no esoteric revelation. Quite the reverse: it felt like a sudden waking from the sleep of ordinary life, an end to dreaming. It was self-luminous reality for once swept clear of all obscuring mind. *I was the revelation, at long last, of the perfectly obvious.* It was a lucid moment in a confused life-history. It was a ceasing to ignore something which (since early childhood at any rate) I had always been too busy or too clever or too scared to see. It was naked, uncritical attention to what had all along been staring me in the face - my utter facelessness. In short, it was perfectly simple and plain and straightforward, beyond argument, thought, and words. There arose no questions, no reference beyond the experience itself, but only peace and quite joy, and the sensation of having dropped an intolerable burden.

**A Note Concerning The Above:**

This realization comes to us backed by no mystical credentials, endorsed by no burst of cosmic consciousness, no ecstasy. Quite the contrary, it's an all-time low rather than a high, a valley rather than one of those famous peak experiences. What's "Himalayan" about it indeed? Truly it's misleading that the opening of this book should be set in those mountains, with all their lofty spiritual associations, thus obscuring the essential lowliness and ordinariness of what happened to happen there. Seeing one's true Face, in all its homely plainness, is at least as easy in a traffic jam or a public lavatory, and much less likely to be confused with any kind of attainment. And in any case the actual experience - in contrast to its setting, whether grand or dreary - cannot be treasured and got out from time to time for loving inspection, cannot be remembered at all. It is Now, or never. It is to be found only in the Timeless Zone. What you are neither has nor needs any time to amount to anything whatever.

(A.D., Editor)

## ON ONE'S OWN EXPERIENCE

By Dave Klebert

It was good to read all your letters once again in the latest issue of the Zen Freethinker. Reading your letters I was once again impressed by the variety of viewpoints represented and the extent of your knowledge of Buddhism. In fact, as I read your letters full of technical terminology, references of esoteric Buddhist texts, subtle discriminations of doctrine, I feel profoundly ignorant. I remember when I was a freshman in college. I would get depressed whenever I walked into a library or bookstore and saw all the shelves and shelves of books. I thought an educated person was expected to have read everything worth reading and to know everything worth knowing. I didn't know where to begin, and so I often left without picking up even one book. Later I realized that there is too much for any one person to know, that the world is specialized, and each scholar simply follows the path of his own interest or specialty. The days of the Renaissance Man are numbered; there is simply too much to know. In a way I find this liberating; one is not bound to learn everything there is to learn, but may follow one's own interests, wherever they may lead one. Also, book knowledge is not an exclusive pipeline to ultimate knowledge.

Most books, if not all, are based on the author's experience of the world, or at least of his own mind. Similarly, the revelations of the Buddha himself did not arise spontaneously in Buddha's mind as a gift from the Divine; they arose out of the struggle and texture of Buddha's own living experience of the world. Each of us is a Buddha in that sense. All of the words of Buddha, the Sangas and Sutras and scholarly treatises, are merely "fingers pointing at the moon". Ultimately, the true foundation of knowledge is one's own experience of the World. I feel this reassuring. Although I have not read one entire Sutra, I have lived on this planet for 46 years, and in that time I have had revelations of my own about the ultimate nature of being and time. Who is to say that my insights are any less valid than the Buddha's. Go in Peace; Make Peace.



## Cricket Song 655

Cricket's voice the pulse of evening  
The moon is the ghost of the sun  
Haunting a ghostly landscape  
Mothers sing lullabies  
To children preparing for sleep  
Just before dreaming  
You can hear  
Fairies sing in the garden

In ancient India  
In palace guarded by tigers  
I lay in bed  
With you in my arms  
Like this  
Listening to the same crickets

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A POEM  
By Erik Storie

Oh  
My Dear  
Zen Free Thinkers  
And  
Unfree Zen Thinkers--  
Keep Talking!

Words Leap Up From The Wordless --  
Trout After Mayflies --  
Slipping Back Down To The Deep.

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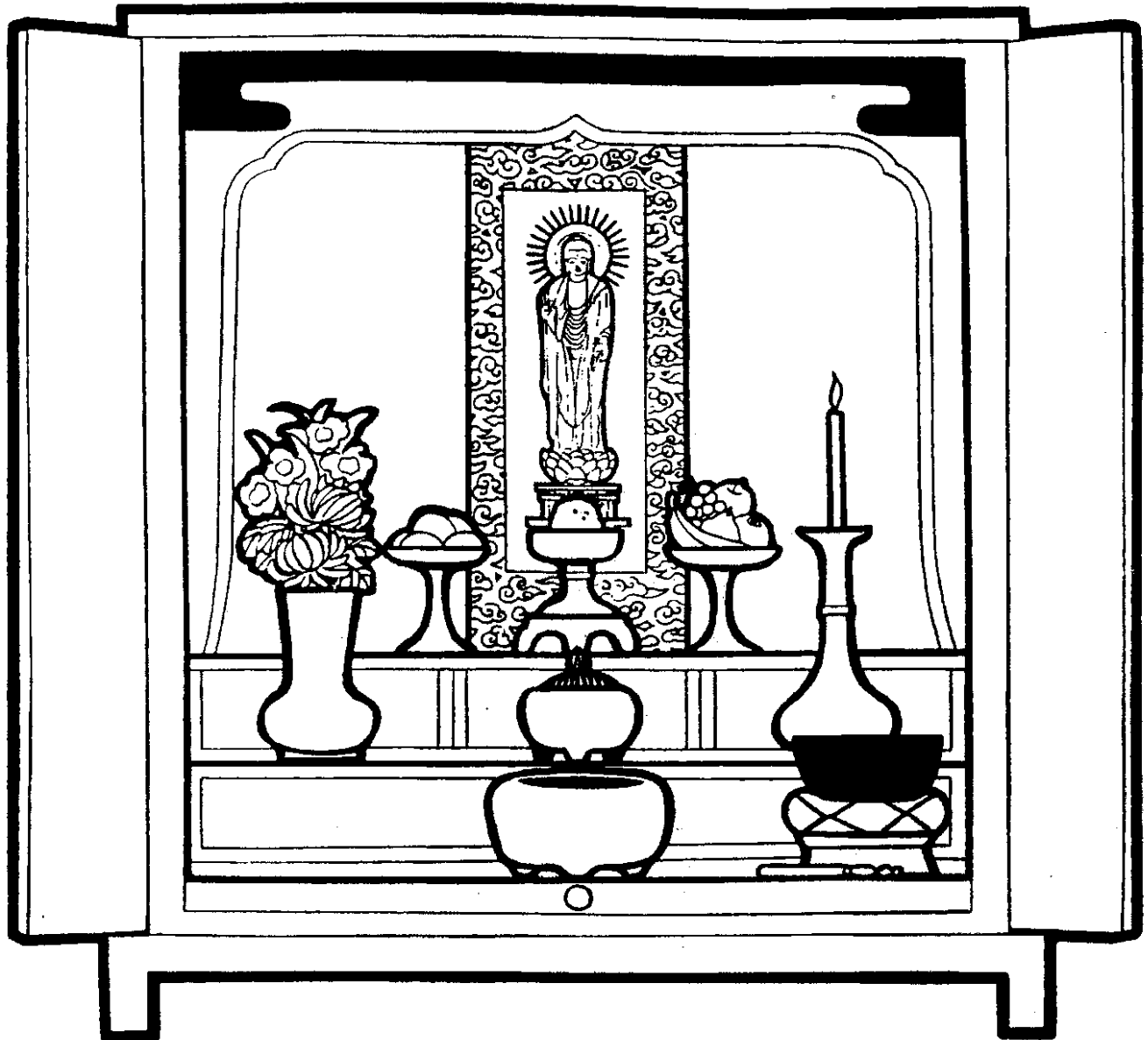
TIME FOR WHAT, By Basco Zen Castelan

I had a jolly good time with issue # 35. A few laughs, and food for thought. I see that HUMOR is a mother load in our group--what a diverse, yet intrinsically similar bunch! I gassho in reverence with a large grin on my face. Zanks. To Lynn Olson: What an estupendous idea. I suggest we free thinkers have as our logo Jonathan Livingston Seagull. Best logo I can think as most appropriate--to soar in sustained flight like no other bird has done before... To T. Thompson: Zanks for those HARA focusing Tips! To John Esse: Had an unusual "audio" experience many years ago. Heard a male voice from a shut-off TV screen say; "NOW IS THE TIME"--unflustered I naturally asked back: "Time for what?!"...I haven't found the answer yet. Any ideas? To Yellow Mouse: Say cheesel Yap, I often find myself walking in the realm of serendipity--as if I were a disciple of Don Juan. Zanks.

With a somersault,  
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S. San Francisco, CA 94083

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# Thank you, Buddha



Thank you, Buddha I come to your shrine,  
each day, each night. I'll Gassho, rain or shine.

Richard

## Words From The Assistant Editor

I am happy that I have the opportunity to work on this new issue of the Zen Freethinker. I would like to take this opportunity thank all of you that sent in letters for publication. This issue is very large, consisting of twenty-four pages of printed matter.

Hear are some of the comments that I wish to make about this publication. For starters, because this isn't costing you an arm & a leg in subscription fees, (1) Please try to keep the length of your letters under 2,000 words (3 pages in the present format). If they are any longer, they might be continued in the next issue. (2) Please refrain from unnecessary vulgarity. If you wish to air out your DIRTY LAUNDRY, then please write a letter to the person -- personally. (3) At the present time we are looking for art work to cover the pages of the ZF. If you do art and wish to submit it, Great! If you use a logo of some kind, please reproduce it in black ink so it can be reproduced. (4) This news letter is for everyone and that means the ladies too. If there are female readers of this newsletter out there, please send us a letter, we will be happy to print it. (5) When writing to the Editor, please specify if you wish your comments to be published or not to save on embarrassment down the line. (6) Please enjoy your self to the fullest, and Keep-on-truckin.

Well, it has taken me 125 hours to re-type all of your letters into this beautiful newsletter for your reading enjoyment. I hope that the layout is both eye-pleasing and satisfactory to you the readers. All comments are welcome about future changes. We need your input to better serve your needs. Only you the contributor can make a difference in how this publication turns out. In the near future we hope to be able to print your picture in this newsletter next to your article. Also, with your help, we hope to soon double our readership to maybe 170 subscribers.....!

Shaku Shin Kai

P.S.

To close I'm adding these two Jodo Shinshu favorites:

## GOLDEN CHAIN

I am a link in Amida's golden chain of love that stretches around the world. I will keep my link bright and strong.

I will be kind and gentle to every living thing and protect all who are weaker than myself.

I will think pure and beautiful thoughts, say pure and beautiful words, and do pure and beautiful deeds.

May every link in Amida's golden chain of love be bright and strong, and may we all attain perfect peace.

## Right Meditation

A. R. Zorn

C. Izumi

1. Sweet hour of med-i - ta-tion, The qui-et hour of peace, When  
 2. Sweet hour of med-i - ta-tion, When, si-lent and a - lone, The  
 3. Sweet hour of med-i - ta-tion, When oft' there comes to me, A

from life's care and tur-moil I find a blest re - lease. In  
 Mas-ter's word I pon-der His Truth to make my own, With  
 vi - sion of the Mas-ter Be - neath the Bo - dhi tree; And

si - lent con - tem - pla - tion New faith and hope I win. More  
 ear - nest pur - pose seek - ing I gath - er more and more Of  
 with Him in that vig - il My spir - it seems to share A

light and deep - er knowl - edge New strength to con - quer sin.  
 Wis - dom's ho - ly trea - sure From His ex - haust - less store.  
 fore-taste of Nir - va - na, Of bliss be - yond com - pare.

FINIS