

*The following is an excerpt from a talk given by Baker-roshi in 1973 to a group of Sensory Awareness students.*

Charlotte and Charles have been my good friends for twelve or thirteen years now. I couldn't have better friends. But they are more to me than friends because they were my first real teachers. At Suzuki-roshi's ashes site there is a wooden pagoda tower in the back of the stone and each side is marked with one of the four gates of practice. The first and most important gate is the "awakening the mind of enlightenment," or the first thought of enlightenment—when you were first turned around. It was Charlotte Selver who first made me realize, who showed me it was possible. She embodied what I thought should be possible for humans, but had long ago given up thinking was possible.

Up until the time I met Charlotte and Charles, I was trying to figure out the world as best I could with as much as I could of what our society offers you to do it with. I had access to most of the tools or education, attitudes or people, whatever is supposedly useful, and somehow none of it came together. And then I saw this little brochure. I read it on a friend's table, as many of you must have read of Suzuki-roshi. Normally I would hardly look at such a thing, but there was something in the language of the brochure, something in the statement about practice. I went to their seminar on Broadway Street, and I immediately knew there was more possibility to life than I had felt before. Not something new; it was a recognition of something that was there but confined or given up.

First of all I saw straightforward clear behavior without worrying so much about what other people think. Some internal confidence. So I asked myself, where does that confidence come from? And I looked at the two of them and I realized it's because they reside in their bodies. Or—we can't just say bodies—something wider than our idea of body. They gave me a practice to begin to realize that. And for Buddhism this is an extremely important point, the point at which you make this recognition. We call it bodhicitta, or the thought of enlightenment. Bodhicitta means many things on many levels. In physical terms it means an actual transformation of energy which you begin to wake up to. There are many aspects to bodhicitta, but the simplest is, we could say, the thought of enlightenment. The thought occurs to you. Then what do you do with the thought? First, you can accompany the thought by an actual inner vow. If it's a deep recognition, you make some vow that transcends or is wider than what you previously thought was possible. And so you commit yourself to it. It's not just necessary to notice it and make some vow, you also have to learn how to enter the mandala, to stay within the vow, to enlighten all beings. You cannot be enlightened just for yourself. You have to give up enlightenment, give up your own ideas about your own self. Whether you are alone in the mountains or in a group in the city, still there's no separation between you and others. "Others" is not something outside yourself. So you make the vow, you find some way to maintain, to renew that vow.

Then there is repetition. We use our mind in Buddhism not so much for its ability to think, but for its ability to make a vow and to continue a vow, to

repeat. Something very deep happens to you when you find some way to repeat, and thus find the new, not just verbally but in everything you do. Some deep repetition. You have to wear away your tendencies. Charlotte and Charles gave me the continuing example of a teacher, of someone who can practice. I met Suzuki-roshi shortly after Charlotte and Charles left San Francisco. I waited many years to introduce Suzuki-roshi to them.

They gave me, started me on a practice, of letting go of monitoring. We monitor ourselves and even when you nearly have given up thinking about yourself, noticing what you are doing all the time, still you don't have a real sensation that you are alive unless you are leaving some vapor trail. You want some record, at least in your own memory, that you've been alive. So this tendency to monitor our activity is very pervasive. The most mild statements, little throwaway statements they'd make that were so quiet, turned out to be concept-shattering thunderbolts. Charlotte wouldn't just say stand up, she'd say come to standing. That is something entirely different. Or as Charles asked



last night, is it your hand feeling your head or your head feeling your hand? It is almost impossible to deeply have this kind of recognition without a teacher. You can read about it but it's not the same.

So we talk about three bodies of Buddha—Dharmakaya, Nirmanakaya, and Sambhogakaya. The usual idea of practice is some kind of step ladder idea, you practice and practice and practice and pretty soon you have some more and more together way of behaving. But Buddhism does not think that is such a useful way to think about it, but rather that you actually give up your past, your family, your ideas of yourself, and you are reborn from Dharmakaya. Dharmakaya means emptiness itself or the ground of being or the mind out of which all minds arise. The spaces between words. When you reside in the spaces between words rather than in the words you live in an entirely different space. No matter how fast things go, things are very slow. So bodhicitta and Dharmakaya can mean the same thing. It is like a flower, emptiness flower, which you open out from then on. You open it out to Sambhogakaya, which means bliss body, or that wider sense of being that Charlotte and Charles are bringing you into. In meditation we know it and in their work you know it. As many of you said last night, you could feel people. It means the subtle level of communication beyond words. And Nirmanakaya is how you exist in this world, how you act out of that potential; every moment as a potential for infinite possibilities is turned into some action. It's the same thing instant after instant. So Nirmanakaya means your actual activity in the world.

But how to stay with this, how to continue this kind of practice. It does not just mean coming to seminars every now and then or even on a regular basis, or coming to zazen, or living at Tassajara. At best that way of Zen practice is a kind of therapy which alleviates your problems. Often people use Zen practice to remove the surface disturbance as a way to protect the root of the disturbance. You find yourself in some neurotic situation or some frustrated life that you can see through enough to know that you are tied up somehow. So you use practice, not to cut deeply through and turn yourself completely around, but just to alleviate it enough so you can continue your deluded views, your desires, your anger and hatred. Practice used this way is maybe beneficial, but unfortunately it often eliminates the possibility for deeper practice, and often deludes others by your reinforced, supported delusion. To prevent that kind of superficial using of practice to protect our opinions, we have to have the example of a teacher and the vow to achieve enlightenment and, strangely, simultaneously the power to give up enlightenment. For a Buddhist also the care of the Eight-fold Path and the abandonment of the ten bhūmis are found simply in the joyful accuracy of a teacher and our own recognition and vow.