

Stewardship

Dharma Field Zen Center

April 19 – May 24, 2010

Classes 1 – 3; Steve Hagen and Deane Curtin

Preparation:

Before the first class please take the Ecological Footprint Quiz:

http://www.myfootprint.org/en/about_the_quiz/what_it_measures/

Before the third class, please read Dogen's *Mountains and Waters Sutra* available online at:

<http://www.nozt.org/teachings/edsansui.shtml>

CLASS ONE:

Quotation for discussion: Tibetan teacher T'songkhapa (1397) said, "Emptiness is the track on which the centered person moves."

CLASS TWO:

Three approaches to ethics in Western culture:

1. Consequentialism (utilitarianism) (Bentham/Mill)
2. Deontology (doing your duty, without regard to consequences) (Kant)
3. Character (Plato/Aristotle)

Two quotations for discussion:

Stephen Batchelor, "Buddhist Economics Reconsidered" in *Dharma Gaia*, p. 180:

"Buddhist economics has to start from the premise of nonduality—recognizing that at root, the distinction between agent, act, and object is merely conceptual. The inherent ecological wisdom of Buddhism is likewise expressed in its reluctance to set anything up as a center to which everything else must refer. ...Such thoughts are alien to the Buddhist experience of reality which, if anything, has tended to be 'acentric'. Paradoxically, however, placing nothing at the center is tantamount to placing *everything* at the center."

Dogen, *Mountains and Waters Sutra*, Section 6:

“Even if you have the highest understanding of mountains as all buddhas’ inconceivable qualities, the truth is not only this. These are conditioned views. This is not the understanding of Buddha ancestors, but just looking through a bamboo tube at a corner of the sky.”

First Theme: wilderness vs cultivation

The *Lotus Sutra* says about the Buddha:

“The beauties of the landscape and his longings for the forest carried him deep into the countryside. There he saw the soil being ploughed, and its surface, broken with the tracks of the furrows, looked like rippling water. The ploughs had torn up the sprouting grass, scattering tufts of grass here and there, and the land was littered with tiny creatures who had been killed or injured, worms, insects, and the like. The sight of all this grieved the prince as deeply as if he had witnessed the slaughter of his own kinsmen.”

But, on the other hand, our lineage in Zen exists only because of agriculture, because of cultivation of the kind that the Buddha himself apparently repudiated.

For example, Pai Chang, the early Tang Period patriarch (749 – 814): “A day without work—a day without eating.” He was called “The Patriarch who created the forest” i.e the sangha.

Our tradition has evolved from “A robe and a bowl on a stone under a tree” to “The Patriarch who created the Forest” (the sangha), from solitary beggar to farmer.

CLASS THREE:

Second Theme: Buddha Nature from all sentient beings to all being

Quotations for this class (in addition to the *Mountains and Waters Sutra*):

Dogen, *Actualizing the Fundamental Point*, Section 9:

“When dharma does not fill your whole body and mind, you think it is already sufficient. When dharma fills your body and mind, you understand that something is missing.

For example, when you sail out in a boat to the middle of an ocean where no land is in sight, and view the four directions, the ocean looks circular, and does not look any other way, But the ocean is neither round nor square; its features are infinite in variety. It is like a palace. It is like a jewel. It only looks circular as far as you can see at that time. All things are like this.

Though there are many features of in the dusty world and the world beyond conditions, you see and understand only what your eye of practice can reach. In order to learn the nature of the myriad things, you must know that

although they may look round or square, the other features of oceans and mountains are infinite in variety; whole worlds are there. It is so not only around you, but also directly beneath your feet, or in a drop of water.”

Graham Parkes on *Mountains and Waters Sutra* (in *Buddhist Philosophy*, Edelglass and Garfield, eds.):

“The central idea of Japanese Buddhist philosophy is that the natural world can be experienced and understood both as spiritual sermon and sacred scripture.”

Gary Snyder, “Blue Mountains Constantly Walking,” from *Practice of the Wild*:

“Dogen is not concerned with ‘sacred mountains’—or pilgrimages, or spirit allies, or wilderness as some special quality. His mountains and streams are the processes of this earth, all of existence, process, essence, action, absence; they roll being and nonbeing together. They are what we are, we are what they are. For those who would see directly into essential nature, the idea of the sacred is a delusion and an obstruction: it diverts us from seeing what is before our eyes: plain thusness. Roots, stems, and branches are all equally scratchy. No hierarchy, no equality. No occult and exoteric, no gifted kids and slow achievers, No wild and tame, no bound or free, no natural and artificial. Each totally its own frail self. Even though connected all which ways; even *because* connected all which ways. This, *thusness*, is the nature of the nature of nature. The wild in the wild.

Ashvaghosha, *Buddhacarita*, (*The Acts of the Buddha*)

“I rain down the Dharma rain,
filling the whole world,
and this single-flavored Dharma is practiced by each according to the
individual’s power.

It is like those thickets and groves,
medicinal herbs and trees
which, according to whether they are large or small,
bit by bit grow lush and beautiful”

Shantideva, *The Way of the Bodhisattva*:

May I be the doctor and the medicine,
And may I be the nurse
For all sick beings in the world
Until everyone is healed