

Zen gossip



Notes with students over the years

Dear students !

Present-day culture and Zen awareness can find common ground in freedom. After all, since the West is basically Christian, the letters of Paul and the Gospels are about a message of freedom, which is similar -- not the same -- to liberation in Zen awareness. And modern culture has been striving for various levels of freedom for centuries.

But how are we to find freedom? Do you think a teaching can liberate you? The twentieth century's ideas of freedom caused millions of deaths. Do you believe that strong-willed mental contents of images, thoughts, theories and experiences can set you free or make you happy? No. Only more uneasiness and suffering is gained in that. More of self love as the scottish preacher George Macdonald would have said. Being a student of Zen awareness is something else, as I see it.

Zen awareness is the open space of love, nothing else. It is not self-effort. When you come to Zen awareness, don't bring content. Don't bring the idea of fixing your salvation by yourself. You can't use these ideas. Zazen is rest. Not easy, not difficult. Rest in nothing created, rest only in simple awareness. You have to die in this rest, die on this cross -- and that means no more of your ego-content. We love telling stories about ourselves and our world, but that has to go. Kill your darlings. We love the fictions about "myself" and we pretend to believe it, although it changes all the time.

As you are in Zen awareness it is impossible to be anxious about your present state. This hereness of this moment simply does not yield to being anxious or troubled. Anyone can see that. Look around. You see everything, you hear sounds. There is this being here in this very moment. Even if you are on the verge of leaving your body in the hospital bed, this is clearly so and you can observe it, just as you can observe your bodily dying process. There is a perfect silence about it.

So this being in Zen awareness is very down to earth. No fancy stuff. No beliefs or proofs of the existence of awakening. Why? Any dualistic mode of thinking is incompatible with true life in Zen awareness. Dualism is the intentional dissociation of thought and action; while life in Zen awareness demands their integration. When there is no need of awakening -- there you are !

From the point of view of any dualist belief and thought, whether in its pragmatic or its contemplative mode, whether from an idealist or a realist attitude, life in the love of Zen awareness cannot even be rightly conceived. Any belief in Zen awareness and the traditional proofs, even if they were logically perfect, could only conclude to some infinite or absolute being which lacks any quality deserving of reverence or worship. The old buddhist scriptures are just conceptions, albeit sometimes useful ones.

The belief in traditional teachings, proofs, lineages and authorities, is not the Zen awareness of living in Zen awareness here in this moment. Zen awareness is like this. People want to experience a miracle or something remarkable. It is just like this. Having a dis-ease about this means you don't observe it. First time you really observe it your mind comes rushing in: wow this is a miracle ! Then this becomes you life and the mind is left alone, not needed to shout things like that. Not needed to produce belief or proofs for belief.

Enthusiastic preaching is really not needed for life in Zen awareness. On the other hand people will continue to try to teach and reach what is here already and go to zen temples or centers to listen to enthusiastic dharma talks. They don't see the sign, as Jesus said. The repose of the mind in Zen awareness is unspeakably great. It is the most profound spiritual tranquillity. The enthusiastic preacher would love to have it, loosing his sense of "I myself and me".

You know there is no human being who would not confess to having something that plagued and disturbed him or her, instead of living in simple awareness. There is always some problem from which you would gladly be free. Right? It is the content of your self-talk, your drama, your narrative. It impossible for you, at the moment, to regard life as an altogether good thing. Am I not right?

Most persons imagine that life would be a great satisfaction if this something would disappear. The causes of your discomfortable drama are of all kinds. You know them very well, you blame this, you blame that. The degrees of discomfort reach from simple uneasiness to a misery such as makes suicide the highest hope. You know, the greater part of the energy of this world's life is spent everyday in the endeavour to rid itself of discomfort. Just look at the advertising! Look at the cult of coaching and spirituality!

Some try to escape it with strong and continuous effort to keep rising in the social scale, you know, to achieve something. But of course they discover at every new ascent fresh trouble. They have brought the trouble with them. As long as you live in the dream you bring your burdens with you.

Others, making good money, are slow to find out that the poverty of their souls keep them unhappy. Some try endless change, they travel, try new life-styles, new positive thinking, every fourth year. But change will never set them free.

May be you try to expand your mind with knowledge? Go into academia? You will find that happiness will not easily dwell in the great house of knowledge. It will turn out to be a simple self-expansion and the false dream continues. Memory and description do not serve freedom.

To number the varieties of human endeavour to escape discomfort would be to enumerate all the modes of such life as does not know how to live outside the self-dream. All seek the cause of their misery, the variable occasion of just your own misery. When one apparent cause is removed, another at once succeeds.

The real cause of your trouble is something you have not recognized as even existent; you are not yet acquainted with its true nature. To live is an extraordinary affair. Zen is to learn to appreciate every single breath. Breathing in -- breathing out -- amazing !

Personal history really does not matter much here. Still everyone is asking for your personal story. In those notes on the teaching we have enjoyed together I will try to get some personal episodes in. Here is one: I sat on bus in Uppsala with a friend, going home to him to have lunch. Suddenly I felt a strong: HERE ! It was mindblowing. It

was like a new country and I was there for the first time. Soon it was over, but I really wanted to return.

People can ask me a lot about this. But really, it is only that you realize what is real. HERE is real. Zen awareness is this real life. Zen awareness is this reality that takes place. Everytime you stop imagining or having opinions you will see what I mean. All ego content has to go in that moment. Why should you carry any mind-content? Love is about letting go of that. For Christians -- we are all, surely, Christians in this European or American culture in a one way or another -- it is the same: Jesus carries all that weight, once and for all times. Zen awareness is saving all living and suffering beings all the time. Let it happen. You don't have to explain it.

I was growing up during the 50s and the 60s and Sweden is a Lutheran country. There is actually a lot of Zen awareness in Luther, if you study him for a bit. We went to church most Sundays. But I have no clear memories from church services or sermons. I remember a lot of debate between mother and father in the car home from church. I think I wondered what there was to argue about. I also went to Sunday school, which was an entirely social affair as far as I remember.

I had no great interest for religious questions during my teen years. The experience in the church as I was 18 was no big thing, just encountering truth, meeting the real. In a way time stops when you don't imagine any more but meet the real. Zen awareness is not in time just because you don't carry any content, you just meet Zen awareness of the HERE. That is so for the rest of your life.

So what about awakening? To realize you don't need it is all awakening there is. Don't get hooked on rumours or presentations of titles. One of my teachers, Soeng Sa Nim, said to me in a letter: "Who is awakened? I don't know!"

Becoming the "new man" as the Christian tradition calls it, means that all memory of yourself disappears for a moment and Zen awareness is real instead for that moment. There is no time involved in that. You sort of jump out of time. You stand in the light of Zen awareness and no time is passing or coming. This is really much simpler than having big belief systems and complicated Buddhist analysis of the mind or Christian

ethical programmes running in your mind. Zen awareness is not about having a teaching of Buddhism or any other religion, it is about the real life. This is the real life and Zen awareness is here. HERE. Can you appreciate that?

If you talk about the “old man” and the “new man”, like you can do in the Zen awareness tradition, beware that real life has neither of them. Zen awareness empties all of those concepts and you are already the “new” just like Zen awareness is always “new”. Zen awareness is always the “new” and it is always the “good news” the true bhakti. Zen awareness is love of reality.

Since I had to study various religious philosophies to become a teacher I discovered what you can do with language and imagery. Every culture has those images and stories and systems of beliefs. Zen awareness was more of a crisis cult to start with - the upheaval not only of the Indian injustice of the cast system but also of the older stale form of buddhism, caught in formalism. This revolt did succeed only for a short period. The brahmanism returned with force. Still today, cast feudalism lives side by side with the modern democracy.

You let Zen awareness in love empty all injustice of this world for you. “In Zen there are no lieutenants” a good friend told me in Hawaii, where I lived in the Diamond Sangha with Robert Aitken. But even in Zen this is happening. See Brian Victorias book about fascist Zen masters of Japan. Victoria reveals the inside story of the Japanese Zen establishment’s dedicated support of the imperial war machine from the late 1800’s through World War II. He chronicles in detail how prominent Zen leaders used the Buddhist teaching to encourage blind obedience, mindless killing, and total devotion to the emperor. Why did the japanese persecute Christians in Japan? Because they refused loyalty to any earthly power, including the emperor. Zen buddhist generally went militaristic. The consequences for true Zen were catastrophic and the impact can still be felt today. Even Robert Aitken avoided talking about roshi Yamadas participation in this, when I brought it up over a lunch in Honolulu. Of course it is not a comfortable topic. Charlotte Joko Beck has a sound appreciation of what a teacher is: life itself, nothing else!

Most western Buddhists will find this account heart- and mind-boggling. Enlightened Zen masters supporting war contradicts everything we know about the Zen awareness of love. We have to conclude that they did not live in this true awareness at all? Probably the same thing goes for most of the present day Zen masters around the world, of course with important exceptions. One could wish all Buddhist institutions took some lessons among the few Quakers in Japan. Just to get the peace and non-violence of it.

After World War II, the Japanese Zen tradition, like the nation itself, went into a collective amnesia regarding its complicity in the war. So over 50 years of Buddhist history have been hidden from outsiders and the Japanese themselves. They are just beginning to confront what happened.

You are not supposed to imagine anything about Zen tradition. If you do that, you are back into the mind prison of obedience to teaching and authority. Zen awareness is about boundless compassion.

Religious systems, like the buddhist, have sophisticated beliefs. None of that is boundless compassion. Having a belief system in your mind means more images and concepts to give up. Some western people think Buddhism is simpler than Judaism or Christianity. On the contrary. Just look into the Abhidhamma system ! But you have to give up all images, you see what I mean? No particular system is better or worse. They all have to go. Zen awareness is compassionately emptying all those thought and images. And stay away from inherently fascist Zen masters ! If they don't rape your mind, they rape your body, if you are a young female zen student. That was also a problem in the Diamond Sangha of Honolulu, among many others in the West.

One of you students said that all the Buddhist Sutras and the Judaic-Christian Bible stories could be just fantasies about many Buddha-lands and the Kingdom of God. That is true. Human imagination is endless and amazing ! In your head all is fantasy, or most of it anyway. So when you imagine things about the Buddha or about Jesus in the Gospels being fake or lies, it is your egocontent that runs you. Try to come from the other angle. What does it take for you to be free? I takes Zen awareness and you letting

go all of your contents in favour of simple awareness. Then a sort of happiness can appear and suddenly you know what the Gospels and Sutras are all about.

Why do you have to be free? Because you are like a prisoner right now. However absurd this statement may appear to one who has not yet discovered the fact for simple awarenessself, the cause of everyone's discomfort is this evil dream you have about yourself and the world. This is moral evil—first of all, evil in the dream about yourself, the dream sin. This is what is wrong with you.

People nowadays do not like to hear about his or her own wrongness, his and her own unrightness. The only way to get rid of it, though, is for you to get rid of your own dream sin. You may have other weaknesses, but no special sin may be recognizable as having caused your prison existence. So start there.

Evil in ourselves as the dream with its content, is the cause of the continuance of misery, the source of its necessity, and the preventive of that patience which would soon take from it, or at least blunt its sting. The dream about yourself is essentially unnecessary, and passes easily with the discovery of what it is. It gives itself up, you don't have to do it.

The suffering also is essentially unnecessary, but while the delusion dream lasts, the suffering will take place, over and over again. Foolish are all those people and organizations who would rid themselves or his fellows of discomfort by setting the world right. By waging war on the evils around us we neglect that integral part of the world where lies our real faith business. If we let go of the evil dream, things will show us true nature, life itself in Zen awareness.

To correct our misery from the outside is impossible. It is to go on dreaming the dream that is our prison to start with. Were it possible — an absurd supposition—that the world should be fixed from the outside, it would yet be impossible for the people who had contributed to the work, remaining in the self dream, ever to enjoy the perfection of the result.

As long as we try to live our self-talk we remain a distracted, jarring instrument. We talk good politics, good religion, but it does not avail to much. The philanthropist who regards the wrong as in the deficit in democracy or in religious faith, forget that the problem is conscious and wrong individuals. The false dream is always generated in individuals; the wrongness exists in the fiction of the individual, and is passed over by parents and teachers. The child starts life in truth and soon goes into the dream lie. So you have to wake up.

There is no way of making three men right except by making right each one of the three; but a cure in one man who repents and turns, is a beginning of the cure of the whole human race.

Some of you have asked many times why no one is good in Zen awareness. All of you should read "The Evil Person" by Maida. Therefore don't call anyone good. And another Zen Master said the same thing: "Why do you call me good?" says Jesus in Luke 18:18. But what is the problem? What you imagine to be good is just disappearing movements of your little mind, just fantasies. That is what Zen awareness means and that is also what Zen awareness is to you: disappearance of images and opinions that drive you hither and thither. So no one is good in Zen awareness. A very good basis for life!

You also have problems with sin. Sin is something you don't like, am I not right? Maybe you use another term: distraction, problem, disturbance, attachment. But you don't like it. Maybe you blame it on other things: the body, the workplace, relatives, societal circumstances.

But you see, it mostly is only distraction from Zen awareness through the dream about yourself. When you turn to Zen awareness the dream fades and all sins are soon entirely gone. Life is then such an immediacy, it is like the grass under your feet, the sky over your head. But don't expect that until it happens. Until it happens you think you are stuck in sin. You think sins are hanging on to you, weighing you down and you can only pray: Amitabha help me, forgive me, have mercy upon this sinner. But the truth is not like that. Truth is that in Zen awareness there is open space, wide enough to let any of your sins simply disappear in that vastness.

So don't imagine too much about evil or sin. It is much simpler than that. You look at everything that takes place like on the river, with loving eyes of Zen awareness, all is open and full of love. You get distracted, your energy is robbed by some train of thought and feelings. You come back, Zen awareness is there to love everything again, as if nothing happened. For the simple awareness there was nothing. For you, in your imagination there were a lot of things: karma, fall, redemption, conversion, bliss....whatever you like.

Sin is distraction. It only drags you away. Zen awareness lives in attraction, It draws you to simple awareness. So those are the movements of life - distraction and attraction. Everything is in change, everything returns. You never have to distract. But if you do, the whole thing is made to nothing when you let attraction from Zen awareness be your living energy. Zen awareness is here to live you.

You never have to know whether sin disappears or stays in some form. This is academic. Not even academics should dabble into such a question. In the vastness of the Lord everything disappears, everything is forgiven for ever. Let that be enough.

When I was a teenager I got caught up in a criminal gang. We organized stealing trips. It was a criminal life, a major distraction for me. A dream of fear, worry and pains for my mother. But when Zen awareness drew me to a simple awareness of everything, it all just went up in the air, I totally lost interest in it. It all disappears into the vastness of this love. We are set right. The dream is over. If that is not a miracle, I wonder what is. But it is also very natural, very simple. Zen mind, beginners mind. That is also the title of one of the best books on Zen, by S. Suzuki.

The one cure for any organism, is to be set right – to have all its parts brought into harmony with each other; the one comfort is to know this cure of the evil dream is in process. Rightness – yes righteousness – alone is cure. The return of the organism from the dream self to its true self in Zen awareness, is it's only possible ease and relief.

To free a man from the dream of suffering, he must be set right, put in health; and the health at the root of man's being, his rightness, is to be free from content, that is, from the sin of distraction. A man is right when there is no false dream content in simple awareness. The wrong in the world, the evil dream, is in simple awareness; he must be set free from it.

I don't talk about confessing sins, being set free from the sins he has done: that will follow when the dream fades away. I mean the sins we are doing now, or are capable of doing now. The dream of our separate being spoils our nature – that is the wrongness in us – the evil we consent to, the sin we are in the dream.

To save you from your dream life, is to say to to: rise up and walk ! That is what Zen awareness is all about. Be at liberty in life itself, the essential being dimension. Be free as the Zen awareness is free !

When misery drives me to call out to the source of Life – and we should take the increasing outcry against existence as a sign of growth – the answer will come in an awakening from the prison dream. This is probably not be what you think you desire. Indeed this message from me is not popular at all, it is hard imagine it in a TV interview for example. It's not tasty to media.

But you want only to be rid of his suffering, isn't that so? You can't have that though, without being delivered from the dream you went into as a child. It is a terrible thing to go on in the dream prison, starting this project and that, trying to prove something. If you will not have that deliverance, he must keep his suffering.

Through life's own chastisement you will luckily take at last the only way that leads into the liberty of true life itself. There can be no wake up except to come out of this evil dream into the ordinary everyday glory of Zen awareness.

I also hear you sometimes discuss what particular action or thought is a sin. In the Catholic Church distinctions are made between venial and mortal sin. But who is interested? In all distraction there is sin. Zen awareness returns you to this now. It is actually one more sin to make distinctions between sins, or between karma of various

kinds, as if you knew something. Zen awareness is complete open love to you and all distinctions vanish. So don't add more distractions to yourself by theorizing. Zen awareness is true life itself. Is there any need to do more than that?

It is rather confusing with the old concepts of East and West. There are no such things in real life. Zen awareness is not a culture, East or West. South of North. Real living Zen awareness is always this here and you are called to it every minute of your life. Which is a life created by that very same Zen awareness. It is not "your" life. To the degree it is your life it has to die. If this seed does not die it is of no use. So it is with all cultures, all of Buddhisms, Hinduisms, Christianities, all human language.

You know when Jesus said to the young man to keep the Torah in order to come into life he was really leading simple awareness down to desperation. The young man had already missed the point. He came up to Jesus and said: Good Master, what should I do....etc. That is missing the point. It is like seekers going to India or Japan, to other religions. What should I do? Practise simple awareness, which we call Zen awareness. But the young man misses out on that, as do many of us.

You go to India, then Japan, then back to Europe to find enlightened teachers, you shift from one to the other. You read all the books and watch all the shows. Same thing as the young man coming up to Jesus. Zen awareness is this vast open ocean of love right here, right now. There is nothing to do here except the real life. Seeking is confusion of the dream self.

Zen awareness delivers us from this seeking. The painful consequences of our seeking dreams fades away in this freedom. But until then these karmic consequences exist by the one law of the universe, the true will of the Perfect.

That broken form of life that is you dream about yourself renders suffering inevitable; it is the natural consequence of the unnatural – and, in the perfection of Zen awareness the result is curative of the cause; the pain at least tends to the healing of the breach. This is the brilliant function of pain and sorrow. So don't complain, it is all for the good !

Zen awareness never delivers you from the karmic consequences of your self-dream. You see that, don't you? To live this self-talk-life is to go dead against the very laws of being. Yet people, loving their self dreams, trying to ignore the dread in it, will eventually be lead to discover the hurt. Even the helix spiral of you DNA cramps tight together, visibly, when you suffer.

In the dream of ourselves there is no doubt images of Zen awareness not at liberty to love and forgive, to the boundless light and life. This is not really Zen awareness but a religious effort that does not save us from hell. The mission of Zen awareness is total open love. It will set us free from all self content. No one is safe from hell until he or she is free from the dream self delusion. To live in that dream may indeed sometimes feel as if we were in hell. There is actually no other hell to think of than that of this self dream condition.

A question that often comes up among you is the devil and evil forces. There is a discussion about this on the forum dharmawheel.net. Have a look at it ! Do evil forces exist? Is there a devil? But in Zen awareness this interest fades away. Really – it fades away in the victory of Zen awareness as reality and the me-dream vanishes. I remember, as a small child, seeing old Catholic Church ceilings, full of paintings of the devil and his hord of evil demons. Images like that are distracting, just like the dream about ourselves. They can be used, as Shinran Shonin says, as a reminder of our longing for the Pure Land. We can even imagine the fragrances in that Land of Light and Bliss, he says. But with this body vehicle we are driving right now, all those images will die away and the infinite HERE comes along. Just as this HERE is here this very moment.

Of course the world is as full of horrid things as the paintings in the medieval church ceilings. But why distract yourself from Zen awareness and freedom? Why should you need to do that?

This living reality that you all share is of course difficult to enjoy if you are distracted. But I discovered early in life that we always swing between enjoying this living thing and loosing ourselves in imagining other things. There is this swinging between death and life all the time. Zen awareness is the living but we will often forget simple

awareness. Every time we come back there is life again. Zen awareness is immortality, our distractions are mortality. So we swing between lethal distractions and immortal joy in simple awareness.

Don't try to be immortal all the time. No chance you will succeed. In Zen awareness you are always saved to immortality. Let simple awareness do it. This is of course a ground for happiness but not for speculations. If you imagine a lot of nice things in the world to come, that will be distractions, taking you to the lethal state again. Let Zen awareness be what life is and rest in That Here.

In Zen awareness you leave things behind, you give up your ego content. That can be felt in different ways. If you are in prison and have committed some stupid things, that feels so good. You leave it all behind, only joy. Then you can really dance and sing Halleluja. The slave is free. But some of you have not committed many crimes, you have behaved well and earned great reputation, you have learned a lot and you know a lot. That feels difficult to leave behind, just give away like that. You will inevitably feel sad. I heard one philosopher say he was sad because according to postmodernism maybe the dinosaurs have not existed, they were just concepts and deductions from bones and other stuff. How much more sad he would be to leave all of his intellect behind in Zen awareness.

An older Christian priest who was listening to me talking about truth in Zen awareness, was very sad for having to leave his traditional faith behind. But what you leave is of no use with Zen awareness anyway. So why not be in Zen awareness without burdens? Is that not what all religions have said deep within the Spirit? His bishop was perhaps warning of the danger of heretical thinking. When you imagine things about heresy and not heresy you really distract yourself from life. There is no ego content in simple awareness. If you bring in some you will be distracted and soon desperate. It has to go. In a way desperation can be a sign for you: go in the other direction.

This also brings up tradition business. Am I a soto or rinzai, am I a Honen or a Shinran student? Just like am I a protestant or a catholic? Am I a true catholic? What is

orthodoxy? All those lable noises in your head. My former teacher Robert Aitken used to laugh at all this. Still he had to respect it. So he kept quiet of sexual misconduct of one of the highranking japanese roshis. There you go. True awareness is not meant for hierarchical distraction, it is meant for this life right here.

You should live with Zen awareness, not with any tradition or signs or ceremonies or "right thinking" according to any catechesis. Then you can do whatever do want to do. Early on Buddhism constructed complicated common liturgies. Why not? Use it, enjoy it if your family insists on it. But do not run away from Zen awareness with it. It does not belong to you, because nothing belongs to you. In Zen awareness you leave everything behind. You die to it.

But it this the case even with other trends. You think you are New Age? Not true. You think you are into nonduality? Not true. You are here at it is just as dualistic as ever ! You imagine thinks and that is dualism, you have a self-talk going on all the time and that is very dualistic. In Zen awareness there is silence all the time, a very living silence, a silence in movement. Zen awareness is the philosophy of true silence in motion when you let everything die for you and you die with simple awareness. That is so simple. This life here is always dying with simple awareness, so you just have to be here. Be natural, no burdens.

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People who are busy at spritual quests are like those two blind men sitting at the wayside as Jesus was passing one day in Palestine. They are shouting at him in their blindness. He turns around and heals them after asking what they want. They get their sight back. It is all about seeing and stop the seeking and shouting. There is no roadmap to enlightenment, you just let awareness open your eyes.

Some of you ask about the mind. Is it good to try to get rid of the mind? Will it be peace then? Are you the mind? Or is the mind just there, impersonal and like a biomachine? All those questions are interesting. But really, what is here? Zen awareness is this here. Is there any mind there? I can't see any. Can you? So seriously,

it seems to be a lot of ghost questions. Interesting though they are, they deal with a dream. That does not lead us to a happy place. Zen awareness does not suggest any of those questions. Better then, perhaps, to just leave it alone and return to simple awareness, exactly here were we are now, with or without any mind.

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You know when you settle into Zen awareness right here, there is actually no need of a searching mind. You can perform functions with body and mind like with a rented car for a while on earth. But you are settled in Zen awareness, which means you live this life here – you are alive. There is no imagination of anything else because this is vast, it's too big. Anything a mind can come up with is so small in comparison. This is even eternal so you don't have to imagine a Pure Land or a paradise or heaven. As far as Zen awareness is concerned this is heaven enough for you, and in every moment too. All suffering in life goes into this vastness and evaporates in the middle of the pain.

When you are in Zen awareness it is natural to challenge all religion, even all popular spirituality nowadays. You should challenge them all because it is what Zen awareness does all the time. Even if you spend time with all the wrong people, it does take place right here, which is a holy place. That is the true Torah if we want to connect to the Jewish tradition. Awareness is indeed the radical Torah. You should be the same as Moses, treading on holy ground. Take off your shoes !

Challenge all the beliefs around you and in you. In Zen awareness you don't trust anything but life itself. You don't trust nice experiences or happy states. They come and go. In Zen awareness you are just free of them, whether they come or not. In this incarnation with body of mine there is pain in many places both day and night. Often migraine attacks hits me that make me go half blind. Those states come and go. In Zen awareness I don't rely on any of them for being "me" or "my life" or even "my suffering". It is just suffering. Why should I indulge ? Zen awareness is life.

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What about sickness and death? A personal note. When I was 20 and romantically deifying myself as a poet I went to spend a zazen period at a lake hotel up north in Sweden, near the places where the famous poet Dan Andersson lived. After some days there I called my parents, only to be told by my mother that my father was dying in the hospital. Chocked and full of fear I immediately went to simple awareness only to see simple awareness die a few days after that. Nobody had an idea that he was that sick. I was with simple awareness almost to the end. The pancreas cancer was eating his body. But his eyes gave me assurance of something undefinable. Without many words he communicated this to me over and over again. All shall be well. I had not come to true Zen awareness by that time in my life, so I was mostly confused. But something great and comforting had been coming from my father in the middle of this pain and death at only 53. He seemed to say that he had no cancer, it was just the vehicle. He, as the driver, was going somewhere else. And it took away some of my romantic notions about being a person in a body that can die at any moment. There is no such thing.

Shortly afterwards I went to Paris and sat for many hours in a zendo in Montmartre. I imagined talking to my father. Was my father in the Pure Land now? A strong sense of direction came into me to look for true Zen awareness instead of worrying about my father. Just outside the zendo I found this street with my fathers name: Rue Norvin. It was hilarious.

Death is a good teacher. Hurry up, it is time right now for the real life. Don't spend another day in the dream about yourself. There is no such thing in Zen awareness. There is only new life, life and love in abundance.

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My dream about myself started early in life. I remember my father asking me when was six : Do you think you are the King of the world? And I think I confirmed that to simple awareness. It was true ! King of the world ! A great feeling.

Then later on over the years he often referred to me as the King in a very ironic way. But I certainly felt like it. I was the King and life was my life. Of course this is a mistaken identity. But you have to disappear in order to really see that. If you make yourself a little vassal of the Zen tradition, you just get religion. Then truth does not make you free. Real truth, when you are not and the true Zen awareness is all reality, makes you free.

Zen is waking up from the dream and experience forgiveness – identification is forgiven, which is given up. Waking up is to be forgiven from all dream content, not a vengeance from Zen awareness. Letting go of the dream is deliverance, not an evil to come as a payback for your time in delusion.

Not for any or all of your bad dream content will you be condemned; not for the worst of them should you dread remaining unforgiven. The dream sin you dwell in is the punishment for exactly as long as you hold to the dream. In this present there is no such me or self as you dream of. In this present moment there is only open forgiveness. Can you see that?

To live those I-me-mine-dream scripts is to live the sins – those pervading your thoughts and ruling your conduct; the dream distractions you keep doing, and will not give up. These are the data you are called to abandon, to clean of your screen.

The individual dream is the cause of your misery, though you may not know it – since our culture does not even as much as hint to this fact. The memory is part of the dream, the memory of the wrongs we have done, the memory of the wrongs other have done to you ! You all have them, don't you?

Such dream memories can really become quite bitter; but they all disappear as the dream goes. The whole personal setup is quickly abolished, remorse lose its bitterness completely in the present life going on right here. When we love the Light in Zen awareness, all shadows are dispelled.

It is the indwelling dream of badness, ready to ever dramatise bad actions, that we need to be delivered from. Not waking up we are left to feel discomfort and reap the consequences of the dream activities. Seung Sahn told a story. A man said on his deathbed: I have lived a life of worries, most of them for things that never took place ! This is one of the consequences of the mediocre dream.

The very child of Zen awareness – the real you – entangled in the fiction of me and my life, does not care for his father and will not easily come into His freedom. This freedom is the easy life, the sacred simplicity. Preferring the ego dream causes us to desire wrongly, act wrongly, or, where we try not to act wrongly, yet making it impossible for us not to feel wrongly.

With the departure of the separative dreaming will depart also the power over us of the evil things we have done, and so we shall be saved from them also, saved from all past time as it were. The bad dream that lives in so many of us, is the theater of our negative judgments, our unjust desires, our hate and pride and envy and greed and self-satisfaction. Only when you drop all content can you wake up from this. Don't believe in all the media based on personal biographies of enlightenment, so popular today in social media. That is only more content. Same dream, additional content.

When we turn against the dream content and refuse to obey them, they rise sometimes in fierce insistence, but the same moment begin to die. We are then on the Lord's side, as he has always been on ours, and he begins to deliver us from them so that we can see what is really here in front of our noses.

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A biographical note. I once met a man who was passing through Uppsala in Sweden on his way from India back home to Vancouver. I have forgotten his name but I remember he was a math professor from British Columbia. He went round our student restaurant and asked if anybody could offer lodging for a day or two. I let simple awareness have my old student room, since I had moved to another place and it was empty. He was an amazing man in his forties and he kept saying to me: Staffan you have

to wake up ! I was studying theology and philosophy at the time so I tried the usual jargons on simple awareness to clarify things. But he just ignored that and returned to: Staffan you have to wake up ! People are sleeping, you have to wake up ! Then he went on his journey in his little Citroen 2CV and I never saw him again.

But his man, who showed up from nowhere and disappeared, stirred something in me. I knew already then that a false dream of myself, sustained on self-talk, was making me sleep. After this man disappeared from my life, I had the conviction that human beings really put themselves to sleep. And they do it mainly with language. In philosophy postmodernism was coming along and I read a lot of Lyotard, Derrida and others. It is all about the ambiguity of language and narration. But this man discarded all discourses. He just said: wake up ! And from then on I knew his was on to something.

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Waking up is like touching the garment of Zen awareness and see your wound disappear, the wound of the self-dream. The very idea of a self is the wound and all the seeking efforts are feeding that wound. My father always asked me: do you think you are a King? That self-dream got me into trouble after trouble. Fights, criminal gangs, suffering. Music saved me a bit, playing in a band took me close to other people in a new way. It took me off the streets. A confirmation camp, arranged by a Boy Scouts organization together with the Swedish Lutheran State Church, also made a heavy impact on me. Two years later this math professor showed up just to tell me to wake up. This is story-telling, don't put too much into it.

You often ask me why I keep talking about Zen awareness when our culture is so secular and only goes for sports and entertainment. But the Zen awareness I talk about is not about religion, it is about your life. It is very natural. Water is wet and you live in Zen awareness. It is our nature to live in the highest good, to leave all ego content alone. Water is by its nature wet. No difficulty in that. Content can come and go when needed. But we leave it alone. That is the most natural thing we can do.

Don't believe those who say that it is difficult to be enlightened. Light is the most natural thing to all being, and infinite Light is even more self-revelatory. It just takes

place, gratuitously. It's all for free ! Zen awareness is light, the very light that is existence here now for you. The light of Compassionate Life.

So it is a mercy to turn to Zen awareness because you are already the lightness that He is. Like recognizes like. You come home and you are without burdens. Why should we not always talk about this? It is the most happy of conditions, why not celebrate it every day, every hour? All the old spirituals and hymns are about this. Your grandparents and their grandparents sang them with tears in their eyes. Share this with them ! It is a great tradition.

Of course people who have struggled for a long time will tell you that it is a burdensome quest – with aching knees and backs ! But do not believe any one else, see for yourself. In the Diamond Sangha we had a Bodhidharma sitting in a big chair ! Touch Zen awareness in this very moment and there is the end of all adventures and burdensome struggles. Life itself will provide all teaching you need. I thought I was a king and then life dethroned me in almost every experience I had. When nothing was left to be mine it was easy to turn to Zen awareness. No struggle at all. We already live in the light of Zen awareness and that is why it is not difficult. It is what you believe about the world that is the problem, not the world.

And people who imagine Zen awareness in various ways will of course tell you that thinking and imagining is the road to Light. They mistake their roundabout burdensome path to the real thing. They believe that their images were necessary. No image is necessary. Not special thinking is necessary. Those activities only prolong the carrying of burdens. To work with those images is like persecuting yourself with your own mind. How intelligent is that? We need to ask ourselves: why do I persecute myself?

◦

If you read in the Sutras you always find people dealing with what is going on. They seldom look for imagery or discourses or symbolic content. They need Zen awareness now and cannot wait for a lot of reflection. They usually want to bypass all content. Be like that ! Don't ask for words and theories.

That urgency is good for you. Skip and bypass all troublesome methods and paths that are flooding the religious market. In Zen awareness all ends. There is absolute silence, the joy of what is. It's strong, it's clean, it's hilarious. And it is so vast that any of your burdens or memories just disappear in this big space, this space of forgiveness.

You know we have a swedish joke: life is like an empty bag. You have to fill it with something. That is the mind-content-machine. But maybe you have noticed that however much content you stuff into that bag, it is never enough. And if you tell the mind about this illusion, it does not listen. It's nature is lack when it cannot compare and analyze. It will keep on getting content. It's like the computer in the car we have for hire. The Zen awareness comes in and all is still. You try to make even simple awareness to be a new content, a new programme. That does not work, He disappears and the atheist is quite right: there is no Zen awareness there !

What is there in the bag is content that eventually will hurt and destroy the joy of what is. Shakespeare puts it well:

“Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth, My sinful earth these rebel powers array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth, Painting thy outward walls so costly
gay?”

And our usual outward walls are normality, cheerfulness and selfconfidence. When you go to Zen awareness these walls may fall away with tears in your eyes, a blend of thankfulness and sadness, because you loose everything. But they fall.

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Many seekers nowadays are talking about consciousness as a great mystical thing, but it is only "this poor soul" in Shakespeares sonnet. You know if you imagine a big vast consciousness, that is just a dream of of your self-talk and self-consciousness. The only consciousness there is around, is this little reactivity of ours, the way we use language to communicate and react on each others words and expressions. This self-

consciousness is actually not free, not full of light, not personal, not loving. It is rather primitive, locked into its own reactivity. Zen awareness is real freedom from this bondage. We die away from this self-consciousness when we go to Zen awareness.

I know many of you like this big vast nebulous consciousness, I can read that in your papers. Of course you should explore it. But you know, the more content you produce with this self-talk, the more pain and bewilderment comes into your life. And it is not personal pain, it is impersonal pain. You can't really blame this self-talk, this self-consciousness. It is like a programme, like the car computer, very practical sometimes. You just need help from the Other power, you need the Person of Zen awareness, who can love you free from the mind bondage. Real love is always personal, full of heart. Your self-talk is more mechanical than personal, although we flatter ourselves to be persons with knowledge and emotional skills. It sounds good but we all know it is pain.

The real love in Zen awareness is difficult to talk about. Sometimes it seems to be seduction, like a magic aesthetics. Life in purity seduces us to say thank you for birth, life and world and then turn away and leave it all behind. From the outside the life of Zen meditation seems just a poor life. And it is true: carrying water, chopping wood, work the land, simple food. Yes it is a simple life.

Nothing seems to go our way in the world. In Zen we just sit, stand and walk in stillness and such things are boring really to most people. Throwing your years away in silence? Stupid. But inside there is seduction - and of course the willingness to be so seduced.

I am a musician and I can really find a likeness in music. Zen awareness is like the tone coming out of pure silence. So being alive is being in Zen awareness when it is an expression out of silence. Silence means giving up self-talk and self-consciousness. Silence is also the basic quality of sitting, as in walking, as in lying down. There are many words, many doctrines but actually it is the infinite life and light of silence that matters to the heart. And you sacrifice all your words into that silence.

So there is this exchange - you drop all of your content and silence comes in Zen awareness. This is very simple, nothing special. When you read Meister Eckehart

“Über das Schweigen” it may sound fanciful and deep, just like some parts of Zen Mind Beginners Mind of Suzuki. But like the taste of water it is wonderful but simple.

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Wherever you are there is a body - have you noticed that? This body of mine is so sick that it is difficult for me to avoid the fact. But really the landscape you are in is always the body. It's where you spend your life! We have this vehicle until the last breath of earth life. Think about it. Now you understand Incarnation. You are an Incarnation. In carna, in the flesh. At the same time, since you can see all this, you are not the body. You are not feminine or masculine. You are not child or middleaged or old. Look and you will see that you are not the body. So what are you? Before you answer, be That for a while. That is Zen awareness. Then you will sense a new way of relating to all bodily things. That is what Zen awareness gives you at every moment in life. Whether you know Zen awareness that way or not, that is what takes place.

But being that which you really are does not pluck you out of the body or the world. Indeed the body is the very prayer cell for That which you are in Zen awareness. The body is the instrument for the Name, the voice to sing with. You have to see this for yourself.

When I was 22 I moved in with my future wife in a cottage in the agrarian countryside outside Uppsala in Sweden, near the little village Alunda. I was doing academic studies in philosophy and was working on my thesis. In the mornings I took long walks around the cottage, over all the Viking gravefields. Over and over I had the strong sense of not being the body but having the opportunity of using the body as an instrument for Zen awareness . By letting my ownership go, accepting it as a hired car, the right relationship to living becomes visible.

We lived in the cottage for almost a year. During that period this was the dominant insight – being lived by simple awareness in Zen, having the opportunity to sing and play the instrument of the body. I was often reading Tao Te Ching in this cottage. At this time I also learned yoga and applied hours every day on postures and breathing

exercises. This enhanced this vision of the body of course. My wife who was much more supple in her body than I, tested yoga now and then but did not pursue it.

So you are not the body. But the body is near and the closest environment. It is an instrument for life itself. There is enjoyment and love in this instrument so why not use it for that? Why use it for meaningless activities? Why manipulate it with drugs or extreme efforts? Why forcing it to overwhelming stimulation? It is a holy temple, best used for contemplation. So take care.

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For many of you students, going to church and listen to stories you don't believe in, is not a nice experience. I have understood that from your papers and reports (on visits to religious institutions, obligatory course requirements). You get irritated, disturbed, provoked even. That is interesting. You should study these reactions. Who is there? Who is going to church? Zen awareness is confronting that question, first of all.

Who is it that tries to live in the moment? It is very popular among upper class people to try to live in the moment nowadays. But actually there is no one here to do that, upon inspection. Am I not right? If you look, can you discover anyone being here? Is it not just the "here" that is here now? A student of Bodhidharma wanted his mind to be enlightened. Bodhidharma shouted to him: Show me that mind ! Which of course he could not do. That is life itself. In Zen awareness there is always this access to life itself. But not to *anyone*, or any "me" to maken an effort to be here.

You know during the -70s there was a book out called "Be Here Now" by Ram Das and we all read it, or rather looked at it, since the brownish paper had a lot of drawings and funny characters in them. Some of you have borrowed the book I notice. It's great fun isn't it? You feel inspired to do something, start meditating or look for a guru. Still most of you don't do that. You get a job and you start a career, you create families and you suffer. Somewhere life is not enough. Some of you older people know what I am saying.

Going into a church and hearing stories that you don't believe in, is actually the same thing as reading "Be Here Now". But it is even better because it provokes your ego rather than gives it pleasure and nice inspiration. Jesus is hanging on the cross there and so will you - that is the message. But as long as you believe that world is for giving pleasure to the self-conscious ego this message will be disturbing.

I remember an event in India. I was 23 years old and went for three months to northern India to do research for my thesis at Oslo University. Up in the little village along the Ganga river, I was invited to tea by an old Indian gentleman. He was a convert to Catholicism but worked as a temple artist for Hindu temples in the region. He showed me a book called "St Francis - the Bhakti Yogi of the West". He made me read the book and then we met for talks around it.

This old artist told me a truth that I have kept since then: it is not enough with your natural desperation and your natural failures in life. Zen awareness's suffering on the Cross is necessary for you to be free of self. And the old man repeatedly quoted 2 Peter 5:7. It is about throwing all your troubles on Zen awareness. I remember telling simple awareness of my yoga practise and he just laughed. It will only lead to natural failure, he said. He made a sweeping gesture and said: This Ganga river from North to South is adorned with thousands of monasteries and ashrams, all leading to the failure of self-power, self-practise, self-consciousness.

And there you have it. True repentance is a joy. You lay down every burden of self-consciousness, every ego content, whether you call it Advaita or Awakening or Transcendental Meditation or sacramental Church activities. Freedom is not about you doing things and the desperation you come to when all the activities just prolong themselves, is not working either. Natural misery and darkness must be thrown upon simple awareness, the light one. In the vastness of Zen awareness all burdens evaporates like clouds drifting away to reveal the blue sky.

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I can see in your questions that you think the Zen awareness gives you the experience of emptiness. In fact, many of you older people seem to believe that this is what zazen should do. This is the emptiness-trip. In truth there is neither emptiness nor fullness. It is just this indefinable life going on. Rest in that. Don't try to be empty or having no thought. Vain business.

There is no one here but Zen awareness is waiting to give us all space. I can even fall back, like you fall back in water to let it support you. No effort, rather the opposite. You rest backwards, letting confidence follow you into the water. You will be carried and you realize: there never was anyone here, empty or not empty.

Therefore I think guilt can be a good sign of the dream. Life itself is going on and in Zen awareness you are done with yourself. In Zen awareness there is mere life, naked life if you like. When conversion to this life takes place most of the preferences and beliefs disappear. They were connected to this false dream. What remains are perhaps a few habituated behaviours, easily questioned and given up. It is a bit like quitting smoking or drinking alcohol. It is there, a bit of a smoke can happen, a drink can be gulped down on occasion, but there is no desire for it, no need. There is no lack of anything really, life itself is just living. Zen awareness is the freedom, not something anybody needs. The needy Zen awareness is just a religious figure, a story. The real Zen awareness is this saved life. It is saved as its own nature. The supernatural holiness of everything is the nature of everything.

Guilt can also show you a lot of things in what you see in others. Anything in you, which, in your own child or sister or brother, would make you feel simple awareness of her not so pleasant as you would have simple awareness of her, is something wrong. This may mean much to some of you, little or nothing to others. The idiosyncrasy of the personal dream is almost always unpleasant to see. Media, of course, thrives on those "interesting" things in people.

As the love of simple awareness who is love wakes us up we get rid of all discontent, all fear, all grudging, all bitterness in word or thought, all comparing and measuring of our own with a different measure from that he would apply to another's. Since mind-contents is outright boring we will have no curling of the lip or feelings of disgust to

peoples behavior. We will not tend to indifference to someone who needs help, there will be no desire to excel another, no pleasure at gaining by his loss. This is not moral striving, it is open space instead of the individual dream.

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You ask me so many questions about personal history. When I say the word: I was brought up in the 1950's in a little village in the south of Sweden, you think there is meaningful communication, isn't that right? But you see the time reference "in the 1950's" and the place reference "in the south of Sweden" are only that - language references in this present moment of communication. There is no such a world as it sounds like. It only sounds like it, and hearing it, your brain dreams it. I use my memory as best I could, but still in that honesty, it is only linguistical references that make you think and imagine. That is fun. No doubt about it. It is creative, you can make radio programmes and films with it. Documentaries are based on this illusion. But this life, my life, life as it is in itself, is almost never concerned with such images and thoughts. It is living here, and there is no reference-world here. That is just a dream of time signs and place signs and adding human agents and their emotions to that. The story. The psychology of the story, the illusion of sequence.

So freedom in Zen awareness is something very different from this psychology of a story with references. And if you want to be free that is the only choice. How many more years do you want to distract yourself? As long as you deal with this distraction you definitely suffer. And the miseries of human life can lead to discovery of Zen awareness but if you don't turn around only the misery will go on. We seem unique in our way of suffering but really – truth is just waiting for the Yes and the HERE.

What do you loose when Zen awareness comes in? Everything. And the truth of the old formula is clear: nothing whithout simple awareness, everything with simple awareness. There is a joy of what is. That is the joy of everything with simple awareness.

However – does this mean you have to stop working as a cashier? Or stop selling cars? Or stop having plans for a family? Or stop being a soldier in an ongoing war - as Arjuna in Bhagavad-Gita? Of course not. Why has anything to stop or change to something else? As George Tanabe used to say: Everything is changing anyway ! Buddhism is built on this insight.

We are a bit too romantic here. Oh, I have seen what Zen awareness really means and I can't live like this anymore ! Of course you can. You can also change to whatever pleases you, perhaps do something that really helps others less fortunate. But, really, life is everywhere. It is what you believe about the world that is the problem, not the world. But if you read spiritual biographies there is always this storyline about revolutions in your life because you saw the light.

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How do you integrate the joy of everything in Zen awareness? That is an interesting question. Is there integration? For whom? You certainly don't have to become a Buddhist monk or join a contemplative order. You integrate, perhaps, by letting the life in Zen awareness, which is simple awareness itself, take care of it. Integration is only about giving up. I give up self-conscious content. That is the only integration worth talking about. And who performs it? We don't have to become someone else, someone new. We simply don't have to become anyone. We are nobody, at last. Now everything can change as much as it likes.

What about relationships, you say? Do you keep all your old friends when you let Zen awareness be your life? You don't have to bother. An old friend visits you, finds you to be no one in particular, gets bored and drops away. That is one possible scenario. Perfect ! Another comes, gets fascinated by your inner silence, stays on and is nurtured by you. Perfect ! Your mother and father and brothers and sisters find you eccentric and lose interest in you. Your mother loves you more than ever and she does not know why. Let all these things unfold.

We need not pursue any holy life, any contemplative order or new images on our walls where we live. The dropping away of all content takes care of itself. It is real life, not

imagined. And you don't change your name to Prem Anand or Bhikku Vamandas. Why should you pursue more ego content, more attributes? Nonsense.

All is new because of the creative dying of all. Without that, life will fetter you through endless experience, the bad dream, the master sin. This master sin is at the root of all the rest. It is no individual action, or anything that comes of mood, or passion; it is the non-recognition by the man, and consequent inactivity in simple awareness, of the highest of all relations – Zen awareness in us now.

As long as you are in that dream about yourself you will question everything anyone says about Zen awareness's goodness and sovereignty. In the darkest place of our life Zen awareness has us testify each day exactly who we know simple awareness to be. Everyday He is introducing simple awarenessself to us in what is going on. Zen awareness sees who we are and uses all the broken places to make us who we are becoming.

The self-dream is the absence in you of harmony with the being who is our real existence, whose word is the man's power of thought, whose love is our true being. Zen awareness cannot be far from any one of us: were we not in closest contact of creative life and death, we could not exist.

You don't see this in you self-dream state, but as we have in us no power to be of our own, so have we no power to continue being. We don't create biology. But there is a closer contact still, as absolutely necessary to our well-being and highest existence. Our being at all, to the mere capacity of faring well or ill.

Until you are awake in Zen awareness, your true relation to life is not yet an obvious fact. The flower lies in the root, but the root is not the flower. The relation exists, but while one of the parties neither knows, loves, nor acts upon it, the relation is, as it were, yet unborn due to life in a separate self dream.

The highest in man is neither his intellect nor his imagination nor his reason; all are parts of the hired vehicle for earth life, inferior to the drivers will to be awake in Zen

awareness, and indeed, in a way, dependent upon it: his giving up all will to wake up as Zen awareness 's own awakeful grace.

Life itself is the end goal of Zen awareness in the creation of man, the end for which buddhism was born. We are saved from the dream of passions, the state of "bombu" as Shinran says, and the universe flowers yet again in this redemption. Isn't this great?

We should of course not imagine Zen awareness without sympathy for the sorrows and pains which reveals the content of the dream drama. Infinite compassion with every living and sentient being. Evil is not human; it is the defect of a false dream, a cognitive mistake, a moral misapprehension. And opposite of the human.

But the suffering that follows our mental and emotional programming is human, belonging of necessity to the human that has identified with the bad dream. While it is by cause of this false identification, suffering is for the sinner, that he may be delivered from his sin. Zen awareness is in simple awareness self aware of every human pain.

Truth about this obvious fact of life and grace becomes the first thing, not individual happiness; and you must not make it true but let the Obvious be Itself. Life itself is in perfect in sympathy with Zen awareness.

The individual dream is the tortured presence of every nerve that lacks this repose in what is always here with us. That is the first Noble Truth. The self-dream recognizes the evil in life only as pain; in your dream you know little and care nothing about this dream sin. And Amitabha, as the Pure Land Buddhist say, is sorry for your pain. He calls on you.

That which is Zen awareness's joy will be our deliverance from the self dream ! He might indeed, it may be, take from them the human, send them down to some lower stage of being, and so free them from suffering – but that must be either a descent toward annihilation, or a fresh beginning to wake up.

In the ego-dream self we really don't believe in meditation or the Zen awareness freedom and gladness that belong to purity and love. I have seen many zen students

fight on their cushions to gain something in that false dream. In this daytime dream we are weary and heavy-laden with self content. Zen awareness is what we need. The person living in the dream knows only what he or she wants. Instead of more mind content we need purity and simplicity.

Dream existence is an evil distraction. We are in samsara. Or "mondo" as the Japanese goes. You can go to Jungian dream analysis for decades, still the self dream will be full of distractions and lies. Life in Zen awareness points to the living existence as absolutely good, right here, right now. Love others, help out, be awake, breath !

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One of you wrote to me: " I know that I need to cling to the promise that Zen awareness is all I need to be complete but sometimes it is easier to talk the talk than to walk the walk."

Well, to tell the truth, the walk with Zen awareness is easier, once you do it. "Only keep Don't Know Mind !" as Soen Sa Nim often said. Simple enough. Talking about an experience is talking about the past, that is really tiresome. There is no past in Zen awareness. And if you feel you must concentrate on the present – same thing. It becomes the past through your effort. To cling to a promise – same thing. In Zen awareness you simply dispense with past-present-future. You rest, you don't cling.

Instead of clinging there is this vast open space. In which you can play with words and do whatever seems good to do at the moment, helping out. In doing it we can see how it passes. So everything passes while you are in Zen awareness forever.

Now you can see why I am so reluctant to be biographical. Many of you have your parents videos of you when you were small children. When you see them - is it really you there? No. There is no one there, it is a video. You are looking at a video and you charge it with content and meaning.

Does it liberate? No. Any Zen awareness freedom in that? You can almost feel the limitations coming rushing at you from the video screen. That is all the creative mind, creating the past and projecting this past on to yourself. Fetters. Pain. Then you take a deep breath, come out of the dream and life is more open, more spacious. You walk outside in nature and feel the freshness of the sky, the air. Freedom.

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When he was a young priest, Albert Schweitzer tried to teach faith to young boys and his main goal was to make them remember a few central thoughts and verses that would keep them from denying religion later in life. That was his main goal: keep them from denying religion later in life. That is interesting, is it not?

I would say the opposite - it is important to deny all content and turn to life itself first of all. Zen awareness is not to be found in stories and teachings. When individuals meet Zen awareness it is about freedom of life itself, freedom in being itself. So it is utterly important to not believe things but get rid of things. Parents and teachers normally fill us with much content that will hinder us and confuse us up through the teen years and onwards through middle age. Some people live in the prison of the ego content to their last day on earth. This content can be religious - many individuals can testify to the painful limitations they have inherited in this content. Zen awareness is the way in freedom from all that.

In awareness there are two swords: mortificatio and vivificatio. The first one kills all experience, the other lets life in Zen awareness take place. With the first sword all religious content is cut off. This is important. All images and doctrines are gone. Then you can live simply and wholeheartedly in Zen awareness, letting the vivificatio, the lifegiving, take place in everything that goes on.

Almost all of culture and most of religious history has been engaged in the creation and anxious maintenance of mind content. As children we are formed by institutions to create a mind, a container as it were. Then stuff is filled into this. In middle age we feel

the prison around us and even in our thoughts. Desperation sets in and we turn to Zen awareness, or some other line of freedom promise. But there never was any problem. All along life itself were living us. We were just too distracted to notice. The main distractions were about owning things, sexuality, identity and security. For some people this continues through the years and only death liberates us from it.

Zen awareness is about finding beauty early on by discarding the ego content and dive into vast space of love and energy. Does this sound too New Agey? Sorry.

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Some of you ask about the historical Shakyamuni, as if that is important to you. What is the result? We don't know. The earliest writings about him are 500 years after he allegedly passed on ! Endless debates about who wrote those first sutras. He is inspiring you to your own freedom. That is all you need to know ! Be practical about it. Zen awareness means freedom in life as it is. You give up body, world, language, self image. As the Spaniard Emilio Carillo says: sin mente, sin tiempo, sin lenguaje – the mind of No Mind, No Time and No Language !

This is perhaps Zen mysticism? This terms does not help you. Zen awareness helps you in your suffering dream. Practise that. Thanks all you people writing complicated sutras ! You gave us the Zen awareness experience. We needed that.

Maybe you are like me. After a while in one path my attention would go for other nice paths to study. In the library of Nathan Söderblom all religious paths were represented. Such a garden of sutras ! But Zen awareness is not one path. It is life itself. There is a Zen awareness awareness in the minutest details of life, whether I behave nicely or badly. There is Zen awareness in all religions, all sects, all paths.

Before I saw this, there were doubts in my mind concerning the truth of all the sects in historic times. Wasn't Zarathustra of the early Persian culture fascinating? Wasn't hinduism more exciting? Wasn't taoism simpler? Wasn't islam more direct in its

approach? All these questions. But Zen awareness is not a choice, it is what is going on all the time.

This is provoking for many zenbuddhists who want to be orthodox, loyal, true to the lineage, politically and religiously correct, who want to talk politely about the Zen awareness path as one of many, and perhaps not the best for everyone. I remember my tongue slipped in Palolo Valley one day, when I said that Zen is for the few. This was cited as sooo correct many times that summer. Pooh !

Of course the Zen language is a particular language with it's own special terms, based on the many indian, chinese and korean writers – Chinul was my favourite term index. And as such it evolves over time. But Zen awareness is not a language. When you find life in Zen awareness, you will be quite liberal with language practises. What is there to defend?

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If there was a special enlightenment, there would be something to defend. But Zen awareness is the dropping away of this imagination. In the Christian tradition Jesus said that when light comes into your eye the whole body is full of light. But that light is the dropping away of all suggestions of “getting it” or “reaching it” which would only become more self-content. It's like the Light of Amitabha. Or the Light of Tabor, in which the meditation of the simple Jesus-prayer dwells. The Philokalia is a library of some 25 Christian Zen-masters, reflecting about this prayer.

Everything in the world is constructing and deconstructing. It is a trivial business, really. Zen awareness is on the contrary like a ship of pure light that sails perfectly when there is no cargo to carry. As soon as you load some content or some constructive suggestion of “wanting enlightenment” the ship stops, the wind of the spirit stops.

I don't have anything for you in the form of content or concepts or aspirations of any sort. I have no intellectually impressive teaching. I have no interesting biography of a spiritual journey. I have no healing for you, no exercises or inspiring meditative

practises. I can just point to Zen awareness where all such concerns dies away into His love. In Zen awareness we die into love. This is all. It is simple.

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Many of the moral precepts, like the yamas and niyamas, like the Ten Commandments, are about behaviour in the world. It is practical wisdom. Don't lie. Don't kill. Don't punish evil with evil. Love your neighbour, even your enemy. But the central theme of Buddhism is awareness. And Zen awareness is freedom in truth right here, scientific truth in fact, where all your imagination is dropped, where all your aspiration is discarded as vanity – like it says in the Qohelet of the Old Testament. Instead there is simplicity, silen, absolutely pure light that falls on everything in the universe. The absence of ego content makes life light and graceful. Minute details of forms, colours, movements, seasonal changes appear in beauty. Other human beings appear as light-beings, miracles that move and talk and imagine things.

◦

There is now an experiencing that nobody in particular experience. Here it is. This is not a paradox or an exciting form of expression - it is the vital truth that anyone interested can really observe and understand, without having any other knowledge. That is freedom in Zen awareness.

When we pause thinking, there is still pure experiencing. We have let Zen awareness remove all I-content, all me and mine, all individuality. Clean simple phenomenology is ongoing. This is just experiencing. Whatever opinion we may have about experience, it is only experience - and it's all going on of itself, right? You see that? It is infinite, there is no determination, it is utmost potentiality. But it is without any experiencer.

Religious individuals have been looking for This to be here, this purity and ultimate potentiality, this boundless life of light and life. So this is really the essence of religions, beyond which an extension and development occurred with language

assistance. Dogmas have been created as conditions for participation. No need really. The large astounding simplicity, always goes on here. It gets lost with these dogmas. Doubts and emotional aspiration comes as a result of this development of doctrine.

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We do not really need to examine our inner life or describe it. That is more like therapy. Of course you can need therapy. But Zen awareness is more reality than therapy. Many pastors talk therapy, really. And other talk dogma. But truth is here, in this very life here. It is enough that we ask ourselves: what is the data that appears on the screen of the soul? Ego content. Of course we can feel sorry for heavy content that hurt us. And then let the Spirit rinse it clean. This is done over and over again. It becomes our second nature to constantly rinse the soul clean by just turning to Zen awareness in this moment.

In the old Buddhist times like in the Middle Ages of Europe, even all the way into our time and increasingly so today, people do pilgrimage walking. By slow walk they leave place after place to finally reach Compostella. Ideally the soul is washed clean by just walking free from professional life, free from class, economy, habits, relationships. In Zen we walk in awareness: right foot - left foot - breathing in - breathing out.

The pilgrimage is a "splendid anarchy" as writer Jack Hitt says in his "Off the road" which is also filmed as "The Way." He writes: "The splendid anarchy of the walk was said to create a sense of being erased, a dusting of the tabula rasa, so That the pilgrim could consider a variety of incoming ideas with a clean slate." Very Zen awareness, that !

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When I was a new romantic Zen enthusiast, I often read books about Zen awareness, much of Alan Watts, from whom I also got a letter as he lived on a boat in Sausalito.

But it turned out that this reading is a distracting weight on the soul. It is conventional fabrications and self-righteous programs. Let the presence Zen awareness wash away all of them with the living water of Wisdom! Wash and rinse! "Best thing you can do in life is to clean!" as the busdriver in Oahu said to me several times during my stay there.

You can never do this cleaning often enough. During the waking hours in a day, you can rinse certainly ten thousand times without any effort. Let the Spiritual water of awareness rinse your soul! Don't carry any luggage.

So it is a huge difference between "engaging" spiritually or psychologically in the problems we have in life and to have all the data disappear from the screen to be in Zen awareness instead. Let's not spiritualize the world but rather allow rinsing to go on in your conscience. Salvation is not found in constructing an deconstructing existence. Let cleaning take place in conscience instead.

I say conscience, because that's really where the problems are. As Luther says, happiness arises when the conscience is at peace, not from thinking or from consciousness or from spiritualizing the world. The good conscience is pure space and simplicity in life and it is what gives happiness and it happens when it's cleaned by grace. Only grace, not religion. Here Shinran and Luther are quite compatible, which is visible also in D.T. Suzuki's book on Shin.

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When frustrations arise in life, we can immediately say to them "I love you, I'm sorry, I thank you for coming and showing this ugly content and give me another chance to drop you!" Zen awareness cleans you up very quickly, much like a windshield wiper that sweeps across the rain-soaked windshield. You really don't do anything.

Another way to see it is with the Swedish priest Waldenstrom. He uses the image of spurs when riding a horse. If we use the spurs to engage ourselves in the faith and the spiritual life, we run only on self power and self content. Old programs will be run and the old data will appear on the screen. It is important to refrain from spurs and let only

the grace rinse – let the horse run. The power of the horse, life itself, and perhaps a light touch of the spurs can feel inspiring.

◦

When you go to a temple of any religion, if you go there, remember that there's really no one there at the beginning or during the service or afterwards. There's no one there. Can you see this? What is there is THIS – which is nothing special. Is this message too provoking? Or meaningless? As long as someone is there, you see, there is ego luggage, data that you need to wash off.

Without content or garbage you are the pure in heart. There is no "I" or "you" but precisely and only the pure-hearted Life. That life is meant to be your life, my life. It is like a screen that gets a lot of dead data and you awareness clear them all. Screen Cleaning. Actually, I can't make the cleanup myself because my ego-action sets new tracks that will add new data: "I did that, I'm spiritually advanced. I am about to be enlightened!" But Zen awareness can do cleansing by His mere presence. In Hawaii people greet you: Aloha! The word means "Loving Awareness is present." We should constantly greet each other Aloha in the sense that all the dead content is eliminated.

This process is similar to the brain's constant neural eliminating of insignificant data in order to function well. In that manner it is a scientific thing. Of all the impressions we take in, we can consciously handle only a small portion into meaningful feelings, thoughts or actions. Likewise the Spirit handles everything that ends up on the screen - removing it by giving it all up to Zen awareness. We are relieved to live a dynamic mix of light here and now, the movements, what is happening in your body now, shapes, colors, sounds. Not in search for the miraculous, but living in it.

The deepest sense of Zen training is not bothering about collective data on the screen, or your own data on the screen on your conscience, but only awareness. Thus, the screen is pure through Zen awareness's complete purity. It's about the love of Zen awareness, not a series of beautiful contents in the mind. No content on the screen is worthy of reality. It is just vain imagination. Pure grace awareness is reality – true Buddha nature.

All other "religious data" is just dust on the screen, collective content. This debris tends to grow to enormous proportions, because you put the religious zeal behind it. It's the same in historic Buddhism and Hinduism, tremendous feudal power structures. Still going strong today. It's amazing that people in the West embraces it – and try ti hide it !

Collective content creates good things: piety, compassion, love of immigrants and those in difficult political situations, efforts to achieve a better world, striving for peace and love on earth. A lot of those endeavors keep the temples and churches going.

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Every moment of rinsing our soulds with Zen awareness is true confession and acceptance of the pain we live with. Every piece of self-talk content, is what acceptance and confession is about. Get rid of it ! Don't hide it. Expose and get rid of it.

Awareness is the rinsing through acceptance of suffering, more than anything else. We all end up in situations where we think negatively about another person or about myself. For many this is taking place every morning they wake up. The dreams have been full of images and memories and associations, creating mental darkness. Now faith in Zen awareness says: I love you darkness, sorry I left you, I thank you for coming and showing it and giving me another chance!

We should love one another. But what does it mean? When hatred rises up in the heart, when greed and lust is coming up – how can we love one another? As I see it we have first of all to practise Zen awareness. In cleaning through zazen we have some hope, when unease and discomfort rises up in our perception, we remember – just here is Zen awareness's and therby the possibility to love one another.

Grace works likes this. To practice this daily is not using a method, it is to be real. It's about what happens in us, empirically, scientifically. The world's evil prince is lurking

in our heart, making us project distractions from living new truth. You meet that daily, don't you?

To read the sutras can be this cleansing of the dark products, this taking out of the garbage. You open something of Nagarjuna for example, start to read and the rinsing starts. Can you feel that? If not, you are probably making more content, more garbage, instead of cleansing. You are constructing something that has to be deconstructed at another point in time. We can actually thank the garbage because it comes back to ask for forgiveness! Then we throw it away. Ok?

Sometimes we can do this with a smile. Sometimes we are very serious, talking to ourselves about difficulties and suffering. Often we focus on the grief and the suffering. In situations we call "horrible" the garbage is just awful - they want to be thrown away. Think of alcoholism, sex addiction, game addiction, criminal acts, pedophilia, rage, things like that. In situations we call "seductive" the garbage is pleasurable and it is difficult to stop it, in situations we call "jealousy" is garbage just emotionally intense. But they all should be thrown away. Bow before them and thank them for their appearance, making you remember to turn to Zen awareness.

◦

Distractive appearances coming and going: that is the way the human heart lives. The Bible show us all sorts of situations where this happens. But you can just look at your own life. I remember a jaina man in India. We talked late in the night. He said his most difficult sin was looking at young women. Then he found a way out of desire: he imagined them old and sick. Suddenly his mind was free of the tendency. He could be real again. It is as simple as that, really.

The dogma of original sin refers to exactly this empirical fact of consistent distractive appearances. Sure, we can dream of awakening and enlightenment. But in everyday life, it is this: garbage shows up and wants to be tossed away. In Zen awareness all content is gone and so life becomes spacious.

Darkness covers the human heart. Everyone should read the small book "The Evil Person" by Shuichi Maida. In our evil dream we really are The Evil Person. But think

of darkness as something that wants to be transparent, washed off. Inherently it need light. Zen awareness is the light.

Zen is the practical side of cleaning or cleansing of the heart. That is why many catholic monks learn zazen. We all need it. We should always engage in this washing by letting simple awareness do it. Penance in Zen is a happy practical way, not a boring self-depreciation. How wonderful to give up distractions! Fold your legs on the pillow and smile !

Weed burning is what other cultures may call the burning of karma to achieve purity. In Zen awareness we are of course already innocent, that is why we feel that the darkness has come on a visit to us, as a stranger. We ask forgiveness for the unawareness we show when we think of the dark data that bubbles up in the “great suck of self” as the novelist Walker Percy names it. And we appreciate that this proved to us that our horizon of phenomena portrayed exactly what we need to be free from. Hello! This is what you are distracted by! Ok thank you!

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A biographical note. When I was young would study Phenomenology at the university of Oslo for a higher degree in philosophy. My German was worse than I thought. I misunderstood a lot of what Edmund Husserl wrote, he is opaque and difficult even for native Germans. I misunderstood what he meant by “intentionality”. I thought he meant that intentionality is not real, that it is a mere concept we add by thinking after the event, after the act. And I agreed with simple awareness about that. I have lived a whole life in this realization. But he actually meant something else! How’s that for misunderstanding the right way?

◦

When we experience something, this happens in my “poor soul, the center of my sinful earth”, to use Shakespeares words in his sonett. Therefore, there is one big task

for me and you - to let Zen awareness clean, cleanse, rinse, wash away, which is the meaning of penance and repentance.

The first part – to let awareness clean us, do the laundry of the heart – is the true life phenomenology. When we are in the company of all our shadows and there is a natural purification of experience (not of the person mind you!), but I have to be awake to choose this awareness.

Allowing the presence to rinse and clean is your daily practice, but it is not a ceremony or worship. It is practise of meditation. It is also a practice in relationship with other people. Most of the distractive assumptions that comes up on the screen in other people's minds, are usually the same coming up on my own soul screen. Have you noticed that? They will all be washed away by the living water in the grace of Zen awareness - if you let that happen.

So we must not make a choice to become "launderer" but rather let the practise of sitting, walking, breathing, hearing, living – wash and let loose streams of living water of the soul. When we are The Evil Person, as Maida calls it, we always experience bodily and mental and emotional cravings. They occur all the time almost without interruption. "Greed, hatred and ignorance arise all the time" is the second promise we do every morning. So we better let washing take place.

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Truth is not about curing one another, it is not about healing. I am no healer, I am no teacher. I have empty pockets, nothing to give you really. It is to take full responsibility for what happens in the soul, to dissolve, to eliminate it by the surging water of the Spirit. It is not by my compassion or some other pious feature that this message is expressed. All such delusions about your own virtue or the virtue of others, are just further debris on the mirror of the soul. Naked data and applications that act on the soul's screen is all we care about. With practise that Light is directed at the garbage, so we just let it all go.

There is perfect health, you know, but on when you let all created things disappear and rest in simple awareness.

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The question Who are you? is popular these days. It becomes rather trivial by being asked so much. Maybe it is better to ask What is here? What is going on? Sometimes I prefer to talk in “states” although this term is also vague. If you think you are the body, that is one state of life. If you think you are mind, that is another. In silence we are nobody and so there is open natural space. You know, that space can also be felt as the absolute being, being before identifying with any form of energy or matter. When I am hungry, this hunger is here. When I am laughing, there is laughter here. But the truth is absolute being, not yet manifested or always returning to Uncreated Light before manifesting. Would you not agree that this is to prefer? The whole. Can it really be said that anything else is real, as a discrete constituent real entity? I don’t see that. And anyway, what happens when you give up all notions in Zen awareness, this absolute love and light seems to be the fact of it all. So we can see it that way.

In this way you see that Zen awareness is not about thinking, believing, having a faith, feeling this or that, being that or this. It is only truth. It is absolute truth and you can have no hesitation about it. It is not a Weltanschauung, it is not a picture of the world, not a myth or a cult of any sort. Forget about all such things. Such things you read about, admire or hate, join or persecute. It’s all content in the world. The Zen awareness I talk about is absolute truth right here and you know it for a fact.

◦

It is so easy to read a little and have opinions about religion and philosophy. You learn to say “myth” and you can discard or explain everything about different religions. It is not about those opinions or academic phrases. It is not about evaluating the history of religious thought or the tendencies of the human mind. It is about this reality right here, this absolute reality in this very moment. Are you carrying content right now? Are you heavy with dust on the souls mirror? Are you distracted? Be honest about this.

When we have had our meetings, many of you feel very good in that silence that often comes when no one has a question and I am silent. Have you noticed that? Silence is good. That is actually what Zen awareness is all about - you are shutting up! How nice to shut up and let the seasons go by.

It is interesting - when you shut up things fall in their natural places.

If you ever have seen a buck in the forest, being disturbed by your coming and rushing away to a safer place. Then it grazes again and acts as if nothing has happened. It does not plan revenge on you for coming and scaring simple awareness away. It does not think it is irritating with humans coming into the forest. It just grazes again after a brief but effective rush away for possible danger. It lives in a natural silence and easiness. Innocence if you will. Or pure actuality.

Life in Zen awareness is much like that. You rest in faith and have a natural happiness undisturbed by distractions in the Actuality of Zen awareness. Then, when things happen around you, you respond effectively and only so far as is necessary. Perhaps other people approach you in an invading way. You rush away, or set some boundary quickly and effectively. Afterwards it's gone. Some angry person calls on the phone. You respond objectively, set the matter quickly and hang up. Afterwards you go back to life in Zen awareness with its light and balance.

Zen awareness is present in all human history. And that means that you can find friends in every age, behind the cultural terminology. To shut up the self-talk in the central thing. This can be done a thousand ways. Sitting and walking and breathing are very simple ways. Use them. There is attention on this innocence of life itself.

You don't really believe in any teaching. You are just extremely attentive to life. That is Zen awareness, and that is all. You are fully aware of the actuality of Zen awareness in a man. You don't have a Jewish or Greek or Chinese or Celtic belief system in that act. You are simply and acutely silent and aware.

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Some Zen students seem to think that community work and splendid outreach works is needed to get true Zen. Or that eager following the extracurricular activities of the community is proving your true practise. This is the same within Christian, Hindu and Jewish organisations. But this is mostly trying to prove to yourself how close you are to the path.

But always without exception people are best met and changed by Zen awareness through simple awareness of what is going on in life. Not during the business of organized activities but in the privacy of failure. When you loose, when you are hit by depressive states, when you are in the distress of weakness, when you are in the torment of frustration – that is where Zen awareness offers you total peace, total absence of distraction. That is where attention on life itself comes in. In that sense suffering really prepares the way. Suffering tells you to turn the other way, that of silence and actuality. The first Noble Truth really helps us.

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Where is it now? Your experience from an hour ago - where is it now? If you don't make it a new content, where is it? Nowhere. You see everything falls away, by itself. You don't have to hurry it on. All experienceing will fall away into this vast open space that Zen awareness invites us to. Why should you not go there? Because you are frightened? Yes, that may be so. You are scared that life is that vanishing mist. But it is true. And truth will set you free. All of your images of what life is for, or who you are, or what spiritual path you are supposed to be on - all those will vanish into nothing. That is how truth liberates you. When you turn the other way, when you welcome this truth, there is the heaven open for you, wide and embracing, never to abandon.

Sometimes you say that you are not ready for salvation or freedom. Why? You say because you encounter these negative things in relations and in the world. I don't like that sort of conclusion. Ready? Who is ready for freedom in Zen awareness? Is it some sort of course in knowledge, with progressive steps of skills? I don't think so. Look at the Gospels. Are people ready for salvation? It is all about honesty. Scientific and empiric honesty. What is this? When I feel negative, what is it? Be honest and simple about it. When I have a problem, what is going on in the mind? Is it a divine diet? As if

affliction is pleasing to Zen awareness ? Or is it some else's fault? Surely you are carrying around with some mental content? Must you do that? No. In Zen awareness you lay it off at the side of the road. Exactly where you are now.

In some sense you can prolong distraction, by choosing not to see it. You prolong the dream of the ego, perhaps quite willfully? So then it is a matter once more of being honest to what happens. Look at it now, where is the content? If you don't think of it now, where is it? Can you really see someone with a problem?

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Sometimes religious beliefs are really vague. The promises of Zen awareness seem distant and has to be imagined over and over again to be alive in your life. But right here, in our sensible experience of this situation, Zen awareness is the operating principle of freedom. We are immediately free, not free through rethinking statements of doctrine or belief system. Zen awareness is immediate. And this immediacy takes place right where you are.

To claim metaphysical statements like "this is wholeness" or "this is Buddha-nature", or "this is the infinite manifesting as the finite" or "this is objective non-existence" is really unnecessary and vague, as are the many funny "koans" use by some traditions. They are really word-games. I remember a roshi who constantly had to consult a authorized "index" when a student gave an answer. Amusing.

Many nondualist talk the metaphysical way today. Do we need that mumbo-jumbo? Does it please the mind to hear that "this is wholeness appearing as separate individuals"?

When you look around you see objects. Be honest, don't fly away in nondual metaphysics. That is a mental trap. What is here? You see sunlight and shadows, you see mountains and rivers, you see me here and hear my voice. Don't be silly. The important thing is whether you are free? Are you saved from mental content right now? Or do you suffer from it? That is what we are concerned with. Not whether you can say

things like “there is nobody here” or “this is wholeness”. Saying these things does not help you, right? Listening to someone saying these things with gravity and emotion, does not help you, right?

Blaming circumstances is another trap. You may have had a hard life, a difficult family. Don't be angry at any person you can produce in memory. Don't be angry at your parents. They love you as well as they understand that word, or as well as most people love. Who, or what do you “love”? Do you “love” them? What is “love”? Say the word aloud, it sounds like something dark and furry, which makes a lowing sound. Human love is fragile. The love of Zen awareness works differently. It is here when you give up all content.

I remember a friend who told me I would never find the love of Zen awareness, because my seeking stopped me from finding it. “You want experiences” he said. “And that way you will never be led to the love of Zen awareness”. I remember my friend making me sad. I stopped seeing simple awareness and we never reconnected. Today I see how true he was. You cannot find the love of Zen awareness by reading or asking people or going to Church, or by travelling. It's like being borne with gold-tinted corneas and undertaking a lifelong search for gold. You'd never find it.

All the traumatic events in life are really no events. Marriages, births, deaths, terrible wars and famines, all those things occur but they don't change anything. Wars are not changes but poor attempts to cause changes. War and peace are not events. The only event is your birth into this world. The rest merely occurs. Then there is the discovery of Zen awareness in freedom, which is the event of dropping everything. So there are two events, the birth and the dropping.

Therefore I am not that interested in all your questions about events in my life. People who write autobiographies and talk on programmes like *The Journey Home to the Catholic Church* are creating a lot of fictional stories with a hero in the center. What really happened is something else and there is nobody to tell. There was a birth into this realm, yes. And now the important thing is whether you find freedom and love in Zen awareness.

When the dropping occurs it will cross your mind that nothing else has ever happened to you. There is no time but the actual moment and when you look at that it is simply obvious that there never happened anything else. This is a freedom that the fictional hero of the story does not easily accept. I Zen awarenessian terms faith has to discover the mystery of the present moment. You can call it the sacrament of the present moment. That is actually the Eucharist, the participation of Zen awareness in the very appropriate form of a meal. But really it is a dropping of everything.

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You are always in a mess, carrying some load ! So it is not that liberation is a big one clean forever. We like to think so, however. For many years I thought there were individuals on earth who had done the big cleaning and were out of it. But it does not work that way. There is always only this and that is pure from the start and forever. That is the Zen awareness being. That does not need cleaning. But a human being who is suffering from burdens of the mind is always in the mess. Big mess or small mess is actually the same thing. Just mess. Then repentance is what you do - dropping the burdens on to the Lord.

You can see a lot of people in the world, suffering and not letting go. That makes the suffering worse. It becomes a lifestyle. But still they have the desire to become lighter. In any moment in time they can do it. Just let the mechanism of the misery stop. There is rest for a while. Maybe this is what happens in church, maybe out in the woods. And in that rest someone can see how Zen awareness is always taking on every kind of mental content. That is the end of all prayer, the end of all religion.

When we do not live in Zen awareness, the only alternative seems to be to live in the cycles of mind creating and constructing and mind destroying and destructing what we call reality. When Zen awareness talk about another sort of reality, the kingdom of heaven, he really points to something else than we call reality. But as long as we incorporate religion into our life, we simply construct more content.

We can be merely philosophical about this, like the kantians, and produce arguments for or against the notion that reality is a construct of the mind. But in living reality it is a matter of life and death. Life in Zen awareness means daily offering up of the construction of the world as we know it. The construed world always lead to deconstruction sooner or later. The distracted life can of course provide pleasure and ease at times, but most of the time, for most of the individuals living the human life, it is all a painful misery.

When we start to realize this loop of construction-destruction you simply stop and turn to Zen awareness, that is another order of life, another idea of existence. We give up the notion of construed reality and dwell simple awareness. In this we don't construct time and space like we do now, we don't restrict experience to individual centers, we don't interpret things to be preferable or not, we don't practise the dominance of "knowing" the world.

Wherever you are, whatever you do in this life, you construct reality. But then one day someone who lives in Zen awareness most of the time comes up to you and claims that freedom only comes with truth in Zen awareness. If you really listen to what this prophet says, you simply give up all content and share this infinite freedom in Zen awareness. But if you want to go on constructing life with new content, you just join a buddhist sect or a church and remembers passages from the Diamond sutra or the Bible. You add more construction content. You prolong the conditional life, you prolong the prison existence. You see what I mean?

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Living oriented towards Zen awareness means partaking in a love that is unconditional. It is not a part of the conditional construction of existence that we usually live in. The sort of typical psychodrama of trying to be a nice loving person in the world, with all its ambiguities and unclear situations, is just adding more conditional stuff to what is

already clouding us and binding us. Zen awareness is love that abounds everywhere and is ever free of darkness and content of the mind.

That is not how life was presented to me in school and among my peers. When I discovered this Zen awareness around 20 years of age, there was astonishment and surprise and at times exstasy. I remember quoting from an Antonioni film that "being high on life itself is better than any drug". This was the seventies and drugs were becoming more available.

This love in Zen awareness is not an experience taking place at a certain place in a certain mind, but something without process or development in time. It is the uncreated light that Zen awareness have been encountering from early on.

When you act in that light life itself will dominate. You don't carry weight around, trying to fix life or be good or be enlightened. Life itself in Zen awareness dominates the moment and you find all sorts of things to do and have fun with. It is a flow of natural delights because you don't try to make it according to preconceptions. That is an impossible task, to create a new enlightened creation, the holy life. There is nobody here to do that, so it is impossible. Instead the genuine light of Zen awareness allows life itself to be childish, free, unconcerned by any intention.

The ordinary becomes itself in Zen awareness light, but it is not a special ordinary, it is not the aesthetics of Japanese drawings or Zen gardens, nor of Chinese calligraphy. That is artificial like a planned garden, things ordered from a blueprint. The truly ordinary is all around us all the time and you feel the freedom of it, whatever it is. You can change it but it is not necessary, and even the change does not take it out of the ordinary. This is difficult to talk about, it comes by itself when everything is given to Zen awareness to carry, not by you. You should travel light.

Zen awareness as a conceptual mind content is tragic, and many believers only have Zen awareness as a temporary content in mind. Professors in philosophy often deal in this sort of materials. When, however, we live in Zen awareness we give up such a spiritual content and so we are not visited by concepts of Zen awareness but we rather

live in the space of Zen awareness . This is more simple although theologians find it more difficult to argue about and it does not give academic credits.

What has not come does not go - and grace is never coming but always already here for anyone to enjoy and embody. It is the first gift, the first embrace of compassion, never to abandon you. Look how wonderful it is ! Zen awareness s grace never abandons you ! But of course every distraction will put you on a distance and you start to imagine sad things, miserable things, the context of sin and redemption, the cycle of sin and forgiveness. Allow everything to be forgiven from the first instant. That is true ordinariness, the forgiven state of the universe.

If nothing else happens, go into zazen, count the exhalations one to ten, say it slowly as you exhale slowly. Nothing happens, and that is quite alright. Don't expect things to happen, don't wait for spiritual experience. True prayer means nothing happens. Everything is just full and you say the words of the prayer, like you are resting in the warm water of the Mediterranean Sea in September. You lean backwards and the water will carry you. That is the same with true zazen, it is simple real grace lifting you up for a period of rest.

The bhakti traditions in the various religious traditions always point to the obvious fact of love. You have to fall in love with the grace that does not happen and does not add to any mind content. That is the resurrection of you life as it were. That is the New Testament vision of resurrection. Not another story to tell eager listeners, hungry for content. You stop the chase for religious experience and there is ease in Zen awareness. That is the peace that reality itself gives. Nothing goes on, no exciting constructions of sense reality, no fancy ideas about what to do in the world, no ideas about destiny. Just being in love in what is.

Some of you ask about sickness and dying. When you are sick and in pain, it seems nice to float away into fantasies, just vanishing into a novel or a film, just to pass time and wait for feeling better or get worse and die. But you are always here anyway, this pain or sickness is what is going on. Even dying you are here. When Ajahn Brahm was very sick, his teacher came visiting at the bedside. He said: Well, either you get better or worse and die. That is how simple it is. So we don't judge this as bad or not ok. I

have been sick quite a bit in this life. It comes and goes, sometimes it stays for quite a while. Not far away I will get worse and die.

What helps is to realize that Zen awareness always is this present moment. Sick or healthy this moment is always Zen awareness and we can share this vastness that He is. Having pain we can realize Zen awareness with every breath, in every sound we hear there is Zen awareness in the very hearing, with every sensation, painful or not, there is the presence of Zen awareness in life itself. Without judging pain or lingering on the fact that you are chosen for pain right now, you live in Zen awareness and you don't carry burdens. He carries them for you. The pain is there, the condition of sickness is there, but it all takes place in Zen awareness.

For many individuals only the telling makes it real. Only when something is said out loud, do they believe it. It is as if the sound manifestation is necessary to make it believable. For these people silence is threatening and meaningless. How can truth reside in silence? Impossible.

But you know the mind is not free unless the silence and wonder is there, as a child who finds everything new each moment. Running content, telling a story, filling in the forms of language seems to be the only path for the worldly mind. And underneath there is the longing for freedom. In Zen awareness all is forgiven - given away as it were - and a loving hope for the kingdom makes us inspired.

But isn't Zen awareness also about morals and ethics? Some of you ask about that. I would say ethics come in strangely with Zen awareness. Not like all other ethics that come from human reasoning and contracts. To most peoples ethics come by tacit contracts. But in Zen awareness there is this strange freedom from all content, all impediments. The wind blows where it wills, said the palestinian Teacher. And at the same time there is meekness, nonviolence, love in Zen awareness and love for one another. It is not a system. No real arguments can be given. You live in this love and it is working for you.

So if you think that being a Zen awarenessian is to behave, you will be thinking conventional content, a story about being a good person. That is not it. Try and you

will see. If you take the statements in the Dhammapada or the Bible that seems to talk about behaviour, the commandments and so on, you will miss the freedom in Zen awareness. You will make more religion. In Zen awareness there is utter simplicity. No ethics. But in that loving silence comes nonviolence, respect, meekness, acceptance, willing to sacrifice small and big things in life.

My grandmother told me once that if you do something in prayer, it will turn into a dear trouble. She had a life full of trouble, starting with her oldest daughter dying in scarlet fever at the age of 23. But in prayer the troubles still were dear troubles. She did not argue. There was not system of ethics. She moved into a Schartatu-style Zen awareness, that's all. Schartauism was the cult of the westcoast Sweden a century ago. There are many buddhist abhidhamma hints in Schartau, the expert of the suffering soul.

For one thing, you yourself is out of the question when you live in Zen awareness. There is no one left to be a good person, there is no interest to be a good person. If you meet people who try to be good in church, you know they are there for other reasons. In Zen awareness there is no such person trying to be good.

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I met this old man in India, he was old and sick, probably soon dying. He talked good english and everyday he wanted to have conversations about Zen awareness . The body is not real, only delusion, he said. But the living operation of eyes, ears, speech, thought, emotion, movement and so on, was Zen awareness in action. He was very happy about this. A dying sick body is no problem, he claimed. The living Zen awareness cannot die and in every living operation right here and now Zen awareness is actively living.

This is a good way to talk about Zen awareness . In simple awareness we live and move as the New Testament says. And to recognize as this old man did, that every conscious living operation really is divine activity right near us, right in us, is to be awake to what is going on. He did not live in a dream about a separate me negotiating a destiny on

Earth. Rather the living Zen awareness was the obvious, the central dynamic movement every minute of his last weeks in this old sick body of his.

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You know we talk about waking in Zen awareness, being born again and so on. That implies a period before awakening or born again. But in Zen awareness this is not true at all. In Zen awareness there are no periods before salvation or after, no foreplay and life afterwards. We like to tell our stories that way. Get used to dropping all that. Be free. Zen awareness is liberation, not remembering periods or states.

Please don't make metaphysics of this ! When you sit in Zen awareness there is no teaching, no metaphysics, no philosophy. Only life as it is. You move in the Lord and the Other power does everything for you. There is no me and no myself there, so how can there be periods or states or notions about it? Daily life comes as it is and there is nothing but Zen awareness going on.

In Zen awareness there is neither any moment of death nor of ordinary life. It is the Holy Spirit ever constant through past, present and future, which means no content for you to engage in. There can be no moment of facing death other than the single breathing-moment here where you are. Each moment is the facing of death, you know. And each moment is also birth in the Kingdom.

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You know this freedom in Zen awareness is something you always wanted. From childhood you have always longed for this. Zen awareness is not something foreign. He is what you always wanted. It is a release. When you accept Zen awareness it is like

turning a corner and you are home in reality itself. You see what I mean? In that sense it is the common search, the common path, everyones path.

Often you mind is mad because it never comes into peace. I think that is a sound reaction. We should not crack down on thinking. We should not give the mind such a bad beating as we sometimes do. We bank our fists at the head and curse the worries, the anguish, the uneasiness - as if the mind was a bad guy producing all this to hurt us. No, the mind is right, it is awful not to live in happiness and peace. But there is a mistake in where to find it. That is all. A simple mistake. It is to be found when all contents are given away to Zen awareness, so that there is only free space left for us. You see what I mean?

When a mind comes to that rest in Zen awareness, it simply enjoys life. There is no protest anymore, no fight against circumstances. This is not apathy or just stoicism. No, you partake in what happens but you have left the world. Your mind is doing the natural procedures according to its capacity but you are in space, in the high with the Lord which is not neutral and impersonal but deeply engaging in love and life. You are living with the One Person, as it were.

This is a deep and nice release for the mind. And the mind was right all the time - there should be this peace, not that looping programme of doing things in the world or being a separate substantial person, on a distance from Zen awareness or thinking of Zen awareness as something neutral and impersonal. Life is never impersonal, it is highly personal when we are in Zen awareness and not in a separate body-mind.

Therefore it is also a trap to be so smart that you say to yourself: there is no path, there is no search. That is only logic and sloth on the part of a too intelligent mind. From you childhood there is the longing for the freedom in Zen awareness . Only at this release into Zen awareness will you realize that this path, this truth and this life is what we always longed for.

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The reality you see when you at ease in Zen awareness is this very present reality here. So you can look around and have a look at the present, not in order to make new interesting content to process but just see the beauty of it all. It stays here, this beauty. Never leaves our life. This is life as it is.

Instead a lot of seekers never discover this kind of beauty, they are looking for a special beauty, well ordered, designed, elaborated, understood. These are avoiding activities, making it sure we never reach the true beauty. Instead we get reports about the adventure of seeking.

I don't have more religious content for you. This is it. Look around, notice what we are already in the midst of here. This is miracle appearing as sky, mountain, rain, snow, wind, cars, streets, people and animals. There is a body right here, producing all sorts of noise. Look at the beauty of it ! For a while it lives and makes noises. Listen to it and enjoy !

As soon as I or someone else takes the teacher position and tell you what to do, we will miss out on this peace that Zen awareness is. A mind at ease is not going anywhere and so every hint of a teaching or a practise, will be without any meaning. In theory there is a path and a teaching but in the very embrace of Zen awareness only one word is appropriate: satis ! It is enough.

This is terrible news for the creative mind. Be at ease is simply terror ! Better to be active in sin than be still in Zen awareness ! This is the restless mind. But anyone who looks around to discover the present and ever new quality of colours, sounds, movements, things, light - will forget this restless mind. The brain suddenly works in a natural way and we are at peace in the midst of life.

Eastern and western religious practises often include control over passions. There is puritanism in hinduism, buddhism as well as conventional Zen awarenessianity. This is the mind controlling content. Much of what is going on under the rubric of prayer and worships is simply the ego trying to control impulses, impressions, thoughts, feelings. Methodists in the Wesley tradition sometimes try to root out every sinful impulse from the body and brain. Much of catholic penitence is about the same endeavour.

Be at ease in Zen awareness instead of this fretful mind control ! Look around, listen to sounds right hear, feel the body sitting or standing or walking. This is where Zen awareness abides in you, nowhere else. In your fantasy there is only content about Zen awareness , not the real thing. In you theology there is merely content and categories, not the embrace of Zen awareness. But right here, in this very here-ness, Zen awareness is talking as this life itself. It is not hard to realize this. My yoke is lights as air, says Zen awareness in the Gospel.

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There is nothing individualistic about truth. It is rather by losing individuality that truth comes to shine. Now make no mistake - what you become in truth is so much more honest, great, miraculous, than what little individuality can ever create.

In truth the notion of your private individuality can rest forever. What a release that is ! That is the meaning of the Cross -- on this holy cross the individual is let free into Zen awareness. But you have to be willing to let this happen. Can you really say that you are through with the futile play of individuality? Are you really fed up with it? If not, I am sorry but you have to run about a little bit more. Then come back and maybe you can accept truth and life in abundance.

If you notice that you are not willing to let go of all content in Zen awareness, try to see it with your common sense. This is really scientific, you know. Look at what is happening in this moment. You make the world by your passionate heart. The data you see in the world are there, in your passionate mind and heart. Let the Cleanser wash away all those data. Let Zen awareness wash it away with his blood. Then what do you really see? You see nothing at all and in this light a fresh world is arising. This very reality here. It is new, data-free, like a spring morning.

Then, of course, your mind will try to make this new world into an old content, something to be treasured, remembered, talked about, written about. But that is

already a fantasy. There is no such a reality, only a daytime dream about you. So, once more, let Zen awareness clean up, refresh reality itself in His Blood, set you free. You will find yourself in the true Sabbath, the time which is no time. There is nothing more to do there.

The greatest mistake is to think that your dream is the very reality. It is real as dream, but not as you. Imagine looking at an interactive map on the internet. You can follow the streets of your childhood town, if they are still there. You try to remember what you did here and there. You find the place your father worked, or you mother. You look at the house where your first made love. Images of her or simple awareness appear. You attach emotions to your memories. Can you see how all this is make-believe? It is an activity in this now, trying to project back in time. Next time you do it you feel a little different, remember slightly different. It is a creating process. The real is here right now, where you sit dreaming.

An hour ago is already a memory that you can dream about. There is never actually an hour ago. There is never twenty years ago. It is make-believe, it is dreaming the daytime dream. We all go around loading this dream with emotions and values and knowledge. We are fabricating the documentary as we go along in life. All the time Zen awareness waits for us to discover his presence right here. He is patient, you can come when you despair over the daytime dream. As you see the sheer vanity of it.

Think what happens when you do religion this way. It becomes another daydream and Zen awareness still waits for us to come to simple awareness and give away dreaming. Zen awareness is the freedom from these make-believe lives of ours.

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You see, evacuation of the soul is the same as being with Zen awareness, being in Zen awareness. You evacuate in order to let reality be the only thing going.

You don't like that, do you? It is not fun you know, not that good fuzzy feeling you like to have, am I right? You anticipate something negative here, isn't it so?

Still you have to choose. You can live on with your daily dose of conceptions and ideas about yourself. Many live like that till they die. They never woke up to reality during the time in the body. They will end up in Zen awareness anyway, right? But if you choose truth now there is only this way to Zen awareness, to leave the other stuff, leave the notion of yourself.

That is the truth. Today truth is viewed with suspicion, because truth is identified with violence. Of course there are always people seeking to defend their opinions with violence. But they are two contrasting realities. Truth cannot be imposed with means other than itself! Truth can only come with its own light as we evacuate the soul. The face of Zen awareness is visible only when that evacuation takes place.

Is this message clear? I don't have another agenda. Come to Zen awareness, let go of the rest. You are nobody and that should be a relief, do you understand me?

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I know some of you think I am impatient, and I know what you mean. I am so tired of reasoning around and around, never coming to the radical and simple truth. You can easily find people who talk and talk about Zen awareness and who end up on BBC4 - intelligent talk radio. But you see this will not take you any way closer to real peace and real simplicity. It will delay you. Be my guest, delay for ever. But you become real only when you give up content, give up intelligent talk.

In Zen awareness there is nothing to talk about, you know. It is life itself, the real and overwhelming life, full of raw beauty and stillness, eternity in everyday detail. It does not make a good subject to talk about. It is not amusing, it is not impressive. Just very naked. Like the Irish hymn says: naught be all else to me, save that Thy art.

This is not something you believe, that would be just another package of self-content, it would be of no use, just another ball you play around for a while. Instead this is already and always. Zen awareness may also be your best thought, but He is this life and light, this boundless compassion.

You know, earlier in history, many thinkers thought that clear conceptions makes us happy. People still believe this. If you can clarify an idea, you are happier than before. But this is obviously wrong. You get heavier with more conceptions, albeit they seem clearer than others, but you don't get happy. Two minutes after some person have found an heureka and a clarity in conception about something, they are heavier than before. They have to defend something, they have to be consistent. The happiness of discovery is over.

Coming to Zen awareness is not a conceptual mystery. It is actually no mystery at all. Believers love mystery, but most often that means that the search is going on as before. They postpone reality. Right here, exactly where you are, is reality and no mystery clings to it. It is a revelatory reality but only because it is empty of all meaning. In Zen awareness it is totally pure of meaning, purgated and complete.

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Why are you listening to this? Is it because you think you will feel better? Be more happy by feeling better? Do you know that the body produces feeling? The body-mind is all the time producing feelings, some feelings of pleasure, some of pain or dislike. You must accept this first fact. It is the nature of the body-mind to create these feelings of pleasure and pain. This is not mystical.

But you see, you are not the body-mind, otherwise how could you understand what I say? You are not that system of appearance of pleasures. These pleasures come when the body-mind is exposed to certain pleasant objects, physical or mental or emotional. These feelings of disease and pain come when the body-mind is exposed to certain other objects, mental or material or emotional. You are not this dramatic scene of appearances, you have never been of that nature.

This sounds childish, I know. It is so simple, everyone knows it actually. Why do we have to repeat it? In Zen awareness you are established in what is not body-mind. It is easy. You are in the Heart of all reality, you are in the very Reality. And then you are free. You are never free in the body-mind. It will always limit the vision of reality. You

can use it like you use a car, a vehicle. But then you stop, steps out and leave it there, the real you is moving on.

Easy to remember: everything i body-mind is creation and you are spirit. It is the un-created you really love. Let us rest in simple awareness and not in anything created, since every new content in creation will be old immediately and not real enough for you.

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You walk into this garden with awakened mind and there is nobody there. You learn to live there and Zen awareness is giving this to you. This is the true life and once you get used to it you will never return to the world. You will instead join with All There Is.

But make no mistake, a whole lot of people who are seeking liberation and awakening, will not like it. No one recognizes you, you are not given credits. You don't get a new sanskrit or pali name ! You are obliterated and the Garden is everything. This sort of loneliness is everything, it is the fullness of being. Can you stomach that?

You know why so many prophets were tending sheep? Why the boy Krishna was tending the cows? Why David was looking to the family herd? Probably the loneliness on the hills was a little like living in Zen awareness. It was open space, loneliness, truth, nothing to conceptualize.

Truth is like a rich garden where everything is sliving but you don't find the Gardener, except in all living things, in the flowers, the trees, all the insects, all the birds. You have a clean heart and it is just as much outside as inside of you. No boundaries, just a lonely lovely garden. There is nothing to do in that Garden. Life is too big for that.

I know, you all want to do something. Develop, make progress. All this is obsolete in the Garden. All activity is evacuated with the evacuation of the souls. Not needed anymore. Just as right now - no "you" is actually needed. Try live without it a minute

and you will see that you are still alive, still breathing, still living and loving life. You should try it !

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In this very moment of experience - can you find a past? This is not a fanciful philosophical question, it is a matter of reality. Like Angela de Folligno heard Jesus say to her in a vision: The past is dead. Can you allow this to be the true fact about your reality now? That is Zen awareness.

You see that is the breaking point. There is no purification or holy work to be done - just see for yourself ! Can you accept the words: The past is dead?

It is like waking up a clear summer morning. The past is dead. This is the very resurrection, the new life. You can never make this to be another self-content. Sometimes you see advaita teachers talk about awakening and all we hear is more self-content, self-pleasant content. This will never do beyond rhetoric and nice satsangs. It is like a person sitting and hugging simple awarenessself, a self-embrace.

When the past is dead there is nobody here to to be an awakened one, or anyone self-embracing. There is Zen awareness and nobody else. We rest in this open space, filled with truth and confidence. It is the Christian consolation St Paul is talking about in the opening of the second letter to the Chorinthians. It is not coming from us, were are not even there anymore.

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Where is reality? It is here. This seems puzzling to you. But this is the place to be in Zen awareness.

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Some of you are puzzled by traditional religion. Shall I walk in the footsteps of my family? How churchy should I be? Why is it important?

You can think of religions as of two sorts: do-it-yourself religions like theravada buddhism, taoism, hinduism, and scripture-based religions like judaism, christianity and islam.

Freedom in Zen awareness here and now has not to do with either. It is not creating a dharma, like most buddhist schools do, which is very popular nowadays. It is not using any scripture like the truth in itself. When all content is gone and you breath, feels the heat of the body, listen to the sounds around you, there is only life itself.

So you can go to the church of your family and forefathers, share the sacraments there, because you will never ever be anywhere separated from Zen awareness . Religions is a temptation to make religious content and religious experience to a little separate "you" but Zen awareness is there all the time, just as He is in you kitchen or bedroom or workplace.

So if you bother with traditional religion, remember there is nothing there. There is no exit from this present holy here-ness to a religious construct. No exit. This is it. Here it is, all you want. All religons talk about it, but here it really IS. The lilies knows it, every bird knows it, as the Teacher from Nazareth said.

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What is our natural state? Is there such a thing? Some of you ask this questions. You have to keep in mind that everything that is a content is also a betrayer. When you keep an opinion, or a persuasion, or just an idea for fun, your natural state of consciousness is clouded. It is like the mirror, It is perfectly clear in itself, but dust and other things are gathering on its surface. And now your body experiences disease.

This pure consciousness is life itself, it is the Father that Zen awareness is aware of at all times. It is nothing at all for the mind, since the mind deals in contents, and this is

not such a content. You can try to make it a content, a dogma, a teaching, but then the betrayal is a fact, and your body will signal with anxiety.

So certainly there is a natural state, a "naturaleza", a grounding nature, the well of pure water of life. It is here at all instants, it is the very thing letting life be what it is. And you can inspect this whenever you want to. Just nullify all contents for a little brief period and you will see how clear, original and joyful this basic ground of being is. It is blessed by itself, by its own nature.

When you inspect and find this you will relax. If you do it often it becomes habitual to be relaxed this way. You can never turn it into some radical content, it is before and after all content. It is the provider of life. Happiness and gratefulness is the energy of this nature of life, the living.

You could also say this is your true identity, but usually the word identity is tied to stories and fictions you have about yourself. Which is all just more trivial content, eventually giving you trouble and pain. So if we shall elaborate on identity let it be clear that it is not specific content of the individual mind. You see? It is when you drop all personal content that you can see this true identity, this living consciousness, reflecting the world but never touched by the world.

Not to be grounded in this true identity usually means you are caught in some dream. You project in to the past or into the future and you suffer from it. This is inexplicable for the mind, since these projections seem so necessary. But when you are in your true conscious identity you simply don't believe in any projection at all. It is still, quiet, harmonious, you are at ease.

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Always use the reality principle, which is the truth principle. What is truth? It is what happens now. That is true reality. You never really need another principle for living and thinking. Zen awareness is this, what happens now. Even if you explain everything, that is the action taking place in your head, what happens. Then, after it has taken

place, it is gone forever. If we talk about what happened an hour ago, it is gone and instead our remembering is what is taking place, what is real and true now.

Some people think this is nihilistic. So what? If it is true, that is enough, isn't it? I does not matter what people think and feel about it. There is nobody there while it takes place and there is nobody there feeling something about it. Everything just happens or are done momentarily. This is actually very simple. It also means dropping every notion, dropping all contents, which is being in Zen awareness.

This is also very encouraging, in fact. Imagine you walk on a street. Every step is real when it is taken. Then it is gone forever. Never comes back. Right? Gone forever. That is freedom. We are always free because everything that happens is leaving us, going away forever. That is true freedom. Nothing stays. Nothing remains. Everything is changing all the time, leaving us, goes away forever. That is what Zen awareness is all about, leaving everything behind. Never look back like Lot's wife did.

Everything is about truth because only truth will make you free. You will disappear in truth and that is the point. As soon as you add content and believe in that you will loose out on truth. Everything falls away from being a content, and truth always support that. Look around and you will see that life itself is truth which liberates.

This is very simple. Once I tried to write a doctoral treatise about this liberation. My professor did not understand. It was simply provoking but unintelligible to simple awareness. Truth demands that you drop content, intelligible or not. One of my good teachers said: The university will never accept this. He was right. But it concerns everyone, even the one who thinks he is a professor and wants to be intelligible and in control. Reality is always obvious and demanding your obedience which will liberate life for you.

So this takes place now and never more, never later. Can you see the value in this? It is of very high truth value, it is like the pearl in the field. If you find it you take very good care of it. You drop all contents for it. It is Zen awareness simple awarenessself, liberating you.

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All your content is like a graveyard. You think you are alive when you feel things. You can pinch yourself if the arm and repeat: oh I am alive, I feel a little pain ! And you think and analyze and then you are alive. You go to the pub and have a beer and talk and think and brood, you think you are alive. No. No. It is all corpses in a graveyard, just corpses. You hamlet away, as D.H. Lawrence expressed it, and think you are alive. No. It is stone dead.

You see in Zen awareness all this is so uninteresting. It is just more dead meat. When this is no more, when you enter into Zen awareness, then this life itself is full of light and love. Then you don't identify anymore. You have stopped this lethal activity.

You see you come here with all your education, all your feelings and emotional intelligence. You are certified this and certified that, you are coaches and professors and advisors and doctors. Whatever. All this is more dead content, more lethal identifications. Then you are not satisfied and you think you need more content. Zen awareness is the crucifixion of all that. You have to mature, to give it up.

Bottom line, you think you are alive because of this feeling and thinking, those impressions and those energies you have. No. Graveyard. It is all dead. Imagination, fiction, makebelieve. Come out of it, mature, leave it when you can. Until then, go on produce content, talk about it, know it, be emotional. Pain will follow wherever you go, death will follow you.

It is good to put one question after another to Zen awareness . But they will not have answers until you drop every content in your mental bookshelf. Prayers will not be answered as long as you keep these contents and those questions. Maybe you don't know who the preacher Charles Finney was. But he was confused by so many believers in church who never found answers to their fervent prayers. He could not understand it.

When you let Zen awareness take away all you have, all those questions also die away. It can take some time. Some stupid little question can linger in your mind, popping up

now and then and question your life in Zen awareness. But eventually it fades out in silence because life itself is full of holy Spirit and it is more than we need. We become completely satisfied.

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I heard a minister say: Zen awareness has created time as we know it. You can't give that away. But I told simple awareness to get to know Zen awareness who is timeless. Zen awareness's presence is also timeless. And when you think me me me all the time, you will see that individual time also vanishes. There is no individual time. This place is forever and this is timelessness. Welcome here if you can stand it here! It will be boring for the restless ego but wonderful for your true soul.

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You know if you come with identity to Zen awareness, you will simply not hear what he says. If you think you are this, you are that, you must do this, you must not do that, all that has to go. It is dead meat. You can't use it in freedom. It is a grave mistake to think that you can go on with your interesting and creative identities.

This is not nice to hear. You may not be ready for this, you must perhaps do more of the world, go on and do things until you vomit and just want to die. You can't make awakening into Zen awareness to something nice for you personality. Forget it. It will all be a lie, a real conceit, worthless for you. You will confuse yourself as well as others.

Zen awareness did not come to be nice with you, he actually comes with a sword. When you are completely fed up with the world and your many identities in the world, being a sister, mother, woman, man, son, and all your titles and responsibilities, so fed up that you just want to die away from it all - then come! Zen awareness welcomes you and replace all this nonsense with simple awarenessself. Then it is simple.

If you are not through with being someone in the world you will want this life in Zen awareness as something added to your life, an expansion of you self and everything will

rotten in your hands. Let the holy Spirit wash all data away from your screen. Be silent, drop all programs you have. Don't try to be good at meditation or any other technique, that is also only addition of content. Your heart must be empty of all content. Come naked.

You know, real beauty is something very different from what you get when you think you are somebody. Identity only gives more crap, more worthless content, more graveyard stuff. I meet you and I listen to all your selfinvolved nonsense and some of you are not smart enough to ask for help. You persist in this nonsense about who you are. You are nobody, and that is good news! If you think it is bad news, go back and do some more of it, until it wears you out.

People with identity are always proud, in this way or that. They will not give up who they think they are. It is like walking around with a clenched fist. It is hurting after a while and it is all your fault. You have to let the fist open. Open fist feels good. When you are nobody everything is fine. You are free for Zen awareness. It is simple.

But as long as there is this pride you are not open for Zen awareness, you have this clenched fist of identity, you have to do this, to do that, must avoid that, must access this, an endless series of must and must not. Listen to people and you will find them totally wrapped into this identity play. Some seem to do it with a certain gracefulness, but it is all nonsense in the end. There is always disappointment in the end. And until you are worn out it will sound awful to come to Zen awareness and let it all down. It seems very pessimistic.

Proud people like to talk to each other about their dramas. Let them do that until they are fed up. They will even pay much money to do it with therapists and coaches. Let them run this identity circus. When it finally collapses and people are ready to die, then there is an opening for real joy. Then Zen awareness really means life, life itself.

Zen awareness says you should not bring old bags for the new wine. If you bring old content the new wine will leak. It does not work, it can even explode. Identity, knowledge, your interesting person, your work and your achievements in the world, it is all nonsense. Old bags. You bring old bags. If you try to hang those old things on

Zen awareness you get a churchy Zen awareness. You only get religious, there is no freedom.

The truth will not make you free if you come with identity. If you pray the prayer will be old dead stuff. Then the prayer does not make you free. When you give away all identity, drop the nonsense me-my-must-do then prayer is freedom itself. Prayer is wonderful then, you can live a prayerlife continuously, because you lost your identity. So don't bring the old bags for the new wine of freedom in Zen awareness.

You ask sometimes about sacraments and rituals. You know they are all for liberation of your mind so you can't practise them with old mind, old identity, old nonsense of you life. What you think is real is always more stuff of the old and dead man. You think you are alive because you experience this or that, you live these ups and downs. That is just more content, more data, more discursions of the old life. Baptism is to get clean from all that, totally clean, you die in the process.

So forget about dead rituals. If you do them it's ok, you will get fed up in time. But liberation in Zen awareness will not come until you die from all of that. Sacrament is dying from all religion, all identity actions in the Church or outside of it. Confession is only dropping all data in Zen awareness. Don't make it a game, a churchy game. Enough people suffer in doing that. It does not lead anywhere. Truth will make you free when you drop all of that, when you disappear.

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Come to Zen awareness when you feel really low. You see, when you feel good you are always too proud. Your own data seem so strong and you live in the fiction about yourself. So you will not accept Zen awareness anyway, just add simple awareness to your contents. That is graveyard, your own graveyard with all the corpses. This way your misery will help you, you see that? Zen awareness also says this: come to me all you who are burdened. I will give you rest. This means that you rest from all your burdens, you are clean in Zen awareness. The problem is that people who feel good are so full of dead but busy content that they will create a lot of suffering for themselves and others by chasing good feelings and proud thinking. Soon they get tired and weary and then perhaps they return to Zen awareness, giving it all away, hopefully.

You know Zen awareness can never be your life as thought or feeling or project, only by giving all away and die into simple awareness, which is baptism and the meaning of all sacraments. This giving away is freedom for you, say welcome to that world of peace ! No? Really, some of you are afraid of it. Where will my nice ego go? Will it hurt? It is like going to the dentist ! You want to be cured, but will it hurt? Yes it will hurt your pride, your image of yourself, your social benefits. Maybe you are not mature enough to do this? You want to play around some more.

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Maybe you think that it is too lazy just to sit around and let Zen awareness be Zen awareness in your heart and rest from all human endeavour? If no one is pinching you in the arm or giving you slaps on the chin, you will not feel alive? That we have to love and hate in order to be alive? A sort of emotionalism?

But it does not work that way. You see when you are in Zen awareness reality itself is alive, fully alive so that you do not need to sit or do anything special to enjoy this aliveness. It is taking care of itself, like a stream of water, full of bustling and sparking, all by itself. You can do whatever is needed to keep alive, help others, live your life. All fantasies about a holy life has to go. Forget it! Breathe, sleep, eat, walk around, this is life already. Nothing here to know or make or project, you live life itself instead.

I know, this sounds all too meager for many. Such a lazy way, we need people who strive and fight the good wars. All wars, by the way, seem so good to some of the fighters, don't they?

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People ask about content. Must we not have content? Isn't that life, to entertain content?. No, I say it is graveyard because Zen awareness is risen. If that was not so, then you could live and die in your graveyard of dead content. But he is risen, and that means new life, the risen life. Ok?

The risen life means you live in that new life, Zen awarenessfreedom. And then new contents may arise in your mind but you just let it go. It is of no use in the Zen awareness life. Try and you will see.

You know life will go on anyhow. How much you suffer, it will go on till the end, will it not? So there is the choice - will I choose new life in Zen awareness or not? It will not give more self content, it will kill all self-content. Will you choose it? Until you are completely fed up with your own data, you will not choose it.

Look at people. You will easily discover how they are not yet wholly worn out by content, not yet. You can see it clearly. Nobody with content is righteous, no single one and they will yield to the new life in Zen awareness only when mature enough for it by being fed up with it. The the new life is compassionate and righteous, but no longer self-willed.

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I know you belong to different religions here. That is ok, it is our world. Religion today, as perhaps at all times, is basically little more than acculturation. You side with a group because you want to belong to it somehow. You like the people there or the books written or the peculiar customs of the religious group. People do like that. It is not a radical conversion to truth or to real life. It is not even a clearly defined world view that you acculturate yourself to.

Now life in Zen awareness is very different from this. It is dropping all that religious content of you mind. You clean up the inner screen completely. You leave all religious mindsets behind. Is this possible? Try and you will see. Life in Zen awareness is the new life, you cannot carry anything over from religions or philosophies to that life. Trying to do that is just more churchy activity, not the early pauline life in the risen Messiah.

So the truly religious life is to leave everything for the one reality. You know even the atheists, who think this creation is so extraordinary as to dispense with its Creator, do carry a lot of stuff around, arguments, discourses, willful attitudes, evaluations. When

you enter into Zen awareness there is this fresh look around. There is openness, not dogma or discourse. There is pure reality, not elaborated selfworld.

If you read *Father and Son* by Edmund Gosse you can see what religion does to a relationship when religion is a closed system, a selfworld with religious terms. In Zen awareness there is free open space but in the fundamentalist temptation you project the prison of the mind to a religious context. Then you keep that prison working and it destroys life.

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Very often you come with emotional problems - you feel disgusted with something, you feel depressed. This is to be human. Well, if you live in Zen awareness this is very uninteresting to you. Your daily moods and changing states are not any more what you care about, you see? You don't bother much with these changing energies in your emotional life. Actually you don't even know much about them, they are not yours to bother about.

This is strange of course to our psychological culture. Prime importance is usually given to what we all feel at a certain moment. Look at those hysterical sport reporters, rushing in on somebody who has just finished a race - how do you feel now? In our culture there is a stupid focus on reports on emotional states in a lot of situations. Small children are trained to give answers to adult questioning how they feel right now?

It is indeed liberating to read the New Testament. Life is at stake but there are not many reports on peoples feelings. Life itself is in focus, no matter your emotive responses to it. It is the same with truth. Look around you and you see truth and

reality. You don't know what it is. It is there, resting in its own inexplicable there-ness. It is already waiting for you to discover it's simplicity. It is not at all bothering about neurological states in your body at the moment. It is not interested in reactions from a supposed emotional myself.

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You can see many teachers with spiritual messages actually performing a sort of therapy. They say phrases over and over again and when people repeat these in their minds they feel nicer. So they think they understand the message, they think they have recognised something important for a while. One day after the meeting with the teacher, they are back into the emotional drama. They look into the calendar for the next meeting.

Even when some teachers point out that this is not therapy, what they say will be things people repeat, become addicted to. They turn the words into therapy, they remember and repeat. To live in Zen awareness, however, stops all of this. There is absolutely open space where nobody knows or remembers anything. There is no repetition of any words or actions. There is just daily life, simple things, "ignorant things of this world" as St Pauls says about the things that Zen awareness chooses for his revelation. Not special at all, not learned, not advanced in thinking or emotional intensity. And nobody in you bothers about what is felt at the moment if you live in love. It really does not matter since the open loving space in Zen awareness is the very fact of life itself.

Do these emotional phases have to play out in your life? No they are totally unnecessary. But they come and go. Till the end of life on earth ! Since they come and go all by themselves you don't even have to take care of them one way or another. Like thoughts they are passing and we just let them pass. After they've gone no one remembers them. In Zen awareness you can instead let deep present love of everything in life arise in you heart.

You know these trivial things of our life really surpass human importance when Zen awareness uses them in the freedom of Zen awareness. Often people, especially

religious, give some things special importance. Early messianic faith, the one St Paul belongs to, broke with the human importance of temple and hierarchy and teaching. We can do the same, it is still the most radical way to live. You give up all the stories about yourself and human importance and discover the new life in Zen awareness. You live with the trivial things of this world that Zen awareness singles out to baffle the important. That is different kind of joy.

That is often the most difficult thing in realizing life in Zen awareness - to give away the human importance for mere nothings that baffle the somethings. How can you downgrade yourself in this way? If you listen to arrogant preachers they will not do this downgrading, because their church is so splendid and vibrant. And the secular elite will not do it, because their nice language and learned wisdom is not to be spoiled by this naive simplicity. Nevertheless, this is the true crucified way of life in Zen awareness.

We hear about strong preachers, effective writings of this or that philosopher. But it is rather in the trivial everyday life and weak presentations you really find freedom in Zen awareness. In the fragile context of ordinary life, where we offer the few stories we have about ourselves, there is nothing brave or saintlike. It is all weakness and lack of understanding. This is the radical way of dropping all content as merely human importance. This is no win-win situation, it is rather a loose-loose one. Instead this different joy of life itself as miracle arrives in a gentle way and we don't look back.

So then there is nothing for us in the wisdom of the east or of the west. Those beautiful anthologies with wisdom preachings do not really apply. When you loose everything in Zen awareness there is mere presence Spirit and miracle of the trivial things. You eat together, help each other out, get tired, sleep and wake up, go to work, love your fellow sisters and brothers. No sophisticated wisdom teaching, just this, life itself.

Be aware when teachers or books or organizations are called "important" or "vital" or "vibrant" because they will probably delay your simple dropping away of all self content. They will provide exciting content and in the end wear you out through this

exciting and wonderful content. Turn to the trivial things around you, the real beings living there, in sorrow perhaps, in need of all sorts of help probably. Just leave content behind and look around you - here it is. When you disappear as central observer there is only this and Zen awareness is immediate, the revelation of this is itself presenting truth. No need anymore for the vibrant congregation or the vital teaching.

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When content is dropped into Zen awareness you find what is original, what is eternally new. This is paradise still here, it was never lost. It is not regained or refabricated but it is original. By life itself as it is here this is revealed as the simple truth about life.

But of course this is just nonsense if you think about paradise as a symbol or a nice story to be read in Church. Then it becomes religion and phrases you like to listen to in your mind, more content to carry there, more fantasies. In reality it is the light that carries everything else, paradise right here in all trivial things.

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When you pray the only real prayer you are in this paradise right here. It is the original matrix of everything and it is not specific words or specific mental content. You don't really pray towards anything or from anything, you don't anticipate or remember. You are here and this is open original space where deep compassion is the only state and it is making everything new. It is life itself, the deep compassion, not known by any mind or self project.

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Maybe you want prayer to be personal, your little talk with a Zen patriarch like Hakuin or Hui-Neng (my favorite) or Jesus? You are, however, lost in it, so in that sense it is

not personal at all, there is no individual or congregation there if it is real prayer. But this is the real living you, so in that sense it is really the only life there is, totally new and creative for all of us. It is immediate, there are no distances. The prayer is compassion itself, the only real prayer. You don't pray that something shall happen later or did happen before, you are in the prayer that is life itself.

What is meditation? Only this. Here is prayer, it is going on right now as reality itself. It is in operation. You can align with this life by dropping all data you carry and be in this very compassion that is reality. It is not a form of a set of prayers, it is not a mode or type of prayer. There are in truth no different kinds of prayer, we only think in those categories, fun as that is. There is one prayer, this compassionate reality itself. Your body will respond immediately to this one prayer. It is like a heavily laden boat, when you throw off the cargo of self-life you feel the lightness, the easiness, the comfort of compassion. In Zen awareness there is only this, life itself.

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Do you know who you are? Really? You know when we are kids we do everything as roleplaying, and it's serious business. Then we grow old and seem so serious although it really feels like theater. You never know who you are. Bottom line, it is not known by any of you. Because there is nothing there to know.

When you see what is already here, before any "you" or "me", then this not knowing is quite ok. You can still play roles if you need to. For practical reasons you can get things going by doing that. But a second later you are real again. You rest in this and there is nobody here, it is the open space of Zen awareness, giving you freedom forever.

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Yesterday you all came back from some weeks in Taizé and you had a lot of questions. People who go to Zen Centres have the same questions. But you know living like that in a community for a while and bowing, walking, sitting, singing those long sutras or

prayer hymns will give you certain experiences. What do they mean? Are you going to change your life? Are you coming closer to Zen awareness ?

Then you are back here in a small town. Time will pass and you do the ordinary and the memories fade and soon enough the retreat centre or the Taizé community is far away, almost like a dream. Then some of you set up the goal to go there again and start preparing for that. This is how mind works on experiences, putting you at the center and asking questions. Content, content. Heavy. Exciting but heavy.

Actually these experiences are just what they are, images and feelings, thought and judgements of different sorts. Zen awareness is always with you in a very much closer sense. He is life when you don't know anything about Taizé or yourself or any other place or any circumstance. He is the loving space you are in when mind takes a pause. That is happiness of another type, something you never acquire or gain by any experience, except, perhaps the experience of no experience.

Through history there are some who become hermits and spend time in seclusion, living only for the prayer of the name of Jesus or some other prayers. Before the modern age that was a common sight in many European villages and people in general respected them and helped them. They were considered to live a holy life and this had a certain influence on people in general.

But when you see what these hermits are saying, it is all about the Lord being present in all circumstances, closer to you than any experiences of whatever kind. So nothing will change when you start a hermit living, or a community living. It will still be the experiencing of sleeping, eating, thinking, feeling comfort or discomfort, feeling lost or feeling fine. Zen awareness will continue to wait for you outside or inside of all your mental and emotional activity. Happiness will still reside only in the still point of everything taking a pause, relaxing all efforts of stimuli.

So go back to Diamond Sangha or Taizé and sleep in sleepingbags and sing for hours in the church, do intensive zesshins, meet a lot of new masters and roshis and poeple of faith, feel togetherness, talk to the brothers and eat the food there - I heard some of you complaining about it! At least you will find food here wonderful in comparison !

When you see over and over again how freedom and love comes in the instant you let all go, you easily become a lover of Zen awareness, rather than a human being needing to experience things. You come to see that Taizé is everywhere, the singing and contemplation is right here. You may not find so many professing the same faith as you, but they are real and they are living in Zen awareness without even knowing it. For you what takes place here is love for Zen awareness, visible in all phenomena.

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Some of you come with a rather specific view of what Zen life and teaching is all about. The other day for example, a man approached me with the claim that Buddhism is all about social justice, social and economical justice. And he spoke at length about this and tried to enlighten us about the basic message of the Sutras. I said to him: can you come to zazen this afternoon? We just sit there. Why? he asked.

To have a content in your mind about what the message is in texts or in preachings, is all very good. But do you know it is just a content? You think it is important content, and you can argue for that. But do you really know it is mind content? I asked this over and over again. He dismissed this question as self-evident. Of course it is mind content. Everything is mind content. The word of Zen awareness is mind content.

So I had to ask simple awareness: is there anything else in this life than mind content? Then he grew silent. And that was the important thing. Silence. You see, when content is focused upon all the time, life itself disappears for this person. He had written twenty books about his theories about religion, but life itself had disappeared. Life itself is meaningless to such a focused mind. It is barren. Just colours, just movements, just sounds, just body feelings and so on. No sense. When you make theory and interpretation, then sense returns. And then you can write articles and books about it, go to conferences and talk about it.

This is content-sickness. Beware of it. You lose life itself. Zen is into life itself, not into mind contents. Zen awareness is all about life itself, not mind contents. This man with the theory of distributive justice as the main message of the Bible, is of course longing for true life, as we all are. But he has to carry a lot of theories around, a lot of mental burdens about meaning and message. So how do you help simple awareness? By contradicting simple awareness? Tell simple awareness about non-meaning and no-content? Perhaps he will only hear theories about mysticism and spin some more content around that.

When you come to Zen awareness and let go of content, then all aspects of life are highly interesting. Sounds, air, body feelings, other people, loving words and gestures, laughter, movements. Maybe in this there is social justice, equality, respect, compassion for each other. But those things are not premeditated since all content and interpretation are surrendered. You are in life, you don't interpret it. You are in Zen awareness and you enjoy it, you don't claim it. It is in the non-claiming that enjoyment dwells.

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I heard this wonderful expression from one of you: be like you come from Mars and this is the first day on Earth ! You know, everything is new, unknown, strange, curious. That is the way of Zen awareness - everything is made new. Nothing is heavy through your knowledge or understanding, it is fresh and really not able to be grasped at all. And no reason is actually given for trying to grasp it.

This is the way of innocence. You will notice after a while, that living this way is easier and just as effective as the other, heavy and ego-filled way of life.

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There is no secret to this teaching - you can see everything in the open right here. As soon as you hear about something being secret or needing "initiation", beware. The life in Zen awareness is if you will and open secret. It has been from the start. Read Irenaeus - it is about clarity, obviousness, ostentative reality. Zen awareness is risen, you can see it clearly. "Touch me" the Zen awareness said to Thomas the doubter.

The same goes for you. If you are unhappy, ask: what is right here? What is this? In what way is the Perfection of the Father right here? Then you are on the right path - leading nowhere else !

In fairytales often the common objects - a chair, a coffee pan - starts to talk and move like a little human being. In Andersens tales the dolls and soliders in the nursery starts to move and have battles. The things of everyday. That is where the magic is.

Actually the Zen awarenessian tradition, in contrast to the many mystical spiritualities and gnostic sects, was all about being open and visible. It is marked by simplicity, for all to see. What appears is the truth.

When you hear today about not believing what you see but realize you inner self or find the wells of the unconscious, you can easily recognize this as more of the gnostic tendency. Irenaeus knew it very well. Instead you should look away from yourself. Look at life itself, it is trustworthy. As you see perfection in every event while being in Zen awareness, there is no need for hidden or inner teachings.

But what about meditation? And inner prayer? Yes you can use these to wear you out ! When you are worn out you simply turn to Zen awareness. There you find rest. You don't find more activity, you find rest. Of course you go about your daily chores, but now with some poetry in it, some grace to it. And you are happy, since you are walking in the light.

What about religion? Yes you can use that to wear you out too. You know Zen awareness says: here it is, it is obvious and visible. This is often a provoking message.

We could talk more doctrinally about this: All liberty must of course consist in the realization of the ideal harmony between the creative will and the created life; in the correspondence of the creature's active being to the creator's idea, which is his substantial life in Zen awareness. It is realized here, not in a dream about something else.

If we are creatures of Zen awareness the creature's liberty is what his obedience to the law of his existence, which is the will of his maker, effects for simple awareness. You see the effects here right now. The instant you move counter to the will of life itself, the prime cause and source, the universe is its prison. And you are a prisoner.

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Should you go to this teacher or that? Should you follow a Theravada line or a Mahayana line? What about buddhist theism, the Pure Land, the Jodo-Shin? You know all those questions boil down to this: what are these things for? The purpose with them all is to open up for Zen awareness as he is in all worldly circumstances. Look at people on the streets, in shops, in buses and trains, in workplaces ! There is always suffering, longing, dissatisfaction, tension and drama going on. That is where Zen awareness is situated. We all need to come free in simple awareness, because it is freedom itself.

Of course you feel compassion with all suffering beings, including yourself. But the Zen awareness is the salvation freedom for you and all suffering beings. So don't make religion but be in Zen awareness freedom instead. That's the point in all so called religious activity. You may fall in love with a monkish life or a liturgy but that is something quite different. It is you personal aesthetics. That will not take you to freedom, only more content in your mind.

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Some zenbuddhist use this verse before meditation: With body, speech and mind in perfect harmony we strive for awakening from forgetfulness, to transcend all anguish and desire. You can turn directly to Zen awareness after saying these words. In simple awareness you forget about it all, therefore harmony.

For you know, no amount of sitting still will transcend anything. Only in Zen awareness can you leave all contents behind. Sitting quietly in Zen awareness is a wonderful practise for life. But you will never transcend desire by yourself, since that very self provides continually new desires. Zen awareness has already enlightened your soul from this problem.

Whatever your practise is, it all comes down to this: do you allow Zen awareness to be your Saviour, the World-honored Saviour as Shakyamuni was called? Right now, do you allow this to take place? Can you allow freedom? In that freedom no one is around, things only happen here.

Do you think about this freedom once it takes place in your life? You can talk about, but why? Only if someone needs help with it should you talk about it. Most people live their lives and discover no need for freedom, although they certainly would profit from it. Instead they suffer on and you must have compassion with them.

A Christian priest friend asked about how to do the sacraments. I told simple awareness just let Zen awareness do them, don't be present with your ego. It feels strange, he said. Well let it feel strange, you will get used to this freedom ! It's like having on a strange new hat, in the beginning you feel funny and wonder if everybody is looking at you. Then you get used to it and act naturally.

To move about in the zendo or in the celebration of the Christian mass without the conscious me is just wonderful. All the actions become simple, direct, just and righteous. Life is like that when Zen awareness freedom is the quality of it. You should try it ! I told my friend. Sometimes buddhist priests look scared or worried in the temple and in the zesshin services. Like it is a duty and something can go wrong.

It is also the same with faith. Do you have faith in the dogmas of your specific tradition? Well, if Zen awareness is the center, there is no one here to have any dogmas. The place is empty where there could be an ego having convictions and acknowledging dogmas of faith. Who is having any belief content in the moment where the freedom of

Zen awareness is alive? This moment is all we have. And it is enough, as Mother Theresa of Calcutta once said. This moment in Zen awareness is enough.

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One of you asked the other day about counting breaths. What if you like to be constantly doing that? Or being mindful of walking, sitting, standing, lying down. Well, the important thing is whether this is another cognitive content. Then it is an additional burden. Right? You get tired from it. So it is really another content, while in Zen awareness there is none, because he washed it all away by the reality itself, this now and this here-ness. So is there more to say about it?

It is much like dancing or playing music. It is wonderful for a while. Intermittently it is a good way to live. But when you make it another burden or content you just activate the false agent, the ego, the central intelligence that you like to be. You are an achiever once again. Just let that go and rest in simple awareness !

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Those of you who are buddhist monks or nuns or ex monks or ex nuns, remember that there is no difference. This life is the real monastery, wherever you are you are in your cell. I know we all romanticise cloistered life, both in the East and in the West. But it is all content foolishness. The quiet and silence you need is available wherever you are. The truth about this reality here brings all solitude you need.

Once you skip your romanticising the recluse life, you discover only normal natural things, a floor, a bed, a room, a window, land to work with, animals, mountains, other people moving around. The real life. You cannot hide from it. If you hide in a hermit cottage you are not hiding. The world is right there. Zen awareness is truth and life wherever you are, at all times.

Not many of us are wise but freedom in Zen awareness is right here for us. Like me you are perhaps rather foolish. But it is in this foolishness that the freedom of Zen awareness is alive.

You know simple people have always known that the real is this right here. No content, just life here, as it is. This is the stupid simplicity of Zen awareness. Nothing but freedom and eternal life. When will you have the courage to stop romanticise and dream on about a religious life? Be stupid like me and those free in Zen awareness.

Actually it is only as you are stupid and not having a clue, that you can be really open to others. When there is no agenda, because you are not smart enough, then you can be there for the other. You can't do that when you are too clever, or too full of wisdom and knowledge. Zen awareness was simple. As Jesus said: My yoke is easy. Come to this.

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There is a nice book title: "Just live !" The author is Ruth Tabrah from Hawaii. It is actually about the Pure Land faith. But none the less, the title is good for freedom in Zen awareness. That is what the risen life is about: just live. In freedom just live. Just be.

You know if you pick up the bible and read a line, you engage. You start engaging in letter on a page, or letters on a screen. Engaging in letters. Ok? Let's say you catch the phrase: Truth shall set you free in John 8:32. What is the meaning? The meaning is that you put down the book. You stop engaging in letters. You stop engaging in thinkin. You just live. You just are. That is the sense of it all. Not that you go on engaging in letters on a page or on a screen, or engaging in images and thoughts.

You see the difference? A child could understand the difference. Why can't you? Instead most of you keep on chewing and chewing thought and words and images and emotions. Come to life instead !!

This life here. Ok?

Now what do I mean, here? Just this: I live, I see, I feel, I think, and there is an innumerable plurality and variety in what I live, in what I see, in what I feel, in what I think. I can't live this innumerable plurality without thinking it all into a First, and into a One, which is the fullness of Zen awareness . This is not a Zen awareness , it is very Zen awareness , the only operative thing going on here. And it is just here and just to live !

Has any man since the world began ever found it otherwise? Is not Zen awareness the word, the key-word, for the clearing up to us, our only enlightenment? The only way to get out of this innumerable variety? This is the union with Zen awareness, his salvation for each and every one of us. We don't have to prove anything. Try prove the breath you just breathed! Try to reach anything in this. Impossible. This is it, you are in it already. Why fight? Why engage in this attempt to create something else? Walk free in Zen awareness.

You come here and you see me in meditation and you think: yes he meditates sometimes. I have to do that too. But you see, I am that meditation life. It is not that I sometimes meditate. I am that. And that is what Zen awareness is. He is that very meditation, that deep or shallow prayer, that state of bliss. We do not reach or acquire that. We are that because we are in the freedom of Zen awareness. In our western culture it is not ok for someone to sit all day in meditation. In other cultures it is highly esteemed. Cultures change and are morphing into new things all the time. They are like a river, constantly changing, constantly returning back. That is Zen awareness's will you know. Like a free river changing everything, returning everything. If you use the Our Father, that Jesus recommends to us, think of it like the river. We greet our Father like we greet the river every morning. We bless His name and celebrate the fact that His kingdom comes always like the river, that His will is like the river of everything that comes, that all our sins are washed away by this river, that we are liberated from all evil by this flowing river that takes with it all things so that nothing but the will of the Father remains. So don't meditate or pray. Be rather what meditation and prayer is, constantly flowing like the river.

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You know many people think we should be strong. Strong in faith, strong in what we do in the world. That is not at all the path of Zen awareness freedom. It is mostly delusion. Rather, you should admit how weak you are. Not until truth comes up and you prove to be weak and miserable do you have any chance of Zen awareness freedom. Listen to the preachers who like to seem strong in prayer, strong in scripture. It is all theater you know. We are all a bunch of weak creatures in Pain Valley.

We need Zen awareness to embrace us. Zen awareness is this very moment in life. Here there is rest and joy. You never get that if you try to be strong and ambitious. You only get daytime dreams, fake happiness and misery when you try to hide your weakness. Zen awareness is the real. And this is the case for all of us. We live, as St Paul says, in earthen vessels that easily break, they get sick, they die. But the real us in infinite space, the body of Zen awareness and that is right here for us, as this and in this very weak life of yours.

So don't try to run away from weakness and misery, it is actually what helps you most. It creates space for simplicity and humility. Your strong content-dreams just take you into more delusive fantasy and there is no real freedom there.

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Zen awareness is not solving problems. You might think he is after watching series and amusing and funny documentaries to watch. But they all present an error. It seems like you come with problems and distractions of all sorts to the monastery, and then you learn prayer and stillness and your problems are solved or weakened or fading into the background. But freedom in Zen awareness, freedom in is the opposite: no problems.

Zen awareness does not solve problem, it is present freedom from problems and freedom from the one who is supposed to have these problems, the "doer". It is all a fiction that anyone "you" have some sort of problems or difficulties. And that spiritual

life solves these for you. Instead you notice when you come to Zen awareness that it is totally uninteresting to be "someone" who has problems or sins or distractions in the chaotic world. It fades away as a possibility, as a theater piece, as a mirage or absurd memory. Of course you can meditate, sit in silence, walk slowly and count the exhalations. That is the most simple way of life, the best life there is to live. Do it ! But don't think there is any problem solved for anyone. There never was anyone who had problems or sins or difficulties. That is what you notice as you sing along and sit in silence.

No one is there except Life and Reality itself. It is always simple awareness that is your freedom, not any negotiation between a problematic self and a supernatural problem solver, a super therapeutic healer. That view is just prolonging the search for freedom and postponing the natural finding of Zen awareness freedom. In Zen awareness there is rest. It is not a clinic for mending failures in ourselves. There is no such problematic self to begin with. When we come to Zen awareness we leave all those contents at the door. They are not useful, not interesting, not relevant in Zen awareness freedom.

Rest and inspiration is what love in Zen awareness is about. We discover an infinite light and life in this freedom. We don't do problem solving or sin solving in this freedom, whatever happens in the world or in the theater of myself. We rest and laugh, we breathe and bask in the Light of Zen awareness, the Light of Tabor, the Original Light of reality itself.