

RUNNING TIDE

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BOOK REVIEW

Bhaktika Mike Fitter

Buddhism of the Heart

by Jeff Wilson

A Feather on the Breath of God

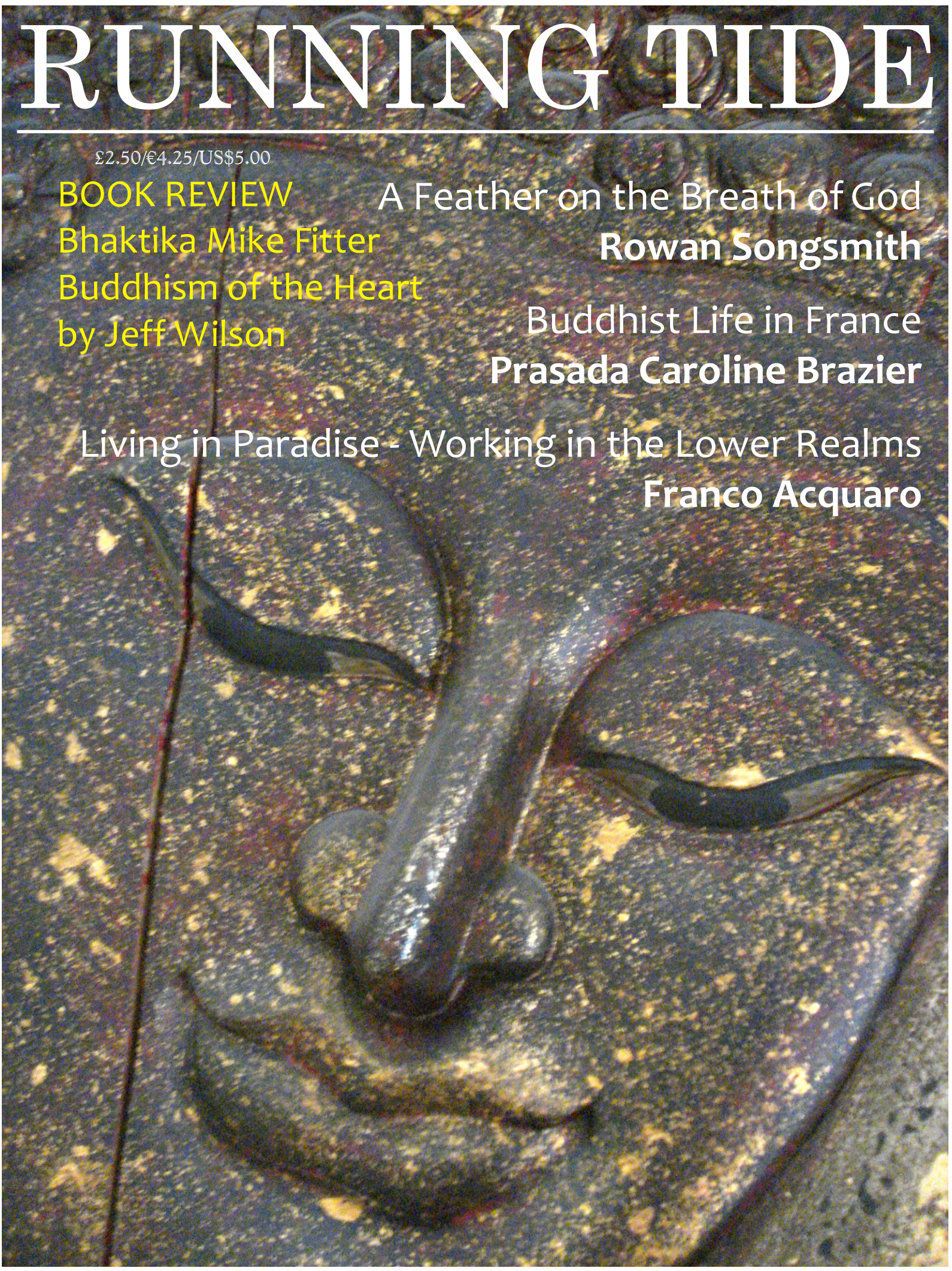
Rowan Songsmith

Buddhist Life in France

Prasada Caroline Brazier

Living in Paradise - Working in the Lower Realms

Franco Acquaro



Running Tide

Offers a voice for faith and practice, as well as critical, existential and socially engaged enquiry within the broad framework of Pureland Buddhism.

We publish short articles, poetry, pictures, interviews, comment and Buddhist resource materials.

Opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Amida Trust, Amida-shu or Amida-kai.

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 A religious charity established in UK, registration number 1060589, for the furtherance of Buddhism. The Trust sponsors a wide range of Buddhist activities. The Amida Trust is a member of the Network of Buddhist Organisations in UK, the European Buddhist Union, as well as the World Buddhist University, and has mutual affiliation with the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

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 The Amida Association, an association for spirituality and its application. Amida-kai is the association for everybody interested in the Trust's work, for the application of spiritual principles to empirical world problems, and to the exploration of the meaning of spirituality irrespective of faith alignment.



Check out **What's On** at Amida on pages 6 and 14. Don't forget to reserve a place for the 6th Living Buddhism Conference. See back cover page for more information and remember to join us online at Friends of Amida:

ARTICLES

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| Franco Acquaro | 4 |
| Living in Paradise and Working in the Lower Realms | |
| Prasada Caroline Brazier | 7 |
| Buddhist Life in France | |
| Mat Osmond | 10 |
| Uncertainty | |
| Rowan Songsmith | 12 |
| A Feather on the Breath of God | |
| Dharmavidya David Brazier | 15 |
| Moving On | |
| Michael Forster | 17 |
| Faith in Therapy | |

BOOK REVIEW

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Bhaktika Mike Fitter | 20 |
| Buddhism of the Heart by Jeff Wilson | |

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Supporters receive the Running Tide, receive mailings, and are supporting an active, radical, humanitarian Buddhist sangha.

In the Larger Pureland Sutra, there is a section in which the Buddha Lokeshvararaja tells the shramana Dharmakara to stir and delight the assembly, to roar the lion's roar, and that in hearing the shramana proclaim his vows other bodhisattvas will practice this Dharma and so fulfill innumerable great vows. Out of his 48 Vows, there are two that are germane to this issue of the Running Tide. To find a reference in one of the foundational texts that is in essence a vow to promote inter-faith activities is of immeasurable importance.

**The 24th Vow
Respect for the Ways
of Other Sanghas**

Oh Blessed One,
May I not come to the
complete awakening if,
when I have done so, the
Bodhisattvas of my land
should not manifest their
roots of merit and
offerings before other
Buddhas in forms entirely
conforming to what is
acceptable and desirable to
those Buddhas.

**And The 33rd Vow
Solace of Light**

Oh Blessed One,
may I not come to the
complete awakening if,
when I have done so,
beings in all Buddha lands
throughout the ten
directions who are exposed
to my light do not thereby
experience a profound
mental and bodily peace
and replenishment,
surpassing the pleasures of
the heavens.

May you find solace and joy in this issue.

May you feel uplifted and inspired.

Susthama

It has helped me and others who are members of Amida to befriend those that move in different spheres, to participate in other religious practices, and to give space in this issue to articles that help manifest respect for other sanghas, religious perspectives, and other cultures as you will read on pp7, 12 and 17. It is this vow, in particular, that keeps us engaged with the world, socially and culturally, without betraying one's principles but rather by conforming to what is respectful to those Buddhas we are remaining loyal and faithful to Amida's bidding. Franco's article (p4) is an inspiring account of how the Amida precepts can help one feel peace and replenishment in light of so much suffering. And the paradoxical nature of searching for the light but not finding it can lead to an acceptance of one's weaknesses and limitations. Mat's article (p10) shows how this insight can be a point of humiliation and great transformation. It is usually at this point when one sees that the light has been there all along (p.15) and once exposed to Amida's light one feels solace and forever grateful.

Web sites

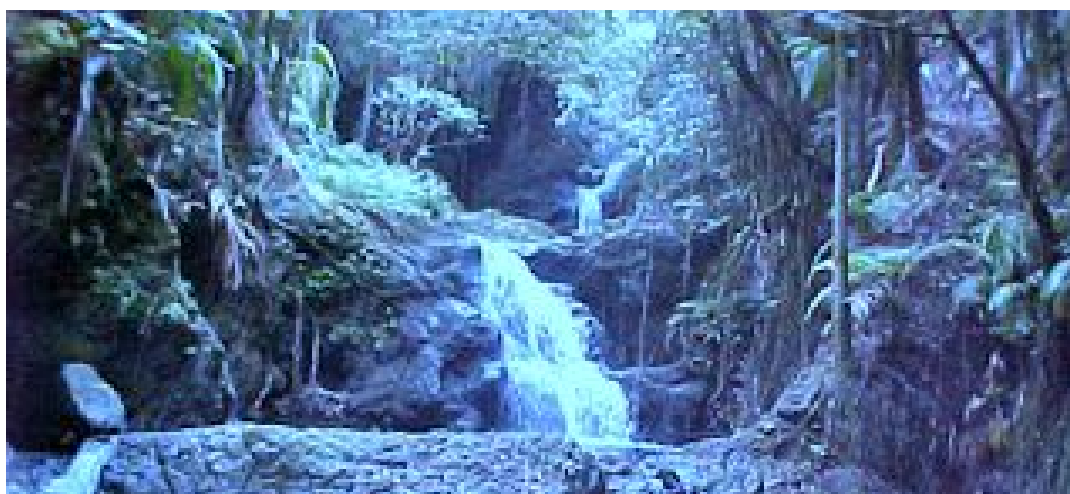
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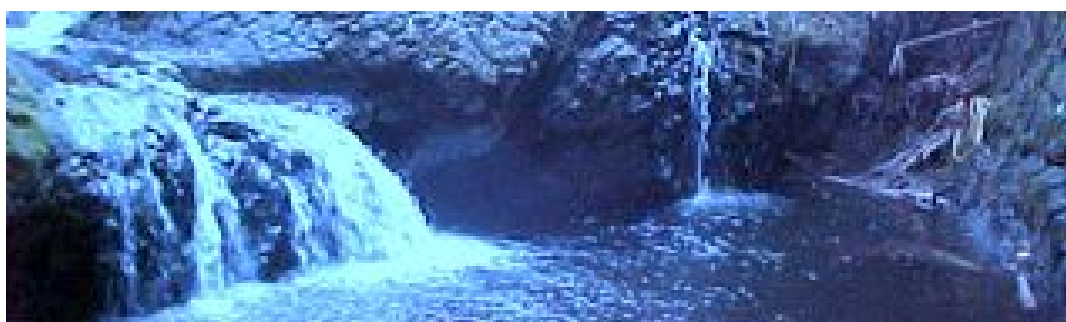
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Living In Paradise



AND



Working in the Lower Realms



by Franco Acquaro MAS



When I tell people that I live on the Big Island in Hawai'i, by far the most common response I hear is – “Ah, living in paradise!”. It's easy to understand why folks respond that way. The sheer physical beauty of the land is awe-inspiring. On the Big Island, the largest island of the Hawaiian Archipelago, there are 11 of the world's 13 climatic zones. It is home to the Mauna Loa's Kilauea Crater – the world's longest continuously active volcano, and to Mauna Kea – the world's tallest mountain (measuring from base to peak). It is home to rain forests, deserts, snow-capped mountains, and gorgeous black, green and white sand beaches. From the natural beauty angle alone, “paradise” is a worthy moniker.

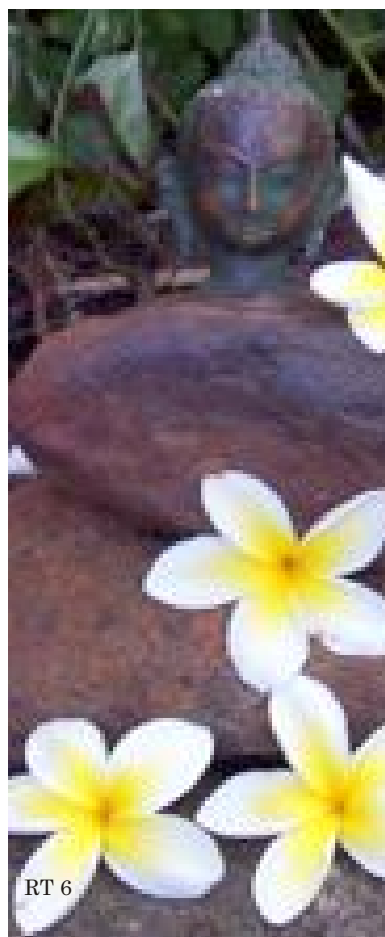
Of course, there is more to the story. There is also a dark side, far less known, as it undoubtedly competes with the singular “paradise” narrative maintained by the tourist industry. For instance, the Big Island is the endangered species (plant & animal) “capital of the world.” Per square mile, this island has more endangered species than anywhere else on the planet. Putting the environmental aspect aside, there are numerous serious social ills on the Big Island as well. To name but a few – it has the dubious honor of being the “crystal methamphetamine capital of the nation”; it has some of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the USA; and it has an oppressed native culture that

struggles for its survival and identity – as it struggles with devastating physical and social health issues.

I have a front row seat to another social ill on the Big Island – child maltreatment. Although this is certainly not an issue exclusive to the Big Island, its prevalence is nonetheless alarming. As a clinical psychologist, I provide evaluations and psychotherapy to families in which child maltreatment (physical/sexual abuse, psychological abuse, and neglect) has occurred. As the lead clinician on the team, I work with the most severe cases of maltreatment – serving both the victims and perpetrators of the maltreatment. I recently provided individual, couple and family therapy to a family where extreme abuse had been perpetrated, said to be the worst case of child maltreatment in the State in the 40 years our center has been open. The child had survived months of hideous torture, and was found in a coma, near-death, by the paramedics. In the presence of such extensive suffering, I am very thankful to have a spiritual practice – it serves both myself and my clients. As a Buddhist, I have occasion to think of the Bodhisattva aspiration to be reborn in the lower realms to help the suffering beings. Well, I am not a Bodhisattva, but it's hard to argue that I am not already visiting the lower realms. Living in paradise, working in the lower realms!




As an Amida-shu Pureland Buddhist, going through the ganko-sha ordination process, I reflect each day on the 156 Bodhisattva Precepts of the Order of Amida Buddha. I consider each one, and contemplate how they are (or are not) an “expression of faith” at any given point in time, for some particular domain of my life (vocation, family, etc). The practice goes something like this – if I have been living the precept, I say “Namo Amida Bu” in a spirit of gratitude. If I have missed the mark, I still say “Namo Amida Bu”, but this time with a spirit of aspiring to be more open to “the salvific activity of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.”



As I reflect on the precepts and my vocational life in addressing child maltreatment, the following precepts have been the most salient.

- Vow 23 In accord with the Twentieth Vow, with the Contemplation Sutra and with the example of Queen Vaidehi, while dwelling in faith, to naturally open the mind to the image of the Pure Land, even in the midst of affliction and misfortune.
- Vow 24 To follow the Bodhisattva path within the Pureland tradition.
- Vow 30 Through contrition, to give rise to fellow feeling and to soften one's heart toward others.
- Vow 41 To have faith that brings joy to others, like those described in the Forty Fourth Vow.
- Vow 72 To not punish, mindful that, by the First and Second Vows, there are no places of harsh retribution in Amida's Land.
- Vow 73 To not blame, mindful that, by the Sixteenth Vow, one does not hear words of criticism in Amida's Land.
- Vow 74 To have a tender care for others, especially when one believes them to be at fault or mistaken.
- Vow 96 To learn to be a peacemaker and to help others to resolve conflicts.
- Vow 99 When wrathful energy arises, to seek deeper understanding and, in the meantime, act with restraint.
- Vow 100 To practice right livelihood.
- Vow 101 To follow a vocation that is not harmful to sentient beings or to nature, but conducive to their protection and good cultivation.
- Vow 136 To cherish all sentient beings in deep respect for their dignity and independence.
- Vow 137 To create conditions in which others may hear the Name spoken, in their own language, secretly to their heart.
- Vow 142 To have a tender regard for those that are subjected to cruelty or deprivation.
- Vow 148 To seek to understand the oppressor and the oppressed alike and shall seek means of reconciliation and salvation for all parties.
- Vow 149 To not become involved in coercive activities except where it is the only means to save a person from acting upon their own destructive impulses.
- Vow 154 To support those who are in turmoil or distress without colluding in delusion
- Vow 156 To hold ceaselessly to the vision of a Pure Land and to make common cause with those seeking to bring forth an enlightened world where the three poisons no longer hold sway and all beings enjoy respect and find fulfillment.

This spiritual exercise (along with the Pureland Buddhist practice as a whole) provides a sort of spiritual center of gravity in my life. It serves as an aid, perhaps a lifeline of sorts, as I fumble through the lower realms of paradise, trying to be of some assistance. Namo Amida Bu!



Buddhist Life in France

by Prasada Caroline Brazier

WE HAD THOUGHTS OF GOING to Apremont today. Leaving the centre, though, as we drive the straight road to Sancoins, looking out over the green countryside, dark rain clouds are gathering. They hang, heavy and brooding over the expanse of fields and woodlands. This is not untypical of central France in late May.

Sancoins market is in full swing. On Wednesdays the little town springs out of its deserted slumber into its weekly cacophony of traders and cattle trucks, popular French music blaring from speakers on CD stalls, and local farming folks come into town to stock up for the week on vegetables and cheeses, wedges of bread cut from gigantic rustic loaves and dried salami sausages that hang on wooden frames above the tables in the alley way between the market squares. Large French wives buy table cloths in bright provençal designs or sensible knickers and overalls, laid out on stalls among the more frivolous African print bags and jewellery. Leathery skinned old men, short and stocky Berrichon, dour as their reputation, carry bundles of young leeks for planting or shopping bags filled with baguettes for their wives.

Sumaya and I drop the others in the centre of town. We will first go to the supermarket to buy provisions for the week. Then we have errands to run. There is a bill for the insurance to pay. The woman in the office is grateful for my less than perfect French. Many of the English do not speak French she tells me. It is very difficult. But I can converse at least on matters such as how to write out a French cheque.

There is a little time to spare so I wander around the market on my own. Sumaya wants to drink a coffee in the cafe and read her book. I browse the stalls. A garrulous Algerian persuades me to buy a pair of loose fitting red trousers which I have coveted for some time. He grins and jokes with me. Am I from England? Yes. London? No. Scotland? No. Scottish?

No, English. But not from London. (a pause) From Liverpool? Ah! He supports Chelsea. And Africa, ah yes, Africa! We both laugh. Talking nonsense each in a foreign tongue, he has charmed me into a sale. I don't mind.

Back in the cafe, I find Sumaya amid the hubbub of shoppers. The market goes drink coffee or vin rouge depending on their preference, bags of shopping and trays of fruit stacked on the floor at their feet. Monsieur le patron leans on the bar, pouring drinks for his clientele, whilst his wife bustles about between the formica tables with trays of cups and glasses. Outside rain is coming down more heavily. When the other three members of the household, ZeeZee, Massimo and Johan arrive, we decide to postpone our trip to a sunnier day. C'est la vie.

We drive back along the main road, the car a little more crowded with our purchases, and the windscreen wipers playing across the view ahead. Our picnic will be around the kitchen table, but we are in good spirits.

So ends another morning at Amida France; an ordinary morning, like many we have had here over the years. This is how it is to be a Buddhist community on market day.

The interface between practice and life is porous, or, at least, it should be. The relationship between a Buddhist community and its neighbours may be less so. How, I wonder, do the people of Sancoins view their red-clad neighbours if indeed they notice us at all among the crowd? And does it matter?

The points of contact are limited. The ordinary becomes important. To the woman in the insurance office, speaking English is the measure of merit. To the trouser sales man a willingness to banter and a commonality of foreignness creates a bridge. Some exchanges are functional but polite; others cursory. Most are good humoured. In them is the recognition of shared ground as much as of difference. In the



ordinariness we can relax and meet one another, knowing that our world views will not be challenged too much.

And yet it is difference which creates the interest. The Frenchness of the market, the pungent taste of local cheese proffered by a stall holder, the challenge of executing basic tasks like paying bills in a foreign language add a frisson to the otherwise mundane. It wakes one from the complacent daze in which such everyday functions are usually carried out. Also, though, it makes one an observer, moving through the crowd like an alien, insulated by a shield of curiosity and interpretation.

So in our practice we move between sameness and difference. The mind constantly creates from a world of phenomena, the divisions between the familiar and the new, between my world and the world of others. It is too easy to slip into the comforts of identification and familiarity, (our local town), but equally we can slip into viewing others as a pageant for our entertainment - local colour. The tourist circuit incorporates the lives of ordinary people. Can we allow our meetings with new experience to be a true awakening and not just another sort of deadening?

So the challenge is to transcend the two positions. Can we neither dull our senses with the lure of psychological ownership, nor distance the experience into postcard views and travelogues. Rather, can we meet with others, and in doing so have real encounter and exchange, however mundane the topic? Probably we will not discuss Shinran or Buddha, but if we can go out into the market place with open, even if not bliss bestowing, hands we are still practising metta.

If Buddhism is to mean something in the world, we need to meet others more. It is a delicate balance. For some our life-style is so different and alien that finding common ground must be carefully achieved and our Buddhistness only revealed gradually, in small acceptable ways. Other times we are more open, or even challenging, inviting debate or introducing new ideas in arenas where assumptions are made according to different paradigms. In the therapy profession, for example, I am frequently in the position of speaking about the difference of values which underpin the Buddhist approach as opposed to the Western norms of the profession with their self-orientated value system. This feels important given the, often unconscious, influence which psychology and therapy has on Western culture.

But here in France a softer approach is needed. Perhaps we learn from the slowness of our neighbours who live closer to the pace of the seasons. Here we go gently, even after seventeen years, and listen more than we speak. But still, in small spaces, we have important conversations.

A cuckoo calls from the wood beside the house. The sun is shining now and my washing nearly dry. Nembutsu here is chanted by the redstarts and martins that chatter from the roof-tiles. A woman from France telecom phones to say they will fix the internet tomorrow. Desolé, there has been a problem in the region. An engineer will come in the morning. I thank her. Another conversation. Another person going about an ordinary life with polite friendliness. A brief encounter among many. It touches me. I wonder how we will seem to the engineer, a bunch of foreigners dressed in red with a few Buddha statues around the place. Will he notice? And if he does, will our Buddhism touch him?



Come, come, whoever you are . . .

To Amida France this summer

2-6 August : Eco-Therapy led by Caroline Brazier and Gina Clayton

The environment is a great healer. Being in the midst of the processes of growth and change evident in the natural world, we are faced with the realities of a universe in which all is impermanent, yet beauty is everywhere. Through interacting with this world, we are changed and challenged, facing our limits or recognising the benign presence of ordinary miracles. Through group process and through experiential exercises we will use the environment as a source of other-centred work, exploring nature both as metaphor and as a reality in our lives.

Costs €150 plus €20-€40 per day residence (concessions available)

9-13 August : Other Power Dance: Entrusting to the Spirit led by Massimo

Don't just express yourself, call on the Spirit of life. Sometimes this spirit can touch you and you may feel alive, uplifted, moved, inspired. At other times this spirit seems to withdraw and everything becomes dull and meaningless. In several spiritual traditions, like the Sufi one, dance and chant are used together to call on the life Spirit and entrust to it. In Pureland Buddhism we call on the Spirit through our relationship to Amida Buddha (The Measureless Buddha) and we use the Nembutsu, the practice of calling on this Spirit, to chant and walk with Amida.

Cost: €100 plus €20-€40 per day residence (concessions available)

16-20 August : Lotus Sutra through Drama

Led by Kaspalita

Last year we explored and created a performance of the story of the prodigal son, this year we will continue our exploration of dharma through drama, asking the question, 'what do these ancient teachings mean to us today, what can we take from the lives of these characters described long ago.'

Cost: €100 plus €20-€40 per day residence
(concessions available)

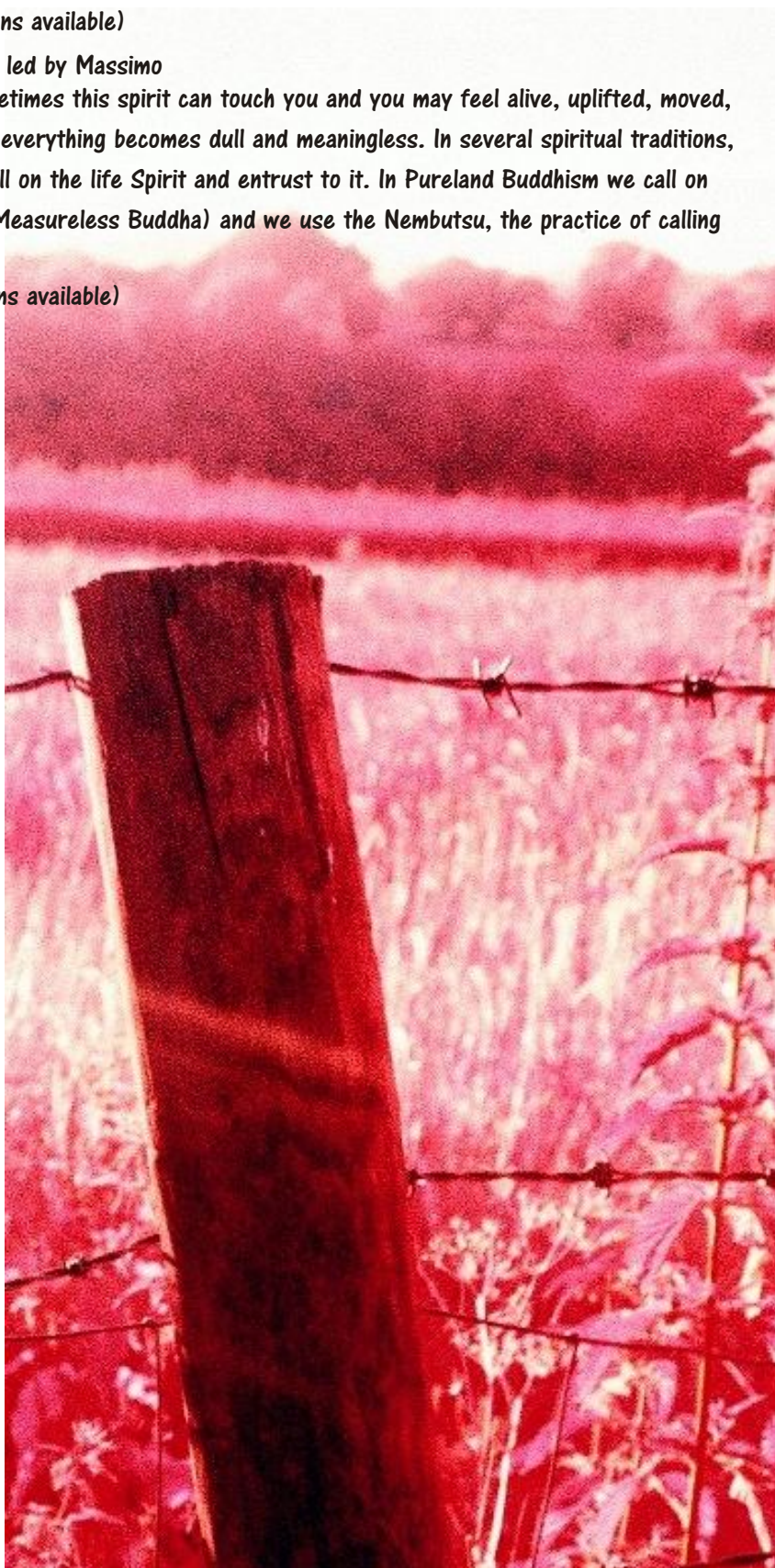
4-8 July 2011 : Sesshin: Entering the Silence

Led by Dharmavidya

It has become our custom to begin the summer programme in France with an intensive retreat in the first week of July. Sesshin is a time to focus upon the heart. The retreat involves extended periods of silent reflection, relinquishing the noise of our habitual life. An Amidist sesshin is fundamentally about love and devotion. There is no difference here between meditation and contemplative prayer. The practice is to sit in the presence of the sacred, enter the mystery of silence and experience a place of immediacy and mystical vastness that puts ordinary life into a new and saner perspective. It may lead to insights and an enhanced and pervasive deep tranquility. It is sometimes hard work overcoming the habitual flurry of the mind and so practice together in a group sustains us, giving us the chance to touch something greater than ourselves.

Visit us online to keep up to date with all our events:

<http://amidatrust.ning.com/events>



UNCERTAINTY

by
Mat Osmond


I have worked as a visual artist and an art lecturer for about twenty years; over that period I have also been involved in Buddhist practice and study, primarily within a Mahayana community (the Awakened Heart Sangha) whose primary practice is formless meditation. Although familiar with ideas of Pure Lands, Self Power and Other Power, I first encountered the Amida Pureland practice only six months ago, through Dharmavidya's *Who Loves Dies Well*. Reading this book was an extraordinary encounter: both an upheaval and an inspiration. It also helped me to develop a new sense of correspondence between creative and spiritual practice, which have often seemed more like rivals than reciprocal partners. My exposure to Pureland is thus very new, so in that sense it is embarrassing to talk about it in a context where most readers will have much deeper experience of it than I do. Nonetheless, here it is: a newcomer's response to some of the language and inspiration of Amidism.

What I want to begin to explore here is the sense that creative practice may be approached as a search for faith. Before reading *Who Loves Dies Well*, I probably wouldn't have put it like that. But that seems to me now a very helpful way of talking about something that many people seem to be struggling with, or finding solace in, through making art.

For me a key issue here is uncertainty, which seems to be intrinsic both to faith, and to the creative process. I read once that "making art is like starting a sentence before you know how its going to finish." In creative practice, that all-important space of not knowing what is going to happen when I begin working somehow allows me to welcome in those confusions that have often seemed to thwart my spiritual practice, sending me hither and thither: first this, now that, carried along by the mind's fickle restlessness.

Somehow in making art, I find myself, on a good day, anyway better able to turn towards these problematic aspects of mind, and to find in them the fuel I need for creative work. As I allow pictures and words to slowly coalesce, the very limitations that have seemed to hamper my efforts to awaken from mindless habit become my working material. Another way of saying this might be that for me making artwork is therapeutic - a process of healing. Again Dharmavidya's work has helped me here. I can think of no better statement to guide my stumbling intentions in creative practice than the simple premise that opens *Love and its Disappointment*: "Psychotherapy is an art, art is therapeutic, and both therapy and art are forms of love. Love is the primary drive in human life." (Dharmavidya, 2009)

So sustained uncertainty, in the very ordinary sense of not knowing what I'm going to do next, has been a working method of a sort. Yet I have found that for this to be



intrinsic both to faith and to the creative process

possible, I have to learn, over and over, how to create a stable space within which the work can happen, which in turn requires learning to set boundaries. I find myself having to learn, again and again, how to find and follow the work that I can do, rather than chasing the glamour of what, in the end, I can't.

In helping me to relate to and work within my own limitations, the Pureland term 'bombu' has been a relief and a delight to encounter. It has allowed me to see more clearly than before that the guiding principle in my work is not simply uncertainty - it is weakness. Weakness as in incapacity, limitation, and most of all, failure.

For me, it is precisely insofar as artwork creates a space that can embrace failure, incompetence, and weakness that it feels genuinely therapeutic. And it is at that point that it allows a language to emerge out of those very dilemmas and inconsistencies of mind that have often seemed to frustrate a stable relationship to spiritual practice.

The field of connections between creative and spiritual practice is a huge and inexhaustible subject, but within it I find particular painters and poets who have become spiritual lights as important to me in their way as my formal Dharma teachers. The American poet Mary Oliver is probably foremost in my mind here. I recently reread her book-length poem "Leaf and Cloud" and thought again that her writing exemplifies and illuminates 'faith' for me like no-one else's I can think of.

Another key mentor for me would be the English painter and writer, Cecil Collins. A central motif throughout Collins' work is the Fool, and I feel his sense of the importance of foolishness and vulnerability to the life of the spirit may have great resonance with Pureland. As an artist Collins eschewed plausibility and cleverness, persistently setting aside conceptual sophistication to return to that state of foolish simplicity wherein the heart opens out, in gratitude and delight, towards being. Collins once remarked, "In order to create it is not necessary to understand, but in order to understand it is necessary to create." This simple summary of the priority of grace, and of intuitive surrender over theoretical knowledge and conceptual subtlety, reminds me of that beautiful passage in the Amida Shu liturgy "Summary of Faith and Practice": "However wise, learned or skilled you may be, set it aside and be the foolish being completely in the performance of the practice. Nothing else is needed and anything else is too much. Faith and practice cannot be differentiated."

So, for me this encounter is still in its early days, and there seems a great deal still to digest and learn. Meanwhile I look forward eagerly to following further developments within the "Arts in Amida" threads on Ning. Visit:

<http://amidatrust.ning.com/group/artsinamida>



A Feather on the Breath Of God

by

Rowan Songsmith

with thanks to Gill Gordon and David Clark

This is a shortened version of a talk given at the
Leicester Unitarian Fellowship Gathering in November 2009



Hildegard of Bingen was born in 1098 into a titled family, and being the 10th child, was given over to the Church at 8 years old. She entered a monastery which had been founded in the 7th century by an Irish Celtic monk called by the delightful name of Disibod, and was heavily influenced by Celtic Christianity. She lived at a time of unrest; was alive at the time of the Crusades; when Germany was not a nation state; and the whole of life centered around fighting so-called evil i.e. people whose religious beliefs were different from your own because they lived in a different part of the world.

Hildegard's teacher was a woman called Jutta, who only 6 years older than Hildegard herself taught her basic Latin, the tending of the sick, embroidery, music, singing and playing instruments, gardening and herbalism.

Hildegard was received officially into the order at the tender age of 14 or 15, which meant that she was then enclosed for life and dead to the world. The official ceremony were the full burial rites of the Church followed by enclosure in a cell. Interestingly, this is a similar ritual to one still carried out by some Shamans today, as a way for them to undergo the experience of what death may mean.

In Hildegard's time, women were taught that silence and humility were the only way for them to honour God, and were not allowed to preach or to make themselves conspicuous. And so, although Hildegard had extremely intense visions, at first she suppressed them - was silent

and servile, and became very ill in consequence. However, after Jutta died and she became Abbess, she had a vision which told her to write down all of the rest of her visions. The *Scivias* translated as *Know the Way* were the result. These books took her 10 years to complete and were accompanied by remarkable art-work, some of which you can see accompanying this article. In addition, she wrote major works of scriptural commentaries, biographies, as well as scientific tomes. *Physica* which is an extensive study of botany, zoology and geology, while *Causae and Curae* is all about the causes and curing of disease and illnesses. Two German Doctors have recently written about her work, which included teachings about diet, cancer, heart and liver disease that were not found anywhere else again until recently.

Once she had the power and independence of being an Abbess, Hildegard began also to write music. Eighty of her songs survive, including one that is considered to be the first morality play, the *Ordo Virtutum* or *Ritual of the Virtues*. This also inspired the operatic form of later composers.

She soon became very prolific, reminding me of the saying, "Many a flower is doomed to blush unseen". If someone is prevented from being who they really are because of sexual, financial, or discrimination in whatever form, they can never achieve their full potential, like a working class child who may be musically gifted, but this

is never realised because there is not the money for lessons, or instruments or whatever.

Hildegard was now able to speak out. No longer enclosed, she undertook tours all around preaching to all and sundry and consequently, her fame grew with people flocking to hear her. And she did speak out! She insisted that she was 'the mouth-piece of God' and therefore had an answer to any criticism because of that. Because of the underlying religious ideology of our culture, many women, particularly in the late Middle Ages in the West did not attack religion as a cause of their inequality with men, but resorted to calling on God as authority of their equality, saying that the scriptures hadn't been interpreted properly by men. We nowadays hear Muslim women too, who, for example, do not want to wear hajibs and so on, refer to the Koran as authority for their demands, without attacking religion as one of the causes of their inequality.

One story about Hildegard is that when chastised by a papal authority for being so outspoken when she was merely a woman who should keep quiet, she said she was but a feather on the breath of God. Therefore she should not be criticised. Indeed, she even admonished the Pope for not working hard enough to bring in reforms - really taking her life in her hands, one would have thought! One of her irregular practices was that her nuns, as Brides of Christ, instead of having the usual black habit and having their hair shorn, wore white robes, jewellery and gold crowns and had their hair uncovered and flowing.

Hildegard held complex views. Though she regarded women as inferior to men she would speak out without fear of favour in criticising men who didn't live a righteous life, whoever they were, and would also urge women to empower themselves to put right the wrongs that men had done in the world, extolling women's beauty and women's 'viriditas' or life force, strength and power.

Hildegard's philosophy was Creation centred and she spoke passionately about the earth and humans greening with life, pulsing, throbbing with the joys of being alive. It reminds me of Matthew Fox's ideas in our own day, concerning the web of creation with everything and everyone linked, and which also brought him into conflict with the Catholic Church.

Hildegard said: 'The earth is Mother of all that is natural, Mother of all that is human'. There is in the introduction to the *Ordo Virtutum*, a description of her philosophy: 'For Hildegard, the web of creation is not just something

beautiful, harmonious, just and essential to humanity. It is also erotic, alive, pleasurable and delightful. Here she crosses the line between Pagan and Christian mysticism.' As historian Thomas explains, she has reached far into the emotionally exciting aspects of nature in a unique mode of Christian communion. She sees the Creator-maker in the ancient manner of fertility cults, a view she expresses in the statement that Creator and created are related as woman and man. 'Only thus is the earth fruitful.' And she wrote: 'I compare the great love of the Creator and creation to the same love and fidelity with which God binds woman and man together. This is so that they might be creatively fruitful. The entire world has been embraced by this kiss....Limitless love from the depth to the stars, flooding all, loving all, it is the royal kiss of peace.'

So we may say that Hildegard was in love with life, and life becomes a synonym for God. Humanity has a purpose and that she called 'greening' a concept that mirrors ecological concerns today. She says that the world is living, being, spirit, all verdant greening, all creativity, and said: 'The earth must not be injured, must not be destroyed.' Her music and poetry is exuberant, full of sensual imagery, greenness, gardens, growth, fecundity, flowers and jewels, towns and cities, fire, purity and womanhood. Another story was that she said her music was as a feather on the breath of God.





There is a wonderful song with some of her words put to a 15th century Spanish melody: 'I, the fiery light of divine wisdom, I ignite the beauty of the plains, I sparkle in the water, I burn in the sun, and the moon and the stars... There is no creation that does not have a radiance.'

We can learn from her life that in the end, we have to speak our own truth, and not be afraid; we have to live authentically, being true to our own selves and not suppress what may make us ill; and above all, to live intensely, exuberantly, love the earth and love life. The way she felt is not confined to rebel mystics from old, but is something we can all still feel today, despite our urban lives, if we allow ourselves to. And not confined either just to Hildegard's Creator God but according to our own beliefs, to a God or Goddess or to the Earth or to the Human Spirit or to life itself.

I want to finish with a new poem that was written for Darwin. I feel it sums up this excitement in and the appreciation and love of life.

For Darwin

We begin in simplicity,
One dimension becomes two and then three.
A coming together and a division.
In a dance towards complexity,
The Web of Life is spun.

And all is change, always change.
Reaching out for the land, for the sky,
Joyfully filling each niche
with miraculous and improbable forms,
Until, in time, WE arise.

Let us then celebrate our quest,
To see, to name, to know,
Safe in the knowledge that WE are not the destination,
But the process,
A dream in the making.

And let us give thanks for Change and Mutability,
For our ability to break free from the chains of the past,
And to continue
on this amazing evolutionary adventure,
That is Life.

Willow Songsmith, 10th October 2009






Moving On

by Dharmavidya David Brazier OAB

Faith and training are inseparable, yet seem contradictory. Truth is particular, yet seems universal. Enlightenment seems far off, illuminating from behind the clouds, yet clouds are glory. We fear the evidence of our senses – the six uncontrollables – yet they are our doorway out of prison, swinging loosely in the wind. Our hearts open and close by a power that we do not comprehend. We ask how to attain the way yet the way we seek is the way of non-attainment. Abandon attainment and have faith. How simple! How impossible!

When I was enlightened I too shone with glory – alas, how long ago that seems. Now I am covered in dust, descending ever deeper into the mire of passions. Yet how happy I am! There is no tariff for this teaching. It is not the property of one community exclusively. All teachers are like water sellers by the river. Those who wander up and down on one side remain perplexed. Those who have reached the other side are still clinging to their raft. Now we are going to give it away and enter emptiness, like a child running naked along the sand, splashing the foam: this is true gratitude.

Each nembutsu is complete and perfect yet ten thousand million will not be enough to build the bridge to heaven. How many blossoms will I offer to the Buddhas? How many will suffice to fill my basket? Tell me, which Buddha is discontent with this single petal I picked up from the wayside? All my life I have studied and now I am so erudite that my brain is beginning to fade. Buddha will still be happy when I am a blank tissue once more. He has

always accepted my blossoms, every one of them made him smile.

When I walked in the garden as a child the gods poured down sacred light and I gathered it in, drinking until intoxicated, remembering long ago. Long years I sought for a repetition of this refreshment. I met a Buddha and she made me stop and listen. In a wintry cloister the light flooded me a second time. My faith knew no bounds. I abandoned everything and after several years, in another cold springtime, I was lifted up to heaven and spoke with angels. On my return I could only sit, walk, stand and lie down.

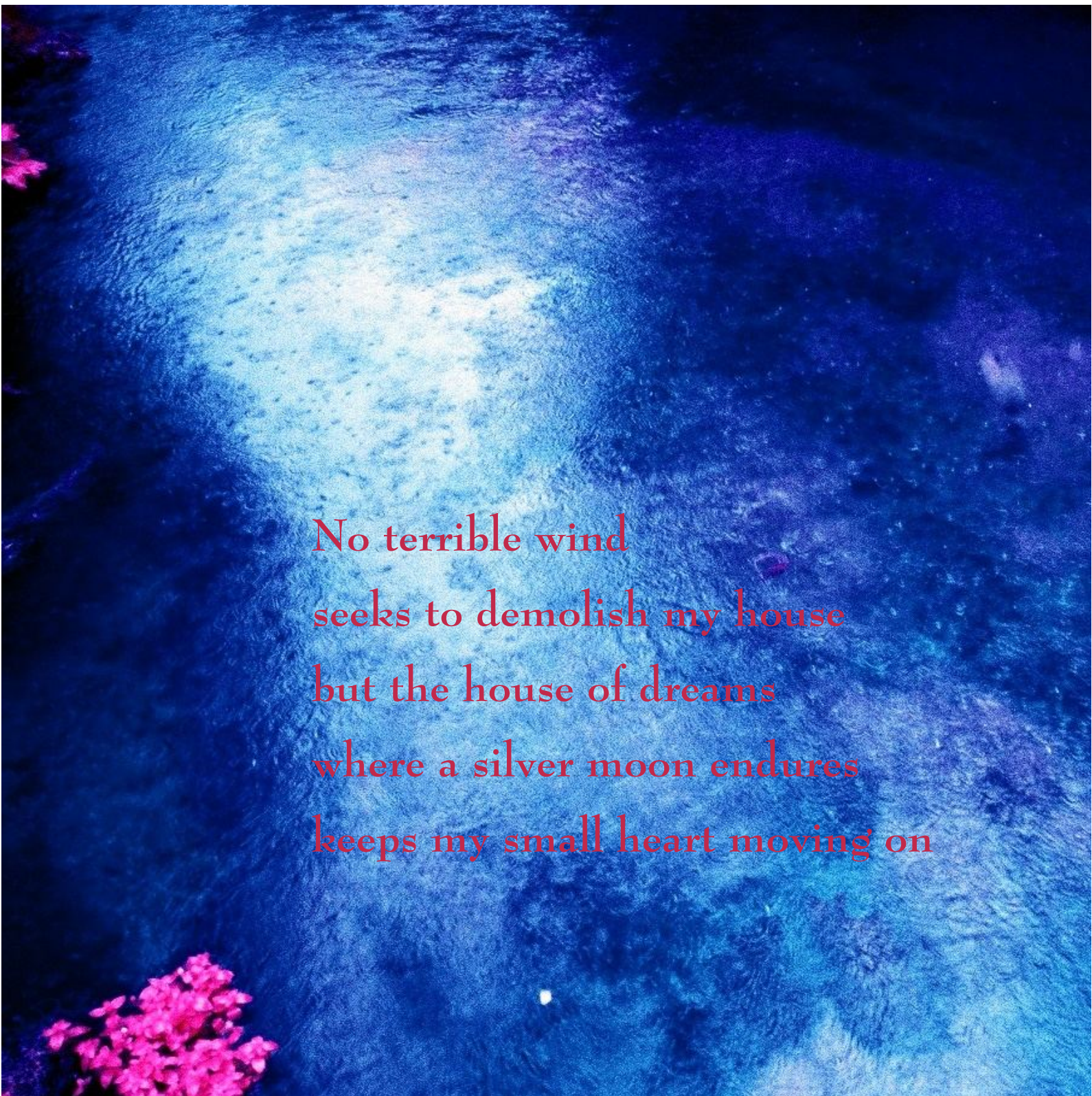
Although I offered nothing to them, the Buddhas made boundless offerings to me. A sage said to me “All Buddhism is good”. Another gave me a heavy charge, made light by his indication of my foolish nature. Despite all these blessings, my life has been ordinary, doubly deluded in the midst of unimpeded light.

Here is what I have realised. True practice is invisible. The heart gives away nothing by giving away everything. The tree at the foot of the garden knows just as well as the man downstairs. Sitting in the lotus position is wonderful and so is lying in the bath. Some imitate Buddha and some meet him face to face. Some have never heard of him and some call him incessantly. Buddha also enjoyed his bath. Every nembutsu is the first nembutsu. Every one is the last. After saying the last one, start again. Occasionally I bring Buddha to mind, but he is already thinking of me. All the ancestors had me in mind. That is why they drank tea and cut grass.



Shakyamuni was a great organiser and a clear speaker. His words were precise, delineating just what nobody can say – no more and no less. The end of suffering is spiritual maturity. Doing what is necessary we save all sentient beings. When all are saved there is still affliction, arising, harnessing and going forth, eight steps endlessly repeating.

Amida Nyorai, hear my prayer. Wayward as I am, may I yet be your peace, your love, your compassion, your joy, your equanimity. May I be so unknowingly so that I do not become proud. May the longing and loneliness of my heart turn to good account through your guiding grace, but do not let me see what you are doing.



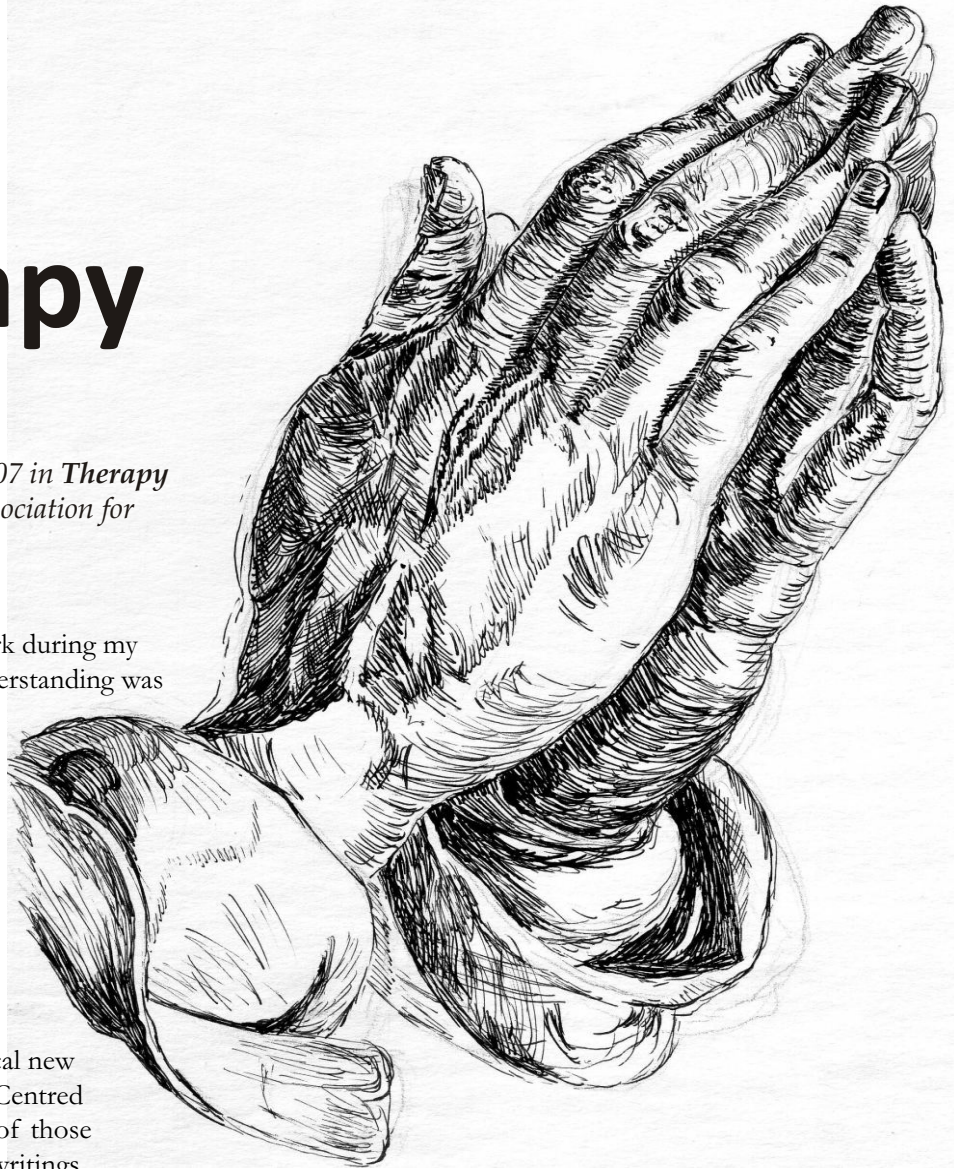
No terrible wind
seeks to demolish my house
but the house of dreams
where a silver moon endures
keeps my small heart moving on



Faith In Therapy

by
Michael Forster

*This article was first published in 2007 in **Therapy Today**, the journal of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy*



When I first encountered Carl Rogers' work during my training for the Christian ministry, my understanding was limited to the 'non-directive' principle. Rudimentary as this was, it underpinned my approach to ministry and chaplaincy, and led me later to choose the Person Centred Approach (PCA) as the principal theoretical model for my post-graduate training in counselling and psychotherapy. By this time, the PCA's powerful resonances with Christian spirituality were crying out for deeper exploration. I am now convinced that, far from being a radical new theory, the basic principles of the Person-Centred Approach were in the awareness of some of those primitive communities where the Biblical writings took shape. This has at least two far-reaching implications:

1. One need not be a religious believer to conclude that those principles are deeply embedded in creation and in some way fundamental to the way it works.
2. Two millennia of neurotically hiding behind carefully-cultivated self-concepts have caused the church to lose sight of its true identity as a person-centred community : an identity that it should urgently seek to rediscover.

Evidence for this is found not only in Christianity's traditional stories and images but indeed in its central principle the doctrine of the Incarnation which claims that in Jesus God entered fully into the world of humanity, without losing 'otherness'. This paradox of immanence and transcendence closely relates to the experience of person-centred indeed, many other therapists engaging empathically with a client while remaining clear about one's own selfhood, and suggests that the Christian concept of God is profoundly person-centred.

If we then examine the tapestry of the Judaeo-Christian scriptures through this lens, we quickly discover among its many and varied interweaving strands a startlingly person-centred thread.

Creation (Genesis 1)

In this opening story of the Bible, the creator uses pre-existing matter, described as 'formless and void'. The apparently unprepossessing raw material is accepted as it is, and then invited and enabled to become what it will: a deeply person-centred principle. Far from being imposed by an external, omnipotent God, life is invited to emerge *from within creation itself*:

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures . . ."

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind . . ."¹

So, the Creator puts faith in the material itself, trusting its internal resources for becoming. Moreover, the phrasing of the invitation clearly anticipates ongoing, self-determining growth:

'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth' (v 22).

This resonates compellingly with Rogers' thinking:

Individuals have within themselves vast resources.²

¹ Genesis 1:20,24

² Rogers C. R. 1980 *A Way of Being* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin) p. 115



That life first emerges from the waters is powerfully symbolic in terms of the role water plays in the Biblical writings. The primeval chaos-waters, although contained during creation, were perceived as constantly threatening to return. Psalmists used floods as an image of overwhelming suffering, and seafarers knew of the mythical sea monster Leviathan, whose lashing tail produced disastrous tidal waves. In this context, the invitation to the waters to bring forth their monsters is staggering in its symbolic power. As therapists we might find evocative the image of a client, within a therapeutic space, feeling able to let the life emerge from those seemingly murky depths. Increasing personal congruence may be characterised as allowing the monsters to surface, rather than remain submerged and create raging internal storms - monsters indeed that turn out to be vital to the process of becoming.

The Genesis image is of the Creator 'trusting the process'. Calling life to emerge unfettered from within is a risky business. In every serious therapeutic journey, the challenge both to therapist and client to trust the process carries awesome risks and possibilities.

This is one of the most fertile images in scripture for me, and could form a book in itself, but there are others to explore.

The Creative Journey

From Abraham to Jesus, the journey image runs through the Judaeo-Christian scriptures like a golden thread. The archetypal example, the book of Exodus, tells of the ancient Israelites' epic pilgrimage from slavery to freedom.

The early Hebrew nation on the move - searching, struggling, changing, growing - offers a powerful image of the human condition, longing for a place to 'be', but actually needing a place to 'become' and so often missing the vital point that the desert is that place. Doubtless many therapists and clients will recognise the disappointment of the Israelites who, having expected instant transformation of their lives, find themselves facing a hard and dangerous desert journey.

They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? . . . it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."³

As we experience anxiety and hostility in the therapy room, we might imagine the biblical writers smugly saying, 'You read it here first!'

The shared Judeo-Christian Bible is a rich source of similarly appropriate imagery, but let's not neglect the specifically Christian scriptures.

The Birth Narratives of Jesus

These 'Christmas' stories found at the beginning of Matthew's and Luke's gospel accounts need careful handling since not everything in them is helpful to therapists. However, their striking value is in challenging the traditional concepts of God who, in these images, renounces coercive power and comes not to be a rescuer but as a companion on the journey. There are compelling parallels with the therapist who has set aside, as far as practically possible, any power or superior understanding to enter the world of the client.

We all know of course that, in a different sense, a baby has enormous power; and it is precisely by renouncing power that the therapist becomes, paradoxically, a powerful presence. However, unlike the baby, therapists have the capacity as well as the responsibility to be aware of its potentiality for good and harm and not use it for the gratification of personal needs.

If the limitations are recognised, the image of creation's long-awaited 'rescuer' homeless in an alien and threatening environment, with nothing to offer but the power of his presence, is a potent internal resource for the therapist.

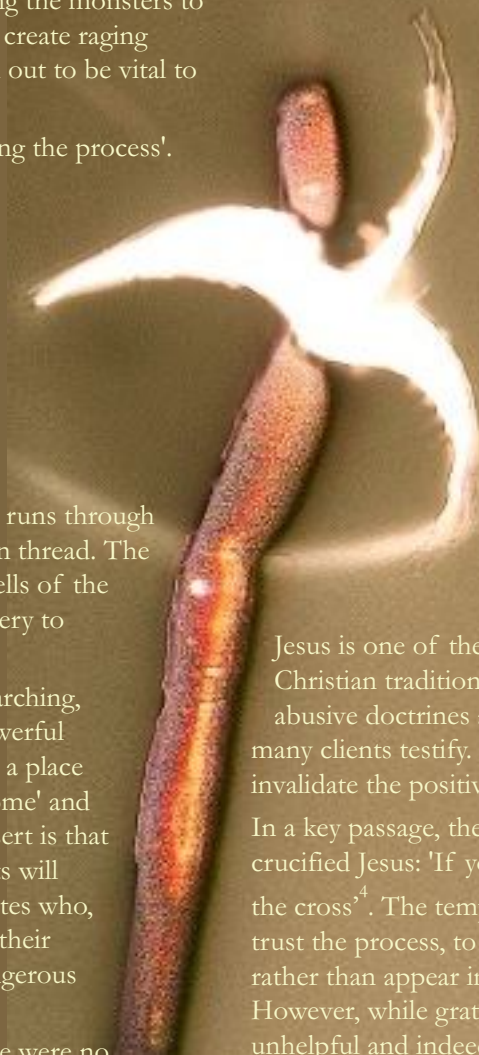
The Cross

Again, careful handling is called for: along with his birth, the crucifixion of

Jesus is one of the two most sentimentalised scenes in Christian tradition, and has given rise to some enormously abusive doctrines and practices, as the scars revealed by many clients testify. Acknowledging that, however, does not invalidate the positive insights.

In a key passage, the crowd watching the execution taunt the crucified Jesus: 'If you're really divine, then come down from the cross'.⁴ The temptation to find a quick fix, rather than trust the process, to demonstrate mastery of the situation rather than appear impotent, is familiar to therapists. However, while gratuitous suffering is clearly therapeutically unhelpful and indeed abusive, it is often important for me to recognise that if I can just hang on in that dreadfully painful place, resisting the temptation to 'come down', then real transformation is possible. I sometimes hold this image in my awareness in those apparently futile times when nothing seems to be happening but pain. I also, incidentally, recall Alan Frankland's saying during my training, 'It is impossible for two people to be together and nothing happening.'

Although expressing it in diverse ways, Christians share a belief that in those moments of apparent hopelessness on Calvary, something transformatory was happening: a helpful image to hold when sharing the client's darkest moments.





Holy Week

A week before his execution, Jesus is shown entering Jerusalem not on a warrior's charger but a peasant's donkey⁵ - with a clear subtextual message of power-renunciation, later reinforced by his words to Pontius Pilate, 'My kingship bears no relation to what this world understands by that term'⁶.

However, the crowd - wanting an old-fashioned rescuer - deploy their equivalent of flags and bunting and the psychological pressure is on. When by the end of the week it becomes abundantly clear that no rescue is imminent, the angry, disappointed crowd turns from veneration to vilification. Like the Exodus story, this offers a graphic image of the disappointment experienced by some clients. Christ resists the temptation to become what they want in order to court popularity, choosing rather to trust the process. The outcome, for those who also stay with it, is the dawning of new possibilities for life and wholeness. Significantly, it is the people who stay at the cross through the darkest moments who are first to witness the dawn of hope.⁷

These are but a few examples of the key principles and images that underpin my person-centred understanding of Christian spirituality. I believe there are radical implications for the churches.

The Church as a Therapeutic Person-Centred Community

The Christian church has many identities, some complementary and others in deadly conflict. We might characterise today's church as a human organism, with a highly conditioned set of differently-configured self-concepts, distorted by introjected conditions of worth and distanced from the core self, leading to cataclysmic internal conflicts and a profoundly externalised locus of evaluation.

Clearly, from an early point, the church aspired to a new kind of community with no barriers, distinctions or defences except its own integrity. The earliest generally accessible Christian writings are the letters of Paul who was deeply committed to this vision of the church:

In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!⁸

This ideal was powerfully symbolized in the community's regular shared meals, incorporating the ritual celebration now called Holy Communion, and when Paul found this to be contaminated by social divisions, his attack was scathing:

When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one

goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?⁹

That the concept of the church as a new model community was high in the awareness of the gospel writers, decades later, is also clear:

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you.¹⁰

The writer of the Acts of the Apostles describes the embryonic church's lifestyle:

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.¹¹

The theological case for the church as a person-centred community is compelling, both in terms of theory and experience.

In theory: if God is person-centred, then to be God-centred is to be person-centred, and the dualism that affects much Christian 'thinking' is fundamentally and tragically mistaken.

From experience: it is my privilege to spend time with some profoundly disturbed and disturbing people, and whether I am there as a therapist or as a chaplain the role is essentially similar: to offer consistently the Core Conditions and try to facilitate a creative internal process. Undeniably, I initially experience some people as deeply unattractive not only in their actions but in the self-concepts they present to the world. However, too often for it to be mere fancy, I glimpse emerging from the depths some hint of life and beauty: an experience I can only describe as an encounter with the Divine.

This experience is available to the Christian church, but is the church open to the experience?

Is it ready to challenge its self-concept as the defender of dogma, guardian of morals, curator of ancient monuments, and allow this deeper, more attractive but more vulnerable self to emerge? It's an awesome prospect. Where will the church find the therapy it needs to begin its own journey of becoming?

³ Exodus 14:11-12

⁴ Mark 15:32-32 & par ⁵ Matt 21 & par

⁶ John 18:36

⁷ Luke 23:55-24:12

⁸ Colossians 3:11

⁹ 1 Cor 11:22-23a

¹⁰ Matthew 20:25-26

¹¹ Acts 2:44,47

“Shin Buddhism has a long history of scholarship and academic learning — but that won’t be the focus of this book. I have always approached it: through story, anecdote, reflection — and humor.” Thus states Jeff Wilson in his introduction. As a Buddhist I enjoyed and appreciated what I read.

The book comprises some 80 chapters, most of which are one to two pages in length. There is a foreword by Mark and Taitetsu Unno, Shin priests, respected teachers and writers, which locates Jodo Shinshu aka Shin Buddhism in the context of Buddhist history, geography and core teachings. The foreword and the book itself serve as an excellent introduction to the core ideas and the feeling tone of Pureland Buddhism.

“As a stream within Mahayana Buddhism, Shin’s Pure Land Buddhist thought — as articulated by its founder Shinran Shonin — subscribes to the two-fold truth of form and emptiness, of words and the truth beyond words. This is regarded as a ‘two-fold’ truth rather than two separate truths — much like the two sides of the same coin. The truth of form and of words belongs to the world of appearances. Thus, when we see a tree, we see *green, willowy, shade, photosynthesis*, and so forth. These concepts all describe the truth of the form through words and concepts, and Shin — like Buddhism generally — does not deny this reality. And yet, there is a deeper truth that discloses itself only when one empties the mind of these ideas. That is the truth of emptiness, the oneness of reality that lies beyond categories. It is the flow of reality as it is beyond words, before conceptualization, things just as they are in their ‘thusness’ or ‘suchness’.” (from the foreword).

Wilson himself originally encountered Buddhism as a Zen practitioner and then turned to Shin Buddhism, the most popular form of Buddhism in Japan, but relatively unfamiliar in the western world. He is a contributing editor to Tricycle magazine and lives in Canada.

Early chapters are about the historical Buddha and Amida Buddha. One, entitled, ‘Once Upon a Time’ is a brief story of key life events of Siddhartha, concluding, “The Buddha did not discover something unique and special about himself. He did not become something different from other things or people. He awakened to the true nature of all things (himself included) as liberated suchness. This awakening came after he had been supported in innumerable ways by countless beings and conditions, and after he had ceased to strive after enlightenment and relaxed back into his natural state. As a much later Japanese Zen thinker named Dogen said, ‘To study the Buddha way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things.’”

Jeff Wilson brings in experiences from his own life as stories that contain a learning point. His fear of flying generates a realisation in response to the question “Why am I doing this? ... What is it about Pure Land Buddhism that leads me to step into this death trap?” that all his answers arise from gratitude toward all, and in appreciation of this when flying he says the Nembutsu (Namo-Amida-Butsu — the core practice for Shin Buddhists) under his breath — not as a prayer but as a statement of thanksgiving. He concludes, “Pure Land Buddhism teaches that the source of our suffering is clinging to ego-centricity and the deluded belief that one’s own individual power is itself fully sufficient to overcome the deep resentment, greed, and ignorance that mark human life. We are counselled to rely wholly on Other Power, the natural activity of all things to reveal our inner togetherness with all things. Flying plays right into this in a nastily direct way: unless you are the pilot, flying is a complete surrender, which is why so many folks prefer to drive even though it’s a far more dangerous manner of travel. Truly giving up self-power is virtually impossible, especially for many Americans. But on a plane you have to relinquish that power — relinquish it, or go crazy.”



This review was first published in...
Bhaktika is a minister in the Order of the Companions of Honour, Sheffield, UK and is active in community building. Professionally he is a charity organisation and leadership developer.

As someone from the UK I’m interested in how Buddhism is perceived in the USA. His book, which comes from Japan has been ‘Christianized’ and evidenced by pews, hymns, organs, and choirs. The reaction can either be bemused or critical. The accusation that Shin has become divorced from the culture, but this criticism is not general. The difference in reaction is a sort of Orientalism for observers. “People look at Judaism as a religion that expect it to look significantly different from Christianity. Buddhism is expected to look, sound, and feel like Christianity. At this level it seems that both anti-Buddhists and supporters of Buddhism need Buddhism as a religion. For Buddhists, Buddhism plays the role of the disenchanted with Christianity, it plays the role of the disenchanted with Christianity. Wilson’s family comes from Texas and the teaching point about Amida’s Vow. Appa and the Emancipation Proclamation legislation of 1863, nobody told the Texas slaves. It was in June 1865 — known as Juneteenth) that they were to announce and insist that slavery be abolished among the freed slaves. “We are just like

book. Instead, I'm just going to talk about Buddhism in the manner that regular Pure Land Buddhists have tradition. In my view, this is an accurate description of what is in the can. And as one who identifies as a Pureland



in Wilson's view on how Shin Buddhism is that the tradition that has been 'lost' in its form as practiced — as a minister. He observes that the tradition is lost. Examining the phenomenon, and divorced from its roots, Wilson observes that it is lost in Judaism, in response to US Christianity. His attribution for the loss of Buddhism on the part of American Buddhism is Western, monotheistic faith, and doesn't come from American Christianity. But it doesn't feel totally other. Indeed, on some level, and people with generally favourable views of some sort of ultimate other. For anti-Semitism, the demonic other; for people who see the role of the alluring, exotic other."

his personal history generates a sense of loss. Recently, when slavery was abolished, the federal government set slaves free on 1st January 1863, as more than a further two years (19 years) before an American general arrived to abolish it. Huge celebrations broke out in Texas among those poor men and women in Texas

before they heard the announcement. They were free, but they didn't know it (worse still, weren't allowed to know it, just as there are whole industries devoted to preventing us getting over our addiction and attachments). Then someone told them they were free, that they had been free all along, and when they trusted this amazing proclamation they felt the bonds fall off and disappear. Just so, Amida's Vow — Buddha's Emancipation Proclamation — freed us long ago, but we don't realise it, and we continue to toil and suffer in the endless cycle of samsara. Then, one day we hear about Amida's actions on our behalf and entrust ourselves to Amida's compassion, and we are filled with awe and gratitude."

One chapter is entitled 'Awakening the Buddha Without' in contrast to Lama Surya Das's book *Awakening the Buddha Within*, a popular teaching which Wilson describes as *a basic tenet of most Buddhist converts in America*. He quotes a passage from Lama Surya Das's book, "When you genuinely become you, a Buddha realises Buddhahood. You become a Buddha by actualizing your own original innate nature. This nature is primordially pure. This is your true nature, your natural mind. This innate Buddha-nature doesn't need to achieve enlightenment because it is always perfect, from the beginningless beginning. We only have to awaken to it. There is nothing more to seek or look for." Wilson comments this was for him an appealing vision but he now worries it can lead to misunderstanding of core Buddhist principles.

"My understanding of Buddhism is based on shunyata, often translated as 'emptiness'. Shunyata is the phenomenon of lack: we lack any 'original' nature, any 'innate' nature, any 'true' nature — heck, any 'nature' at all. All things are selfless, built on composite parts that come together temporarily and later disperse. There is no Buddha hiding inside somewhere waiting for the other parts to get out of the way."

One further example, a story that appeals to me. It concerns the Reverend Kenryu Tsuji, a famous Jodo Shinshu minister who played an important role in American and Canadian Shin Buddhism in the twentieth century. The other players are a Chinese-American professor described as a devout Buddhist with a somewhat conservative frame of mind towards Buddhism and a more philosophical Buddhist inclined to question things and sometimes unable to commit himself sufficiently. "One day, after the weekly service, the Chinese-American professor approached Reverend Tsuji and asked, 'Amida Buddha — is he real or a myth?' Reverend Tsuji smiled and said, 'Amida is a metaphor.' The professor went away in thought. The other man jumped up, pleased to hear a teaching that seemed to cement his personal prejudices. He walked over to Reverend Tsuji and said, 'So, it's true, Amida doesn't literally exist, he's just a metaphor.' Without a moment of hesitation, Reverend Tsuji told him, 'Oh no. Amida is very real.'" Wilson comments "Each man got a teaching that shook up his fossilized views, forcing him to consider other ways of approaching the tradition, and thus notice the way even notions of Amida are used to reinforce our egoistic desires."

By giving examples of Wilson's writing and story telling, my intention has been to illustrate the diversity of issues addressed and the vivid style that brings together contemporary concerns with traditional teachings. In my experience the book works well as one to dip into for a moment of uplift or insight (a 'Thought for the Day') and has proved useful for selecting short readings offered as part of a Buddhist service.

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OCTOBER 9 – 17 : BOUNDARIED SPACE: FORMALITY AND SPONTANEITY IN THE THERAPY RELATIONSHIP

Therapy relies upon a combination of formality and spontaneity. The situation in which a client talks to a stranger about personal matters in a time limited, rule bounded setting is highly formalised and yet the real substance of the meeting is an unplanned encounter between two people in which things unfold according to unpredictable psychological and inter-personal factors, and become the subject of shared examination. This combination of the planned with the unforeseen creates the tension which itself supports therapeutic process. It is a creative tension in which habitual patterns of reaction can be examined and new insights can be discovered.

October 9-10 CONTRACT AND ENCOUNTER

The therapeutic relationship relies upon the establishment of a particular set of conditions. Within the containing frame of the therapeutic contract, a meeting of two people occurs which has a particular intensity and purpose. The therapist has responsibility to establish the parameters of the relationship, but is working with the client to explore forces in their life which are as yet unknown. We will discuss the implications of contract within a "bambu" paradigm in which the unknown and the unforeseen are appreciated both for their potential and their dangers. This first weekend of our October course block will look at the way that the therapeutic frame is established through explicit and implicit contract and how this enables or impedes a real meeting between therapist and client.

October 11-14 INTENSITY WITHIN LIMITS

In the therapeutic encounter the level of intensity is a significant factor in enabling therapeutic process to occur. This four day experiential workshop will provide group experience, exercises and discussion exploring ways in which structure creates intensity. We will look at different sorts of intensity: the role of cognitive clarity and of emotional engagement as well as their pitfalls, putting these in the context of the core Buddhist concepts of wisdom and compassion, which are the two wings of the Buddhist



path. We will also examine the way that the values of intensity, energy and passion which are emphasised within Buddhist training transfer to the role of the therapist. We shall explore the paradox: limits liberate.

October 15 STRUCTURE AND SPACE

A day seminar exploring the significance of structure in the therapeutic relationship. In this theory day we will look at issues of assessment, therapeutic contract, and the maintenance of the therapeutic space in the light of Buddhist theory and practice. We will draw comparisons between the concepts of the therapy profession and those of Buddhist training to throw light on current practice issues. We shall reflect upon how difficulties that arise in relation to the therapeutic contract often reflect issues that clients have in relation to the structuring of their own lives. Therapeutic boundaries are not just a container for therapy, they are themselves a therapeutic variable.

October 16-17 THE REAL THERAPEUTIC CONTRACT A WEEKEND OF MICRO-SKILLS

This weekend workshop will include skills practice, demonstration, feedback, coaching, and discussion. Whilst therapists may create intentional contracts and clients may set therapeutic goals, the process which actually unfolds has complexities that often remain unconscious. In this process subtle negotiation takes place continually. The subtle unacknowledged structure of the therapy relationship is an essential dimension of the meaning creation process that enables clients to restructure their life purpose and come to terms with opportunities and frustrations at many different levels. By focusing on the juxtaposition of explicit and implicit meaning in the fine grain of communication between client and therapist we will explore ways in which what appears to be the case may often hide opposite forces and will look at the usefulness or otherwise of making these communications explicit.

TBH • Sat 9 - Sun 17 October • £60/day/public • £36/day/gen reg students
Rates/night • Single £35 • Twin £25 • Basic £15 • 10% off for all students
email: courses@amidatrust.com • phone: 0116.286.7476
more info: <http://www.buddhistpsychology.info/courseprospectustextonly.pdf>

Moving through Change – Embodiment & Somatic Practice With Sally Ridgway

The body, as home to our life's story and all our thoughts and feelings, is our starting place in these experiential workshops that focus on the role of embodiment for health and wellbeing. Somatic practice places emphasis on mindful attention on bodily experience through awareness practices, touch and movement explorations. The dialogue between body and mind is a powerful resource for self-reflection and insight, often revealing limiting mental constructions and habitual patterns of behaviour. As the wisdom of the body becomes more fully engaged so we learn to trust and depend upon the body's ability to support our truthful and compassionate expression.

ENDINGS November 20/21 2010

MIDDLE GROUND February 20/21 2011

BEGINNINGS April 17/18 2012

These workshops will explore the somatic experience of change through somatic practice and creative process.. Change is arguably one of the most demanding aspects of life. Whether it confronts us suddenly or if things have been brewing a long time, change can often be a time of crisis, fear and anxiety. It may also often lead to great potential for personal and spiritual rebirth. Participants will be supported to follow their own process in the context of the group.

Suitable for anyone with or without experience with an interest in a holistic approach to healing and imagination offering practical skills that may be applied in the arts, complementary health practice and therapies. Workshops may be taken as a series in which participants will find continuity and development of the theme. However weekends will also adequately stand alone for independent study if so desired.

TBH • £80 for one workshop • £180 for all three

Rates/night • Single £35 • Twin £25 • Basic £15 • 10% off for all students

email: courses@amidatrust.com • phone: 0116.286.7476

more info: <http://www.buddhistpsychology.info/courseprospectustextonly.pdf>

1-8 December 2010

The Bodhi Retreat

The Bodhi Retreat is held in commemoration of the Enlightenment of Shakyamuni and the founding of the Buddhist tradition. Always the most important and exuberant event in the Amida annual calendar, the Bodhi Retreat has grown in significance as the Amida-shu and the Amida Order have developed. Five years ago we inaugurated the practice of 24 hours of continuous chanting at the beginning of the retreat. This year we will once again hold three days of continuous chanting. This practice provides the opportunity for a complete immersion in the nembutsu. One can spend every waking hour in nembutsu practice. In addition to the continuous chanting practice, the Bodhi retreat is the time when we hold admission and renewal ceremonies in which people commit themselves at various levels within Amida-shu and the Amida Order. If you are a present or intending member of Amida-shu, do make every effort to attend. If you are contemplating an advance in your commitment, please arrange to discuss this ahead of the retreat with one of the teachers of the Order.



6th Living Buddhism Conference

“Culturally Engaged Buddhism”

12 - 15 May 2011 at The Buddhist House

Narborough Leicestershire UK

Culturally Engaged Buddhism in the narrow sense refers to Buddhist involvement in the arts, letters, and the social and cultural activities of society. In the broad sense it refers to Buddhism's mission to change the ethos of society by education, community building, resisting oppression, assisting the afflicted, and demonstrating an alternative way of life.

The Conference will take place over four days from the Thursday evening through to the Sunday afternoon. It will include plenary sessions, presentations of papers and workshops as well as discussion panels and open gatherings. There will be associated events during the five days before the conference. This provides a valuable opportunity to expand the value of your visit. In previous years the pre-conference has included some intense and hugely valuable themed discussions as well as more relaxed events such as visits to local places of interest and meetings with representatives of other faiths. Contact courses@amidatrust.com or phone +44(0)116.286.7476

- To reserve a place
- To submit a paper or propose a workshop

