



Prajnaparamita Transcendental Wisdom -- Universal Mind

For twenty-five years, I have struggled with the following questions “Why are we here?,” “Who am I really?,” “What is enlightenment?,” or “What is the true essence of Zen?” No one can answer these questions for us; each of us must resolve them for ourselves. Yet, one of the great benefits of being human is that, through the miracle of language, we don’t have to keep reinventing the wheel. After struggling with these questions for some time, we realize they are all really the same question asked in different ways. It is clear that the ancients really have had true insight into this matter. Each year of my own inquiry deepens my appreciation for the teachers who have shown the way. For some reason, at this time, I feel moved to write down an outline of my own thoughts; however, I know this is just my feeble attempt to share that which can not be adequately said.

The Heart Sutra, which is chanted worldwide by Mahayana Buddhists, is one of very few documents in the world that succinctly address some of the most subtle and profound truths of the universe. In a popular English translation of the Heart Sutra, it says that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas rely on Prajnaparamita (Transcendental Wisdom of the far shore) and therefore reach the “most supreme enlightenment.” So, just what is Transcendental Wisdom?

The Heart Sutra says that the core dynamic of the Universe lies in the following phrase, “Ga te ga te pa ra ga te para sam ga te, Bo dhi sva ha.” This can be roughly translated as “Bodhisattvas see the world as empty, empty, completely empty, and here now fully present.” And, just what does that mean?

Wherever there is deep inquiry, insight is sure to follow, and we realize that...

1) The Universe is alive with Mind. The Universe is not just a hot soup of random star dust, it is alive from the start. In

other than Mind; hence, we can accurately say there is No-Mind, as in nothing but Natural Activity, i.e., stars shine, planets orbit, water flows, trees stand, fish swim, “frog jumps in and water sounds.”

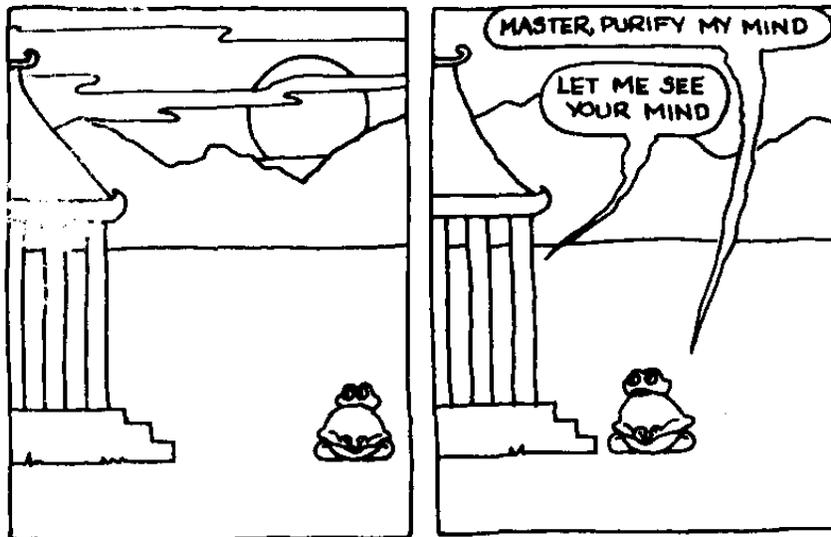
2) There is one Mind not many. Each human being has a unique sense of personal consciousness that we often confuse as evidence of a discrete separate identity. However, as our mind has the opportunity to open to the vastness of it all, we come to realize that our personal consciousness is just an extension of one universal Mind. It is like a wave on the ocean, each wave

has a temporary unique existence, but is never really separate from the ocean from which it arises, is sustained, and soon returns. When our mind is truly open, beyond the arbitrary boundaries of our own human condition, we are no longer limited by form and time.

3) Mind is fundamentally empty. Physicists tell us that all of matter is mostly empty space; moreover, they say that the small percentage of

“matter” that has some “substance” or mass is really made up of combinations of fundamental particles that are nothing more than bundles of energy. Hence, all of matter is an illusion. Our ancient teachers have always intuited this. Everything that seems solid is really the free-flowing energy of Mind that will soon transform into a new shape. When our personal minds are sufficiently open, we begin to see the world more as it really is. We begin to see everything as the transparent free-flowing fabric of Mind. No structure exists

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the East this Mind is also referred to as Dharma or Tao, in the West it is called Spirit or the Ground of Being. This Mind is not dependent on form (i.e., substance or physicality as we know it), but is not separate from it. Mind pervades everywhere and there is nothing that is not some manifestation of this Mind. This Mind is the animating fabric of the Universe from which all structures are composed. Mind is felt as a “good vibration” running through everything. Even to use the name “Mind” is to create a false impression that there could be something

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that does not mingle freely with all other "structures." Therefore, from an absolute perspective there can be no distinct independent structures, such as life or death, you and me; these are just names we give to different "aspects" of Mind. In addition, there is no "personality" directing Mind. The very idea of a discrete separate personality is a delusion propagated by our ignorance and the fear of the vastness.

4) Mind has many realms and particulars. There are an infinite number of forms that manifest as Mind; for a start, consider every rock, tree, star, or drop of rain. In addition, there are many rich currents in this ocean of oneness, i.e., we live in a multidimensional universe. Today's mathematical physicists postulate that eleven dimensions are necessary to understand all of "matter" as a manifestation of one unifying energy or force. This is six dimensions more than the three of space and one of time that we are most familiar with. How many dimensions are then needed to include the realms of "soul" or "spirit" as extensions of one unifying energy

or force? Even so, no matter how complex and diverse this universe is, it is nonetheless as whole as a single orb with two poles. The poles have been variously named relative and absolute, form and non-form, imminent and transcendent, personal and universal, yin and yang. These poles have no discrete identity of their own, they are just names given to opposite ends of one continuum. Like the universe itself, every so called aspect of the universe is at once "empty" and "present."

5) Buddhas and Bodhisattvas realize this Mind. Everything everywhere is some manifestation of Mind or "Buddha Nature;" yet, not everyone realizes or "awakens" deeply to this truth. Human Beings are complex enough to be aware not only of

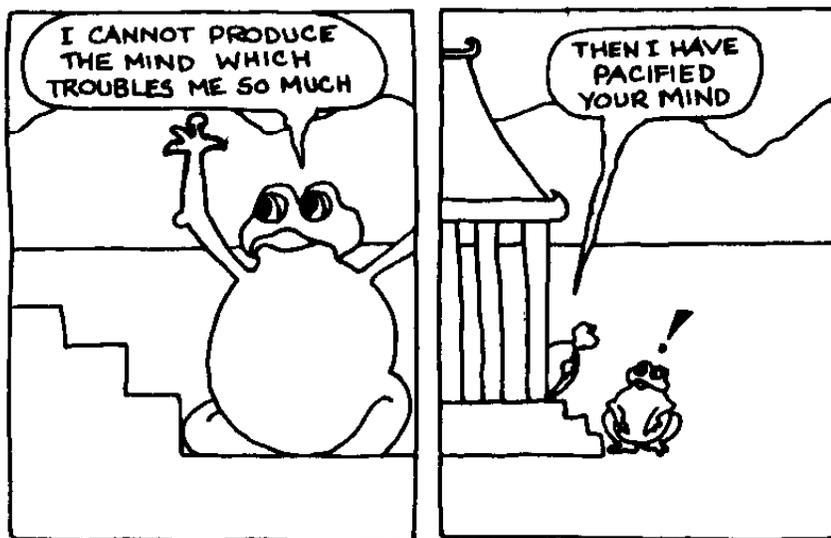
our surroundings, but of our presence in each unique moment of eternity. Moreover, we are complex enough to begin to be aware of our dreams and our communion with the "Collective Unconscious" or the even broader "Universal Mind." In fact, every human being is primarily a Buddha. It is simply true that the very complexity that allows us to realize the subtle profound Mind pervading everywhere is the same complexity that allows us to be so confused and conflicted. Whether or not we are as confused as the most heinous criminal, or clear as the greatest of sages, each condition is still just a manifestation of Mind.

To be confused is to be a confused Buddha. Yet everyone, no matter how con-

ferences; furthermore, it provides a laboratory where we can experiment with how to surf or sail on the waves of this ocean of reality.

When Mind is realized, we experience the deep harmony of *samadhi*. We realize we have always been one with the continuum from the personal to the universal, and we feel fresh, free and fearless (i.e., not possessed by our fears). We can not help but to truly care, not just for ourselves, but for everyone and everything. It is through us, and creatures like us, that compassion is directly manifested in the universe. We are that aspect of the universe that can care.

These musings have been written down in different ways many times before, and will be written many times more. The words or their meanings are really not very important, but being informed by the experience that gives rise them, and acting from that experience, may be said to be something. Even with the experience that gives rise to the words, they are, at most, a finger pointing at the moon. These words are offered only as a departure point, with the hope that they are not too distracting from the perpetual task of dedicated training and practice.



fused or clear, is naturally unfolding towards expanded awareness. This is the nature of the human condition, and more broadly the very nature of the universe. It is possible to learn how to process our confusion and fear into strength and maturity. Over the course of time, we must learn to blend with rather than run from or defeat our own confusion, doubt and fear.

Zen practice facilitates our ability to have peace of mind through the widest spectrum of experience. Through practice we acquire simple direct skills on how to be fully present to the moment at hand, and this, in turn, stimulates the natural unfolding of our true potential. Zen training produces a kind of heat that burns through our self-insulating ego cocoon of delusions and pref-

With gassho,

Genjo Marinello

