

# Mirror Flower Water Moon

FALL/WINTER 2018

鏡花水月



DHARMA REALM  
BUDDHIST UNIVERSITY

Dearest readers:

When you hear the word “transformation,” what do you think of? Does your mind go to time lapse videos of flowers emerging from sprouts, or contemplate how a wiggling caterpillar becomes a butterfly as it breaks open its chrysalis?

Transformation. This word elicits an expectation of grandiose change, in which the present state of being resembles nothing of what it did in the past. If a mirror were placed in front of the butterfly, would it still recognize itself as once a caterpillar?

Within the human process, transformation can be subtle, bitter, sweet, or jarring. There is no definition of what transformation looks like. It’s more of a feeling. Transformation can be as simple as a lesson learned and put into practice. Its catalyst can be as simple as a change in perspective, or a clarity of mind. What is important about transformation is not necessarily what prompts it, but the new understanding that it brings forth.

“Any progress is progress.” This means that no matter the hardships, the repeating of mistakes, or the discomfort, there is a sentiment to “Keep moving forward.” Growth and improvements are happening, even amidst frustration. Transformation often has a component of self-reassurance and self-forgiveness.

Our kind contributors have wondrously helped us characterize the spirit of transformation through their own experiences and works. With some, transformation occurs as a quiet vow to partake in something new. With others, a teacher or experience aids in sparking a realization. No matter the time, place, or experiencer, transformation is, in its own way, transcendent of what once was. With that, we’ll leave you to immerse yourself in the transformations from our community members.

As always, the editing team wishes you the best in everything you do!

*Your editing team*

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# Ceremonies & Barbarians

Mr. Eggplant

Ceremonies, ceremonies, ceremonies. The City of Ten Thousand Ceremonies. And I don't mean this in a bad way, but you have to understand, I am a Westerner, okay? A barbarian. I came here some years ago, my head full of pop Zen, thinking it was the best thing I had put my eyes on and feeling like I was very clever, and next thing you know I'm in the Buddha hall at four in the morning trying to read pinyin at 300 BPM. That wasn't the kind of stuff D. T. Suzuki wrote about in his books.

Yet it was, it had to be the best thing ever, because, oh my God, the Venerable Master. I read about him and his virtue and I cried because he

Disciples said that the Master once told him that "if you cultivate, you will make progress, even if you don't want to; and, if you don't cultivate, you won't make progress, no matter how much you want to."

was not in his physical form anymore—which was not his real form anyway because he was a sage—but don't get all clever on me or I won't be able to go where I want to go. I haven't even started yet.

Anyway, back when I was going to restart college after dropping out the first time, a part of me awoke, as unexpectedly as a dragon suddenly hatching from one of the stones you put in your garden next to the violets because you thought the egg shape was very decorative. This new dragon-being in my head told me that sometimes, to get stuff done, you just have to shut up and put up with hardship (I was a bit of a wimp at that time). So that's the attitude I had when I came to the City. I was not going to be so easily deterred. If doing Buddhism meant going to ceremonies, so be it.

It wasn't easy at first. Especially the 4 a.m. one. One time I even made a vow, and wrote on the whiteboard of my annex, that for the following week I would pay one hundred dollars to anybody who went to a morning or evening ceremony and did not see me there. That week I didn't miss a single one. But don't get me wrong, not all of it was bad—far from it. Many times, ceremonies were incredibly joyous, like light pouring from above, and I'm sure that by doing them, many things inside me began to heal. But hey, the know-it-all barbarian in me wasn't going to give in so easily. Anyway, that was some years ago, and I've changed, and I've done more ceremonies, and, for the most part, I have come to terms with them and with waking up at 4 a.m. But on the bad days there's still resistance. It must be my karmic obstacles.

That day was a so-so one, and so there was resistance. It's hopeless, said the voice, as my mouth went "Naaaah." I'm hopeless. "Mwoooo." I've made so many mistakes. "Aaaaah-aah." I have so much bad karma. "Meeee-eeeh." Cultivation is too difficult. "Twooooo-ooh." I'll never make it. "Ooooooh." So incredibly difficult. "Oo-ooh-fwoooo." It's impossible and I'm hopeless. And so on.

Dark, depressive yin energy (note the Daoist jargon). I guess it's all the bad karma, the guilt, and the feeling of having failed myself for all the mistakes in the past. One day, this thing creeps in and the next thing I know, I'm struggling to find meaning in life and I get all needy and insecure. The light becomes dimmed. A large, black duck takes hold of the pond and I can't shoo it away.

But that was the whole point of Buddhism. At least a big part in the beginning. It wasn't exactly the hyperabundance of happiness in my life that made me want to leave everything and go live in a monastery. No, I wanted to learn how to stop feeling miserable. And that's why, I reminded myself, I'm now standing here, trying to hit the right notes.

And then, as I struggled to find meaning in what I was doing, I thought about this story that the Venerable Master told on numerous occasions: Once, there was a farmer who was really impatient because he thought his plants were growing too slowly. So, one night, he went out and pulled every bud up a few inches. The next day, all of his precious crops had died. I also remembered how

Ajahn Chah says that practicing the Dharma is like growing peppers: once you water and fertilize them, you just let the plants grow at their own rate; how fast they grow is beyond your control. In other words, if you try to force it, it won't work. You just have to cultivate without being greedy for results. And I also recalled that one of the senior disciples said that the Master once told him that "if you cultivate, you will make progress, even if you don't want to; and, if you don't cultivate, you won't make progress, no matter how much you want to." And so, I made an effort to just focus on the recitation and on visualizing Amitabha Buddha, standing above me and smiling with infinite kindness, and to shift my attention from the negative feelings I was having and from wondering when they were going to stop.

And then something clicked.

It came from inside, like a shiny submarine surfacing on a dark lake. It was nurtured, I'm sure, by the recitation. I was suddenly able to see it, as if I had taken a step back that allowed me to get some perspective. Yes, my mistakes, my flaws, my limitations, they were all there; but that wasn't all. Here I was, at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, reciting the Buddha's name. That wasn't too bad. Actually, it was pretty good. And I felt like it was okay. Everything was okay. Whatever my life had been so far, it couldn't be so terrible if this is where it had led. And by doing this, I was changing it for the better, slowly but surely. Amitufo: watering. Amitufo: fertilizing. And then one of the many living beings inside of me told the others, "We're in good hands now," and there was as if a murmur of assent, and some of the ones that had been anxious relaxed, along with the knot in my stomach and the weight on my shoulders. I probably smiled a little, but I don't really remember.

Amitufo.





The spiral song our mother sings you learn,  
and with our Father's lead you move in turn.  
Adhering to him seeking to discern,  
that secret cause that begets thy seed to yearn.

He teaches thee about the mystery,  
the secret cause we wish to be aware.  
Imploring now I do so plea to thee,  
I seek an answer to the riddle rare.

Ye seek a choice of love, I grant to thee.  
And now, forgetting all that came before,  
amid myself so wishing I may see,  
to thee I do so once again implore.

O God do make thyself be known to me.  
Bestow thy love upon thy child's heart n'see.

# What is Success?

Bhikshu Jin Chuan

*This is the third of a series of posts reflecting on how I found myself drawn to monasticism despite (or perhaps because of) my upbringing in the Bay Area and providing insight into how the relatively secular environment in which I grew up prompted me to look deeper into the meaning of life.*

My mom's look of confusion and unhappiness upon hearing about my monastic aspirations had its reasons. She would often tell me, "You are too idealistic! How are you going to support yourself?" And when I tried to explain to her that being a monastic was actually really practical, she would only get more upset. And yet was there any more lasting profession in history? Talk about job security! And what was even better was that no one else wanted to do it, so there was no competition.

Finding that my reasoning and arguments were of no use, I decided to keep quiet. But, in my heart, I strengthened my resolve to become a monastic. The rebellious, independent, self-righteous kid had decided what he wanted to do, and he was going to get his way. Stubbornness runs in my family.

My mom began to regret supporting my interest in religions. She had bought me a NIV Student's Bible from which I read a passage almost every night. She supported my regular attendance at Christian Fellowship gatherings. And she had given me books on Buddhism which she had gotten from a friend (which is how I learned about Ajahn Sumedho).

She began questioning the way she had brought me up, saying she thought she might have made the mistake of giving me too much freedom. She would tell me how one of my relatives would

critically say to her: "你真麼可以讓他這樣之呢? 他活在他自己的世界裡" (How can you let him be like this? He's living in his own world!). To which she would add her words: "Why can't you be normal!"

("What's normal?" was my immediate response—and, I quickly learned, the wrong response!)

I was a bit of an embarrassment among her friends. When they got together to talk about their kids, other parents would talk about how this kid was successful in doing this and that one in doing that—and then there I was: the one who didn't seem to be "successful" in anything.

I had a good answer for that though, one straight from Merton:

*A few years ago a man was compiling a book entitled Success wrote and asked me to contribute a statement on how I got to be a success. I replied indignantly that I was not able to consider myself a success in any terms that had a meaning to me. I swore I had spent my life strenuously avoiding success. If it so happened that I had once written a best seller, this was a pure accident, due to inattention and naïveté, and I would take very good care never to do the same again. If I had a message to my contemporaries, I said, it was surely this: Be anything you like, be madmen, drunks, and bastards of every shape and form, but at all costs avoid one thing: success. I heard no more from him and I am not aware that my reply was published with the other testimonials...*

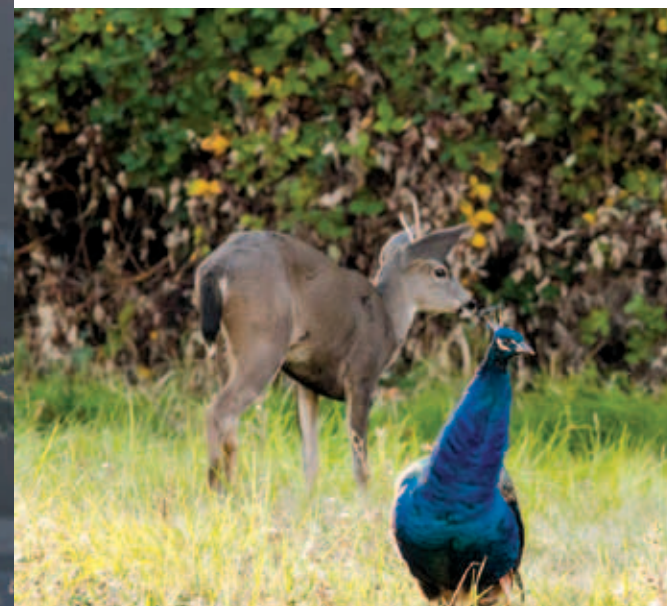
*What I am saying is this: the score is not what matters. Life does not have to*



*be regarded as a game in which scores are kept and somebody wins. If you are too intent on winning, you will never enjoy playing. If you are too obsessed with success, you will forget to live. If you have learned only how to be a success, your life has probably been wasted.*  
—Learning to Live, 11-12

To be honest, I was a bit self-righteous, because I could see no point in what the world called “success.” Looking around at the “successful” people around me, I noticed how many of them were unhappy. What does “success” even mean? A big house? The perfect family? Running a successful business and making a lot of money? I didn’t want any of those things. Instead, I wanted to be true to myself and what I believed in. Safe to say, I was (and still am) pretty idealistic.

What I am saying is this: the score is not what matters. Life does not have to be regarded as a game in which scores are kept and somebody wins.







# Lost in Translation

Terri Nicholson

Other people in the monastery had more lofty reasons for wanting to learn Chinese. They wanted to bring the Master's teaching to the West and translate the Buddhist canon into English. I wanted to help with those things too, but more pressing for me, I wanted to know what was so funny. Our teacher had an outrageous sense of humor, even in English, but those who understood Chinese would be laughing uproariously, and even after hearing the translation, I'd still be wondering what the joke was.

One afternoon, I sat down with the Chinese text the Master was explaining and my brand-new *Matthew's Chinese-English Dictionary*. With a month or two of Chinese 101 under my belt and a beginner's zeal, I was determined to look up all the characters I didn't recognize—which was most of them—before evening lecture.

This wasn't as straightforward as it sounds. Chinese is an ideographic language. Each character represents one sound or syllable, so arranging them in alphabetical order isn't actually possible. Each character has a portion called the radical, which usually relates to its meaning. The other part has to do with pronunciation. Chinese dictionaries are organized according to these 214 radicals. Once you figure out which part is the radical, you then count how many more brush strokes it takes to write it and then—oh, never mind. Just take my word for it. It's not easy to find a Chinese character in the dictionary.

To make it "easier" for non-native speakers to pronounce Chinese characters, two linguistic scholars, Mr. Wade and Mr. Giles, came up with a system they called "Romanization," or writing Chinese characters using our alphabet. Let's not get into what it had to do with the Romans. This is complicated enough already.

My Matthew's dictionary was set up in alphabetical order using the Wade-Giles system of Romanization. Once again, this is not as helpful as it sounds. There are hundreds of characters with different meanings, all Romanized the same way, kind of like homonyms in English, except that different intonations create different meanings. Then there are those that sound *almost* the same, like *shu* and *hsu*. I still remember the smirk on my Chinese teacher's face when I insisted one of the characters in the passage he'd assigned for homework was not in the dictionary.

Once you do find the character, though, hopefully the first definition will be the one you're looking for. Unfortunately, characters are most often used in combination and then usually mean something entirely different. For example, *ta tso* (打坐), literally "hit the seat," means to meditate, and *ta tzu* (打字), "hit the character," means to type. All of this is more than a bit daunting for a beginner.

The first two characters in the text for that evening's lecture were *erh shih* (爾時). When I finally found the character *erh* (爾) in my dictionary, the definition said, "*you, yours*." It further elaborated, "Dr. Hu Shih explains it as the possessive or plural of address." Clear as mud, right? The next character in the text, *shih* (時), means "*season, time or period*."

"We're all here so you can learn."



I was sitting at a table in the dining hall, puzzling over how the text could begin with “your time,” when the Master came up behind me.

“What doing?” he asked.

Seeming to materialize out of nowhere when one was least expecting it was one of his many skills as a Buddhist Master. Sometimes it elicited a sigh of relief: rescue had arrived. At other times, it felt more like, *uh-oh, busted again*. People often asked the Master why he didn’t learn to use English. He usually said it was because he wanted his disciples to learn Chinese, but he actually understood English quite well. He had a unique way of speaking, though. The first time he spoke to me in English, I turned to someone for a translation.

He had a strong Chinese accent and translated his thoughts into English using Chinese sentence structure. I came to love the way it sounded. If you were helping him carry a table and he wanted you to lay it on its side, he might say, “Put it sleeping.” He said our goal in studying Buddhism was to “Go to enlightenment,” and if he wondered what you were up to, he might say, “What doing?” like he did the day I was struggling with the Chinese dictionary.

“I’m looking up the characters for tonight’s lecture,” I told him, hastily putting my palms together.

He laughed. “You find all words, still not know meaning.” He patted my head and moved on. At lecture that evening, I found out that “*erh shih*” means “at that time” or “when.”

Sometime later, I was doing my Chinese homework when one of the monks asked me to serve tea to the Master and his guests. Feeling honored to be entrusted with this task, I took the tray and began my ascent to the third floor. “Serve Shrfu first,” he called after me. *Shrfu* is what disciples call their teacher. *Shr* means teacher and *fu* means father.

When I entered the guest room, I found the Master seated at a table with two Chinese nuns. He motioned me forward with the tea. My Chinese was still rudimentary and my understanding of Chinese etiquette, let alone Buddhist monastery etiquette, was non-existent. Unfortunately, so was my awareness of that fact. I dutifully poured tea for the Master and then offered tea to the two nuns. Both of them covered their cups with their hands, shook their heads, and

said, “No, thank you,” in Chinese. So, I didn’t give them any.

The Master immediately jumped in, as if averting disaster. “*Ta bu dung*. She doesn’t understand.”

But I did. They’d said they didn’t want any. “*Wo dung*,” I insisted. I do understand what they said.

The Master then picked up the teapot, poured tea in each of the nun’s cups, and dismissed me. I was mystified, but nothing else was ever said about it. However, I was not asked to serve tea to the Master and his guests again.

Many years later, I learned that the Chinese almost always refuse food or drink when it is offered to them. According to Chinese etiquette, the host continues to insist until the person acquiesces. I have noticed that a guest usually still refuses to drink the tea until it is almost time to leave and the tea is no longer hot. I may still not have any of that right, since it would be the height of rudeness to tell me that I’d gotten it wrong,

When the Master lectured, those who knew enough Chinese took turns translating. None of us were completely fluent. The lecture was recorded on an ancient reel-to-reel tape recorder, then rewound for the translator, whose earphones were plugged into the recorder. Anyone who had earphones could plug in and listen as the lecture was being translated into English. Once I started doing this, my Chinese improved more quickly, and after a year or so, I understood most of what the Master said, even the jokes.

The Master noticed and suggested I join the translators’ rotation. A few days later, there I was, sitting below and to the right of the Master, who lectured from a raised platform called the High Seat. He leaned over toward me, smiling his thousand-watt smile. “Are you scared?”

The lecture hall was quite full and I was terrified. “Yes,” I answered in Chinese. Sweat trickled down my back, even though the unheated, mattress-factory-turned-Buddha-Hall, affectionately called “the icebox,” was quite chilly.

He smiled again. “Don’t worry. We’re all just here so you can learn.”

Still, I was nervous. Whenever it was my turn, the senior American nun assigned to help me sat, not next to me, but across the aisle, and made it quite clear she wouldn’t baby me.

Sometimes I got so anxious that even when she did provide a word I didn’t know, I couldn’t hear her. I was convinced she was doing it on purpose. She suggested I get my hearing tested. I did. There was nothing wrong with my hearing.

On the days my turn went smoothly, I was elated and my confidence soared. On other days, the translator’s chair became the hot seat. Perhaps the Master quoted ancient poetry, selections from *The Book of Changes*, or some other classical text. He had them all memorized. It was like asking a beginning English speaker to translate Shakespeare or Chaucer. On those nights, I emerged exhausted and demoralized. I felt like a bumbling idiot, my faults clear for everyone to see. Sometimes I’d get so flustered, the Master gave up and translated for himself. He certainly didn’t *need* me to translate for him.

By the next summer, my Chinese had improved, but not as much as I’d thought. The Master was invited to conduct a meditation session on a farm near Reedsport, and many of us went with him. The session, held under a tent with open sides, alternated walking while reciting the Buddha’s name with silent meditation. In addition to our community, about 30 young people attended. Each afternoon and evening, the Master gave instructional talks. When my turn

came to translate, I was feeling pretty special. I knew Chinese and was a translator for the Master.

He began telling a story\* I knew quite well. This was going to be easy. I picked up the earphones and began to translate: “Once there was a young man who wanted to shave his head and become a monk, but the other monks wouldn’t have him because he was too stupid.”

The Master looked over at me sternly. “No, that’s not right.” He turned to one of the nuns who then retranslated. “There was a young man who wished to shave his head and become a monk,” she said. “But the other monks wouldn’t have him because he was too stupid.”

The Master smiled and nodded.

I tried again. “When they tried to teach him to recite ‘Homage to the Buddha,’ if he remembered ‘Homage,’ he forgot ‘Buddha.’ If he remembered ‘Buddha,’ he forgot ‘Homage.’”

“No, no, no. That’s not right,” the Master insisted. Again, he looked to someone else to translate.

Another translator corrected me. “They tried to teach him to recite the Buddha’s name, but if he remembered ‘Homage,’ he forgot ‘Buddha,’ and if he remembered how to recite ‘Buddha,’ he forgot how to recite ‘Homage’.”

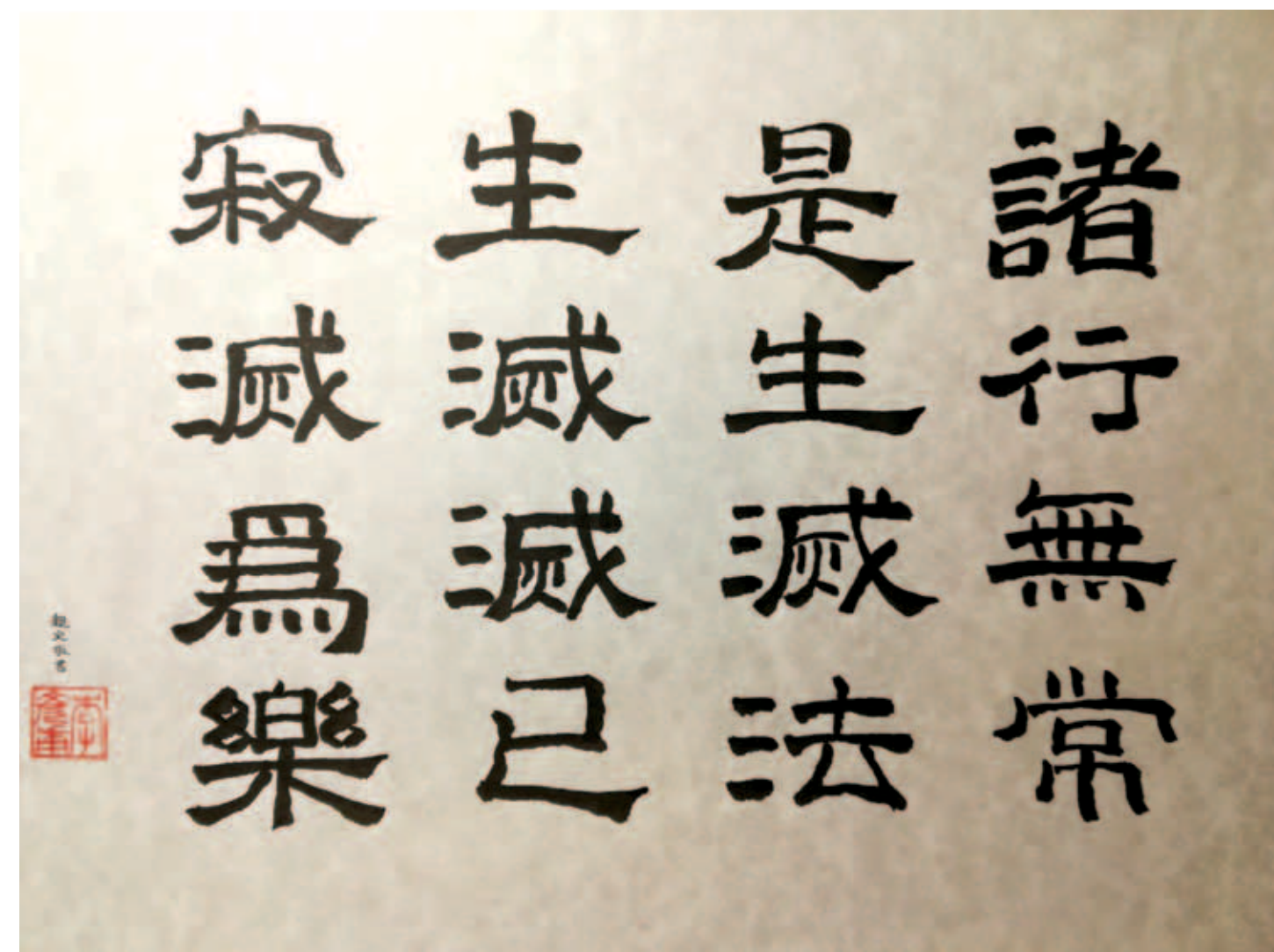
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Calligraphy by Yenfu Li



Calligraphy by Yenfu Li

# Struggles in San Francisco

Oldie but Goodie

Many of us had entered the 1968 Shurangama Summer Session without any realization whatsoever of what was about to happen. By the time the session ended, many of us found our lives had changed forever! We had formally become Buddhists by taking refuge with the Triple Jewel; we had received the Five Precepts and the Bodhisattva Precepts; and more than a handful of us were quitting our jobs, uprooting ourselves entirely, and moving to San Francisco so we could listen to the Sutras, learn the Dharma, practice Buddhism, and be near an incredible teacher.

But such a move is not easy for young adults to make. Settling in a new place—especially San Francisco with its limited space and high cost of living—was difficult. We faced lots of troubling things. It was at about that time that the Master wrote this verse titled San Fan Shi, which is the way San Francisco is pronounced in Mandarin. He was always a little tongue in cheek...

Here is the verse, which lends itself to many translations, a few of which are shown here as well.

三煩事

sān fán shì \*

無布難裁寒冷煩

wú bù nán cái hán lěng fán

無米難炊饑餓煩

wú mǐ nán chuī jī è fán

無房難住風雨煩

wú fáng nán zhù fēng yǔ fán

終日徒呼無難煩

zhōng rì tú hū wú nán fán

—  
\* san fan shi is the Chinese pronunciation of San Francisco.

## Such Futile Struggles!

(note: English title keeps the three initial consonants of the pin yin. A nod to San Francisco.)

Without cloth to keep out cold, we struggle.

Without food to stave off hunger, we struggle.

Without shelter from the wind, we struggle.

All day long we strive in vain to resolve those struggles!

## A Threefold Hassle

It's a hassle to be without clothing when we're cold.

It's a hassle to be without food when we're hungry.

It's a hassle to be without shelter when it's stormy.

It's a perpetual struggle to avoid these hassles.

## Three Bothersome Things

What a bother cold is when we don't have clothes.

What a bother hungry is when we don't have food.

What a bother the weather is when we don't have shelter.

How hard we work every day to avoid being bothered!

## Three Vexing Matters

It is vexing not to have clothes to keep out the cold.

It is vexing not to have food to prevent hunger.

It is vexing not to have a house to provide shelter.

All day long we try to avoid these vexing matters.

## A Triple Nuisance

When we lack clothes, cold is a nuisance.

When we lack food, hunger is a nuisance.

When we lack shelter, the weather is a nuisance.

We are forever trying to avoid these nuisances!

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## A Triple Nuisance

When we lack clothes, cold is a nuisance.

When we lack food, hunger is a nuisance.

When we lack shelter, the weather is a nuisance.

We are forever trying to avoid these nuisances!





## *Heart-deliverance*

Jessica Samuels

How do we grow best, and in what ways can we stimulate positive change in ourselves?

Related: How can we support each other in positive transformation?

Hopefully part of what we do with each other is treat each other with care. We're careful about how we talk to one another, and careful about what we say. Also, ideally we talk directly to each other, rather than about each other, and when we do that, we do it with genuine care and concern. These aren't easy skills.

Living and working in community, let's hope we can do the best we can in how we treat each other, and also in how we go about supporting each other to transform into better, kinder, wiser human beings. Above all, let's try to do no harm.

*"...the heart-deliverance of loving-kindness is the escape from ill-will."*

*—Digha Nikaya*

*"Be impeccable with your word.  
Don't take anything personally.  
Don't make assumptions.  
Always do your best.  
Learn to listen."*

*The Five Agreements*

*—Don Miguel Ruiz*

*"Love is patient, is kind. It does not envy others or brag of itself. It is not swollen with self. It is not wayward or grasping. It does not flare with anger, nor harbor a grudge....Three things matter – believing, hoping, and loving. But supreme is a loving."*

*—St. Paul*

*1 Corinthians  
13:1–13*





## THE QUESTION OF THE NON-LOVER IN PLATO'S PHAEDRUS

Warren Chew

In The Phaedrus, Socrates' discourse on the soul addresses immortality, eros, and the conflict between our base desires and the pursuit of truth. These elements are weaved together by the argument that true knowledge nurtures the soul and brings happiness to our realities. Although Socrates speaks to an important part of ourselves lead by hope, passion, and fulfillment, he disregards ambitions related to the material world and considers them to be ignorant, depraved, and purposeless. From a philosophical perspective, Socrates' view on the soul and its communion with knowledge and eros is a beautiful discourse, but it lacks nuance when we try to apply it to the hardships rooted in our material reality. He argues for the lover, who seeks to harmonize passion for his beloved and quell emotional turmoil with knowledge, or philosophy. The coldness of the non-lover is perceived to be a vulgar, benefit-based relationship with the world. Although we strive to be the lover in our pursuit of happiness, the non-lover triumphs as a result of the cost-benefit society we live in.

Socrates' depiction of the soul relies on the concept of an immortal and self-moving identity. He argues that the nature of the soul is based on our freedom to rise towards goodness or settle for degeneracy. But in our efforts to live realistically, we relinquish that freedom and enter a more complex and morally grey territory. Socrates establishes the soul's immortality at the beginning of his argument: "The soul through all her being is immortal, for that which is ever in motion is immortal; but that which moves another and is moved by another, in ceasing to move ceases also to live."<sup>1</sup> In the context of this passage, "motion" is our capacity to effect change in ourselves and the world around us. It stems from the

1. Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*, translated by B. Jowett, (Oxford University Press, 1892), 451.

idea that we are masters of ourselves, and that the constant impact we have on each other is an untraceable momentum that begets immortality. This momentum never “ceases to move”, and we remain alive through the consequences of our actions. Socrates puts forth a strong stance on freedom of will over the determinism of our environment. In our daily lives, we encounter many choices along the lines of the good and evil that Socrates emphasizes. But the overarching effects that culture and the environment have on us force us to abandon ideas of morality and enduring identities. The immediacy of reality comes in the form of external factors outside of our control, such as mental illness, parental abuse, poverty, and societal standards. The way we react towards this suffering is a testament to the side of human nature that Socrates doesn’t address—survival. The non-lover is an embodiment of our will to survive, and the lover’s attachment to ideals dies quickly in the presence of adversity. Suffering that is brought on by the environment remains inescapable and unbiased. Our “motion” is limited to the society we grow up in, and the suffering it deals out elicits the non-lover in our psyche.

The lover and non-lover is raised to a platform beyond relationships in Socrates’ discourse. He delves further into how love manifests itself in our lives and he introduces to us the concept of eros. Lysias’ speech is comparatively shallow and of a narrower scope, but his understanding of the lover and non-lover resonates closer to reality. According to Lysias, lovers only remain while their passions exists, whereas non-lovers are free from compulsion because they reap the benefits of their relationship.<sup>2</sup> In addition to freedom, the “non-lover is more his own master”<sup>3</sup> and bases their success in love through the “reward of their merit.”<sup>4</sup> Eros is a concept that looks down on this seemingly cold and detached view. Socrates describes eros as a part of our soul that longs for “knowledge absolute in existence absolute.”<sup>5</sup> Eros is not love in the traditional sense like that of the lover and non-lover. It is a force that compels us to find meaning and truth. Socrates is a proponent of philosophy as a means to achieve this absolute knowledge. And any other means of achieving this fulfilment in our lives is seen as flawed. This is where Socrates forms a disconnect between his ideals and reality, and it is where the complexity of the non-lover arises. Society engages with us in a way that fuels our will to survive, not flourish. We find success through our usefulness towards others. The fulfilment of our personal ideals does not have priority like it does in Socrates’ reality. In response to this disconnect, the non-lover serves as a subtle union of reality’s expectations and your personal ideals. There is a logical component of the non-lover that weighs reality in terms of its benefits and costs. Eros demands that you look at reality with the notion that there is a greater meaning or truth that will unfold before you. But there are times that reality has no deeper or intrinsic

*continued on pg. 22*

2. Ibid., 435.  
3. Ibid., 436.  
4. Ibid., 437.  
5. Ibid., 453.

# TRANSFORMATIONS

Hasan Friggle

I  
here in this stupor aflame and delighted  
sliced as a body in the light

II  
a window cuts a figure in the glass of this world  
the pristine incandescence I have hoarded in your eyes

III  
what I find in my hands  
poisoned by the touch of many things

IV  
to be in a sense returning  
rooted in the lessness of you

V  
this mountain no longer a mountain  
just a place where the sky is not



*continued from pg. 20*

meaning for you to behold, and it doesn't wait to punish you with its expectations. As a non-lover, you come to terms with reality and weave your personal ideals into it with the power of logical reasoning.

The nature of the soul is depicted as a charioteer steering a pair of winged horses—one noble and one ignoble. In our attempts to reconcile morality and hardship, the soul grows its wings and is elevated to a goodness comparable to the divine. Socrates illustrates this metaphor through eloquent wordplay but he doesn't address his negative view on the non-lover. His claims about the non-lover do little to prove that it is an inferior way of living life: "the attachment of the non-lover, which is alloyed with

a worldly prudence and has worldly and niggardly ways of doling out benefits, will breed in your soul those vulgar qualities which the populace applaud."<sup>6</sup> Socrates' language makes a distinction between divine and worldly pursuits. The divine pursuit is related to how every individual has their own unique relationship with love: "Everyone chooses his love from the ranks of beauty according to his character, and this he makes his god, and fashion and adorns

as a sort of image which he is to fall down and worship."<sup>7</sup> This speaks strongly of passionately following your ideals to their ends. The mainstream populace that is invested in worldly pursuits like money and material success has no place in Socrates' interpretation of goodness. It is possible to strike a balance between idealistic and heartless goals but Socrates' argument allows room for only one. In his disdain for the non-lover, Socrates has created a divide in the way we are allowed to live a virtuous life. The crux of the matter lies in bridging the gap between our ideals and the reality that has laid itself before us.

My ideals drive me forward and push me incessantly towards my version of perfection. Despite my lingering doubts and constant fear of failure, I retain to those ideals because they provide me a way to endure hardship. Socrates' words speak to myself and others that need to validate their expectations of a meaningful life. But the process of achieving those ideals is a form of insanity. Our constant desire for purpose and the increasingly higher standards that we set for ourselves is bound up in a cycle of failure and disappointment. Without the reigns of the non-lover to hold us back, the efforts we make toward our ideals hold us captive in a pursuit of the unreachable. The visceral pains of reality give rise to the non-lover: the strongest competitor in a society built on usefulness. Survival is rooted in the logic of costs and benefits, and our ideals form a subtler part of the meaning we derive from life.

**My ideals drive me forward and push me incessantly towards my version of perfection. Despite my lingering doubts and constant fear of failure, I retain to those ideals because they provide me a way to endure hardship.**

6. Ibid., 463

7. Ibid., 459.





The Cambridge Dictionary defines a poem as “A piece of writing in which the words are carefully chosen for the images and ideas they suggest, and in which the sounds of the words when read aloud often follow a particular rhythmic pattern.”

The following poems are selected from my students’ midterm project for the Chinese III class. The idea of having them write poems arose from my observation of their strong sensitivity to rhythm and tonality. They have only limited vocabulary and might not all be good at classical Chinese, but when they were asked to convey their thoughts in poetry, their creativity and imagination far surpassed my expectations. Reading their poems, I can sense the vibration of nature. The themes they chose include the transience of body and life, the urgency of cultivation, the beauty of nature, and the Venerable Master Hua’s vows.

—Bhikshuni Heng Yi

## Suffocating

My body is like a floating bubble,  
Sometimes good or bad—it’s not fixed.  
It brings so many afflictions.  
Pretty soon I’m going to go crazy.  
So I recite Guanshiyin  
And quickly achieve liberation!

Anonymous

飛  
親  
心

## Look Afar, Attain Rescue

With a disturbed mind my body free falls;  
Into a great river of shit I tumble and roll.  
From afar I suddenly hear the melodic bark  
of “Arff-Arff.”  
There on a single boat floats a lone puppy.

Benevolent Radish

仁  
羅  
蔔

生  
悶  
氣  
我  
身  
如  
浮  
漚  
好  
壞  
說  
不  
過  
煩  
惱  
太  
多  
堪  
堪  
要  
抓  
狂  
我  
念  
觀  
世  
音  
快  
快  
就  
解  
脫

遠  
看  
得  
救  
身  
墜  
心  
是  
亂  
江  
中  
大  
糞  
卷  
遠  
吠  
旺  
旺  
聲  
一  
舟  
飄  
獨  
犬

木  
福

同  
各  
躡  
季  
積  
多  
多  
願  
僉  
孰  
住  
蔭  
覓  
果  
願  
僉  
孰  
住  
天  
覓  
休  
願  
僉  
孰  
住  
暗  
覓  
火

## Tree Blessing

With each passing season offer more and more:  
May those who dwell in shade find fruit;  
May those who dwell in skies find rest;  
May those who dwell in darkness find fire.

Anonymous

孫  
彩  
寧



## Reflection on Learning

Dharma from the East has been  
transmitted to the West.  
Realm of the Dharma has no boundaries  
yet lies within a single mind.  
Bringing forth today's affinity: the  
great vows.  
Using thought after thought, students  
cultivate peace of the mind.

Laughing Dream

學  
思  
法  
從  
東  
來  
向  
西  
傳  
界  
無  
邊  
際  
唯  
寸  
方  
大  
願  
成  
就  
今  
日  
緣  
學  
子  
念  
念  
修  
心  
安  
吳  
夢  
笑





## UCCHUṢMA AND THE MICROCOSMIC ORBIT

Mojohito von Tchudi

The Śūraṅgama Sūtra is famous for its depictions of twenty-five great sages describing the practices they used to attain advanced states of meditation and bodhicitta. The techniques they developed and the obstacles they faced vary widely, so the reader gains insight into the many ways one can orient their personal practice to develop along the path towards complete awakening and Buddhahood. One of the most dramatic of these characters is Ucchuṣma, also called Fire-Head, who harnessed the intensity of passion to become a bodhisattva.

Ucchuṣma's full name in Sanskrit is "Vajra Krodha Mahābala Ucchuṣma" which translates literally as "Great Power Furious Diamond Ucchuṣma." The word Ucchuṣma itself comes from the Sanskrit root *ucchuṣ* (उच्छृष्), meaning "to dry up." The proper name Ucchuṣma (उच्छृष्म) translates as "one whose crackling becomes manifest," and is also used as an epithet for Agni, the Hindu god of fire. In the process of translating from Sanskrit into Chinese, his name became Fire-Head (*Huotou* 火頭). Ucchuṣma, as you may have guessed by his name, is a fierce bodhisattva. He is described in the commentary as a vajra-lord and a vajra-warrior. His vow is to come to the aid of cultivators who are on the cusp of full enlightenment, using his fearsome wrath to obliterate demons and obstacles. He is pictured standing on one foot, leaping into battle to defend those who need his support. His six hands are wielding weapons and magical implements to threaten and defeat adversaries. His lower garment is the skin of a tiger—the most ferocious of beasts—and his upper garment is a shroud of dragons. And, of course, he is standing amidst a blazing flame of purifying wisdom which emits from his very pores.



Before he became an Arhat, the cultivator who would later become Ucchuşma was hindered by intense sexual desire. His practice was to meditate on the hot and cold energies running along his bones until a sphere of spiritual light formed within his body. This spiritual light transformed his desire into wisdom. His burning passion was transmuted into the spiritual fire of purification. This process of converting base emotions and energies into the fuel for enlightenment is called *internal alchemy*.

Internal alchemy has its roots in Taoist healing arts. Classical Chinese medicine has documented in detail the complex functioning of the *subtle body*—the flow of energies as they course through our body. These energies are regulated through diet and herbs, *qigong* and *taiji*, meditation, and medical treatments such as acupuncture and moxibustion. Three of the most important of these energies are *jing* (精), *qi* (氣), and *shen* (神). *Jing* is the inherited vitality, genetic code, and memory of our ancestors. How well we manage our *jing* determines our life-span and rate of aging; it is also responsible for sexual vitality and reproduction. *Qi* performs myriad functions including circulating blood, digesting food, and regulating breathing and body temperature; *qi* also flows through the meridians, along the bones, and within the organs. *Shen* is the light of consciousness, intelligence, and the capacity for spiritual awakening.

These energies are ordinarily depleted through automatic, reflexive living. *Jing* has a tendency to flow down and drain out in the reproductive process, driven by desire and self-cherishing. *Qi* is dispersed by indulgence in strong emotion. And *shen* is exhausted by over-work and over-thinking, chasing career accolades and material success.

However, these vital energies can be harnessed and transformed into the capacity for awakening, as Ucchuşma did. Through meditation, the vitality of *jing* can be redirected inwards and upwards, *qi* is contained and concentrated, and *shen* is oriented towards the clarity of realizing emptiness. Thus the very same energy which leads to desire can instead be used as the fuel of meditation and awakening.

The sphere of light Ucchuşma discovered within his body is called the *dantian* (丹田)—the field of elixir. This metaphorical cauldron is where the natural energies of the body are alchemically transformed into a nectar of awakening. It is in the *dantian* that *jing*, *qi*, and *shen* are transformed into the awakened body, speech, and mind of a bodhisattva.

As Ucchuşma followed the *qi* coursing through his deep meridians, he developed a sensitivity into the transformations of subtle energies within his body. As his meditation shifted into the *dantian*, he was able to harness the power of alchemical transformation to utilize the potency of his passion to transform *jing* into *qi*, and *qi* into *shen*, and *shen* into wisdom.

This is the briefest introduction to the process of internal alchemy which Ucchuşma followed. May it help beings discover their own inner light and ride it to buddhahood.







Every Moment is a Matter of  
Life and Death  
念念皆生死

by Xiaojuan Shu / 束曉娟

Death is busy.  
Every day, it snatches away  
countless living beings  
or lurks nearby  
patiently  
Suddenly  
awareness enters my mind:  
death could be right outside anytime!

Please do not knock  
I'm not ready!

When I am aware,  
I smooth the way  
for my own death

First, my parents  
who gave me life  
I need to smooth the way  
for their death too  
for me  
for them

To smooth the way  
I need to help them  
realize their dreams  
expand their minds  
if only I knew myself  
how to live, really live

In order to know how to live  
I need to open wide  
my compassionate heart  
because suffering  
is all around  
But with compassion alone, I might sink  
in the vast sea of misery

To stay afloat  
I need a boat  
built with an unmoving mind  
to point within  
where all inherent wisdom lies

Every day  
death is busy  
Moment after moment  
is a matter of  
death and life

I vow to live  
each moment  
with fearless joy, cultivating  
compassion and wisdom  
before death  
knocks on my door

When that knock comes  
my wings fling open  
fully, ready to fly

死亡很忙 每天匆匆  
劫走無數生命  
或  
潛伏於附近  
耐心等待  
忽然  
我覺察到死亡  
隨時  
可能在我門外  
守候！

請不要敲門 請不要  
我還沒有準備好！

自從有此覺察  
我開始  
為自己的死亡  
鋪路

首先，為 生我育我的父母  
我要為他們鋪一條  
離去的路  
為他們  
也  
為我

為了這條路  
我需要  
幫助他們  
實現夢想  
開拓境界  
願以我之自知  
明瞭生命之諦

若要真正活過  
便要活得真切  
便要完全敞開  
慈悲之心

世間諸難 無處不在  
若只慈悲，我仍會  
沉溺苦海  
終不能改

若想完全橫度此海  
我需要撈起  
一葉禪定之舟  
返歸慧鄉

日升月落  
死亡很忙  
一刻接一刻  
一念復一念  
隨時皆生死

於是，我發願  
在死亡敲門之前  
勤修悲慧  
亦不忘練習  
時時無畏  
刻刻歡喜

當敲門聲起，  
我將羽翼豐滿  
準備好--  
飛翔！

The Light of Dharma never Goes Out  
Those ginkgo leaves will be beautiful when they fall  
from their branches  
they will be beautiful when they die  
Bright green to gold  
Falling on the ground  
my beloved is beautiful  
Will always be  
Even now, after leaving his lifeless body  
Fallen.  
Dead.  
Bright gold to ash  
His light will never go out  
The ground of his being will forever be.  
The ground of the ginkgo leaf radiates eternally  
All things: a mote of dust, a drop of water, a grain of sand  
a strand of hair  
Forever sing Dharma  
my long black braid now cut off for my love  
Luscious locks once filled with life  
Now scattered in the fields and forests  
resting, decaying, fading  
into forever  
Celestial incense breaking down  
molecule by... molecule  
dispersing into nothing and everything  
candle melting  
flame "flickering"  
Instantaneous diffusion of fire... to smoke... to  
emptiness...  
The broken mala cascading  
bead  
by bead  
bouncing  
Ricocheting  
Ringing  
off the cold stone floor with the clear angelic song of Amitabha...  
faces of lovers, family, friends, sisters, brothers, teachers, monks, bhiksus  
changing, trading, interpenetrating  
flowers blooming, drooping, wilting, decomposing  
all Nirvana  
all here, All now  
Eternally together  
One and the same  
Neither coming nor going  
Forever free

This poem was inspired by the poem “Every Moment is a Matter of Life and Death” written by Xiaojuan Shu. After meditating on the sudden and tragic loss of my beloved, Xamuel Lara, in his physical form, I wanted to write a poem about him and his impermanence. When he was alive in body, I saw the ground of his being from which he cultivated the paramitas. Even though Xamuel has transitioned into the next, the fundamental light of his being will always be. That light is everywhere, within all of us. Always.

Sha’ii // Indrayani Ananda // 親聖



# Creating the DRBU Audio Anthology

Hui Xuan Ooi

In exchange, I would be honored with the gift of their story. What I discovered was that my peers had similarly emerged from great darkness, our karmic fates bringing us together at the right moment, at the right time in our lives.

I found my passions reignited the moment I stepped onto the DRBU campus as a student. Three months before, I had graduated from University of Florida, realizing I was deep in the doldrums of my own mind. What does one do with an English degree? What did I want from my ideal job? Did it exist? Could I stay true to myself in a job that made me inherently uncomfortable? I floated through ambiguity, feeling lost and increasingly hopeless. After attending Buddha Root Farm 2018 and through a series of the right conditions, I found a sliver of clarity from the immense amount of support, compassion, and loving kindness I experienced. My friends have told me that I seem happier than I've been in a while. I don't disagree!

I was in a new environment at DRBU, starting a fresh chapter of self-love and self-care in my life, surrounded by incredible people that all instantly treated each other with a warm familiarity. In the first few weeks, I found myself telling my story of my life to people who actively listened, engaged in what I had to say. In exchange, I would be honored with the gift of their story. What I discovered was

that my peers had similarly emerged from great darkness, our karmic fates bringing us together at the right moment, at the right time in our lives.

I was lucky enough to hear about DRBU through the stories of faculty, students, and alumni at dinner one night at Buddha Root Farm. They heard my story and imparted their own experience on how DRBU “was the best gift they could give to themselves.” My rekindling of my confidence happened through the conversation that took place that evening. I came here because of an exchange of stories, but I knew very well that I was fortunate to hear these stories. I wanted to see if there was any way in which I could help prospective students in the same way I was helped—through hearing how people were able to trust themselves, transforming into better people.

There are some decisions in life that I instinctively made without knowing why. While packing my two suitcases for DRBU, I had packed my microphone, mini microphone stand, and pop filter “just in case.” At the University of Florida, I had taken one class, “Advanced Exposition,” which ended up becoming a class focused on linking expositional

writing and the format of audio—including audio production, aural immersion, and script-writing. After the class, I hadn't used my audio equipment besides for recording sound bytes for performance sets I created and helped with in dance. I must have known that I would find a use for my equipment at DRBU somehow and didn't know for what or when.

Earlier in my first semester here at DRBU, I began my first passion project with the audio equipment I brought with me. I poured my heart into creating the DRBU Audio Anthology, a collection of stories from the voices of the students and alumni at DRBU. In the anthology, I ask my interviewees about their life before DRBU, what they experienced that may have brought them to take steps to take care of themselves, and what they've learned from being, cultivating, and learning in this one-of-a-kind environment. Afterwards, I edit the audio and write the audio transcription. It is my brainchild that I spent and spend a lot of time raising.

The DRBU Audio Anthology is not limited to its original, intended audience of prospective

students, but is open to the public and available for anyone to listen to for inspiration. One of my listeners has told people to “bring tissues” while listening to the first episode, which happens to be my own story.

You may listen to the episodes on the DRBU Audio Anthology SoundCloud page here:  
<https://soundcloud.com/drbu-anthology>



Painting by Kathleen Irby

## 回春醫療保健操動作、要領、作用與圖解

INSTRUCTIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS FOR PERFORMING THE  
MOVEMENTS OF THE RETURNING TO SPRING EXERCISES  
FOR CURING AND MAINTAINING HEALTH AND DESCRIPTIONS  
OF THEIR FUNCTIONS

Translated by Bhikshuni Heng Chih et alia

*These exercises are part of an ongoing series, the first ten of which were published in the Summer 2018 issue. The editing team would like to apologize, as the images for those exercises were accidentally left out of the print magazine. However, they appear in the PDF available at DRBU's website.*

### 11. 甩拳

動作：兩手握拳，臂與肩平，右手握拳直臂後甩，眼看右拳。同時左臂握拳曲肘於胸前，交替進行各16次。

作用：活動上肢和頸、肩、腰。使臟腑氣血充足，血脈暢通。

防治：上肢疾病、氣管炎、肺氣腫、咳、喘。

#### SWINGING THE FISTS

**Motion:** The two hands make fists. Bring the arms up level with the shoulders. With the hand in a fist and the arm straight, swing the right arm to the right, with the eyes following the fist, and at the same time bend the left elbow and bring the left fist to the chest. Alternate the motion 16 times on each side.

**Function:** Exercises the upper limbs, neck, shoulders and waist. Replenishes the energy (*qi*) and blood in the bowels. Clears the blood vessels.

**Preventative cure:** Diseases of the upper arms, inflammation of the bronchia tubes, swelling of the lungs, coughing, asthma.







12. 搜拳

動作：右臂向左前平伸，掌心向外划弧握拳，拳心向上用力收拳於腰部，左右交替進行各32次。  
作用：活動上肢關節，通經活絡，促進血液循環。  
防治：上肢和心肺疾病。

**FLOURISHING THE FISTS**

**Motion:** The right hand is stretched out level in front and to the left. The palm, facing outward, moves in an arc as the fist, with inside facing up, is returned forcefully to the waist. Alternating left and right, repeat the movement 32 times each side.

**Function:** Exercises the joints of the upper limbs, clears the Principal Channels and invigorates the Connecting Channels, improves blood circulation

**Preventative cure:** Pain in the upper arms, heart and lungs.



13. 側彎腰

動作：兩手叉腰，上身漸漸向右彎一伸一鬆16次，同法左彎16次。  
作用：伸筋拔骨，鍛鍊脊柱側韌帶和腰肌。

**SIDE-BENDS AT THE WAIST**

**Motion:** The two hands grasp the waist. The torso is then gradually inclined to the right, bending once and then relaxing once. The motion is repeated 16 times. Then the same motion is repeated by inclining to the left 16 times.

**Function:** Stretching the tendons and pulling the bones. Tones the spinal column, strengthens the belt and the waist muscles.



14. 原地跑

動作：曲肘握拳原地跑，兩臂前後交替擺動64次。  
作用：活動全身，疏通經絡，促進心臟功能，加快血液循環，對內臟器官有按摩作用。

**RUNNING IN-PLACE**

**Motion:** Bend the elbows, makes fists, and run in-place. The two arms swing back and forth 64 times.

**Function:** Exercises the entire body. Clears the Principal and Connecting Channels. Improves the functions of the heart, increases the rate of blood circulation. Functions as a massage for the internal system.

15. 慢游臂

動作：右臂前上擺，手與肩平，左臂同時從體側後擺，兩膝配合擺臂微曲伸，交替進行64次。  
作用：緩解疲勞，增加手臂血流量，調整內臟功能。

**SLOW SWIVELING OF THE ARMS**

**Motion:** The right arm swings in front until it is level with the shoulder. At the same time the left arm is swung back beyond the side of the body. The two knees and the swinging arms are slightly bent. The motion is repeated alternately 64 times.

**Function:** Relieves fatigue. Increases the amount of blood flow to the hands and arms. Regulates the functions of the internal organs.



16. 按手

動作：曲肘，兩手平伸與腰齊，由右向左用力按4次，在由左向右按4次，用力在掌，交替進行32次。  
作用：疏通經絡，降低血壓，防治手顫。

**PRESSING DOWN WITH THE HANDS**

**Motion:** Bend the elbows. Stretch both hands out level with the waist. Push down forcefully four times in a right-to-left motion, then four times in a left-to-right motion. The force should original from the palms. Repeat the motion alternately 32 times.

**Function:** Clears the Principal and Connecting Channels. Decreases blood pressure. Cures hand tremors.



17. 上搖球

動作：兩手如抱球，在頭前上方，由右向左搖16圈，再從左向右搖16圈，眼隨手轉。  
作用：活動上肢，增強腦垂體平衡，鍛鍊視力。

**TWIRLING THE BALL UP ABOVE**

**Motion:** Arrange the two hands as if they were holding a ball, placing them above the head. Twirl in a right-to-left motion 16 times and then in a left-to-right motion 16 times. The eyes follow the hands.

**Function:** Exercises the upper limbs. Enhances the body-balance function of the brain. Tones the eyesight.







18. 中搖球  
動作：兩手如抱球在胸前，由右向左搖16圈，再由左向右搖16圈，不過頭頂，不彎腰。  
作用：活動上肢。

#### TWIRLING THE BALL IN THE MIDDLE

**Motion:** Arrange the two hands as if they were holding a ball at the chest. Twirl in a right-to-left motion 16 times and then in a left-to-right motion 16 times. Do not go above the top of the head and do not bend the waist.

**Function:** Exercises the upper limbs.



19. 下搖球  
動作：兩手如抱球，彎腰45度，由左、下、右上搖(手高過頭頂)再反方向搖各16圈。  
作用：活動肩、肘、腰。疏通經絡，調理臟腑。

#### TWIRLING THE BALL BELOW

**Motion:** Arrange the two hands as if they were holding a ball. Bend the waist to a 45 degree angle. Twirl the ball to the left, down, to the right, and up (the hands going higher than the top of the head) and then twirl in the opposite direction 16 times.

**Function:** Exercises the shoulders, elbows, and waist. Clears the Channels. Regulates the internal organs.



20. 抓空  
動作：右臂上舉過頭，手心向前，手用力如抓物，下甩體側，兩手交替進行各32次。  
作用：活動肩、肘、指關節。疏通經絡，調理臟腑。

#### SEIZING SPACE

**Motion:** The right arm is held above the head with the palm pointing upward. The hand forcefully seems seize something and then sweeps down past the side of the body. The two hands alternate the motion 32 times each.

**Function:** Exercises the shoulders, elbows, and joints of the fingers. Clears the Channels. Regulates the bowels.








Painting by Jackie Farley



Painting by Jackie Farley





# TRANSFORMATIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND REFLECTIONS FROM THE MIRROR OF WISDOM: FROM VIJÑĀNA TO JÑĀNA IN CHINESE AND INDIAN BUDDHISM

Lisa Liang and Brianna Morseth

Because the *ālaya-vijñāna* is the constituent element (*dhātukatva*)  
of all the kinds of karmic formations (*saṃskāra*)  
comprised in proliferation (*prapañca*),  
[the practitioner] makes [them] into  
one collection,  
one heap,  
one hoard  
in the *ālaya-vijñāna*.

Having collected [them all] into one,  
he revolves the basis (*āśrayaṃ parivartate*) [i.e., the *ālaya-vijñāna*]  
by the cause of assiduous cultivation of the wisdom (*jñāna*)  
which takes true reality (*tathatā*) as  
an objective support.

As soon as the basis is revolved,  
the *ālaya-vijñāna* must be said to have been abandoned (*prahīṇā*);  
because it has been abandoned,  
it must be said that all the defilements also have been abandoned.<sup>1</sup>

The transformation of consciousness is a radical enterprise. In the  
above excerpt from Asaṅga’s *Yogācārabhūmi-Śāstra*, transformation of the  
eighth consciousness, containing the other seven, receives prime atten-  
tion. With one fell swoop, all are transformed.

On the other side of the equation are four “knowledges” (*jñāna*).<sup>2</sup>  
On the “classes of mind” associated with these four, Xuanzang of the  
Consciousness-Only school (唯識宗) writes:

1. *Yogācārabhūmi-Śāstra, Pravṛtti Portion*  
(5.b) C.1, cited in Waldron, William S. *The  
Buddhist Unconscious: The Ālaya-Vijñāna*  
in the Context of Indian Buddhist Thought.  
Routledge, 2003, p.126; formatting ours.

2. The Sanskrit *jñāna* is related to the terms  
for consciousness (*vijñāna*) and wisdom

(*prajñā*), as well as the Greek γνῶσις,  
*gnōsis*.

3. Hsüan-tsang. “Demonstration of  
Consciousness Only” (from the Chinese  
成唯識論, *Chéng Wéishi Lùn*, hereafter  
CWSL), in Cook, Francis H. *Three Texts  
on Consciousness Only*. (1999), p.347;  
formatting ours.

4. *Ibid.* p.351

5. Muller, A. Charles & Cuong T. Nguyen.  
*Wōnhyo’s Philosophy of Mind*. University  
of Hawaii Press, 2012. p.14; See also  
*Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra IX.12-17*;  
formatting ours.



The first is the class of mind [i.e., consciousness, mental activities, etc.] associated with knowledge that is like a great, perfect mirror (*mahā-adarśana-jñāna*) [大圓鏡智], that is, this class of mind is separated from all discrimination, its objects [of perception] and mode of activity are subtle and difficult to grasp, it is unforgetful and nondelusive regarding all objects, its nature and characteristics are pure and separated from all defilement, it is the support of the actual [*dharma*s] and the seeds of unadulterated, pure, perfect qualities, it can manifest bodies and lands and generate images of [other] knowledge, and it is incessant and uninterrupted forever, like a great, perfect mirror manifesting multitudes of images of forms.<sup>3</sup>

Perfectly reflective, the great mirror shines bright. Although but one of the four transformations, it is arguably the most inclusive and final of them, as having collapsed all into one (as referenced in the opening quote) and “abandoned” the *ālaya-vijñāna*, there is no turning back. This great mirror is the flawless functioning of mind and serves as the essence or support of all dharmas arising and ceasing. Citing sources on mirror wisdom, Xuanzang later adds:

...the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra* says that great, perfect mirror knowledge is not deluded concerning all objects. The *Buddhabhūmi-Sūtra* says that in a Tathāgata’s mirror knowledge there appear images of all sense basis [i.e., eyes, ears, etc.], objects [i.e., forms, sounds, etc.] and [corresponding] consciousnesses.<sup>4</sup>

Here, the perfect mirror knowledge, clear by nature, reflects all images without distortion, untainted by imaginative contortion. Based on the same *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra* cited by Xuanzang, liberation, though accomplished at once, consists of four distinct transformations:

1. The five sense consciousnesses become able to transcend their normal physical limitations;
2. The sixth, thinking consciousness, is able to discern phenomena with perfect accuracy;
3. The seventh, afflicted-with-self consciousness, stripped of its self-centeredness and able to perceive the equality of all phenomena; and

4. The store consciousness perfectly reflects all phenomena like a clear mirror, constituting what *Mahāyāna* Buddhists call omniscience (*sarvajña*).  
The perfect accomplishment of these four purifications is called transformation of the basis (*āśraya-parāvṛtti*).<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the final transformation occurs only after all others have been perfected. Collapsing the four transformations into one “turns”<sup>6</sup> the consciousnesses into their essential functioning, transcending any limitations and discerning all with clarity. Master synthesizer, Sixth Patriarch Huineng reflects on the transformation and revolution of consciousness:

Five and the eight[h] together; sixth and seventh too—  
Change and turn through cause and result.  
Merely useful names; they have no real nature of their own.<sup>7</sup>

It seems telling that the “five” and “eight[h]” (*ālaya-vijñāna*) are featured together. Likewise with the sixth and seventh. By one interpretation, the first through fifth and eighth transformations occur in the realm of “results,” “fruits,” or “effects” (果) at the Buddha-stage, while sixth and seventh operate in the realm of “cause” (因) at the Bodhisattva-stage.<sup>8</sup> The five consciousnesses and the eighth consciousnesses have the capacity to receive objects as directly sensed and perceived, without conceptual interpretation. Yet their functioning becomes clouded over by the activities of the sixth and seventh. Master Xu Yun confirms, “It is of paramount importance first to transmute the sixth and seventh consciousness, for they play the leading role and because of their power in discriminating and discerning.”<sup>9</sup> Xuanzang also confirms, “the [*Samdhinirmocana*] *Sūtra* says that mental consciousness is called ‘possessing discrimination,’ which is not the case with the five consciousnesses.”<sup>10</sup> Yet by other accounts, the eighth consciousness as *ālaya-vijñāna* functions as both result and cause of manifest cognitive awareness.<sup>11</sup> Either way, when we wholeheartedly recognize that the corrupted functioning of the sixth (the central processing unit for incoming data from the five) and seventh (which takes the eighth as its object) comprise causal grounds that yield unwholesome effects and transform our relationships to the five and eighth, we may cease creating contaminated karmic seeds.

Regardless of the intricacies of interpretation, transformations of the various consciousnesses clear the horizons of our karmic habituations, opening boundless space in which endless possibilities may unfold. Such transformation brings us beyond the rigidity of form. When phenomena (*dharma*s) are seen correctly, reflected perfectly in a clear mirror, then one may come to know the universe itself as mental creation. One’s

6. From *parāvṛtti*, to turn, return, overturn, transform, revolve. Thus is transformation of consciousness a revolution in one’s relationship to “reality.”

7. The Sixth Patriarch’s Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra. Buddhist Text Translation Society: Ukiah, 2014, p. 74. Original verse:

五八六七果因轉 但用名言無實性; hereafter cited as Platform Sutra (BTTS). Note that 果 precedes 因 unlike in the English translation where “result” follows “cause.”

8. The Diamond Sūtra and The Sūtra of Hui-neng. Trans. A.F. Price and Wong Mou-Lam. Shambala: Boston, 2012.

9. Empty Cloud: The Autobiography of the Chinese Zen Master. Trans. Charles Luk. pp. 232-233

10. CWSL, p. 229

11. Waldron, p. 134; See also Mahāyānasamgraha I. 14

12. Sixth Patriarch Huineng refers to seeing one’s nature (見性) in terms of “realizing the spiritual powers of self-mastery” (自在神通) and “the samadhi of playfulness” (遊戲三昧); see Platform Sutra (BTTS), p. 92

13. “Treatise on the Golden Lion” cited in Chang, C. C. Garma. The Buddhist

Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism. Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park and London, 1972, p. 228.

14. For Husserl, the primordial hyletic flow (urhyle) reflects the sea of ever churning sense data that comprise the content of our experience. These data remain raw

and bare, in a state of pre-conceptual awareness, until identified and objectified into discrete categories. Perhaps Fazang’s interfusing of eye with ear, etc., reflects a trans-conceptual transformation of the sensory consciousnesses into an undifferentiated perceptual matrix.



mind interpenetrates all phenomena insofar as it expands beyond the presumed boundaries of form. Without fixed edges, all phenomena inter-fuse. The mind is then capable of reflecting, with awareness, the intricate yet luminous play of the Dharma-realm (*dharmadhātu*). Transformation of consciousnesses entails the melting away of dense and solid appearances to which we tend to grasp and cling fixedly. Upon loosening one’s grip, one thoroughly comprehends the mind’s powerful play<sup>12</sup> to create, manifest, or otherwise “set up” (立) in expedients without getting caught up or bound up in them.

This loosening is reflected in the embodied philosophy of the Huayan school (華嚴宗), basing itself on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Throughout the immense yet mostly untranslated corpus of Huayan texts, the use of imperceptibly infinitesimal microscopic particles as containers for inconceivably immense macroscopic systems helps illustrate the emptiness, and hence interdependence, of phenomena. Third Huayan Patriarch Fazang proposes that parts already contain their wholes, as with his theory that mutually reliant phenomena are both mutually identical (*xiāng jí* 相卽) and mutually inclusive (*xiāng rù* 相入). Fazang’s own example seeks to demonstrate that essence and function interpenetrate seamlessly:

[T]he gold and the lion both establish and include each other in harmony. There is no obstruction between one and many. [In this complete mutual inclusion,] the Li [noumenon] and the Shih [phenomena], the one and the many, remain in their own positions. This is called the mutual inclusion and differentiation of one and many.

[A]ll the parts of the lion, down to the tip of each and every hair, take in the whole lion in so far as they are all gold. Each and every one of them permeates the eyes of the lion. The eyes are the ears, the ears are the nose, the nose is the tongue, the tongue is the body. They all exist in total freedom without obstruction or impediment. This is called the mutual identity of all dharmas in freedom.<sup>13</sup>

Such perfect interfusion and mutual nonobstruction, by some interpretations, may refer to the transformation of the sensory consciousnesses. Whether Husserl’s primordial hyletic flow<sup>14</sup> or Kant’s pre-synthesis of the sensory manifold,<sup>15</sup> the influx of percepts initially comprise an undifferentiated mass. Indeed, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* itself melds the sense consciousnesses through its kaleidoscopic imagery, which have audible reverberations on the landscape of some minds.

Looking at the Buddha in various ways, there’s nothing there;  
Seeking him in all directions, he can’t be found.

The manifestations of the reality body have no true actuality:  
This truth is seen by Silent Sound.<sup>16</sup>

Certainly, such a passage can be interpreted in as myriad ways as there are consciousnesses, yet by one interpretation, it illustrates the principles of synthesis, consciousness-only, and emptiness all at once. Perhaps visualizing the invisible resembles the emptying of the ear organ and the emptying of the emptying.<sup>17</sup> As ordinary beings, we only see conditioned existence as truly existing because we perceive fixed appearances. Yet these appearances are unreal, being mentally constructed. Lacking intrinsic nature, such appearances are fictions, figments of our imaginations. Thus, the Buddha is said to exercise omniscient awareness of all interpenetrating phenomena. All is the play of this omniscient awareness, wherein all phenomena in their emptiness are transformed.

Jizang, an exegete of the “Three Treatise School” (三論宗), the Chinese adaptation of Indian Madhyamaka,<sup>18</sup> reflects on emptiness functioning “like water, which is capable of extinguishing fire; if the water itself were to catch on fire, what would one use to extinguish it? Nihilism and eternalism [the two extreme positions] are like the fire, and emptiness is capable of extinguishing them. [But] if one persists in becoming attached to emptiness, there is no medicine which can extinguish this.”<sup>19</sup> Such a statement traces itself to the noblest of dragons<sup>20</sup> himself, Nāgārjuna, who writes in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*: “Emptiness is proclaimed by the victorious one as the refutation of all viewpoints; But those who hold ‘emptiness’ as a viewpoint—the true perceivers have called those ‘incurable’ (*asādhya*).”<sup>21</sup> Running with the medicinal metaphor, Jizang reflects: “One speaks of non-being only because there is initially the illness of [attachment to] being. If the illness of being subsides, and the medicine of emptiness is discarded, then one realizes that the holy path has nothing to do with being and non-being. ...Originally nothing is asserted; subsequently nothing is denied.”<sup>22</sup> Just as the teaching of emptiness functions medicinally and ought not to be set up as concrete reality, so too is “consciousness-only” an expedient (*upāya*; *fāngbiàn* 方便), a “skillful means” to a skillful end, and not an end in itself. Indeed, utilizing this strategy, Xuanzang writes:

[B]ecause mind and its activities arise in mutual dependence, they do not really exist, just as magical illusions do not. In order to refute the false attachment to a really existing realm exterior to mind and its activities, we teach that there is nothing but consciousness (*vijñaptimātra*). But if one believes that consciousness only really exists, this is no different from attachment to external objects, and it remains attachment to dharmas.<sup>23</sup>

15. For Kant, the sensory manifold consists of non-conceptual “stuff” floating in space and time. Upon the application of concepts, the manifold is synthesized into a discrete conscious representation. Space and time only become conglomerate wholes through synthesis of the manifold. When undergone consciously via

the activities of reason (or wisdom in the Buddhist sense) the process of synthesis avoids distortion of cognized objects.

16. Cleary, Thomas. *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Shambhala Publications, 1993, p.75

17. See the Śūraṅgama Sūtra section on Guan Yin’s method of redirecting the hearing faculty inward. For instance, “once my six faculties perceived an interconnected functioning and became united in their capacity to clearly perceive everything in all the worlds throughout the ten directions, my mind became like

a great flawless mirror that reflected the emptiness of the Matrix of the Thus-Come One.” From BTTS, p.244

18. Literally the “Middle-Way,” systematized by Nāgārjuna around the teaching of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), reflecting that all phenomena are “empty” of inherent or absolute substance and instead rely

upon myriad factors for their conventional existence.

19. Taisho vol. 45 #1852, p. 7a, line 14, cited in Fox, Alan. “Self-reflection in the Sanlun Tradition: Madhyamika as the ‘Deconstructive Conscience’ of Buddhism.” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 19.1 (1992), p.8

20. An interpretation of Nāgārjuna’s name from Sanskrit. Apparently, Kumārajīva, interpreting “ārjuna” as a type of tree, translated Nāgārjuna as “dragon-tree” (龍樹), while Xuanzang, possibly influenced by exposure to the Indian epics, saw “ārjuna” as the name of a mighty warrior, thus translating Nāgārjuna as



Consciousness-only is taught for the sake of those who are attached to phenomenal appearances.<sup>24</sup> It, like emptiness, is neither to be reified nor deified as an actual entity with a real nature of its own. Once consciousness has been transformed, the essence of four wisdoms function effortlessly. Since the four wisdoms are present right from the beginning, there is no use in “consciously cultivating” nor “holding to or pondering them” as such effort is deemed futile.<sup>25</sup> Board the raft but leave all baggage behind. Pack lightly. Ultimately, the raft too must be shed, though not prematurely. On the mirror of wisdom, Sixth Patriarch Huineng reflects:

The wisdom of the great, perfect mirror,  
Is your own nature, pure and clear.<sup>26</sup>

Basically, bodhi has no tree,  
Nor any mirror-stand bright.  
Originally there’s not one thing:  
Where could dust alight?<sup>27</sup>

*“dragon-might” (龍猛). The “nāgā” of Nāgārjuna designates the serpent, which transforms into a dragon in the Chinese. Preserving the transliterated form “nà jiā” (那伽), Sixth Patriarch Huineng, in his verses on the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, writes of the transformation of consciousness: “If in the place of change and turning [轉], you don’t linger on feeling; You flourish and forever abide in the samadhi of the dragon [那伽定].” See Platform Sutra (BTTS), p.74*

21. See Mūlamadhyamakakārikā 13.8 (trans. Streng, Frederick)

22. Taisho vol. 45 #1852, p. 6c, line 27, cited in Fox (1992), pp.9-10

23. CWSL, p.39

24. Indeed, an alternative name for the Chinese Consciousness-Only school is 法相宗 from the Sanskrit dharmalakṣaṇa, referring to phenomenal appearances. Apparently, this term was used dismissively by Fazang and others from the Huayan school in criticism of what was deemed the superficial approach of Xuanzang. See Hamar, Imre, ed. Reflecting Mirrors: Perspectives on Huayan Buddhism. Otto Harrassowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, 2007. pp.198-199.

25. See Platform Sutra (BTTS), p.75

26. Ibid. p.74

27. Ibid. p.14



continued from pg.11

“Yes.” The Master beamed at everyone but me.

Some say that the Master could read minds. Whether that was true or not, at this point, what was going on was as clear as if I had “Needs to be taken down a notch” written on my forehead. I had no choice but to continue. “When the monks told him he was too stupid to study with them, he appealed to the Buddha.”

“Try these two words,” the Buddha told him. “Sweep clean. Just sweep your mind clean.” “That’s wrong,” came the Master’s voice.

Someone else translated, saying almost exactly what I said, and the Master nodded. It went on this way for what felt like forever.

At last, I managed to translate the ending of the story without being corrected. “The monk the others had called stupid was so sincere and diligent he got enlightened very quickly, unlike the monks who had thought themselves so superior.” By this time my inflated ego had shrunk down to nothing. If there was a joke here, it was certainly on me.

When the lecture finally ended, a young novice, a buddy of mine, came over and whispered in my ear. “What did you do to deserve that?” The words the Master had spoken on the day I translated for him that first time came back to me then. “We’re all here so you can learn.”

\*I actually don’t remember what the story the Master told, just that it was one I had heard many times, but this one fits the situation well.

# Stand Up for Non-Duality

Summer Translation Seminar Team B

To the tune of Yankee Doodle

Bodhisattva Delighting in Truth said to Vimalakirti:  
“The true and false are completely dual, that’s what the Buddha told me. Those who believe that dharmas are true cannot see their own faults, Those who use their eyes to see can’t believe it’s all false.”

(Chorus)  
Then the teacher stood up and took an impressive posture. He said... nothing at all. Le professeur se leva



et prit une pose impressionnante.  
Et dit...  
rien du tout.

“The truth seen only with wisdom eyes  
this is non-dual.”  
Each Bodhisattva asked Manjusri,  
“How can we be this cool?”  
Manjusri then stood up and said,  
“Well in my humble opinion,  
All Dharmas are free from words,  
concepts and explanation.”

“But if you, Vimalakirti,  
could go on some more,  
Explain to us your students  
this foremost Dharma Door.”  
Then the teacher stood up  
and took an impressive posture.  
He said...  
nothing at all.

Manjusri got up and said,  
“How absolutely delightful!

When one is beyond all text and words,  
they’re truly insightful.”  
After all was said and done,  
five thousand Bodhisattvas,  
Realized non-duality  
and non-production Dharma.

(Chorus)  
Then the teacher stood up  
and took an impressive posture.  
He said...  
nothing at all.  
Le professeur se leva  
et prit une pose impressionnante.  
Et dit...  
rien du tout.

*This song was written and presented as part of the 2018  
Summer Translation Seminar at DRBU. Its authors  
were Team B, whose bilingual slogan was “Boisterous  
Buddha Brain / Cerveau Tumultueux Bouddha!”*

*Disclaimer: The song is not infringing upon the Dharma or the song due  
to its skillfulness/expediency. No dualistic views were harmed in the  
production of this song.*

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

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