

Welcome to the new Buddhist Journal of culture, thought and practice. We will come out every other month. There is a need in the troubling time to share ideas and keep connected. Dragons Leap also needs to expand out to increase its reach and support. Perhaps you might consider giving us further financial support.

Turnings: Some Aspects of Buddhist History by Dairyu Wenger

1. The telling of history is a selection of choices. Some choices are right on, some choices are near misses, and some choices are way off. There is a history that is written down, and a history which underlies that and remains to be articulated. So when we talk about history, what are we talking about? Is it our intuition, or that handed down verbally? Is it the unspoken, yet to be articulated? Or is it our projections, from the facts available currently? These questions remain with us in our attempts to understand history. Rujing, Dogen's teacher in China spoke of this, "the footprints of Tathagata can actually be seen today in India, the room in which the layman Vimalakirti still exists, the foundation stones of the Jetavana monastery remains as well. But when one goes to the sacred remains such as these and measures them, he finds them sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, contracted or extended. These dimensions can not be fixed. This is the manifestation of the breath and vitality of the buddha dharma itself."

Buddhism, like Hinduism and Jainism, is one of the great religions of the Ganges plane. It is often argued that Buddhism came out of Hinduism, but this is not so clear. It's possible that the contemplative tradition was brought to the region by nomadic Arians. At that time in the region there were many religions flowing together, like tributaries to the Ganges itself. Hinduism and Buddhism are from a common stream, which eventually separated. Though Hinduism considers

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HOPE AND FEAR

What can you do when there is nothing left to do?

ON PRACTICING ZEN IN GREECE, A COUNTRY WHERE THINGS HAVE ONLY GOTTEN WORSE FOR MOST PEOPLE IN RECENT YEARS (AT LEAST ECONOMICALLY)

BY BERND BENDER

For the last three years I have been flying to Athens every three months to practice Zen with a group of people there. From my very first visit, I was struck by the city's extreme contrasts. I enjoy going to Monastiraki Square in the heart of the city, where I sit on the steps of an old Byzantine church, which seems lost among the modern concrete buildings that surround it. My gaze wanders to the ruins of the Acropolis, which lie above the square, still standing imposingly to this day. Apparently the people who lived 2,500 years ago also believed in the permanence of things – in eternity, even – and expressed it their architecture. Yet one day the ancient Greeks experienced their own crisis, a veritable catastrophe: the end of their civilization. Everything flows, everything is in flux.

Today's crisis is vividly apparent in Monastiraki Square. Young Greek men (55 percent of whom are unemployed) break dance daringly in the hope of collecting some spare change from tourists. Yet their dance is not just an

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**Don't make up standards on your own. --
Sekito Kisan** -- by Jamie Howell

I have been studying Zen Buddhism for forty years or so. I keep making the same mistakes. Chief among those mistakes is the inability to walk the middle way in terms of my practice. Again and again, I resolved to practice on a schedule that was designed to mimic the arduous schedule of a hermit while not compromising my life as a householder with a wife and four children, a businessman managing dozens of people, an amateur athlete training for soccer tournaments or olympic distance triathlons, and a contributing member of society serving on non-profit boards and as a children's soccer coach. Sometimes, I would succeed.

One year I managed to sit Zazen at least an hour a day and bow 108 times daily as well as sit two sesshins and a half dozen one day sittings. I ended up the next January with repeated bouts of flu and bronchial infections and so angry and burned out that I walked away from Zen practice and triathlon training for six months. Dairyu Michael Wenger had to use very skillful means to coax me back to practice.

At the other extreme, I spent times in waddling in deep hedonism, not sitting Zazen at all, touching all the points in a samsaric dream. I ate, drank, cavorted, then had to cope with inevitable disasters of illness, psychological damage to self and others all leading to self-loathing and guilt.

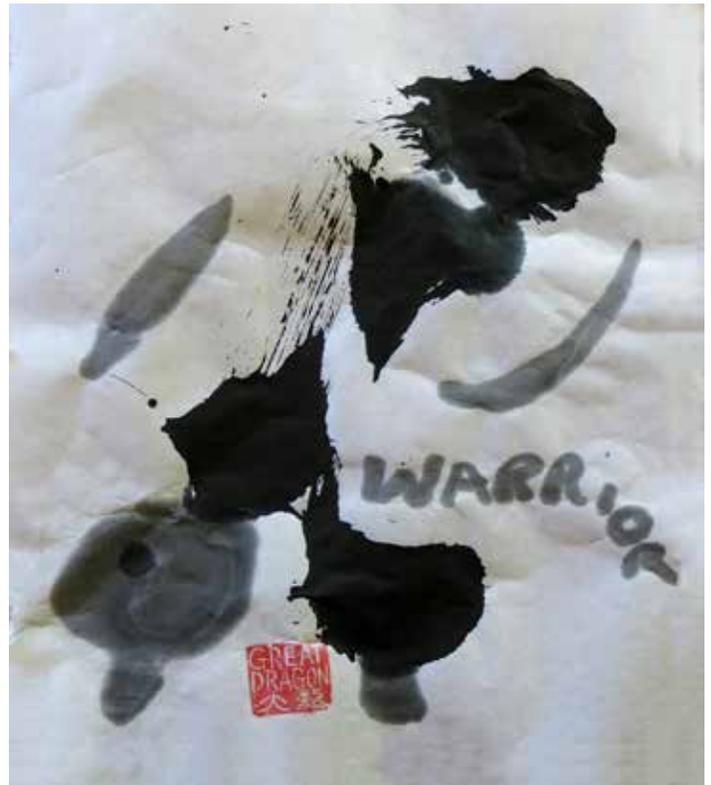
Finally, in the winter of my life, I have managed to begin an arc closer to the middle way. I am not prepared to say how much of this revelation (or revolution) is due to practice, how much is due to old age and the gradual withdrawal of testosterone, and how much to the patient guidance of my teacher, Dairyu Michael Wenger. Some of each, I expect. But I am becoming more content in and with my practice.

Still the problem remains as to what expectations to have of myself and, then, how to implement those expectations. As I appreciate that life's winter has brought a contented and joyful practice, I am also experiencing the bitter fruit of a old age - orthopedic challenges, difficulty in fighting off infections, and chronic disease. Those and the responsibilities of a patriarch of an ever increasing family pull me away from a fixed idea of practice.

So where to turn? How do I tell if I am being too easy or too hard on myself? My answer is to stop listening to a false inner voice and seek the counsel of others. It may take a congress of voices - my teacher, my spouse, my children, my students, my peers, my own voice, ones that know me intimately and that will fearlessly share with me - to provide me the advice, the answers to keep me from falling in one extreme or the other. It is when only my singular voice, the voice full of gaining ideas, is heard that I get in trouble.

It is also very important to be generous. Holding my own practice and guarding it vigilantly is a form of greed and a denial of the Mahayana way.

I continue on. I continue to make many of the same mistakes and, as I do so, watch self manifest itself in condemnation or congratulations. And I smile. But when I listen and trust in Buddha's voice manifested by the people that I love, then the wind of the Buddhas house brings forth the gold of the earth and the fragrance of the cream of the long river.



Enlightenment is like
The square root of minus one.
Imaginary but useful,
In solving intimate personal equations.
- Lou Hartman

Vending Machine
from *49 Fingers* by Dairyu Wenger

CASE 1

Dainin Katagiri once said, “You take care of your life as if it were a vending machine. You put the coins in from the top and then get the soda at the bottom. You do meditation and you expect something. But life doesn’t always go well. The vending machine goes out of order. Then you are mad and kick the machine.”

COMMENTARY

Dainin (Great Patience) Katigiri Roshi was born in Osaka in 1928. He was ordained shortly after WWII in the Japanese Soto Zen Eiheji line. He came to America in 1964 and was a teacher at the San Francisco Zen Center from 1965 on, at Shunryu Suzuki’s request. Shortly after Shunryu Suzuki’s death, he left and founded the Minnesota Zen Center. He died in 1990. The case statement was from a lecture he gave at Green Gulch Farm in 1986. It was given at a time when the Green Gulch Farm community was undergoing considerable self-criticism and evaluation.

The masters of old ask over and over, “What do you want? What is your intention? What are you manipulating?”

Nangaku came to Baso and asked, “What are you doing?” “I am practicing zazen.” “Why are you practicing zazen?” “I want to be a Buddha.” Nangaku picked up a tile and started to polish it. Baso said, “What are you doing?” “I want to make this tile into a jewel.” Baso asked, “How is it possible to make a tile a jewel?” Nangaku replied, “How is it possible to become a Buddha by practicing zazen?” “There is no Buddhahood besides your ordinary mind. When a cart does not go, which do you whip, the cart or the horse?”

Do you kick your desire, your results, your means, your understanding or do you sit complacently with no nourishment? Where do the conditioned and unconditioned meet? Dainin asks, “Have you made your world into a vending machine?”

VERSE

RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT, ONE ... TWO...
THREE. The monkey mind is a helpful aid and a tyrannical master. Is the tail wagging the dog?

Turnings: Some Aspects of Buddhist History

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Buddhism to be a sub sect, it may be that they both are streams in a larger river. The founder of Jainism was contemporary to the founder of buddhism and they shared some of the same teachings. However, Jainism, like hinduism, did not spread past the Indian subcontinent

In a poem by Sekito Kisen, Sandokai, merging of difference and unity, it says, “branching streams flow in the darkness,” alluding to the various separate sects of buddhism, and their both interacting and separate nature. Buddhism, at its best, is a religion of tradition and transformation. To both be grounded in the past, and to be open to change on each new occasion is very important. Japan is a good example of a culture grounded in the past and open to the future. The modern trend to desire a return to a past that maybe never was, or seek a future which has no roots in the past, lead to a divisive, rather than inclusive, religious life.

2. One of the important aspects of buddhism is its cultural adaptation. That’s why people may be confused by buddhism having different color robes, languages, teaching emphasis, and all still be considered buddhist even though they are so different. My own Soto Zen tradition traveled from India, to China, to America, all

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Book Recommendations by Dairyu Wenger

Hamilton by Ron Chernow

Biography from which the Broadway plan was adapted. Story of the founding fathers with their great aspirations and glaring faults,. from the highest ideals to slavery. Well written. Who know the past was so contemporary.

Inspector Chen Mysteries by Qi Xiaolong

A modern Shanghi detective who is a poet and police detective. Inspector Chen is a combination of mystery, public critique and social conflict. It depicts a political system caught between history, human desires and high ideals. Well worth the effort.

Black Mountain by Martin Duberman

The history of an intentional community and all its ups and downs. Charismatic leaders seeking a better life and all the joys and difficulties of people living together.

different cultures with different cultural adaptations, yet each cultural tradition left its own distinguishing mark. Each of these cultural turnings had to adapt from one culture to another. When Buddhism reached China, the closest cultural referent was Taoism, so much of Buddhism was translated into Taoist terms. In China, Taoism in particular and Confucianism were changed by meeting with buddhism. In fact, at one point, there was a decision to have a Buddhist Chinese, with technical Chinese terms, to distinguish itself from Taoism. While it may have been more technically accurate, it isolated buddhism from the rest of Chinese cultural debate. In America, the closest cultural referent was perhaps psychology, so much of Buddhism was translated into psychological terms. While this may not have been completely accurate, it allowed buddhism to integrate into the cultural zeitgeist. Cultural references that have been affected by and are affecting buddhism include psychology, the quakers, and 12-step programs.

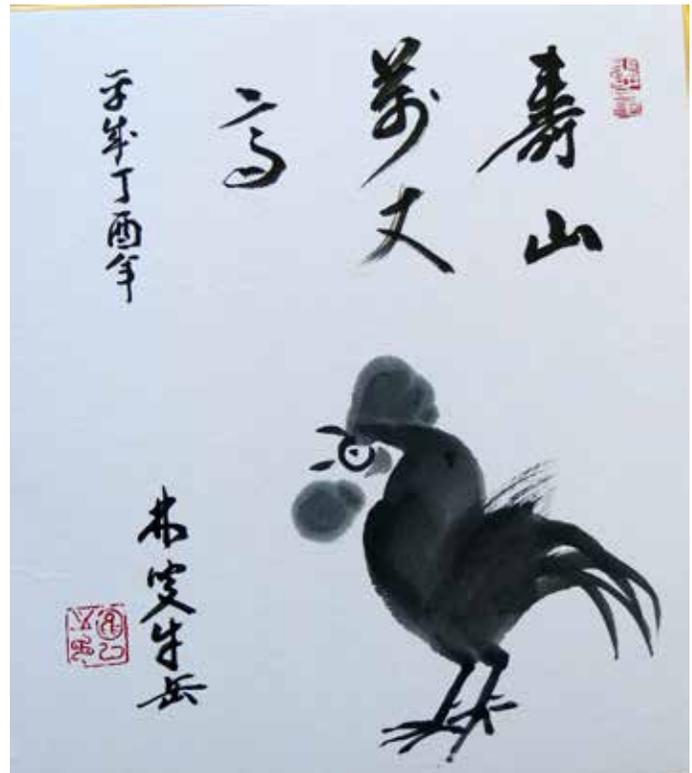
3. It is often said that buddhism in it's indian form is a religion of renunciation. This can be seen in the extensive teachings on precepts, and sexual renunciation by monks and nuns. Therefore, in India there was an emphasis on community rather than individual fulfillment.

Renunciation in the cultural realities of the west might best be described as acceptance. We need to accept our differences in order to see our oneness. So perhaps we see that renunciation and acceptance while appearing to be opposites, can often come from the same understanding.

The Dalai Lama and other eastern teachers have observed that many western students have a great self-loathing. Thus the emphasis on acceptance may be more important here.

An example of this in Japan are two ways in which meditation instruction is presented. One is to give your mind a big pasture, to neither encourage or discourage thought. This is more of an accepting way. Two is to cut off all thought. Perhaps this is more renunciation.

4. Precepts, or buddhist conduct, were redacted from a number of questions that were brought to the buddha, "So and so did such and such, was that appropriate or not?" Many of those decisions grew into a more general proscriptive preceptual guide.



Rooster by Hoitsu Suzuki

Ananda once asked shakyamuni buddha, "does a monk have to follow all the precepts?" Shakyamuni said, "only the major ones." However, Ananda never asked which were the major and which were the minor ones, so after buddha's death Mahakasyapa said, "the monk should follow all precepts because they don't know which are major and which are minor." This decision perhaps kept the buddhist religion from getting too selfrightous while keeping rigorous rules of conduct.

5. Food

Eating is an important part of every culture. While buddhism is thought of as a vegetarian tradition, its primary admonition is to eat what is served. Of course, in monasteries this meant being vegetarian, but outside of the monastery you would eat what is served. In China, due to the climate and other cultural influences, it was said that a day of not working was a day of no eating, which was a change from India where monks were not supposed to work. Also, because of the climate, the monks were given an evening meal, which was often called a medicine bowl, due to having to work in the colder climate. In India and South East Asia, they didn't eat after noon.

Another important factor in Chinese Buddhism was its dependence on the patronage of the emprial court. The fact that the Zen school was located in the countryside and did not depend on royal patronage lead to its ability

to survive persecution. In the years 574, 577, 845, and 955, buddhism was persecuted by the emperors of China, usually to weaken its influence, get more recruits for the army, and collect more taxes. Thus, all the schools of Buddhism eventually were housed in Zen temples, because all the other temples had to shut down due to lack of funding.

6. Precedence

Japan and Tibet were, until mid-20th century, the only countries not subjugated by other countries in the East. The Meiji restoration in Japan was an attempt to both westernize and remain independent from western powers.

Japan is unusual in that during the Meiji period (1868-1912), the government encouraged the clergy to marry. This was in order for the government to have more control over the clergy. It also became a precedent, when Japanese Buddhism came to America, for the clergy to be married. Of course this is a much more complicated discussion than I will present to you currently. While this was unique in Asian cultures, it foreshadowed modern developments. In non-monastic temples of Japan today, the wife of a priest is often equally important in serving the community.

Another interesting cultural Japanese precedent, when Zen Buddhism first came to 11th century Japan, was Dainichi Nonin. The founder of the Daruma school emphasized the non-duality between buddha and sentient beings, attracting many poets and painters. He was very moved by the natural world, much like the Beats in America, who also were drawn to Zen. He sent two of his disciples to China to put forth his realization to Zhuoan Deguang, who certified Nonin's enlightenment. Daruma was the first Zen school in Japan, but in 1194 the Tendai establishment shut it down for being incomprehensible. Following the decline of the school, Koun Ejo, Tettsu Gikai, and others, became an important element of Dogen's followers. It is interesting that in the 1950's and 60's, the Beat painters and poets were attracted to Zen and its emphasis on personal liberation.

It is also noteworthy that three of the major strands of Buddhism in America: Zen, Tibetan Buddhism, and South East Asian Buddhism, had three different propagation scenarios. Southeast Asian teachers mostly stayed in Southeast Asia, and their western counter-

parts studied in Asia with them, and were encouraged to adapt to Western cultural styles. Many teachers from the Zen schools of Japan and Korea came to the West and empowered their students to change slowly over time. Tibetan teachers resisted change in order to preserve their culture and religion in a time of intense persecution.

HOPE AND FEAR

What can you do when there is nothing left to do? -continued from page 1

expression of their straitened circumstances; it is also the postmodern play of satyrs, one with an oddball humor that seems in open revolt against the inevitable. With their forceful performance, the men seem to be proclaiming: Sure, everything's going downhill here, but we're alive, we're laughing. Let's enjoy that! I set out for the Athens Zen Center just a few streets away. I pass shuttered stores and once beautiful houses from the 19th century which are simply falling apart. Their facades have now become canvases for a horde of street artists who are using them to depict both their fears and hopes. Scattered among them are rather unsightly concrete buildings from the 1980s and 1990s that appear older than some of the antique ruins nearby. Yet in the midst of this urban crisis, places can still be found where life is reshaping and rewriting itself. Young people are opening cafés where the chain-smoking patrons loudly discuss current events. People laugh and flirt. The Zen Center is located above such a café, in the heart of decaying, self-reinventing Athens. It's a lively site where people learn martial arts and practice Zen.

From the very first day I was fascinated by the kindness, the individuality, the humor, the lust for life and the gentle optimism of the people I met there. And yet, every single life is part of the crisis and is unfolding in ways that were unthinkable ten years ago.

What can you do when there is nothing left to do? This question could be asked by most of the Zen practitioners I have gotten to know in Athens. What can you do when in the last eight years your parents' monthly pension has been cut from \$1,500 to \$400 and is now being halved to \$200? What are the very human fears behind those figures? What can you, a 21-year-old, do when you are told the hospital will

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probably not be able to purchase your HIV medication abroad due to Greece's capital controls and no one in the county produces it? How does a young man feel, for whom the austerity policies of the EU suddenly become life-threatening? What can you do, when you, a public servant, are laid off and then denied unemployment benefits because public servants cannot be laid off, a situation worthy of Kafka?

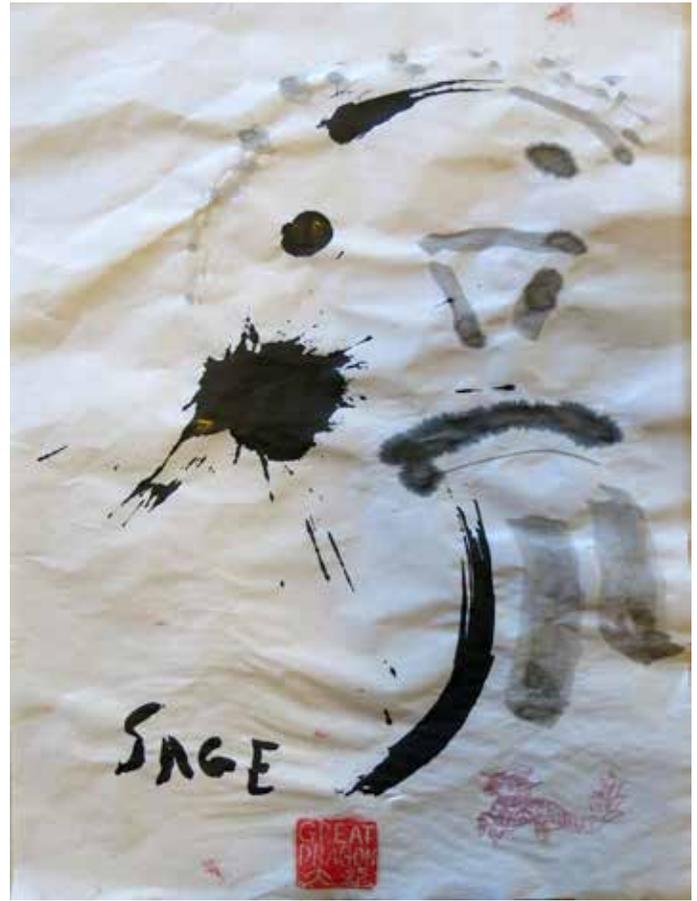
According to Zen teacher Bernie Glassman, there is something we can do when there is nothing left to do: bear witness. The practice of Zen meditation is also a form of bearing witness. We sit quietly in the midst of our experience, trying to hold on to nothing, rejecting nothing, simply observing what is there. In our retreats in Greece, these periods of sitting Zazen alternate with periods of intense listening and active participation.

Interestingly enough, in many cases a space opens, a wide, creative space in which new things can arise: long forgotten feelings of receptivity and ease that transcend the often burdensome feelings of everyday life, creative impulses in response to situations in which nothing seems possible. And not least, when we bear witness to our experience in absolute silence, it becomes increasingly clear that we do not have to identify with what we perceive.

Yes, there is a crisis taking place, and in human terms it's a catastrophe. Yet there are other things as well, transient things that are often difficult to grasp. Life's basic elements, for example: earth, air, water and temperature, in their always changing forms. These things remain untouched by the crisis; they are always there, a sort of consolation or reminder, telling us that everything is always shifting and we do not know what will be one moment from now. Yes, everything flows, everything is in flux – something taught by the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus at the same time the Buddha was sharing his insights, albeit at a remove geographically. When we entrust ourselves to the course of events, we do not gain ground to build on, but we are touched by life as it is – by its tenderness, its vulnerability, by the love it awakens. Maybe that is enough. Near the Athens Zen Center there is a phrase scrawled on a wall: "Frau Merkel, you can take everything from us, but not our nice weather." Isn't that a cause for hope?

MEMBERS OF THE ATHENS ZEN CENTER ON HOPES AND FEARS IN GREECE

How has your life changed as the crisis in Greece has unfolded?



Panayotis Panayotidis: I had to sell my business and have been employed on and off for the last five years. Whenever I have a job I feel gratitude, when not I still feel grateful for the roof over my head, the food I have, my friends and my family. I am single and have colleagues who are in a much worse situation because they have children and both they and their spouses have lost their jobs.

Manolis Illiakis: Several fears arise in everyday life. I have recurring worries about the future and my family. It's not easy to make clear-cut decisions in such a fluctuating, unstable situation. As an architect I haven't had any commissions for three years now. I have to find a new profession.

What does Zen practice give you in times when so many things – at least in the outside world – are falling apart?

Panayotis Panayotidis: Zen practice helps me stay in the moment. Throughout the day I often pause and simply become attentive. I breathe and try to maintain an upright position in life. The people I practice with give me the strength to refocus and to practice compassion, giving and gratitude.

Manolis Illiakis: I've come to understand sword master Tesshu Yamaoka's poem: Perfect when clear / Perfect when cloudy / Mount Fuji's original form /

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Never changes.

What are your hopes? What are your fears? And how are you dealing with both?

Panayotis Panayotidis: Basically, I just live day by day. Sometimes I think this economic situation will last forever and I find myself getting depressed. It paralyzes me. But then, step by step, I accept things the way they are. I try to become aware of all the things to be grateful for. I see all that I have and never really valued, things I constantly took for granted. I tell my fears “You’re not real” and I tell myself “This too shall pass.” Since good things don’t last forever, the same holds for bad things. I hope things won’t get worse. I want my country to regain its dignity. I feel sadness and compassion when I watch well-dressed men and women digging in garbage cans. What I would like is for the next generation to rediscover their hopes and dreams.

Manolis Illiakis: I mainly have economic fears and fears of getting sick. I try not to analyze them. I don’t try to manipulate them, thereby rejecting them. I try to see them as good friends instead. My hope is not to have hopes.

What do you rely on in these uncertain times, which seem to be only getting worse?

Panayotis Panayotidis: I try to focus on the positive aspects of the crisis. People are growing closer together. Pride is losing its glamour. I read yesterday that a Bavarian aristocrat raised €385,000 so he could donate it to refugees on the Greek islands. Life recycles itself and by practicing openness you can realize that refugees are part of the same whole.

Manolis Illiakis: An empty heart relinquishes fear. As with the sun, which shines on young leaves and nurtures them, the heart allows anything and rears everything. The heart that sees through evanescence becomes empty.

Harris Mitsouras: We were supposed to live like “brothers and sisters” according to the ideals of the European Union. Instead, the only thing I hear in the media nowadays is that according to northern Europe “the Greeks are lazy.” I see freedom and kindness in our society crumble away day by day. However, as Martin Luther King said, I have a dream. I still have a dharma dream. To put it in Dogen’s words, my dream is that one day we will all be able “to take a step back and thus reverse the activity of the mind that seeks happiness outside. That we’ll be able to turn our light inwards and illuminate our true face.” In my opinion, our true face is everybody’s

face: I am the Syrian refugee, I am the killer, I am the shepherd in the mountains, I am the dog that dies alone in the streets.

Deep inside everyone’s heart lies what Buddha called “basic goodness.” Nobody wants to hurt anyone else on purpose. He or she just seeks his or her happiness through “right” or “wrong” measures. When I sit still and am quiet, I can somehow perceive this knowledge deep inside my heart. Then I can forgive myself for the pain I’ve caused others willingly or unwillingly and I can – to some degree – forgive others.

In Greek, “to forgive” means “to give space.” To have the courage to be familiar with the small child in me that cries for its toys (hopes) and to be familiar with my father’s voice admonishing me (fears). When everything seems to be falling apart, Zen gives me the chance to enjoy a good cup of coffee. After all I am a Greek! May all of us live like brothers and sisters. May all of us find happiness and the causes of happiness.

Soto Zafira: The saddest facet of the so called crisis is that it somehow forces you to feel Greek. That’s sad because, though we have the means and the knowledge to think deeply – transcending borders and apparent separateness – our mind constantly relapses back into the separation of being Greek, German, French...

While most of us think we are studying dharma and have integrated it into our life, the reality is, when real life knocks on our door and confronts us with problems, we escape through the next window to spend time with our (dharma) hobby.

As western societies we consider it our legitimate right to exhaust this planet’s energy sources and create more and more garbage, while taking advantage of the weak.

The truth is: The sky of life will always create clouds. Instead of viewing them as potential thunderstorms, why don’t we understand them as “adornments in our sunset”?

