

Why We Are at War

I HAVE SEEN PARTS of myself recently that I haven't been able to see before. And when I see these parts of myself, I realize why we are at war in Iraq, why the Israelis and Palestinians may never resolve their differences, why the Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites may not be able to coexist. As I see and acknowledge these depths of darkness in myself, I begin to understand why all those who oppose each other are locked into intransigent patterns of body and mind. Then I know that I am part of all the mayhem, destruction, and ignorance of the world.

We think we come to practice to slip out of this sheaf that is our body-mind and reunite with our true body of realization. Yet our practice is to accept this mind and body as it is, to completely return to just this.

"Just this" is profound forgiveness, atonement, repentance. If we can't forgive ourselves, we will always be caught in the self-righteousness of the judging mind.

A few years ago I realized our work is to love the world as it is. That realization came forth with absolute certainty. Every

day that challenge arises within the mind that also imagines how the world could and should be improved. Until I can love this world as it is, I can't love anyone. Any other love I imagine will be contingent on conditions. I will love you if you reflect some part of me that I am willing to show. I won't love you if you reflect some part of me that is ugly. I'll only love those who bring forth my better nature.

Dogen's essay "Genjo Koan" speaks to this: "When you see forms or hear sounds fully engaging body and mind, you grasp things directly. Unlike things and their reflections in the mirror and unlike the moon and its reflection in the water, when one side is illuminated the other side is dark."

Most of the time we don't see forms or hear sounds fully engaging body and mind. When one side is illuminated, the other side is dark. We may know the other side is there, but we don't feel it. We can't quite acknowledge it. When our beautiful, generous, loving side comes up, we know the dark side is also there, but we don't acknowledge it with the same certainty as that which is appearing. When the self-justifying mind comes up, we know there's something else also, but it seems so shrunken at the time that we hardly can contact it.

I don't know how we can have a peaceful planet when we are all armed to the teeth with fear, anxiety, distress, and possessiveness.

Dogen continues: "To carry yourself forward and experience myriad things is delusion." He means that when we bring our ideas, feelings, and language to things, this produces delusion.

Each of us is a mirror, or consciousness, shining on the world, and thus what we see and reflect is our own mind. But

JUST THIS

when the myriad things come forth and experience themselves independent of my mirror, that's awakening. Yet we are all manifesting ourselves and, like Indra's net,^{*} all the jewels reflect each other. We can't be independent of each other's mirror because we are in interaction and in reflection with each other continuously.

Stephen Mitchell tells a story about when he was working with his Korean teacher, Seung Sahn. There was a stage of their relationship where they began to clash. Stephen describes about nine years of tremendous anger toward his teacher, and also he perceived great anger in his teacher. But once a year he would come to prostrate before him, to express his respect. As he did his prostrations, the anger was still there in his heart, and he saw it in Seung Sahn also. He despaired of ever being free of it. Then one year when he came up from his bow, the anger had dropped away, and he saw that in Seung Sahn the anger was also gone. He didn't know how it happened.

As I was telling this story some months ago, students were asking, what happened? Was his teacher really angry with him? What was going on? I myself wasn't sure. Then someone suggested that the teacher always reflects what's in front of him. And as long as Stephen came forth with all his anger, that's what his teacher reflected. When it dropped for Stephen, it dropped for his teacher. The mirror was empty.

My own understanding is that I don't know.