The second slogan under this third point of training the heart is famous: **Drive all blames into one.** It, too, is quite counterintuitive, quite upside down. What it is saying is: whatever happens, don't ever blame anyone or anything else, always blame only yourself. Eat the blame and it will make you strong.

There's another Zen story about this one. In Zen there's a formal eating ritual called *oryoki*. In Zen monasteries this is the way the monks eat all of their meals: in robes, seated on meditation cushions on raised platforms, with formal serving and chanting, eating in a dignified prescribed style, even washing out the bowls with water and wiping and putting them away as part of the ritual. When I was a monastic, I ate this way every day, and even now at some of our retreats we practice oryoki. At first the practice seems intimidating and overly complicated, but when you do it for a while, it becomes second nature and you see its beauty. You realize that actually it is the simplest, most elegant, and most efficient way that a group of people could eat together. In a way, it is a bit like mind training itself: it seems at first impossible and complicated, but when you get used to it, you see how beautiful and even how simple and natural it is.

In any case, once in ancient China an abbot was eating oryoki style with the monks in the meditation hall. He discovered a snake head in his soup. This was not snake soup; Zen monasteries are vegetarian. It was definitely a mistake. Probably a farmer monk out in the fields hadn't noticed that he'd cut off the head of a snake while cutting the greens, and the snake's head had found its way into the soup pot because the soup-cook monk also hadn't noticed it. Such things happen, even when you are practicing mindfulness and doing good organic farming and trying not to kill anything. But a mistake is a mistake, and a mistake that ends up in the abbot's bowl is a mistake compounded. The abbot called the *tenzo,* the head cook. "Look!" He held up the snake's head. And the tenzo, without saying a word, snatched the snake's head and swallowed it. He didn't

blame the farmer, he didn't blame the soup cook. He didn't make excuses. He didn't feel guilty or ashamed. He ate the blame. It was probably very nourishing.

Drive all blames into one is tricky because blaming ourselves, which seems to be what the slogan is recommending, is not exactly blaming ourselves in the ordinary sense. We know perfectly well how to blame ourselves. We've been doing this all of our lives, it is commonplace; we are constantly feeling guilty about everything, and if we are not guilty, we are ashamed. We don't need Buddhist slogans to tell us to do this. But clearly this is not what is meant.

Drive all blames into one means that you can't blame anyone for what happens, even if it's actually someone's fault, like the farmer's or the soup cook's. It may be their fault, but you really can't blame them. Something happened, and since it did, there is nothing else to be done but to make use of it. Everything that happens, disastrous as it may be, and no matter whose fault it is, has a potential benefit, no matter how bad it may seem at first. That's the nature of something happening, that it has a potential benefit, and it's your job to find out how to turn it into a benefit. **Drive all blames into one** means that you take the full appreciation and full responsibility for everything that arises in your life, no matter whose fault it is. This is very bad, this is not what I wanted, this brings many attendant problems. But what are you going to do with it? What can you learn from it? How can you make use of it for the path? These are the questions to ask, and answering them is entirely up to you. Furthermore, you *can* answer them; you do have the strength and the capacity. **Drive all blames into one** is a tremendous practice of cutting through the long human habit of complaining and whining, and finding on the other side of all of that the strength to turn every situation into the path.