

Questions for Reflection

Series 9, Talk 1

Here are some ideas to reflect on during the week:

1) First: In the *kanshi* entitled "Snow" Dogen says that he realized that there is no such substantial mountain which does not change in the process of the turning of the seasons. Rather **the different sceneries of each season--flowers in spring, the song of cuckoo in summer, the shining moon in autumn and the snowy mountain in winter--are themselves the true reality of mountains. And our mental conditions caused by these changes are the true reality of our lives at each moment, if we are not deceived and pulled by them.** Please stop. Describe what you see right now around you and in your heart. That would be the true reality of your life. Does it differ from how you imagine the true reality of your life?

2) Second: Many people make up stories in such a way that they can be considered good or honorable people. According to Yogacara teaching, that is the function of the seventh, the ego consciousness. This is how we see things in self-centered ways. Could you recall one or two such stories of your own to look at closely. What are the qualities in yourself that they highlight? Please pay closer attention to them and try to learn something about yourself that you were not formerly aware of or not as highly aware of.

3) Third: Why was the expression "*Plum blossoms amid the fallen snow,*" so important to Dogen's beloved teacher Rujing?

4) Fourth: Why is it that we don't practice zazen for any reason?

5) Fifth: When we study Buddhism our heightened awareness of impermanence, no-self, and ego-centered motivations can prompt us to want to get rid of them. Then we're told not to use zazen for that. So what should we do? What would be our correct attitude and state of mind toward ourselves and our lives given the truth of the above situation?