

Talk 6 Series 9
Questions for Reflection

Here are four ideas for reflection during the week:

1) First: Regarding the teaching--FROM THE HUNDRED-FOOT POLE, TAKE ANOTHER STEP--the pole is the Self and the step means a step forward. So the teaching is that in practice there is no rest (outside of a conscious rest practice). Weaning ourselves away from self-clinging IS really hard. Can you name something you have done with this in mind? If not, can you think of what that would be for you and then experiment with doing it?

2) Second: Why do you think that Dogen introduced the last line in his poem with three other lines about vague boundaries or the interdependent whole? Or Rujing's words, "Everything is grasped in the palm of South Mountain." How does this idea that we're not going anywhere differ from what you have always thought about death and dying?

3) Third: Dogen's descriptions of birds flying and fish swimming are actually descriptions of zazen. We don't actually do zazen. Zazen does zazen. But we need to be present for it. And we need to continually push our zazen practice forward (take another step). If you haven't done that recently, can you imagine what you might do in an effort in that direction? What would be your next step?

4) Fourth: We have had many examples of kanshi in this series. Why don't you try writing a few of your own? Typically they will have between four to eight lines. Study the rhythms here and see what happens:

"Knowing that friends are coming, I use my foot to clean around the wicker gate"

Why complain of loneliness and seclusion when a hermit's life is what you seek?

Sparrows frolic, roosters crow, so what?

To be one of a tribe of mountain birds floating by a cliff,

You needn't be a mountain bird.