

Questions for Reflection
Talk 3 Series 13

For your reflection during the week here are four major ideas contained in the discussion of the First Bodhisattva Embracing Action, Offering. Each of them is as difficult to enact as it is powerful as a teaching. Please choose one and think of one change that you could make right now so that your life would BE with that teaching more intimately. Write your idea for change down and pay attention to how it goes. In this way you will uncover your present obstacles thereby beginning the actual process of making these Actions part of your own life and practice as a Zen Buddhist.

I. The only way we can repay the debt of gratitude is to live an unselfish way and try to be helpful to other people we encounter. That is, we offer the same support as we received to others. In the case of Buddhist practitioners, we practice buddhadharma for the sake of buddhadharma. This is what Dogen Zenji means when he says, "The principle here is to maintain the practice so that the life of every day is not neglected and not wasted on private pursuits."

II. Because we all have a tendency to gain something desirable and not to lose anything we possess, we need to actively practice not to gain and to lose.

III. When either giving or receiving, by letting go of egocentricity and being giving or receiving, we go beyond the separation of self and all other beings. We then actively participate in the network of interdependent origination.

IV. "We offer ourselves to ourselves, and we offer others to others" means we entrust ourselves to ourselves and entrust others to others. We refrain even from controlling ourselves as well as others. This is what we do in our zazen. In zazen, the self settles down within the self and others become as they are. This is much different from our usual way of seeing ourselves with greed and anger or hatred. Zazen allows us to give up our usual struggle between who we are and who we want to be, and it frees us from our expectations of how others should behave.