

Questions for Reflection
Talk 1 Series 14

Here is an idea for your reflection during the week:

Each of the six main points from today's talk are important basic truths in the practice of Zen. Please pick two of them and write a journal-style entry about how this teaching applies to your own life. For example, if you choose #2, you might describe an occasion where you had projected yourself outwards and were comparing yourself to others or judging yourself compared with your ideas about how you think you should be in the world. After describing the situation as you see it projecting yourself outwards, describe the same situation from another point of view, one where you do not project yourself outwards. Stay with it till you feel you really understand.

- 1) First: Dogen says, "Do not regard the capacity to expound the Dharma as superior and the capacity to listen to the Dharma as inferior. If those who speak are venerable, those who listen are venerable as well."
- 2) Second: If you reflect on yourself, that self is not your true self any more. You cannot project yourself as some objective thing to think about.
- 3) Third: As with zazen itself, for Dogen the ritual of listening to the teaching is not undertaken as a means to the goal of awakening or understanding, but simply as an enactment of the buddhahood already present.
- 4) Fourth: To have some deep feeling about Buddhism is not the point; we just do what we should do like eating supper and going to bed. This is Buddhism.
- 5) Fifth: To make our effort, moment after moment, is our way. In an exact sense the only thing we actually can study in our life is that on which we are working in each moment. We cannot even study Buddha's words. To study Buddha's words in their exact sense means to study them through some activity which you face moment after moment. So we should be concentrated with our full mind and body on what we do; and we should be faithful, subjectively and objectively, to ourselves and especially to our feelings.

6) Sixth: Zen is not some kind of excitement, but concentration on our usual everyday routine. Some people start to practice just out of curiosity and they only make themselves busier. If your practice makes you worse it is ridiculous.