

**The Genuine Within Us    June 23, 2010   Olympia Zen Center   Eido Frances Carney**

I want to speak about this particular subject which I have been thinking about this week and then low and behold, there was a wonderful entry in a book that I use sometimes to inspire the writing of poetry or journaling or writing of some kind. It's called *An Almanac for the Soul*. Today it had exactly the topic.

Today's entry in the Almanac:

*Listen to the sound of the genuine within you. Small, Einstein said, is the number of them that see with their own eyes and feel with their own heart. How to be one of them? The black theologian Howard Thurman said that there is something in each one of us that waits and listens to the sound of genuine in ourselves, and it is the only true guide you'll ever have. If you cannot hear it, you will all of your lives spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls. You will find that when you leave here there are so many noises and competing demands in your lives that many of you will never find out who you are. So I hope you will learn to keep quiet enough to hear the sound of the genuine within yourselves so that you can hear it in other people too.*  
"The Well-Lived Life is a Search for Substance" by Marion Wright Edelman

So, if I were wise I would just say, well that's enough talking for tonight! I needn't say another word, it's rather a beautiful entry. Nice to sit with and just take in.

I wanted to speak also about a Koan. Koans have to have practical meaning for me, and they have to be able to be used in everyday life. If they are just esoteric sweet stories, they don't make sense. They have to be something that we can apply.

*A monk asked Yunmen: "What is talk, that goes beyond Buddhas and Patriarchs?"  
Men said: "Cake!"*

Then Dogen Zenji:

*To penetrate one thing does not take away it's inherent characteristics. Just as penetration does not limit one thing, it does not make one thing unlimited. To try to make it unlimited is a hindrance.*

So, I want to talk about this Genuine in us. First of all, the monk asked Yunmen, "What is talk that goes beyond Buddha's and Patriarchs?" And Men said "Cake!" Men's answer meant just One Thing. To penetrate one thing Dogen says doesn't take away from itself. To check in, to look into the Genuine of this One Thing does not take away from ourselves, just as penetration does not limit one thing, it does not make One Thing unlimited. To penetrate ourselves does not limit ourselves, nor does it make us unlimited. To try to make it unlimited is a hindrance.

I know we often sit and talk about, the importance of Awakening and the importance of Realization, the importance of understanding and coming to really know the Big Self. Yet I can't

think of anything more important than to know our Genuine Selves. The Genuine, to know what it is, to move from a genuine point in ourselves. I can't think of anything more essential. Even if we should never know what Kensho means, the genuine in ourselves is the most important thing. When we come to Zen practice we are a little bit befuddled because we have this problem of the relationship of Teacher. We have this problem of Teacher in front of us and so it's a little bit hard to know to figure out what this relationship is all about. But the job of the Teacher is indeed to stand in front of us so that we cannot escape from looking in the mirror to ultimately know what is genuine. It is not the job of the Teacher to remake us into her or his own likeness. It's this One Thing, always this One Thing, everything as one thing. The practice of one pointedness.

And our job as students is to sort this piece out within ourselves, to really find what is Genuine in us? And that we do not give away, we never give this away. We never give our Genuine place away for anything, for anyone in any relationship. We must stand on that Genuine point. In all of our movements in our lives, we come up against all kinds of people, and all kinds of people will never fail to have an opinion about us! No matter what, someone will have an opinion about us. Almost every time we pass, someone will have an opinion about us. We have an opinion about everybody! If we are good Zen-practitioners we don't engage in this. However it's pretty common in society to think "that person doesn't belong, that person is poorly dressed, that person is too fat, that person is too skinny..." It's endless. What is Genuine in us has no party to that kind of manipulation of ourselves or others, wherever we go. We don't give this authentic away because of other people. As a matter of fact, that Genuine is necessary for True Meeting. That Genuine point must be there in order to have real relations, real relationships, so that we aren't making ourselves up to please somebody that we imagine thinks a certain thing about us, that may not at all be true.

So, finding the genuine is pretty important. And sometimes we come through situations in our lives that may unseat us, that may make us a little bit wobbly about knowing just who we are and knowing where this Genuine point is in us. And if we lose that connection we must come back to that very search for what is Genuine, what is Authentic in us. It's the most important thing!

In our practice we have this One Point, always One Thing. There's always just One Thing. There is always One Thing of chanting, there is One Thing of bowing, there is One Thing of Zazen. There is always One Thing. And it is within the forms of practice that allow us to see and to find that Genuine Point, to find what is Authentic in us, to know for a moment One Complete Bow, to know for a moment One Complete Chant, with One Thing, doing One Thing. And it is through this practice over and over again that we begin to sort that out, we begin to discover this rich source within us. So when Men answers "Cake," he is saying One Thing! Just One Thing.

One Thing is the Zen Circle, always teaching us one thing, the Empty Circle. Realizing the Skandas, is doing One Thing. One Thing and understanding the myriad things as One Thing.

Dogen Zenji teaches about the spiritual agents, and the spiritual powers and the characteristics of Enlightenment, and The Noble Eightfold Path. The spiritual agents are Trust, Zeal, Reflection,

Contemplation and Wise Discernment. So I thought about this question of Trust in relationship to the development of understanding ourselves in the Nature of the Authentic. Trust is deeply necessary, the practice of Trust, trusting ourselves is the most important point in Trust. Trusting ourselves even when we are betrayed in our relationships, to continue to trust ourselves, to Trust the Genuine within us. To trust practice as that which is the best Teacher of the Genuine. This is of course in a climate of such profound mistrust in our society, mistrust of our Government, mistrust of our partners, our teachers, just about everything. We have crisis in terms of trust, so it behooves us to restore a sense of trust in ourselves. There is hardly anybody who has not been betrayed at one time or other in their lives, by someone, something, some relationship and so we know what it means to loose trust. We know it very directly. But this Point of Trust within our own selves must be kept. We really have to be true to ourselves so that we don't mistrust our Self. The Self that carries us, that carries our whole lives, that allows us to walk in the very best possible way in our lives.

We have to Trust that we can walk without holding on to anything. When we sit on the cushion, we sit with nothing, we don't pack a whole bunch of leaning places around us. Nothing to lean on, we come into the Zendo without encumbrance. We sit on a Zafu as if we are sitting on the whole world. Just This, right here, nothing supporting us, except Emptiness. And the True Genuine spirit and the Authentic Self that sits here.

Just to realize that we come and we have all sorts of accoutrements around us in our lives, all kinds of supports and props, endless bags of props. And yet on the cushion, we bring nothing. No props, just ourselves here. It's such a rich place then to examine what is Genuine, to examine where that place of Genuine rest, that place that we know we can return to, that allows us actually to be buffeted when we go out into that noisy world. And yet we can stand firm and clear and at peace with ourselves because we know where that is.

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