

AWAKENED HEART

Introduction and Overview

Overview for teachers

This course introduces the mahayana view to beginning students. Because of its introductory nature, it is particularly important to invoke the non-theistic, non-conceptual approach—else students will think that buddhanature exists!

Topics include the transition from hinayana, discovery of bodhicitta, spiritual friend, bodhisattva vow, and bodhisattva activity—wisdom and compassion—through studying each of the paramitas.

Descriptive blurb for publicity/brochures for students

Through meditation and seeing our basic nature, we are able to drop the inward struggle, extend out, and see all experience without the overlay of our own concepts. The experience of basic nature brings more warmth and openness, then leads to a connection with a spiritual friend who is an inspiration and example for real compassion and true warriorship, which is practicing and living for the benefit of others.

Reading List

Class 1: Transition to Mahayana

Student readings:

- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 77-109

Instructor readings: the above plus

- *1974 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 30-38
- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, Talk 1

Class 2: Discovery of Awakened Heart

Student readings:

- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 19-29

Instructor readings: the above plus

- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, Talk 2
- *1974 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 114-125 (optional)
- *1975 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 121-130 (optional)

Class 3: Inspiration and Commitment in the Mahayana

Student readings:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 103-110, 127-134

Instructor readings: the above plus

- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, Talk 3
- *1975 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 131-141, 163-175

Class 4: Bodhisattva Activity

Student readings:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 113-118
- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 35-64
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 167-207 (optional)

Instructor readings: the above plus

- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, Talks 4 & 5
- *1973 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 200-216
- *1974 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 114-152

Class 5: Prajna and Compassion

Student readings:

- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 207-215
- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 106-113
- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 65-74

Instructor readings: the above plus

- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 187-206
- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, Talk 6

CLASS 1

TRANSITION TO MAHAYANA

Student readings:

- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 77-109

Instructor readings: the above plus

- *1974 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 30-38
- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, Talk 1

Overview of talk

1. Introduction: general information about the class
2. Attitude toward studying buddhism
 - a. Buddhism is not an entertaining structure of concepts.
 - b. What are we studying in buddhism?
 - c. Why is practice emphasized?
 - d. Studying ourselves is not narcissism.
 - e. Practice is not something we do *after* we get ourselves together.w
3. Hinayana background
 - a. What we understand in hinayana
 - materialism
 - impermanence
 - suffering and egolessness
 - b. What are the results of practice in hinayana?
 - acceptance of the three marks
 - delight in practice
 - taking the refuge vow
4. Potential for mahayana: questioning our existence is the seed of mahayana

TALK OUTLINE

Introduction: explanation of course format

1. Number of meetings, when and where
2. Books needed: *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, *The Myth of Freedom*, and *Meditation in Action*
3. Importance of practice in relating properly to subject matter. Announce forty-minute sitting before each class.

Attitude toward studying buddhism

1. Study is not conceptualization. Studying buddhism does not mean constructing elaborate conceptual theories. It is beside the point to make interesting half-baked ideas fit together in an intellectually or aesthetically pleasing structure.
2. The field of study is ourselves. Our own experience is the fuel for our study. We do not need to create anything. Instead, we need to get in touch with what is already there.
3. Study makes sense only in the context of practice.
 - a. The teachings developed from people's practice of meditation for over 2,500 years. The Buddha did not think up the teachings and then practice. They developed from his own practice and experience of himself and the world.
 - b. Through practice we learn to identify with our experience rather than isolate our experience into a conceptual scheme.
4. Studying ourselves does not mean self-indulgence of self-preoccupation. Wallowing in our neurosis is often an escape from feeling the texture and immediacy of experience.
5. Practice begins now.
 - a. We might think we would like to develop a direct relationship with the world, but first we must get beyond our neurosis and get our own life straightened out. But it does not work that way. Working with our present situation and problems through practice is the path which itself is developing a direct relationship with the world.
 - b. The practice undermines our notions of who we think we are and what we think we can do. It becomes difficult to define ourselves as "this" kind of person, as having "this kind of solid problem."

Hinayana background

1. By hearing, contemplating and practising hinayana, we realize how our lives are motivated by our avoidance of the three marks of existence.
 - a. We see how, by trying to increase pleasure and avoid pain, we involve ourselves in a continual struggle which is itself painful.
 - b. We see how shifty and impermanent our minds are.
 - c. We see how hollow our attempts to maintain ourselves are.
2. Through practice, we learn to accommodate that "wound" without scratching, without adding further struggle onto an existing struggle.
 - a. This acceptance of the problem produces a feeling of choicelessness. We realize there are no alternatives or side tracks. Even our attempts to avoid the three marks become further reminders of them.
 - b. However, rather than being a grim, martyr-like situation, we feel some delight in the realization that we could give up struggling all the time and accept our world.
 - c. This realization is formalized in the hinayana by taking the refuge vow, where we acknowledge that we are leaving the familiar home ground of habitual neurotic patterns and become "refugees" on the path of meditation which is not another cosy nest.

Potential for mahayana

1. How do we know the situation is inescapable? How do we experience dissatisfaction?
2. The very fact that there is a question, that we can experience sharply, is some clarity of vision, some intelligence and concern.
3. This is the seed of awakened heart, the possibility of the mahayana, which is the open way.

In the next class, we will discuss awakened heart and its relation to practice.

CLASS 2

DISCOVERY OF AWAKENED HEART

Student readings:

- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 19-29

Instructor readings: the above plus

- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, Talk 2
- *1974 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp.114-125 (optional)
- *1975 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 121-130 (optional)

Overview of talk

1. Review of previous talk: mahayana is based on the discovery of buddha nature.
2. Discovering awakened heart
 - a. Problems and questions are an expression of potential richness and intelligence.
 - b. Buddha nature is not dependent on moods. In that sense it is unconditional.
3. Cultivating awakened heart. Meditation makes it unavoidable.
4. The nature of awakened heart
 - a. intelligence, or prajna
 - b. warmth, or compassion
 - c. spaciousness, or shunyata

TALK OUTLINE

Review

The mahayana path is based on discovering our potential buddhahood, our awakened heart or buddha nature. In this talk, we will discuss how such a discovery occurs and the nature of awakened heart.

Discovering awakened heart

1. Normally we approach restlessness, dissatisfaction and searching from a poverty mentality. "Why do I have these problems? How can I get rid of this?"
2. However, the very fact that we can question our experience is a sign of our intelligence.
3. Through practice, we develop a sensitivity to our experience, so we may feel difficulties even more vividly. At the same time, we develop accommodation for our experience, so we do not get caught up or enslaved by it. This, too, is a sign of some innate intelligence in us.
4. So the fact that we seem to have garbage or "manure" in our life is not itself a problem. If we reject or are put off by the manure, we are creating a poverty approach: "There is some area that I cannot handle." However, if we "save" our manure and let it ferment without disturbing it, we enrich our experience and nourish the field of bodhi.
5. Through practice, we learn to approach situations from a mentality of wealth. Difficulties do not have to be a drain on our resources. They can be a delightful challenge that we can welcome as a further opportunity to express our wealth.
6. It is important to realize that the wealth is "unconditioned." It is not dependent on a set of conditions or a mood: very happy, sad, confident, bored, excited. This wealth is the workability of all of these.
7. Therefore we can connect with this wealth in many situations.

Cultivating awakened heart

Therefore, we need to practice meditation. Meditation is the only way we can make a direct, uncluttered and simple relationship with our experience. By

"letting be" with awareness, we can accept ourselves without any need for confirmation.

The nature of awakened heart

Awakened heart contains three different qualities: intelligence, warmth, and spaciousness.

1. *Intelligence, or prajna.* This is an inquisitive attitude and willingness to see without judgement. "Why is water wet?" "What is there when I open my eyes?"
2. *Warmth, or compassion.* This is a sense of softness, vulnerability, and willingness to be touched by the world. This soft spot comes from not closing ourselves off from what happens around us. Therefore we can communicate genuinely with others. Such sympathy for others can only develop from maitri, or friendliness toward ourselves.
3. *Spaciousness, or shunyata.* This is the fact that we cannot pin down awakened heart. We cannot make it into some external support for our sense of existence. Buddha nature is not some external "thing" that can be grasped or gained. It is the essential nature of our mind after it has been stripped of ego's games.

In the next talk, we will discuss how our buddha nature can be worked with and developed.

CLASS 3

INSPIRATION AND COMMITMENT IN THE MAHAYANA

Student readings:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 103-110, 127-134

Instructor readings: the above plus

- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, Talk 3
- *1975 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 131-141, 163-175

Overview of talk

1. Review. Where does mahayana inspiration come from?
2. Inspiration. Aloneness is two-edged:
 - a. giving up comforting ourselves
 - b. aloneness becomes wealth
3. Commitment
 - a. Why is it necessary? It keeps us from getting sidetracked by:
 - the twisting of prajna
 - the twisting of compassion
 - b. Bodhisattva vow
 - Commitment is expressed by the bodhisattva vow.
 - What is the bodhisattva vow?
4. Spiritual friend
 - a. Why do we need a spiritual friend at all?
 - b. Qualities of a kalyanamitra
 - c. What is our relationship with the kalyanamitra and why is it important?

TALK OUTLINE

Review

Inspiration in the mahayana comes from our glimpse that awake is not a myth. It is possible. Through practice we realize that awakened heart is natural to us and can be cultivated further.

Inspiration

The experience of inspiration of the mahayana is two-edged.

1. The glimpse of awakened heart reveals that ego is not a real basis for our life. Because we give up constant attempts to comfort and reassure ourselves, we experience aloneness.
2. Instead of being depressing, there is a sense of being unburdened of ego's petty, cramped and fearful pursuits. Our sense of aloneness becomes wealth because we can develop the confidence that we do not need to support and justify ourselves. When we are totally alone and without support, we realize that we have nothing to lose. We develop fearlessness.

Commitment

1. Given our inspiration to continue, we need some sort of commitment to keep us from being sidetracked.
 - a. We can be sidetracked by pulling back from genuine communication with others because it feels too naked.
 - b. We can use others as an escape from the necessity of mindfulness and insight. Always being with others, we smooth over the sharp edges of our lives.
2. Bodhisattva vow
 - a. In the mahayana, commitment is expressed by the bodhisattva vow.
 - b. The bodhisattva is one who fearlessly treads the open path. He is willing to share his sanity with others. He is not put off by his or others' neurosis, but accepts obstacles as challenges on the path.
 - c. The bodhisattva vow is a commitment not to pull back from

working with others and to deepen the practice of sitting on which it is based.

- d. In this case, commitment is not a sense of obligation and drudgery. Instead, it is a discovery that situations are workable and interesting, which produces delight.
 - e. *Example:* It is like being let out of a dark, lonely dungeon. We might feel the light is too intense and would like to crawl back to our hole. But as our eyes get accustomed, we realize how much there is to do and how delightful it is to be able to do it.
3. So we commit ourselves to a path of directness and warmth.
- a. Warmth. Because we do not need to protect our territory, we can afford to open to others.
 - b. Directness. We do not need to look over our shoulder when we relate to others. We can meet them directly because we are not protecting ourselves: "Am I manipulating?" "Am I making the right impression?" We see what is happening clearly.

Spiritual friend

- 1. Given some sense of inspiration and commitment, we may still hesitate. "What do I do now?"
- 2. What we need is a teacher. However, this person has to be someone more than a mere transmitter of guidelines, rules and information. That person must be someone who embodies the mahayana and yet with whom we can have a strong personal connection. In the mahayana, this person is called *kalyanamitra*, or spiritual friend.
 - a. Because this person embodies the vision of the mahayana, the spiritual friend is extremely impressive and awesome as a thoroughly accomplished example of wakefulness. To see his or her unending ability to deal with situations directly and warmly is very inspiring.
 - b. At the same time, this is an eye-level friendly relationship. We have some confidence that the awake quality we have experienced is no different from that manifested by the teacher. We are sharing the same path. This is, perhaps, the first person we could have a direct, awake relationship with.
 - c. Because it is a personal relationship, the whole path becomes less

abstract to us. It is like the difference between reading about a meal and actually sitting down to eat.

- d. The spiritual friend is friendly, but directly or indirectly always throws us back on our own resources, which is a powerful gift. The spiritual friend generously serves as a mirror for our own confusion and sanity without self-justification. By being open and direct, the spiritual friend offers us the opportunity to be as we are.

TALK 4 BODHISATTVA ACTIVITY

Student readings:

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 113-118
- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 35-64
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 167-207 (optional)

Instructor readings: the above plus —

- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, Talks 4 & 5
- *1973 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 200-216
- *1974 Hinayana-Mahayana Transcripts*, pp. 114-152

General approach

First discuss the compassionate approach, then the paramitas in general. The presentation of paramitas might focus especially on generosity, then on discipline and patience. The other paramitas could be dealt with more briefly. The main point is to communicate the compassionate spirit and skilfulness of the bodhisattva, rather than to offer a technical rundown of the path. Due to the length of the talk, you may want to present some of the paramitas at the beginning of Talk 5.

Overview of talk

1. Review.
 - a. Shunyata is not cold and hollow. Without preconceptions, the world becomes spacious and rich.
 - b. Bodhisattva action is based on shunyata. Without shunyata:
 - actions based on "good" and "bad"
 - no direct relationship with situations
 - solidity of "self" and "other"
 - no true compassion
 - c. Compassionate action is based on practice and is not self-conscious.
2. What is the definition of "paramita"?
3. What are the first five paramitas?
 - a. dana paramita, or transcendent generosity
 - b. shila paramita, or transcendent discipline
 - c. kshanti paramita, or transcendent patience

- d. virya paramita, or transcendent exertion
- e. dhyana paramita, or transcendent meditation

TALK OUTLINE

Review

1. Shunyata is not something cold and desolate.
 - a. When studying the idea of groundlessness or emptiness, it might seem that everything becomes cold and hollow.
 - b. This is not the case. Being completely present without preconceptions creates space to see what is going on around you. This openness makes communication and compassion possible.
2. The bodhisattva's action is based on shunyata.
 - a. Without shunyata as a basis, actions would be coming out of habitual thought patterns, such as "right" and "wrong," "good" and "bad."
 - b. Without shunyata, there is no clarity or direct relationship with situations because there are continuous reference points to our own little world.
 - c. Shunyata realization cuts through ego and others as one's solidified projections.
 - d. *Image:* Like a fish cannot exist without water, compassion cannot exist without shunyata.
3. The connection between the paramitas and practice.
 - a. There is a constant ground of awareness which has developed in sitting practice, a quick glimpse of awareness which leads to compassionate action. It is not a self-conscious attempt to be compassionate. There is just glimpse, then compassion.
 - b. All the paramitas spring from the awareness which is developed in practice. They are extensions of practice: meditation in action.

The meaning of paramita

1. Paramita literally means "the other shore." "Para" is "other," and "mita" is "shore."
2. By practising the paramitas, we pass beyond the confusion world to the "other shore" of awakening. This is the practice of a would-be bodhisattva.
3. For a full-fledged bodhisattva whose life expresses the other shore, paramitas are his natural activity.
4. They are "paramita" because there is no reference to a solid "I" or "other" to be congratulated or blamed.

5. Transcendent action does not mean a high-flying, trippy approach, but transcending habitual neurosis which can only occur through realization of shunyata.

Dana paramita, or transcendent generosity

1. Bodhisattva activity is a combination of maitri and generosity. It is a journey outward: communication. Generosity is the foundation of all the paramitas, and all the paramitas express various forms of generosity.
2. Invite all sentient beings as your guests.
 - a. The bodhisattva realizes the preciousness and impermanence of all relationships.
 - b. The bodhisattva puts the needs, both material and spiritual, of his guests before his own.
 - c. The bodhisattva does not try to seduce guests into his territory for personal benefit, or try to latch onto the world of the guest to ease his own loneliness.
 - d. Being able to have guests is an expression of our own dignity and richness, and the way we treat them acknowledges and brings out their dignity and wealth.
 - e. Those in close relationships, like our husband or wife, are also our guests. Imagine the sanity of the world if we could treat all beings as our guests.
3. Generosity involves both material things and the teachings.
 - a. The bodhisattva does not make a fortress of his understanding or his wealth. He shares his sanity without being secretive or possessive about his teacher or the teachings. He does not feel that if he gives something away, this will impoverish him. He has a fundamental feeling of richness which is not threatened by openness.
 - b. He not only gives out, but opens himself to the irritation of neurosis. He is brave and cheerful about accommodating and working with others.
 - c. When he gives, he does not conceptualize about a giver, receiver, or the act of giving. The whole situation is ventilated by egolessness. This is called "threefold purity."

Shila paramita, or transcendent discipline

1. The discipline of a bodhisattva is not a slavish adherence to rules. It is a direct response to a situation which is seen clearly. The result of such an action is benefit to oneself and others.
2. The scriptures described the bodhisattva discipline as a natural adherence to right conduct. The basis of this is bodhichitta, an awakened heart.
 - a. Right conduct involves an awareness of situations. For instance, not aggressively pushing one's point of view on others, especially if the listener is uninterested.
 - b. Bodhisattva discipline is also not holding back one's insight. If one is asked, one communicates directly and precisely without trying to protect himself or the other person from the truth.
 - c. For a bodhisattva, discipline is not a scheme. He does not sit around planning his next bodhisattva action. He does not pat himself on the back or keep track of "good deeds," but relates simply and spontaneously because he is soaked in bodhichitta.
 - d. All these express the ability:
 - to correct oneself and cut ego when one tends to get carried away with oneself;
 - to step beyond hesitation and just relate to the situation when one feels one is losing one's grip.

Kshanti paramita, transcendent patience

1. The bodhisattva's patience is not ignorant perseverance, a beast of burden suffering stupidly.
2. It is a further expression of discipline, a sense of nonaggression and spaciousness which lets situations develop naturally.
 - a. It is not an impulsive action which lack clarity, constantly pushing for the way we feel things ought to be.
 - b. Patience is an expression of gentleness toward the environment, patience involves a sense of humour. When there is a sense of humour there is delight in the way things are happening, a light touch.

Virya paramita, transcendent energy

1. Without energy, true patience cannot develop. Patience could become a lack of wholehearted involvement. Energy is the spark of joy which leaps into communication.
2. Energy or industriousness for the sake of sentient beings is a delight in continuously exerting oneself. It is a kind of upward vision which implies no complaint, cheerfulness, which is not intimidated by difficult or neurotic situations.
3. The bodhisattva does not retreat from situations, but remains on the spot with whatever is happening.
4. This attitude is also expressed in the way he perseveres in his own practice: with delight and without seeking highlights or some kind of goal.

Dhyana paramita, transcendent meditation

1. Because the bodhisattva is motivated by bodhichitta, he develops ongoing meditation which does not dwell anywhere but deals with actual life situations. The continuity of such meditation is centreless awareness. The meditator is not watching himself acting meditatively, nor does he comment on his meditation.
2. Meditation is not motivated by avoidance of life, trying to develop trance or bliss states which would only lead to the god realm.
3. The meditative awareness of dhyana paramita coordinates and integrates all the other paramitas.

Summary

1. We have discussed the way a bodhisattva works with the world, the qualities of his nature. When we first take the vow, we obviously are not expressing bodhisattva activity all the time. But working with the paramitas is a leap in that direction. You pretend that you can do it, and the vow keeps you from slipping back into a self-centred approach.
2. However, we need to guard against:
 - a. overextending ourselves to others, which leads to forgetting to take care of our own bodies or continue our own practice. Compassion

begins at home.

- b. excitement leading to the desire to convert everybody, which lacks the softness and spacious vision.
3. Next week we will discuss the two guiding lights of the bodhisattva path, without which all the paramitas are useless: prajna and compassion.

CLASS 5

PRAJNA AND COMPASSION

Student readings:

- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 207-215
- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 106-113
- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 65-74

Instructor readings:

- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 187-206
- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, Talk 6

General approach

The last talk should reconnect students to their present path: meditation and making friends with themselves. Even though they are inspired by the mahayana, there are no short cuts. The path is to work with one's present state of mind and life situation. Making friends with oneself begins with facing the less pleasant, confused aspects of one's mind. This is positive, since it is the initial expression of the inquisitiveness and openness of buddha nature. When one acknowledges the universality of buddha nature, one does not need to struggle to protect it, but can extend it to others.

Overview of talk

1. Review and introduction
 - a. Paramitas arise from practice.
 - b. Prajna and threefold purity
2. Prajna
 - a. How prajna operates in hinayana.
 - b. How prajna operates in mahayana.
 - Discovery of shunyata
 - Prajna is the "eye" of paramitas
3. Compassion
 - a. Compassion is working for others.
 - b. Compassion and prajna work together
 - compassion leads to prajna
 - prajna leads to compassion
 - prajna without compassion: cold intellectualism
 - compassion without prajna: idiot compassion

4. Conclusion

TALK OUTLINE

Review and introduction

1. The paramitas all arise from practice. Without sitting practice these actions become either theoretical ideals or busy-body do-good morality.
2. .Sitting practice also gives birth to prajna, or transcendental knowledge, which sees groundless of oneself and others. Through prajna we understand the threefold purity which allows the paramitas to be enlightened activity instead of mere morality. We will discuss prajna and how it relates to compassion.

Prajna

1. Prajna sees the groundlessness of concepts and fixed ways of dealing with the world.
 - a. We first awaken prajna in the hinayana path when we begin to realize that suffering and its avoidance permeate our life, that everything is impermanent, and that we have no solid self.
 - b. Through further meditation and extending ourselves into the world in the mahayana, we see that our whole reality is empty, without basis or foundation.
 - "Empty" means without any veil of concepts. Usually we wall paper our versions, desires, and concepts over the way things are. "What does this situation mean to me, what is this person in relation to this model?" We take the wallpaper for the wall and thereby cause confusion for ourselves and others.
 - "Without basis or foundation" means that things are fundamentally understood in the present in and of themselves, and not by case history or projection. Though our desire is to see situations in terms of some safe guiding principle or some master plan, there is no plan or overarching principle to which everything may be subordinated.
2. Prajna is the "eye" of the other paramitas.
 - a. The other paramitas are like blind men without prajna to guide them.
 - b. Prajna destroys any conceptualizations concerning giver, recipient,

and act of giving.

- c. It see through any project or plan-oriented mentality we might wish to associate with the paramitas and allows situations to be dealt with directly.

Compassion

1. Compassion is our instinctive warmth that arises from sitting practice and mahayana orientation.
 - a. It needs to be expressed as working for others' benefit. Otherwise it is an abstraction. We might feel warmly towards others, but if we are still stingy, that is not compassion.
 - b. Without compassion, the whole path just becomes a slick self-improvement scheme.
2. Compassion and prajna work together.
 - a. Through compassion we begin to surrender our territory and extend ourselves to others. This forces us to drop our expectations, hopes, and concepts, thereby giving rise to prajna.
 - b. Prajna, cutting through our preconceptions, allows us to communicate directly, to be affected by them and to help them intelligently.
 - c. Without compassion, prajna becomes mere intellectual cutting, basically destructive inwardly-turned approach.
 - d. Without prajna, compassion becomes blind and purely emotional, trying to be kind without understanding what is appropriate. This is what is called "idiot compassion."

Conclusion

During this class we have gained some perspective of the open path of the mahayana. Whether it becomes real inspiration and guidance, or just more conceptual baggage, depends on our practice and willingness to work with others.