

Trust in Mind IV
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Good evening, bodhisattvas!

Tonight I'm going to spend the last bit of time on the *Xinxinming*, which is an early Chinese poem that expresses a lot of the Chan ideas about duality and nonduality. *Xinxinming* can be translated as "Trust in Mind" and Chan, for those of you who don't know, is the Chinese pronunciation of the word that's pronounced 'zen' in Japanese. I'm going to pick a few themes I want to make sure we touch on before we depart the *Xinxinming*. Also, I know that some people have found it helpful and interesting to live with the text over these last weeks, so anything anybody want to say about that would be great.

If you had to boil down the message of "Trust in Mind" it would be about duality and living in dualism, by which it means having a habit of dividing things into camps, so that there's good and bad, right and wrong, things I like and things I don't like, and also that there's a fundamental stance in the world of *I am the subject and everything else is an object*, so there's a separation between self and basically everything else. Living in a heart-mind that is grounded or sunk in or steeped in that kind of duality is kind of a problem for two reasons, and the first is that it's painful. The more you sit in meditation, the longer you spend getting intimate with your own heart-mind, you notice how much time we spend in what the Korean teacher Seung Sahn used to call checking mind, the mind that's always comparing, sorting, and dividing things into categories, evaluating things and assigning them worth and meaning. The more time you spend in that mind, the more painful it is after a while. It's not an expansive, open, generous space. It's the opposite of that: constricted, tight, self-concerned, and tiny. That's the first fundamental problem of duality: It hurts.

The second problem with duality is that it's not realistic. It's not representative of the way things actually are on the truest level, which is one of the reasons it's painful; when

we get caught up in something that's fundamentally against the way things are, that creates a lot of confusion and a miasma of difficulty and suffering.

Here's what I mean when I say that duality is not fundamentally the way things are. When things arise in the world, when each phenomenon appears in the world, it doesn't come through one of two tunnels, one of which is marked 'good' and the other of which is marked 'bad,' where there are things Joan likes and things Joan doesn't like. They come into the world deeply embedded in large webs of connection of what Buddhism 101 calls causes and conditions. Nothing springs into the world *sui generis*, all by itself, unconnected to anything else, and nothing comes through a tunnel that labels what it's going to be. It arises as part of this vast network of connection. To say that things are fundamentally one way or another just isn't true from Buddhism 101, and it also limits us in a certain way. If we think of things arising to the world, arising to manifestation as part of a vast network of causes and conditions, this phenomenon lives and grows over time, other causes and conditions come into play, and things change, including this phenomenon. You have the evolution of everything from a physical being to an idea over time, depending on the way the causes and conditions change.

There's something here that's kind of optimistic: We ourselves can, at any moment, become a cause and condition for something in the world. We're not just at the mercy of what's happening. This is important, because the way *Xinxinming* famously begins — “The Great Way is not difficult for those who have no preferences” — can be misunderstood as *It's all good ... Whatever ... It doesn't matter*, and that's *not* what it's saying at all. Instead, there's an invitation in any moment to be a cause and condition for what you think to be good, to be helpful, to be important.

And when we do that, when we're willing to engage in that way, to become a cause and condition, it's true that we might not always succeed in that particular round. That relationship might not be healed that time, that social movement might have terrible setbacks despite all our best efforts, things might go horribly awry. But again, basic Buddhism 101 is that when we put our energy into this network of causes and conditions, even if things don't immediately turn out the way we hope they will, there is a residue of what we've done that persists, and we don't know what its effect will be in the future, but we know that it persists. It doesn't disappear. It's not that something didn't work so we're

back to ground zero. It's never back to ground zero. That energy, that love, that attention, that care is now among the causes and conditions of what will happen next. We might not live to see it but it's there.

Buddhism 101 would say that's a realistic view of the way things work, and we might easily say it's a more optimistic way to think of how things work, and an encouragement to engage, even if we are doing the practice of trying not to be attached to outcome, if we're trying to act without attachment to the fruits of our actions, in the words of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

I wanted to touch on those big themes about duality, and since this is our last evening with the *Xinxinming*, I'm going to read through the second half of it, which I'm going to be focusing on tonight:

Just let things be in their own way
and there will be neither coming nor going.
Obey the nature of things (your own nature),
and you will walk freely and undisturbed.
When thought is in bondage the truth is hidden,
for everything is murky and unclear,
and the burdensome practice of judging brings annoyance and weariness.
What benefit can be derived through distinctions and separations?
If you wish to move in the One Way
do not dislike even the world of senses and ideas.
Indeed, to accept them fully
is identical with true Enlightenment.
The wise person strives to no goals
but the foolish person fetters herself.
This is one Dharma, not many: distinctions arise
from the clinging needs of the ignorant.
To seek mind with the (discriminating) mind
is the greatest of all mistakes.
Rest and unrest derive from illusion;
with enlightenment there is no liking and disliking.
All dualities come from
ignorant inference.
They are like dreams of flowers in the air:
foolish to try to grasp them.
Gain and loss, right and wrong:
such thoughts must finally be abolished at once.
If the eye never sleeps,
all dreams will naturally cease.
If the mind makes no discriminations,

the ten thousand things are as they are, of single essence.
To understand the mystery of this One-essence
is to be released from all entanglements.
When all things are seen equally
the timeless Self-essence is reached.
No comparisons or analogies are possible
in this causeless, relationless state.
Consider movement stationary and the stationary in motion,
both movement and rest disappear.
When such dualities cease to exist
Oneness itself cannot exist.
To this ultimate finality
no law or description applies.
For the unified mind in accord with the Way
all self-centered streaming ceases.
Doubts and irresolutions vanish
and life in true faith is possible.
With a single stroke we are free from bondage;
nothing clings to us and we hold to nothing
All is empty, clear, self-illuminating,
with no exertion of the mind's power.
Here thought, feeling, knowledge, and imagination
are of no value.

In this world of Suchness
there is neither self or other-than-self.
To come directly into harmony with this reality
just simply say when doubt arises, 'Not two.'
In this 'not two' nothing is separate,
nothing excluded.
No matter when or where,
enlightenment means entering this truth
And this truth is beyond extension or diminution in
time or space;
in it a single thought is ten thousand years.
Emptiness here, Emptiness there,
but the infinite universe stands always before your eyes.
Infinitely large and infinitely small;
no difference, for definitions have vanished
and no boundaries are seen.
So too with Being
and non-Being.
Don't waste time in doubts and arguments
that have nothing to do with this.
One thing, all things:
move among and intermingle without distinction.
To live in this realization

is to be without anxiety about non-perfection.

To live in this faith is the road to non-duality,
Because the nondual is one with the trusting mind.
Words! The Way is beyond language,
for in it there is

no yesterday
no tomorrow
no today.

“If you wish to move in the One Way, do not dislike even the world of senses and ideas. Indeed, to accept them fully is identical with true Enlightenment.” This is saying that enlightenment isn’t about detachment from the world, a turning away from the world. We don’t have to annihilate the world or annihilate our ideas; actually it’s about accepting them fully. The Korean teacher Seung Sahn used to say, “In front of the door is the land of stillness and light.” ‘Door’ here is used in its technical meaning of a gate for sensory experience: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind. He’s saying that this very world we perceive, this very world right in front of us that we’re aware of, that we think about and feel about, is the world of stillness and light. We don’t have to go somewhere else or turn away from it; it’s right here in front of us all the time.

Then it says, “Do not dislike the world of senses and ideas,” which indicates that not only do we accept the external world, the world that our senses perceive, but we also accept the inner world, the world of our thoughts and feelings. Sometimes that’s even more difficult to do. We also accept *that* as the world of stillness and light. Do you believe that? It’s true! But sometimes it can take some effort to accept that, to not turn away and accept them fully.

I’ll talk a little bit about the nature of fully accepting our thoughts and feelings. This relates to something that comes a little later, where it says, “For the unified mind in accord with the Way, all self-centered streaming ceases.” Doesn’t that sound nice? All self-centered streaming ceases. It’s a nice promise, and there’s a connection between “all self-centered streaming ceases” and “accept them fully.” Accept the world that we sense and accept our own hearts and minds, because to accept them fully means not to jump to the concerns of the self. It means to stay with something that’s appearing before us or appearing inside of us and accept it fully. Which, again, doesn’t mean *Whatever, it’s all good*.

It means being willing to hang out with it, to sit down next to it, to listen, to hear what it has to say. That's what "accept it fully" means. When we jump immediately to the concerns of the self, that self-centered streaming, we're not accepting what's happening fully. We're now *not* in relationship with what's happening anymore. We're in relationship with our opinion about what's happening. That's self-centered streaming, and that's also painful.

A theme that keeps re-emerging over recent times is about how most people probably think that there's a self, and it's the thing that brings continuity to their lives. They wake up in the morning, look in the mirror, and recognize the face looking back at them, and they identify that with the self. There's a life being lived. There's something that's going on that has some kind of throughline, some kind of thread. We've been talking about what it's like if, instead of letting the self be the throughline, the focus, and the thing that provides continuity, we let awakening be there instead. What if we think of the throughline, the thing that provides continuity, as awakening rather than the self? That's another way of trying to counteract the self-centered streaming that exists when everything is related to the self.

I don't think the word 'equanimity' appears in the *Xinxinming*, but there's a note underneath everything that points to a certain way of looking at equanimity. The important thing is that it's not equanimity as detachment, equanimity as somehow caring less deeply about things, as being unruffled by things. You can be equanimous and tremendously ruffled by something that's happened. The thing is that you can *bear* being tremendously ruffled, and you don't have to turn away; your field of equanimity is strong enough to take in the difficult thing and your own reaction to the difficult thing. Equanimity does have a quality of restraint about it, and maybe a quality of greater simplicity; equanimity tends to be not as complicated as the streamings of self-centeredness.

The restraint of equanimity isn't a restraint that's based on a rejection of what's outside the sense doors. It's not a restraint that's a pushing away. It's a restraint that's based on a deep or an increasing knowing of our own limitations and the limitations of the world. By that I mean, if you spend not very much time doing some kind of practice, you quickly come to the conclusion that probably the answer to your happiness is not a new

car. A car might be nice but that's not going to give you fundamental peace of mind. That's coming to know the limitations of the world. New cars don't equal ultimate happiness. And coming to know a limitation of ourselves: we're not capable of being made happy by stuff like that so much. That's an aspect of equanimity.

Can you see the difference between saying *materialism bad, stuff bad, we shouldn't do, anybody who does is bad*, which is the self-centered concern, and saying, *You know what? I realize that stuff doesn't make me happy*. There's a limitation in what the world can provide, and there's a limitation in what I'm capable of experiencing, and that's equanimity. That's okay.

There's a question that's a corollary to that feeling about equanimity, which is: If we're not caring about things or valuing things primarily from the standpoint of the self's clinging, the self's desire, what the self thinks it needs, what is the basis of our care? That's important and I'm going to leave it as a question for each of you to think about. If we're not going after things because we need, want, cling to, are afraid of losing — all those kinds of things that are the self's motives for going after things — why do we? What motivates us to care? And that's, to me, a beautiful question, a happy question to be contemplating, something to notice as you go through the day. What else, what other reasons are there, what other motivations are there for caring about the world?

The last thing is an image I find beautiful. We've talked about how when we're in a spasm of self-concern, in the self-centered streaming, there's a constricted, tight, and narrow feeling about it. When we can remember reality, how things really are, things get expansive, get bigger and warmer, instantly. An image that goes along with that felt sense of constriction and expansion is from a contemporary Japanese Zen teacher named Uchiyama Roshi, who talked about opening the hand of thought. What he meant by that was that when we're in that constricted, tight, self-concerned, lost place, it's as though our thoughts have curled up into a fist. There are lots of reasons that thoughts curl into fists. It can be an attempt to try to grab or cling to something. It can be anger. It can be sorrow, when things get tight and dry and painful. It can be fear, when you curl up into a ball. Lots of reasons for thought to become a fist, and Uchiyama Roshi's invitation was to imagine how the fist might open. How does the hand of thought open? How do we move

from that constricted state of a fist into an expansive, related, caring, open palm of thought, open palm of the heart-mind? I offer that image. It's always been quite beautiful and helpful to ask whether I'm curled up as a fist, or is my hand of thought open? Is my hand of feeling open?

Okay, we'll stop there.