

Vashon Dharma

Vashon Dharma: After the Rain

the dharma goes on
swelling
 out of itself

hydrangea wet
 door open
 roof quiet

the little boy with the
green frog
umbrella
comes running toward me

 a second rain
 drips
 from cedar limbs

 clear tones

from all these centers –

ripples that do not cancel
at the nodes

 breath

 no sound –

 flower

 bells

sky drying itself,
mind clear.

Dharma is a Sanskrit term meaning “What is Real”

Always Already

walking back to the house
from the cabin,
when have I not been
always

already here?

here I am again
crossing the yard,
breathing relief
suddenly lighter,
a foolish smile
on my face.

Blind

Every concept a blind spot
Everywhere there is a thought I am blind
Even this poem
Every there is lost
Every I blots out
This bell has no message for "me"

There is either no present
or ALL present.
In time, the present is a fiction
In the present, time is a fiction.

Concordance Co-Created

– a found necessity that swings,
not one pole to the other,
but through my limited, concrete,
and highly personal self
dancing to the other side of the room
to take the hand of a partner
that is already the room, me,
and dance
at once.

physics: laughing quantum
ecology: coevolving
origin (*Buddha dharma*)
polis: reveal who you are
power: the wave's no-self-knowing
leaping *poetry*
(faith)
love: say yes

here the world slows
as if approaching the speed of light,
voices crawl to a growl
time spreads out, yardsticks
distort, when,
suddenly through the event horizon,
all is in motion, color,
grace clothed
in dimension and form,
clothed in meaning.

Death

one death lives in time
and one leaves time.
yes, the living mourn
the self is lost at death –
thin separation
impermanent protean
permeable web
over the face of the imponderable,
that is already lost
and lost again
while we live.

Diamond Sutra

Knowing the map is not the territory.

I may navigate.

Knowing the word is not the thing.

I may speak.

Knowing the idea is not reality.

I may think.

Knowing the mind's voice is not me.

I may listen.

Knowing time is only a measure.

I may plan.

Knowing space does not divide.

I may build.

Fever Evening

though my love
has come to the window
and opened it
to let in the cool night air

though the soul
lays about
where common things
are easily found

though I have thought
repeatedly of rousing
from this dream of dreams

no, I will stay here with the wilted lettuce
in the salad
and the scatted toys underfoot
on which I step,
 the culprits escaped
outside – and who
are calling already
for me to chase them again.

Gateless Gate

the seed splits and leaves
the empty seedpod.
is it like that? no,
we here do not decay in one season
returning to earth as the seedpod does.
we need the self for what it does.
perhaps this – we open the jar with care,
knowing that for months,
we will spoon
the sweet jam onto brown toast. no,
that is not quite it either. perhaps
it is more like the opening
of a symbol that, while its white
flight wings suddenly
from our headtop,
stays always present in the art
that gave it birth.
no, no, it is more like this:

Hidden in Plain Sight

energy dances into matter
dull matter stirs to life
life breathes into consciousness
consciousness rises to God
God laughs to hide
in the smallest particle
breaking into tiny points of fire
that sparkle on the flowing water's
surface, water that rises and falls
in breaths that are God's own
just there breaking it all open
to hide itself within itself again.

i am I

We begin as infants with *it* is all *i*
we grow into *i am* all *it*, except
It is *I*, and appropriates all the same
language and terms to speak of *I*
and know *I* that *i* used starting out.
This is most confusing. It is still *I*
who speaks – not *i*
and *I* know that *i am I* –
and have no other means of participating
in *I* than as *i*.
It is the way we are given.
Mountains become mountains again,
rivers become rivers.

I Have Known Help

I have known help – not
angels by name
or moments of blinding illumination
so much as a rising swell
of direction
in overwhelming circumstance,
the way a log, far out to sea
lifts as it is carried toward shore,
small birds
navigate an entire ocean,
salmon recognize precisely that stream
they are to enter.

Ego to Self: I'm Your Man

"You have a project?" asks the ego,
"I'm your man."

You can't think this thing through.
It can't be done by trying.

It's all an act to keep
a going concern,
created in the guise
of self-elimination.

Impermanence

the vantage looking out upon impermanence –
is it also impermanent?
how then is there enlightenment
from one moment
to the next?

Joshu's Mu

It means, for god's sake stop portaging that canoe
around like a silly oversized hat

and either paddle across, or let someone else.

It means, whether a dog has a Buddha nature or not,
getting an answer to that question

is bound to be bad for you.

It means, if I catch you trying to slip your hand
into the cookie jar again

I will slam the lid on it.

It means, if you keep up these serious Buddhist studies
you will ruin your mind

and grow hair on your palm.

It means,

WAKE UP!

Just So

just as there is in eternity
all that appears to us
as time and in infinity
all that appears to us in space
so in God there is
all that appears to us as us.

Lazy

Time of no plan,
no program, no deadline.
Time of no time,
undefined,
mine and utterly
unimportant to me.
The timing? Can't
be said. Meaningless
and immediate.
That which comes when
it comes, and which
is available as soon
as I am.

Listen

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listen again – it's been too long
a minute forgetting
is a loss
a break in what was embodied
that may never be recovered.

listening incarnates
and I have forgotten to listen
for days, their minutes
each slipped like an egg
that falls to the floor.

inattention. this isn't like taking up
a book again, a chore, a puzzle –
one can only wait
not for hearing but for listening
to return,

it comes as a grace
not the Word, but the listening
for that for which we listen.

the surrounding world
is a shattered crystal
whose brash edges shout
and clash
against the bell of listening.

listening is a call
first breath, then calm
then the pieces shivered
from the crashing glass
sliver

back in place –
the stunned room
the pressing intrusions
the obliterated
respond.

Little Black Spider

a little black spider
emerges from its crack
and runs down the wall
again and again –
watch closely
it is only a shadow
a thought
of a thought
already there
before I whispered it to myself
and I am only repeating
what has already been said,
little black spiders
that run down the mind's
wall and disappear.

Little Song of Enlightenment

set yourself aside
set yourself aside
breathe

set yourself aside
breathe

set yourself aside
here

set yourself aside
breathe
now

there is no way out that is not through

every moment has its duration
every step must be taken

I can change nothing
but remove the obstacles to change
I cannot hold the water still
but hold still the bowl.

breathe
set yourself aside

when I step out my door, I must do it
as if I may run all the way across the field

breathe
the point of life is in it

every step
must be taken
set yourself aside

the meaning of life
lies in the living of it

*every moment
has its duration*

bring consciousness
to peace

bring to consciousness
this great peace

*the point of life
lies in the living of it*

*every moment has its duration
every step must be taken*

there is no way

out

that is not
through.

set yourself aside
set yourself aside
breathe

here now.

Logic

like some blanket
we pick up, carry with us,
throw over things –
 a cloak.
if the fabric is well-woven,
we think we know truth,
we think we know the thing
we throw it over.

Meditation

i

wild horses
scattered among cattle
over the range

then corralled
circling
the wood pole fence

and then the horse
and the thought of the horse
disappear

ii

smoke pours constantly
from the incense burner
twisting into nothing

constantly pouring,
vaporous –
no, it's not
what you think.

Meditation on Time

does not the secret lie in time?
the strange dimension
we do not understand.
no line on which no past is already gone
no future does not exist
and no present crystalizes
in a single moment
but flows. neither
point, nor line, nor plane,
nor solid – although it appears
as birth and death,
coming and going,
permanence and impermanence,
beginning and end,
before the beginning and after the ending –
none exist. the scientist
raves of time wandering
through all simultaneously existing moments.
clear away all dimensions.
what then?

No Concept

no self means
no
self –

it does not mean the absence
of what was never there
for self could never have been
the presence
of what does not exist.

it means no concept –
no concept of self
no concept of no self
and none of no concept.

swallowed in a sea of words
learned professors
lost in a world of words.

No Here, No Now, No I

if I am eating lunch at 11:52
at Dick's Durn Good Burgers outside Wenatchee
then *here* is 11:52
and *now* is Dick's Burgers.
I catch up time and space, whirling the robe
of the next thing that happens over my shoulders

and I
not different
than All

matter goes making space-time,
a light that falls
from its lovely shoulders.
matter nothing
but a beautiful figure
of energy,
energy never lost or created
but only transformed,
able to arise anywhere
only by arising everywhere
– All
at once.

no time but this eternal
reconfiguration of All,
neither before nor after,
ceaseless, impermanent

no space
but this infinity that closes
brightly around form
as it passes from All
to All

no I but this angle of reflection
in which All is glimpsed
by All, uniquely
seeing it All again.

No Problem

without space, no time
without space-time, no matter
without matter, no mind
without mind, no words
without words, no problem.

No Project

The small self insinuating itself
into the project of nulling itself,
is only the sad and wretched
self-talk at death,
cancer-ridden and wasted
upon the bed, convincing itself
that it is not frightened to go.
It could not be otherwise.
No Self. No project.

No Self

when the rain falls on the roof
you just listen.
breathing, you don't wonder
what the next breath will be like.
when the wind runs through the grass
you don't wish it from a different direction.
sitting,
 you sit.

Not Lost

not lost, never lost
found this moment
found this very moment
found not where it had always lain
but where all has always lain in it.

Not One, Not All

on a mountainside I come upon myself
with surprise –
to be here! several
young pine,
patches of shade and light
shift in the green needles
as a nimble wind rises over the ridge
and with surprisingly light touch
here we sway,
rough bark creviced
in shadows that stand in sharp relief
morning sun aslant –
oh, I had forgotten!

Nothing

I sit with the door of my study open,
and the rain falls.
Nearby, the rain falls.
And even against the far trees,
up near their tops,
I can see the same rain falling.
This rain drives to the ground,
and on the roof
many feet dash off to nowhere.
The anxious, neurotic little book
I'm reading is nothing compared to this rain.
No washing, no cleansing compares.
Nothing compares to this rain.
This rain is nothing,

 leading me on
to nothing.

On Naming a Dharma Heir

It is only Spirit talking to Spirit
wind whispering to wind
wave lapping on wave
time folding into time
space nowhere separated from space,
nowhere a distinct individual.
There is no dharma and no heir.

It is breath translocating
air that is continuous
with all creation,
neither “inside” nor “outside.”

News comes of the discovery
of a 150-ton mycorrhizae in Michigan,
1500 years old.
Gigantic and ancient,
most venerable of living creatures
invisible beneath the soil
it occupies 15 hectares and everything
that lives there is it.

Brown spore caps
appear immediately
when the log falls
because the fungus is already
threaded within the living wood.

Ah! and this sitting
too
already there
before it was sat.

Original Face

Leaving the water trickling overnight
to prevent the pipes from freezing up
I find a small rill will
flow down the underside of the faucet.
Reaching the sink, it threads
the tiny detritus that roughens
the sink's side
to the black drain where it disappears.
Just so, time trickles
across the face of consciousness,
vanishes, and is gone.

Participation

The meaning of life
lies in the living of it;
our daily participation
its ecology,
the Gestalt
from which figure endlessly
emerges and fades again to ground
as birth gives form to reconfigured form –
species or psyches
or play of Spirit,
perception, ecosystem or personal experience –
shifting patterns
that exist
only as
their interplay continues.

Practice

cumulative moments
like snowflakes
pile up,
or perhaps water
wears
grains
from the rock,
or else nothing
keeps adding up.

Quantum Action at a Distance

as any carnie sideshow sharp
could tell us rubes, if it could not
possibly be true, it probably isn't.
we would rather stay confused.
no use puzzling the cosmos
for pieces of string.
it must mean no distance,
no need to travel
the cubic speed of light.
it must mean only the senses,
the concepts can't
get there. no here,
no there, no separation.
touch one particle, touch all –
as we can plainly see.
it must mean
great distances are already present,
here. we measure
the illusion and are
confounded. but then,
the illusion is far easier
to understand.

Raft

we hear, “leave the raft
when you have crossed”
but everywhere we see
people portaging
their canoes, lifting
the heavy, cumbersome
things over their heads,
staggering to balance
and heading doggedly inland

– and those carrying “no canoes”
how much more heavily burdened!

Say Yes 2

Thy will come to you
and bring you a baby
and say "this is your baby"
Say "yes"

They will come again
and take the baby
and say "this is not your baby"
Say "yes"

Shedding Clothes

clothing becomes garments
garments become mist
mist is only another way of saying
nothing

nothing behind the mist
in the mist nothing
sitting counting breaths

Sine Qua Non

without consciousness,
no squirrel on the roof
there are those who
linger many years,
comatose,

without love,
no squirrel on the roof
some waste away
though it take
years, months,

without food,
no squirrel on the roof
we starve in a month
or two,

without water,
no squirrel on the roof
we last at most
a few days,

without air
no squirrel on the roof
we suffocate
in moments

without the Ground of Being
the entire universe never was
sooner than this instant

Ah, sighed Master Fa ch'ang
at his death,
it is only a squirrel on the roof –
just that!

Sitting

At first there is the sorting out that settles on no
thing,
then the dog noses into view through the window,
uncertain I am there since I do not move
nor sure he can trust his eyes
he raises his nose and tries the air
giving those exploratory come hither yips
that mean an invitation to play.
No response. He wanders away.
Meanwhile the incense smoke arising momentarily
gives the illusion of an insect crawling up the couch behind.
Then the rain picks up, taps down cedar shingles
as if they were in one moment all nailed in place –
a wave in time that swells and dies.
And then there is my mind,
the play of yipping dog, rising smoke, swelling
dying rain, and the field in which they play.
Do not ask who is here.
The dog, the incense, the rain, and me.
Ah, who is not here?

Sitting and Composing

as soon as I sit
the poems come down like bells
and I don't know
is to stay to go?
short words knell
no words compel
I have not learned to write
that language
the bells
roll and roll and roll

Sitting in the Sangha

Sitting in the Sangha
someone stirs.
It is the sound
of one you love turning over,
breath heavy as the bedclothes.
That face, this face
Still so.

So Much

so much to do, so much to finish
so much to do, so much to finish
I –
so much to do
I am aware –
so much to do, so much to finish
I am thinking
so much to do, so much to finish
so much to do, so much to finish
over and over
I watch myself
thinking so much to do, so much to finish
breathing, breathing
in, out
I am
so much

Some Sunday Afternoon

some Sunday afternoon, and the dogs are barking.
drops of water are lit on the tips of grass stems
as the sun shines feebly off and on,
making patches of sunlight appear and disappear
on the wet uneven slope that runs toward the door.
nothing much doing and anyone who dropped by
unexpectedly would find us pretty much as we are
in our ordinariness that conceals nothing
and in which nothing is concealed.

Stealth Meditation

on the ferry –
no one knows I'm doing it
but here's my hand
and here's the book
and above it
people having their morning
conversations unconfounded
by the unbelievable brilliance
of their presence.
out on the water,
grebes stick their heads
into the satin blue
that folds and unfolds
over the Sound's
lovely silver arms, suddenly arch
their shoulders
and dive
into their looking.

Sunlit

not the yellow slide alone, but the sunlit yard –
the sunlight is already everywhere
but the cedars and fir allow the eyes to be lifted
hundreds of feet to see it;
not alone the tall cedars and fir that ring the yard,
but the fresh first sunlit morning of spring
and the breezes that toss their limbs,
lovely as young women;
not the fresh morning alone
but what spirit is doing everywhere in it and through it
bouncing down the sunlit yellow slide
spiraling up through sun-filled cedar branches
dancing in their long fingers
and through these eyes, seeing itself

Tat Tvam Asi

it does not rain, but I am that
and the drops do not roll down the long grass
and down the window in their many tracks
but I am that
and the wet bird does not shake
and settle its ruffled feathers
but I am that
and the soggy dog does not look with longing
through the window of the house
but I am that
and wind does not for a moment
fling several drops on the roof
but I am that
and the cancer does not thread
its secret way through the cells
but I am that
and secret cell of terrorist sleepers
does not stir stupefied by terror
but I am that
and the child molester does not struggle
with his secret passion
but I am that
nor does Gandhi sit and spin, nor Christ arrive
nor the Buddha teach, nor Muhammad call
but I am that

The Past

another thing
that does not exist
whose mischief
makes mockery
of the present,

gift
to no future,
continually opened
today
whose giving
is all that I have.

The Pond Nearly Still

the pond nearly still
a few rings
brownish-green water,
then gusts of wind
push across its face,
rippling
hundreds of darts
thoughts flee
shiny white surface
reflection, then
it clears
again.

This, That

mind, ceaseless as the sea
continually throws new works upon the shore –
no stopping wild nature fecundating
nor thoughts and mental creations,
self radically rising, falling –
because this is, that is
no need to strive for no self

Tonglen

in my heart –
may all suffering come to naught

upon this breath
black smoke of pride

breathed in
may naught be left

dissolving
as a white mist dissolves the trees
may the suffering of all beings

enter
and be brought
to nothing.

may all that is good in me
go forth upon this breath,
a white mist

anything in me
that may serve others.

all things come and go
I come and go
on this breath.

We Think We Must Gain Something

widows, orphans, the disenfranchised –
we're sure we've lost something,
must go out on a dark road
at night,
 seek it –

going through my pockets:
mindfulness already here,
consciousness already here –
 nothing lost,
but something else
like a thick rug or woolly blanket,
thrown over mindfulness
thrown over
consciousness –

and that glimmer
shining through
 we call
 grace.

What Do We Lose?

the one death lives in time
and the other leaves time.
the self is lost at death
and what do we lose?
thin separation
impermanent protean
permeable web
over the face of the imponderable,
 already lost
and lost again
 while we live.

What Happens Next

The Spirit doesn't direct what happens next
in my head, much less the Universe.

And all this time we've strived mightily
to hand it all over to the Spirit.

Like a quadraplegic,
it falls
through the hands.

It already is that
which we want to hand off.

We have to do it. We have to do the work.
We must be that which experiences,
not the experience.

The ego, so eager to help –
so we must act and not act.

Enlightment comes at the price of many, many
coins of unenlightenment.

You are that impossibility.

What Shall We Call It?

the point at which particle and wave
resolve into light,
the point in which acting and waiting
fulfill one another,
where motion and stillness invade one another,
the still point where opposites reconcile,
the fluid point at which any two contradictory ways
surrender to one another,
where all their branching, complicating puzzle
hangs,
 caught, held,
a paradox of great relief,
the entire passionate possibility of each
come true –

suddenly everything goes in motion
suddenly the world stops
suddenly nothing is not there
and nothing is