
A cloud... A thought

By Claude Emon Cannizzo

« The Way is fundamentally perfect. It permeates everything. How could it depend on practice and realization? The Dharma Vehicle is free and liberated from all hindrance. Therefore, how is man's concentrated effort necessary? In truth, the Great Body is far beyond the dust of the world. Who could believe that there is a way to dust it off? It is never separated from anyone, always exactly where you are. What's the point of going here or there to practice? »

These are the first sentences of the Fukanzazengi, the first text written by Master Dogen on his return from his trip to China, country where he went to find the roots of Zen.

What does the beginning of this text tell us?

First of all, we are completely part of the world around us, but we forget it ... We have forgotten that we totally belong to the place where we are. There is nothing we have to do, there is nothing we have to believe to be saved. We just need to awaken and realize that we are already the Buddha nature. Wherever we are or wherever we practice.

The components of our being, of our body, existed for hundreds of millions of years. The molecules of our body were part of the ancient seas, even before the Earth was as we know it. How could we not be part of them now, right here?

It's just that we've forgotten, too busy looking only at our navel.

We no longer live in such a way as to feel a connection. The result is that, when we forget our connection to others, it becomes difficult to live or get along with them. We forget that the "meaning of life" here on earth is not just about making money, obtaining power, earning things for the future ... but about living in unity with each other, taking care of our families, our friends, doing works that makes sense and is right for us.

In short, nothing more than follow the Precepts and the Eightfold Path.

The foundation of our life as Bodhisattva is the wisdom and compassion of Buddha. But it is something that requires an effort. One way to make that effort is to take a moment to look within yourself, much like looking up at the sky. As you do that, you will notice the clouds. And as you look closely, ask yourself, "Do they belong in the sky?"

In the same way, in zazen, while observing yourself, you see thoughts ... but do they belong to you? When you look closely, you see that in reality they are only passing by, just like the clouds in the sky. Indeed, the clouds are part of the landscape in the sky, but they are not the sky. Just as thoughts are part of us, but they are not us.

The ignorant believes that he is what he thinks, but the Enlightened, the wise, does not make that mistake...

To go back to the Fukanzazengi, to realize this, it is not necessary to run around the world, we can observe it here, where we are, where we live, because it is written: "the Way is always exactly where we are". So, what is the point of going here or there to practice?

But! Because there is a "but" ...

As the following sentence from the Fukanzazengi says: "However, if there is a ditch, however narrow it may be, the Way remains as distant as the sky from the earth!".