

Mind the Gap

Mondo by Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei
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[Gong strike]

“The Dharma is vast and deep
Perfectly penetrating, rare to encounter through numberless kalpas
Now we can see it and hear it, open and attain it.
We vow to penetrate to the Tathagata’s true Teachings.”

[Gong strike]

If and when you travel to London, England and you decide you would like to go and sit at Harrow Zazenkaï, which is really in South Harrow, you would be, let’s say, in downtown London and you’d be going to take the Underground because it is really very efficient and an inexpensive way to travel. Then you’d have to find out how to get where you want to go and this can be kind of confusing for us the first few times. We look: we have stations and lines and the lines are Bakerloo, Central, Circle, District, East London, Hammersmith and City, Jubilee, Metropolitan, Waterloo and City, Victoria , Piccadilly and Northern. And if you are like most traveler’s - I’m speaking from experience - in the beginning of setting out to travel you look at the map in the Underground and go, “Oh no” and all of a sudden we tend to lose, often, capacity for following lines and following directions and so on. And it can be quite confusing because there are lots of people rushing around and they all look like they know where they’re going and self-image, being the way it is, will say to itself, “Well, look at them. They all know where they’re going and they’re probably noticing me looking as if I don’t know where I’m going” because that’s how self-image is. It believes itself to be the centre of the universe.

So once we get it straightened out that, yes, the best way to get there would be to take the Piccadilly Line and then we notice that there’s all sorts of stations that we may be going by. We start at Piccadilly Circus, then we have Hyde Park Corner, Knightsbridge, Gloucester Road , Earl’s Court, Baron’s Court, Hammersmith, Green Park , and a couple more in between, Acton Town . We have to be careful at Acton Town because if we are on the wrong train we could end up at Heathrow. So we don’t know, we’ve never

done this before, so our hearing and our sight could get a little garbled because we are so worried about being lost we've forgotten that we always are where we are and that we have actually, should we choose to exercise the capacity to open states, we have enough time. So we go to the train that is going to take us to Sudbury Town , Sudbury Hill and South Harrow and then we get off.

I've taken that route lots of times and I notice that, interestingly, people who are totally familiar with what they are doing and with their route, will hurry down the escalators. They are running. Then they will get on the train and immediately start to do something, anything else, to distract themselves from the tedious journey. So we have headsets and phones and sandwiches and books and so on.

Now this is a universal. This type of behavior is a universal. It's not limited to the London Underground. In fact, we do this with our lives: birth, death, and in between, maintenance.

[Laughter]

Or birth, death, and depending upon what time in history we are born, to what group of people, to what our family circumstances are, we may have in between, culturally appropriate and significant landmarks. So we will have birth and then we might have, depending upon certain fixtures, we might have things like circumcision, baptism, school, dating, wedding, children.

Tedium

Tedium

Tedium

Death

So it varies according to what the cultural signifiers are. Most of us will never question into any of the cultural signifiers, just as a person on that train will wake up when they hear Acton Town . The rest in between is the mmmm...

[O-sensei imitates the drone of a moving train]

"...mind the gap." (imitating the voice of the announcer) Mmmmm...

[O-sensei imitates the drone of a moving train]

"...mind the gap." But even that "mind the gap" gets eventually clouded over and that is something - to "mind the gap" is to notice, when you are on the train and you are going to get off the train, that at some stations there is a gap between the train door and the platform. Terrible things can and have happened to people who are not aware of the gap. You can get your foot stuck in it and that would be a disaster. But after a while, after we hear anything for a while, we human beings tend not to listen, tend not to look, and tend not to pay attention, because self-image says it knows what's going on, and nothing's going to happen to it anyway, so why should it have to pay attention to what ordinary hoi polloi pay attention to? Or it may not even be that sophisticated: We just shut down until we get to what we want, to our destination.

Now, in this practice, the gap is quite a different thing, or the gap that I am talking about today, is a different thing. And it is always a good idea to clarify what you're talking about, what you are hearing, what it means. So in some teisho that Roshi has given he's talked about a "gap in practice" and of course that means the practice is not continuous. Any word can only mean what it is heard to mean. If it is understood

because of context of past experience in a certain way, that's what it is going to mean to the person who hears it. I may say any word, you may use any word. in a certain way and be quite sure that everyone is going to understand what you mean but that is not the case. Our experience defines the meaning of the word.

So a gap...I looked in the big dictionary that I have downstairs and of course it is a very important text because it has teeny-tiny type and you have to get a big magnifying glass to read it and we all know that that makes it very, very important. So the "gap": It's an old word in English and they have a date record, 1380. So we know right there that we are not talking about the store because it was not around in 1380.

So, "Any opening or breach in an otherwise continuous object". So, if the gong has a nick in it we could say that's a "gap". But not everything is an object. But we will try and do that. We human beings want to make anything an object and that's one of the main tasks that self-image assigns itself. It makes an object of anything. It wants to make anything solid so that it can then have the sense that it's in control. It makes the body an object and gets very surprised when it looks one day at the skin around its arm and notices it's full of wrinkles because it hasn't recognized that there's process. The body is a process, just like practice is, but we want to make an object out of it.

So, "Any opening or breach by which entry may be effected" is also a definition of "gap". That must be pretty old, too, because there are things like a gap in the ramparts around a castle. But when we look at it from the point of view of practice and the point of view of the presentation, the Dharma Assembly today, that's a good meaning: "An opening or a breach by which entry may be affected."

So we talk about, in practice, "usual mind" and "ordinary mind". A very simple distinction is that "usual" is what we do before we practise and basically what is going on most of the time for most of the humans that you'll meet. "Ordinary mind" is the mind that has practised and is practising and that means that it's actually looking, moment-to-moment, at experiencing and seeing what's going on, and recognizing that we do not have to live with the contractions of self-image. They are not inherent to the bodymind. We make a choice to feed our attention into a story about what's going on and that obstructs the natural intelligence of the bodymind.

Ordinary mind means a mind that is unobstructed, a bodymind that is unobstructed, a human being that actually knows where they are and what's going on and is living in this moment un-contracted, or another traditional term is "wholesome". "Wholesome" in that context means "full and present" as opposed to "unwholesome", which is contracted. It is not a judgment as such, it is a distinction.

"To make a gap or a breach in or between" is another definition of "gap", a breach in or between. So we could say there is a breach in or between our usual rounds of thought and feelings, that continuous, or apparently continuous, stream of chit-chat, internal dialogue, ruminations, choices about how to fashion ourselves in a certain moment, how to present ourselves in a certain moment. And in the beginning of practice we do, when we sit down, actually start to notice that what we are taking to be continuous, the "blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," the "blather, blather, blather," "Yahde-yahda" and something happens like...

[O-sensei strikes gong]

...and we go, "OH!"

And we see for a moment that there's a room around us, that there's actually more going on in our experience than what we had selected to fixate on. The thoughts are not continuous. They arise in space. So a gap is created in that usualness. That moment of "gap" is the only moment that you can practise, actually, actively, practise. That is because you've Woken Up for a moment. Head comes up, eyes open, there's an awareness, a knowing, of the rest of experiencing, which is the rest of what's going on with the bodymind. At that moment the instruction is to feel the breath, sit up straight, feel other bodily sensations. So what you are doing is practising the larger space which is the reality of experiencing in that moment.

Do you have any questions about what has been said up to this point?

[Student]: You mentioned, O-sensei, that we make a conscious decision not to be Awake, and yet it feels as though it is completely unconscious; it's always there. The moment of being Awake is a conscious decision. The rest of it is the unconscious.

[O-sensei] Well, we actually do have choice. We've always had choice about falling into our stories. The choice, the capacity for choice, has always been there. Just because someone didn't tell us doesn't mean that we don't have the capacity. And yes, it can feel like we have no choice and the longer we have had patterns running that have defined, and that we have used to define, and that culture has used to define, us, it could be that the patterns are going to present themselves quite strongly and because we have believed them for so long, we can't believe that anything else is possible. And patterns are not, as we all know, I am sure, patterns are not just this little story, something that comes up, and we go "Oh my goodness, a pattern". No, this pattern or tendency affects the whole body because each thing in the bodymind affects everything else. And nobody knows how. Science doesn't know how, exactly, all of this occurs, but we do know that when we learn something whole-bodily, whether we chose to learn it or just had it patterned into us, that whenever the little flag comes up pointing to that thing, there's a flood of biochemistry that occurs, some of which can be very strong.

So what we are dealing with is the phenomena of being a human being which is very complex and can only, actually, be experienced. I am glad you used the words, "seems like" because it does seem like, just as when we get lost in a thought, it can seem like we leave the room because the bodymind seems to disappear because we are very involved in that particular story.

I can tell you it's not true. We do not leave the Zendo or the Hatto when we are caught up in our thoughts. Because if we did, I would say about two minutes into a sitting round there would be "pop, pop, pop, pop" as bodyminds magically disappeared and some of them might come back when the gong is run at the end of the period...

[Laughter]

...full room again. So yes, it "seems like" or "seems as if", but we are learning and it can be very difficult because practice is about learning what actually occurs in the bodymind and we are learning it in a most unusual way, which is through the experience of sitting it down on a zafu, sitting it down for 30 minutes, which is something that we really don't like to do. We don't really - well, self-image, for sure, doesn't like to do anything, really. It will always find a million reasons why it can't or why it shouldn't or why something else would be better. And by the way, if you find yourself with some sort of discomfort, this is a more informal presentation and so you certainly may change your posture. You can sit like this with one leg up.

That's a perfectly respectable posture. Because what's the point if you are so all consumed, if you become consumed with discomfort...and then you won't be able to hear these little pearls that I...

[Laughter]

Does that answer your question? Does anyone else have a question they would like to ask?

[Student]: When a state is very big, let's say, I have the impression that you have resistance, that anyone else telling you that you should get out of it would increase it.

[O-sensei]: Oh yes.

[Student]: (inaudible - 3 words)

[O-sensei]: That's right. And again, that's a pattern that's learned. That reactivity is a pattern that's learned. The environment of practice is here only so that you can practise. And we come here and we bring all of our little patterns with us. Oh, yes, in the beginning we do try and leave them at the door. You know, we believe we leave the fact that we are nasty; mean-tempered; prone to swearing; might occasionally have a glass too much wine; might smoke a joint from time to time; might have cheated just the "tiniest bit" on our income tax; might have snapped at the dog, and so on... so we just leave all that stuff at the door and often we'll try and put on some sort of little face.

[Laughter]

[O-sensei]: But of course we've known that, we've known for 2600 years that that's what people do. So we come into the environment that's here for our practice but we don't understand when we are told that it's actually here for your practice and your practice and your practice. We are not used to that. And we think that maybe it's "for the monks" and we are just allowed in to somehow be startled and upset and reviled.

[Laughter]

[O-sensei]: Then we start to get over that and we realize, yes, it really is for us to see things that arise in our experiencing and the reactivities are us. Reactivities to just about anything. Someone will come along, when you're sitting, to adjust your posture. So, we get our posture adjusted and then all sorts of things can come up. "They touched me." "They shouldn't touch me." "I was straight." "She made me crooked." "Why don't they leave me alone?" "I am doing the best I can." "Oh yeah..right...only pay attention when I'm doing something wrong."

So all sorts of reactivities. Now, bear in mind I am speaking only of myself, and only in the early stages of my practice, right, because none of you have experienced anything like that.

[Laughter]

[O-sensei]: This is how human beings are. This is how self-image is. That's what we are working with. It's interesting that in practice interviews, for instance, very occasionally, once someone has really started to trust that what they are being taught is true, and that what is being said is true, and that you can say anything in a practice interview...that we start to tell the content... I think in the course of the past 13 or 14 years, only a couple of times has someone said to me, "I just wanted to punch you. Well, when you did this I

got this [O-sensei imitates the sound of something like a wildcat growling].” Because we are still not convinced that we can even talk about something like that because “it means that we are a bad person”.

We have forgotten that behavior, (right?), behavior is what we have control over. So the wanting to act out, or having a reactivity that causes us to want to say something nasty or to inflict damage on the practice advisor or the Dharma Teacher, is not who we are; it’s a reactivity that’s going on. So as with anything, when something’s done there’ll be a reactivity and there could often be stronger push not to react. So there could be a bigger resistance, like “Who are you to tell me what to do?” [O-sensei laughs].

Is that the kind of thing that you are talking about?

[Student]: “Gassho”.

[O-sensei]: So you feel the breath, you sit up straight. The thing you want to do, first of all, with any reactivity, is to get a better look at it and you get a better look at something by looking at it more closely in an unobstructed space. So space becomes obstructed by other reactivities, such as “You shouldn’t have this”; “this shouldn’t be happening”; “his means that...” and all the other stories that we have.

So you are looking for the gap in that stream of reactivities. And one day you notice it and the bodymind will actually practise in that moment. And it can occur in such a way that you may realize that self-image, who is always directing things, actually did not go through the steps of feeling the breath, feeling the hands and feet, sitting up straight; that that happened and we noticed it. The bodymind itself loves to practise because it is going from contracted to open. The movement is always from contracted to open. And when self-image stops picking on the bodymind, when we stop picking on it – “we” being the thing we think we are, the thing that lives up behind the eyes that has all of these different descriptions of itself, well, that’s “self-image.” When we practise with self-image and its numerous definitions of how we are, and how the world is, and what’s going on, then those gaps in the habitual patterns and reactivities become wider and more and more frequent.

So the bodymind will present itself in spite of, perhaps, us being “lost” that sense of being carried away with something. This can be disconcerting, particularly if say we have a strong attachment or have learned to hang on to a particular pattern for whatever reason, for whatever adjective we may use to describe it. But we have deemed it useful because it has been around for a long time and we can generate all sorts of stories about why we shouldn’t lose it. So we will start to see that and experiencing will open, will be more wholesome, less obstructed. But that can be quite disconcerting because you could be, you could find yourself in full rant about something and the bodymind will present itself like [O-sensei inhales sharply] and there can really be a profound dislocation that can occur. Has anyone ever noticed that type of thing?

[Students concur]

[O-sensei]: Yes, profound dislocation. And we can take that to be upsetting. So there’s this gap and then self-image will want to turn it into something else because it always wants to define and send out these sticky strings that are going to keep things in place. You keep practising with it each time you notice anything about how you are. Practise with it. Don’t bother. Don’t follow along with that game of counting coloured stones. Discriminating: “This is the kind of thing we can practise with.” “This isn’t.” So self-image will want to discriminate and it wants to discriminate in ways that say “Okay, I was sitting here lost in thought but I was thinking about practice.”

[Laughter]

So, that's okay. And on the other hand we'll be sitting here thinking about what we are going to buy at the grocery store. Not okay. Both of them are the same thing, and both are practised with, in exactly the same way during formal practice. You will not lose the capacity to go to the grocery store to get what you need to get; nor will you lose the capacity to practise. In fact, by practising at either of those "gaps" that occur, opening to the larger context, practising when you notice it, regardless of content, is what you are supposed to do. That is the instruction.

Anything else?

[Student]: I thought it very interesting the way you turned the word, the "gap" on its head because when I first read the title of this Dharma Assembly I was thinking, "Oh, this is going to be a list of all the things I do bad when I'm practising."

[O-sensei]: I rest my case.

[Laughter]

[O-sensei]: That's what self-image does. Well, good for you for showing up.

[Laughter]

[O-sensei]: It is important to question. You know, that question, "What is it? What does it mean?" What definition are you putting on it?" "What definition do I have." Then we can know what we are talking about, more or less. The question gets us a little closer to the mark.

[Student]: I find that when that dislocation that you are talking about happens, self-image will try to take out the - what's happening now as like a new stance and say, like, "okay now I'm mindful" and to kind of maybe like cover over that dislocation or like make it manageable or something?

[O-sensei]: Always. The ticket is - self-image wanting to, as you say, make things manageable. It wants to be in control. It's prepared to lose all of its definitions about itself as long as it's in control still. So you start to recognize, as you are practising, that any view that comes up about how you are and how the world is, is questionable. And you question it when you sit on the zafu by recognizing that you have an opportunity to practise. The draw of content is very strong. We're content junkies. We believe if we don't have the words, we don't have anything. That's what we believe: Words are more important than anything else.

Now, this is not true. Words did not come before human beings. In the course of evolution, words did not come before experience. Words developed so that there was a way of describing what we were talking about - rather, what was going on, what was happening, what was occurring. So the words were developed to describe what was occurring with experiencing. But now, the beginning of the 21 st Century, we believe that words are more...

[Distant sound of tenzo-anja striking the lunch bell]

...significant than and more important than, the experience, that moment of experience. So we have developed more and better words.

I'm not saying that we go and live in a world where we are going [O-sensei makes a series of grunts]. Not at all. Unless you are talking to chimps, maybe, but even they are developing linguistic capacities. But let's just look more into what's actually being talked about, what's actually being presented in any situation.

[Student]: What if the pattern is self-destructive and then the whole issue of self-image wanting to disappear goes right to work against instead of being a help...

[O-sensei]:

You see, it really doesn't matter what we call the contraction into a self. We could call it "self-destructive"; we could call it "self-enabling"; we could call it "positive"; we could call it "negative". It doesn't matter what you call it when you are sitting on the cushion, and bear in mind what we are talking about most specifically, is actual practice, when we are actually sitting in formal zazen. What do we do with it? (...Because self-image will generate all sorts of stories). When you are practising, and you are sitting zazen, and you notice any contraction, regardless of how self-image wants to label it: Feel the breath; sit up straight; tuck the chin in; feel the hands and the feet. Practise.

We spoke earlier, just at the beginning, about the use of forms. If you notice that there's a very strong pattern going on, and of course you feel it physically, as it were, because we do - any movement of mind produces some effect, as it were, in the body. So that patterns have a strength to them. Balance out that strength. So if you notice that the tendency is to move towards certain stories about the pattern which can be very strong; feel the hands with that same intensity; feel the feet and the knees and the spine with the same intensity; see the seeing with that same intensity. And rather than having this great lump of aggression that's aggressive all over, what you will find is that whatever that pattern was will balance out. There is a lot of energy available from any pattern, from any state, when you are working with it in that way. And of course, what you learn, what the bodymind learns sitting zazen, is encoded in the bodymind. It is whole-body learning. If you are working with something that is habitual and strong and you are working with it in that way, you will find that you may be involved in the rant off the cushion, in informal practice, and all of a sudden you get [O-sensei makes some kind of sound that seems related to release] and again there is that dislocation that can occur and it can scare us because self-image will come up with stories about losing your mind, "I really lost it. Yes, that's it, I've lost it" because we don't have all those sticky bits that are working to keep us in one place, very solid, acting in a certain way, as we have habitually acted.

[Student]: Might do something weird.

[O-sensei]: Yes. Well, you can't get more weird than sitting facing the wall so you may as well get into the rest of it.

[Student]: Could it be that simple?

[O-sensei]: Yes, "we" know about it.

[Student]: It was very interesting, O-sensei, in answering James' question you used the word "questionable" and normally we perceive that of being dubious, it has a dubious connotation. And when you do think about questioning into things and there are so many things that you think I shouldn't question into because I would truly lose my mind. And it's um hmmm.

[O-sensei]: It's all questionable. It really is, from both senses of the word. Yes.

[Student]: I find sometimes, too, you'll be sitting there and then you realize and then you go back to the breath but the story before was really interesting? And then you are sitting there - "That was an interesting story, I'd like to go back to that, but that's okay because I am choosing to go back to it".

[O-sensei]: Right, and that's what happens. It's not a problem, but once you start to notice that then you say "Okay, well I don't need to follow that do I? Won't lose it. Most of our interesting stories, you know, we'll have access to should we want them for something like to make a point or to tell someone an interesting story or to write it down. The stories cease to draw us. They lose their interest for us, really, after a while, after seeing them in context.

[Student]: You've mentioned about practising using the energy of the...can't think of the word now...the strong tendencies...to take that energy and apply it to the practice and I am thinking that I have experienced a lot of, oftentimes in practice, a drowsiness or apathy or just passivity or...it's just a real...I think drowsiness speaks for quite a lot of it. How do you take that energy? It almost feels like a lack of energy and how do you directly deal with something like that and turn it into the strength of that? It doesn't feel like a strength at all. It feels like the sense of a lack of strength or interest. So how do you take that and turn it into practice?

[O-sensei]: Well, the first thing, as soon as you notice it, a drowsiness - it could be the eyes flick down, they start to close and there is the narrowing of the visual field. When you notice that, feel the breath, sit up straight, really sit up straight, really feel the spine, because you've noticed. So in the moment of noticing you can exercise a little Samatha or will or effort. So you can straighten in that moment. And then when you have done that you can feel the hands, you can feel the feet. Do not expect it to be continuous once you've done it. This is another thing that we will do with practice: We think, "There, yes, okay. That's it. Now I'm bright and bushy-tailed so I am going to be like this for the rest of the sitting and for all sittings ever after." Well, it's not true.

[Laughter]

[O-sensei]: But for that moment you have practised. Practice is practising with what's going on in the moment and yes, we do get tired. We might have a cold. We might be getting older.

[Laughter]

[O-sensei]: We want things to be the same and solid. That's self-image. Nothing is the same. Everything really is changing. We've all lost trillions of cells since we walked into the Hatto this morning. So there is this constant change. But we will lock ourselves into being a certain way. We will say, "Yeah, that's it. I'm too tired." And the bodymind seems to go "Oh? Tired. You want tired? Okay." That's what it does; it's just interesting in that way. Like...try not to think of a pink Buddha. Right? What happens?

[Laughter]

[Student]: Pink Buddha.

[O-sensei]: Right. That's how the bodymind is. It's incredibly intelligent, so rather than not recognizing that, let's recognize it and recognize that every little thought, every little "bip", "bip" that comes along affects how we are. Why fall for just one story? And it's usually the least interesting one about how we are and tends toward incapacity. We are very good at incapacity.

So it's not about making yourself a certain way. It's practising with whatever is going on in that moment. Practice is practice of your life up to the point of death. When you are sick you can practise; when we are losing capacity we can practise. Okay?

Is there anything else?

[Pause]

[O-sensei]: Birth, old age, sickness and death, and in between there's this moment and this moment and this moment and this moment and you start to see each one more and more clearly with all the richness present that is actually occurring, that the bodymind is actually responding to. You might as well notice it. It's your life.

Was there something?

[Student]: There seem to be three moments between the duration and decaying of the moment and the building of the next: There seems to be states or nothing or gap. Are we choosing gap, also?

[O-sensei]: Well, let's see. You spoke about the arising and decaying of moments. Well, "moment" is only a word and we are using it to describe something that is continuous, basically. There's moment after moment after moment. It is not as if there's little things that arise as a moment and then another moment and that one's gone. So language is very liquid when we're talking about practice because of course it's not describing anything solid. So let's just say there is the vastness of Awareness; the vastness of Knowing; or the vastness of experiencing. That's what we are talking about. So in that there arises moments of experience that arise, decay and fall and yes, in between moments of experience that are noticed, there is a gap. No moment of experience is continuous. So we are practising that moment, that gap.

Does that clarify?

[Student]: Yes. Sometimes when we talk about "nothing", I mean in the teisho, are we also talking about the same thing there as that gap?

[O-sensei]: I would need the context of the particular teisho, so you are certainly welcome to get the context and then we can talk about the... bearing in mind, as I said at the beginning, Roshi used the word "gap" in our practice, in one particular teisho. But the word was being used at that time in a different way than I am using it now. No word is the be-all and the end-all and the final word to describe whatever nor are they describing the same thing. And that in itself is a very interesting thing to look at, to start to look at how language is used and what it is actually describing. We take a lot of things for granted so most of us spend a lot of our time not knowing what's going on at all, which is not in the sense of practice, but just if we're out and about, what's being talked about. And we fail to notice even incredibly incongruent things like advertisers telling us to express our individuality by all getting the same thing. You know.

[Laughter]

[O-sensei]: It's almost lunch time, so we will have practice interviews in the afternoon. Is there any last moment...

[Student]: Since I notice the breath, why can't I just let the body breathe? It's kind of like I have to go one-two-three, one-two-three. It seems like if I stop running it, it would just stop working. I've been working for a long time to let that go and as soon as I pay attention to it, it is like having to manage it.

[O-sensei]: Here's what you can do with that; just notice when you are doing that pattern, when that pattern is running, and then just feel the body moving with it, just for that moment. You are just noticing this phenomena and over time, and with practise of each moment that you notice, it will shift. How you are understanding it, how you are doing it, what pattern comes up, will change. And most probably you won't stop breathing at that point.

[Laughter]

[O-sensei]: Anything else at all?

[Student]: (The Roshi said during Mishin godo's ordination, "You think you've seen fun, you've seen nothing yet; and if you think you've seen fear, you haven't seen nothing yet. Wait till you see nothing." And I am wondering if I understand that the nothing has...seems to get recognized sometimes through our practice and seems to be what's between moments. So I am wondering if that's an aspect or another way of talking about gaps between moments. I am wondering if I understand that or...?)

[O-sensei]: Well, what you are trying to do here is something that we commonly do in practice, you are trying to make a quilt out of it - taking little bits from here and little bits from there, and trying to come up with a seamless whole. Okay? This is what we do; we've been taught how to do this. What we want to see is how we are doing that, how that occurs, how that pattern comes up and wants to. This is definitely self-image trying to pull together bits and pieces to try to make this seamless whole without recognizing that the seamless whole is what is.

Anything else?

[Student]: Just a quick observation, that would replacing a pattern with another pattern not be a sort of covering a hole with a hole?

[O-sensei]: Well, that would be what it is, but that's not what we are doing. That's one way people have worked with things such as negative thoughts. There're some instances where people will say, "take a negative thought, turn it into a positive thought," so in that sense what you are saying is very accurate. Yes, covering a hole with a hole, wasting a lot of time. But seeing a pattern, practising with a pattern so that you are not acting it out, this is what happens with zazen. You are sitting there, you are seeing patterns, you are recognizing them eventually as such, you are feeling the breath, you are sitting up straight. You are practising. By not feeding into it, it's wearing out. So you are not replacing it with anything. You are wearing it out so that it is no longer there. You still won't forget to, you know, get the Piccadilly Line and get off at South Harrow if you are going to Harrow Zazenkai to sit when you are in London .

[O-sensei strikes gong]