Spirituality, Religion, and Education

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This series publishes books that examine fundamental questions of life, touching on the meaning, purpose, and mission of education from a variety of spiritual and religious perspectives. The series provides a forum for scholars to explore how to engage learners spiritually and holistically. It studies how spirituality, religion, and education intertwine with the learning of wisdom, peacebuilding, cultural and interfaith dialogues, and the integration of learners' body, mind, emotions, and spirit. Commonalities and differences among spiritual and religious traditions are explored alongside new developments from science that bridge the spirit and the mind. The series especially pays attention to the educational initiatives, outcomes, and programs that simultaneously engage the cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions of both students and educators. The world we live in focuses mostly on education for the intellect, thus restricting our ability to explore and understand deeply the nature of the cosmos and the meaning of our life. Although education is accessible to more people than ever before in human history, the dominant paradigm focuses solely on knowledge, skill, and material acquisition that neglects the meaning and purpose of life. This creates a huge void in learners and produces a huge number of people who are unhappy, unfulfilled, restless, lost, or desperate. An education that distills and recovers wisdom from spiritual and religious traditions can fill the void and help cultivate citizens who have love, compassion, knowledge, and the capacities for enlightened action. Books in the series address these age-old pursuits of inquiry, meaning, purpose, growth, transformation, and change. To submit proposals to the series for consideration please contact Jing Lin at jinglin@umd.edu.

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Preface

Some terms, parables, and practices to get us in a spiritual headspace:

* * *

As under delusion's power a heard of deer will rush
for water in a mirage which is not recognized,
so also the deluded quench not their thirst, are bound by chains
and find pleasure in them, saying that all is ultimately real.
(Saraha, one of Buddha's disciples)

Samayamudra

Samayamudra is the third mudra, the lock of time, that one aspires to break in the practice of chakra meditation. The first is Karmamudra or the lock of action. The second is Gyanmudra or the lock of knowledge.

Breaking these locks is nothing but the process of using our experience and learning to better ourselves, achieve distance from our ego, and live life fully in the present moment.

* * *

Reasonable Faith

"Since the experts disagree, we can only get certain knowledge through God", wrote the leading student of Paduan Aristotelianism, Pietro Pomponazzi, in *De immortalite animae* (1516). He acknowledged the limits of reason by arguing that matters such as the eternity of the soul could only be engaged with through recourse to revelation or faith.

* * *

Practice

"The Zen way of calligraphy is to write in the most straightforward, simple way as if you were a beginner, not trying to make something skillful or beautiful, but simply writing with full attention as if you were discovering what you were writing for the first time; then your full nature will be in your writing. This is the way of practice moment after moment."[1]

Zen reminds us that unlearning is a precondition of learning. In the Zen worldview, openness is prioritized over experience and skill. Experience is useful but must not manifest itself as preconceived notions that stand in the way of learning anew—that is the Zen way. A beginner practicing calligraphy represents the antithesis of many of the traits we value and encourage through education today: refinement, attention to form, specialization and expertise, ownership of the end product, and a linear and competitive view of progress where beginnings are only made once.

* * *

All-weather mantra

Tat Tvam Asi: You are That

Delhi, India — Kalyani Unkule

[1] *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* by Shunryu Suzuki, edited by Trudy Dixon, with a preface by Huston Smith and an introduction by Richard Baker, Weatherhill 1970.

Acknowledgements

To those who believed, I thank you.
To those who didn't, I thank you too.

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