

Exploring the use of Koans in Chinese Zen

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Talk given by Dr. John Crook (Chuan-deng Jing-di) during retreat in the Maenllwyd Chan Hall, 1997.

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I'll talk this evening a little bit about the use of koans or questions in the context of Chan practice and I want to do that especially in the light of what we've been practising.

When one first explores the literature of Zen one gets the impression that the use of the Koan or questioning is completely the opposite approach of the type of meditation we've been mainly talking about and practicing here, namely Silent Illumination or, as the Japanese call it, Shikantaza. And there are some good reasons for that impression.

There were, in China, two different schools respectively emphasising a 'gradual' and a 'sudden' approach. In the sudden school the idea was that you could solve the problem with a question based on a koan story to yield an instantaneous discovery, whereas the other way was by study or by sitting on a cushion and slowly making your way to a solution through calming the mind in meditation.

Contemporary scholars have shown that nearly all the discussions that have split Chan into those two attitudes were actually mistaken; that there's much more in common between the two views than had formerly been thought, and furthermore a lot of the polemics was actually, you might say, Buddhist politics.

This distinction has none the less persisted, particularly because in Japan there is a very particular use of the Koan in the Rinzai school contrasted with the very particular use of Shikantaza in the Soto Zen school. Indeed, if you specialise, as it were, in one or the other approaches, they do become two contrasting even competitive methods.

I don't want to spend a lot of time talking about the history of these things. The point I'm coming to is that in Chan of this last century, Master Xu Yun brought many of the different approaches together in one practice that allowed different emphasises that could be chosen as practice depending upon the needs of the monk or meditator.

The reason for this was that the situation of Chan in China in the early part of this last century was chaotic. Even before communism there had been a great deal of destruction of monasteries. Master Xu Yun was instrumental in re-establishing many monasteries and many practices, but in order to do that he had to pick and choose from the surviving methods which were available. He focussed especially on the methods of contemplating the Koan and the methods of Silent Illumination. You could chose your focus and vary the relationship between them. So what we have in Chan today is a remarkably wide range of possible ways of practice.

So, how is the Koan used in present-day Chan derived from the 'reformation' of Master Xu Yun. How does Shifu Sheng yen present it?

If one reads the works of Shifu and Xu Yun together, you get a pretty good picture of how a Koan can be approached in Chan. The way I'd like to talk about it here is to develop the idea of enquiry. After all, questioning a koan is an enquiry. But enquiry also occurs in Silent Illumination. A very important aspect of Silent Illumination is the moment when one looks into the developing silence with the implicit question "What is it that is going on here?". The

mind is alert with an enquiry, not a verbal question but an enquiry. It is this enquiry, this alert looking-into the silenced mind, or the silencing mind, that generates illumination. And this is very important for us to realise. It's no good sitting on one's cushion endlessly mulling over the same stuff, one has to really adopt a very questioning viewpoint; not a question as such but a kind of investigative look, what the Chinese called Tsan.

Sometimes you read in the stories of Chan that a master will suddenly shout "Tsan!" My original teacher in Hong Kong, Mr Shiliang Yen used to emphasise this point of "investigation". Investigation in Silent Illumination is an alert looking at what you're on about.

As I have said many times, investigation can be applied at whatever level you're at. In any retreat some people may be sitting there with their minds buzzing with thoughts, worries and troubles. Others may be in a pretty clear condition. There are always great contrasts between people on retreat. People have different karmas, different problems to work with. It would be most surprising if everybody was going at the same speed and doing the same thing. This issue of enquiry applies to whatever stage one is at.

Let's take somebody who is really very troubled by wandering thoughts and issues. As we've said before, what you do with that is ask yourself what on earth you're on about. "What's going on here?"

One doesn't just sit there and let the turmoil whiz round and round and up and down a cul-de-sac, a one-way street. One says to oneself, "Well there's no doubt I'm up a one-way street that's going nowhere, but what am I doing in it, how did I get here, how do I get out?". One takes a dynamic, investigative perspective. This requires a certain toughness, because there may be bits and pieces of that one-way street which you're particularly anxious to avoid, and you may not entirely know, until you actually bump into them, what it is you're avoiding. But that's still part of the investigative business. When the mind is in that state the investigative attitude is very important. Habits are very difficult to break.

Maybe there's another person sitting on the very next cushion who's had one or two blissful moments and is very peaceful, yet somehow it's a bit stale. A similar question applies there. Not so much "What am I going on about?" but "What is this that's happening, what's happening now?" Obviously it is a quieter and less confronting question, but it is appropriately investigative.

I sometimes tell the story of somebody who has a goldfish bowl. A friend comes into the room and says, "Oooh, that's a nice goldfish bowl, what's in it?" You look at the goldfish bowl and you see two fishes swimming round, so you say "There are two fishes swimming in the goldfish bowl." and the person says "Anything else?" and you say "Hmmm.... not anything else, just two fishes". "Wrong!" he says, "There's something else in there as well". So you start looking.... you can't see anything but two fishes going round and round, chasing each other and making faces. So you spend a long time looking at this goldfish bowl and seeing two fishes go round in it.

Your friend, keeps saying "Look further, it's not enough, look further, there's something else in there as well!" So after a long time you think "Well, I've really got to look into this.

"So you sit quietly, collect yourself together, you sit back, and you look at the goldfish bowl, and you say "Well, what's *in* the goldfish bowl. Well first of all course there's the water.... ohhhhh. The WATER, of course, that's what's in there as well as the two fishes, the water, how obvious."

And it's like that. But it requires that investigative, peaceful, slightly withdrawn, let's have a real look at this", eyeing it from one side and then another, the kind of investigative attitude in order to spot what's absolutely obvious. But only obvious afterwards, as it were.

So, as we've been seeing all the time, this attitude of investigation is terribly important in the practice even of a so-called "gradual path"-- which is a dubious misnomer anyway because all realisations are actually sudden. Now what happens if, while you are sitting there, your investigation suddenly takes the form of an actual verbal question.

I once had a curious experience on retreat with Master Sheng yen. A phrase came up in my mind, "Dogen is offering to Dogen". It would not go away. It was going round and round in my head while I was trying to do Silent Illumination. So I went to Shifu and said, "Look, this phrase 'Dogen is offering to Dogen' is going round and round. What shall I do?" Shifu smiled and said, "Well, you've got a question there, haven't you? What is it? What is it saying? There's a koan in this, you'd better look into it."

So, although I was practising Just Sitting, he had said "Take this up as an issue, as a question." Something had come to a focus in meditation and when something comes into focus like that it becomes a Koan. There's something to be gone into there. And that would apply to any such question which comes to a sharp focus.

Now, of course, that's a little bit different from having a question set to you by a teacher, or choosing one from a book or something. That's a bit different. But it's very typical of the Tsao Tung approach. Remember what Dogen said about this (of course it wasn't only Dogen, because it came from his own teacher in China) he said that "the Koan arises in everyday life". There are quite enough questions and problems welling up all the time without having to use a fabricated one from some ancient bit of history, stuck in some book by some collector of stories. You don't have to have such a Koan, the Koans are coming up anyway.

But the issue is that a Koan, to be really powerful, has to have, it has to point somewhere. It's no good taking up as a Koan, "Is today Tuesday?", because of course you can answer that question, you can look at a calendar and say "No it's not, it's Wednesday/Thursday/Friday/Saturday/Sunday/Monday", I mean you've only got seven options as to what it might be. And if you know what it was yesterday you can fairly well work out what it is today.

Of course, you might be totally lost on a desert island in which case it might be a real Koan. Because you have no calendar it begins to get interesting. "No calendar so what day is it today?" Now, that's a Koan. When there's no calendar, and you ask what day it is, there's a Koan.

Similarly, imagine you're flying in a rocket right out past the moon, somewhere in the direction of Mars, and you casually say, "What day is it?". Well no light, no day. Just the rocket revolving; black/white/black/white/black/white as it flips round before the sun. That's hardly a day. So you have to think "What day is it on earth? There aren't any days up here. Indeed what is a day?" A day is the revolution of the planet, and the revolution of the planet is being shone upon by the sun so it is dark and light, dark and light, dark and light, every 24 hours. That's what a day is. But when you're out there the sun just shines, and it's black except where the sun hits the vessel. What's a day up there? It's become a Koan. Is it a meaningless question? Depends on what clock you're using. It turns into "What is time?" and there you have it.

Well, it's similar on a retreat; depends on what "clock" you're using. In other words, what is the context, where are you trying to get to, what are you using time for? So issues can arise in the sitting, or they can arise in everyday life. And if they point, as it were, beyond themselves, they're very probably Koans.

I've a picture of a Koan of this kind. It's a signpost, you know, just an ordinary road sign, except there's nothing written on it, and it's stuck on the top of a cliff, and it's pointing straight out over the Atlantic ocean. "Where would you go to?", that's the Koan, where would you go

to with a signless signpost pointing straight out over the ocean. Which is actually the state of our lives, which is why it's a Koan. What is the purpose of this life? Is there any purpose in it at all? Is there any purpose in the cosmos? Well, one doesn't have to doubt the vastness of space, the immensity of the thing. What's it there for? Who made it? Why am I here? Have I any purpose? Or do I invent one? All of these are Koans. And of course they're terribly important, basic in our lives. It is the resolutions of those questions which bring meaning to us.

One of the tragedies of the present time is that the contemporary, materialistic kind of world in which we live has no ultimate meaning, apart from making money. So that we're faced, very often, with a meaningless existence. That is meaningless in the old sense, when meaning was given by the religion into which you were born. Nowadays one is not born into a religion, one is born into a chaos of ideas, people thinking one thing and then another. This particular age is in many ways as decadent as ancient Rome before it fell and there are some interesting historical parallels if you actually look into this.

The Koan is vividly before us the moment you open a newspaper or read the Economist or think about the state of the planet. And unless one has some kind of an approach to those questions, ultimately life gets meaningless, and depressive, and lonely, and unrelated, and one indulges in numerous compensations: drugs, confusing love affairs, co-dependencies, psychotherapy, all of which are palliatives for an absence of meaning.

But there's something also quite vibrant about this in a way. The very fact that there is no given meaning, means that one can face the Koans of existence without all that old superstitious nonsense of the past. Without all the stories of hells and heavens and angels and all that stuff. They were only prisons, after all, comfortable prisons of the mind. But we've thrown that stuff away, so we're left naked on the cliff top with the sign post, with nothing written on it, pointing straight out over the ocean. What do you do next?"

Well, someone has just sent me a cartoon showing two rather miserable looking monks sitting on their cushions. One is saying to the other- "Nothing happens next. This is it!" Go into that one. Sky gazing at the clouds passing the blue immensity of space might open it for you.

Books of Koans are nonetheless useful, if you want to use them, I don't want you to think that I'm in any way debunking the use of old Koans. I'm not, I'm merely saying that it's a relative approach and it's not necessary to use them. But they can be enormously valuable. Why? Because these old Koans are the puzzlements of past time, when two deeply reflective masters or monks had a conversation about one of these burning issues. And one of them came up with a question and the other answered it. They said "Ah, yes" and our question becomes "What the hell are they on about?" (laughs)

Sometimes I open a book of Koans, look at it, "Yeah, right, yeah", turn over the page, open another one "Cor blimey, don't get it, I just don't get it". It's like that with Koans.

One key Koan is the simple question "What is this?" A Chinese monk might have thought about this when he sat on his cushion and heard a bird singing outside the window. He may have thought, "Ah, what's this?". And that's a real question.

"So what is this?"

Now, the first thing to do when a question arises like that is to take a reflective, contemplative attitude. Forget meditation and all the techniques, just consider, "What's going on here? What is this? Well, there's a bird singing, but it sounds a bit different from usual. Is the difference out there, or is the difference in here? Mmmmm. Birds sing every day, every morning rather like that, but I haven't heard one so clear before. So the difference must be in here. Mmmmm. Wonder what that is? What is this? What is this? Well, it's nearly end of a seven day retreat, perhaps that's got something to do with it. Well, I have noticed some changes in the past few

days ... "

So you mull it over, as it were, you actually think, surprise, surprise. You think "What is this? What's going on here, there's something puzzling, strange, my mind is so clear, clear as a bell, what is this, what is this clarity?". And, so, you kind of ponder it and explore it and ponder it and explore it. And this is valuable, but only the preliminary skirmish.

You sit there, and you're puzzling, "What is this? What is this?", and you've thought about it from every possible angle and nothing comes up. You've cleared the ground a bit, there's no more 'brush wood' around. The countryside is wide open, but the question is still vividly there.

Master Xu Yun suggests that what you do then is to let the question come up, but don't try to do anything with it at all, just let it come up, and kind of 'do it's own thing'. You've tried everything else, you know, you've gone to the edge of your own thought, this way, this way, upwards and downwards. You've explored the ground but the question is still untouched.

As you let it crop up look at the instant before it arose, look just ahead of the thought. The question is really just a noise, almost a mantra, except that it's a very meaningful question for you because you've already explored it intellectually and thinking-wise, so it's a profoundly puzzling and meaningful question, there's a 'great doubt', around this question now, there's a great doubt inside you. "What is this? What is it?" You are profoundly puzzled.

So, Master Xu Yun says allow it to come up, but don't look at it any more, just let it come up. The place to look is just in front of where it is arising, that's where you should look, and that's the practice.

Now you can begin to see the close similarity between this use of a question and Silent Illumination. Here we have almost a Silent Illumination practice.

The beauty of the method is in the intensity of the question. The repetition of the Buddha's name for example is calming, quietening, almost silencing. Which is fine, it's intended to be so. But the intensity of the question and the doubt which is around it makes questioning a very pointed exercise, one-pointed. The mind is highly one-pointed, there's a different flavour about the work. That's why it may yield a 'sudden' response.

And indeed Master Xu Yun goes on to say that the response to such a question can be quite sharp, it can have the nature of a sudden breakthrough. Whereas Silent Illumination progress tends to be gradual, like a flower growing until suddenly it blooms: in the intensity of the Koan question, the whole thing can break quite suddenly.

In Xu Yun's own account he'd been puzzling over a Koan in this way, for many days, many retreats in fact. He was at a tea break. And, someone came to pour him out tea, but Xu Yun was clumsy, the teacup fell down and broke. His mind was so taut that it broke too. At that moment, he saw the solution to the Koan, an immediate experience of no-self.

I once asked Shifu, "What happens in these moments?". I was wondering whether it was the ending of thought so I said "Is it that thought ends?". He said, "No, it's not that thought ends. Thought is always sort of creeping about somewhere or other. It is not that thought disappears. It's that self disappears." At that moment in Xu Yun's account his sense of himself as a question vanished, and there was just the broken teacup.

These are matters about which we find a number of Chan masters have written and talked about. Somebody might have a wonderful flash of experience, but its impact may be short-lived and minor in the long run. Why? Because the other aspects of that person's training have not been developed. And this is almost certainly one of the reasons why, in our present time, a lamentably large number of western masters, for whom there is no reason to doubt their

'kensho' experience, have then failed miserably ethically and morally?

Why could that possibly be, one asks oneself. There's no reason to doubt the enlightenment experience. It's probably because in Zen training more than merely a focus on enlightening experiences is required.

I remember, once, I had some kind of an experience of that sort, and went to speak about it with Roshi Kennett when she was over in Britain at Throssel Hole Priory. She said "Fine, but it's a bit like a kensho orgasm isn't it, really? The trouble with you is you're going 'one, eight, six, ten, two, five'. No no no, you mustn't go like that, you must go 'one, two, three, four, five, six". Then I understood what she was saying.

It's no good having an experience which is maybe well advanced, well down the path, if you're neglecting the simple things like being kind, being thoughtful, struggling with one's difficulties, working with the everyday Koans: "What shall I do now that my child is in hospital with whooping cough?", or "What can I do about my lover, who doesn't seem to love me any more?" or, the other way round, "What can I do about this relationship when I've started to love somebody else".

These are burning issues, and they're not at the end of the road, they're right down there at the beginning, raising questions of mindfulness, ethical behaviour, simply trying to be 'good'.

So Xu Yun would stress that there's no need to rush into using Koans. You can use the Silent Illumination approach, if that is appropriate for you. It may even be appropriate for you not to use that either; just watch the breath. Just calm the mind, forget about reading all about this Zen stuff; chuck it out. Just calm down man, okay?

There is a modern Japanese story of a man who kept coming to the master terribly confused. Whatever he did, nothing seemed to help him whatsoever. He had all sorts of high-flown ideas about being a monk, he was obviously the most unsuitable person to be a monk, but nonetheless he these ideas about being a monk, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

Finally, the master said, "You want my advice? You've been in this state, you've done twenty retreats, you're still the same, nothing's touched you. I suggest you do something very very simple". He said "What's that?". He said "Go and make prostrations to the statue of Kuan Yin, every morning, a hundred times, and just keep doing it." So the man who was at his wit's end, dropped all his arrogance, and said "Yeah, okay, I'll do that." He didn't come back to the monastery for six months. When he came back the master said to him "How are things?" He said "Fine, fine. I've begun to understand what illusion is. "What had he done? Just done that which was appropriate to his nature. He needed to let go, and to ask "Please, help me." He didn't have to think "What is it that's helping me? Who is Kuan Yin? What is Kuan Yin? Kuan Yin is just a statue. What is the meaning of a statue?" None of that concerned him. He just found the statue, and did as the master had suggested. Fortunately, he had the sense to see the wisdom of the master. He let go of his self concerns and found a simple sanity.

A wonderful story, very important story, I think, for all of us. One of the beauties of Chan is having this wide range of possible activities, of possibly ways of practicing, One can choose a way which is suited to one. It's not like going to a rather more narrow approach which says "Do this, do that," and that's the right way to do it. But rather, it's more subtle. If you go with Shifu, have an interview with Shifu, you spend a lot of time kind of mulling over what would be a good approach.

This is why interviews in Chan are quite important. What both participants in interview struggle to do is to share an issue which the practitioner is bringing up, to find out what is the way through. Sometimes it really is very difficult. Who knows? Sometimes one just doesn't know. Neither the teacher, nor the practitioner. No idea. What can one do then? Well, you can start bowing to Kuan Yin. Might do you a lot of good.

Koans are used in a very subtle way in Chan. They can be used in an entirely classical way. Master Sheng Yen trained in Japan in the Rinzai method. He's very well aware of the powerful value of the use of an orthodox Koan, and he'll sometimes recommend that. He'll talk at considerable length about the development of the great doubt, and how one can penetrate the Koan using a very orthodox Rinzai/Linji way of speaking.

Personally I have found Master Sheng Yen at his best in the more subtle negotiating of "Well, what is it we should do together, what is the question here?" That's where his mastery really shines forth, for me, to me. That's where I find him such a subtle teacher. And also of course, for me personally, his teaching in Silent Illumination is extremely profound.

So, this is evening I have been sharing with you a perspective on the use of Koans. Lets spell that out right now in practical terms for this retreat. Much of what we've been developing together is essentially the Silent Illumination approach. That's fine, there's no need to do anything extra; continue with it. But it might be the case that some of you find a puzzling Koan arising within that practice. If that happens, it might be a good idea to take up that Koan and focus on the issue which has come up.

I would suggest is that before you change your method, you come and speak about it with either Simon or I, and we will discuss whether that might be a good idea or not. It might not be a good idea; it might be better to stay calm, collected. It might even be better simply to watch the breath. Sometimes one has funny ideas about one's ability when a lovely question comes up, but actually you're not ready for it. One's Karmic state may be not such as to make it valuable to do that.

If you'd like to ask a question, feel free; if not we'll sit in a few minutes.

Questioner 1: What about when imagery comes up, not necessarily a thought, but are images similar to a thought?

John: Yes. Images can be treated in the same way as thought. I mean, they are thoughts, but they're pictorial, so there's no special recommendation here. Of course, images are quite interesting in a different way from thought in that of course they can lead on to dreams and fantasy. Perhaps the image is a more direct door to one's unconscious world. But apart from that it's just Makyo, as the Japanese would say, it's illusory, from the point of view of the task.

Questioner 1 again: Well you said to look in the gaps, But then this imagery, say of Amitabha comes up. No real thoughts, but imagery.

John: Ah, well look between the gaps between the images. If the image is continuous, you have to break the image somehow, which the Tibetans do very effectively by suddenly shouting "Phat!".

Breaks, breaks the image and throws you into a state of surprise. "Phat!". Breaks the image.

Questioner 1 again: Silently, we do that silently?

John: You can do it loud if you like. But you're only allowed one in every half hour!

Questioner 2: So you're saying that a Koan could be an image, because an image can be paradoxical can't it? One image can have two ...

John: Strictly speaking, no, a Koan is not an image, strictly speaking a Koan is a question, which has a verbal form. But I think, if you mean you have an image that comes up which is deeply puzzling for you and which you wish to investigate and go into, you could use it in a similar style, yes.

The thing about images, they tend to change of their own accord, whereas questions say the same. Questions have a formal structure to them, a linguistic structure, so they stay constant. Whereas if you're trying to investigate an image in this way, the image is liable to shift and move, so it's more slippery.

Questioner 2 again: It might provide you with answer by shifting?

John: Well the answer actually doesn't lie in the image. Remember that what one's looking for is what lies between, behind, beyond, around, the image. And images are just pictures on pages. What is the paper?

Questioner 2 again: The space between the shifts?

John: Yes. You can try it, yes, If you have an image that you want to investigate, by all means do so.

Questioner 3: When you asked us to go outside this afternoon and sit down, a very strong question came up. I've been wondering about how to bring it into the practice. I mean, I recognise the question as one of the so-called "unanswerable questions" the Buddha did not discuss.

John: Well, a lot depends on what the question is and what its context is, where it comes from. A question can sometimes be a very personal one like "What shall I do about a certain situation?" That's not a Koan. It's a very important question but it's not a Koan. I don't know whether you want to talk about your question here or whether that's more suitable for an interview. Maybe we need to share what the question really was.

Questioner 3 again: I don't mind. The question has to do with the Mahayana idea that there's nothing that needs to be done, etcetera, etcetera, there is no path, and no suffering. And yet, the world that we live in is full of people suffering, It's full of people like us going to retreats, and going back, and coming back. That's a very personal issue for me.

John: Indeed that is a very genuine Koan. You need to sharpen it into a question that has only a few words in it, one which you can then use as a vehicle for the investigation. This is a deeply paradoxical and problematic issue which takes us into the whole issue of what is meant by emptiness. An ancient Buddha once said (Huang po / Chu Ch'an. 1947. The Huang po Doctrine of Universal Mind. Buddhist Society. London. p 51.) "Do you not see that the fundamental teaching of the Dharma is that there are no entities having absolute existence. What are not entities from an absolute perspective are indeed entities in their relative aspect? One who understands this is a true monk and can practice rightly. "If you can sharpen up your concern into a sharp-pointed, one-pointed question which feels right to you, than that would be a Koan to use.

Questioner 4: You have admonished us a number of times to make our minds bright. I take it from that that when I sit with my eyes open then that's brighter than sitting with my eyes closed, and when my eyes fall shut and imagery happens, that side of it is not very useful so I return and open my eyes. Is that the right approach?

John: Not quite, not quite right. 'Make your mind bright' really means 'investigate'; it means 'find out what you're on about, don't sit there doing nothing'. Investigate, make your minds 'bright!'. That's what that means.

You refer to eyes open and eyes shut. It is true that the meditation is rather different if the eyes are open or shut. Basically, if the eyes are open then one can be more alert, and one is more easily able to feel the world around you, the room around you.

The value of the eyes shut is that sometimes one wants to go 'in'. One doesn't want the world, you want to go 'in'. Turning the gaze inward, into the darkness as it were, is also very valuable. By using both methods on a retreat, one can discover a broad view of one's own meditation practice. One can discover what it is like to go deeply inwards; one can also discover what it is like to come out again. There's an expression used in Mahamudra practice - 'co-emergence', it's all about relating the inner and the outer.

Questioner 4 again: When imagery happens for me, I'm not in enough control to investigate.

John: Oh. Well, one has to let it run, until a certain amount of calming-down occurs. It's true, at times, there's not much one can do, except just let it exhaust itself. Remember the image of the beer bottle. There's a lot of fizz in the beer bottle, you take the top off and the bubbles come up. If one sits patiently for long enough, the bubbles run out.

The thing you have to watch is that you don't keep regenerating them. The mind can have a way of 'regenerating' the bubbles, not letting go of the issue, but keeping on feeding the issue, milking the issue. Like 'poor me'. "Poor me, I never get anything right, my mummy did this and so I'm awful," or "My sister did this so I'm awful." You go round one loop and recognise what you are doing. Then you have a chance to say "Oh well, that's that, that's me doing my 'poor me' thing again." You have a chance to drop it and do something else.

But some people don't catch that moment, they go round again "Poor me, here I am in this awful Zen hall, with all these awful complicated talks and this dreadful Chinese chanting. Poor me." So you go round again! Now, the problem is, how do you break that. This is where interviews are very useful.