

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Library — Archives

September 11, 1982

Dear Aitken Roshi --

The simplest way to describe the intended direction of this letter is to say, "thank you." "Thank you," and then again, "please."

Although we have not met-- or perhaps did so briefly at Dai Bosatsu monastery in 1976-- still I feel that in some way we have met based on something you wrote for "The Ten Directions." What you said helped considerably to clarify some of my recent confusions...or, helped considerably enough for me to see that I wanted to break off my affiliation with New York Zendo, Sho Bo Ji. I did. For all the bittersweetness of that decision, I am still indebted for these words:

Be clear about this. Distinguish between the Buddha-dharma as Buddhist teachings, and the Dharmakaya as the pure and clear law body. Wu-men wrote 'When the world is destroyed, it is not destroyed....'

This is true, but it offers little solace. In the course of the destruction, the Buddha-dharma, the teachings of the Buddha and all his successors, will be lost. Can you hear Dogen Zenji objecting? I certainly can.

These lines were like a flashbulb going off in a dark closet for me. For several days after hearing of Eido Roshi's latest mistakes, I felt trapped. Twice before, in 1975 and 1979, I had been over this bump. (I missed '66 in Hawaii, thank God.) Twice before thoughts and emotions, current and countercurrent, ran wild. This time was not particularly different except that there was one question that seemed to stand out, a question in the form of a statement: "Although there are no limits or lines in Zen, still Eido Roshi has crossed the line." Your words, though written in a somewhat different context, cracked me like a walnut. Choosing a direction became easy. Thanks!

With any luck, this latest éclat will be published in the Village Voice together with its predecessors and effect something that all previous attempts at reasonable discussion could not. Perhaps. Perhaps not. But what concerns me is the future our small, fine flower patch. It seems to me there is something indelibly precious and it deserves nurture. I cannot think at present that that nurture is well-served

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library — Archives

by speaking only of the wonderful flowers. Weeds are wonderful too, but they actually do harm flowers. When even Soen Roshi, while acknowledging his deep connection with Eido Roshi's problems (and which of us could deny our connection?), calls Eido Roshi a "liar" both to his face and to others...I wonder if the leaders of our American Zen community will not want to take a less indirect approach in future.

I am not a good student of Buddhist history, nor do I count myself among those anxious to shoehorn Zen experience onto the nearest available psycho-analyst's couch, but don't I remember correctly that after Shakyamuni's death his disciples would gather fortnightly to discuss openly their difficulties and directions?

I cannot pretend to know what will happen in future, nor can I gauge what action will be appropriate at that time. For all that, I would like to encourage you who has encouraged me so well: please keep an eye peeled for what the kids on the cow farm used to call "pasture pastries"...they really can stink up the house something awful!

With gratitude and best wishes,



Adam Kigen Fisher