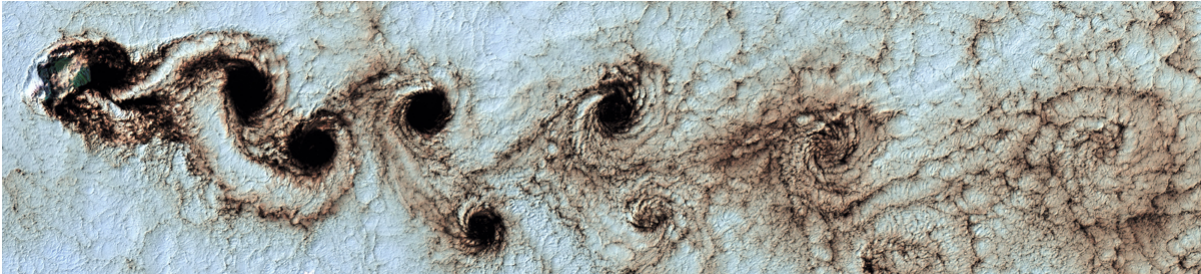


Zen Center

O F S A N D I E G O

ZCSD Newsletter

May-June 2023



Living Heartmind

Rick was a fellow engineer at a medical electronics firm we worked for—this was many years ago, in my home state of Michigan. We were working in the back area of the building, by a big, open loading dock door, as a violent thunderstorm unfolded. It was a deluge, with almost constant strong lightning and thunder, and a gale force wind. We watched out the back as a small bird, helpless in the wind, was thrown into the side of the building and dropped like a stone to probably a half-inch of water on the concrete driveway.

We all took the poor creature for dead, except for Rick. He ran out into the storm and brought it in. It seemed lifeless, but he gently applied heat (from a heat gun, a tool used in working with electronics) as he held it. After a few minutes, nothing—a casualty of the storm, we figured. Except for Rick. Another minute of heat and the bird opened its eyes and began moving. Another minute and it was fully back to life and started flying around. Rick held up his finger and the bird landed on it. He took it outside and

2023 Sesshin Dates

June 8-12, 2023

September 8-11, 2023

December 28-31, 2023

[Announcements](#)
[Sesshin Application](#)

The Sexual
Misconduct
Complaint
Procedure and
Code of Ethical
Conduct for
Teachers/Practice
Leaders can be
found on the [ZCSD
website under
"Policies."](#)

***“Heartmind has
the totality of***

extended his hand upward and the bird took off.

It was something I'll never forget, and it happened just like this. Can we care, move, and do what preserves life? For at least this relatively brief time, Rick was living Heartmind.

Once in a while I'll watch videos on YouTube of people's extraordinary experiences with animals. Living things seem to know when you're interested in them and not life-threatening, and I've found it not too uncommon to have memorable experiences with them—any creatures, really (including our fellow human beings), that we share this life with.

To have such an experience breathes life into that word Unity for me, but it tends to return to the thought realm. Practice can help us here, not straying as far away, allowing more access to our inherent nature of connectedness. If you've done a few Sesshins, our meditation intensives, you've probably felt the reality of this connectedness at the end of the retreat.

In the Beatles song, "Let It Be," Paul McCartney sings of an almost life-saving solace and wisdom brought by Mother Mary. The breakup of the band was a "time of trouble," especially for Paul, and the lyrics may reflect that. He seems to suggest that taking the offering of the heart (which, to me, is what Mother Mary represents) and "letting it be" in our life can illuminate our way forward, more in the spirit of unity.

Indeed, there can be times when life takes us to our limit, and surrender is the only option. I've been there. The grace of this is, I feel, in allowing the Heart-intelligence to take over, which it does in my experience. We're at the edge but don't want to give up control—it seems like giving up life. And in a way, it is. But maybe something tells us it

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will be OK and we manage to do it. We make it through and life moves on, and we've evolved a bit, with a little help from a Friend.

I feel we all have a goddess (or god) of unity within ourselves—that we could call the Heartmind. Looking at the world's religions, there are many gods and goddesses. But we almost always make them outside of ourselves. Do we need to go outside? Are all the gods "out there" a result of an unheeded call of our own heart?

I'd like us to consider the work of the Third Ancestor, Jianzhi Sengcan, the author of "Relying on Heartmind," which we regularly recite at the Center. This work offers us a way to live a more unity-based life, live the Heart-intelligence, and it alerts us to the consequences of our separative behavior.

The author suggests the possibility of an openness to what-is, not incessantly adding our self-centered drama and story to our life. He tells us to use awareness of what's happening in our life, not avoiding or denying it, to move toward resolution and healing.

Practicing, we look at our concepts, ideas, judgments of good and bad, and see them more clearly as the cause of our suffering. Then we can loosen the grip of believing those thoughts, acting on them, and doing harm.

Then the heart of us is more free to act in the world. Practicing what the Third Ancestor speaks of in this writing lines up a clarified mind with the heart. Jack Kornfield speaks of this Jewel in the Lotus:

"Compassion arises when the jewel of the mind rests in the lotus of the heart. The awakened mind has a diamond-like clarity. When this clear insight rests in the heart's tender compassion, both dimensions of liberation are fulfilled."

With "Relying on Heartmind," Jianzhi Sengcan invites us to take a look at the clinging, holding, believing, assuming, and the like, that we're engaged in and suggests that in its absence "the Way becomes perfectly apparent." The battling of likes and dislikes, the disease of the mind, separates heaven and earth. This life, as it is, presents heaven and earth together. It's not difficult (or easy), if we just cease cherishing opinions, he says.

He's not telling us to abandon the practical matters of this human life, but rather see how belief in our separation causes suffering.

"Heartmind has the totality of space: nothing lacking, nothing extra; yet attachment and aversion make it seem otherwise. The Supreme Way by nature is all-embracing.

"Misunderstanding the great mystery, people labor in vain for peace."

In almost every line the Third Ancestor points out how we might drop the barriers to living Heartmind with an openness and presence in this moment, allowing us to more clearly see and experience those barriers, taking away some of their power:

"Holding onto thoughts denies reality.
Resisting thoughts perturbs the spirit. Why
treat what's yours as foreign?
Quibbling and hesitating, the more you
hurry, the slower you go.
Holding onto things wrecks your balance.
Every opposition under the sun derives
merely from false thinking.
Like dreams, illusions, mirages before our
eyes—why grasp at them?
Discontinue unnecessary speech and
speculation, and the whole world opens up."

Writing again of the unity, he concludes with:

"The realm of true actuality harbors neither self or other. One is no other than all, all no other than one. The reliable Heartmind lacks dualities; nonduality is relying on Heartmind. Here the way of words is cut—no past, no future, no present."

With the last line, even concepts of, or thoughts about, what we call past, future and present can be quieted and illuminated, to open us to this here-and-now.

Again, we really don't need to concern ourselves so much with what Heartmind is or isn't—just be here for the life in front of us. This can happen as we practice, and we see through what's getting in the way of a more naturally satisfying life. Simply, living awake.

—Chuck Sweet

Our practice is always to uncover what's blocking our awareness of the wonder that is life.

—Charlotte Joko Beck