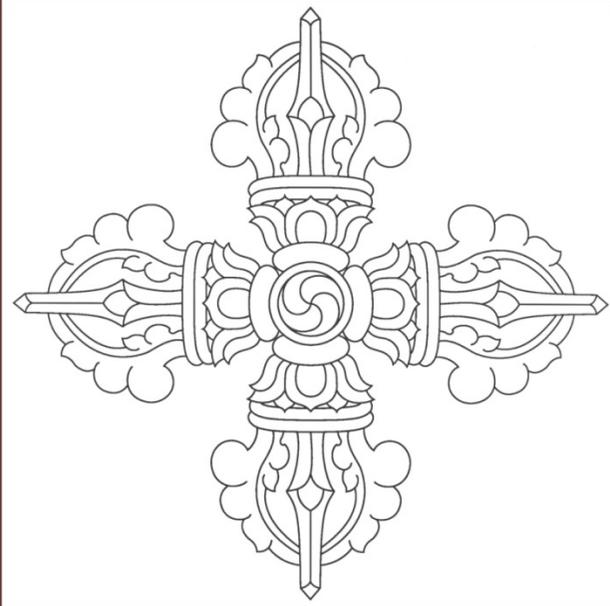


The Dharma of Resistance



by Michael Erlewine

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INTRODUCTION

This is not intended to be a finely produced book, but rather a readable document for those who are interested in my particular take on dharma training and a few other topics. These blogs were from the fourth quarter of 2017, posted on Facebook and Google+.

Michael@Erlewine.net

Here are some other links to more books, articles, and videos on these topics:

Main Browsing Site:

<http://SpiritGrooves.net/>

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THE DHARMA OF GETTING STUCK

We live on the edge of the Manistee Natural Forest, some 900,000 acres of essentially wilderness. The two-track forest roads often get impassable in heavy rains and in the spring thaw. The ruts can be a couple of feet deep. You don't want to get stuck back there.

If we do, our attention is on whatever tire is the most stuck. It's a case of the obvious, the low-hanging fruit, and that the squeaky wheel always gets the oil. Most of us are busy enough with our distractions, so it takes something pretty immediate and right in our face to get our attention; so much for deliberate planning.

What I'm saying here is that I react much better than I plan ahead, so throw me a bone and I might chew on it. Wait for me to study it out and find it on my own and you might as well forget about it. So, if we are aware that we are stuck (and where), perhaps we can do something about it. Awareness is always the key, which is what Buddhism is all about. The word Buddha simply means the one who is aware or awakened.

And so, where is the edge of awareness for us for us to grab ahold of? Well, for one, it has to be immediate, meaning in the present moment. Yes, we can be aware that we were unaware (or aware) in the past or the future, but even that has to be done in the present. So, as they say, start where you are, here and now.

I have written a great deal about becoming aware of our own reactions since they tend to naturally grab our attention, but becoming aware of where we are

mired or stuck in life is a little more difficult, especially if we don't even know that we are stuck, but just think that's the way things are or, worse, that that's the way we are. Do you see what I'm getting at?

Everything changes; everything moves; just as ideas that we will never change give way to change, so does any situation we are in, good and bad. But there's that problem again, becoming aware of where we are and even who we really are at heart. Of course, as mentioned, awareness is the whole of what Buddhism is about, the study of awareness and ourselves becoming more aware.

Many of the great Buddhist texts are about how we are not aware of ourselves in this present moment. Instead, we are lost in noodling around in our past or scheming and dreaming about our future. It reminds me of how we entertain ourselves on the Internet. So, these pith texts encourage us not to spend so much of our time in the future or the past, but rather to be more aware in the present. It's not that the past or the future are bad, but just that since everything happens in the present, it might be helpful to spend some time there, like in this moment now. Yet, no matter whether this is a good moment or bad, it is easy slide with it into the past and dwell on it.

Yet, it seems that for many of us, we are not entirely happy with (or in) the present moment. As Shakespeare said, "There's the rub." We want it to be different than it is or we feel the present is not what we hoped for or expected. We would rather be elsewhere, like where we think we want to be rather than where we actually are. We are not satisfied with who we are or perhaps where we are in life. Like the

old Rolling Stones song and the line “I can’t get no... satisfaction.” I often feel that way about the food I eat; no matter how I vary it, I’m still not satisfied. It’s like there is some mineral that I need but that I’m not getting, an itch that I just can’t scratch.

And the epitome of this problem is when we are not happy (or cannot accept) this present moment, even though all the wisdom of that past declares the “Present” as the living end, the outcome of all there is up to right now, the tip of the top, so to speak. Not accepting the present moment is like holding our breath and refusing to breathe. It’s not that the present moment is where we want to pause or stop but, like breathing, unless we keep doing it, we won’t even have the present moment, warts and all. It’s no wonder that so much sage advice often starts with the simple admonition “Relax, and take a deep breath” and I would add, “and keep breathing.”

I don’t mean to be vulgar, but if we have ever been constipated, we know that we can’t just stop or accept the status quo. We have to keep working with it. It’s the same with a mother giving birth. We don’t stop the birth process because we’re stuck or it’s difficult; we go through with it. Where we are in the “right now” is often just like that. We may not like where we are, but refusing to accept our situation because we are not happy with it only makes it worse. It’s like the high-wire artist. In the middle of the wire is not the time to have a little protest. It’s the time to keep walking.

DHARMA FOR WHEN WE GET STUCK

This idea of “getting stuck” in the mud of our life that I brought up yesterday has broad implications, especially if you want to learn how to deal with it. To me, in a sense, it is the essence of what I have learned from the Tibetan and Zen Buddhists, to work in the moment with what is, whatever that may be for each of us. And that includes feeling stuck where we are and not too happy about it, either.

The cycles of life (actually a spiral), with their ups and downs, seem more elliptical than circular, meaning the cycle leans on those two turnaround ends in the ellipse more than the long linear-like stretches. I tend to get stuck in the low spots of life and can't get moving again, with seemingly less energy or will to do anything about it. And there I sit, wondering if this is just the way I am and/or the way life is. Or, is it just me?

I forget (if I ever knew) how to extricate myself from these virtual standstills and can only vaguely remember being stuck like this before, which I (of course) have been many times. I shouldn't have to mention this (but obviously I feel I need to), that if we feel stuck in our present life-situation that, spending most of our time worrying about the past or hoping on the future, is not going to make things easier. It doesn't help at all. In fact, it's the problem.

Learning to just “be” alone in the present moment is, for most of us, not immediately all that easy. We are afraid of being bored or of not knowing what to do with ourselves if we are not lost (as usual) in this busyness or that. We may also feel uncomfortable being alone with ourselves unless we have our “worry

beads,” the sense of doing this or doing that to fill up (or fend off) the space and time of being alone. The present moment, with all its instantaneity, nevertheless can appear at first as a vast empty space in time with nothing to do. Learning to get comfortable in the moment is not a trivial task. It can appear foreign to us. Some folks have vertigo or claustrophobia. In a similar way, many of us are afraid to enter the silence of the present moment.

As mentioned, to get comfortable and familiar with being alone, we first would have to stop endlessly filling up the naturally emerging gaps in time and space with our busyness and worry beads. It’s just a nervous habit, yet we wall ourselves off from ever being alone and are afraid of it.

Yet, what DO we do if there is nothing to do and we don’t fill that void with endless nervous busyness? And it’s true that there IS nothing to do because there is nothing that has to be done but be there. We have to stop “doing, doing, doing” and be done doing for the moment and let our busy fingers rest. Nothing is gained by that.

Like turning off the radio or TV because we suddenly realize that it is irritating us is what I am talking about. Yes, what we gain is the deafening sound of silence, but more important is the experience of the purity of the un-busy-moment, one without all of the white-noise we have been generating since we don’t know when. And that purity is not a vacuum or some empty feeling, per se, but rather the uncorking of the well of our intuition within us that has been obscured all this time by our own busyness and fear of true openness.

And out of this endless instantaneous moment called “Now” pours the cornucopia of insight and the purest intuition. And please don’t think or imagine that what appears are just more thoughts of the kind we are already so used to. Hardly! It takes some time for the obscurations caused by our busyness to clear but, given a little time, what starts to emerge is an insight that is more pure and original than anything we have known. It’s always been there, but drowned out by our own nervousness. To say by words that it is insightful or interesting would be to miss the reality. Words can’t go there.

The insight of purified intuition completes what has always been missing in our self and life; it scratches that itch that never has been scratched and satisfies where satisfaction has never been known. And don’t think that being in the moment is some big task we have to undertake; that’s not it.

We don’t have to do anything at all, EXCEPT to stop spending all of our time in past and future considerations. Like an elastic band, when we stop dwelling in the past and future, we automatically snap-back into the present. It’s been there all the time. And we have to make no other effort than that.

Yes, we may have to suffer withdrawal symptoms from endlessly surrounding ourselves with the white-noise of busyness and let the accumulated obscurations in our mind clear out. But after that takes place, we don’t just “do nothing” and sit there alone like a lump on a log. Instead, we begin to intake and be inspired by the naturally emerging insight that rises to consciousness. It is all the freshness that is. And, as mentioned, what is most unique about this intuition

is that it is exactly what we need to complete us. That, we have never found before.

There is nothing extraneous about discovering our emerging intuition. It is pure signal and no noise. And, as mentioned, it's about finding the missing pieces to whatever has been puzzling us in life. It main-lines a stream of insight that exactly completes us.

THE DHARMA OF WORKING OUT A FUNK

This blog is about what we can do when we find ourselves in a funk, not feeling like ourselves. What are the most practical means to get “unstuck” when our life progress seems to come to a standstill and nothing seems to be happening for us? It can be a hopeless feeling. And I apologize if what is being pointed out here is simplistic or I sound too didactic. I’m just trying to be clear.

I am amazed at how often lyrics from one of my daughter May’s songs come to mind, in this case a tune called “Rise Up Singing,” and the line “You know, trouble ain’t built to last.” This song that May wrote was chosen to be included in the best-selling popular-folk-music collection in North America, having sold over a million copies. If you have never heard this song, you just might like it. I do. Here it is for those who have enough time for a time-out.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9X_uvK5ERM8

And the point of that lyric should not be lost on us, that even trouble (and hard times) aren’t made to last forever. Trouble always gives way to better times. Yet, if we can’t afford to wait (or don’t want to), we can help trouble to pass more quickly. Let’s look at the dharma of how this can be done.

First, it is important to realize (and this is a toughie my friends) that most often much of the situation in which we find ourselves is in our own mind. Where else would it be? LOL.

I’m not saying there are no intervening circumstances that may have brought our life to a halt at what seems

like a full-stop. Certainly that happens. Yet, it is what we do about it that is important. We don't have to just sit in a slump and stop living. As the old Neil Young album said, "Rust Never Sleeps." This is also true for change; we never stop changing, no matter how empty life can at times seem. And we can take advantage of that fact.

Next, don't take "No" for an answer. Keep going. Nothing is static. Everything changes, so be part of the solution and not the problem. We become part of the problem when we fall into believing that the way we feel right now (feeling down) is the way-we-just-are as opposed to just something we are going through. It's like getting stuck in the mud out on the back roads here in Michigan. If we think we can just ride it out every time, that may or may not work. And that's the idea here too. If we can't ride, walk. And sometimes, we have to just get out and help push.

And it's not true that "every door won't open." It will, but it may take time and care on our part to achieve that. The attitude required when life comes to a standstill (instead of progressing normally) involves our working with the situation. The moment we react and take a stand against a bad-moment (as in: "I don't like it"), we are even more stuck with it. It is better (and far easier) to recognize our "bad" situation as a challenge and not a stationary fact. In other words, we are not "that." The situation does not define us.

Yes, we may have to take a few steps back and survey the problem to see just how best to work with it, but working-with-it is what is required. Let's be sure we are on the same page. Here are some illustrations as to what I'm talking about.

For example, we wake up one morning feeling not our usual self, as in a “bad” mood. And we have a big day ahead of us, important in one way or another, but for some reason we are just out of sorts. Not only do we not feel right, we are upset because of it. It’s no wonder that we somehow want to leap-frog how we feel at the moment and get back to feeling good. In other words, there is a division or separation between what we imagine we should normally feel like and how we actually feel at the time. And we don’t like it. That’s an example.

The idea here has to do with the “resistance” we feel, in particular our resistance in-the-moment to whatever we don’t like about how we feel. However, by resistance I am not talking about our resistance to conventions, the law, society, and so forth. I am referring here to our resistance within our own self to something we have to do or are feeling, like feeling down and stuck there. Here we are looking at our internal resistance (or reaction) to anything, especially a reaction that further constipates or slows us down into inaction and a slump. And I am reminded of Shakespeare and in Hamlet’s Soliloquy, the lines:

“And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprise of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.”

I know. I’m using Shakespeare here out of context, but my point is that it does not take much for us to stall-out and have trouble getting moving again. We can sit in a funk or depression for who knows how long. And a major source of depression is the

resistance we feel to accepting how it is with us in the moment. We want to feel better, but we don't, and we don't like it. So, what are we going to do about that?

Wait it out? Wait until we naturally feel better? Or, are we going to "identify" with feeling bad as just who we are, how it is, or that it's what we deserve, and sit ourselves down and pout. It is easy to become discouraged and give up for a while, when life-events have taken the cream off the top of how we feel and we accept that this is just how it is, will be, or must be for us. In other words, we identify with the depression as us. "We" are depressed.

My point is that this view is not helpful, but just one more turn of the screw and not a time to give up or sideline ourselves, much less to identify with the depression as us! This would be a big mistake and we can easily do something about it. Well, perhaps not too easily, but instead, working WITH our situation is what is suggested.

In summary, at some points in our life it does not take much to get us down and, once down, it can be hard to get going again, to get back on our feet. So, if we are talking about remedies here, the above described situation is what we are remedying. How do we keep what is just a depression on the road of life from shutting us down and disabling us? Such a state of mind can be hard to ignore or get around.

And the way to prevent that is to not-identify with the depression as anything other than what it is, a dip in the road, a setback, etc. If we insist on reifying every bad moment or every resistance that we feel, we are creating our own problems as we go along. Instead,

we can learn to consider each setback or depression as the challenge that it is. We may be feeling bad, but we are not the “feeling bad.” We are ourselves and the “feeling bad” is something that is just temporary because we are aware of it. That awareness is our edge.

And I am reminded of the Old Testament in the Bible where it says something like “This came to pass” or “That came to pass,” etc. Nothing comes to stay; everything is just passing through and will pass away. In other words, our job here is to help things pass away, especially whatever makes us feel uncomfortable or out-of-sorts. Help it out. So, the Buddhist techniques in Lojong training are designed to facilitate and help us work with whatever comes our way and not lock horns with it through resistance. We are not resistance fighters. So, how do we remedy this?

For starters, the answer is: slowly and carefully. Rejecting our current situation, even if we don't like it, seldom works. Instead, we have to accept however we feel and get familiar and comfortable in it. In this case, it is easier to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear than it is to hold our breath and wait for better days. Or to quote a method from Sun Tsu's “The Art of War, where it says to “keep your friends close and your enemies closer.” Don't reify the perceived divide.

We want to be aware that there is a division between who we are and how we feel, but not strengthen that division by the attachment of opposing it. It's just the opposite; we want to take possession of our “bad” mood and accept how we feel as the only means to change it up to feeling better. In other words, we have

to accept feeling bad, bring it closer, get into it, and transform it; cheer ourselves up, so to speak. As long as we keep our bad mood at arm's length, we only intensify the separation. That's what "stuck" is.

And to me, the interesting point is that we are just the person to do all this, i.e. transform our bad mood into a better mood and cheer ourselves up. We have handled moodiness before and come out feeling better. However, we can't do this if we refuse to accept our mood just as it is, warts and all. It's ours.

And while it's correct to not identify WITH the bad mood, it's equally true that we must own it. It's our bad mood. It's where we are at just now and only we can turn it around. In fact, we are ideally suited to do just that. If we don't, it's like trying to drive a car and not be in it. Eventually, we have to just get into the car and drive it where we want to go.

And it is the same with getting stuck in one of life's low spots. Just as we don't want to identify with it as "us," there is also no point in trying to wait it out. Instead, we get more familiar with it. Keep in mind that we are already aware enough to know that we don't want to feel like this. That is our advantage. We know how we would like to feel, so with a little love, attention, and care we can pull up out of whatever has gotten us down. It is just as easy to work with our bad mood and change it as it is to remain stuck there opposing it. By working with ourselves, as it is, we can ease on out of it.

In other words, we have to relax and accept the "bad" mood as a starting point to regain a normal sense of ourselves. If we are doing something like sitting

meditation and don't feel like it and are just waiting until it is over, it's the same story. Relax and accept where we are, like "in a bad mood," and work it like clay until we shape up into something better. That is the dharma of it, as I know.

DHARMA'S ENERGY STOREHOUSES: REACTIONS AND RESISTANCE

IMO, deeper than our day-to-day involuntary reactions to life is our stubborn resistance to things. Often we are not even aware of our own resistance because we are too busy resisting. And while it's not difficult to become aware of our knee-jerk reactions and learn to tone them back, it is much harder to become aware (much less realize) our resistances and work them out.

To keep it simple, "resistance" is when we resist something, whether it is something we don't feel like doing or something we are unaware that we are even resisting, like when we find ourselves pushing-back for no reason we know. I'm not referring to resisting "evil" or the law, etc., but rather deep-seated prejudice and bias or even sheer laziness. For example, I resisted taking the trash and recycle out each week for years, until I realized that it was far easier just to do it (and get into it) than to gripe about it to myself. Now it's a chance to get some early-morning fresh air. Overcoming our resistances is a positive pleasure that also releases large amounts of previously inert or frozen energy.

Our moment-to-moment reactions are just instantaneous (and I have written about them often), but resistance is often so ingrained or deep that we can even mistake it for a part of us, who we are or perhaps who we think we will be or turn into in the future. In other words, we can fall into thinking that a particular resistance we feel is our character, who (or what) we are, i.e. that our resistance is actually an innate part us, the way we are. To me, that is something to watch out for.

I know of only one way to handle resistance and that is to first become aware that it exists, even if we at first only can see the tiniest outline or edge of it. And once recognized, resistance is then not removed suddenly or by force, but slowly and very carefully like we would go about removing a thorn from a foot or a sliver in our hand. We work it out gradually until we can see to embrace the totality of it and free it up. But unlike a thorn or a sliver, we do not then pass the resistance from our system. Instead, we work through the resistance, which is like freeze-dried karma. Just add heart and awareness and it can become again a positive part of us rather than something we resist. There is always “something” to a resistance and ultimately when we realize its essential nature, it vanishes and ceased to be separate from us. This may be as close to removing deep karma as we can get.

And, as we do become aware of a resistance, we realize that our resistances are everywhere that we are, deeply embedded in the very fabric of our existence. So, what are we resisting? That is a question for each of us to ask. Once we tap into them, our resistances are a very rich find, an immense storehouse of energy, much like petroleum, that can fuel our path to enlightenment for a very long time indeed.

Once we are aware of them, we find that our resistances are ubiquitous; they are everywhere. In each case, our resistance to what we don't like or don't feel like doing can be savored and sucked dry of its habitual hold on us. That's the dharma of it. Our resistances are the low-hanging karmic fruit that, once discovered, are the gift that keeps on giving.

And like thoughts, whose every essence is the same, the way to unravel and free our resistance is also always the same. While our knee-jerk reactions, although numerous, are fleeting, resistance takes time to be unearthed and thus can be, as mentioned, storehouses, treasures of energy for our realization.

Although the path of dharma may seem at times to be long and arduous, much like a desert that must be crossed, our deep pools of resistance are like oases of energy, waiting to be discovered. And unlike our reactions, which are like lightning bugs in the night, resistances are a slow-burning fuel that, as they are liberated, can shed light for a very long time. They become a torch that helps to light our liberation.

However, we have to realize our resistances. And that means becoming familiar with what we resist and why. And then we revitalize our resistance, like adding water to freeze-dried food, only in this case, we just add awareness. We finally take the time to stop resisting and instead love (or at least neutralize) our resistances, eventually reincorporating and recognizing them as us.

You are reading here (and in several previous blogs) about the dharma of resistance. This is a link to some articles on the other form of reactivity we experience, our moment-to-moment reactions:

<http://michaelerlewine.com/viewforum.php...>

UNKNOTTING THE CORD OF THE MIND

We each bump up against our resistances all the time. They are like a bad clutch, but most of you reading this have probably never driven a car with a clutch. At every turn, we find ourselves resisting this or resisting that. We may even translate our resistances into “I don’t like this” and “I don’t like that” or worse, “I am this way” or “I am that way,” but this may just be over-anthropomorphizing all of this.

If our myriad of resistances are what makes the wheel squeak, then each resistance, when realized, contains within it the oil to un-squeak itself, if that makes sense. That is what realization is all about. In the Tibetan tradition, they use the image of a knotted snake that, when it relaxes, just naturally unties itself. Dharma realization is the untying of our own knots.

I am reminded of the old road-sign warning “Slow Down, Curve Ahead.” When we sense ourselves resisting, that too is a sign that we should relax and take it slow, hopefully evening-out the particular knot of resistance that we feel within us. Our resistances are like shorthand. They can be relaxed and unpacked, thus extending themselves smoothly and releasing their tension. Just as in the body pain is our way of becoming aware that something needs attention, so do resistances pinpoint for us where attention on our part is needed. It is our psyche’s way of alerting us, is we can learn to be that aware.

And just as the masseuse seeks out knots in our body and solves them, so can we learn to unpack our many resistances, releasing their energy to us for other uses. And the process is simple. First, we have to be

aware of being resistant and pinpoint each resistance with that awareness. Next, we can learn to treat each discovered resistance of which we are aware as an opportunity to slow down and very carefully unpack it. And this is best done with love and a cherishing of this opportunity. When that resistance is totally released or expanded, it releases the frozen-energy in which it was bound and that energy lives again and is available to us. Consider the whole process as a kind of psychic massage that removes the knots and kinks of our resistance, resulting in a smoothly running (and fully flexible) mindstream.

Each knot of resistance is a frozen energy pool that can be unlocked and liberated. It amazes me that we carry within us the very means for our own liberation. How economical! And, it's not like we have to go far to get an energy drink. In time, we can learn to choose, unlock, and release resistance after resistance on our path to enlightenment. It's like a picnic lunch, fully portable.

And just as with a universal wrench, one realization fits all. Once we grasp the nature of realization, it's a universal solvent. So, to back up a bit and repeat, our resistances are like an oilfield, with many wells. Like a knotted cord, as each resistance is realized, another knot in the cord is unraveled and the increasingly unknotted cord becomes more and more of an open conduit through which our life-energy can naturally flow.

Unraveling our knotted cord is the path to liberation and enlightenment, one knot at a time. It is an axiom in Tibetan Buddhism that what binds us, frees us, if

we can realize how to do this. And the key to realization is awareness, awareness, awareness.

SUMMARY: REALIZING RESISTANCE

How should I put this next thought? I don't want to be overbearing, but at the same time, what's the point of communicating without actually communicating? I've been pointing out the concept of "resistance" and the fact that for most of us this is some deep-down stuff that we may not even be aware of. So, if you are reading my blogs and nodding along (or nodding out, LOL) you may have missed the point, so I will try to be clear.

Working with our involuntary reactions (since they are obvious and instantaneous), there is little problem for us to get on and stay on the same page here. However, with fully grasping the nature of resistance, it is a bit (or a lot) more difficult. Of course, we all get the general concept of resistance. We resist and do it all the time; we find ourselves resisting this, that, and the other thing. Yet, IMO, "realizing" resistance is another matter entirely. And fully realizing "resistance" means being able to turn it to our advantage and make each resistance a liberation. And for that, in my experience, more than just a conceptual grasp is required.

Dharma training is ultimately about realization and little else. We can talk and talk or read and read or listen and listen. That is no guarantee that we have experienced what we are talking about, much less realized it. Realization is two levels up from understanding in the dharma handbook, and in my life actual realization is rare enough. Yet, that could just be me, but I don't think so. LOL.

The more advanced dharma teachings are filled with what are called “upadesha,” which word translates to something like “pith teachings,” the boiled-down essence of the major dharma texts. It is similar to reading prose or poetry. We can read prose forever and perhaps never reach a fever-enough pitch for it to become incendiary in our mind. Yet often, poetry, with fewer, but just the right, words can cause our mind to burst into flames of realization. The pith dharma teachings from Tibet often are actually poems of spiritual realization called “Dohas,” and they are indeed incendiary.

Dharma realization, at least for most of us, is rare. And there is no patch-test that we can buy at the drugstore that if it turns blue we have realization and pink if we do not. That’s one of the reasons why the Rinzai Zen practitioners have all their koans. Koans are like the questions Harrison Ford had to ask in the movie “Blade Runner” to determine if a person was a human or a replicant (android). Dharma teachers have similar tests as a way to tell if a person has actually achieved the realization called “Recognition” (Kensho in Zen) or just think they have. It often is a series of questions and answers, like a lie-detector test. I too have been asked (and answered) questions in this traditional manner.

Anyway, as mentioned, “Resistance” is much deeper and more stubborn to realize than, let’s say, our knee-jerk reactions that we can all be readily aware of. Resistance is usually embedded in our habits much more deeply, well beyond what we could call superficial awareness. We may understand it conceptually, but we still don’t get it. Mastering our resistances involves being able to turn them to our

advantage and use them to enlighten ourselves. That would be an example of realization.

And, as they say, everyone wants to be in that number “when the saints coming marching in.” If you are concerned or question whether you have realized what is called “Recognition of the True Nature of the Mind,” you probably have not. It’s that simple. “Recognition” is always a “without-a-doubt” event. That, by definition, is its very nature. Imagining we have realization gets old fast and sooner than later we do “realize” that what we have (as my dharma teacher pointed out to me many times) is just another spiritual experience, and they come and they go. Realizations, however, are permanent.

So, if we find ourselves wondering, then we don’t have it and it’s better to spend our time preparing for realization rather than assuming or asserting it. And if we are defensive about this, that too is not a good sign. In that case, we probably ARE a replicant. LOL.

I can’t tell if someone has or has not recognized the true nature of the mind, so don’t ask me. I might have a guess, but as Chögyam Trungpa used to joke, “Your guess is as good as mine.” However, what I might be good for is helping those interested to work through the preliminary practices in order to get ready (properly) to recognize the actual nature of their mind. As my first dharma teacher used to say to me: “The dharma is not true because I say it; I say it because it is true.”

Hopefully, that’s what I’m doing with these blogs.