



## Presencing Issue 46 Reflecting Presence



**Shinbutsu Shugo:** Some years ago I was guided to the top of a hill in Kamakura in Japan; all around was forested with deciduous trees waist high bamboo and vines. At the summit there was a steep winding road running down and as we walked down the road we could see fissures in the rock wall which had been peopled with stones stacks 3 each, assembled to resemble monks sitting in meditation. These stones and fissures converged just above the entrance of a tunnel carved directly through very hard stone. As we traversed the tunnel we could hear voices at the other end. It was

bright and sunny as we emerged from the tunnel, stepping through a row of torii doorways of spiritual transition, each dedicated by families many years ago. I found myself in a box-canyon called Zeniari Benzaiten Ugafuku combining by Buddhist and Shinto deities, shrines, ponds, ancient statues, water and ferns dripping down vine covered canyon walls and a spring-filled cave in which people have prayed and washed their monies and left mementos of their attendance for 1,100 years. .

**Surprise:** As we made our way to the largest of the Shinto shrines my friend showed me how to rinse my hands face and mouth in the dragon fountain; how to pull the rope which rang a giant jingle bell, to clap my hands twice to declare my obeisance, to bow my head, eyes closed and say a prayer. When I raised my head and opened my eyes I beheld one of the biggest surprises of my life. There on the middle of the altar was a mirror looking back at me. In all of my experiences with altars I had never been touched to the core like this. At first it seemed profane: could humans in this culture elevate themselves to a Godlike status? No the implications were much deeper; perhaps it meant 'to thine own self be true.' How many times in life are we challenged to look directly at the role we are playing; and to recalibrate our course? My Japanese friend saw the challenge of the mirror somewhat differently. The Lord of Death presents us with a mirror at the end of life, so that we can observe our true character. Depending on what we see, we either join Yama in the underworld or we pass on to another lifetime.



**Lessons of the Mirror:** Perhaps the mirror has different lessons to teach. That first experience with an altered mirror was in 2001. It has come back to me over and over. I have written about it from various perspectives. The first mirrors which were used were bronze mirrors from China. They were considered magical because of their properties: their shiny surfaces could hold an image as long as you cared to look at it, unlike water which could only hold an image as long as it is horizontal and undisturbed. Also mirror makers learned how to add magical properties that would make the mirrors more valuable. They could stress the surfaces or blends of metals to create various visual distortions and reflective light patterns. When we consider mirrors and why they

were regarded as special; which is that they reflect reality. But we must also recognize that the image we see in the mirror is a distortion because it is reversed. We see ourselves as the mirror sees us.

**Mirroring from a different perspective:** There is a glaring fact that accompanies our lives in bodies. We cannot see our own face without the help of a reflective surface. Robert Bumes once wrote 'O wad some Power the giftie gie us / To see oursels as ithers see us! There is hint of a special gift concealed within those lines; a reminder of a special ability and responsibility to witness for one another. Because our mirrorings of one another depend upon our own facial expressions, I realized how important it is that we reflect one another without projection. As such we need to take responsibility for the thoughts that overlay our seeing. If our seeing is accompanied by past memories we are not seeing accurately. If our seeing is overlaid with fear or expectation, we are not seeing accurately. If our seeing is overshadowed with resentments or feelings of guilt or self-regret we cannot see without comparison, envy, or jealousy. How can we cleanse our seeing so that we can reflect other beings as creatures of beauty and innocence as they truly are?



Jesus asked the question: How is it possible to see the faults of others and remain ignorant of our own? A simple answer to that dilemma is that we have trained our minds to interpose our past memories between the present reality and our observations. This is projection in action. Thus we cannot see or reflect anything or anyone truthfully. Likewise we have trained ourselves to rely on the past for our understanding of this moment. When we finally come to see things as they are now without needing to subsume them to the past we will find that we have a tremendous gift to give to one another: the co-discovery of our true identity.



**Seeing without conditioning:** If we recognize that we interpose the past on our witnessing of one another we can ask ourselves why do we do that? One answer is that we do that for our own protection. Most of us are afraid to look another person in the face, and especially in the eyes. Many times we have turned away because there is a feeling of helplessness that comes when we realize that we are connecting directly through facial contact. The feeling of helplessness can occur because our sense of a personal self is changing into a sense of a collective self. Sometimes when we feel that our look is being returned, there is a sense of recognition and safety and deep communication. With presence we detect a willingness to let our sense of self dissolve into emptiness. We find our ego selves interposing strong defenses against such happenings. Our thinking minds start formulating an escape from this very real experience of dissolution and nothingness and no sense of reference. So we find our minds making comparisons, projecting past images and memories

to regain some sense of control. We restrain these fearful reactions by consciously following the sense of dissolution into the fullness of sharing holiness and presence, allowing curiosity and innocence to arise. In these sacred moments of joining we become aware of the signs of presence arising: *silence, stillness, no thought, no time, and mu or emptiness*. We can embrace the fearlessness of these sacred encounters.

**Cleansing the mirror:** Healing is about training our minds to become observers of presence as much as possible; learning that every sensory faculty we possess can be rekindled as an agency of presence. That our minds and bodies are always resonant to this moment; and thus there is no separation between observer and observed; between now and next, between now and near, between nothing and everything. We become aware of sentience and livingness as one and the same. Our consciousness can lead the way; discovering new faculties of awareness as we plumb the depths of our own being. Finally we come unto a place where we are accurately mirroring the beings that we are; mirroring the holiness and wholeness in everything that lives. In ACIM he says "You can become a spotless mirror in which the holiness of your Creator shines forth from all around you." We start to realize the difference between projection which is what we have been doing because of the self-centeredness of our minds and, reflection as an agency which come from the clear channels we become mirroring presence back and forth to one another. Taking responsibility for our own darkness, our fears, our pains, and our paths not taken, can bring us into a new sense of wholeness, as conscious players in creation.



Open hands  
Open mind  
Open face  
Open heart

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