

# Change is Possible! —Former Google Engineer Shares His Thoughts



## 改變是可能的——前谷歌工程師的心得分享

Dharma talk by Filippo Spike Morelli from June 2, 2014 at the Buddha Hall of City of Ten Thousand Buddhas  
史派克講於2014年6月2日 萬佛城大殿



BODHI FIELD | 菩提田

I first came to the City in November 2012, for a Guan Yin retreat. At that time we were living in San Francisco and I was working in the Silicon Valley. That December my wife came up to the City again for Amitabha and during that retreat someone told her there was an opening to tutor some kids in the girl school. From there she was offered to become a full time teacher and in January 2013 she moved to the City and became a resident. I've never seen her happier and for that alone I'm grateful to the City and everybody here that has supported her and worked with her.

我第一次到萬佛聖城是2012年11月，目的是參加觀音七。當時我在矽谷工作，和太太住在三藩市。一個月之後，我太太又來聖城參加彌陀七，當時有人詢問她是否願意在女校擔任課後輔導老師。沒多久，她成為女校的全職教師，並在隔年初搬到聖城常住。我從未見過她如此地開心，因此我非常感謝萬佛聖城以及所有支持她，和她一起工作的每個人。

2013年一整年，我都會在週末和一些打七的法會來到聖城。雖然逐

During 2013 I kept coming up weekend and for some retreats, but while much felt familiar with Buddhism, leaving everything to come up here felt scary. And the City itself was intimidating in many ways. I've been to China several times and I liked it very much, the first trip we took it felt like being back in Italy when I was a kid, which many people can't believe, but it really is that way.

After many conversations, last November, I finally gave up, left my job in Google and moved here. I've been a permanent resident of CTTB since January 2014 and I don't think I've ever been happier. In fact at times I feel so happy that I feel guilty. But it wasn't always like that, in fact during March I felt I was at my lowest ever.

The truth is, I must have a lot of karmic obstacles and I don't do well with a lot of the practices here. I can't sit very well, Chan sessions are as scary as it can get, my legs are shaking just thinking of this coming December. And I don't seem to understand the Sutras. My wife has given me many to read, but the Shurangama is the only one I can relate to along with the *Six Patriarch* and even those, when I sat in classes and discussed them, made my head spin. I love to recite the *Shurangama Mantra*, but I couldn't sit through the *Shurangama Mantra* class.

I felt helpless and lost in the daily ceremonies and lectures, and the more I tried to make sense of it by reading more or forcing myself to attend the events, the worse things got. This state became obvious in my day by day work and interactions: I was unhappy and angry, pointing fingers and finding faults everywhere. And then it hit me. What's the point of being a Buddhist, let alone studying the Sutras, if in my every moment I can't be at peace?

So I decided to run an experiment: for 6 months I'd allow myself to not read Sutras or attend ceremonies and just focus on the every moment. I felt really bad at the thought of not attending ceremonies or not reading Sutras because that's what you seem supposed to be doing here, that's what everybody tells you to do, but giving it a specific duration allowed me to let go of it, and what did I have to lose anyway? I was already in a pretty bad spot.

Once I let go of everything and just started paying attention to the present moment, I discovered a world of behaviors and attachments with no beginning or end. I primarily ended up focusing on 3 main topics:

**food**

**pointing to bad things**

**judging and scolding**

Food is a big one. I come from Italy and I think our reputation precedes us. I actually like Chinese food very much, in fact I seem to like certain Chinese things like stinky tofu that even Chinese people don't like. Still, I can be very picky.

When I was here for a Guan Yin retreat, a girl during a Dharma talk

漸認識佛教，但真要放下一切搬進聖城，心裏還是會害怕；而且聖城這個大環境，也有很多方面讓我有些懼怕。我很喜歡中國，也去過那兒好幾次；第一次造訪中國，感覺就像小時候回到意大利一樣。很多人也許不相信，但真的是這樣。

經過很多次的討論，我終於在去年十一月，決定辭去谷歌的工作搬到這裏。從2014年1月開始成為聖城的常住眾至今，我從未如此開心，因此時常在歡愉的情緒裏，夾雜著罪惡感。當然，事情也並非總是如此美好。事實上，今年三月我陷入前所未有的低潮。

我想我應該是業障很深，因為很多修行法門我都做得不好。比如說，我不擅長打坐，一想到今年十二月份將舉行的禪七，我的腿就不自覺地發抖。對於經典我似乎也不太瞭解，我太太拿很多經給我讀，但是我只對《六祖壇經》和《楞嚴經》產生共鳴。即使如此，在課堂上研究這些經典，我還是覺得很吃力。我喜歡誦〈楞嚴咒〉，但是跟大家共修〈楞嚴咒〉時，卻讓我坐立難安。

對於跟不上每天的大殿功課和聽經，我感到很無助。但是我越努力地讀，或是強迫自己去參加，情況就變得越糟糕。這完全反映在日常的工作與人際互動中，我變得憤怒、不開心，常常指責別人的不是。然後我開始反省：如果我無法安住在每個當下，那做一個佛教徒有什麼意義呢？更不要說深入經藏了！

所以，我決定做一個實驗。我允許自己半年內不讀經，也不參加法會，只專注在每個當下。對於「不參加法會」、「不讀經」的念頭，我感到很糟糕，因為這似乎是大家認定在聖城應該做的事。但是給自己一段時間，不去碰這些事，又有什麼損失呢？更何況我已經糟透了，實在不用擔心還會失去什麼。

一旦放下所有事情，只專注在當下，我發現自己對事物的執著無有止境。於是我決定專注在三件事情上：

**食物**

**挑人毛病**

**批評和指責**

對食物的執著是個大的問題。意大利人對食

shared how, as a way to cultivate a non-differentiating mind, she simply ate whatever was in her bowl from left to right. That stuck with me so I tried. I then tried to not take more of what I liked and less of what I disliked. Slowly I made some progress and started to try to take some of what I thought I would not like. After that I realized I was attached to the individual taste so that even if something tasted bad it was still ok because I could still eat something else that tasted good afterwards. To counter that, I began to mix all the food up in my bowl.

Sweets came next. I used to have two buns with peanut butter and jelly so I tried to cut those off. While under the 8 precepts that became really hard and highlighted how I was looking for “entertainment” all the time: not being able to watch movies or play my body took it out on food which was still “allowed”. So with my wife we started to do something else and limited our meals to one single bowl. That helped to an extent as I could only pile so many pieces of cake on top of one another without it looking really bad in the dining hall.

After a few weeks the craves started to subside at which point I began trying to be more mindful, eat slower and not wander with my thoughts while I ate. This has been extremely beneficial and I've enjoyed the practice very much.

The second topic was pointing to bad things and by extension judging, harsh language, complaining and gossiping. Very much like food, once I started paying attention to the words that came out of my mouth in a day, ceremonies etc excluded, it was amazing how many were not positive and simply the fruits of deluded thoughts. Thoughts of expectations, thoughts of what should have been and wasn't, thoughts of what I'd liked. I tried to recall, before moving here, what kind of conversations I'd have in the course of a normal day and I couldn't come up with much that now would feel useful.

As a result of cutting off that sort of speech there was a lot more silence in my day and positivity, which has brought me peace and joy. It reminded me that complaining is useless, you either can do something about the problem, in which case you better do, or it's just better to let it be.

The added quietness also helped me see more clearly the roots of my judgements and it became obvious that they all came from the same place: my mind. Not only that, they were often my own faults projected onto others. That brought back to mind an old quote, from before I encountered Buddhism I think: everything around us is merely a reflection of ourselves.

It's been about two months that I've been focusing on my

物的熱忱，不用我贅述。我也喜歡中國菜，特別是某些料理，例如連有些中國人都受不了的臭豆腐我也喜歡。儘管如此，我對食物有時還是很挑剔的。

有一次參加觀音七，一位女眾在結法緣時分享她如何學習讓自己沒有分別心——就是將碗裏所有的食物，從左到右依序全部吃到完。聽完之後，我也試著這麼做。後來我又嚐試在吃飯的時候，不多拿自己愛吃的或者少拿自己不喜歡的；漸漸地，我可以試著拿一些我認為自己肯定不愛吃的菜。接著我又發現到，自己很在乎每種食物的味道。我可以忍受一道難吃的菜，是因為之後我可以用另一個好味道來蓋過它。為了解決這個問題，我開始把碗裏所有的食物通通攪在一起吃。

接下來，開始解決對甜點的執著。我習慣要吃兩個塗花生醬和果醬的饅頭，所以我試著要把這個戒掉。當受八關齋戒時，對食物的執著受到嚴格的考驗，整個過程讓我看到自己一直在尋找「娛樂」。當不能看電影，也不能去玩的時候，我的注意力全部集中在齋戒「允許」的食物上。於是我跟同修開始找些別的事來做，並且限制只能吃一鉢，所以我的一個碗就只能放下那麼多的素糕而在齋堂裏看起來不至於太糟糕。

幾個禮拜之後，對食物的欲望開始降低。於是我不再開始試做一些觀想，比方說吃慢一點、吃飯時不打妄想。這對我幫助很大，我也很喜歡這種修行方式。

第二個問題就是挑人毛病、太早下定論、出言不遜、抱怨，以及講是非。就像食物一樣，當開始專注嘴裏講出的話，我驚訝地發現，除了法會之外，我講的話多數不是正面的，基本上就是愚癡妄想所造成的。就是一些對未來期許的妄想，一些事與願違的妄想，一些自己喜歡什麼的妄想。回想搬來萬佛聖城之前的生活，我發現大部分時間講的，也都是些沒什麼意義的內容。

於是當我試著少說這些愚癡、無知識的話時，一天多出很多安靜的時刻，以及正面的念頭，令我感覺平靜和喜悅。這提醒我，抱怨其實是沒用的。因為問題出現時，如果有方法解決，就趕快去做；沒有的話，也不用抱怨，隨緣就好了。

當有更多時間靜下來，我更清楚地看到批評指責背後的原因，其實都是自心的作用。不僅如此，它們都是我把自己的錯誤投射在他人身上的影子。這讓我想起還沒遇到佛法之前聽過的一句格言：外在一切，都是內心的投射。

greed, on harsh language and in general mindfulness in the present moment and as I said I've never been more joyful. In fact, pretty much the day I started doing this, I felt better already and began again to go to ceremonies and read sutras and my sitting has improved, although I still find it all very difficult.

Going through this practice has also provided an opening to reflect on precepts. For the month of repentance my wife and I took the 8th precepts and it's been an incredible experience. I had only taken them for up to a week during past retreats and that was already a challenge to the point that initially I didn't want to do it for a month this time. In the end I agreed to and I'm glad I did. While eating one meal a day for the month I've rarely been hungry and now that the month is over, and with that the 8th precepts, I've been hungry non stop. I think that does speak to the power of not just precepts, but vows.

I know that Sutras, ceremonies, sitting and other practices are important, but right now it's really being useful to follow this practice and focus on the six principles in every moment. I think what helps me the most is that I can see the progress. As it stands, I can't see the Western Pure Land, but I can see my hunger, my desire for entertainment, I can see my thoughts and hear my words, I can hear the requests for help and see myself responding or not, or their behaviors and my judging or not judging.

Working on this for the last couple months and managing to get a little bit more detached from what are attachment of a lifetime, like food, proved to me that I can change. The strength I felt from the vows proved to me that the Buddha Nature is there, compassionately and patiently waiting for me to let go of my delusions.

We always say that there are 84,000 Dharma doors and while I don't know what mine is, I am grateful that I've had enough support to be able to put down what I was trying before and do this for a little while. I admit it's hard at times to not feel judged. We seem to have very specific views of how we should go about our practice, the ceremonies, the classes, the studies, and I'm never quite sure if I'm causing harm to myself by not following more closely or if instead this, at least with my current causes and conditions, is my Middle Way.

And maybe that in itself is my projection, but with no wisdom, the struggle to understand is always there. For this reason I'd like to conclude by requesting this Dharma assembly to renew their vows of compassion and kindness and help those of us who, like me, need practical ways to bring the Dharma in their daily lives as a form of cultivation. Amitufo. ❀

就這樣持續兩個月，我一直專注在自己的貪念、惡口，以及觀照自己的念頭。就像前面說的，我從未感到如此快樂。事實上，付諸行動的第一天，我就已經感到輕鬆許多。然後我開始繼續參加法會、誦經，我的打坐也進步很多，儘管我還是覺得很困難。

這次的練習，也讓我有機會反省持戒的重要。拜萬佛寶懺的那一個月裏，我同修和我決定要受持八關齋戒。那是個很不可思議的經驗。我曾經受持過一星期的八關齋戒，對我而言那已經很不容易了，所以一開始我不太願意持一個月。最後我決定要持，而且也很高興自己作這個決定。一整個月，我很少因為日中一食而感到飢餓；但是當一個月結束，不再持戒之後，我總是很餓。這不僅說明了戒律的力量，也說明了願力的力量。

我知道經典、法會、打坐和種種法門，都是非常重要的。但是就現在來說，遵循六大宗旨，還有剛剛提到的修行方法，對我是比較有幫助的，因為我可以看到自己的進步。我還沒辦法見到西方極樂世界，但是我可以看見自己的飢餓、追求娛樂的欲望，聽見自己內心的想法和對話。我可以聽見他人求助的聲音，看看自己的反應，也可以看見別人的行為表現，看看自己會不會批評指責。

這幾個月裏的努力，讓我能把一生中的執著捨去一點點，比方說對食物的執著。這證明了我是可以改變的。我的願力使我深信，我的佛性就在那裏，慈悲耐心地等待我放下我的無明。

我們總說有八萬四千法門，而我卻不知道我的法門是什麼。但是我很感恩，有足夠的支持讓我放下過去，來試驗這個修行方法。我必須承認，不在意他人的評論是很不容易的。對於像是上殿、聽經、上課這些修行方法，大家似乎都有了某種程度的認知。我不確定不隨眾做這些功課是否障礙我的修行，但是以我目前的因緣來看，或者我應該修的是中道。

當然這也許是我妄想的投射，但是由於沒有智慧，學習的過程總是很辛苦。正因為如此，我懇請法會大眾能夠發慈悲心來幫助我們這些人，讓我們能把佛法修行融入日常生活中。阿彌陀佛！ ❀