

# The Unity of Self and Other

## 物我同靈

A Talk Given By Cheng Guan Koay  
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Although I grew up in a typical Taoist/Buddhist family in Penang Malaysia, my encounter with the Dharma did not occur until my step-mother passed away in November 2014. My step-mother took care of me as if I was one of her own sons after I was born. After her passing, I was introduced to Avamtasaka Vihara by one of my colleagues at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, and it was then when I realized the first 49 days after the passing is very crucial for the deceased. Therefore, I placed a rebirth plaque for my mother at the monastery, offered vegetarian meals, and completed a 3-day Amitabha chanting session during that period, in the hope of transferring good merits to my mother.

Ten months prior to her passing, I went back to Penang and witnessed her condition deteriorating. Just a couple of weeks prior to my visit to Penang, my wife had an abortion. At the time, we were very ignorant. We thought about how difficult it would be for the little one to survive in this world with a genetic abnormality after my wife and I were no longer able to care for him. Thus, with deep sadness, we opted to have an abortion. This incident left a void in our hearts.

These two events, the witnessing of my mother's deteriorating condition and realizing her eventual passing may come soon, and the abortion, was the major turning point in my life.

During my visit to Penang, it so happened that I came across the *Earth Store Sutra* in my sister's car. Out of curiosity, I searched online and came across the stories of Earth Store Bodhisattva and his past vast vows on YouTube. After I came back from the visit, the stories of Earth Store Bodhisattva had resonated in my memories.

I then made the vow of not eating any meat for the rest of my life,



雖然成長於馬來西亞的一個典型信仰道教及佛教的家庭，真正接觸佛法卻是在2014年大媽去世那一年。大媽並不是我的生母，但是從我出生後，她對我無微不至地照顧，視如己出。大媽去世後，我透過在瓦爾特里國家軍事醫學中心的一位同事，認識了華嚴精舍，並且知道往生後的四十九天對亡者非常重要。因此，我為大媽在精舍設立超度牌位、供齋並且參加佛三法會，希望將這些功德迴向給她。

在大媽往生前十個月，我回檳城看她，當時她的健康狀況已開始惡化。在出發前的幾週，我太太經歷了一次人工流產。當時我們很無知，因為擔心將來無法照顧這個先天殘缺的孩子，於是痛苦地選擇人工

with the sincere belief in the power of the vow as illustrated in the Sutra of the Earth Store Bodhisattva. It was my hope that whatever merit that might be accrued from this act would be able to help my mom suffer less and eventually leave suffering altogether and attain bliss. I also hope that my vow would help the innocent little one to attain bliss.

When I told my wife that I was going to be a vegetarian without disclosing to her about my vow, she told me right there and then that I would go back to my old way in two weeks. I am very humbled and glad to say that everyone in the family is a vegetarian now. Additionally, everyone in the family has taken refuge with the Three Jewels and have taken the five precepts.

Now I am going to share the stories about my experiences with other sentient beings, especially small animals such as bunnies and turtles.

### A. Expression of gratitude by small turtles

As I learn more about Buddhадharma, I feel I should perform the liberation of life for small animals. One weekend morning in the summer, I asked my sons to accompany me to release some small turtles back to the wild. We released about 5 or 6 turtles and they all scuttled into the deeper part of a creek, except one that remained close by with its head above the water as if to express its gratitude for its release. I was pleased that the kids had the opportunity to experience this touching response from this small turtle, and to understand that all sentient beings, regardless of size, have spiritual awareness. Deep inside, I wished my wife was there to witness this response. She is from China and was raised in an environment devoid of any spiritual practice or religious belief.

One week after the first liberation of life, I asked my entire family to accompany me for another life liberation with the sincere hope that my wife could experience herself the spiritual awareness of other sentient beings, especially small animals. That afternoon was very hot and humid. During our drive from the live seafood market to the creek, I quietly and sincerely wished that it would rain a little to give these small turtles some relief. We had kept them in the trunk of our car, which was quite warm, although these turtles were in an open container with some water within the trunk.

I asked my wife to check the weather report to see if there would be any rain that day and she told me quite affirmatively, that there wouldn't be any rain until the next day. When we passed a stretch along the Rockville Pike in Northern Bethesda, it suddenly started raining heavily on what was a sunny day! There was only a small patch of dark clouds passing across Rockville Pike. For the few seconds when our car was under that dark cloud, I had to adjust the wipers to the highest speed! Quietly, I was very grateful for the rain and felt relieved for these turtles.

We recited the Buddha's name as we released these turtles to the creek and all of them scuttled into the deeper part of the creek the moment they were released. After a few minutes, one of the turtles swam back

流產，從此在我們心中留下無法填補的缺口。

目睹大媽日益嚴重的病情，我意識到她的來日不多，加之太太的人工流產，這兩件事促成我人生非常重大的轉折。

在檳城期間，偶然間發現姐姐車上放了一本《地藏經》。出於好奇，我在網上查找到關於地藏菩薩以及地藏菩薩所發大願的故事。回到美國後，地藏菩薩的故事一直在記憶中迴蕩。

因為相信地藏菩薩在《地藏經》為眾生的演示——發願的力量不可思議，於是我立下誓願從此斷葷吃素，並希望藉此功德減輕大媽的痛苦，使她離苦得樂，往生淨土；也希望藉此誓願，讓那無緣出世的無辜小生命能往生淨土。

我告訴太太我決定吃素，但沒有提到自己發的願。她聽了之後，認為不出兩個星期我一定恢復原樣。如今可以欣慰地告訴大家，我們全家都成為素食者，而且家中每個成員都皈依三寶並受持五戒。

現在我要分享親身經歷的關於小動物的故事，特別是兔子和烏龜。

### A. 烏龜感恩

對佛法認識愈多，我愈意識到放生的重要，並開始付諸行動。在一個夏天週末的早晨，我把兩個孩子叫上一同去放生，我們放生了五、六隻烏龜。當我們把它們放進小溪時，其餘的烏龜都朝溪水的深處游去，唯獨一隻逗留在我們附近，還把頭探出水面，好似在向我們表示感謝。我感到十分欣慰，能讓孩子親身經歷這感動的一幕，體會到一切眾生皆有靈性，即使像烏龜這樣的小動物也不例外！這時我打心底裡希望太太也能目睹這一幕，因為她在中國出生，成長於一個缺乏宗教信仰的環境中。

就在那次放生之後的一星期，我再次動員全家一同放生，並且希望太太能親身感受到其他眾生的靈性，尤其是小動物們的。那天下午十分炎熱且潮濕，我們把買到的小烏龜放在後車廂。雖然容器內有放一些水，但是從市場駛往小溪的路上，我心中還是不斷祈禱老天能下一點雨，讓悶在後車廂的小烏龜能得到一些清涼。

我讓太太查看一下天氣預報，看看是否有下雨的可能。查完後她很肯定地答覆，今天

towards us. It swam towards me at first with its head raised above the water and looked at me intently as if to say thank you. I reciprocated by reciting Buddha's name. It then moved slowly along the creek toward my wife who was standing about two meters away. This small turtle stopped right in front of her and then raised its head to look at her with the same intent as if to say thank you.

## B. Expression of motherly love by a wild rabbit

On one early summer morning, as I walked out of our apartment to drive my kids to a Japanese language lesson, we encountered three animals in the front yard—a crow, a dead bunny, and the mother rabbit guarding the dead bunny. I told the kids with the intention of also letting the mother rabbit know that if the dead bunny was still there after we had come back from the Japanese lesson, we would bury it and chant the *rebirth mantra* for it.

By the time we came back to our apartment, two and a half hours had passed. The crow had moved on, but the mother rabbit was still guarding the bunny earnestly. As promised, we started to dig a hole next to the dead bunny. As I was digging the hole, the mother rabbit kept a close watch under a bush. She was watching closely as we buried and chanted the *rebirth mantra* for the bunny. After the *rebirth mantra* recitation, I walked toward her and said to her that we have buried and chanted the *rebirth mantra* for her little bunny. I also said to her that she should go back to take care of her other bunnies. As I walked towards my apartment, I turned around to look back at the mother rabbit, and she had already left.

I am very grateful to the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua for establishing the proper Dharma in the West, and to the Dharma Masters for their guidance. I would like end this talk with a verse I came across from one of the articles in the journal of the *Vajra Bodhi Sea*. This verse was spoken by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Patriarch Venerable Manorhita when the 23<sup>rd</sup> Venerable Haklena sought help from the Venerable Manorhita to liberate a flock of cranes that were following him around.

*The mind, according to myriad states, turns.  
At the place of turning you can perceive the profound.  
If you can, in following that flow,  
come to recognize your nature,  
Then you will experience neither delight nor anxiety.*

Amitufo. ॐ

絕不可能下雨！然而神奇的是，當車子行駛在貝塞斯達市北邊的洛克菲爾大道上時，烈日當空的天氣突然間下起雨來。那時天空就有這麼一片烏雲，飄浮過洛克菲爾大道，而我們的車正好就在那幾秒鐘之內，行駛在這片烏雲的遮蔭之下，雨勢大到得把汽車雨刷調到最快的一檔。我默默地感謝這場及時雨，也為小烏龜們感到高興。

到了溪邊，我們一邊念佛號，一邊把烏龜放進溪裡。在被釋放的一瞬間，每隻烏龜都快速地游向小溪深處。不一會兒，一隻烏龜朝向我們游回來。它先向我這邊游來，把頭伸出水面注視著我，好像向我道謝。我以佛號回應牠，然後牠又緩緩沿著小溪，朝距離兩米遠的太太那邊游去。小烏龜在她面前停下，把頭仰出水面，用同樣專注的眼神看著她，彷彿向她道謝。

## B. 兔媽媽的母愛

另一個故事，同樣發生在一個夏日的清晨。當我正走出公寓準備開車送孩子們上日文課時，看見三隻動物——一隻烏鴉、一隻死掉的小兔，和守護在小兔身邊的兔媽媽。我對孩子們說，也是刻意讓兔媽媽知道：「如果我們上完課回來，那隻死去的小兔還在這兒的話，我們就埋葬牠，並為牠念〈往生咒〉。」

兩個半鐘頭之後我們回來了，烏鴉已經離開，可是兔媽媽還一直守護在小兔旁邊。正如先前的承諾，我們開始在小兔旁邊挖一個坑。挖坑時，兔媽媽躲在附近的灌木叢中注視這一切。即使埋葬了小兔並為牠念〈往生咒〉時，兔媽媽還是密切注視著。念完〈往生咒〉之後，我走過去跟牠說，我們已經埋葬了牠的小兔，並且為牠念〈往生咒〉，並且告訴牠應該回去照顧牠的其他小兔們。當我走回公寓，走了幾步之後再回頭看時，兔媽媽已經離開了。

非常感恩宣公上人在西方建立正法，感恩各位法師們的教導。在此謹以我在《金剛菩提海》中看到的一首偈頌來做為今天的結語。二十三祖鶴勒那尊者曾經向二十二祖摩拏羅尊者請問，如何才能令常隨在他左右的鶴群得到解脫？摩拏羅尊者送給鶴勒那尊者這首偈頌：

心隨萬境轉，轉處實能幽，  
隨流認得性，無喜亦無憂。

阿彌陀佛。 ॐ