

Opening to Repentance

Reflecting on the recent DRBU Contemplative Exercise Immersion,
“Bowing as Heart Cleansing”

敞開心扉來懺悔

參加法大近期活動感言：沈浸式觀照實修——「拜佛淨心」

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As someone coming to Buddhism through the Pali tradition, I had never engaged repentance as a formal practice. At the beginning of last week's Contemplative Exercise Immersion on “Bowing as Heart Cleansing,” led by Prof. Marty Verhoeven, you could even say I was quite “unrepentant.”

I spent the first day of bowing working with the three refuges and inviting in something like the grace of God when I bowed down in the striking way modeled for us, with upturned hands. I could not see the sense in forcibly cultivating an attitude of regret. But I saw the value of aspiring to be a vessel of grace rather than a vessel of poison, and the attitude of upturned palms spoke to me at that visceral, bodily level. The thought, “Alright, do you want to be a vessel of grace, or a vessel of poison? (You have to choose!)” reverberated through my being throughout the day.

作為一個由南傳佛教走入漢傳佛教的人，我從未把懺悔當成一種修行法門。上週開始，參加馬汀教授所帶領的「拜佛淨心」沈浸式觀照實修課程，剛開始，我可以說是非常的「不思悔悟」。

第一天的練習，在禮拜三皈依時，以我們特有手掌朝上的跪拜方式，我心裡祈請的比較像是上帝的恩典。在這種強制式的修法中，我感受不到「悔」意，而是看到矢志成為恩典容器而非毒藥容器的價

On the second day, on the wise, skillful, and compassionate advice of DM Jin Jr Shi, I thought I should at least start slipping in an “I’m sorry”, which she had suggested was repentance in its simplest form. That little haphazardly inserted “I’m sorry” was a surprisingly powerful seed! It grew, seemingly of its own accord, into an “I’m sorry for my acts of craving, aversion and delusion,” and gradually, “I’m sorry for my many deeds of body, speech, and mind done out of craving, aversion, and delusion”—before I knew it, the repentance verse was more or less coming out fully formed and sincerely from my heart in every bow. I was reflecting on past acts. I was warming to repentance. I was perhaps receiving the grace that on the first day I had sought.

On the third day, Marty’s morning talk was powerful, and cut deep into my mind, shaking me to the core. It connected the idea of repentance with the devastating toll we’ve taken on other forms of life on earth (driving untold quantities of species to extinction) and on the earth itself. This reflection struck such a deep chord, I burst into tears, and emptied myself out during bowing, begging the earth for forgiveness for the damage we’ve wrecked on her and, in doing so, unwittingly, on ourselves. I realized amidst sobs of remorse and too-late regret that I was part of the problem.

Not only, in the midst of environmental breakdown and ecological collapse, could I/we not even give up so little as every day plastics or fossil fuels, or organize to replant forests — convenience and habit somehow outweighing existential necessity — more than that, I had myself contributed so much craving, aversion, and delusion to the general pool of craving, aversion, and delusion fueling humankind’s incessant drive to consume and destroy, and in so doing cut through our own roots. I was part of the problem as much as anyone else. I grieved my role, and the loss that we now stand facing, every day more apparent, because of it— the damage done, too late to do anything about except regret.

So I poured out abject regret. My perfunctorily inserted “I’m sorry” had grown into a full-blown cathartic cleansing of the heart. I felt a closeness and communion with the earth I’d never felt as I grasped her feet and begged forgiveness. I felt sorrow, but also strangely comforted during this act of expressing it, as if receiving a hug back from the mother we’ve so wronged, in the midst of pouring out my grief and humiliation. Only the earth could be so forgiving.

On the fourth day of the retreat, I expected this sentimental sense of reverence and remorse experienced toward the earth might return; but to my surprise, it didn’t. Instead, it broadened: not just

值；手掌向上的姿勢是內心和身體在對我說：「你想成為恩典的容器，還是毒藥的容器？（你必須做決定）」。這個想法一整天都在內裡邊迴盪。

第二天，在近智師睿智、善巧又慈悲的建議下，我想我至少應該開始說句「對不起」，這也是她建議表達懺悔最簡單的方式。那個小小隨意插入的一句「對不起」，是個驚人的強大種子！它自然地長成「我對自己貪瞋癡的行為感到抱歉」，而後又逐漸變成「我對貪瞋癡所造就身語意的種種行為感到抱歉」。——不知不覺，在每一拜，懺悔偈或多或少都從心裡真誠地流露出來。我反省過去的作為，變得更願意懺悔。或許我正接收第一天所尋求的恩典。

第三天，馬汀教授的晨間談話相當有說服力，直入心坎，撼動心弦。他將懺悔的想法與我們對地球上的其他生命（造成無數物種滅絕）和地球本身所造成的毀滅性傷害聯結起來。這種反思引起內心深沉的共鳴，我忍不住流下眼淚，在拜佛的過程中放空自己，祈求大地原諒我們對她造成的傷害，以及無意中也對自己造成的傷害。

我在悔恨的啜泣和為時已晚的懊惱中意識到自己就是問題的一部分。不僅如此，在環境和生態破壞中，我/我們甚至無法在日常中少用一些塑料、石油，或者是組織性的造林——便利和習慣在某種程度上遠超過生存所需——不僅如此，我個人的貪瞋癡在總體的貪瞋癡上也有相當程度的「貢獻」，助長人類不斷消耗和破壞，也因此破壞我們自己的根。我和其他人一樣是問題的一部分。我為自己所扮演的角色，以及與日遽增的耗損感到悲哀，傷害已經造成，除了遺憾，已無力挽回。

於是我傾吐深深的遺憾，從敷衍地一句「對不起」變成心靈的全然淨化。當我抓著地球母親的腳踝祈求寬恕時，感受到前所未有自己與地球的親密和交流。

the earth; I've destroyed so many things! Every act of craving or aversion, every selfish, ego-centric action: every one of these was spreading poison, instead of medicine, corrupting so many countless little things with virtually every action taken over the course of a lifetime. My whole life I'd been the vessel of poison. Memories of strong emotions from childhood started welling up to the surface; I looked back on myself with pity and remorse.

I'd taken such a toll on myself, on my family, on everyone with whom I'd come in contact. I denounced each act that came to mind, each impression of past anger or passion or self-serving arrogance that surfaced. I cringed to recall all the occasions, each of which was a tiny act of offering poison to the world, and those around me — those whom I loved most. I'd contributed so many drops of poison to the pool we drink from. Walking back from this final round of bowing, I felt a lightness and a clearing in the lower parts of my body that I recognized from other practices and realized that this attitude of repentance was a powerful way of generating what in Pali we call *adosa*, *alobha*, and *amoha*: the forces of “non-aversion,” “non-craving,” and “non-delusion,” which have a powerful purifying effect on mind and body.

It's only in the wake of such cleansing that our hearts and higher regions can open, and give rise to *mettā*, “love,” *karuṇā*, “compassion,” *muditā*, “joy,” and *upekkhā*, “equanimity.” And these — the grace, perhaps, I'd sought — began to flow. I started to realize, to some small extent, over these few days, the power of that seed, “I'm sorry”, and the tremendous force of purification it could grow into. I'd started to appreciate, and understand the value and the power of repentance. It also struck me how on the basis of this practice, later on, throughout the day, any wayward thought of craving or aversion that arose stood out as so blatantly, glaringly hypocritical and embarrassing, in the light of that earlier practice.

Thus the strong mental, physical, and emotional impression of the bowing practice had a beneficial effect on “mindfulness” as well (my practice of some 20 years). I felt great joy on recognizing the usefulness, validity, and power of this practice, new to me as it was, and getting a taste (even if only a fleeting, small taste) of its benefits. I am grateful to DRBU and to CTTB for having had this precious, magical, and deeply gratifying opportunity. May we all be vessels of grace, not of poison, in the world. ☸

在這表達的過程中，我感到悲傷，但也奇妙地得到安慰，彷彿在傾吐悲傷和難堪的同時，被受委屈的母親擁入懷裡，唯有地球才能如此寬容。

研習的第四天，原以為這種對大地敬畏和懊悔的情緒會消失；但令我驚訝的是，不但沒有，反而擴大。不僅是對地球；我破壞了那麼多東西！每一個貪或瞋的行為，每個自私、以自我為中心的舉動，每一個行為都是在散播毒藥，而不是藥方。我所採取的每一個行動都會有無數的小事物受到波及。我的一生都在做毒藥的容器。來自童年的深刻記憶浮上心頭；我帶著憐憫和悔恨回顧自己的過去。

我對自己、家人以及我所接觸過的每個人都造成了傷害。我譴責每一個浮現在腦海中的行為，每一個曾經有過的憤怒、激情和我慢。我怯懦地想起過去的種種造作，每一個小小的舉動都對世界和我周遭的人——也是我最愛的人投下毒藥。我在我們飲用的水池裡滴下許多毒藥。從最後一輪的拜懺回來，我的下半身有種輕盈、清爽的感受，我從其他的修行法門中認識，並且意識到這種懺悔非常強而有力，可以產生在巴利文所謂的無瞋(*adosa*)、無貪(*alobha*)、和無癡(*amoha*)，對身心有著強大的淨化作用。

只有在如此的淨化之後，我們的心和更高的精神領域才能開啟，才能產生慈(*metta*)、悲(*karuna*)、喜(*mudita*)及捨(*upekkha*)。這些——或許就是我所尋求的恩典——正開始流轉。在這幾天裡，我在某種程度上開始意識到「對不起」這顆種子的力量，以及它所產生的巨大淨化能量。我開始感恩、理解懺悔的價值和力量。在修習這個法門的基礎上，在之後的一天中，任何貪瞋癡的念頭出現，都顯得虛偽和難堪。

拜懺法門強化心理、身體和情感表達，對「正念」有所益處（我約有二十年的修行經驗）。我很高興認識到它的實用性、有效性和修習的力量，對我來說是新的，還嚐到它的好處（即使只是淺嚐）。我感謝法大和萬佛聖城提供這個寶貴、神奇、令人欣慰的機會。願我們都能成為裝載恩典而非毒藥的容器。☸