



# Metta

December 2016

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## Buddhism and Psychotherapy across cultures

Dr. Mark Unno



*Editor's Note: This article is part of a larger essay entitled *The Borderline Between Buddhism and Psychotherapy* which is included in the book *Buddhism and Psychotherapy Across Cultures*. Dr. Unno will be visiting Hawaii in March 2017.*

### *Shin Buddhism*

The Shin tradition of Pure Land Buddhism is based on the path of the *nembutsu*, or invoking the Name of Amida Buddha, as found in the six-syllable phrase, "Namu Amida Butsu." In terms of the two-fold truth of Mahāyāna Buddhism, *Namu* meaning "the one who entrusts," corresponds to form, or more precisely to the foolish being (Skt. *prthagjana*) attached to form. *Amida Buddha*, the Buddha of Infinite Light, corresponds to emptiness, or the illuminating power of emptiness manifest in the human realm of samsara. The accompanying table shows the correspondences.

Form	Emptiness
Distinctions	Beyond distinctions
Blind passion	Boundless compassion
Attachment to fixed object of desire	Release into emptiness
Foolish being	Amida Buddha
<i>Namu</i>	<i>Amida Butsu</i>
Samsara	Nirvana
Karmically defiled world	Pure Land beyond form

That is the doctrinal explanation. Practically speaking, as in the forgoing cases of the Buddha and Erickson, there is in Shin Buddhism a focus on meeting the needs of the Pure Land follower in the concrete circumstances of the here and now.

Gutoku Shinran (1173-1262), regarded as the founder of the tradition, felt it was particularly important for the teacher to pay compassionate attention to the needs of his followers or students, rather than to take care of those needs. For this reason, he fused to take the mantle of institutional leader, leaving behind his own community to live out his last thirty years writing and reflecting while residing in his brother's house until he died at the age of ninety. When his followers journeyed hundreds of miles on foot to ask him to clarify their doubts, he told them straight away, "As for myself, Shinran, I do not have a single disciple. If I could make others say the Name of Amida Buddha through my own devices, they would be my disciples. But how arrogant to claim as disciples those who live the *nembutsu* through the sole working of Amida's compassion [the liberating power of formless compassion, of emptiness]." Thus he called fellow Shin Buddhists "my honored fellow practitioners, my honored friends" (*ondōbō ondōgyō*).

*(continued on page 4)*

## A Few Words From the Editor

Jamie Lyn Itokazu



Hello!

I know that this year we have gone long spurts in which you see us in print, but thing around here have been busy. I sometimes wish that our newsletters would magically create and send themselves to you, so you could hear from us in real time.

Amazing things have been happening since then and hopefully we will have more things in store for you in the new year. Here's a short recap of what's been happening.

In July Professor Jeff Wilson came and spoke on Mindfulness for this year's Summer Session. All his talks through the districts were well received and the main session talks held at the BSC are now available on our Youtube channel. If you have not heard we are now on Youtube<<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUWzJg0lcuY5tdIGef9O9HQ>> or just search "BSC Hawaii" We are also now livestreaming events through there.

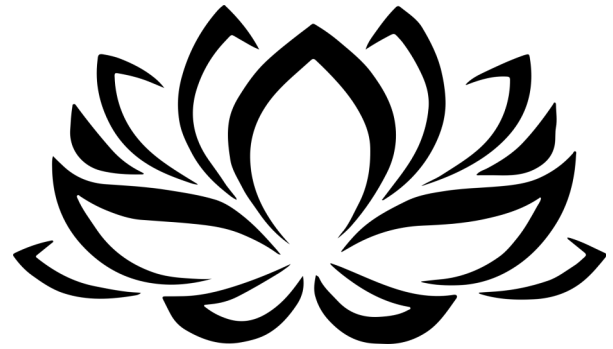
After which we hosted an experimental Jr. YESS Camp at the BSC. The participants were able to learn ikebana, shodo, taiko, and several bon dances. Overall the participants seemed to enjoy the experience and we hope to continue the program in some form in the future.

In August, we had previously hosted a Young Adult Retreat for the Fellowship Club members and their friends. This year we decided to use the same time period to do a Career Workshop with Janelle Sasaki. You can read more about the workshop on page 5 along with the announcement for part II of the workshop.

We have many exciting things in store for this year and we hope to you will hang in there with us to see all the changes to come and hopefully we will see you in person at one of our events.

Also if you have not been receiving your newsletter by snail mail feel free to contact us and update your address. If you wish to receive your newsletter via email now, we also have the option available.

Namu Amida Butsu



*"A hundred thousand elephants,  
a hundred thousand horses,  
a hundred thousand mule-drawn chariots,  
are not worth a sixteenth part  
of a single step forward"*  
*-In the Connected Discourses of the Buddha*



The current logo from all the documents I have found was designed in 1992 under the direction of Rev. Yoshiaki Fujitani, when he was director of the Buddhist Study Center. The background of the black circle with the white stripes images a scene of the calm ocean and symbolize serene and tranquil state of mind created by the Buddhist teachings which is represented by the white lotus flower in the center of the logo.

This also symbolizes the BSC, located in Hawaii on the crossroads of the Western cultures and the Oriental cultures, which shares the better understanding of different cultures and contributes towards the peace of human beings and the world.

The white lotus flower symbolizes a stage that is associated with the state of bodhi; that of becoming awakened to the wonders of it all. When one reaches this state it is said that one has mental purity and has reached a state of spiritual perfection.

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## Let us consider...



As we witness what is unfolding in our Nation after the 2016 Elections, there is room for concern as emotions and feelings run high, but let us have faith in ourselves as residents of America and also as humanity.

For me, the wise counsel of Prince Shotoku comes to mind. Prince Shotoku lived in a period of uncertainty and needed to unite various factions so that the country could be unified, better organized and prosper. He mentioned some guiding principles which are still important for us, today, to consider. As Article 1 in his 17-Article Constitution, he emphasized the value of harmony in society with the words “Harmony is to be valued.” He sought harmony and collaboration among the various individuals and factions that were divided and wanted them to work together towards a common goal, a unified nation. Prince Shotoku realized how we, many times, each tend to emphasize and focus on our own viewpoints and disregard that of others to the point of not even lending an ear. He realized that if we each continue to do this we would get nowhere as no discussion could even begin. The Prince was very astute and sensitive to the fact that, too often, we are driven by our egos and also our emotions and feelings like anger, fear, doubt and arrogance. Thus, in Article 10, he shares his wisdom when he says,

Let us cease from wrath and refrain from angry looks. Nor let us be resentful when others differ from us. For all people have hearts and each heart has its own leanings. Their right is our wrong, and our right is their wrong. We are not unquestionably sages, nor are they unquestionably fools. Both of us are simply ordinary people. How can any person lay down a rule by which to distinguish right from wrong? For we are all, one with another, wise and foolish, like a ring which has no end.

From *A Guide to Japanese Buddhism*-BuddhaNet [www.buddhanet.net/nippon/nippon\\_partIII.html](http://www.buddhanet.net/nippon/nippon_partIII.html)

He sincerely revered The Three Treasures of Buddhism which also speaks of the middle way in which we avoid extremes. As the Historic Buddha shared if the strings of a lute are too tight it will break, on the other hand, if the strings are too loose the lute will not produce its music. What is needed are mutual respect, balance, trust, participation and collaboration and adherence to the virtue of non-violence by all of us. Moreover, we should see the value of interdependence by realizing that we are all interrelated and interconnected as Indra’s Net, beautifully and profoundly, shares. It is a fact that we affect each other locally, nationally, internationally and even galactically through our thoughts, words and actions and how we approach a matter is just as important as the goal or objective. The intent of this message is not to dissuade people to express their thoughts through peaceful rallies and methods. As we face our challenges (to alleviate suffering and promote peace, happiness and people’s welfare) as a Nation, this message is suggesting that we must consider ways, approaches and outcomes which emphasize the oneness and equality of life with all its diversity, foster mutual respect and harmony amongst all, and will nurture unity in our Nation and the World from today and into the future. In Hawaii, I believe, the Spirit of Aloha will guide us in our endeavors. As a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist, I say, may we (all) be guided and inspired by an All-Inclusive Wisdom and All-Embracing Compassion.

**Let us “Mutually reflect, respect and interact.”**

Eric Matsumoto  
Bishop, Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

(continued on page 6)

As an extension of this disavowal, he proclaimed himself “neither monk nor layman” (hisō hizoku), a renegade priest who openly married, refused to take up residence in a temple, renounced personal ambition in both the lay and ecclesiastical realms, and lived outside the boundaries of society. In the end, he declared, “When I consider the compassionate vow of Amida (the unfolding of formless compassion)...I realize that it was for myself, Shinran, alone.” That is to say, regardless of whether others considered him to be a teacher or not, despite whatever effect he may have had on others, at the deepest level, he saw himself as the recipient of the gift of the dharma rather than its dispenser. His true Buddhist identity came effectively into relief only in the solitary light of his own self-awareness. The truth of the self can only truly be seen when one is alone with the universe.

One of the effect of this spiritual egalitarianism has been the lay-centered approach of the Shin path in which there is a great deal of emphasis placed on listening to (chōmon) and hearing the dharma (monpō). The priest and congregants listen together to the call of formless compassion, the voiceless voice of Amida; and the priest listens to the needs of fellow practitioners as one who is also in need. While there are priests, then, the emphasis is on modeling deep listening, deep hearing, so that all followers of the Shin path listen for and to the voice of boundless reality calling out to meet their needs. As the Shin teacher Kai Wariko states in her poem:

*Mihotoke no na wo yobu waga koe wa  
Mihotoke no ware wo yobimasu mikoe narikeri*

The voice with which I call Amida Buddha  
Is the voice with which Amida Buddha calls to me.

Thus, whether one is outwardly a teacher or a follower, Shinran makes explicit that all followers of the Shin path are equally followers, equally foolish in their attachments, and therefore also equally the recipients of boundless compassion that comes to meet them at the point of greatest need.

#### *A Contemporary Illustration*

Early in my career, I had an opportunity to develop a course on women and religion, in part because a position for which I had applied included a job description for someone who could teach courses on women and Buddhism. Thinking in my own feeble way to follow Shinran’s admonition to see one’s own truth illuminated from beyond the narrow confines of my own foolishness, I organized an experiment: I planned to have the mostly female student body of the class show me how to teach a course on women and religion. I planned to observe and learn from the way that they approached the subject matter. It turned out to be a wonderful experience, and I continued to teach a similar course as I moved on.

During my next appointment as assistant professor at another institution, I taught this course under the same title as before, “Women’s Spiritual Journeys East and West.” After the first two exams, one of the students came to my office and asked if she could speak with me. I invited her to come in and sit down, and asked how I might help her. She told me that she was concerned about the poor grade she had received on the first exam, an ‘F.’ She explained that she had spend the previous term in a nontraditional learning environment and that she had not yet adjusted back into the academic rhythm on campus. I sensed

that she wanted to somehow improve upon her situation by retaking the exam or doing an extra assignment. As the teacher, however, I needed to treat everyone fairly, so I told her that she didn’t need to worry so much as the exam represented only ten percent of the grade and she could still excel in the class. She responded by saying that she could see the exam as a learning experience; she was used to doing well, and this gave her an opportunity to better understand other who had difficulty taking standardized tests. I did not think that she entirely sincere, but I felt that she put a good face on what for her was a bad situation. We ended the meeting cordially, and sure enough, she improved her performance, receiving a course grade of “B+.”

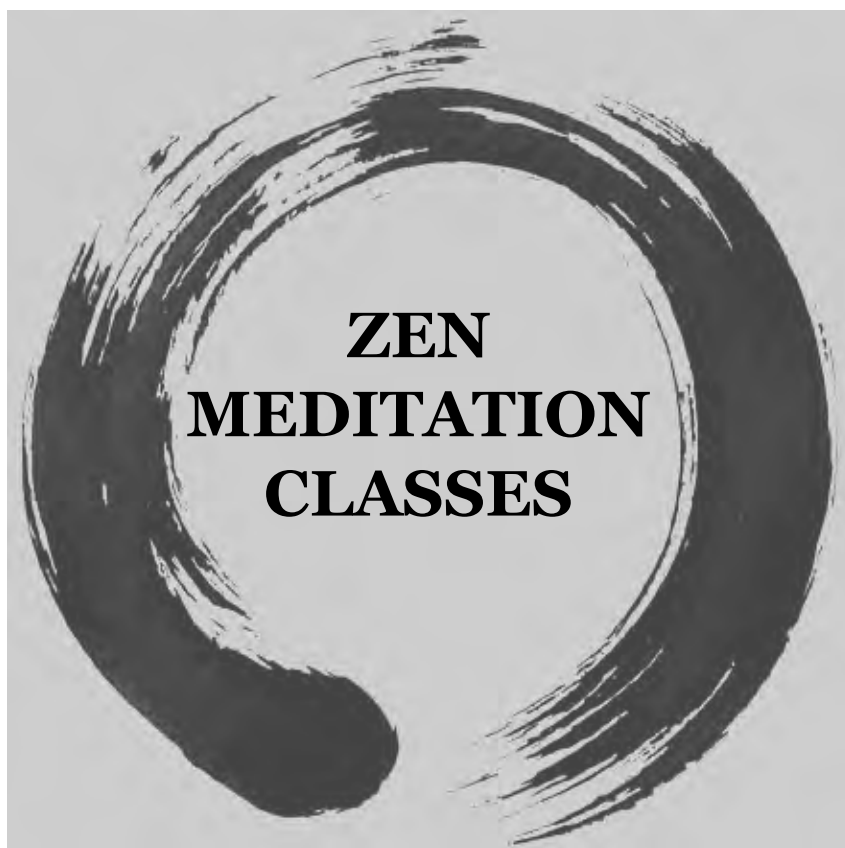
At this college there is a custom after commencement of greeting students and their relatives on the campus commons. As I strolled and greeted students I noticed this student out of the corner of my eye, and I went over to congratulate her. As soon as I approached her, she said, “Mark, I want to introduce you to my mother.” Her mother responded, “So you’re Mark Unno. She often talks about your class. She says that the ‘B+’ from your course was the most important grade she received in her four years at Carleton.” I mumbled something or other trying to take it all in. It was especially surprising, given that, out of a graduating class of several hundred. My student was one of seven or eight to receive academic honors such as *summa cum laude*. For her to have received such high honors, she would have had to have virtually straight “A”s due to my having given her a “B+”. As I pondered this, she said to me, “Mark, I want you to meet someone else. This is my brother.” I shook his hand, and as we began to converse, I realized that he had a learning disability. Then it finally dawned on me, that what she had said back at my office was not a face-saving remark at all but had been offered with sincerity. For her, always the perfectionist, receiving an “F” on the exam was a failure; yet this “failure” enabled her to see the world through her brother’s eyes for the first time.

Through her “F,” life had met her at her point of greatest need, and she had graciously received it as an invitation to a greater world of understanding. I, on the other hand, had lost my way somewhere along the path. Earlier, I had begun with the good intention of having my students unmask my male chauvinist assumptions and teach me the way to enter the world of women and religion. Yet by the time I was teaching the course at another school, I had become the “expert,” reading my female students’ minds at a “deeper level.” In the terms of Shin Buddhism, my student arrived in my class like the extension of Amida’s compassionate hand, illuminating my foolishness at the point of greatest need. I thought I was listening to her in my office, but then learned that it was boundless life itself that was listening to my needs so that I might hear the call of limitless compassion.

**To be continued in the next issue**







“Zazen, or sitting meditation, is the heart of Zen practice. The Art of Zazen is just sitting, that is, suspending all judgmental thinking and letting words, ideas, images, and thoughts pass by, without getting involved in them.”

**AVAILABLE AT TWO LOCATIONS**

**When:** Tuesdays from 5:00pm to 6:00pm  
Effective 10/11/2016

**Where:** Buddhist Study Center

**Address:** 1436 University Avenue

**Lead Instructor:** Mike Sayama

**When:** Saturdays from 8:00am to 9:00am

**Where:** Japanese Cultural Center,  
Kenshikan Dojo (Ground Floor)

**Address:** 2454 South Beretania Street

**Lead Instructors:** Colbert Matsumoto &  
Richard Lim

**Appropriate Attire:** Loose sweat pants & t-shirt (no shorts & tank tops);  
no jewelry or fragrances

**Admission:** Free

**Newcomers:** Must arrive 15 minutes early

**For more information, contact:**

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#### *In honor of Joel & Marjorie Determan*

Lisa Baxa Honolulu, HI

We gratefully welcome memorial donations and donations in all forms. We are now on Paypal! There is a link on our website.

As of January 2013, Please make all checks payable to the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. Thank You.

## Buddhist Study Center Fellowship Club Participates in a Fundraiser to benefit Kapiolani Medical Center

Extra life is an annual event where gamers across the nation join forces to raise funds for the Children's Miracle Network hospitals (CMN), by pledging to play games for 24 hours. The primary beneficiary of CMN efforts in Hawaii is Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children. Since the inception in 2008, the event has raised over \$22 million.

The Buddhist Study Center Fellowship Club put together a team to help support the cause. On November 5, they have successfully played both board games and/or video games for

24 hours. More importantly, the team raised \$1,500 benefiting CMN Hospitals. This put the Buddhist Study Center Fellowship Club team within the top 11% of all teams in the nation.

Overall, it was a fun event, and went to a great cause. The club hopes to participate in the event again in 2017.



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## ***UPCOMING EVENTS***

<b>CLOSED-New Year's Day</b>	<b>Jan.1</b>
<b>UH-Manoa Starts</b>	<b>Jan. 9</b>
<b>Zen Meditation</b>	<b>Jan. 10</b>
<b>Shakuhachi with Rev. Thomas Okano</b>	<b>Jan. 11</b>
<b>Shakuhachi with Rev. Thomas Okano</b>	<b>Jan. 12</b>
<b>CLOSED-Shinran Shonin Day</b>	<b>Jan. 16</b>
<b>Zen Meditation</b>	<b>Jan. 17</b>
<b>Shakuhachi with Rev. Thomas Okano</b>	<b>Jan. 18</b>
<b>Shakuhachi with Rev. Thomas Okano</b>	<b>Jan. 19</b>
<b>Buddhist Discussion Group</b>	<b>Jan. 23</b>
<b>Zen Meditation</b>	<b>Jan. 24</b>
<b>Shakuhachi with Rev. Thomas Okano</b>	<b>Jan. 25</b>
<b>Shakuhachi with Rev. Thomas Okano</b>	<b>Jan. 26</b>
<b>Jodo Shinshu Career Development Workshop</b>	<b>Jan. 28</b>



# **Metta**

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