

# Do Not Get Caught in Attachments

## 不為執著所困

A Talk by Tomas Fletcher at the Buddha Hall of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas on May 1, 2024  
Chinese Translated by Janet Lee

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芬陀利 中譯



I would like to share some thoughts from an essay I wrote for one of my classes on the *Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra*. I picked this topic because we are in the midst of the Ten Thousand Buddha Jeweled Repentance.

I imagine the Sixth Patriarch is alive here, dwelling on Wondrous Enlightenment Mountain behind CTTB. A group of us went up the mountain and requested that he come down and speak the Dharma for everyone. I specifically wanted to explore the principles of repentance and renewal, and I thought that would be an appropriate subject.

Again, I'm just imagining how the Master might be speaking, so I'm role-playing here. The Great Master said to the Assembly,

我想和大家分享我在一門課所寫的《六祖壇經》心得報告。之所以選擇這個主題，是因為我們正在拜萬佛寶懺。

我設想六祖大師依然住世，就住在萬佛城後方的妙覺山上。我們一行人上山去，禮請大師為大眾講法。我特別想探討懺悔的義理，也認為這個主題相當契機。

我想像大師會怎麼說話，有點像是角色扮演。六祖大師對

“Fundamentally, your nature is pure in itself and requires nothing to be repented of nor renewal to take place. It is only because you cling to the false, taking it to be substantial, and pursue what is external to you that repentance and renewal become necessary for you to practice.”

I wanted to start out with that point because repentance carries a very different tone in the West. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, repentance is often seen as necessary because we lack something and need to redeem ourselves through the grace of God.

In contrast, Buddhism believes and trusts that we have everything complete within us. It's simply that it's been covered over with greed, anger, and delusion. So, in my imaginary dialogue, the Master continues, “It is of essential importance to recognize that the practice of repentance is not an attempt to compensate for a fundamental lacking in your own nature.”

It is not a practice of self-deprecation, self-belittlement, or guilt. Those who take these to be signs of humility stray far from the correct path. Recognizing your own faults and shortcomings through the practice of repentance is just recognizing where you are still getting caught in attachments.

Renewal is simply the natural state that occurs when you let these attachments go. Your Buddha nature, full and complete, radiant and perfect in itself, will then naturally and spontaneously come to the fore. I then go on to explore two other principles that I think sometimes help in working with the practice of repentance and renewal.

I don't know what other people's experience is, but oftentimes when I spend a lot of time bowing in repentance, it's sometimes very easy to fall into a very morose state where you feel like low in self-esteem and you feel down in spirits. I found that bowing, in particular, is very good at bringing up all the deep, dark things that lie at the bottom of our mind, and that's how we actually cleanse them. But in that process, keeping your spirits up sometimes can be very difficult.

I know that the famous American Thai monk Ajahn Sumedho had a lot of self-doubt when he first became a monastic, and Ajahn Chah taught him—it was one of the very first teachings he gave him—was for him to reflect on his virtues. It seems counterintuitive. Usually, we emphasize recognizing our own faults, and to look at our own capacity for goodness seems like bolstering the ego.

大眾說：「你們的本性，本自清淨，本來無須懺悔。但因大家以妄為真，追求外境，懺悔成為行者必修的法門。」

我想從這個觀點切入，因為「懺悔」在西方文化中是不同的概念。在猶太教和基督教的傳統中，懺悔是必要的，承認我們自身的不足，祈求神的恩典，以得到救贖。

相反地，佛教認為並且相信我們每個人本具圓滿的自性，只是被貪瞋癡所蒙蔽。因此，在我想像的對話中，大師繼續說道：「最重要的是要明白，修行懺悔法門並不是試圖彌補自性中所缺少的。」

懺悔不是自我貶低、自卑或內疚。錯把這些情緒當成懺悔的人，已經偏離正道。透過懺悔來認識自己的過失和不足，認清自己哪些地方仍被執著所困。

蛻變是放下執著時所產生的自然狀態，我們本自具足、光明、清淨的佛性自然會顯現出來。接下來我想探討懺悔法門的另外兩個理念，我認為這對修習懺悔法門很有幫助。

我不知道其他人的經驗如何，就我而言，每當我長時間拜懺，有時很容易陷入一種情緒低落、自我貶低的狀態。我發現拜懺特別能夠挖掘埋藏在內心深處的黑暗面。事實上，這也是我們淨化的方法。但在過程中常保振作之心，有時非常困難。

我聽聞著名的美籍泰僧蘇美度長老剛出家時，內心曾充滿許多自我懷疑，而（他的師父）阿姜查長老給他最初的教導之一，就是觀照自己的德行。這聽起來似乎有違直覺。我們通常是觀照自己的過失；觀照良善，似乎有助增長我慢。

但根據《六祖壇經》的教導，我們每個人本具不可思議的良知。如果我們能對與生俱來的善念生起信心，

But in light of the teachings from the *Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra*, we all already have incredible potential for goodness. If we develop trust in that inherent goodness, it gives us all the more power to turn away from all the bad habits that keep us from fully recognizing and uncovering it. With this, there's kind of a balance, an interplay between confidence, courage, and humility.

In my own experience, I find this inner refuge of confidence and also peace and tranquility when I simply go outside for a walk and recite the Śūraṅgama Mantra. I remember reading the Venerable Master saying that we should see the sutras and the mantras as if they were emanating from our own nature. And so, when I'm reciting the Śūraṅgama Mantra, I like to think that it's simply reconnecting with something that I have deep inside me, and that by reconnecting myself with that, I can find more peace and clarity.

One of my favorite stories out of the entire Buddhist canon that I've ever read is the fourth chapter from the *Lotus Sutra* about the prodigal son. In brief, the story is about a son who runs away from his father for ten, twenty, even fifty years. Then, after a long time, he comes back, and his father is now a wealthy merchant.

He doesn't even recognize that he's the heir to all the merchant's wealth and mansions and authority. It is only after the Buddha very skillfully and over a long time develops a relationship with him and gains his trust that he finally comes to recognize that all along he was the son of a wealthy merchant, and he is the rightful heir to everything that his father, the merchant, possesses.

So, in this sense, repentance is not coming from a place of absence. We're not trying to compensate for a loss or become something we are not, but just return to something that we already have. ❀

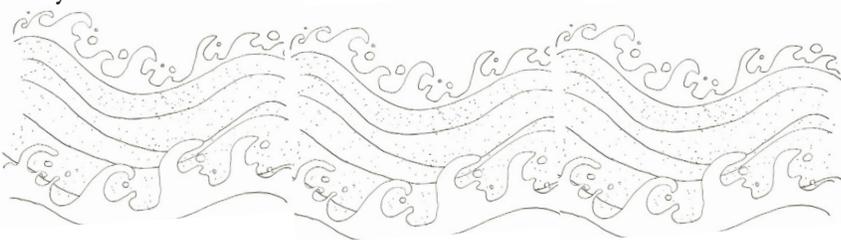
我們就更有力量擺脫那些阻礙我們看清、發掘內在良善的壞習氣。因此，自信、勇氣和謙遜之間有著一種平衡和相互作用。

依我個人的經驗而言，走出戶外散步並持誦〈楞嚴咒〉，就能找回內心的自信與平靜。我記得曾經讀到宣公上人說：「我們應該把經咒看成是從我們自性所流出的。」當我唸〈楞嚴咒〉時，我感覺持咒是與自己內心的某種特質重新連結。藉由這個連結，讓我可以找到更多的平靜與清明。

在我讀過的所有佛教經典中，我最喜歡的其中一個故事是《法華經》第四品窮子喻。故事講述一個兒子離家漂泊十年、二十年甚至五十年之久。他貧窮潦倒多年後，終於回到故鄉，他的父親已是富甲一方的商人。

這個窮子根本沒想到，自己竟是這個富商所有資產、豪宅、權力的繼承人。直到佛陀（故事中的富商）以善巧方便，經年累月與他建立關係，獲得他的信任之後，他才終於明白：原來自己一直以來都是這位富商的兒子，本來就能繼承富商所擁有的一切。

因此，根據這個故事的概念來說，懺悔並非我們有所欠缺，也並非我們想要補償或改變；而是讓我們回歸本有的狀態。 ❀



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