

# Whole Personality and Space

Excerpt from “Karma in Buddhism,”  
the May 23, 1987 Dharma Talk by Dainin Katagiri Roshi

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So very naturally, I think if you study Buddhism in order to research what karma is, it's still very vague. So I would like to say [something] paying attention to the human life which you are taking care of day to day. How do we accept karma [in day-to-day human life]?

But first, I think we should understand *personality*. [We always use this word, but] what is personality?

Personality is sort of a very simple entity including its multitudinous nature, such as the intellect, emotion, and volition or will – not only intellect. Or, [it is] very *deep* feeling, profound feeling, where the intellect, emotion, and volition are working together.

We [talk about] the five *skandhas* or *aggregates* of *form, feeling, perception, impulses, consciousness*. That second one, *feeling (vedanā)*, is [the] very deep, profound first stage of human emotion. The very first [stage] – before you poke your head into it. So that is very deep feeling. The moment when you face or see your object, the image of your object is accepted by the first stage of your emotional/intellectual function. That is called *feeling*. So that is very deep.

[Personality also includes] custom, habit, and also individual character. Or heredity. And also memories.

So what is personality? We see personality simply, but personality is working in your everyday life in a very complicated way, because it includes many things.

From this point, what is your everyday life? You always understand who you are [and] who they are. You evaluate yourself, and you are critical toward others, critical towards the present situation – by which you always create anger, hatred, fighting, and many things. What is your present life? How do you understand it?

Even if you don't evaluate, you don't think, you don't criticize people, still you always give rise to a certain “smell” from your body and mind. Can't you believe [that]? [*He laughs.*] Even though I sit down here without saying [anything], you can *smell* a certain [something] from me. So even though you don't judge, you don't criticize, or you are very nice, or not good, or whatever you say... if you just sit down here, then something speaks of *you*. What is it? This is called *personality* – *whole personality*.

What is *whole personality*? What is it structured by? That's why I mentioned those things: emotions, [intellect] and will, and also oneness of the emotions and intellect and volition; and also customs, habits, and [character]; and also heredity, and also memories.

Memories come from your beginningless past. You have lots of memories. Some memories come up in the present, but that is just a little bit of your memories. But if you sit down, what kind of memories come up? You are surprised to see that.

So from this point, I can say [it] like this: First of all, by your intellect you feel your life and others' life, and you judge yourself and others and the world, et cetera. But that intellectual understanding is just a speck of dust of your whole personality. It's not perfect. But a problem is that the intellect fully believes that your understanding *is* perfect. That is a characteristic of your intellectual habits.

That's why we so much love the world which is clear and neat. We don't want the "dark" aspect of the human world; we don't want to have what we don't understand; we try to understand *everything*. So we always ignore the back. *The back* is [what you] don't understand.

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*The back* means *space*. [...] What is space?

Space is also the *front*. [The space in front] is clear, understandable, reasonable. This is the intellectual world, alright? Created by science.

And *behind*, that space is very dark. You don't understand it. But you cannot ignore it; you have to always carry it on your back! What is the past? What is heredity? We don't know. What is religion – dealing with life and death, in the past, in the future? We don't know what it is. That is the space *behind*.

And the space to the *right* and to the *left* – this is human relation. That space is really taken care of by human relation: working hand in hand, under all circumstances. This is taking care of space.

And also, there is space *underneath*. This is everyday life, rooted in the earth. That is completely beyond *wise* or *not wise*: everyone has to be rooted in everyday life.

One more space is *above the head*. *Above the head* is something mysterious. But it helps us so much, when we are confused. When we are confused, we always pray. To where? We say God, but where is God? We always look up to the sky, don't you think so? [*He chuckles.*] So *space above* is wonderful – clear, vast openness.

So even though we say *space* – what is space? Not a philosophical term, but practically, what is space? Front, behind, to the right, to the left, beneath, and above. Those space[s] should be understood.

But intellectual understanding is very narrow. A problem is that intellectual understanding fully believes that it is perfect understanding, but it is just a speck of dust. You always love the front, [and] that's it. You don't reflect upon the relationship among human beings, you don't accept the relationship among human beings with compassion. If you ignore this [relationship], you never exist in peace and harmony. So if you want to live in peace and harmony, you have to take [care of] many kinds of space: front, behind, to the right, to the left, above, beneath.

But it is a fact that we have intellectual understanding. So from now on, what we have to do is to *train* our intellectual patterns. In other words, change a little bit. *Change* means patting our head and [saying], [*he laughs,*] "Okay, you are good – but wait a minute. I will tell you something; a little more broad aspect of human life which you don't know. I think you shouldn't [hide it] or throw it away; no, you should take care of it."

That [is what change means]. So from now on, what you have to do is to practice a changing of the usual pattern of your intellectual system. Alright?