



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

JUNE / JULY 2013 NEWSLETTER

Right Livelihood and Individuation

BY JUSTIN HECHT

Justin Hecht is a psychologist who practices in San Francisco, specializing in stress reduction and personal growth. He has practiced Vipassana meditation for many years and seeks to integrate his Western psychological training with Buddhist spirituality.

I'd like to speak to you today about how we spend our working lives, from the point of view of two ideas: the Buddhist idea of right livelihood and the Jungian idea of individuation as it applies to the livelihood we choose. In its essence, right livelihood is the idea that you aspire to earn your living in a way that does no harm to yourself or others, and in a way that makes a contribution to your society and to the world. Individuation is defined as resisting the conformity imposed by society, while at the same time resisting primitive and destructive impulses of the unconscious. The individuation process is fulfilled by struggling to find not just a job, but a career and a way of life that is consistent with the archetypal idea and pattern of wholeness, and with your unique and authentic self.

I'll start with a story about myself. In college, I was passionate about my extra-curricular activity, which was as treasurer, business manager, and ultimately president of a club that put on an exuberant, youthful, comical, but well-produced show. The theatrical show had a long tradition, and it was there that I had my best experiences in college and met many people who remain close friends to this day. While I didn't know how I would do it, I sought after college to recapture the joy of that time in my career.

After several years in advertising, marketing, and business school, I went to work for one of the top three Hollywood talent agencies as an agent-in-training. This was about the best route in town for those who aspired to become producers, production executives, and studio management. I worked there almost two years, and during that time, I learned a lot about the business of matching screenplays with actors, directors, producers, production companies, studios, and financial backers of various types. I also learned a lot about myself, human nature, and ethics.

As an agent-in-training, it was my job to read and 'cover' the huge number of screenplays that were submitted to our department, to be the courier for the department, delivering screenplays on my motorcycle all over LA when I had to, as well as being a gopher for the agents, doing whatever needed doing. In return for long hours, I was taught how deals were made and screenplays were 'packaged' with other elements to make a film. I learned this by listening in on the calls that the agents made to the producers, as well as reading letters and contracts, and attending meetings where deals were negotiated.

The amount of dishonesty, cruelty, posturing, aggression, and bizarre behavior I witnessed over the time I worked there was astonishing. I could give many examples of what I heard and saw, but I was most concerned to see that I had begun to behave the way that the senior agents did: aggressively 'shading' the truth and being dishonest, always pushing for my own advantage, and looking only for how I could climb the next step up on the ladder. It was so far away from the carefree days at the college theatrical club. I got a promotion and took a vacation. When I returned from the vacation, I knew that something inside of me had shifted permanently.

The gay Buddhist fellowship supports Buddhist practice in the gay men's community. It is a forum that brings together the diverse Buddhist traditions to address the spiritual concerns of gay men in the San Francisco Bay Area, the United States, and the world. GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

Returning to work on Monday, I watched the phones begin to light up as we were getting ready to ‘auction’ a promising screenplay by a well-known writer. I heard my agent sequentially promise the screenplay to three competing producers within a few minutes, putting them each on hold as he told them he would “never lie to them,” all the while looking at me, rolling his eyes, and making a provocative gesture suggesting masturbation. Although I’d been through this exercise many times before, something about it on this day turned my stomach, and I heard an internal voice loudly saying “NO!” I knew that I couldn’t continue to work at the agency. At lunch, I took my personal items with me and walked out, never to return.

The chronic dishonesty, manipulation, and aggression had taken a cumulative toll on me, and in that instant of watching my agent lie, I knew I couldn’t stand it anymore. Although I was only dimly aware of Buddhist principles at that time, I knew that my work at the talent agency was ethically impossible for me. Once that became clear, I knew that to stay any longer would do serious damage to my soul.

I now see the first part of my career transition away from the movie business in terms of both right livelihood and individuation, but I think that the ethical concepts of right livelihood dominated my decision to leave the agency. I’ll return to my own story later.

For now, let’s review these two concepts by remembering some well-known facts about the lives of the Buddha and C.G. Jung. Let’s start by briefly reviewing the life of the Buddha, especially as it relates to right livelihood.

As I’m sure you know, the man who became the Buddha, Gautama Siddhartha, was the prince of the Shakya clan. Shortly after Gautama’s birth, his father went to see a fortune teller, who predicted that the boy would become either a great warrior king or a wise spiritual leader. Determined to influence the prophecy and to direct his son to become a warrior king, the father steered the son away from any exposure to the world. He arranged for him to be constantly entertained and distracted with instructions in martial arts, beautiful dancing girls, parties, musicians, delicious foods, and every other imaginable kind of sensual, materialistic indulgence.

A palace charioteer, according to legend sent by one of the gods to confound the king’s plan, drove the young prince through the city, where he was exposed to poverty, old age, sickness, and death. The sight of these four afflictions opened the Buddha’s eyes to the reality of the world, and shortly after this he left his wife and young son behind to search for spiritual truth. He took the road as a wandering mendicant and met the proponents of many spiritual belief systems.

He’d led the life of a prince, pampered and indulged. Now he went to the opposite extreme, following a rigorous, ascetic practice, in which he starved himself and punished his body. Close to death, he realized that the path of extreme self-deprivation was so painful that it prevented the clear thought necessary for enlightenment. He sat down under the bodhi tree and meditated with determination for 49 days until he achieved enlightenment. Then, he debated about whether to remain alone in enlightenment or to return to the world to teach what he’d discovered.

Luckily for us, he chose to teach the principles of what he’d learned. His decision is what inspired the bodhisattva ideal. This ideal suggests that when an extraordinarily wise being discovers something that can benefit humanity, he or she remains in the world and makes an effort to teach it to others. The Buddha articulated his path towards enlightenment, which included the overall principles of moderation, ethical conduct, and self-discipline. He advised us to follow the eight-fold noble path, a series of guidelines for attitudes, behaviors, and ethics. One of the key guidelines in the eightfold noble path is right livelihood.

Let’s stop for a moment and consider the story of the Buddha’s life as it relates to the question of finding a right livelihood. First, remember that he is living in privileged comfort, oblivious to the suffering of others. A crucial change in his life occurs as he sees

suffering and inquires into the meaning of it. This suggests that we should take seriously the reality of human suffering, and that we should seek to understand it and alleviate it to the extent that we can. The path of his life also suggests that we should avoid mindless distraction, a trap perfected by our contemporary culture.

The Buddha then makes an extraordinary and courageous decision. He renounces his life of privilege and comfort, and sacrifices his status as a prince, turning his back on material comfort and a secure social position for a life of contemplation, inquiry, and an unknown future. His life says it all: material comfort and social position matter far less than grappling with important questions and coming to answers that are meaningful for yourself.

The story of the Buddha’s life has many other important lessons to teach contemporary Americans. When I was a freshman in college, in 1979, a survey of college freshman had been going on for about 30 years. It asked college freshman, “Which is the more important goal of college: to establish financial security, or to develop a personally meaningful belief system?” Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, establishing a personally meaningful belief system had been the choice of the majority. The year I became a freshman, for the first time in many years, financial security became the majority choice. The news stories that reported this change linked it to the end of the idealism of the 1960s and early 1970s. The next year, Ronald Reagan was elected President, signaling another shift in the national mood.

Unlike the life led by the mainstream in America and the industrialized world, the life of the Buddha suggests that dedicated inquiry and study is the more important choice, not just for college, but for all of life. And the Buddha’s life suggests that this contemplation should not be an arid, disconnected exercise, but should be the basis for a life spent in service to all of humanity. These are high ideals indeed, and they are rather daunting for ordinary mortals. Perhaps it’s easier to start with the idea of right livelihood.

The idea of right livelihood is rooted in the Buddhist idea of ethical action. This starts with the concept of *ahimsa* or non-harming. An ethical job or right livelihood should be one that doesn’t harm other people or beings. Typically, this means that an observant Buddhist would refrain from jobs that involve the exploitation, harm, or killing of others. These are prohibitions, and they are linked to the five precepts, all of which are typically stated in the negatives.

The five precepts are:

- Not killing
- Not stealing
- Not misusing sex
- Not lying
- Not abusing intoxicants

Stated in a positive way, we could also read the precepts as:

- Respecting life
- Respecting others’ property and boundaries
- Treating sexuality and relationships with integrity and kindness
- Telling the truth and speaking carefully
- Using intoxicants very carefully and promoting awareness of their risks and dangers

Observing the precepts suggests that we evaluate our career and job prospects in light of these aims. It’s clear that a career directing a homicidal drug smuggling and prostitution gang implicated in corrupting politicians, for instance, wouldn’t be a path to serenity and enlightenment. The traditional Buddhist scriptures do proscribe a number of other specific professions, including soldiering, butchering, and producing, selling, or serving intoxicants. I wasn’t able to find prohibitions against pimping or prostitution,

although it seems to me that these occupations are not consistent with the precepts or the idea of right livelihood.

The key point here is that we think about the precepts and try to become mindful. It seems to me that a right livelihood wouldn't cause harm to self or others, would be honest and fair, and would support a life of inquiry and service.

Now, I'd like to shift from Buddhist thought to a brief introduction to the life of Carl Gustav Jung, and talk about his idea of individuation.

Carl Gustav Jung was born in 1875 in rural Switzerland near Basel, where his father was a parish pastor in the Calvinist Swiss protestant church. Jung was a remarkably bright boy and young man, who had learned five languages (German, Latin, Greek, French, and English) by the time he finished High School. He went on to get a scientific and medical education in Zurich, and became a psychiatrist in his mid-twenties. He was appointed to the faculty of the University of Zurich medical school, and served on the faculty of the B rgh lzli sanitarium nearby. While he was on faculty there, he published well-regarded research suggesting the existence of unconscious complexes. In 1900,

Like the Buddha, Jung chose to withdraw from worldly involvement. Freud had offered him the leadership of the psychoanalytic establishment, but Jung was unwilling to sacrifice the integrity of his beliefs for worldly prestige. He wasn't indifferent to recognition, but he cared more about finding his own, personally meaningful system of understanding what's most important in the world. He also believed that Freud was simply out of touch with what he considered to be the truth of the psyche.

Jung's early adulthood parallels that of the Buddha, in that both men studied, evaluated, and searched for systems of thought that were meaningful before immersing themselves in their own experiences. Following this immersion, both devoted themselves to teaching what they had discovered.

To me, Jung's life suggests that we should pay close attention to the content of both our conscious and our unconscious mind. We should work to try to understand what our dreams, daydreams, fantasies, and reflections are telling us. We should value history and mythology, and seek to understand the mythic belief

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he read Sigmund Freud's great work *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Jung was so moved by this experience that he wrote to Freud and immediately began an impassioned correspondence and collegial relationship that influenced both men profoundly. As a Jew, Freud faced severe discrimination in Austria, and he sought a Christian psychiatrist to help him promote his ideas in the wider European scientific community. Freud was so impressed with Jung's genius that he sought to make him the crown prince of the psychoanalytic movement. Freud saw in Jung a successor, and Jung saw in Freud a wise mentor. Although this period of mutual admiration lasted for many years, Jung was too independent a thinker to follow all of Freud's ideas. Freud and Jung disagreed over the nature of the unconscious. Freud insisted that the unconscious contained only sexual, aggressive, and homicidal urges, while Jung maintained that the unconscious was vastly richer, and while he never denied the presence of sexual, aggressive, and homicidal content in the unconscious, he maintained that we have in our unconscious the irreducible urges to affiliate with each other, to make meaning of our experiences, the drive to create, and the drive to individuate, or to become who we truly, uniquely, and authentically are, which is our subject for today.

Back to Jung's biography: Following his break with Freud in 1913, he had a period of pain and struggle, and he spent several years partially withdrawn from the world. He continued to see patients for private consultations, but he was much less visible in public, and he sought a deep connection with his dreams and his unconscious. He believed that this would ultimately lead him to the divine both within and beyond himself. He felt a confidence that this would sustain and direct him on his unique journey. Following this period of withdrawal, Jung began his most productive period of writing, which lasted all through the 1920s and 1930s. He continued writing until his death in 1961.

Although Jung and Buddha were very different men, and lived at very different times, and although their belief systems come from very different disciplines, I believe that their lives offer all of us some guidance on what it means to lead a meaningful life.

systems of our own culture and other cultures that we seek to learn about. And we should critically evaluate what we've been told about how we think and how we live, struggling with our teachers and even breaking away from them if necessary.

Jung believed that in our unconscious lies the key to who we really are. He believed that our dreams, fantasies, daydreams, play, and inclinations reveal our desire to live a life that is uniquely our own. He called the process of fulfilling this unconscious desire individuation.

Jung saw individuation as following a similar arc as a heroic journey or a religious vocation. The great mythologist Joseph Campbell, who elaborated and clarified many of Jung's ideas, described the individuation process as the hero's journey, and he used the stories and myths of heroic achievement to illustrate the qualities necessary in an authentic life.

One important aspect of individuation, certainly as it relates to career choice, is its unconscious nature. While right livelihood can be evaluated through the consideration of the ethical principles of Buddhism, individuation is only experienced through the emergence of unconscious contents and the conscious response to what emerges.

I'd like to draw some similarities and contrasts between right livelihood and individuation.

Right Livelihood works on a conscious level and involves the applications of ethical principles to a job or career field. Right livelihood also suggests ethical principles of non-harming (benevolence), honesty, mindfulness, and service. These principles can be applied regardless of the job or career under consideration. They are useful touchstones to consider when performing any kind of work. Right livelihood is a helpful way to think about both the kind of employment to seek, as well as the attitude to take in approaching that work. It doesn't have too much to say about finding work that is uniquely suited to the individual as a means of personal expression.

Individuation, on the other hand, has less to say about the ethics of selecting or performing a job. It is a psychic process that happens in response to unconscious drives, urges, feelings, dreams, and images. It is unique to the individual and has as its central concern psychological wholeness and personal authenticity.

One of the most frequent complaints I encounter in the patients who come to me for analysis is a vague sense of a loss of meaning. People come to me and complain of feeling drained, exhausted, stressed, and unfulfilled. It's not uncommon for them to catalogue their list of achievements, degrees, and possessions, almost as though these are charms that could somehow ward off the threatening feelings of emptiness and pain that have become increasingly difficult to ignore.

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I work with a lot of people who have become what the world calls 'successful': high achieving, well-educated, powerful, and accomplished. But I've come to see that along with these characteristics come a number of warning signs that suggest that the outer situation masks a deeper discontent. You might want to consider your own life as I list these signs and see whether any apply to you.

- Excessive use of alcohol, caffeine, and recreational drugs can mask authentic and necessary feelings, reducing the accuracy of the emotional feedback that you get from your life and job.
- Reliance on expensive and indulgent purchases or services to boost self esteem
- Immersion in the distraction factory of our popular culture, (especially in educated people who must realize at some level that they are wasting their precious time and talent)
- Rationalizations that 'everyone else is miserable in their jobs,' in addition to being untrue, devalue the troubling feelings that should make you more conscious that your work isn't working for you.
- A dim awareness that your current job is boring, unsatisfying, or unfulfilling that you seek to avoid through denial, repression, or bargaining
- Watching the clock and seeking just to endure your work until lunch, until Friday, until vacation, until you have enough in the bank, or until retirement
- Minimizing the importance of how you spend 40+ hours per week and focusing instead on your hobbies, relationship, friendships, or other interests
- Physical and mental health problems that are symptomatic of stress (insomnia, anxiety, gastric upset, depression, lack of energy, etc.)
- Immediate and sustained dismissal of the patient, disciplined, and incremental effort and sacrifice necessary to find more satisfying work
- Participation in office gossip and complaints that paradoxically keep you stuck in a miserable position by creating close social bonds in misery

And I could go on and on, but you get the picture. If your life feels unfulfilling, consider that your work isn't aligned with your

authentic self, and begin a careful, disciplined process of moving towards something better.

I'd also like to have some compassion for all of us, as we seek to lead lives that are more in line with our true selves. There are many forces and pressures, within and around us, that conspire to keep us in work that isn't the best for us. Living carefully on limited funds may be a real challenge in a world that bombards us with messages that spending brings happiness. It takes real courage to explain to parents or friends who equate financial security with personal fulfillment that we see things differently and are making different choices. There's tremendous inertia to our career choices. Once we commit to a career path, we make friends who have made the same choice, and it becomes a realistic fear that in choosing to renounce a career we will

lose not only a livelihood but a circle of friends and colleagues as well. (That's what happened to me when I left L.A.) It's especially hard to give up an unfulfilling career that carries a lot of prestige.

We must risk being rejected and ridiculed and perhaps have an emptier wallet if we live in accord with our true self. It may be very difficult, but it will ultimately be rewarding. This is the message of the great works of literature that describe the quest for the self, works such as Homer's *Odyssey* and *Don Quixote*. Living in accord with the promptings that come from the true self, or individuation, is so difficult because we face obstacles at many levels to an authentic life. On a personal level, we must know ourselves and seek to free ourselves from hatred, delusion, and greed.

And greed can be so subtle, can't it, especially when "everyone else is doing it"? Another example from my own life: Immediately after college, I worked in marketing. I knew that my job wasn't my true calling, but I didn't know what was. Older people whom I'd admired had gone to business school, and so were most of my friends from college. I couldn't figure out what better to do, so I applied and was accepted to a business school famous for training the masters of finance on Wall Street. I didn't know it at the time, but it was not a good fit at all. "Oh well," I joked to friends, "at least I'll have my existential crisis at a higher salary level." I want to be gentle with my 23 year old self; I was doing the best I could. But I also want to acknowledge that I don't currently admire the values that I prioritized in making that decision. They were a subtle form of greed: in the absence of an organizing life philosophy, I sought greater material comfort and security.

I did meet a lot of interesting people at business school, and learned a lot about how to think, how to use statistics and other analytic tools, and began my education in psychology. I also reconnected with two people there whom I'd known in college. I've followed their lives and think that they can be helpful examples of how NOT to live a life, as well as how to live a life.

The first man I'll call Chris. When I knew him in college, he was a fresh faced blonde boy with a fascination for French romantic poetry. He'd grown up on a ranch in Colorado and was a fascinating blend of tough, authentic cowboy and passionate intellectual. He'd quote long stanzas of poems to me and to the professor leading our seminar, connecting the themes and ideas to novels, music, and art history. Chris was a natural intellectual, and we all believed him when he told us he

intended to become a professor in the humanities. I lost touch with him after graduation.

Just before going to business school, I was returning from a business trip on a TWA flight in the summer of 1985, and I happened to sit next to a partner in a management consulting firm. We spoke about business and marketing, and I was shocked to learn that this man was Chris's boss. Chris had given up his plan to study French literature and had become a management consultant. Not only that, but he would be in my class at business school that fall. The partner suggested that I would make a good management consultant and encouraged me to apply to his firm, contacting him or Chris when I saw him at business school.

When I saw Chris again at business school, he had changed. We'd all aged a bit, but his face seemed harder, and so did his spirit. I asked him why he'd abandoned literature, to which he'd seemed so committed, and he dismissed the subject, saying, "There's just no money in it." Appalled, I asked him to tell me what he liked about management consulting. I listened numbly as he told me, "It's a great place to learn about business while you're figuring out how to get rich."

Before he graduated from business school, he told me that he was going into a financial field, for which he obviously cared little, strictly because of the profit potential. When I saw him at our 25th class reunion, he was going through a divorce. Overweight and probably drinking too much, he'd made a fortune but was clearly unhappy. He'd sought the wrong kind of riches.

Contrast this with my friend Mehmet, whom I knew as an undergraduate in an economics class. He was sincerely concerned with how to take what he was learning and help people. I was always struck by his service ethic. It turned out that he, too, was in my class in business school. Not only that, but he was simultaneously in medical school. He told me that he was interested in finding a way to keep large numbers of people healthy, possibly by using his business skills to aid the health services in his native Turkey.

In his career, he took his commitment to public service and began writing popular books and articles advocating healthier lifestyles. The books became best-sellers, and he came to the attention of a celebrity talk show host. She mentored him and he now has his own show, where he takes his passion for health and expresses his desire to serve through the mass media.

His story is somewhat complicated and I no longer know him well. Through mutual friends and his own self-presentation, I gather that he is happy and fulfilled. He has always been a very hard worker, but he doesn't seem driven. He seems to have stayed true to his values. He has been rewarded by material success and recognition, but I don't think that this is what primarily motivates him. I believe that the ideals of service and commitment that he expressed to me in the mid-1980s continue to motivate him today.

Chris and Mehmet show contrasting approaches to ethics, ideals, and to the idea of vocation. I believe that Chris sacrificed his true vocation, being a professor, for the illusory security of wealth. I believe that Mehmet, on the other hand, followed his vocation with dedication and passion and was rewarded with a fulfilling career.

I don't want to judge Chris too harshly, nor do I want to idealize Mehmet. Many of us struggle to find a vocation to which we can commit ourselves as Mehmet has, and never do find it. Sometimes we only get a negative message: that we're off track.

To return to my own story: I now understand my decision to quit my job in Hollywood as what I've come to call the 'negative vocation.' So often in looking for the career or livelihood that will be a satisfying and ethical way to make a living, we wish for a 'call' or vocation that will make it clear to us what we are supposed to do. In my personal and clinical experience, the vocation more often arrives in a negative way. We might not get affirmative guidance from our

intuition or our guts about what we are supposed to do, but we get a very clear, rejecting message that we cannot continue to do what we are currently doing. If we are lucky, this negative vocation arrives when we are younger, before we've made long term commitments and/or have dependents. If we are older and have committed seriously to a career path when we hear the negative vocation, it can demand very painful sacrifices from us. But the sacrifices can bring great rewards if we find the way to stay true to our ideals in spite of challenges on multiple levels.

On an interpersonal level, we must find a way to resist the influences and manipulations of others around us, and often they will not appreciate the idiosyncratic value of our struggle. On a societal level, we are rewarded, at least initially, for conformity and compliance, and although true individuals can be acclaimed for success, worldly success is not the guaranteed outcome. On a personal level, we need to find a way to avoid doubt and despair and to cultivate courage and strength as we pursue our dreams.

Although it's demanding, the process of individuation, living in accord with the promptings from our true selves or our intuition, can work well with the application of the principles of right livelihood to our jobs and careers.

Taken together, these two concepts can help at all stages of our lives, and especially in the area of jobs and careers. The search for right livelihood is itself a profound spiritual practice. Seeking to apply the ethical principles in right livelihood to any job we find ourselves in cannot help but be beneficial. The process of individuation, especially when consciously pursued, can help us to find a more fulfilling career and way of living our lives. It's a process that integrates the images and energy of our dynamic unconscious to give our lives greater fulfillment and authenticity.

Perhaps my own experience with these two principles will provide a helpful illustration of the ways that they can work together.

Back to my job in Hollywood: The agency was run by a man widely regarded as a tyrant, and although I only once experienced his irrational rage, I could see that he set a tone of cruelty, dishonesty, and aggression that dominated the agency. I was dimly aware of how unhappy I had been in my position, but after the vacation, it became impossible for me to continue working in an environment that was so contrary to my values.

The second part of my transition from the entertainment business into psychology is something that I experienced much more as the process of individuation. This process is frequently clear only in hindsight. After leaving the talent agency, I took some time off and went on a silent retreat. After several weeks of not speaking and doing simple chores with great mindfulness in a monastery, I awoke one morning and took a shower. While I was showering, I heard an inner voice say, "You should be a psychologist."

This experience had much more the feeling of individuation for me. I'd never before considered the possibility of becoming a psychologist, but there had been much in my life that had been leading in that direction. I'd been recording my dreams since I was a teenager, had written an extensive journal, profited greatly from personal psychotherapy, and read shelves full of popular psychology and self-help books. It seemed obvious in retrospect. It seems remarkable, but it had never before occurred to me. I can remember reading the descriptions of psychology courses in the college course catalogue and thinking, "boring." It's remarkable to me to reflect on how little I knew my true nature, and this is also the point of individuation.

In the monastery that day, I discovered that there was another part of myself that had been quietly growing outside of my conscious awareness and that it had become a vital and powerful part of my personality. Powerful enough, in fact, that it has been an organizing part of my own individuation process for the last twenty-five years. ■

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GBF Annual Mount Tamalpais Steep Ravine Hike

Come join us on June 8 (Saturday) for GBF's annual Steep Ravine hike on Mount Tam in Marin County. This is a beautiful and relatively easy four mile downhill hike starting at Pantoll Station, continuing down a trail alongside a creek shaded by redwood trees that opens up to great ocean views and ends at Stinson Beach. We will have lunch at the Sand Dollar Cafe in Stinson Beach and drive back to the original starting place. (Before the hike starts, we will have drivers park one car at Stinson Beach and then return to Pantoll Station in another car.) Bring water, sun block and layered clothing. (It sometimes gets chilly there.) We will meet at the GBF center at 37 Bartlett St., at 9:00 a.m., and carpool over there. For those interested in participating, please contact Clint Seiter (415) 271-2780 beforehand so that he can have a good estimate of carpooling needs. Heavy rain cancels.

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GBF Yahoo Discussion Group

There is now a GBF discussion group for the general membership (and others) on Yahoo. Join the discussion at:

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/gaybuddhistfellowship

Calendar

Sunday Sitzings

10:30 am to 12 noon

Every Sunday at 10:30am we meditate together for 30 minutes, followed by a talk or discussion till 12 noon. Everyone is then welcome to stay and socialize over refreshments till approximately 12:30, after which those who are interested usually go somewhere local for lunch. Our sittings are held at the San Francisco Buddhist Center, 37 Bartlett Street (Look for the red door near 21st St between Mission and Valencia Streets) **MUNI:** 14 Mission or 49 Van Ness-Mission, alight at 21st St, walk 1/2 block **BART:** 24th and Mission, walk 3 1/2 blocks **PARKING:** on street (meters free on Sundays) or in adjacent New Mission Bartlett Garage. The Center is handicapped accessible.

Sunday Speakers

June 2 Bevan Dufty

Bevan Dufty is the Director of HOPE (Housing Opportunity, Partnerships and Engagement) for the City and County of San Francisco. In 2012, He was elected to serve as a member of the San Francisco Democratic County Central Committee. In 2002, he was elected to represent the City's 8th District on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, succeeding Mark Leno. He was re-elected as Supervisor in 2006 and was termed out in 2011. Bevan will be talking about the impact of poverty and homelessness on members of the gay and lesbian community. While Bevan's focus must necessarily reach all San Franciscans, he has made a commitment to explore how the gay community can best be engaged and how poverty and homelessness has affected gay residents of San Francisco in the past and what challenges face us as a community in the future.

June 9: Dharma Duo

Longtime GBF members David Margolis and Dave Limcaco will share in the dharma duo program.

June 16 Open Discussion

June 23 Thom Phillips

Thomas Phillips is the Proprietor of Praxis: Counseling Services, a health and wellness consultancy based in San Francisco, CA. He is a certified therapeutic body worker and a nationally-certified exercise trainer with over 15 years of experience leading wellness retreats for men. Thomas has served as Co-President of the Association of Certified Sexological Bodyworkers (ACSB), as a volunteer massage therapist for clients at the Immune Enhancement Project

(IEP), and as a Community Advisory Board (CAB) member of MAGNET, the men's health clinic in the Castro district of SF. He has practiced meditation for over 30 years and yoga for over 20 years.

June 30 Bob McMullin

From his childhood in a devout American Baptist household through his coming out experience and years working with gay non-profits to his recent brief stint working for a Roman Catholic monastic community, Bob will share how he has tried to use these very different life experiences in his pursuit of personal insight and spiritual health.

July 7 Open Discussion

July 14 John Coleman

John Coleman is a Jesuit priest, an associate pastor at Saint Ignatius Church in San Francisco. He holds a doctorate in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, where he specialized in the sociology of religion. As a Jesuit he is naturally interested in spirituality and its practices.

July 21 Sheppard Kominors

Sheppard Kominors has been writing poetry since he attended Kenyon College, more than 60 years ago. He has taught poetry writing, along with literature and drama, since his first appointment at Washington College, in Chestertown, Maryland, in 1956. He has also written five novels, half a dozen plays, and has developed an important book on journal writing called *Write for Life: Healing Body, and Spirit Through Journal Writing*. Sheppard has written two books on recovery for gay men: *Accepting Ourselves* (Harper) and *Accepting Others* (Hazleton). He will talk about writing as a spiritual path.

July 28 Emilio Gonzales

Come for a body-centric, experiential Qigong session, via a repeat engagement with Emilio Gonzalez. Emilio has been practicing Qigong and Tai Chi Chuan since 1973. A senior student of Grand Master Kai Ying Tung, he taught Tai Chi at 50 Oak Street in San Francisco for over twenty years. In the 1990s, he established a special Qigong for Health class for people with HIV and other chronic illnesses. He also taught at San Francisco State University, at Mills College, and at various national conferences on Traditional Chinese Medicine. In 1996, he produced a best-selling Qigong video that was broadcast nationwide on PBS.

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By the power and truth of this practice, may all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness, may all be free from sorrow and the causes of sorrow, may all never be separated from the sacred happiness which is without sorrow, and may all live in equanimity, without too much attachment or too much aversion, believing in the equality of all that lives.

—GBF Dedication of Merit