

## **Dharma Breeze: The Shin and Zen of Nobuo Haneda (OLLI, Spring 2026)**

Nobuo Haneda is the founding Director of the Maida Center for Buddhism in Berkeley, California. He considers himself a student not a teacher — a student, primarily, of Shinran and also Dogen, two revolutionary 13th century Japanese Buddhist figures.

Unaffiliated with any temple, Haneda focuses on explaining **the difference between what are called “provisional” (dualistic) and “true” (nondualistic) views** of the Buddha-Dharma.\*

Outside the mainstream in this country, Haneda often implies that “Buddh-ism” and “Buddh-ist” are oxymorons because the Buddha’s teachings are universal, essentially non-sectarian, and nothing to ego-identify with. Despite that, or because of it, he is in demand as a speaker at Jodo Shinshu temples and study groups in the U.S., and also in Japan. He has been conducting weekly three-hour study sessions and annual three-day retreats for 35 years. He has published several books, including a collection of his essays titled “Dharma Breeze,” and “The Evil Person,” which is a translation of the writings of Shuichi Maida. In this class we will read and discuss the writings of Haneda, Maida, Shinran, Dogen, and other free dharma thinkers.

### **Texts likely to inform our discussion (even though we will keep it simple, for my sake)**

- Shinran, *Kyogyoshinsho*
- Dogen, *Shobogenzo*
- Shuichi Maida, *Dogen and Shinran: Zen and Shin Buddhism as Teachings of Self-examination* (Retreat materials, Nobuo Haneda, trans.)
- Nobuo Haneda, *Dharma Breeze*
- Longchenpa, *Maya Yoga* (Keith Dowman, trans.)
- Hui-neng, *Sutra of Hui-neng*
- Huang-po, *The Zen Teaching of Huang-Po*
- Bankei, *Bankei Zen*
- Yasuda Rijin, *Demythologizing Pure Land Buddhism*
- Manshi Kiyozawa, *December Fan*
- Kodo Sawaki, *To You*
- Sekkei Harada, *Being Thoroughly Familiar with the True Self*

## \* “Provisional” vs. “True”: An Outline

---

### The Central Idea

Reality is not the same as our description of reality — much suffering comes from forgetting that.

This class/discussion will explore this point.

---

### I. Finger and Moon

A finger pointing at the moon is not the moon. Looking at the finger is not seeing the moon.

- Words, concepts, doctrines, maps — all pointing fingers
  - The living reality in front of us — the moon
  - The danger in every tradition: mistaking the finger for the moon
  - The word "tree" is not a tree
  - A map of Paris is not Paris
  - A menu is not the meal
- 

### II. Two Ways of Relating to Reality

Buddhist teachings sometimes call this insight the "**Two Truths**" — but the concept points to something most people already sense:

#### **Provisional view (reality as described, thought about)**

- The world of words, categories, symbols, concepts
- Useful and necessary for navigating daily life
- Becomes a problem when we forget it's a map, not the territory
- Getting wrapped up in doctrine, debate, ritual for its own sake
- Example: arguing about the menu instead of eating

#### **Actual reality (as is, pre-description)**

- Direct, unmediated experience

- Before the word-screen drops over it
- What you actually see when you look
- Not hidden or mystical — just ordinary life
- Example: the taste of the meal itself

**Important:** This is *not* a split into two separate worlds. It's two ways of relating to *one* reality.

---

### III. The Mountain Metaphor (Zen)

A simple progression that maps the inner journey:

**The mountain is the mountain:** Naive realism

- Words and reality are not consciously differentiated
- The map is the territory
- Most of us start here

**The mountain is not the mountain:** Deconstruction

- Everything is empty of fixed, independent existence
- The map is just a map — and a pretty poor one
- Meaninglessness
- The danger: getting stuck here in nihilism, mysticism, or philosophical endlessness

**The mountain is the mountain:** Return

- The mountain is a mountain again
- Ordinary life, fully inhabited, as is
- The word "tree" used freely, knowing it isn't the tree
- Living with open eyes (senses) — present, clear

This is not a retreat to infantilism.

---

### IV. What We're Not Doing

- This is not an introduction to Buddhism as a religion to adopt

- Not a comparison of sects and other religions to determine which is better
- Not an argument that all religions are the same
- Not meditation instruction (although we may talk about practices)

**What we are doing:**

- Using Buddhist vocabulary as a lens — because it can be precise about this subject
- Asking what it means to live with clear eyes in the present moment
- Noticing how this question shows up across traditions and in ordinary experience
- Thinking together about the difference between talking about life and just living

\* \* \*

**“We are actually incredibly free. But the problem is that in spite of that, we convince ourselves that we are unfree. This is called ‘upside-down-ness’ or ‘delusion.’ We can do whatever we want to do. We are inherently endowed with perfect freedom. Religion is recognizing the fact that we are free.”**

(Shuichi Maida)

\* \* \*

John Veen, [johnveen@yahoo.com](mailto:johnveen@yahoo.com)

Ph: (559) 355-1222