



What is this ?

Ancient questions for modern minds

A GUIDE FOR
READING GROUP
AND INDIVIDUAL STUDY

TUWHIRI

Wellington

Aotearoa New Zealand



Saturday evening
Entering the retreat
Stephen Batchelor

What do you make of this book's chapter structure, following the talks actually given during a retreat at Gaia House?

What really matters for you? To whom or what do you owe your deepest loyalty? When do you get the chance to reflect on this question as you read this book?

Our digital devices keep us connected with the world, no matter where we are. How well do you cope when that connection is severed? Is it necessary for Stephen to 'strongly encourage' you to switch off your device for the duration of a retreat? What is your relationship to his authority in this context?

In such a retreat, silence is the norm. Not so in 'everyday' life. When in your life do you experience a silence that allows you to think in a different way?

Stephen and Martine have a deep connection with Korean Sŏn Buddhism, through their years at the monastery and so many years of hosting a Sŏn retreat at Gaia House. What is your connection to this tradition, if any? How do you relate to it now?

Stephen quotes Mazu with these words, 'All of you should realise that your own mind is Buddha... Those who seek for the truth should realise that there is nothing to seek.' Are you convinced? What are your thoughts about this?

Stephen encourages us to consider our life, or a piece of it, as a question, and to explore it. How might you consider your life? What is the effect of considering your life, or one of its concerns, as a creative question?

Stephen describes several ways that supported a retreat, such as honouring his teacher, particular seating arrangements, and silence. Do you have ways of supporting your practice? What might they be? How do you ensure they do not become routine and stale?

Do you object to making offerings and bowing to a Buddha statue? Would you participate in these rituals? Whatever your view, can you conceive of anything that would maybe shift your position, one way or the other?

What's your immediate response when you are told to stop making a difference between who you think you are and who you think the Buddha is? Is your response any different after a longer period of reflection?

To what extent do you feel the mystery of simply being human, the puzzle of being here at all?



Sunday morning
The basis of meditation
Martine Batchelor

For someone who has not heard Martine talk about it, summarise the essential differences between anchoring and experiential enquiry. Do you share Martine's preference for the term 'anchoring' over 'concentration'?

In what ways are anchoring and experiential inquiry separate experiences for you? In what ways do they support each other? Do you have a preferred anchor? Is there one that you find hard to work with?

What does it mean to say that one has become stuck in repetition? Do you consider this to be an issue? What do you think it means to experience change through looking directly at change?

Is it possible for the question 'What is this?' to be both the anchor and the cue for experiential enquiry?

What experience have you had of asking questions not with the head, but with the belly? If this comes naturally to you, try to describe it for someone for whom it is a weird idea.

Does asking the question 'What is this?' arouse anxiety? If so, how would you describe it to someone who, you imagine, rarely feels anxiety.

What's your experience of the foreground and the background in meditation? If you've never heard it explicitly discussed before, do you recognise the distinction in your own experience?

What is it like for you to begin asking the question 'What is this?' Are you returning to the present moment, or is something else happening? Please describe your experience.

Rather than recommending just one posture for meditation, we are encouraged to be open to trying several postures, such as sitting on a bench or a chair. As you experiment with different postures what do you discover?



Sunday evening

Talk – Questioning and responding

Stephen Batchelor

Where do you find yourself at this moment?

When you 'look inside' and encounter a physical sensation do you find it banal? Is there a sense of disappointment? How consistent is this feeling – the physical sensation and your immediate response to it?

In your life to now, how have you responded to claims of a transcendent reality? How seductive do you find 'mystical' ideas? If you're not at all seduced, why do you think they're so seductive to so many? '

Do you cherish the idea that there may be something beyond the six senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking? Regarding these questions, can you say something other than 'yes' or 'no'?

What ideas, theories or beliefs have you acquired which purport to explain who and what you are? How difficult is it for you to let go of them?

How do you experience pondering the question, 'Why is there anything at all, rather than nothing?'

Do you think it's a problem that we've got stuck in a habit of thinking that denigrates ordinary life as somehow inferior? What influences in your life reinforce the idea that the world you live in is a pale copy of some truer reality?

Stephen says, 'We come back to the dull, blunt immediacy that is intimate but inarticulate...' Even though it may be inarticulate for us and difficult to describe, we are nevertheless encouraged to demonstrate our understanding. Right now, what do *you* say to demonstrate your understanding?

Stephen discusses the paintings by Sengai and the arts of China and Sōn as ways of expressing the inexpressible. If you agree with this, what are your ways of 'coming into a new relationship with the ordinary objects of our daily life'?



Monday morning

Instructions – What is this?

Stephen Batchelor

On the level of social niceties: Do you have a well-used narrative that you fall back on in response to the question, ‘Where have you come from?’ What is it? Is there an alternative narrative you could use?

Stephen raises the issue of our intentions. Why are you here? Play along in the style of a small child – keep asking ‘Why?’ in response to each reason given. How deep can you go before you say ‘I don’t know!’?

Do you consider yourself to be aware of ‘the great matter of birth and death’? If so, was there an event that precipitated this? To what extent is your answer also a well-rehearsed monologue? Could you be largely ignorant of ‘the great matter of birth and death’?

Do you have a favourite riddle? What do others make of it? Is there a deeper mystery that the riddle might draw on?

Do you have a favourite *kongan* of your own existence? What do you like about it? Have you grown attached to it?

It seems that we’re being asked to hold the question ‘What is this?’ without pushing or expecting an answer. How does that feel to you?

The usual form of epiphany stories involves a sudden realisation that represents a shift to a clearer or more certain view. What’s your understanding of the term ‘epiphany’? Was it an epiphany that led Huairang to spend eight years in the monastery?

What do you do by way of an exercise in embodiment? Stephen lists some examples in this chapter, but maybe you have another practice.

Do you have physical sensations with the experience of great doubt, which Stephen calls ‘a felt sense’? Can you describe areas of your body where that felt sense, your somatic experience, is stronger?

What do you make of what Heidegger said, that 'questioning is the piety of thinking'? This may depend on the associations you make around the word 'piety', of course. Taken out of context like this, how helpful is this quote to you as a way of exploring questioning as a practice?

Stephen begins the talk by identifying that the true source of the question 'What is this?' lies within ourselves. If this is true for you, how is this so? If not, do you have another question or source for your curiosity?

As you encounter the mystery of the great matter of birth and death, is it becoming more mysterious, or less so?

What exercises, other than returning to the question 'What is this?' do you use to develop 'grounding' in your body, and in your world?



Monday evening

The three symbols of awakening

Martine Batchelor

How does Martine see the offerings of incense, water and candle representing aspects of awakening?

It could be that, in the context of this talk, Martine asks this as a rhetorical question, but how much selfing do we need?

Do you know anyone who you consider to be a good example of a person who lives wisely other-centred? What does it look like, and when did you first notice this aspect about this person's functioning in the world? If no one comes to mind, are there any obvious examples in your life of people who live unwisely other-centred?

When was the last time that 'survival mode' led you to make a hasty judgement? How did you realise that you were generalising too quickly? Can the practice of questioning help to balance out the ingrained habit of automatic categorisation?

Have you found any use for asking 'How long is this going to last?', purely as a question to illuminate a feeling?

How long do you spend in meditation waiting for something special to happen? How do you react when you realise that you are waiting for the *real* meditation to begin?

When was the last time that you were surprised by the creativity of a choice that you made?

Martine speaks about the water metaphor: 'generally it flows down'. This metaphor is a contrary to the usual upward metaphors that we associate with spiritual practice, such as climbing a mountain. Have you encountered any other examples of contrary metaphors that might lead us to re-examine habitual ways of thinking?

She speaks of creatively engaging with this flow of experiences. What are some examples of this engagement in your own practice?

How open are you towards the idea of becoming more flexible through the questioning practice? To what extent do you value, and maybe cling to, rigidity?

How do you reconcile the idea of becoming more flexible by doing the same thing (asking the question) over and over again? What's your relationship with the subtlety of the practice?

Have you benefited from the 'Let's see what happens?' approach? If this is something you do regularly, how do you try to use it wisely, in a balanced way? Do you have an example of where this has backfired, and ended up doing more harm?

Selflessness, Martine says, is not the disappearance or annihilation of the self; rather, it's the awareness of our 'selfing' – the ways we make ourselves the centre of almost everything we think. Can you say something about your own experience of selfing, and of selflessness?

What are some of your ways of seeing experience more clearly?



Tuesday morning

Effortless effort

Martine Batchelor

What, in summary, needs to be balanced in order to achieve effortless effort? And what is the nature of that balance?

What connections can you make between what Martine calls 'creative awareness' and 'wisdom'?

Does it fit with your experience to say that calmness will dissolve the power of habitual thoughts in meditation? Does the metaphor of 'dissolving' resonate with your experience?

What do you think Martine means when she recalls going 'inside the pain' and 'experiencing its emptiness'? Is this something that you recognise from your own practice?

How susceptible are you to self-pity? If it is a familiar habitual routine, when did you first identify that tendency? To what extent is it a choice for you?

Martine discusses a creative quality of awareness involving insight into our thoughts and considering where they may lead. How is this different to your usual picking and choosing?

In the context of listening meditation Martine suggests that when we hear a sound we don't know we see how much we want to know. In what other contexts has it become clear to you that you are a meaning-making being with a strong desire to know?

What anecdotal evidence do you have for mixing up effort and effect in the way that Martine describes towards the end of her talk? Your examples need not be purely meditation-based.

Martine discusses several ways she uses to make her efforts effortless. What are some of yours?



Tuesday evening

Good snowflakes: they don't fall anywhere else

Stephen Batchelor

Stephen comments that showing, as opposed to telling, stories 'brings the calculating mind to a stop', leaving one with an image that may be revealing. In your reading of the case, what image remains with you? If the image is meaningful to you, what is the meaning?

Stephen describes the power of kongans to bring the calculating mind to a halt. What else, in your experience, can arrest the calculating mind?

In what way do good snowflakes show us rather than tell us something about contingency, or conditioned arising'?

Of all the modern, conceptual answers to the question 'What is this, and how did it get here?' which do you find most satisfying? Are you able to experience modern naturalistic descriptions as conceivable, but at the same time inconceivable?

How sympathetic are you to Stephen's suggestion that we like to tell ourselves stories that explain how special we are because we find it hard to accept that maybe we aren't special?

Stephen speaks with awe of the profound contingency of the universe and sentient existence. What is your sense of your place in this? How do your answers further (or hinder) your practice? If you don't have 'answers', can you rest in not knowing? How so?

Isn't our own existence just an unavoidable given? Can we be forgiven for often feeling disinterested or bored about it?

If we do indeed spend our lives like the metaphorical fish swimming through the oceans in search of water, what is the water that we are in search of?

Think of a sublime experience you have had. In what way did it exceed the capacity for representation? If you do feel capable of representing the experience, does that preclude it from being sublime?

Why do you think it is that we usually don't recognise the sublimity of simple, ordinary things?

How well-equipped are you to confront the kongan of your own life?

What did you feel as you contemplated, along with Stephen, the arbitrary, utterly contingent, accidental appearance of homo sapiens on the earth – this planet being one of innumerable rocks 'crashing around in space'?

What were your feelings as you contemplated the arbitrary, utterly contingent, accidental appearance of yourself?

'Negative capability' is defined by Keats as being 'when a man is capable of resting in mysteries, uncertainties and doubts without any irritable reaching after fact or reason.' Give an account from your own life, in which your capacity for negative capability was evident.



Wednesday morning

Instructions – I don't know

Stephen Batchelor

Optical illusions are a ready way of illustrating the idea that being convinced about something makes it difficult to see it in another way? Do you have a favourite example of an optical illusion that works in this way? Can you think of a more subtle illustration of this point about certainty blocking fresh insight or understanding?

Stephen mentions Gotama's love of metaphor as a means to illustrate his teaching. Are you clear about the distinction between metaphor and allegory? Are any of the metaphors that he refers to particularly vivid for you? Do you consider any of them to be dead metaphors?

How do you understand the phrase 'The taste of tea and the taste of Sŏn are one'?

Do you have a practice which involves a hands-on engagement with the world that draws upon skills enacted with the muscles and nerves of the body? How does it compare with a practice that can be achieved by the mind alone? Do you seem to have an inclination one way or the other? How do you feel about that internal tension?

Stephen is critical of directing practice towards an absence of thought or mental activity, which can easily be misconstrued as a blank-minded quietism. How is 'unknowing' an improvement on this? What is your relationship to these different ways of understanding and enacting 'no-thought'?

How does not-knowing, or deep agnosticism, underlie negative capability? What are the fruits of negative capability?

For you, where are the boundaries of acceptability for unknowing? Where do you tolerate unknowing? Does this cause struggle internally, or with others who have different tolerances?

Recall a situation where you've been confronted with unsettling feelings of unknowing, uncertainty and doubt. Was it, as with Stephen's example, when

someone pointed out a mistake in something that you've done? How easy was it to accept that the discomfort was likely to be linked with the ego's need to be right.

Stephen gives an example that involves his cats. If you have a cat, you're likely to be more invested in having an opinion about whether Stephen is right in his theory about cat consciousness. If this applies to you, can you feel that tendency? If this does not apply to you, consider which types of subject push your own ego-investment buttons.

To what extent do you agree with the idea that it is a privilege to be able to ask the kind of questions which open ourselves up to the fact that we don't know? Do you have a space in your own life where not knowing is not regarded as a weakness?

How clear are you about the distinction between deep agnosticism and uncertainty, or ignorance? Sum up that distinction to the best of your ability.

Can you recognise a conviction that works for you as an aesthetic response that may give you an advantage in your work and career, but as a side effect numbs your aesthetic experience of the world?

Contemplate these words of Keats that describe Shakespeare:

The least of an egoist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself but he was all that others were or that they could become

and then in another letter:

As to the poetical character itself, it is not itself. It has no self. It is everything and nothing. It has no character. It enjoys light and shade. It lives in gusto. Be it foul or fair. High or low. Rich or poor. Mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet.

What is the relevance of Keats' observations to our study of the practice of questioning, or alternatively, the contemplation of the state of not knowing?

How conflicted do you feel when you hear authority figures say that the purpose of mindfulness or Sōn is not to grant us further knowledge? Perhaps this will depend on your original motivations for getting involved in such practices. Explore this further.

Stephen explains his preference for the word 'unknowing' in terms of it being 'processual, something we can cultivate and develop over time'. What are some ways to develop this unknowing for yourself?

Do you struggle with a societal expectation to know an answer when you don't? After having followed this practice for a while, in what ways do you respond differently?

Batchelor states that only in Ch'an, Zen and Sōn does one 'find the integration of the arts'. Given that stupas are found in the Theravada, and mandalas in the tantric traditions, what do you think Batchelor understands to be 'the integration of the arts' *within* a tradition?



Wednesday evening

Emptiness

Martine Batchelor

When did you first come across the line ‘form is emptiness, emptiness is form’? How has your understanding of this changed since then, if at all? Have you, at any point, reified the concept of emptiness?

How do you interpret this extract from Nāgārjuna: ‘Buddhas say emptiness is relinquishing opinions. Believers in emptiness are incurable’?

When explaining her idea of *emptying*, Martine uses an illustration from the shared experience of the retreat (the washer-uppers). What image could you use from your shared experience?

At the point where Martine does her ‘party trick’ she refers to an object that is very special to her and to Stephen. What is this thing? Do you have a strong feeling of the ‘rightness’ of your answer to this, and your need to be correct (as mentioned in previous chapters)?

Martine uses the embodied metaphor of ‘grasping’ to illustrate a process that blocks the creative engagement that can come from the process of emptying. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this metaphor in this situation? Do you have a more abstract way of understanding this obstacle?

When Martine discusses the emptiness of words (‘they’re just sonorous waves’), to what extent does her idea align with the saying ‘sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me’? Can you find a nuanced perspective on this? How are your feelings about this affected by context?

Summarise the ‘second arrow’ metaphor with reference to a concrete example. How might you explain this to someone who experiences chronic pain (or is experiencing acute pain) who sees it as a worthless platitude?

If you are a coffee drinker, do you ever have the feeling that you can’t love coffee if everything is empty? If you are not a coffee drinker, substitute something that you do enjoy for the coffee in this example.

Have you ever reached a point in a close relationship with another where you can say 'I see you, I know you, I accept you'? What about in relationship to yourself? Have you seen examples of relationships between others where they have arrived at this kind of non-grasping in their relationship? If you have children, when have you noticed that you love the idea of the child over the child themselves?

Emptying seems to have an element of loosening our grasp on things, including what we consider me or mine. In changing the noun emptiness to the verb emptying we may come to a new way of seeing this. Do you?

Emptying may be an example of the middle way between nihilism (or nothingness) and something eternal (or mystical). It seems that the act of emptying ourselves moves us from extreme views and the grasping that comes with them to an action – that of emptying of self. What are your thoughts about this?

If you're reading this book and drawn to Martine and Stephen's approach, you're probably not inclined towards heavy dogmatism. However, you may have experienced this in the past, in yourself and in others. Have you any examples of dogmatism being the 'last frontier' of emptiness? How do you avoid embracing the opposite extreme of total relativism?



Thursday morning
Courage and questioning
Martine Batchelor

Often you hear 'faith' talked about as if it's synonymous with absolute belief, or as a substitute for 'religion'. How does the kind of 'great faith' that Martine talks about differ from absolute belief?

Have you ever had great faith in the 'building ourselves up' phase, only for it to come to nothing? If so, what impact did that have on subsequent occasions when great faith was called for?

Is there a difference between your faith and great faith? In what ways, if any, would you develop great faith?

Why do you think Martine prefers the phrase 'creatively engage' to the phrase 'purify the mind'?

One of the ways Martine describes great courage is not sticking to a thought, having the courage to delay grasping at views. Can you give examples of this in your own life?

Martine gives the example of her moving from sitting on the floor to sitting on a chair to illustrate an act that required 'great courage'. It naively sounds like a very small adjustment to make – why do you think it required great courage on her part? Do you have a personal example of your own that fits into this category?

Elsewhere, we hear Zen practitioners speak about 'great doubt'. If you are familiar with this terminology, how do you think 'great doubt' compares to the 'great questioning' discussed by Martine here? To what extent are the two terms synonymous in this context?

Try to express the sensation of questioning in words. It might feel ineffable, but get as close as you can.

Have you ever worked with a mantra as you go about everyday tasks? How do you think that compares to asking 'What is this?'?

Martine says that the great questioning is really about balancing the quality of calmness and the quality of alertness. What might it feel like if this balance isn't achieved, one way or the other? Refer back to the Tuesday morning instructions if necessary.

Martine describes several approaches of holding a great question. How do you feel when you hold a great question? How do you practice the great question throughout the day?

These instructions finish with an extract from a letter by Dahui. In what way was what he wrote an encouragement to his correspondent? If you need this kind of encouragement yourself, what source do you go to? Do you recognise the need for encouragement of this kind in this context?



Thursday evening
The four great vows
Stephen Batchelor

Deshan's address to the monks was powerful at the time because he was calling into question beliefs and concepts that the monks would have revered. His words might not have the same impact on you, especially if you don't revere the things he was speaking about. Can you imagine the kind of iconoclasm that would be required to shock you in an equivalent way?

Pick an example from your own tradition of a teaching method that has become domesticated by its elevation to canonical status.

To what extent do you agree with Stephen's interpretation of the expression 'What is known as realising the mystery is nothing but breaking through to grab an ordinary person's life.'? Stephen talks about breaking through to the ordinary life, and the difficulty this entails. What prevents you from breaking through to an ordinary life?

Why does Stephen claim that The Four Noble Truths are *metaphysical* truth claims? What is an alternative to the view Batchelor advances? What in practice, is to be gained by taking the view advanced by Stephen?

What is the problem with making truth claims about Buddhism? Without repeating Stephen's points, what are some of your own ideas and perspectives about 'the four great tasks' that he proposes we use as the basis of our practice?

You may already be familiar with Stephen's re-interpretation of The Four Noble Truths from other talks and publications, or maybe his comments here are the first time you have encountered 'the four tasks'. What is the first task? The second? The third? The fourth?

In what way do people on retreat practise these tasks? In other words, how does asking the question 'What is this? fulfil the first, second and third of these tasks?

Stephen claims that practising the four great vows can move us to acts which are ethical and compassionate. The first vow that speaks of a compassionate relationship to all beings is impossible to fulfil. Why, then, take the vow?

Give an example from your tradition of a teaching method has become domesticated, losing its power to shock, to transform.

The second vow also speaks to an impossible task: our defilements are inexhaustible, but we undertake to sever them all. Stephen suggests one way of confronting this Sisyphean task is to turn the experience into the question 'What is this?' What happens if you do this?

With the fourth vow, we take up the way of the Buddha, which involves reducing our reactivity and self-centredness. In your own language, how do you enact this vow, or not?

What do you think characterises those practitioners for whom such mind-turning methods have the power to bring dukkha into stark relief, as perhaps the poignant, unreliable, tragic dimension of experience?



Friday morning
Waiting and listening
Stephen Batchelor

In the context of asking ‘What is this?’, how does Stephen define śamatha and vipassanā?

Again, in the context of asking ‘What is this?’, how is the integration of śamatha and vipassanā described?

In the discussion of ‘waiting’ as an aspect of don’t-know mind, how is waiting contrasted with expecting?

What does it mean to valorise waiting without expecting?

How is listening a metaphor for meditative awareness? What are some of your experiences of this?

According to the *Śūraṅgama sūtra*, what is the most effective way to enter into meditation? How does Stephen interpret this instruction from the sūtra?

Carry the metaphor of listening as meditative awareness into the metaphor of listening as compassion, being attuned to suffering of life. What factors do compassion and meditative awareness share?

The figure of Avalokiteśvara transitions from male to female on reaching China. She is also associated with listening, hearing the cries of the world. What is it like for you to try listening in this way?

What is your reaction to Stephen’s statement, ‘That just to sit, to be focused, to enquire, to be mindful, is already enough’?

Carry the metaphor of listening as meditative awareness into the metaphor of listening as compassion, being attuned to suffering of life. What factors do meditative awareness and compassion share?



Friday evening
The path of compassion
Martine Batchelor

Where do we find the practice of compassion in a tradition that is focused on asking the question 'What is this?'?

Recap what Martine means by the 'indirect' cultivation of compassion in the practice of asking 'What is this?'.

How does the ethical practice of retaking precepts on an annual basis avoid perfectionism? And why is perfectionism best avoided in this context?

Martine mentions three analogies that are used in the Sōn text with reference to the ethical precepts: a brilliant lamp, a most precious mirror and a most valuable gem. How do these analogies map onto the ethical precepts? How does each analogy provide a different perspective on the value of the precepts?

Martine suggests here that the precepts emphasise the conditionality of ethics. Consider the ethical system(s) that you were brought up in – to what extent did the system(s) recognise conditionality? Is it possible to reconcile precepts with absolutist ethics such as Kant's categorical imperative?

Summarise the interrelationships between the three trainings of ethics, meditation and wisdom. What might the interplay be between these three in a specific situation where, for example, you and another person are angry with one another?

What might bodhisattva precepts appropriate to our own time look like? How might we put such a list together, in light of the causes and conditions that we encounter now?

Are you willing to experiment and follow Martine's recommendation to make your own list of precepts that better fit your situation? In what ways do they continue to fulfil the intent of the original precept?



Saturday morning
Practice in daily life
Stephen Batchelor

In what sense is the end of the retreat 'the beginning of the real practice'?

Compare 'practising' with 'cultivating'. What seems to be behind Stephen's preference for cultivation over practice?

Summarise how Stephen uses the eightfold path to show that practice involves far, far more than just meditating. Do you have a tendency to narrow your practice to being no more than meditation? If so, what habits might you set up to take a more complete view?

How can meditation function like the hub of a wheel? How can this analogy help you to develop a perspective that allows you to fully flourish as a person?

What is to be gained from remembering that your life is a work in progress? How much do you need to be reminded of this in your own practice/cultivation of the eightfold path?

Can you do it? Can you be courageous, take risks and not mind failure? Of the things that Stephen suggests that you can do to reduce the sense of isolation, which ones have helped you to do it? Which ones might help in future?

TUWHIRI

FINDING MEANING IN A DIFFICULT WORLD

Tuwhiri is the initiative of secular Buddhists in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. A word in te reo Maori, 'tuwhiri' means to disclose, reveal, divulge, make known, or a clue, a means of discovering or disclosing something lost or hidden, a hint, a tip, a pointer.

Set up in 2018, The Tuwhiri Project is a creative dharma publishing imprint. Our first book was *After Buddhism: a workbook* by Winton Higgins, our second *What is this? Ancient questions for modern minds* by Martine and Stephen Batchelor, and more books are on their way.

The Tuwhiri Project Ltd is 100 percent owned by Aotearoa Buddhist Education Trust (ABET), a New Zealand registered charity. As a social enterprise with no investor shareholders and no need to prioritise profit-making, we are able to focus on our purpose: to help people find meaning in a difficult world.

MORE THAN JUST BOOKS

As well as publishing books on early Buddhism, its retrieval, and secular adaptation to twenty-first century conditions, we will be creating online courses that focus on developing a secular take on the dharma.

We are immensely grateful for the time, energy and expertise so generously given to this project by individuals, communities and organisations around the world.

We're also grateful to all our supporters who are helping breathe life into the aspiration that became Tuwhiri, financing the production of our books. To accomplish our aims, we need help – both practical and financial.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

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WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

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In Aotearoa New Zealand, you can make a charitable donation into our Kiwibank account at 38-9019-0064662-07. To get a NZ tax receipt email ask@tuwhiri.nz letting us know how much you donated and the date.

If you have any questions write to ask@tuwhiri.nz.

OUR HEARTFELT THANKS GO TO

Martine and Stephen Batchelor for allowing us to turn the talks they gave at Gaia House during this retreat into the book *What is this? Ancient questions for modern minds*, to **Christine Johnson** of Upaya Sangha of Tucson (Arizona) for sharing the set of questions she devised for a course she ran for her sangha, as well as to **Bill Cooper** of Bellevue Dharma (Washington State) and **Jim Champion** of the Middle Way Society (UK) for the questions they devised. As a result of the effort all these people went to, we can offer you this reading group study guide to accompany *What is this? Ancient questions for modern minds*. We trust you will be able to put it to good use.