



Leave No Trace, by Les Kaye

"Zen master Dogen said that when birds fly in the sky, they leave no trace. And when fish swim in the water, they leave no trace. With this metaphor, Dogen encourages us to understand how to express spirituality in our everyday lives. He is saying that there should be nothing left over from our activity, nothing to clean up." "Because of the flowing nature of water and air, the gentle traces of the birds' activity and the fish's activity are quickly gone and air and water return to equilibrium. So we say that they leave no trace. But unlike birds or fish, people do not move in the air or in the water. We move on the ground and we also move in each other's minds. That is the nature of human beings. [...] If we create a trace in someone's mind because of what we say or do, that trace may last for a lifetime. So out of our feeling of compassion, we try not to leave a trace in someone's mind." "Allowing our minds to be like air or water lets them return quickly to equilibrium and leave no trace of disturbance. When our minds are that way we can notice their tendencies, that is, the times when they do not act like water, when they are stubborn, angry, greedy, or distracted. So we continue our determined practice to let our minds be "no-trace mind." We do this so we will know how to take care of others' minds without leaving a trace." -- Les Kaye