

## WELCOMING THE UNWELCOME

Wholehearted Living in a Brokenhearted World

By Pema Chödrön

192 pp. Shambhala. 2019.

After a seven-year hiatus, Pema Chödrön, an American-born nun of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition and author, has released a new book of spiritual teachings. *Welcoming the Unwelcome: Wholehearted Living in a Brokenhearted World* offers antidotes to polarization in our culture and alienation within ourselves, tools to awaken the heart and mind (*bodhichitta*) on behalf of all sentient beings. The recurring theme of the anecdotes and instruction is to feel raw emotions and counter our aversive tendencies. Perhaps the best known technique of the *bodhisattva* (one on the path) is *tonglen*, where we breathe in others' suffering and send out comfort and ease. Additional tools to build healing bridges are to universalize experiences (repeat "just like me"); maintain open awareness (see without labelling or "input[ing] meaning"); and embrace impermanence (notice the beginning, middle, and end of experiences). The practices gently and slowly coax us towards our challenge and learning zone, and over time, we can increase our tolerance and capacity for difficult feelings, cultivate a different outlook, and deepen our sense of interconnectedness. Of course, the irony of going against type is that we awaken and see that we all are as we have always been: basically good. Until then, "proceed sanely and humanely" (146). —Lisa Thaler, author of *Look Up: The Life and Art of Sacha Kolin*, 30 January 2020