

Approach to Zen

The Reality of Zazen/

Modern Civilization and Zen

by Kosho Uchiyama Roshi

Japan Publications, Inc.

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ISBN 0-87040-252-8

LCC Card No. 73-83957

First printing: September 1973

Japan Publications, Inc.

Japan Publications Trading Company

1255 Howard St., San Francisco, Calif. 94103, U.S.A.

P.O. Box 5030 Tokyo International, Tokyo 101-31, Japan

Printed in Japan by Komiyama Printing Co., Ltd.

Foreword

The civilization which began in Greece, developed in post-Renaissance Europe and finally came to control the modern world was an intellectual civilization which defined and categorized everything. But after defining and categorizing everything intellectually, the people of Europe and America today seem to be on the verge of suffocating and are now showing a great interest in the ancient Oriental world. They seem to feel that perhaps only in the ancient Oriental world is there an "unlimited" depth which goes beyond intellectual definition. In response to this longing on the part of today's Europeans and Americans, many books have been published as guides to this "unlimited depth of the ancient Oriental world." As is only proper, Zen is more or less at the center of this and an especially large number of books about Zen have been written. This is a really fine thing, but I think there is a problem concerning the meaning of this word, "unlimited."

For example, Japan and especially Kyoto where I'm now living (Kyoto is the ancient Capitol over a thousand years old and has become the center of Zen and the tea ceremony) is surrounded by mountains, and throughout the year mist and fog occur easily and frequently. This mist and fog envelope the mountains around Kyoto and the rocks and stones are heavily covered by moss. These moss-covered rocks and stones in the midst of absolute silence seem to express the meaning of the "unlimited." The mountains, too, piled one on top of the other and surrounded by mist and fog, have unlimited depth. We are enraptured by mystical ideas and feelings. Until now, practically all the books dealing with Zen or the tea ceremony have had pictures of Zen temples and tea houses with a background of moss-covered rocks and deep, misty mountain scenery.

It's, of course, a very fine thing that the mist and fog make the scenery

around Kyoto so beautiful. But I think it would be quite a problem if Americans and Europeans interpreted "the unlimited depth of the ancient Orient" to be this kind of exotic world, and worry that too many books have presented the depth of the Orient only in this sense. If Americans and Europeans take the "unlimited depth of the ancient Orient" to be this kind of thing, they will go into the depths of this mist and fog and try to find some great treasure. However, when the fog and mist is cleared away by the true light of reason, they will find that, in most cases, they have come up with a lot of trivia and nonsense.

The true depth of the Orient isn't simply a denial of human reason. It's not a depth within the fog of anti-intellectual unlimitedness and non-definition. The "unlimited" of the ancient Orient must still exist even after all the anti-intellectual mist is cleared away by the light of reason. The depth of the unlimited is beyond the reach of any kind of reasoning. It's just like a sky without any clouds or mist. The clear depth of the universe is the "unlimited" discovered by the ancient Orientals. It shouldn't be a mysticism based on some kind of anti-intellectualism. It must be a true depth which comes about after the intellect can be sufficiently convinced that it is beyond the reach of the intellect.

I don't doubt that readers of this book will feel that it is quite differently oriented than previous books about Zen. I will feel that I have sufficiently accomplished my purpose if the reader understands with his human intellect that Zen concerns the true depth of "life" which is beyond the reach of that intellect. (This "life" has nothing to do with East or West. It extends throughout all mankind).

Above all, I hope that when you read this book, you will forget your sentiments about exotic foreign lands and read with a completely fresh mind. I hope that, as you read, you look at your own life and apply what I have written to your everyday life. This is the only place where the real world of Zen is.

The English translation of this book has been done by Thomas Wright, Stephen Yenik, and Fred Stober. They have been practicing *zazen* at *Antaiji* for several years. Furthermore, I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Miss Sumiko Kudo who kindly looked over the manuscript and ensured its accuracy.

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BOOK ONE / *The Reality of Zazen*

1. | *The Meaning of Doing Zazen*

1. Ants in a Sugar Bowl

One day I received a visit from a fifty-year-old Jewish American who was a company president. I don't speak anything but Japanese but since he brought along an excellent Japanese interpreter we had no trouble communicating. He asked me the following question:

"I have plenty of money and a wonderful family, but for no reason at all about ten years ago, I began to feel a terrible emptiness in my life. First, I studied Judaism, but I couldn't find any satisfaction. Then I studied Christianity but I couldn't find any satisfaction there either. After that, I felt that only Zen Buddhism could satisfy me and I have been studying Zen ever since. Now, I have come to Japan in order to study Zen more deeply. What do you think about this feeling of emptiness I have?"

In response to his sincere statement and question, I said; "You're searching for the value, basis, and recognition of your existence only in things outside yourself such as property, work, or other peoples' opinions. Perhaps you feel this emptiness because you haven't found anything in the reality of your own true self. In other words, you probably feel this emptiness in your life because you are always living only in relation to other people and things, and aren't living out your true self."

This simple answer seemed to strike him as quite right, and he immediately agreed with me.

"It's just as you say. Every moment of the day, I live only in relation to other things, which must be the reason I feel such an emptiness in my life."

Since he accepted my answer so completely and without hesi-

tation I didn't have to make any further explanation.

He continued, "Well, what should I do about it?"

I replied, "You'll never be able to resolve the uneasiness in your life by drifting around and searching in things outside yourself. The important thing is that "the self live out the truth of the self," or that "the self live out the reality of the self." Zazen puts into actual practice this idea that "the self lives out the reality of the self." My teacher, Sawaki Kodo Roshi always used to say, "Zazen is the self making the self into the self." He nodded as if my answer was just what he had expected and said, "That's just what I thought zazen was. I would like to do zazen here at Antai-ji."

My replies to his questions were not just my personal opinion. I merely told him what has been recorded in Buddhist Sutras since ancient times. In the Sutanipada, which is one of the oldest Buddhist sutras, it is written, "To rely on others is to be uneasy." And in the equally old Dhammapada there is the phrase, "The abode of the self is only the self."

This man was most unusual in that he was able to accept these simple but important passages, which I have quoted, with such humility and readiness. And that is why I have brought up my conversation with him. His mind must have already been developed enough to accept immediately and without discussion these two important Buddhist phrases.

In most cases, however, much more explanation is necessary before a person can accept these Buddhist phrases as they are. So now, I offer the previous discussion as a conclusion and will add the following explanation.

Why is it that today's wealthy and in so many ways fortunate Americans feel this kind of emptiness. I say Americans, but really many people from well-off countries like England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, and Australia feel this emptiness, and, seeking to understand Zen, they come to a rather poor country like Japan and to an even poorer temple like Antai-ji. At first glance this seems really strange, but during the last few

years I have had many opportunities to come into contact with these people and in my own small way feel like I can understand why they come and what their psychology is. Briefly, and in my own words, I think the best explanation is to compare the people living in the advanced countries of Europe and America to ants which have fallen in a sugar bowl.

Think about ants that have fallen into a bowl of sugar. They suck on the sweet stuff until their stomachs are swollen and practically transparent. And yet, everything they see and hear, the whole world which surrounds them, is nothing but the same tedium of sugar. It's only natural that they feel an emptiness in their lives. Being inside this sugar bowl, there's nothing else for them to do but bathe in the self-consoling intoxication of LSD and marijuana or else commit suicide.

When I draw this caricature of Americans and Europeans and compare them to ants fallen in a bowl of sugar, I must naturally think about what kind of condition Japanese society is in. If I were to apply this caricature to present day Japanese, I would draw a figure standing outside the bowl. He's thinking how great it would be if he fell in the bowl of sugar too like the Americans and Europeans. He follows the trail of spilled sugar outside the bowl and tries as hard as he can to get in. Although they are known as economic animals throughout the world, the Japanese themselves are rejoicing as if they have become a great economic power. As a Japanese, I can only say that this situation is truly regrettable. Finally, I will add one more figure to this caricature. He, too, is standing outside the sugar bowl. He watches the white people getting fat, and resentfully, stamps and screams that he wants some too. This is the American black man today.

Now, do you think that, in the above caricature, the ants in the sugar bowl are in the best position, that the ants trying to get in are second, and that the most miserable ants are the one's resentfully screaming outside. If that's what you think, then you're only using the yardstick of an economic animal. Looking at it in terms of real life, all three types are pathetically meaning-

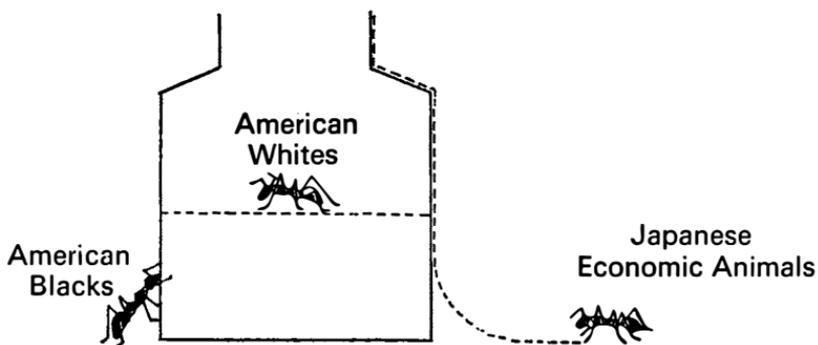


Figure 1

less ways of life. Each one of these life styles is basically only to live in relation to others, and to have completely lost sight of the true self. They are not living out the life of the true self.

Maybe I should bring up one more point in order to conclude. We must reflect on just how this thing we usually call 'I' comes about.

2. To Rely on Others is to be Uneasy

What is the thing we usually call 'I'? It seems that the thing called 'I' comes out in relief only in contrast with other people, only when we meet other people.

For example, a certain man sees himself as a 'husband' with respect to his 'wife' and a 'parent' with respect to his 'child'. At work, he sees himself as an 'inferior' with respect to his 'superiors' and as a man of 'no ability' with respect to his colleagues who have ability. He sees an 'I' which has a structure like this; a 'salesman' with respect to the customers; an 'opponent' with respect to his fellow workers, a 'poor man' with respect to a rich one, 'I can't but it' with respect to 'a good thing like that,' a 'loser' with respect to a winner, 'powerless' with respect to society. It would certainly be a wonder if a man who was conscious of himself by means like these didn't become neurotic with a feeling of inferiority. (See Figure 2)

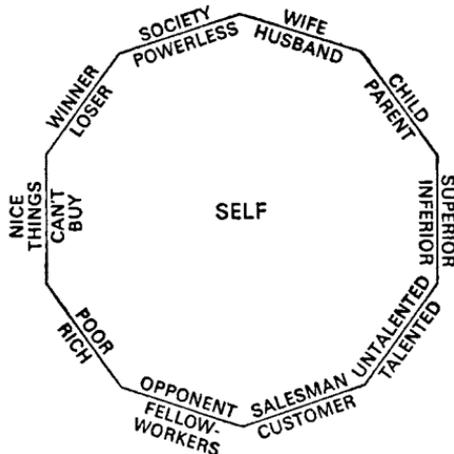


Figure 2

But even if it's the case of a man who was conscious of himself only as inferior when compared to others, maybe he wouldn't

become resentful and bitter and suffer from an inferiority complex. Maybe another part of his self consciousness would say, just like the present Japanese economic animals, “Okay, I’ll work hard and study a lot. I’ll chase after the others—money, status, ability, fame, etc., and someday I’ll catch up and pass them. I’ll win!” What would happen if a man lived with a positive idea of himself like this?

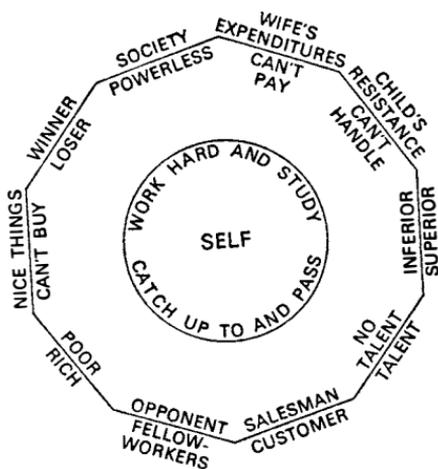


Figure 3

Or, how would it be if a man, due to his circumstances, was in the position where he could feel sufficiently superior as opposed to those people who must have a consciousness of inferiority?

These seem completely different or even totally opposite to the case of inferiority. But really they’re all in the same category. The point is that people think of their ‘I’ as something that is determined from the outside, as something which is balanced against other people and things. Essentially there isn’t a bit of difference between these examples. There is certainly no doubt that we live like this, being conscious of our ‘I’ as something fixed from the outside and in balance against others, but if one thinks that only this is his ‘self,’ if one lives only as something balanced against other people and things, then I must conclude

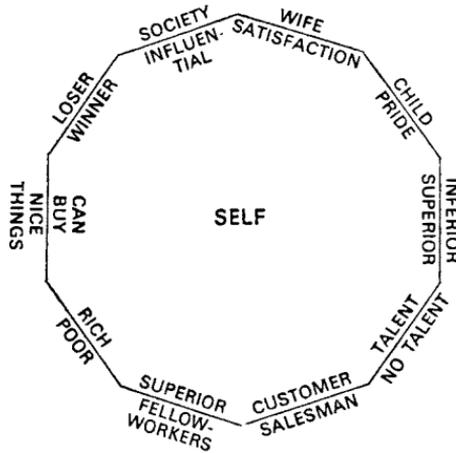


Figure 4

that he has lost sight of his real 'self' which is the reality of life.

Rousseau wrote the following in *Emile*. "Any man whether he's a king, or a noble, or a millionaire, is born naked and poor, and when he dies, he must die naked and poor." This is certainly the absolute truth. However we aren't naked during the entire time from birth until death. We all wear some kind of clothes during our lifetime. There are people who wear splendid and gorgeous clothes like a queen's and people who must spend their whole life wearing poor, tattered rags. Some people wear army uniforms; others, prison clothes; and others, monk's robes.

Actually, these clothes aren't limited only to those made of cloth, but of course, there are the clothes of class, status, fame, and wealth. They're the clothes of nobles, company presidents, congressmen, and millionaires. I say these are clothes because there will always be a time when a man is stripped naked of things like class, status, fame, and wealth. There are also clothes called 'beautiful woman' and 'genius.' No matter how beautiful a woman is, there will finally come the time when she must change clothes and wear the garb of an old woman. And the genius must in the end change into the clothes called 'senility.' Likewise, there are the clothes 'superiority complex,' 'inferiority complex,' 'happi-

ness,' and 'unhappiness,' and further the ones called 'so-and-so-ism,' 'so-and-so race,' and 'so-and-so people.' Also people change from one system of thought or ism to the next, and when it's time to die, doesn't a man even take off his old clothes of racial distinction and die as a completely naked 'I'?

Even though these are just clothes that we wear in the interval between naked birth and naked death, almost all people are taken in by only these clothes. They think that the entire problem of living is out of all these clothes, which nice ones will they wear? And isn't it true that they never once ask the questions: "What is the self which is the reality of life?" "What is the naked self?" In other words, what I previously described as a relationship which is determined from the outside and balanced against other people and things is the same as the 'clothes' I'm talking about now. At any rate, while we are now certainly living out our 'I,' we are not in fact living out the reality of the true self. We are only concerned with the 'clothes' during the interval when we are alive, or the self which is determined from the outside and balanced against others. It seems we assume that this is all there is in life.

As long as this is so, it is not at all strange that people should find an emptiness in their lives. Whether they suffer from an inferiority complex (Figure 2) or burn with the spirit of competition (Figure 3) or have a superiority complex (Figure 4) it's only natural that they all feel the same hollowness in their lives. "To rely on others is to be uneasy." A man can find no true peace of mind until he lives out the reality of the life of the self, until "The abode of the self is only the self."

3. Everything is Just as It is

Doing *zazen* is not to think of yourself as something determined by a relationship with other people and things or, as the clothes I mentioned before, but rather it is living out the reality of the life of the self. That's right. More than anything, when we enter the world of Zen, we enter the 'world of practice' where we live out the reality of life. Actually, this 'world of practice' which is to live out the reality of the life of the self is nothing special, but regardless of that, these words probably sound quite strange to you. That's because they pertain to a world which is undreamed of in the sphere of Western thought as well as in our ordinary daily life.

What I mean is that, as I have already said, we ordinarily live only as an 'I' which is related to the world, which has only a social appearance and only a worldly evaluation. In other words, only in the midst of others do we find the value, basis, and recognition of existence. We assume that what is called 'I' is that sort of thing, and conversely, we end up thinking that living a life of practice as our real selves is something special.

On the other hand, Western thought has turned its eyes away from the reality of life in a different way. That is to say, Western thought, which began in ancient Greece, has become too used to grasping all existence in the form of *logos* (language). To grasp something in the form of *logos* is to establish precisely the relationship of that thing with other things by means of *logos*. Because Western thought has become too used to this kind of definition of things, it even tries to grasp the self and life itself by definitions. The important thing here is that even the power to understand all things by definitions is the power of the life of the self. The life of the self is not something which comes about by being defined. It is something that lives as real experience even if it is not understood and defined. Although this is something which naturally ought to be recognized, it cannot be easily recognized

by a Western rationalistic way of thinking. If one thinks about the reality which exists before the definitions of speculative thought, that itself creates a kind of definition. So hasn't it ceased to be before definition? Therefore, one ends up *thinking* that the definition itself is the real thing.

But the basis of Buddhism, which began in India, is the reality of life which goes beyond all definitions. More than that, since really life produces all relative definitions, any kind of definition is life itself, but the reality of life can't be bottled up in a definition. Although it produces all kinds of definitions, the reality of life goes beyond and transcends all definitions.

Why does Buddhism presuppose that there is a reality beyond definition? The reason is simple. If we actually touch a flame, we will certainly be burned, but if, without touching the reality of fire, we say the word 'fire' our tongues will not be burned. And likewise, if we only think about it, our heads won't be set ablaze. So, the definition of fire, whose nature is to burn all things, can't be the reality. Fire exists beyond its definition. In Zen, it is said that a man only knows cold things and warm things when he himself experiences them. Everything is interpreted as the real life-experience of the self. This means there is no value in definitions of things, reports of other people, or pure observation of things in which the life-experience of one's self is removed. As far as that goes, can't we say that the difference between Zen and existentialism is that present existentialism is the philosophy of general existence and is not the 'practice' of the very life of the existentialist himself. The important thing for the self is practice in which the self truly lives out the life of the self, not discussions of general existence which has been observed.

According to Western thought where everything must be defined by *logos*, a reality which is beyond definition is nonsense and utterly impossible, but as for practicing reality, the very power which is beyond thinking and creating definitions with words must be the reality of life. Professor Daisetz Suzuki emphasized 'Japanese Spirituality.' The world of 'Japanese Spirituality' opens

up only when we actually practice the reality of life which transcends Western rationalistic thought.

Now, do you suppose that the reality of life which transcends definitions, words, and thought is some mystical, esoteric world which is deeply hidden somewhere, something we can't talk about and is even unimaginable? This is not at all so, because we are always living out the reality of life.

Let's try putting our hands to our own hearts. My heart does not beat because I think about making it beat. Nor does it beat because of physiological or medical definitions. A power which is beyond the definitions of words and ideas is making it beat. But as long as it's really beating inside me, it is, needless to say, the reality of my life.

Also, my respiration goes on, without ceasing, at a rate of so many times a minute. Maybe I can take two or three deep breaths by thinking about it, but it's completely impossible for me to make it function without a rest even when I'm sleeping by simply thinking about it. There are neurotic people who feel anxiety about almost everything, but there's no one who can't sleep because he worries about how terrible it would be if he forgot to breathe so many times a minute all night long. I go to sleep and leave my breathing up to some great power which is beyond my own management. That power is really working. Although this is not done by a power which I control, since it's really working inside of me, it's nothing other than the reality of my life.

This is reality as physiological life but let's go a little further. I was born a Japanese and you were born a Caucasian. This is not something which we chose by our so-called will, and yet in fact, I am a Japanese, and you are a Caucasian. This is the reality of life which transcends our own management and discretion. Also, I am a Buddhist priest and I'm living a life of zazen practice in a certain temple in Kyoto, Japan, but is this way of life a way which I chose by my own power? Certainly, in a sense, I did choose it, but where did I get the power to choose it? I can only think that this choice too has been given life by a great power,

whether it be coincidence, fate, or the Providence of God, which transcends my own so-called will power and thought.

In this case, when we use our intellect to come up with some answer, this is nothing but a one-sided and abstract thought. As for the reality of life, we can only say that it's just as it is. That's right. The reality of the life of the self is simply to live life just as it is. The self does not exist because I think about it or because I don't think about it. Whether I think about it or not, this very thing, the self, is my life. Zazen is truly to put this reality of life into practice.

4. The Meaning of Living Out the Reality of Life

I said that the reality of life is the very fact of living life just as it is, and that zazen is the practice of the reality of life. But is there any other way to live besides the reality of living life just as it is? In other words, is it possible to live outside reality? Of course, whatever our way of life is, being alive is the reality of life, and there can't be such a thing as living outside the reality of life. Nevertheless, there can be such a thing as living, having lost sight of the reality of life itself, and just because of that there is pain and suffering in our lives.

Here's an example. Recently a woman in her forties came to talk to me. She was very distraught and upset as she told me the following story. She had always loved to paint pictures and was also quite talented. When she was about twenty, her parents helped her go to Tokyo and try to become an artist. In the beginning she met with considerable success. Her paintings were exhibited everywhere, she often won prizes, and even the critics gave her generous praise as a young, beautiful, and accomplished artist. However, her brilliant beginning met with an obstacle. Just when her reputation was beginning to grow and she was about to succeed, her father lost all his property. It was still a little risky for her to live only on her painting, and since she was also worried about her disappointed parents, she returned to the country. There she did all she could to look after her parents. As the years went by, her parents grew quite old. However, her unceasing passion for painting won't allow her to just stay in the country and wither away. So she made the decision to go to Tokyo again, get a job for awhile, and try to establish herself as an artist. Taking her aged parents along, she went to Tokyo, and while working during the day, she devoted herself to painting at night. She continued this effort for several years, but she couldn't win any recognition the way she did when she was twenty. Every work she exhibited and placed her hopes in, lost in competition.

As a result she couldn't sell any paintings, and she was forced to go on working in order to support herself. Her energy and spirit were finally exhausted. She lamented her unfortunate situation saying, "I'm unlucky. I haven't been able to fulfill my talent because my family lost their property."

While I sympathized about her fate of not being able to attain her goal as a painter because of a setback in her circumstances, I spoke up and said,

"You're thinking about it all wrong. It's a big mistake to think that it's only natural for a person to have property from his family. What's natural is that a person have no property at all. In your case, however, you were able to study painting which you like so much until you were twenty by means of your family's property. That's unusual and you should be very grateful. Furthermore, already twenty-some years have passed since your family lost their property. In spite of the fact that now you don't have any at all, you still think, "Oh, if only my family hadn't lost their property!" Crying about all this is just to be dragged around by fantasies of the past. Isn't that kind of thing completely meaningless? You must open your eyes to the present reality and start off with a completely naked self which has no property or anything else.

Furthermore, when you were in your twenties, the pictures you exhibited always won and received prizes. You still remember those days and think, "A taste of that again!" Isn't your agony when things don't work out like that nothing but being dragged around by fantasies? You ought to forget these fantasies about wanting things to be the way they were when you were twenty, and begin with your present reality.

The one thing that is most basic is this. Isn't it that you like to paint pictures and that you paint just because you like it? You should be satisfied with just that. But instead of that, if you do the painting you like so much and then complain that you can't sell your pictures, you're being all together too greedy. It's quite all right to have a job to support yourself. If you can make a

living like that, then you can spend a pleasant life whether anyone recognizes you, or not. Shouldn't you be very happy about this?

I haven't been doing zazen because I want to make it into something sellable. I've been leading a life of zazen for thirty years, but for the first twenty, I was completely ignored by the world. I did zazen in obscurity and poverty with hardly enough to eat. But just by doing zazen, I was able to find the meaning of my own life even in those circumstances. In the last ten years, people who sympathize with the attitude of my zazen have come to join me in zazen, but even now I don't have the slightest intention of making zazen into a saleable product. I just do my zazen. For you, too, really painting the pictures you like is your life. Shouldn't just that be your greatest joy?"

This woman completely understood what I had told her and she went home with a bright look on her face.

Actually, we are always living out the reality of our own life, but regardless of that, it sometimes happens that a person loses sight of the reality of his own life. When things come down to be just terrible fantasies of the past or comparing one's self to others, then a person is dragged around by those fantasies and by comparing himself with others. Doesn't this just lead to being filled with feelings of utter isolation and loneliness and to being filled with jealousy, envy, pain, and suffering?

This is what happened to me when I went to a place in the country once. Looking from a distance, there was a thick forest on the side of a mountain, and I could make out the roof of a large temple hidden among the trees. According to the story of a villager, previously, this temple had been much bigger, but after being burned down, the present building was put up on a smaller scale. Being guided by the villager, I climbed up a long, stone stairway. When I finally approached the place and had a look at the temple, far from being small, it was a magnificent structure. And yet, it didn't seem to have been built at all recently. I began to wonder about it and asked the villager just exactly when the temple had burned down. He told me it happened

during the Kamakura Period (1185–1333). Probably, before the Kamakura Period it had been a much bigger temple, but the Kamakura Period was seven or eight hundred years ago. I burst out laughing because when the villager was talking about “after it burned down” and all, I thought he meant five or six years ago or at most twenty or thirty years ago. At any rate, I found it interesting that these country people handed down the story of something they hadn’t seen themselves as if it happened only yesterday.

On second thought, a thing that happened seven or eight hundred years ago is undoubtably a recent event. The Jewish people vividly remember the temple which Solomon built several thousand years ago as if it was only yesterday. Really when people use the word “remember”, they should be talking about things they themselves experienced or at least things which happened in their own lifetime. But in this case they are “remembering” what’s written in books or “remembering” what they heard their ancestors tell about. It would be one thing if these were simply memories, but the Jewish people are gambling the fate of their entire people for the sake of these memories, and along with the Mohammedans and Christians are killing and being killed. This isn’t at all a one-sided affair. It’s also combined with the “memories” of the Mohammedans and Christians. At any rate, what in the world is this kind of thing?

In mythological and sectarian religions, people act according to what they’ve been taught, what is written in books, and what has been handed down by their ancestors. And yet, there are too many times when they wage giant wars and kill each other in mass. This isn’t limited to only mythological and sectarian religions. It’s just the same with so-called isms and ways of thought. Instead of looking at the reality of raw life with their own eyes, people end up stifling the reality of life with the name of God, the name of Justice, the name of Peace, and with fixed dogmas and formalized thought.

As long as memories, fantasies, myths, history, isms, or ways

of thought are produced by human life, we can never say they are meaningless. However, these are not the raw (i.e. living right now) life-experience itself, but rather, they have a conceptual existence which is fixed within our thoughts. This is past experience and past wisdom or, perhaps, the experience and wisdom of mankind, but it should be made to live only within the raw life-experience of the self which is here and now.

But it sometimes happens that we plunge our heads too far into memories and fantasies, or myths and history, or else religious dogma and the formalized way of thought of isms. When we admire these, believe in them blindly, and become frenzied and fanatical, we vividly activate this fixed and conceptual existence. We totally confuse this kind of conceptual existence with the raw life experience which is now, and end up being dragged around by it. We do things which only stifle raw life. This happens a great many times. In the case of an individual who is like this, he can be admitted to a mental institution as a schizophrenic, but when huge masses of people begin to act according to sectarian religions or isms, then the schizophrenic activity is of the mass itself. There is hardly a hospital where they could be admitted, and far from that, these fanatic groups eventually move the very history of man. Can't we really say that the history of man is a continuum of this kind of thing?

If we think about it, there is no doubt whatsoever that everyone is always living out the reality of life, even if it be insane. But going a little further we have to conclude that the important thing is to really practice and aim at 'living out the reality of life.'

Here is where we truly find out what it means to say that zazen puts into practice the 'living out of the reality of life.'

2. / *The Reality of Zazen*

1. How to do Zazen

Above I talked about the meaning of zazen, but now I will explain how to do zazen.

First, the room where you do zazen should be as quiet as possible. It should be neither too light nor too dark; warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Take care not to let wind and smoke get in and keep it neat and clean. In other words, try to create a settled and peaceful environment where you can always sit. It's also a good idea to enshrine a Buddha image, have an offering of flowers, and burn incense. A Buddha image represents the tranquility of zazen and is an artistic expression of the compassion and wisdom of zazen. We who do zazen should pay respect to the place where we sit. This is why we bow when we enter the Zendo. We should always remember to take care of the environment which helps us do zazen.

Next, I would like to explain how to sit. Place a *zaniku*¹ facing a wall and then put a *zafu*² on top of this. (See Figure 5.) Sit down on the zafu and fold your legs. You should cross your legs by putting the right foot on the left thigh and then the left foot on the right thigh. This is called the full lotus posture. (See Figure 6) If you can't fold your legs like this, you can just put the left foot on the right thigh. This is called the half-lotus posture. (See Figure 7) Don't sit in the middle of the zafu. The zafu should be in back of the place where your legs cross and your

1. A *zaniku*, usually called a *zabuton*, is a cushion about one meter square and filled with cotton.

2. For instructions on how to make a *zafu* refer to the back of this book.

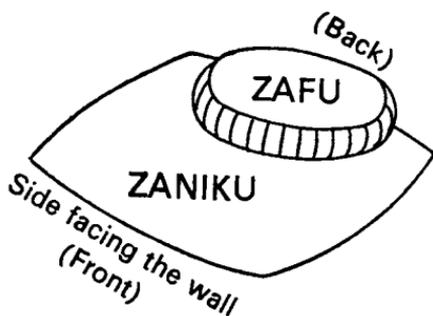
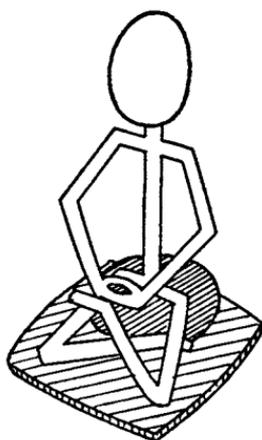
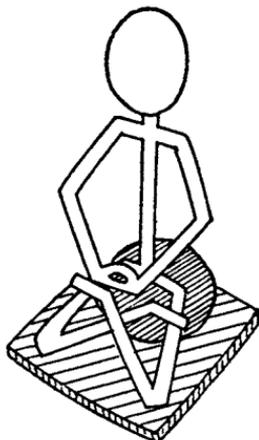


Figure 5



Full-Lotus

Figure 6



Half-Lotus

Figure 7

knees should be firmly down on the zaniiku. The weight of the upper part of the body should be distributed on three points—your knees (on the zaniiku) and your buttocks (on the zafu).

Sit up and straighten your back as if you were pushing your buttocks firmly into the zafu. Keep your neck straight and pull in your chin. Without leaving an air-pocket inside, close your mouth and put your tongue firmly against the upper pallet. Project your head as if it were going to pierce the ceiling. Relax your shoulders.

Put your right hand on top of your left foot and put your left hand in the palm of the right. Your thumbs should meet above your hands. (See Figure 8)

Your ears should be in line with your shoulders and your nose in line with your navel. Keep your eyes open as usual, look at the wall, and drop your line of vision slightly.

Once you've taken the zazen position, open your mouth and exhale deeply. By doing this, you change your whole mood. In order to work out the stiffness in the joints and muscles, slowly swing two or three times to the left and right. Now you take the immovable posture. Once you've taken the immovable posture, breathe quietly through the nose. The important thing is to let long breaths be long and short breaths be short. You should breathe as naturally as possible from the *tanden*.¹ Don't make noise by breathing heavily.²

1. There is an area about three centimeters below the navel which is called the *tanden*. If you are maintaining the correct zazen posture, the center of gravity of your body and mind will naturally fall to the *tanden*. In regulating the breath, the center of gravity should fall to the *tanden* by means of maintaining the correct posture. Other than that, you should just breathe naturally.

2. "In our zazen, the most important thing is to sit in the correct posture. Next, it is important to regulate the breath and calm the mind. In Theravada Buddhism there are two ways of doing zazen. One way is to count breaths and the other is to think that the body is impure. In other words, a practitioner of the Theravada controls the rhythm of his breathing by counting his breath. However, the practice of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs is completely different from the way of Theravada. In a sutra it is said, 'You should never try to follow the Theravada way of zazen in which they try to improve themselves.' The Shibunritsu Sect and the Kusha Sect presently active in Japan are of that type. The Mahayana way of regulating the breath is to know that a long breath is long and a short breath is short. The breath reaches the *tanden* and leaves from this same place. The inhalation and exhalation are different. But however way it



Cosmic Mudra

Figure 8

I've generally described the zazen posture, but I think it can be said that this posture is a truly unique discovery of the East. It's unique because it's the best posture for throwing out our small human thoughts.

You'll easily understand what I mean if you compare the zazen posture to Rodin's statue, *The Thinker*. It sounds good to call this statue *The Thinker*, but actually it is a position for chasing

is, we must inhale and exhale through the tanden. When you breathe through the tanden, the transcendence of your life becomes clear and it is easy to calm the mind.

Ju Ching said, "The breath inhaled reaches the tanden. However, it isn't that this breath comes from somewhere. For that reason, we can't say that it is either long or short. The breath is expelled leaving from the tanden. But it is not a matter of it going somewhere. For that reason, we cannot say it is short or long."

Ju Ching explained it in that way and, if someone were to ask me, "How do you go about regulating the breath?" I would probably answer in this way. Actually, it is not something which can be determined as Mahayana or Theravada. And vice-versa, it is not something which can be determined as Theravada or Mahayana. (This is because it is something which transcends both.) And, if the questioner continued, "Well, then, how is it?," I would add that both breathing in and breathing out are neither long nor short." (It's not a matter of comparison.)

Eihei Koroku, Vol. 5

after illusions. The trunk of the body is hunched over, the arms and legs are bent, the neck and fingers are bent, and even the toes are bent. When your body is bent like this, blood becomes congested, you are caught up in your imagination and cannot break free. On the other hand, everything—trunk, back, neck, and head is straight when you sit zazen. Because your abdomen is comfortably resting on solidly folded legs, blood leaves the head and circulates plentifully towards the abdomen. Because blood circulates downward from the head, there is no congestion, excitability is lessened, and you can no longer chase after fantasies and delusions. Therefore, doing correct zazen means taking the correct posture and leaving everything up to it.

It's easy to tell someone to aim at the correct posture with his flesh and bones and leave everything up to this, but it's actually not so simple to do. If, even while you are in the zazen position, you continue your thoughts, you are thinking and no longer doing zazen. Or, if you fall asleep while in the zazen position, you're simply sleeping and no longer doing zazen. Zazen is not thinking, nor is it sleeping; rather, it must be to aim at holding a living and vital zazen posture. If you become sleepy while doing zazen, your energy becomes dissipated, and your body becomes limp. If you pursue your thoughts, your posture will become stiff. Zazen is neither being limp and lifeless nor is it being stiff; rather, it ought to be full of life and energy.

This is the same as driving a car. If a driver gets drunk, or feels sleepy, his life force becomes dull and it's very dangerous. Likewise, a nervous driver, or perhaps one who's completely absorbed in his thoughts, becomes stiff, and this too is dangerous. This is true for businessmen and politicians, too. If they're sleeping or drunk on their jobs, or maybe overly strained or just caught up in their own thoughts, again it's dangerous. In other words this really applies to any kind of work. The life force should be neither stagnant nor too rigid. The most important thing is that the life force live to its fullest potential. Zazen is the most condensed form of life being just wide-awake life. It puts this

life into the most direct and pure practice. This is the most important thing in life, but, although it's easy to talk about, it's very difficult to do.

When we actually do zazen, we shouldn't be sleeping nor should we be caught up in our own thoughts. Rather, we should be wide-awake and aim at the correct posture with our flesh and bones. But can we ever attain this? Is there such a thing as succeeding or hitting the mark? Here is why zazen is unique. In zazen we must vividly aim at holding the correct posture, but we should never hit the mark. Or at any rate, the person who is doing zazen should never perceive whether he hit the mark or not. If the person who's doing zazen thinks, "My zazen is really getting good." or, "I've hit the mark in my zazen," he is only thinking his zazen is good, while actually he's become separated from the reality of his zazen. Therefore, we must always aim at doing correct zazen, but we shouldn't perceive whether we've hit the mark or not.

Is there really such a strange contradiction? Generally most people think that as long as there's an aim, it's only natural that there's a target to hit. Precisely because there is a target, you can aim. But, if you know that there isn't a target to hit, who's going to attempt to aim? This is the usual idea about giving and taking. This is people's usual calculating way of behavior. However, when you do zazen, you have to let go of your calculating and dealings with others. Zazen is just the self making the self into the self. Zazen does zazen. Zazen is the throwing away of this calculating way of thinking which supposes that as long as there's an aim there must be a target to hit. You just sit in the midst of this contradiction where although you aim, you absolutely cannot perceive hitting the mark. You sit in the midst of the contradiction which is absolutely ridiculous when you think about it with your small mind. However, when you do this kind of zazen and just sit, how indefinite you may feel! How unsatisfied or completely lost you may feel.

But actually, it is just because of this, that zazen is so wonder-

ful. If the small self, this foolish self becomes satisfied or puffed up with arrogance, it is nothing more than the foolish self being satisfied or arrogant. This being satisfied or proud is, after all, nothing more than a continuation of the thoughts of our foolish self. However, in our zazen, it is precisely at the point where this small self, our foolish self is unsatisfied or completely bewildered that the immeasurable natural life beyond the thoughts of the small self is activated. It is precisely at the point where we become completely lost that life operates and the power of Buddha is actualized.

People planning to do zazen must realize intellectually beforehand that zazen is this kind of thing, and then when one begins zazen, to just aim at the correct posture—not with the head, but with the muscles and bones. Finally, one must drop everything and entrust everything to the correct zazen posture.

It is impossible to look directly with your own naked eyes at the raw reality of your own face. Because zazen actualizes the reality of the life of the self, just as it is, there is no reason to think that you will perceive it.

In this case, we must realize that it is only our calculating mind which is unsatisfied because it cannot see the results of its' activity.

In any event, zazen is the best posture for actually living out the reality of life as it is. Actually taking this posture is *shikan taza*.

The aim of doing zazen is to do zazen. It's never doing zazen for some purpose such as gaining some sort of special enlightenment. This is nowhere clearer than in the following passage by Dogen Zenji. Zazen itself is *satori*. Zazen is dropping body and mind and is the Shobogenzo-Nehanmyoshin (true Dharma). Doing zazen is to practice, put into effect, and actualize this *satori* here and now. (*Satori* is not so-called "enlightenment." Nor is it some special experience which you strive for by doing zazen.)

Only when we do zazen with this attitude can there be such a thing as *shikan taza*.

"The correctly transmitted Dharma from Buddha to Buddha and from Patriarch to Patriarch has always been just to do zazen

. . . . This is very clear. Zazen itself is already the ultimate posture of *satori*. In other words, *satori* is just doing zazen.”

Eihei Koroku, vol. 4.

“The way which has been transmitted from Buddha to Buddha and from Patriarch to Patriarch is to practice the Dharma by doing zazen. Ju Ching said, ‘Sitting with folded legs is the posture of the ancient Buddhas. Therefore, entrusting the body to zazen is dropping body and mind. Burning incense to settle your mind, worshipping Buddha images, reciting the Nenbutsu (repeating the Buddha’s name), repenting, reading the sutras, and other religious ceremonies are not necessary. It is enough just to do zazen.”

Eihei Koroku, vol. 6.

“When Bodhidharma came to China, he didn’t engage himself in all sorts of so-called religious practices. Nor did he give lectures on the sutras. He simply did zazen at Shorin-ji Temple for nine years just facing the wall. Doing zazen, just that, is the way of Buddhas, the Shobogenzo Nehanmyoshin (true Dharma).”

Eihei Koroku, vol. 4

“Ju Ching said, ‘Doing zazen is dropping body and mind, and for that reason, burning incense, worshipping a Buddha image, reciting the Nenbutsu, chanting sutras, and other sorts of religious ceremonies are unnecessary.’ Within the past four or five hundred years it was only Ju Ching who gouged out the ‘eye’ of the Buddhas and Patriarchs and sat within that eye. Even in India there has been no one equivalent. There are extremely few who know that just zazen is the Dharma and that the Dharma is zazen. Even though there may be some who know, experientially, that just zazen is the Dharma, there are none who know that doing zazen is just doing zazen. There are none who live the Dharma as it is.”

Shobogenzo: Zammai O Zammai

My teacher, Sawaki Kodo Roshi, always used to say, “Just do zazen. That’s all.” This is the same as “Zazen is the Dharma. The Dharma is zazen,” “Doing zazen is just doing zazen.”

Therefore zazen is all there is to do. But because there is such a great deal of doubt about what doing zazen is, many people find

difficulty in developing a correct practice. So my purpose is to try to explain in the rest of this book just what zazen is. However please understand that there is no other conclusion for this entire book than what I have just quoted. That is, actually do zazen.

2. Letting Go of Thoughts

I have already said that if during zazen you are thinking, then that's thinking and not zazen. Then is it that during zazen no thoughts at all occur to us? Is good zazen when all thoughts have ceased to come into our minds?

Here, we must clearly distinguish 'thinking' and 'chasing after thoughts' from 'thoughts occurring.' If during zazen a thought occurs to you and you chase after it, then you're already thinking and not doing zazen. But this doesn't mean that you're doing zazen only when thoughts have entirely ceased to occur. So, just what is it?

First, try placing a big rock next to a person doing zazen. Since this big rock is not alive, no matter how long it sits there a thought will never occur to it. However, a person doing zazen, unlike a rock, is a living human being. Even if you take a stationary position like the rock, we can't say that, like the rock, no thoughts will occur to you. Moreover, if thoughts did cease to occur to you, we would have to say that you weren't alive. However, the truth of life never becomes something which is not alive. Therefore, it's false that thoughts cease to occur to a person sitting zazen, rather it's natural that thoughts should occur. But, if a person chases after thoughts, he is thinking and no longer doing zazen. So what should our attitude be?

Briefly, our mental attitude should be to aim at the posture of zazen with our flesh and bones, and maybe the expression 'letting go of thoughts' is the most appropriate. What is 'letting go of thoughts'? When we think, we think of 'something.' Thinking of 'something' means grasping that something with thought. But during zazen we open wide the hand of thought which is trying to grasp something, and don't grasp at anything at all. This is 'letting go of thoughts.'

Actually, maybe some thought will occur to you. But if only the thought does not grasp, it will not be formed into any 'thing.'

For example, even if thought A (a flower) occurs to you, as long as it is not followed by thought B (is beautiful) no significance such as A is B (a flower is beautiful) is formed. Neither is it something which could be taken in the sense of A which is B (beautiful flower). Then, even if thought A does occur in your head, as long as you don't continue the thought, A stands before the formation of meaning. It is meaningless, and in that condition will disappear as consciousness flows on.

Because blood recedes from the head and excitability is lessened by keeping this posture, zazen is primarily a posture in which you can't chase after thoughts. So as long as you leave everything up to the zazen posture, simultaneously letting go of thoughts will come naturally. However, human life is not a machine and so even in the zazen posture, if you feel like thinking, you can think however much you want. So the important thing when doing zazen is first to aim, full of life, at the posture of zazen with your flesh and bones. At the same time, you should leave everything up to the posture and let go of thoughts. By aiming at the posture of zazen and simultaneously letting go of thoughts, both body and mind do zazen in the spirit of zazen. Zazen is never *thinking* about doing zazen in the spirit of zazen. It's something one actually practices.

Dogen Zenji, quoting the words of Yakusan Osho, called this 'the thought of no thought.' While doing zazen with your flesh and bones, you aim at (think of) letting go of thoughts (no thought). Also Eisan Zenji used the word, 'kakusoku' (覺觸). He meant that one is wide awake and actually living out reality.

Because Eisan Zenji's word, 'kakusoku' seems to state admirably well the mental attitude of a person doing zazen, I will talk about conditions during zazen by using the word 'wake up' in this sense. 'Kakusoku' means, as I just said, to wake up and be real, or perhaps, I could say that the real thing wakes up as the real thing. At any rate, this 'waking up' is not what is called thought or perception. In thought and perception there is a confrontation between the thing which knows and the thing which

is known, but in 'waking up,' there is no such confrontation. This is important.

As I already explained earlier, we are at all times and places living out the reality of our own lives. However, regardless of that, we *lose sight* of the reality of our own lives and cause this reality to be dull and foggy. How do we lose sight of the reality of our lives and cause it to be dull and foggy? This happens because of our dozing off to sleep or by our thinking. If we drive a car while dozing or thinking, our driving becomes dull and foggy. Please remember that this is dangerous. 'Waking up' is to let go of your thoughts, to wake up from sleeping or thinking, and to perform the reality of the zazen posture which you are practicing with your flesh and bones. In other words, by doing zazen with your flesh and bones, you actually live out the reality of the self.

3. Waking up to Life

Next, I will, in as much detail as possible, give an analytical description of the actual internal experience when you are doing zazen. First, draw a line, ZZ'. This line represents truly maintaining the posture of zazen. (see Figure 9). When we are doing zazen, this line ZZ' (doing zazen) ought to be the reality of our life now, so we certainly must maintain the line ZZ'. But a human being sitting is not like a rock. He is not fixed and so it sometimes happens that he tends to move away from this line. Either thoughts run through his mind or else he dozes.

For example, a person goes away from the line ZZ' and thought 'a' comes to his mind. If he takes this thought 'a' as a basis and continues with thoughts a' and a'', he is thinking. If something about his own work comes to his mind, and he continues with thoughts about the arrangements and management of his work,

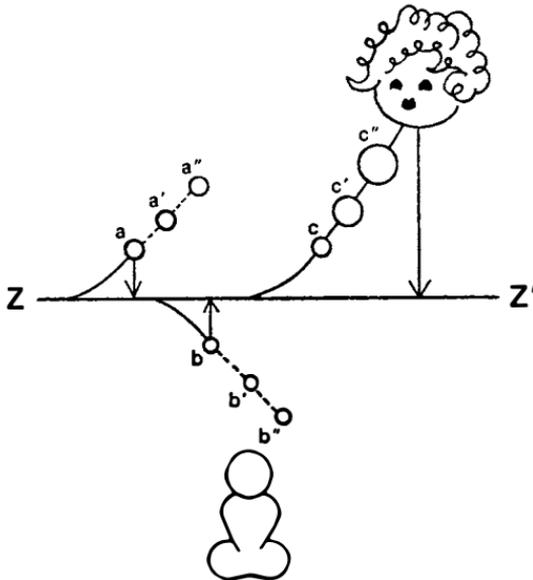


Figure 9

he is clearly doing nothing but thinking about his work. Then, he lets go of his thoughts and, ‘wakes up’ to the posture of zazen with his flesh and bones. He returns to the reality of life. I will express this ‘waking up’ with an arrow (↓).

But after awhile he becomes drowsy. This is ‘b.’ If this ‘b’ continues on to b’ and b”, he is really dozing. Maybe it seems strange to use these symbols in the order of b, b’, and b” for dozing too, but in actually doing zazen, that’s the way it is. That is, when you become sleepy during zazen and some thought floats into your head, you’re already sleeping. Having some thought float into your head is the same as dreaming. In actually doing zazen chasing after thoughts and sleeping are not different things. If, while we are wide awake, a thought comes to mind and we chase after it, this is actually thinking. But if, when we are sleepy, a thought comes to mind and we chase after it, we are chasing after a dream in our sleep. Sometimes you might be nodding and napping and at the same time be thinking, “I’m sleepy, but I’ll hold out and stick with doing zazen.” In other words, you’re dreaming. (Speaking from my own zazen experience, this is actually true. I don’t know anything about hypnotism, but perhaps hypnotism makes a practical application of this state of sleep.) Therefore, when you become sleepy doing zazen, you must wake up by vitally putting your energy into your zazen with your flesh and bones, especially so that you don’t chase thoughts. You must be wide awake and return to the reality of life. This ‘waking up’ is also expressed by an arrow (↑).

Actually when we do zazen, it is a continuation of this kind of (↑) or (↓). Sometimes you might even completely forget about ‘waking up.’ Maybe you’ll chase after the thoughts c, c’, c”, c”” and end up completely away from the reality of your life. In other words, you might become separated from the reality that you’re now doing zazen. Without being aware of it, you’ll be associating with or having a dialogue with a vivid figure, c”” (e.g. a beautiful woman) which has been totally created within your own chasing after thoughts. Even at a time like this, if a person doing zazen

‘wakes up’ (if he actually performs the posture of zazen with his flesh and bones and lets go of his thoughts), the very vivid figure of c''' will disappear instantly, and he can return to the reality of zazen (ZZ'). This is truly a remarkable point. It makes you clearly realize that the vivid figure of c''' has no real body and that it is nothing but empty comings and goings. At any rate, when you notice something like this during zazen, whether it's at stage c , c' , c'' , or c''' , you should wake up to zazen as soon as possible and return to ZZ'. We may wake up at any time. Certainly, the very form of ‘waking up’ (↓) which is returning to ZZ' is zazen itself.

That's right. In the beginning I said that when we are doing zazen, this line ZZ' (doing zazen) ought to be the reality of our life. So it's necessary that we maintain the line ZZ'. However, I now have to restate this. ZZ' is the reality of the posture of zazen, but the reality of our life is not just ZZ'. If it were only ZZ', then we would have no life and would be the same as a rock. While we are aiming at the line ZZ', we can never actually adhere to ZZ'. Rather, we tend to diverge from it and go off it in various ways. However, the very power to ‘wake up’ to ZZ' and return to it is the reality of life which we actualize by doing zazen. Zazen makes us realize that all the thoughts which float into our heads are nothing but empty comings and goings which have no real body and which can vanish at any moment.

In Yung Chia's *Shododa*, it is written:

“The five skandas are just floating clouds that aimlessly come and go,

While the three poisons (craving, anger, and stupidity) are but bubbles that appear and vanish.

When the real is attained, neither ego nor dharma exist,

And in a moment the avici Karma is eradicated.”¹

1. *Avici* is the last and deepest of the eight hells into which sinners suffer, die, and are instantly reborn to suffer without interruption.

Truly, all thoughts, delusions, and cravings are like bubbles and are nothing but empty comings and goings which have no real body when you wake up to zazen. So even a hell like avici, which is developed by thought, may be eradicated in an instant. Zazen makes us experience this as reality. This point about zazen is most important. The reason I have taken it upon myself to try to explain with diagrams what's really happening during zazen is this; usually people tend to think that zazen is to aim at the line ZZ', to train and discipline their own minds, and finally to hold firmly to ZZ' itself. But I wanted to make it clear that zazen of real life, which Dogen Zenji called "the correctly transmitted zazen of the Buddhas and Patriarchs." is not like that.

Please read the following passage from Dogen Zenji's *Eihei Koroku*, vol. 7.

"The Patriarch Nargajuna spoke thusly; Zazen is the Way of all the Buddhas. The heterodox schools also have zazen. However, they go too far by tinting the nature of zazen and their incorrect views are like thorns.* Therefore, it cannot be the same as the zazen of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The Theravadins also have zazen, but they wish to improve themselves and seek to reach Nirvana. This is not the same as the zazen of the Buddhas and Patriarchs."

These are the words of Nargajuna (A.D. 150-250) which Dogen Zenji quoted. In other words, Nargajuna had already made clear the difference between the zazen of the Buddhas and Bhodisattvas and that of Theravada and the heterodox sects. The zazen of heterodox sects outside of Buddhism is not the pure zazen of life itself. It is flavored and colored with various kinds of profit and develops from a worldly and utilitarian outlook. The Theravadins do zazen to gradually decrease delusion and craving, and they seek to finally extinguish these entirely (Nirvana). None of this is

* The Japanese word for incorrect views is *jaken*. This refers to the mistaken views of cause and effect. For example, it is incorrect to think that by doing zazen you will become happier or your health will improve.

the zazen which has been correctly transmitted by the Buddhas and Patriarchs.

In other words, the zazen we do is not something at which we succeed only when we strictly maintain ZZ' as in Figure 9. The purpose of zazen is not to decrease delusion and desire and finally to extinguish it completely. In Theravada Buddhism, the complete extinction of delusion and craving is called Nirvana (Enlightenment) and zazen is done in search of this. But if one takes this kind of enlightenment to be the truth of human life, then this is nothing but saying that the truth of life is not-life (death). However, because in Theravada Buddhism the cravings in human life are the cause of suffering, one extinguishes them and seeks the bliss of Nirvana. But isn't seeking to get rid of pain and to gain the bliss of Nirvana a desire and a craving? Actually, this too, is desire, and just because of that, the one who is practicing is in self-contradiction and must suffer. And because of this, there are the words, ". . . the practice of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs is completely different from the way of Theravada. In a sutra it is said, 'You should never try to follow the Theravada way of zazen in which they try to improve themselves.' "

The zazen of the Buddhas and Patriarchs, the zazen of true life, is not like this. Because desires and cravings are actually a manifestation of the power of life, it's simply no good to hate them and try to extinguish them. But on the other hand, if, as a result of this, we are pulled around by desire and craving and chase after it, then life becomes fogged over. The important thing here is that we don't cause life to be fogged over by thought. Rather, we should see all thoughts, desires, etc., as things on the foundation of life, let them be as they are, and still not be dragged around by them. It's not a matter of making great effort to not be dragged around by desire. One just wakes up and returns to the reality of life. As applied in zazen, this means that, even if various thoughts like 'a' and 'b' occur to you, they will all vanish by 'waking up' to zazen.

"Neither try to eliminate delusion, nor search for what is real.

This is because ignorance, just as it is, is the Buddha Nature. This worldly body itself which appears and disappears like a phantom in this world is nothing other than the reality of life.

When you actually wake up to the reality of life, there is not any particular thing which you can point to and say ‘this is it.’”

Yung Chia’s *Shodoka*

Even in the case where one is completely off the track and things develop to the point that a vivid figure like c[”] appears, c[”] will disappear instantly when one wakes up to zazen. The person who is himself doing zazen is really made to experience with his whole body that thoughts are nothing but empty comings and goings without any real body. But this cannot be easily understood if you do not actually practice zazen.

To say that you cannot realize this without doing zazen is an extremely self-assuming expression, but the reason I say so is this. Usually we are quite unable to recognize that what we think about in our heads is nothing but empty comings and goings. We plunge our heads too far into our thoughts, and live too much in the world of thought. Once we think of something we want or like, we assume that the simple fact that we think we want it or like it, is the truth. Then, thinking that because this idea is the truth we ought to seek it, we chase after it everywhere and end up developing greed. Also, once we think of something we hate or dislike, we assume that the simple fact that we think we hate it or dislike it is the truth. Then, thinking that because this idea is the truth we ought to follow it, we chase after the idea until we finally turn it into anger.

In other words, the activity in our every day lives is almost all the result of chasing after ideas like this. We cause a vivid image to become fixed, and then even more importance is placed upon this fixed delusion and desire. We only act by being carried away by delusions and desires. It would be even more correct to say that ordinary people are being flung about by desire and delusion

without even knowing it. A man who is drinking sake (fantasy) knows that he is drunk, but when it gets to the stage that the sake is drinking sake and even further when the sake is drinking the man, then the man is forced to drift in fantasies without even knowing it and behaves accordingly. Almost all people and societies throughout the world behave by being carried away by desire and delusion. Just because of that, the zazen which we do comes to have a great significance. When we 'wake up' in zazen we are truly made to experience the fact that all the things which are developed in our thoughts may vanish in an instant.

In other words, we almost always stress the content of our thought, but when we 'wake up,' we wake up to the reality of life and make this reality of life our center of gravity. It is then that we are made to realize that all the desire and delusions within our thoughts are nothing but empty comings and goings without any real body. When this kind of zazen experience becomes a real part of us even in our daily lives we will not be carried away by the comings and goings of life-like images. We will be able to 'wake up' to our own lives and begin completely afresh from the reality of life.

Then, are desires, delusions, thoughts like a, b, c, etc., all things which primarily do not exist and should be denied? This is not at all so because even thoughts which produce desire and delusion are manifestations of the power of life. However, if one continues the thought and is carried away by desire and delusion, life is obscured and stifled. Then we 'wake up' to ZZ' and from this standpoint of 'waking up' we can see that thoughts, desires and delusions are the scenery of life. If it's during zazen they're the scenery of zazen.

There is scenery only where there is life. There is no scenery where there is no life. While we are living in this world, there will be happiness and unhappiness; favorable conditions and adverse conditions; interesting things and boring things. There will be pleasant times and painful times; times to laugh and times to be sad. Really these are all the scenery of life. Because people

plunge into this scenery of life, are carried away by it, and end up running helter-skelter, they become frantic. Even though various life-like images appear to us during zazen, we can see the scenery of life for what it is by 'waking up' to ZZ'.

Now let's try thinking about this in connection with the 'I' which is fixed by relationships with others the way I explained earlier. We can easily see that the 'I' which is determined from the outside is scenery in the life of the self. It's not at all that there is no such thing which takes the form of an 'I' which is fixed from the outside. Although it produces all this scenery, my own true life is the reality of life which I 'wake up' to without being carried away by the scenery. Zazen is the foundation of life where this reality of life is being real. In that sense, zazen is the reality of the self, the true self.

"Zazen is the practice of the Buddha. Zazen is non-doing.

This is indeed the reality of the Self. Nothing else is to be sought after in Buddhism."

Shobogenzo: Zuimonki

In other words, the most important thing in zazen is not to cut down delusion and craving and strictly become ZZ'. Of course there are times like this during zazen, but this too is one part of the scenery of zazen. Rather while aiming at ZZ', we have a tendency to go away from it. Even though we have this tendency, the very form of returning to ZZ' and waking up is most important in terms of the zazen which is the foundation of life.

3. | *The Reality of Sesshins*

1. *Sesshins* without any Toys

Next, I will talk about the sesshins at Antai-ji and give a descriptive analysis of what is experienced through these sesshins. I want to make *zazen* and the actual attitude towards life through *zazen* even clearer.

From the time my teacher, Sawaki Kodo Roshi died in 1964, I began the following kind of sesshin. It's five days every month with the first Sunday of the month as the middle day. There is no sesshin in February, however, when it's cold and in August when it's hot. Also, the July and September sesshin are only three days. The schedule is to do only *zazen* and *kinhin* from 4:00 o'clock in the morning until 9:00 o'clock at night. We eat three meals a day and do *kinhin* immediately after each meal. Then, there is a thirty minute break when everyone goes to the toilet etc. There are two characteristics of these sesshins. One is that there is absolutely no talking. There are no greetings or socializing, and no sutra chanting. Secondly, we don't use the *kyosaku*, the wooden stick sometimes used to wake up the sitter, and I, who am the head of the temple, constantly face the wall and do not keep watch on the other people doing *zazen*. These two points are the main characteristics of Antai-ji sesshins. The only instructions added to these rules are that regardless of all others, you apply yourself to just your own practice. This kind of sesshin is the result of having done various other kinds of sesshins before. I have continued it since 1964 because I believe it to be the best way. The basis for this is that I believe it is the best way to put into practice of the purest kind, the following words of my

teacher, Sawaki Roshi, “Zazen is the self making the self into the self.”

The reason for having five days of absolute silence is so that people become the self which is only the self without socializing with others and without the distraction of others. And yet at the same time this makes the five days of sesshin like one period of zazen without any breaks. The reason we don't use the *kyosaku* is, more than anything, so that everyone becomes the self which is only the self. Because zazen is to stop everything and face the wall just being yourself, people feel a terrible boredom. Then, if the *kyosaku* is carried around, it becomes a toy and people start to play around with it. For example, someone is sitting quietly and the *kyosaku* is coming around. “How about my posture? No matter how much he's thinking of hitting me with the *kyosaku*, there probably isn't the slightest excuse.” Or else, “Oh, these long afternoon hours! Maybe I'll have him hit me with the *kyosaku* for a little relief.”

If you think about it, our whole lives seem like lives of playing with toys. It begins as soon as we're born. Our first toy is the nipple of the milk bottle. When we're a little older, it's dolls and teddy bears. When we're even a little older, it's do-it-yourself kits, cameras, and cars. At adolescence, it's the opposite sex. There's study and research; earnestness in business and search for fame. There's competition and sports. This is all just playing with toys. Until we die, we just change one toy for another and end our whole life with nothing but playing with toys.

Doing zazen is to be the reality of life. It is the self which is only the self without any playing with toys. It's like the time before we die when all the toys are taken away. But even in this case we look around for some toy and try to play with it even for an instant. Just because of that, there's the worry that when the *kyosaku* is brought around, it will right away become a toy and zazen will cease to be the self which is only the self. So we don't use the *kyosaku*.

But what do you do if you get sleepy at an *Antai-ji* sesshin?

If the *kyosaku* is for the purpose of clearing away your sleepiness you will go right to sleep when there isn't any *kyosaku*. However, there's no need to worry. There's absolutely no one who sleeps through the entire seventy hours of the five day *sesshin*. Inevitably, you wake up. Since it's your own practice, you just do *zazen* as best you can. *Zazen* is not something you should be forced to do. It's a practice which you do yourself as the self which is only the self.

Or perhaps, there might be a case where you're awake but very bored. So in order to pass the time, you think about one certain thing and entertain yourself with this idea. (It's utter nonsense to think that you may just pass the time like this regardless of the fact that it's your own practice, but occasionally there may be people like this.) However, if you are mentally normal, you won't be able to do it. At a *sesshin* where there's absolute silence and long continuous hours of *zazen*, you'd feel extremely uncomfortable as if you were going crazy. The normal mind cannot bear to struggle with and relate to one deluded thought over a long period of time. In the end, you'll realize by yourself that the most comfortable thing is to let go of delusions and aim at a solid *zazen* posture. In other words, these *sesshins* are just sitting as the self which is only the self without any outside restrictions. Because of that, they swing you to the point where you can't help but become the self which is only the self.

I also sit facing the wall and not towards everyone else. (Usually the head of a *Soto* temple doesn't face the wall.)

This is in order to take away the relationship of watching and being watched. If I sat with the intention of keeping watch on the others, then I would be doing just that and probably lose sight of my own *zazen*. Also, if everyone was conscious of being watched while doing *zazen*, it would become *zazen* which is balanced against another person and no longer be *zazen* which is truly 'the self which is only the self.' I myself must do just my own *zazen* practice and everyone else must respectively practice *zazen* as the self which is only the self.

However, in a sesshin like this, there is absolutely no guidance concerning zazen. For that reason, one must sit having understood beforehand what the mental attitude should be in order to practice zazen as the self which is only the self. For this reason, I have previously written books dealing with what zazen is, and have gone into as much detail as possible. I want people to sit sesshins after having read and understood these books. This book too is one of those. If people still have questions, I have them visit me freely and ask their questions at times other than sesshins.

As the same time, however, people who read my books and decide to do zazen are different than the usual people who resolve to do zazen. It's a fact that a lot of these people are concerned with intellectual understanding. In other words, they are full of argumentative theories. I want these argumentative people to understand by their own experience that zazen is absolutely not theory—it's something one really does. For this reason, I have them go right into zazen practice which is completely silent the way I have described.

2. Before Time, before 'I' Effort

Part 1 was about the kind of sesshin we do at Antai-ji, and how by actually doing this kind of sesshin, one becomes aware of various things, not as some sort of theory, but as a personal experience. Now, let's look at some of these things which we become aware of.

Well, the first thing one can't help but feel when doing this kind of sesshin is the tremendous drawing out of time. It's exactly like a couple of Zen expressions, "a day is long and is like all of antiquity" or "a day is long and like one's infancy." How often in our ordinary life do we share a joke with a friend or perhaps watch a bit of television, and before we know it, half a day or maybe even a whole day has already passed? But when we come to sitting zazen an entire day, time just doesn't pass easily. Your legs hurt and you become filled with boredom. And what's worse, is that there's nothing to divert you from the boredom. Precisely because of this there is nothing else to do but live out time as a reality of life, in every moment.

During sesshin all our activities are regulated by a bell. Two gongs being the signal for kinhin, we all stand up from zazen and begin walking.

Now we're doing kinhin and unconsciously the thought arises "Oh, I'm already full of zazen, but . . ." When we think just a bit further, it's very discouraging to realize that it's still the morning of the 2nd day, and less than half the session is over. There's no doubt that during our sesshins everyone has had this thought.

How in the world do we get through the remaining time? Arriving at this point we absolutely have to transcend time. If we don't forget this thing called time, it is impossible to continue through the rest of the hours of the sesshin.

It's just when we transcend time, forget this thing called time, that we actually meet the raw reality of life. The Japanese word

for time is 'toki.' I think this word is filled with deep meaning. 'Toki' comes from the word 'toshi' which means swiftness or quickness. In other words, precisely because we have the comparison of flowing swiftness, we have this thing called time. If we didn't compare, we would transcend this thing called swiftness or time, and be 'the self which is only the self.'

Those who continue sitting the sesshin no longer recall time. Simply, hearing three gongs zazen begins; if it's two gongs, then it's kinhin. Again three gongs and sitting begins; then, it's two gongs and back to kinhin. You just continue the sesshin just the way it goes. You just follow the signals of the bell and don't think whether it's a long time or short time. Then, without realizing it, five days have passed, and the sesshin is over. Finally, we think, "Doing zazen, I've completely forgotten time." But I'm afraid this expression "Doing zazen, I've completely forgotten time," will invite a big misunderstanding. Rather, "While applying myself to zazen and kinhin like this, five days have passed all by themselves over there someplace," might be more appropriate. At this point, no matter what words we use, nothing is really appropriate. You simply have to personally experience a sesshin.

Anyway, it is a fact that this kind of experience actually shows us just what this thing called 'time' is, and also just what 'before time' is. Usually we are under the impression that we live in the midst of time, however, we can actually experience that it is not so, rather, it is the life of the self which manifests time.

Further, when we do zazen, we fold our legs, don't move our bodies, and keep perfectly still, so one would have to say it's painful compared with a self-indulgent way of life, in which usually we can move as we wish.

If, during a sesshin like this, you begin to think about how painful zazen is, and how you are persevering and bearing that pain, you won't be able to sit quietly through out the whole five days. You might be able to do two hours of zazen, or even four or five hours, strictly on your ability to persevere and endure pain, but you could never sit a whole day, much less a five-day

sesshin, by simply persevering and enduring the pain. Furthermore, you could never lead a life of zazen practice and do a sesshin every month just by having some egotistical idea about your own ability to persevere and endure pain. Even if you did do it this way, it would be meaningless. You would only be disciplining your own ability to persevere and endure in comparison with other people's. In other words, this would be nothing but a continuation of your own disposition to compare yourself with other people. Rather, the most important thing in our sesshins is to throw away even these ideas of how painful it is and how you are persevering and enduring the pain. You just become submerged in zazen which is 'the self making the self into the self just as it is.' You don't move and leave everything up to the posture. Only then will time pass all by itself over there someplace. In other words, only when you throw away your ideas about how painful it is and how you are persevering can you do a sesshin without anxiety.

This experience has a very important meaning. By doing this kind of sesshin, you are made to actually experience what it means to have the bottom fall out of your own thoughts about persevering and suffering.

This experience demonstrates a great power in our daily life. We meet many problems and misfortunes in our every day lives, but usually what happens is that when we meet a problem, we begin to struggle and by struggling we are forced into an even worse problem. We can easily understand when it's somebody else. When someone has fallen into some unfortunate circumstance, we, as observers, often say that he shouldn't struggle, or that he should just calm down. As observers, we can very coolly say this, but when the trouble is our own, we can't help but struggle with it. How can we make this self, which can't help but struggle, stop struggling and quiet down? There's no other way than for the bottom to fall out of our thoughts about *our* suffering and *our* perseverance. You are made to experience during our sesshin just what it is to have the bottom of your thoughts fall

out. In other words, our sesshin is the kind of practice which is before the distinction between 'self-power' and 'other-power.' We practice what comes before persevering and enduring.

3. The Scenery of Life

I must tell about one more thing that is actually experienced at the Antai-ji sesshins.

One day in September two Americans, Jeff and Fred, who could speak Japanese very well came to my room with some questions. They had both stayed at Antai-ji and had been doing the sesshins for over a year. “When you do zazen, don’t you have to have a satori experience?” they asked.

I replied, “Satori and Zen seem to have such an intimate relationship in Japan that when somebody says ‘satori,’ everyone thinks ‘Zen’ and vice versa. Really this ‘satori’ is not an easy thing and it would be safer if we didn’t bring up the word. The reason I say so is that people usually speak about ‘satori’ as opposed to ignorance. In other words, satori is thought of as a concept which is the opposite of ignorance. If that’s so, then the discussion is based on the distinctions of satori and ignorance which we make with our ordinary minds. In other words, we are no longer talking about anything but the discriminations of our ordinary minds.

But the true satori of Shakamuni is not like this. It is said that Shakamuni made the following statement when he attained satori.

“I attained the Way simultaneously with the whole world and all sentient beings. Everything—mountains, rivers, trees, grass—attained Buddhahood.”

For Shakamuni, satori wasn’t something peculiar only to himself. It was the satori of the life which included himself and all other things. That is something that truly goes beyond the discrimination of our deluded minds. Also in the Prajna Paramita it says; “There is no birth or death; no purity or impurity; no increase or decrease.” This means satori is beyond birth and death, is beyond impurity (ignorance) and purity (satori), is beyond increase and decrease. This is to be enlightened to the reality of life which comes before the distinctions such as yourself and

others or ignorance and satori.

On the other hand, if we practice and as a result of our practice want to say, “I’ve gained satori!” then this satori is merely something which belongs to the ‘I.’ It is nothing but the satori which comes after the distinctions of ignorance and satori, yourself and others. It is nothing but the world created by the distinctions of the ignorant mind.

Here is a quote from Dogen Zenji.

“If you follow a preconceived idea of satori, the resulting satori will not be reliable. Do not try to predict what satori is. Because it transcends all things, only satori can help satori. Know that ignorance doesn’t exist. Know that satori doesn’t exist.”

Shobogenzo: Yubutsuyobutsu

Fred responded to my explanation like this.

“But when I do zazen, there are times when no matter how much I try to stop chasing thoughts and put my energy into the zazen posture, thoughts just keep coming one after the other and I can’t help but chase after them. However, at other times, I am able to do zazen with a completely clear mind and, without having any thoughts come up. Wouldn’t you call this ‘satori,’ or ‘kensho’?”

I replied, “Certainly when you do sesshins like the ones at Antai-ji, you often have this experience. But if you call times when you can’t help but chase thoughts, ‘ignorance,’ and call clear-minded zazen, ‘satori,’ then ignorance and satori are nothing but the conditions of temperature and humidity.

At the Antai-ji sesshins, we have various kinds of weather throughout the year and even during a single sesshin, the weather may go through various changes. If you continue these sesshins over a long period of time, you will naturally come to understand that there is a causal relationship between the degree of temperature and humidity and your own psychological condition. In general, you will know when certain conditions will arise. For example when it’s hot and muggy, no matter how hard you try

to maintain your zazen, your head simmers like its fermenting and you can't get anyplace. But when the air is dry and a cool evening breeze is blowing, your head clears and it certainly feels like you're solidly maintaining zazen. Both of these are the condition of your head which is responding to the temperature and humidity. Since zazen is to sit and aim at maintaining zazen, it's needless to say that this kind of zazen is very fine. However, this doesn't mean that this kind of zazen is good zazen and zazen which isn't like this is a failure.

“Regardless of this, the important thing when doing zazen is to just sit aiming at zazen and ‘waking up’ to zazen. When you just sit and ‘wake up’ to zazen, the various conditions of your head are all just the scenery of zazen. Since you have already been doing zazen and sesshins here for over a year, I expect you understand this to a certain extent.”

The two Americans had a good laugh at my explanation that satori and ignorance were conditions of temperature and humidity and then went home.

(Please refer to the words of Dogen Zenji which I quoted at the end of Chapter 2, part 2.)

Two or three days later, the September sesshin began. The early part of September is hot so the sesshin is only three days long. As usual the first two days were very muggy and we were doing zazen covered with sweat. But on the morning of the third day, it refreshingly cooled off, and began to seem like fall. We were able to do zazen in comfort and the sesshin ended. At the end of sesshins everyone relaxes and we drink tea together. At this time Jeff and Fred took up the topic of this change and both said, “We certainly got to experience what you meant when you said that satori and ignorance are degrees of temperature and humidity.”

Because what happened in September of that year left quite an impression on me, I remember it well. These two Americans completely understood what I had said because we had had our discussion just before the sesshin and immediately after that there

had been just the right weather changes to prove and let them experience my explanation.

The world in which I live is never something which exists independently of my own thoughts and ideas. Rather the world in which I live appears to me unified with my own thoughts and ideas. So according to my ideas and thoughts the world which appears to me may come to be a completely different world. However, what I call my ideas and thoughts is my psychological condition and furthermore, my psychological condition is at the same time my own physiological condition. Therefore, if something is wrong with my body, my mind doesn't clear and if my mind doesn't clear, the eyes with which I see the world and my own life are darkened. And then, life and the world itself comes to have a gloomy appearance. On the other hand, when my body feels fine, my mind brightens and then the world and my own life appear more brightly to me.

Furthermore, my physiological condition is tremendously influenced by the environment in which I live. The changes and conditions of climate and weather effect me like that. This cause and effect relationship is particularly well observed when one continues a life which is a monotone and completely without distractions like the sesshins at Antai-ji.

However, the important point here is the attitude of just striving to "wake up" no matter what the conditions are. It's not necessarily important to reach the point where thoughts no longer occur to you. It's more important to watch these relationships of cause and effect with a calm mind and to sit still without being carried away by them. This is shikan taza (just doing zazen).

There are all kinds of waves and conditions in our lives—clear days, cloudy days, rainy days, and stormy days. These are all waves produced by the power of nature and not things over which we have control. No matter how much we resist these waves and try to make a cloudy day clear up, we can't do it. Cloudy days are cloudy; rainy days, rainy; clear days, clear; and it is only natural that the coming and going of thoughts and the psycho-

logical and physiological conditions fluctuate accordingly. This very thing is the reality of life itself and its manifestations. Going beyond this, seeing it as the scenery of life, and not being carried away by it—this is settling down and this is the foundation of life.

Our sesshins are like this. As I mentioned earlier, we do zazen aiming at the line 'ZZ'. However, we cannot adhere to the 'line ZZ', and it sometimes happens that we are apt to move away from it. It's just a repetition of moving away and 'waking up' to 'ZZ', moving away and 'waking up' to 'ZZ'. Zazen is the very posture of sitting while waking up to 'ZZ' over and over again. As long as we have this attitude all the thoughts which occur to us when we move away from 'ZZ' are the scenery of zazen. Or else at times we may be able to strictly maintain the line 'ZZ', but this too is the scenery of zazen. It is never that the cessation of all thought is satori and good, or that the rushing of thoughts and tendency to chase after them is ignorance and bad. At any rate, just sitting and being beyond good and bad or satori and ignorance is the zazen which transcends the sage and ordinary man, which transcends satori and ignorance.

Please look at this quote from Rinzai Zenji.

“The self far transcends all things. Even if the heaven and earth tumble down, I will have no misgivings. Even though all the Buddhas in ten directions appear before me, I would not rejoice. Even though the three hells appear before me, I would have no fear. Why is it like this? Because there is nothing I dislike.”

Rinzai-Roku

For Rinzai Zenji, the appearance of all the Buddhas in the three worlds was not something to rejoice about and the appearance of the three hells was not something to be afraid of. Not being afraid of the appearance of hell doesn't mean that for Rinzai hell did not exist. Rather, Rinzai thought of hell as a kind of scenery which was different than the appearance of all the Buddhas. The point we should pay attention to is that whether hell, all the Buddhas, or whatever appeared before Rinzai, he saw it

all as the scenery of life. This very thing is also nothing but the scenery of our zazen.

At Antai-ji there are many monks practicing zazen and I want them to continue the monthly sesshins and daily zazen in the morning and evening for at least ten years. The reason is this. If they continue this life of zazen for ten years, monks who are in their twenties will have reached their thirties. A person faces his greatest mental struggle during his twenties, and it's quite a thing to pass through this period doing only zazen and having no other distractions. There are no radios, televisions, or other entertainment facilities here. However, if a person leads this kind of life and sits zazen throughout his twenties there is no doubt that he will come to have a commanding view of who he is. During these years his deep mental suffering will all come out, and a person will be able to work through these years only if he has the foundation such that he sees this suffering as the scenery of the life of the self and does not behave by being carried away by it. A person who has worked through these ten years will be able to take the attitude of living out the reality of the true self which is not balanced against others.

That's right. When you live at Antai-ji, not only zazen, but the daily life itself is something in which you can't find the value of your existence in other people and things. It's a life which is unbearable unless you discover the value of the existence of the self in the self.

The important thing for us is that whether we are doing one period of zazen, a five day sesshin, or ten years of practice, we must live out the reality of the self.

4. | *The Self of the Zen Man*

1. The Self is the Universe

Our zazen is just 'the self making the self into the self,' and I have discussed the reality of this kind of zazen.

But if zazen is 'the self which is only the self' and has no relationship with other people and things, aren't you just closing yourself up in a shell called 'I' and disregarding society and other people? Isn't this just a kind of self-fascination and withdrawal from the world? If zazen isn't simply a withdrawal and escape from the world, or a kind of self-fascination, and is related to other people and society, in what way is it related? I think it's only natural to be sceptical about this. This is the essential problem, especially for people who want to do zazen and are searching for a true way to live.

However, there is an even more basic question than the problem of self and others. We must ask again just what in the world is the 'self'?

After having a new look at the self, we will also have a new look at the self-other relationship. It's only then that we meet the basic teaching of Mahayana Buddhism. Also, the real meaning and attitude of zazen becomes even more definite. The rest of this book will be concerned with the basic teaching of Mahayana Buddhism and with zazen which is the real depth of Buddhism. This is because the background for our zazen must be the whole teaching of Buddhism and the background of Buddhism must be our own life. Any discussion about zazen must encompass this.

Well, let's begin by discussing the problem of 'self' and 'others.' For the self, just what does 'other' mean? Usually people think of the self as something in contrast with 'other' and conversely

the 'other' is always in contrast to the 'self.' This thing we call 'I' is externally determined by its relationships with others. In other words, this 'I' is the self which is not an 'other.' Conversely, the 'other' is always seen and defined by the self and is an 'other' which is not 'I.'

'I' and 'other' are diametrically opposed and at the same time mutually interdependent. If you try to cut off this relationship with the 'other' and be 'I' which is only 'I,' this would certainly be a kind of withdrawal and escape from the world and a sort of self-fascination. This would be nothing but closing your eyes to your relationship to others and being self-satisfied.

However, our zazen is not like this. We certainly *think* about the 'self' and 'other' as this kind of contrasting relationship, but during zazen, we let go of this very 'idea.' Then, this very form of the 'self' and 'other' being a contrasting relationship is abandoned.

If we let go of this relationship in which the 'I' and the 'other' are diametrically opposed and, at the same time, mutually interdependent, how can there be an 'I' anymore? Actually, during zazen, we completely let go of this self-consciousness of an 'I' determined from the outside. Conversely, we 'wake up' to the self which is the reality of life. Even if we aren't conscious of this self and attach no name to it, it is the self as raw, living experience.

In other words, even if we use the words, 'the self which is only the self,' the self is never the 'I' which is not an 'other.' This is not the 'I' which denies the other while being mutually interdependent with it. This self is what 'wakes up' and experiences 'the self which is only the self' as the reality of life. Therefore, the self in this case is never some fixed principle, theory, or thought concerning the self; it is the substance to which we 'wake up.' Furthermore, the only thing we can 'wake up' to as reality is the life of the self and this is always the 'self which is only the self.'

However, this doesn't mean that the self-other relationship completely disappears. Rather, in terms of zazen, the self-other

relationship is completely different than the usual self-other relationship. How is it different and just what is a self-other relationship for people who do zazen?

Here's a story from the Edo Period.

Behind a temple there was a field where a lot of squashes were ripening. One day a fight started. The squashes split up into two groups and made a big racket shouting at each other. The head priest heard the uproar, and when he went to see what had happened, he found the squashes quarreling. The priest yelled and scolded them saying, "Hey, you squashes! The idea of fighting among yourselves! Everyone do zazen!"

The priest taught them how to do zazen. "Fold your legs like this, sit up, and straighten your back and neck." While the squashes were sitting zazen just as the priest taught them, their anger subsided and they settled down. Then the priest quietly said, "Everyone put your hand on top of your head." When the squashes felt the top of their own heads with their hand, they found some weird thing on their heads. It turned out to be one vine which connected them altogether. "This is really strange. Actually we're all tied together and *living just one life*. In spite of that we've been arguing. What a mistake!"



Figure 10

"It's just as the priest said."

After that the squashes got along with each other very well.

We are certainly living as a small, individual body called 'I.' We *think* that this small, individual body is our self but the 'self' as the reality of life is never simply this individual body. It must

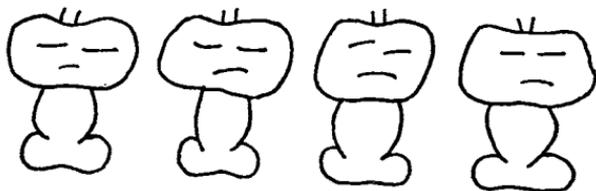


Figure 11



Figure 12

be something more than that.

For example, I talked about this before but, the power which makes my heart beat, sends blood flowing through my whole body, and allows me to breathe so many times per minute, is not something which I control or activate. The power which does these things works completely beyond my thoughts. But because this power comes from beyond my thoughts, can we say this power is not I? As long as this power is working in me, it is indeed the reality of my life. It's not only these kind of physical functions, but the same is true for the ideas and thoughts which arise in my head, too. Looking at the contents of these ideas and thoughts, it certainly appears as though they are my thoughts and ideas. But it must be said that the very power which allows me to work out these thoughts and ideas, is a transcendent power beyond my thoughts. However, even if I say that this power is a transcendent power beyond my thoughts, it's no mistake that as long as it is actually working in me, it is the reality of the life of

the self. In other words, while the reality of the life of the self exists beyond the thoughts of this small individual 'I' it is at the same time, right now, the power functioning in this small individual 'I.'

And just as it is with me, so it is with you too. The self as a small individual and the various thought contents of the individual assume that each individual is a self. In terms of the ideas of each individual, they are indeed distinct. But the power of life which makes us think variously and works inside each individual is beyond the thoughts of this small 'I,' and in this it is all pervading. Just as in the story of the squashes, when the squashes tried following the vine on top of their heads, they were living out the reality of one life. And in this sense, we have to say that all living creatures, all existence, is living out the power of one great life which is all pervading.

During zazen, we let go of our thoughts, and this makes us 'wake up' to the reality of life which pervades the whole universe. Because we live within the thoughts of this small individual 'I,' we are dragged about by these thoughts, and an 'other' which is not 'I' closes in on us. If we let go of these thoughts, and 'wake up' to the reality of life which is working beyond our thoughts, we discover the self which is living Universal, non-dual life (before the division into two) and pervades all living creatures and all existence.

From ancient times, Zen teachers have expressed this in various ways—one's original self, the self which pervades the ten worlds, the self which fills all the world, and the Universal Self. In any event, whether we realize this or not, we are all living the Universal Self. As I quoted before, when Shakamuni attained satori he said, "I attained the Way simultaneously with the whole world and all sentient beings. Everything—mountains, rivers, trees, grass attained Buddhahood." I think these words clearly show that what Shakamuni became enlightened to is the self which is the whole universe.

2. The Activity of the Reality of Life (Shojo no Shu)

I have just said that everyone, regardless of whether he realizes it or not, or whether he “wakes up” to it or not, is living out the Self which is the whole universe. I repeat this because it is so very important. In other words, we usually make the idea of this small, individual self the center of our world and become firmly convinced that this small individual is the ‘self,’ but this is not the real Self.

(Please notice that I am making a distinction between self and Self.)

The reality of life is beyond my idea of myself as a small individual. The basic fact is that the Self is living out non-dual life which pervades all living things and everything which exists (Universal Life, Universal Existence). On the other hand, we usually lose sight of the reality of the life of the Universal Self by having this idea of ourselves as small individuals. We cause the Self to be clouded over. If we now let go of our thoughts, this reality of life becomes pure and clear. Zazen is to live out this reality of life as it is. That is, “wake up”; do “no-thinking.”

At this very point our basic attitude in practicing zazen becomes definite. The attitude in doing zazen as Mahayana Buddhism is never to try and produce artificially some new self by means of practice. Nor are we aiming at decreasing delusion and finally eliminating it altogether. In zazen, we neither aim at having a special mystical experience, nor do we try to gain greater enlightenment. Zazen, as true Mahayana Buddhism, is always the Self just truly being the Self. Life truly being Life.

Naturally we have eyes, but if we close our eyes and say that the world is absolutely dark, then we aren’t living out the reality of life. If we open our eyes, the sun is shining brilliantly. In the same way, when we live with our eyes which see life wide open, we find out that we are living in the vigorous light of life. Although we always make the light of the Universal Self foggy and

dull because of the clouds which are the ideas of our small self, we can open our eyes to the vital life of the Universal Self by doing zazen and letting go of these ideas.

In other words, when we believe that the truth of our small individual self is the Universal Self and practice the reality of life (do zazen), then we have the attitude of zazen as true Buddhism. This kind of zazen is the zazen of Shojo no shu (證上の修). Because you are living out the reality of the life of the Universal Self, this is the activity (shu 修) of the reality of life (sho 證). Therefore, this is called Shojo no shu.

I just said that we 'believe' and 'sit,' but I must now discuss the meaning of 'believe' in its Buddhist sense. Usually we use the word 'believe' to mean something like thinking that what somebody says is true. In religion when an agent of God (medium) speaks suggestively about an invisible realm (a metaphysical realm) and says that there is such and such a God or that man has a soul, people assume that it is true and act accordingly. This is called 'believing.' But the basic Buddhist definition of 'belief' is completely different. The definition given in the Abhidharma-kosa (Kusha Ron) which is the Buddhist equivalent to Scholasticism, is that belief is clarity and purity. In other words, in Buddhism belief is not to hear somebody say that man has an individual Soul, or that God does exist outside of the life of the self and to think that this is so.

Belief in Buddhism is not like that. While we are in fact living out the life which pervades everything and is beyond our individual thoughts, we lose sight of this reality of life and are carried away by the ideas of our small, individual self, just like the way the squashes started fighting. We live being totally confused. In our zazen, we let go of thoughts, lower our level of excitement, and become clear and pure in the reality of the truly Universal Life. This is the basic meaning of belief. Therefore, the very act of doing zazen is to believe.

However, usually we think that our self is only this small and distinct individual self, and we are quite unable to think that the

Self is the very life which pervades all things. We have actually lost sight of reality that much. When we talk about the Self which is the universe, we should realize this is something concerning ourselves, but we are unable to do so and think that it is someplace outside of us. However, if we hear someone say that the Self is not some other person, and that the truth of the Self is to live out the life which pervades all things, we may recognize that it is so. When we no longer doubt this, the second meaning of belief, “no doubt,” comes out. This is not simply hearing what somebody says and not doubting it. This has nothing to do with our own ideas and is regardless of whether we think so or not, or whether we believe or doubt. The meaning of belief in Buddhism is just to not doubt that we are living out the reality of indivisible life.

In the Maha-prajna-paramita-padesa (Daichidoron), it says, “We enter the great ocean of Buddhism through faith.” When zazen is basically to sit and have faith in “the Self which is the universe,” it is zazen which is true Buddhism. This is the meaning of zazen which is Shojo no shu, and zazen which is to believe and sit. Here again the attitude of doing zazen as Buddhism becomes definite.

Until now, I have proceeded to explain things by using the expression ‘the Self is the universe,’ (盡一切自己) jin issai jiko. This expression was originally used by Dogen Zenji in the Shobogenzo, but we’re not limited to this word. In Buddhist sutras and commentaries, a tremendous variety of words are used to express this Universal Self. If we take the most commonplace words used in Buddhism, we have all these which follow: Tathata, Dharma Nature, Dharmakaya, Dharmadhata, Buddha Nature, Tathagatagarba, Mind, only Mind, One Mind, advaita (non-duality), Suchness, Nirvana, Middle Way.

If you run across any of these words while reading Buddhist books, you should realize that they are all different names for the reality of life which you actually ‘wake up’ to in zazen. You should realize that sturas are directly connected with your own

zazen and that they are meant to guide and teach you about your own zazen. At any rate, the Buddhist religion throughout its history has used a great number of words, and has made various explanations using a variety of expressions. It has even produced all different sorts of sects. But the basis for this is to believe that the Self is living out the life which pervades all things and to practice and actualize this life here and now.

For example, within Buddhism, there are the teachings of the Pure Land Sect. According to these teachings, in a world of the immeasurable past, there was a man called Dharmakara-biksu, and having made a Great Vow, he practiced under Lokeshvavaja. His vow was that on the dawn of completing his training and attaining Buddhahood, he would create a great Pure Buddha Land. Furthermore, if there were any sentient beings who wished from the bottom of their hearts to enter this Pure Land, he would save them all without exception, and take them into the Pure Land. Dharmakara-biksu actually did complete his training and became Amitabha Buddha. He then created the magnificent Buddha Land called Pure Land Paradise just as he vowed. Therefore, anyone who is totally disillusioned by this corrupt world and invokes the name of Amitabha will be saved. Anyone who believes in Amitabha's vow and deeply prays for this Pure Land will attain Nirvana and be taken to the Pure Land. This is the teaching of the Pure Land Sect according to the Larger Sukhavati Vyuha Sutra.

This teaching of the Pure Land Sect looks in every way completely different than the Zen Sect where one realizes satori within his own zazen practice. But even this Amitabha Buddha which the Pure Land Sect teaches about is another name for the Universal Self. It's just that it's been made into the name of a Buddha. Of course, Amitabha isn't the name of a person who actually existed historically. In Sanskrit, the name Amitabha, or amitayus means Infinite Light or Eternal Life. In other words, this is the life which pervades everything.

If we look into the depth of these Pure Land teachings, they

turn out like this. We are usually completely lost in the thoughts of our small, individualistic, distinct selves, but in terms of basic life, life which pervades everything, we are already saved by the vow of Amitabha Buddha. We believe in this vow and are clear and pure in Amitabha Buddha. We express our admiration for this clarity and purity in Amitabha by devoting ourselves to the Nenbutsu chant. This attitude is exactly the same as the attitude of doing zazen.

In the Daijokishinron-giki, a famous commentary on The Awakening of Faith, the Buddha's vow is described as follows: "The true mind of the sentient being turns around and awakens the sentient being himself. In other words, this true mind is the Buddha's vow itself."

We are already living out the life which pervades all things. We are awakened and pulled along by it. Buddhism expresses this fact by saying that the Buddha saves sentient beings by means of vows. Therefore you should understand that even if I talk about the vow of Amitabha, I am not talking about some other person or thing called Amitabha, Amitabha is not outside of the Self.

Here it is clear that in Buddhism while we might do zazen or the Nenbutsu chant, it is basically the very same attitude towards life. The Buddhist religion teaches us about this attitude towards life.

In other words this small 'I' is embraced by the universal and eternal Amitabha Buddha. This has nothing to do with and is beyond the thoughts of this small 'I.' It doesn't matter if I can think it is true or not, or whether I believe it or not. In fact I am saved and embraced by the universal and infinite Amitabha Buddha. I am very thankful for this. "Namu Amida Butsu." When we say this with our mouth, it is the Nenbutsu which expresses our deep sense of gratitude. When we preform this with our whole body, it is zazen which is Shojo no shu, or zazen which is to believe and sit. In other words, when people chant the Nenbutsu, they are doing zazen with their mouth, and when we do

zazen, we are performing the Nenbutsu with our whole body.

In the above sense, our zazen must always be to just sit, believing that the Self makes the Self into the Self, Life makes Life into Life, the Buddha makes the Buddha into the Buddha. It's never that we are gradually enlightened and become Buddhas by means of zazen. As long as we are talking about this distinct 'I,' we will always be talking about an ordinary man, but regardless of that, zazen is the Buddha. Therefore, we take the posture of the Buddha with this body of an ordinary man and throw ourselves into the Buddha's posture. In the *Shodoka*, it is spoken of like this; "One leap and we immediately enter the land of the Tathagata."

Dogen Zenji went to China in 1223, and after visiting various places, he chose Ju Ching as his teacher. The records of the teaching he received from Ju Ching are called the *Hokyoki*. The following is from the *Hokyoki*;

"Ju Ching addressed the monks, 'Practicing Zen is dropping mind and body. Without employing the burning of incense, services, rituals, or the chanting of sutras and the Nenbutsu, or repenting, just do shikan taza (zazen).'

Dogen asked, 'What do you mean by dropping mind and body?'

Ju Ching answered, 'Dropping mind and body is zazen!'"

In other words, to give yourself up unconditionally to zazen and to be overcome by zazen is dropping mind and body. If you ask what dropping mind and body is, it is to really do zazen. Then, it's not a matter of gradually dropping our minds and bodies by means of zazen. Zazen itself is the reality of dropping mind and body. Sitting, practicing, and putting our faith in zazen is dropping mind and body. In other words, satori is to realize that practice is satori. This is clear in the previous passage. This attitude is called the activity of the reality of life or the identity of activity and the reality of life.

3. Waking up and Living

Above, we determined our attitude when we do zazen, but also this determines the attitude a person practicing zazen takes towards his whole life and his everyday activity. That's right. Buddhism, in a word, is the teaching of the Buddha (awakened being) and it is what truly teaches us about being awake and living by zazen. Just as I have made clear before, usually we lose sight of the life which pervades all things because of the thoughts of our small self, and, as a result, we completely close our eyes and live by being carried away by the thoughts of the small self. But a person who wakes up to the Universal Self by letting go of his thoughts in zazen works and lives out the Universal Self during his whole lifetime and in each daily activity. This must be the attitude of waking up and living which a person who does zazen takes toward his whole life and daily activities.

But, how can we describe concretely what it means to wake up to the Universal Self and live and work as the Universal Self? In the *Eihei-Shingi*, Dogen Zenji taught his disciples in great detail about this concrete way to work. This book was considered so indispensable by the disciples of Dogen that they had to take it with them wherever they went. Also when they were living in a monastery, they always worked through their daily activities by reading and checking with this book. I truly believe that this is an incomparably great religious book which gives concrete guidance about putting zazen into practice within our daily lives.

However, I think it is regrettable that this book is essentially known only by Zen priests who follow Dogen's teachings and is not well-known by the general public. I want to introduce the public to even a little of the contemporary meaning of this book, and I have already introduced one part of it. This introduction is in the form of my book, *The Cookbook of Life—Teachings in the Tenzokyokun* and the soon to be published, *The Activity of Life—Appreciating the Chiji-Shingi*. I hope for the day to come when the

general public understands and practices zazen so deeply that it is not simply meditation or a clear mind, but something which functions as a real living practice in daily life and a vital attitude towards life in general.

By doing zazen, a person should determine his attitude towards his whole life and work out the practice of his daily life. This book deals with the reality of zazen and stops at only explaining how to do and understand zazen, but in the next few pages I will just touch on the basic spirit of the *Eihei-Shingi* by talking about the three minds, Big Mind, Parental Mind, and Joyful Mind. These three minds are discussed in the *Tenzokyokun*.

As I said before, we come to experience the reality of life itself by letting go of our thoughts during zazen and this reality of life is the Universal Self. This Universal Self which zazen wakes us up to must be the attitude which could be described like this. We only live out the life of the Self which extends as far as we can see. Here there are no other people or things. Therefore, no matter what happens we live out the life of the Self which is only the Self.

When you first hear this, it may seem to be quite impossible. During zazen you stop all the communication and associating with other people, your work, etc. Because it's just you sitting alone, maybe you can become the Self which is only the Self, but isn't it completely impossible to be the Self which is only the Self during your daily life when other people and the world are certainly before you?

But this isn't at all a matter of becoming the Self which is only the Self by means of some special device whereby you erase all the other people who are before you. We are not the Self which is only the Self only when we are doing zazen. Rather, the reality of life is that at all times we are living out the Self which is only the Self just the same as when we are doing zazen.

What I mean is that we assume that we are all living together in one common world, and that we meet other people in this common world. But this is not at all true when you look at it

from the viewpoint of the reality of the raw life-experience which you learn about through zazen and by letting go of your thoughts. For example, when you and I look at a cup, we usually assume that we are looking at the very same cup, but this isn't so in terms of the true, raw life-experience. I am looking from my angle and with my power of vision and you are looking from your angle and with your power of vision. We absolutely cannot exchange our raw life experiences nor are we able to know each others' experiences.

Seeing is not the only thing like this; it is also true of every experience we sense and perceive such as hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. The world in which we live and experience raw life cannot be common to both of us. I live in a world which is only mine and you live in a world which is only yours. When it comes to our thoughts, it's needless to say that everyone has completely different thoughts just as everyone's face is different. It may seem that people who believe in the same philosophy or ism use the same general vocabulary and follow the same formalized way of thinking, but even in this case there is no doubt that their ideas in terms of raw reality are respectively different. Just because of that they sometimes openly disagree and internal discord arises. So these people too are living out life. If things weren't like this, the people themselves would be nothing but lifeless, standardized manequins. Anyway, if you assume that all of mankind is living in the same world and has the same ideas, this is a big mistake. Even when it seems that we are communicating by using the same words, this is communication only in a generalized and abstracted sense. We must conclude that in terms of raw life-experience everyone lives in a different world and lives out his own world of the Self which is only the Self.

Furthermore, we often say things like, "I know you very well." But this hardly means that I know everything about you. It only means that I know the aspect of you which usually appears before me. For me, you are nothing but the 'you' which is within my own Self.

Therefore, when we talk about raw life-experience in which we let go of our thoughts, this is not limited only to the times when we are doing *zazen*, but it is the same even in our daily lives. Living out the Self which is only the Self at all times is not some special thing. It's a most commonplace and basic fact. We have become too used to giving and taking with other people who, for no reason at all, we create by our own thoughts. We have lost sight of the truth in terms of raw life-experience.

The most concrete and easily understandable example of this is the way people in society think about money. Money has no value except that which is formed by the promises people make in their heads, but most people think of money, which is useful for trading with others, as the real thing. Conversely, they lose sight of the reality of the Self.

However, if through our *zazen* we take a new look at things and get used to living out the reality of raw life, then it will be clear to anyone that whatever happens there is nothing outside of living out the Self which is only the Self. In the *Tenzokyokun*, this is called Big Mind (大心), the mind which throws out the thoughts of the small self and does not discriminate. It is clear that all worlds, people, affairs, and things are appearing before me as the present circumstances, the scenery of life, the content of the Self. This is exactly the same as when during *zazen* all the thoughts which come and go are the scenery of *zazen*. The very same thing can be said about time. Usually we think of time as something which is flowing from the past, through the present, and towards the future, and we assume that we live inside time. But if you think about it in terms of the raw life-experience, you will realize that this is not at all so. The past has already gone by and doesn't exist, and the future hasn't come yet so it doesn't exist either. What exists is just this one moment of the present. Both past and future are nothing but the thoughts which float into your mind within this momentary present. You might want to say that this isn't true because old buildings and books are in fact right here. But these buildings and books are existing in the

present and thinking that they are old is nothing but the present thought in my head. In other words, my head which exists right now gives the attribute of 'old' to the buildings and books which exist right now. Therefore, in terms of raw life-experience itself, we are always living out the present which is only present, the now which is only now.

So, what in the world does it mean to live and work as the Universal Self? This is now clear. It is living and working in the now which is only now and as the Self which is only the Self no matter what happens. This means that whatever happens we live out and work through what we are now faced with as our own life. In this attitude towards life there is no past, future, or other person before the eyes of the Self. There is only living out the reality of raw life.

4. The Direction of the Universal

The reality of life which we wake up to through zazen is the now which is only now, the Self which is only the Self. It is taking the attitude towards life that whatever happens what you are now facing is your life.

What a quiet, calm life is spread out before us! No matter what we're thinking about, we are almost always comparing and discriminating 'this' and 'that.' We are always calculating how to make things even a little bit better. Therefore, we live being careful and always nervously watching out for something. That is, it's only natural that as long as there is something better there will be something worse. So we are always surrounded by misgivings that something bad will happen. In other words, as long as we live by distinguishing between the better way and the worse way, we can never find absolute peace of mind such that whatever happens is all right. This is just like the lack of peace of mind in a life of always preparing to pass exams.

But when we let go of our thoughts which distinguish better from worse and see things in terms of the Universal Self, we have a different attitude towards life. We take the attitude that whatever happens we are living out the Self which is only the Self. Here a truly peaceful life unfolds itself.

In Buddhism, the expressions Paradise and Hell are used; in Christianity, Heaven and Hell; and in our daily lives, happiness and unhappiness or fortunate circumstances and unfortunate circumstances. Then we assume, as if it's perfectly natural, that Paradise, Heaven, happiness, and fortunate circumstances are good and that Hell, unhappiness, and unfortunate circumstances are bad. This kind of discrimination and division is nothing but the distinctions we make in our heads and is totally removed from the reality of life. But just because of these distinctions, we raise a clamor about wanting to go the better way and trying not to go the worse way. As long as this is so, we have completely lost

absolute peace of mind. For example, if we fall into unfortunate circumstances or Hell, we run around thinking it's unbearable and try to get to Paradise or happiness. In this case, the devils* in Hell entertain themselves and play with us just like a cat plays with a mouse. The more we try to run away the more the devil plays with us becoming more and more vicious.

But the important thing here in terms of the truth of the Self is never to try to stay away from the worse way (Hell, unhappiness, bad circumstances) and turn to the better way (Heaven, happiness, good circumstances) by discriminating with our heads. Rather, the important thing is to take the attitude of living straight through the things which are the reality of life we are now meeting.

In other words, if I fall into Hell, Hell itself is my life at that time and I will live right through Hell. If I go to Paradise, Paradise itself is my life and I will live straight through Paradise. This is the attitude.

However, when we take the attitude towards life that the Self lives out the reality of the life of the Self, it doesn't mean that Paradise, Hell, happiness, and unhappiness cease to exist. It becomes clear that all these are only the scenery of my life. All kinds of scenery develops in the life of the Self. However, the absolute reality, the absolute fact is only that whatever happens the Self lives out the Self which is only the Self.

But in the case of the Universal Self, or the Self which is only the Self, since whatever happens is fine, aren't we left completely directionless? No, this isn't at all so. When I talk about the Self which is only the Self, this Self isn't completely empty of scenery. As I just said, the Self as the reality of life unfolds the richness of the meaning of life, the scenery of the Self, the circumstances of the present. The now which is only now isn't flat-surfaced. Both past and future exist as the scenery of the present.

* In the Buddhist Hell, there are terrible devils under the command of the King of the Dead, Emma, and these devils have various ways of torturing the people who fall into it.

Usually people don't take this to be the scenery which is unfolded within the Self. Rather, through thought they analyze it and set up other people and things before themselves. They place themselves within the flow of time from past to future. Then they are bound by their relationships with others, bound by the habits of the past, and bound by their expectations for the future. Being totally tied up like this, they are carried away by opinions of their small egos, and end up floundering in desperation.

But, when a man sees everything as the circumstances and scenery of the present, how should he function as the Universal Self within this moment? Through these circumstances in the life of the Self, a man can create fresh and vigorous activity by making the past live as his own rich experience and responding to directions toward the future.

As long as a man 'wakes up' and lives as the Universal Self, he always works in the direction where the Universal is alive. Everything we confront is our life. Because of this, the aim is to make all things, the world, people, affairs, etc., live as the Universal life with the attitude that the Self is taking care of the life of the Self. In the *Tenzokyokum*, this is called the Parental Mind (老心), the mind of a parent looking after his child. I live within your life and the Universal lives within my own life. This is because you and I and the Universal are living out the life which pervades everything.

In winter in Japan all the plants wither and die, but suddenly when spring comes many varieties of wild flowers bloom in the fields. In this case all of these wild flowers are blooming forth the life of spring. Looking at it from the opposite point of view, because the life of spring comes, the violet blooms as a violet, the dandelion as a dandelion, and the lotus as a lotus.

In the same way, the flower of my life blossoms when I work to make the flower of all the world, people and things which I now face blossom, and when the flower of my life blossoms, the flower of Universal life blossoms. Likewise, the flower of your life blossoms when you work to make the flower of all the world,

people, and things which you now face blossom, and this is when the flower of Universal life blossoms.

On the other hand, there is the attitude which stifles Universal life. People see themselves as simply one individual in a world which is only a place to compete for existence. They think that the law of the survival of the fittest is the truth, compare and rate themselves against one another, and in their competition try to kick each other down the ladder. There are winners and losers, but the winners degenerate in their own extravagance and the losers go from frustration to neurosis. They end up without even being able to make their own flower blossom. The flower of Universal life can never bloom here.

I have been making my explanation by using the expression 'the flower of life blooms,' but, just as a reminder, this is not at all a matter of having the goal of making a flower blossom and then realizing that goal. For the Self, a goal is another person, something outside the Self, and when you work towards a goal outside yourself you cease to be the Self which is only the Self. We are always the Self which is only the Self, and this Self is the life which pervades all things. Although the manifestation of this Universal life force is the direction of life itself, it is never activity directed towards a goal. In other words, a delineated goal does not exist for Universal life. There is only the direction of the manifestation of the life force.

This applies to zazen and practicing Buddhism, too. If we try to achieve some goal by means of zazen and practice, even if the goal is satori, then we have become completely separated from true zazen and practice. This is not the way. Because there is the life of the Universal Self, we just practice and manifest the life of the Universal Self. The direction of this practice is not a goal; it is the life force itself. It is the very direction of life. In this sense, the attitude of our faith and practice, when it is truly inspired, is never to practice with respect to some goal. It should only be the attitude of the pure manifestation of the life force. Please consider this carefully.

The reality of this manifestation of the life force changes moment by moment. Therefore, the Self must work in the place which it confronts at this very moment and, must work in the direction of the manifestation of the life which pervades all things. Here we come to find the true value of life which is to live out the Self which is only the Self, no matter what happens. In the *Tenzokyo kyokun*, this is called the Joyful Mind (喜心), the mind which lives in the true value of life.

To conclude what I have said up until now, it would be most appropriate to quote the following words of Dogen Zenji.

“All the Buddhas have completed their practice and attained the Way. They have attained Buddhahood. How are we to understand the unity of ourselves and the Buddhas? First we must understand the practice of the Buddhas. The practice of the Buddhas is carried on with the whole world and together with all sentient beings. If it is not Universal, it is not the practice of the Buddhas. Therefore, from the time we first aspire to the Way until we attain Buddhahood, both practice and attainment of Buddhahood must be one with the whole world and all sentient beings.”

Shobogenzo: Yubutsu Yobutsu

Supplement: Replies to a Few Questions

Before, I talked about actual zazen, but now I will add a short supplement by taking up a few questions which I most often receive.

Question 1. You have explained in detail actually how to do zazen, but I think that it's very difficult to sit zazen without forgetting all of these things. What about it?

Reply: That's absurd. As I have repeatedly said zazen is the simple act of really sitting and aiming at the zazen posture with your flesh and bones. Here's another quote of Dogen Zenji's:

“Is the Way attained through the mind or through the body? The teaching schools say that, since body and mind are identical, it is attained by the body. However, they don't make it certain that the Way is attained by the body. In Zen, the Way is attained with both body and mind. If you contemplate Buddhism with the mind alone, you won't be able to attain the Way in ten thousand kalpas, nor in a thousand lifetimes. You attain the Way when you let go of your thoughts and give up intellectual and conceptual understanding. Those who gained satori by seeing blossoms or hearing sounds achieved it through the body. Therefore, if you cast aside completely the thoughts and concepts of the mind and just do zazen, you attain to an intimacy with the Way. The attainment of the Way is truly accomplished with the body. For this reason, I urge you to just do zazen.”

Shobogenzo: Zuimonki

When I say that you aim at the correct zazen posture with your flesh and bones, it's simply a restatement of “We attain the Way with our bodies.”

I have made a lengthy explanation of zazen, but it is an effort, using words only temporarily, to let you realize that ‘living out the Self which is the reality of life’ isn't a matter of words or

intellect. After you first sufficiently understand what zazen is intellectually, the important thing is to really practice and aim at the posture of zazen with your flesh and bones without any regard to words and intellect.

Question 2. Isn't the aspiration to practice and do zazen a desire?

Reply: There is no doubt that usually when people first decide to practice and do zazen, they think that they will somehow improve themselves. As long as this is so, it is a desire. I call it a desire because these people, turning to the future and outside themselves, depict the goal of improving themselves and want to become that kind of self. However, this desire is to feel the value of life in the search for a goal (object) and so they are completely side-tracked from the manifestation of the raw life of the Self. Dogen Zenji says the following in the *Shobogenzo: Genjo Koan*; "When a man first seeks the Dharma, he is far away from its environs." But real improvement of the Self isn't to put aside this 'I' and chase after goals in the future, or outside ourselves, but it is to live the reality of the life of the Self here and now. When our attitude is thus changed, this is no longer desire. This is just the manifestation of your own life without turning towards goals outside yourself.

Then, what in the world do you call this power? You don't call it desire; it's the life force. When the living bodies of plants or animals are injured, they heal naturally. Grass by the roadside which is being crushed by a rock pushes out from the side of the rock and continues to grow. Do you suppose that the power to heal and the power to transcend obstacles is desire? Not at all. This is the life force. The power with which we do zazen and practice is the same. Without having any goals or expectations, this power manifests and actualizes the reality of the life of the Self.

Question 3. You said that because we are not like rocks it is only natural that thoughts come to our minds when we sit zazen, but

it seems that when I sit zazen an unusual amount of delusions and fantasies arises. What should I do?

Reply: It's not that an excessive amount of delusion and fantasy arises because we do zazen. Usually, we live surrounded by even more delusion and fantasy, but we are so steeped in it that we become numb to these delusions and fantasies. Therefore, we exist without even knowing that delusions and fantasies are arising. Conversely, because we become still during zazen, we clearly see in relief our own condition of being filled with delusion and fantasy. It only seems that we have more delusion and fantasy than usual.

However, as I have repeatedly mentioned, zazen is never an attempt to extinguish these delusions and fantasies. Because even the arising of delusion and fantasy is our life force, there is no reason to think that we should extinguish it. And yet, needless to say, to be carried away by the state of delusion and fantasy is to injure life itself. Because during zazen we let go of these thoughts, delusion and fantasy become something which exists and yet fades away. Therefore, zazen transcends ignorance and satori and goes beyond the sages and the ordinary man.

Question 4. Is zazen a religion?

Reply: According to how you define religion, zazen might be a religion or might not be. In many cases the word religion is used in the sense of a sect or creed. Zazen is in no sense a sect or creed nor should it be.

Continuously from the primitive religions of ancient times, religion is concerned with man's relationship to an authority above him. People are put under a suggestive spell by the words of that authority, that is, the words of God, divine revelation, or mediums and representatives of God who have received the revelations, and call the absolute submission to this authority, 'religion.' Zen is not a religion in this sense either.

Zen Buddhism does not recognize any authority outside of the Self. This is tradition passed down since the time of Shaka-

muni. Shakamuni himself, as his final teaching said the following to his disciples. "Pay homage to the Self. Pay homage to the Dharma. Do not pay homage to any object." Also, just before Shakamuni's death, Ananda, the only attendant with him, wanted to call together the rest of his many disciples, but he did not permit it. He said, "I do not own the people." He just lived his own life and always refused to become an object of the faith of many disciples and worshippers. This was his basic attitude towards life. There are very moving passages about this in the *Dirghagama Sutra* and the *Yugyokyo*. I won't quote them here, but I highly recommend these sutras to those of you who might be interested in studying the basic attitude of Shakamuni.

Zen Buddhism has inherited Shakamuni's basic attitude towards life which is to just live out the life of the Self. Therefore, in Zen Buddhism, we just actualize within the Self the most refined attitude towards life. If religion means the teachings about the most refined attitude towards life, then Buddhism is certainly pure religion. But as I've already said, this Self is not simply the 'I' as opposed to other people and things. 'To live out the life of the Self' doesn't mean the self-intoxication of 'I' alone. Rather, this attitude towards life is to discover life which is pervading throughout all things within the Self. It is to live aiming at the manifestation of life in each and every thing we meet and to see everything we meet as an extension of our own life. This attitude towards life is called compassion. A man who can't find compassion for others within the Self cannot be called a man of zazen who has 'awakened' to the reality of the life of the Self.

Look at the following quotes from the Bible. "God's will be done." "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." "Because God loves us, we know love. We express our love for God by loving others."

This basic Christian attitude towards life is also the basic Buddhist attitude towards life.

Question 5. You said that during zazen we must sit and let go of

all thoughts, but shouldn't we sit without letting go of the ideas which are most important for humanity such as compassion, love, justice, and peace?

Reply: If you think about these ideas and grasp them through thought, really everything will be transformed into something which isn't like that. For example, the justice and peace of a democratic people and the justice and peace of a communist people are completely different. This is because they are only ideas of justice and peace. Therefore, they disagree with each other and wage wars of mass slaughter under their respectively different banners of peace and justice. Only when we let go of all our own ideas, 'wake up' and actualize the reality of life, will disagreements disappear and the non-dual reality of life pervade through out everything. It is only here that we find compassion, love, justice, and peace in their true sense. We actualize attitudes of compassion, love, justice, and peace only when we wake up to the reality of true life and not by words and ideas.

Question 6. Why must we do zazen for many hours? Also, at the very least how much must we do?

Reply: Zazen doesn't have anything to do with the length of time whether it be long or short. Since olden times it has been said that "one inch of sitting is one inch of the Buddha." Whether it's one period of zazen, one sesshin, or many years of a life of zazen practice, it's all the same in terms of living out the reality of the life of the Self. Therefore, you've done however much zazen you've done, and there is absolutely no such thing as passing by sitting a long time and failing because of sitting a short time. This is because zazen transcends the length of time or the distinction of passing or failing according to the length of time.

However, you might say that because zazen transcends the length of time, you'll try to get by by doing as little as possible, but this kind of self-centered calculating isn't the attitude of a person who does zazen. The attitude of a person who does zazen should be something like this. Since zazen doesn't have anything

to do with the length of time, I'll do as much as possible. Since zazen is living out the reality of the Self, I'll continue to do it all my life. At Antai-ji, we do a lot of zazen, but this isn't because we want to be boastful in front of others, or in order to gain merit. Since we know that zazen has nothing to do with the length of time, we just do it.

Furthermore, because zazen has nothing to do with the length of time, people may start off doing thirty minutes or an hour at a time and think that is zazen. As a result, they're afraid to sit long hours of zazen and can't do it. But if, from the beginning, people have the idea that zazen is something you do as much as possible, they can do it without being afraid. For this reason, it's best to form the habit of sitting for as long a time as possible from the very beginning.

A certain American said that he had been sitting an hour a week for a year at a temple before he came to Antai-ji and at that time was thinking of writing a dissertation on zazen. However, he laughingly said that after he came to Antai-ji and did daily zazen and sesshins, he realized that he couldn't yet write a dissertation or anything on zazen. Now, isn't that just the way it is.

Question 7. I understand how very important zazen is for all people throughout the world and I myself would really like to do zazen. But what about people who can't do zazen because they're unable to fold their legs or else even if they can fold them, it's too painful?

Reply: The basis of zazen is the single act of the Self making the Self into the Self and to stop being the 'I' which exists only in a give and take relationship with others. At present there are four or five foreigners coming to the Antai-ji sesshins who sit so well they put the Japanese to shame, but there are also many foreigners who really can't keep their legs folded for long hours. These people sometimes put their knees up when during the sesshin their legs hurt so much they can't help it. They do this with utmost consideration of those sitting next to them and try to

create as little disturbance as possible. In this case, they're no longer maintaining their zazen posture, but as long as they join the sesshin for five straight days, they are not living the ordinary life of work and association with others. The fact is that at least they have cut off all of this and are completely alone in silence.

In spite of this, when they put their knees up and bend their backs, their posture is such that inevitably all kinds of thoughts will occur to them and they will tend to think and continue their thoughts. Even though they take the trouble to be the Self making the Self into the Self, they can't do it because of associating with the delusions within their own heads. Therefore, they make the effort to correct their posture and maintain the form of zazen. When those people realize by their own experience that the zazen posture is the very best posture for letting go of thoughts and for the Self to make the Self into the Self, they make a second effort to maintain this posture. I think this is okay. As long as they continue the effort, at some point their legs will become accustomed to sitting and they will become able to endure long hours of zazen. In short, zazen is not something you should be forced to do by another person; rather, it should be done by the manifestation of your own life force. The important thing is to do it by your own motivation.

Because until now mankind has been very poor in material means, most people have been chased around by earning a living and haven't had the margin of time and spirit for practicing and aspiring to truly manifest the life of the Self in its most refined form. However, in the future, the number of wealthy people will increase and they will wish to truly refine their own lives. At the same time, many more people will realize that their own life is something which should be made truly noble and not just be the life of an animal within the midst of luxury. Zazen isn't something which is advertized by loud speakers. Rather, it will spread quietly as the number of people who actually do zazen increases. I firmly believe that zazen will someday become the power which guides the world of mankind.

When the bell for kinhin rings twice, first rock to the right and left two or three times in the sitting position. Then, get up quietly. You should stand in back of your zazen seat and turn 90° to the right. (At this point in a real temple, all the people will be in a straight, single line.) Put the thumb of the left hand in the middle of the palm and make a fist around it. Turn this hand downwards in front of your chest. Cover your left hand with the palm of your right hand. Keep your elbows away from your body and make a straight line with your arms. This is called 'isshu.'



Figure 13

Then, straighten the posture of your body and make sure your neck is also straight. Your line of vision should fall about two meters in front of you. Now walk quietly starting with your right foot. Although I say walk, actually you advance by taking only half of a step for every breath, one unit of exhaling and inhaling. Don't let your posture fall apart. Don't look up and down or to the left and right. Don't shift your shoulders and chest. It should

be as if you are standing in one place. Without dragging your feet, walk quietly.

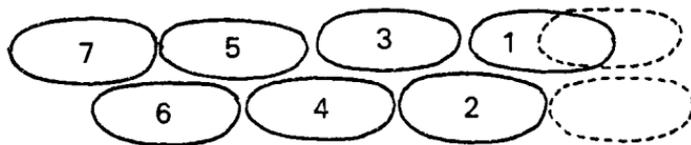


Figure 14

You should always walk straight ahead, and if you turn, always turn to the right. The word “kinhin” means to go straight like the warp of a weave. Just as zazen is the way the Buddha sits, kinhin is the way the Buddha walks. More than anything, the important thing is to practice this with correct posture, wide-awake, and coordinating your walking and breathing.

At the Antai-ji sesshins, we do ten minutes of kinhin after fifty minutes of zazen. The bell is rung once to signal the end of kinhin. When the bell is rung, you walk at your normal pace following the person in front of you. Going once around the room, you return to your original seat. At this point, people may go to the bathroom if they wish, and the next period of zazen begins. The bell to begin zazen is rung three times.

When you get to your seat, you face your seat and bow (*gassho*). This is a formal greeting to the people sitting to your right and left, and signifies that you are going to do zazen together. Then, turning to the right until your seat is in back of you, you again bow to the far side of the room. This is a greeting to the people across the room. Turning to the right again, you take your seat and begin zazen. You should also bow in the same way when you stand up from zazen. This is to express your gratitude that you can do your own zazen practice with the help of the people who are practicing with you.

Other than this, there are various ways of entering the *zendo*

(zazen hall), walking in the zendo and taking your seat. However, because I think it's best to receive concrete instructions when you first come to a temple, I will omit the explanations.

How to Make a Zafu

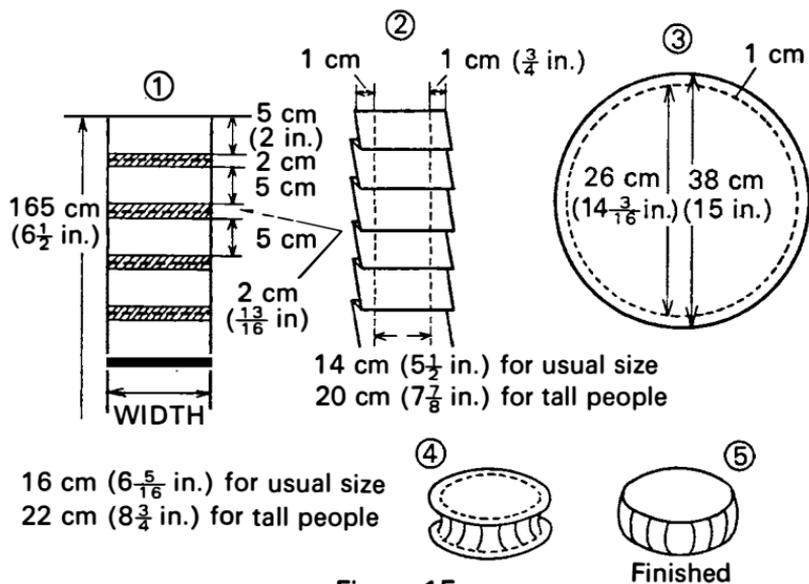


Figure 15.

NECESSARY MATERIALS:

- A. Two round pieces of cloth 38 cm in diameter.
- B. One piece of cloth 165cm × 16cm for people of usual size, or 165cm × 22cm for tall people.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. First, make pleats and bast the 165cm × 16cm (or 22cm) piece according to the measurements in figure 1.
2. Leave a 1cm margin on each side for the margin.
3. Sew it on to each of the round pieces of cloth as in figure 4.
4. Take out the basting and turn it inside out.
5. Stuff it with kapok.

Because the kapok becomes packed down and the zafu becomes flat from usage, you must gradually add more kapok. Each individual must adjust the height of the zafu according to his own posture. It is best to have cloth which is not smooth.

BOOK TWO / *Modern Civilization and Zen*

1. | *This Modern Age has No Direction*

A comical fellow named Hachiko wanted to learn to ride a horse. The horse, however, was instinctively aware of the rider's poor skill. When they passed by a grocery shop in a busy street the horse came to a halt and began helping himself to some vegetables, showing no sign of moving on. The angry shopkeeper goaded the animal on its rump with a stick. The horse reared and took off in a gallop down the street. The rider, Hachiko, stuck to the mane of the horse and tried not to be shaken. Hachiko's friend happened to be walking down the same street. At the sight of Hachiko's frantic efforts he yelled, "Hey, Hachiko! Where are you going?"

"I dunno . . . ask the horse," came the reply.



Ask the horse!

Figure 16.

This is a silly anecdote, but I have repeated it here to show the similarity between ourselves and Hachiko.

"Hey, human race! Efficiency! Efficiency!" you say. As you raise efficiency, where on earth are you going?

“I dunno, ask the machinery,” comes the reply.

“Hey, modern people! You take pleasure in your cultured life, but where is your life headed?”

“I don’t know. Ask this culture itself.”

“Hey, mankind! Why are you making H-bombs and guided missiles?”

“I don’t know. But somehow we seem to have fallen into this plan of human annihilation.”

In other words, we modern people are exactly like poor uneducated Hachiko, frantically embracing that galloping horse. We are grasping scientific and technological progress, but lack the power to control it. Accordingly, neither the destination nor the direction in which to proceed is clear. This is our present age.

Speaking of direction, in the past we found it by bowing down before God. One good aspect of this attitude is that it gives great peace to our life. But there is a defect too. Since we cannot see God with our eyes or touch him with our hands, our only knowledge of him is what is preached about him. It is said that this preaching is divine revelation. In my opinion it is a myth. The attitude to find direction in bowing down before a god is in fact to be led by myth. Most of the ancient wars were promoted by oracles and revelations from their respective gods; they were wars of one myth against another.

Today, highly developed world-wide communication facilities place many of these so-called mythical religions within our reach. And with various products called gods on the market, we are less likely to consider any one of them absolute. So in civilized countries at least wars in the name of God no longer occur. We have lost the sort of passion which justifies wars in the name of God. Even among devout Christians, who believe that their God created the universe, there would be almost none who would interpret the Book of Genesis literally. For us modern men, such mythical cosmogony has been replaced by a scientific concept of creation. It has become impossible to believe in mythical cosmogony ignoring the scientific one.

Now that a scientific concept of the world has replaced the old mythological one and old teachings are no longer accepted as naively as before, the grounds for belief in God's existence have become very weak. At the same time the attitude of prostrating ourselves before God has vanished, and along with it, answers to the questions, "What is ahead in the human journey?" and "What is most important in our lives?" The most important question for us today lies here. Efficiency! Efficiency, we say. As we raise efficiency and improve our splendid modern civilization, as individuals and as humanity, actually what is to be our settling place? There may be some unthinking people who confuse scientific progress with real human progress. But to return to our analogy, today's scientific progress can be compared to the instinctive flight of Hachiko's horse when it got smacked on the rump—it lacks direction.

Concerning this point the following words of Arnold J. Toynbee are very appropriate; "Modern civilization is nothing but Adam's original sin equipped with an infinite quantity of energy and explosive power."

2. | *The Age of Soothing Religions is Over. What Now?*

Since man first appeared on earth there have been two aspects to his development. Progress in technology and the quest for peace of mind.

Man has made a continuous effort to create a comfortable, plentiful life for himself; sometimes adapting himself to nature, sometimes co-operating with it, and sometimes conquering it. By his own perseverance he has lived and prospered.

At the same time man has been apprehensive about the limits of his ability. Especially in primitive man, the mystery of his natural surroundings aroused fear and awe. Man has found that danger in hunting and good or bad luck in fighting with animals are controlled by something beyond the weapons and skill of the hunter. And again, when man began to cultivate land and breed animals he found that famine could be forced on him by such natural disasters as hail-storms, insect damage, droughts, and floods. He was always at the mercy of nature. Timid creature that he was, when he chanced to see relatives and other fellow men die, he trembled with fear at the mystery of death and the insecurity of human life.

But he patiently fought back; co-operating with nature and conquering it he made steady material progress. On the other hand, when his material progress came to its limit, attempting to control nature he practiced witchcraft and sorcery; and to appease nature he engaged in rituals and prayers. There had been an unimaginably vast space of time before man reached the stage of the early Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations. Likewise, we can be sure that it was after much groping and struggling for peace of mind that man arrived at what we now call primitive religion. In this respect his search for peace of mind was essential

to him as was his struggle for progress.

In modern society the balance between these two pursuits has been lost. Let me illustrate. In ancient times, men might have offered a human sacrifice to obtain divine help in the construction of a large dam they were attempting to build. In these societies it would not have been considered either cruel or unlawful. Nor was the religion which issued such an oracle a particularly evil one. But in modern society, what if a human sacrifice were offered at the opening of a dam construction project? Obviously, it would be considered both cruel and inhuman; and further, it would be a criminal offense. The religion demanding such a sacrifice would be thought of as an unsocial and immoral superstition rather than a religion. What is required to build a dam are sufficient funds, a skilled labor force and the application of appropriate technology, not a human sacrifice. In the same way religions which promote the cure of disease through special rituals and prayers are rightly considered harmful paganism. For this we should be grateful to the progress of science in its pursuit of a better life. Science has solved for us certain problems of human anxiety which used to be the main focus of religion, and

PAGAN SUPERSTITION



"Religions," which must be called pagan superstitions became abundant.

Figure 17.

consequently most of these “religions” are now treated as pagan superstitions. Can’t we find a religion which is not the remains of an archaic way of thinking, a religion with real meaning? If so, where?

Yes, it is certain that there is no longer a place for the “soothing religions” which hope to solve problems by magical power, when these same matters are quite reliably handled by modern science. The true religion, whose existence is justified in this modern age, is not one concerned with the problems gradually being solved scientifically, but one which pursues peace of mind which can never be attained by scientific means. Do you think true peace of mind is within the reach of technological progress? Concerning this point, the facts are very reproachful for us humans.

Let’s take an example very close to ourselves. We take modern civilization for granted. One of us, barehanded could not fashion a single board or post from a tree, has not the power to move a single rock, can not carry one steel girder, yet we live and work in fine houses and excellent buildings. We don’t know how to spin a single thread of yarn, can’t make one bolt of cloth, yet we wear fine clothes and even follow the fashion of the moment. We eat well, but most of us couldn’t imagine harvesting a single grain of rice or wheat. And then we surround ourselves with electrical appliances and other such modern conveniences and live in complete comfort.

If we compare our situation with that of the ancient Egyptian civilization, our lives would compare in luxury to that of a man served by tens or even hundreds of slaves. We are kings, who through television are entertained by the best performers of the country, and by modern transportation carried to our destinations at speeds the Egyptian pharaohs couldn’t imagine no matter how strong their palanquin bearers were. What has enabled us to live in such luxury? We must realize we are enjoying material wealth and know-how accumulated over thousands of years of struggle.

Now that we have such a life, would you say we are living

with no wants or discontentments, with complete peace of mind? I am afraid not. For the most part people of today are dissatisfied and discontented. So men are always fighting for better wages, they want an even higher standard of living, and nations are ever ready to wage war against each other for their selfish interests. In the future, when through even greater technological advance will man have no material wants, do you think the discontent which causes national strife and international wars will also cease? If you do, you are being far too optimistic. The higher the standard of living a man gets, the higher he wants. The more power a nation is able to gain, the more it tries to acquire. Men are inventing more and more powerful weapons and heading toward a great world war.

Really, why does this occur? Our high standard of living was born of dissatisfaction and the intellectual ability to satisfy it. Dissatisfaction is the mother of invention and progress. Because man is dissatisfied with what nature offers, he tries to somehow improve the situation, and thus progress is made. But no amount of scientific progress can satisfy human desires. Man is walking along his road of progress carrying a bag full of desires and dissatisfaction, and no matter how many hundreds or thousands of years pass we can expect to see him still clutching that bag.

That we make continuous scientific progress is fine; that it results in human comfort is great; and that we possess the dissatisfaction which begins this process is certainly a wonderful thing. The problem is that if we are dissatisfied with the present we become filled with the impatience of desire and the unrest of competition. Because of this we are unable to find genuine peace of mind in our life.

In other words, no matter how far science progresses, it is not going to be the answer to our lack of peace of mind, nor can we be pacified by a high standard of living, for it lacks a base for spiritual peace. In a highly advanced civilization, when we get old we can spend our days in a rest home as comfortable as a hotel and equipped with modern medical facilities and every other

possible convenience. But this alone will hardly bring us a peaceful life.

Civilization galloping onward like a wild horse when we know nothing of peace of mind is a crazy civilization. This modern civilization which started in Europe and spread throughout the rest of the world may itself be called insane. The further civilization advances the clearer it becomes that this is pure madness.

As I have already discussed, the “soothing religions” have lost their place since the development of modern civilization, and we can be grateful for that. At the same time it is urgent that we find a genuine religion concerned with true peace of mind, as the scientific civilization develops. We must make a basic and sincere search for the peace of mind with real meaning—something which cannot possibly be offered by science.

Goethe says, “Man gets lost when he marches on.” Is that humanity’s fate? Or can we discover the road where “marching along, we can have peace of mind,” or rather, “having peace of mind, we can march along.”

3. | *The Self Settled in Itself*

It is very significant that, finding themselves dissatisfied with the modern situation, many Westerners have turned their eyes to the East, probing into the very essence of ancient thought. Within this thought there is a religion called Buddhism, which, if studied closely, reveals a very unique culture.

The reason for this is because Buddhism has no God. For this reason it was at one time denied the status of a religion by Christian-influenced scholars. But it is nonsense to decide whether a teaching is a religion or not by the presence or absence of the idea of God. If you do, you must say there has been no religion since the scientific view of the world replaced the mythological one. However, this view is fundamentally false. For religion is that which teaches us what is most important in life, and provides genuine peace of mind. Buddhism, in this sense, is the purest religion, for it teaches the true nature of life.

As we have said Buddhism is a religion without a god. What then is the basis for this peace of mind? The fundamental posture of Buddhism, in contrast to the “bowing down before God” posture of Christianity and other religions, is that of the self settling in the true and immovable self. We are usually tossed about by various thoughts, but this should not be. Rather, we should be firmly settled in our true self. From the time shakamuni Buddha taught that the self must settle in itself, truly and firmly, this teaching has been the principle attitude of Buddhism.

In the *Suttanipata*, said to be the oldest scripture, the Buddha says, “Live in the world relying only on the self as a foundation, and relying on no things, be freed from all things.” In the *Damma-pada*, he says, “The foundation of the self is only the self.” And in the *Nibbana-surranta*, “Believe in yourself; believe in the Law;

believe in nothing else.” These passages from the earliest scriptures show the basic attitude of the founder himself.

But with a slight misunderstanding of this attitude there is a danger of a very foolish civilization being created. One mistake and today’s completely scientific civilization becomes one of madness. If you take one distinctive feature of human nature and develop it without seeing the truth of human life, the result is likely to be nonsensical, even insane.

Modern civilization insanely exerts itself, ignoring the truth of human life. It was in the same way that the Hinayanists, immediately after the Buddha’s death, without seeing the truth of life, developed a foolish trend. They misinterpreted the Buddha’s intended meaning in the words “Settle the self in itself, and seek nothing outside” to mean that the self should be fixed on death. This was because they thought that by extinguishing the outwardly directed desires they could arrive at a quiet Nirvana. Consequently their *samadhi* (meditation), where the self settles in itself, came to mean an escape, a seclusion, a life devoid of activity other than that of waiting for death. It goes without saying that here the truth of human life was lost.

The misconception that Buddhism is nihilistic and pessimistic can no doubt be attributed to this misinterpretation. To be sure, it must be admitted that if one is not careful, *samadhi*, where the self settle in itself, can have a negative trend—the tendency to indulge in escapism. This point must always be born in mind as we re-discover Buddhist *samadhi*, *zazen*, buried in the ancient East.

As opposed to escapism, the Mahayanists developed a living *samadhi*. *Samadhi* means for the self to settle in the true and immovable self, but “immovable” should not be interpreted to mean “without function” or “fixed in an inactive state.” Because the self is life, and life is activity; life, hindered by nothing, manifests itself as pure function, an immovable unshakable life, sufficient in itself.

This is what the Mahayanists realized from the founder’s active life, devoted to the salvation of all beings. And the development

of Mayayana Buddhism lay in realizing the importance of the true and immovable self as a manifestation of vital life. In brief, the self settled in itself does not mean to display personal desires, nor does it mean to discard vital activity and become lifeless either. On the contrary, life in itself is simply manifest function, so there must be activity. In this activity an immeasurable and boundless world will be open to us.

Since this discussion has become a little too abstract, let's return again to thinking of the concrete everyday world. For instance we might ask, "Really, why do we work at all?" We can give various answers, "To eat," "To achieve a better life," "To realize our ambitions," "To obtain glory," and so forth. However, these answers originate in our physical bodies, and in our desirous thoughts. None of them is the answer coming out of life itself.

The lily blooming in the field—why on earth does it bloom? It blooms solely because it has been given life. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." (Matthew, 7: 28-29) Here, the glory of life simply appears. In the same way the violet blooms as a violet, and the rose expresses its life as a rose. The flowers blooming in the field do not feel with pride that they would win first prize in a beauty contest; they do not feel that they are in competition with other flowers. The violet does not develop an inferiority complex thinking, "The roses are big and beautiful, but a little violet like myself is useless." It doesn't say with greed and impatience, "I must become more efficient." It simply manifests its own life force with all its might.

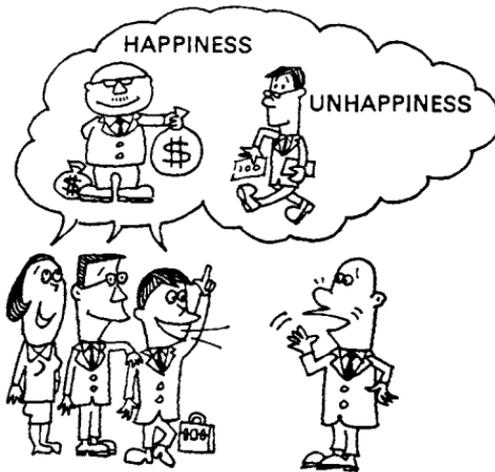
Of course if a violet plant cannot produce even a small violet, it lacks life. But then when it does bloom, it does so for no purpose. It's the life of a violet just to bloom. The *Lotus Sutra* says, "All things are the truth by themselves." The phrase, "A willow is green, a flower is red," is a common Zen saying. In short, Buddhism is a manifestation of the world of life in which a violet

blooms as a violet and a rose blooms as a rose.

The Jodo Sect's *Amida-sutra* describes Paradise by saying, "Blue things are blue, red things are red . . . that is what we call Paradise." This point demands our attention. Mistakenly we think it would be wonderful if blue things were red. Do we not often think that a poor person can be happy only when he becomes rich?

Of course it is a fine thing when poor people become rich. But happiness does not invariably come with wealth, nor unhappiness with poverty. If you decide that the rich are happy and the poor are unhappy, then when you are poor, you will surely be unhappy. However, this idea is a mistake. For those who think this way there is a time when, no matter how much money they have, it will not be valid. When the time comes for them to die, they will fall into the depth of unhappiness.

That is not the way life is. Is there any distinct dividing line between the rich and the poor? It's only a matter of comparison. Only when you give up such a comparison will you be able to



**Happiness does not invariably come with wealth,
nor unhappiness with poverty.**

Figure 18.

settle in your true self, any time, any place. People may compare you with others and call you either rich or poor, but that is only applying a label which has nothing to do with the real you. As you return to the reality of your life, to your true self, and become manifest as such, that is when “blue things are blue and red things are red,” which is called Paradise.

In other words, without being tossed about by various ideas, return to your true life. Without envy or self-deprecation, yet without pride; without laziness, yet without strife; without being idle, just be yourself—with all your might live out your true life just as it is. Here the glory of life appears—the light of Buddhism shines. When our true lives are manifested, the light of religion glows. The world where the self settles in itself does not contain the struggle for existence where the strong devour weak, neither has it any place for escapism, where the blossoming of one’s own life is forgotten. On the contrary, it is the world where the present is actualized as it is, and the flower of one’s true self blooms. The foundation of this manifestation of life is Buddhist *samadhi*, *zazen*. In the succeeding pages I will attempt to explain for you how *zazen*, as the source of life, is central to the manifestation of life.

4. | *The Structure of Life—Dependent Origination and the Middle Way*

If we want to get at the Buddhist notion of life, we shall have to take up the teachings of Dependent Origination (*engi*) and the Middle Way. When we speak, as we have above, of the self settling in itself, we must ask what this self is; for what is called “self” in Buddhism is quite distinct from that which we ordinarily speak of as “I”. Indeed, the unique Buddhist view is distinct from our ordinary way of thinking, not only in regard to the concept of self, but also in its understanding of this world in which the self finds itself. This distinctive view is expressed in the concept of Dependent Origination. For in Buddhism the “self as life” as well as the “living world in which the self dwells” are both understood in terms of Dependent Origination and the Middle Way. Therefore to get to the correct Buddhist sense of the *zazen* in which the self settles in itself, we must go round about, speaking first of these two concepts.

Fortunately, there is in the early scriptures direct reference to these teachings which we can use here.

“He who truly sees the aggregation of the world does not hold to the view of non-existence. He who truly sees the annihilation of the world does not hold to the view of existence. The view that everything exists (*uken*) is one extreme: the view that nothing exists (*muken*) is the other extreme. The Tathagata detaches himself from these two extremes and preaches the law of the Middle Way: because this exists that exists, because this arises that arises. (*Pali Soshi Bu Kyoten*, S. 12. 15, S. 22. 90 T. 301, 262.)

In this one quotation from ancient scripture the whole of the teachings of Dependent Origination and the Middle Way is explained. Moreover, there is expressed here the very essence of

the spirit of what was to develop as Mahayana Buddhism. However, the language of this passage is, I think, too simple to be fully understood at first reading. Therefore let us try to get a sense of these words in terms of our everyday life.

Now the scripture says of Dependent Origination, "Because this exists that exists, because this arises that arises." But what does this mean? It means that all concrete entities occur in accordance with various conditions, and that all abstract entities are meaningful because of their mutual relations. Accordingly, what is being said here is that there are no independent substantial entities, i.e. no things existing in themselves.



That is not a substantial thing, independently existing within itself.

Figure 19.

Let us take my own being as an example. Usually we think of the self as an individual independent substance, as an enduring existence. But if we think about it carefully this is by no means the case. I have an album of photographs taken of me every four or five years from infancy to the present. But now when I look at it I am filled with an utterly strange feeling. It so clearly shows the change of this human being called "I," who is gradually advancing in age. But how the face and figure change with the

years! I can only wonder at the marvel of creation. Within this constant change what endures? The birthmark under my eye, the peculiar slope of my head—only these meaningless facts remain. And if it is true that I am only what endures through time, then this birthmark and this oddly shaped head are what I truly am. Consequently, I cannot help but wonder whether these pictures are all of the same I or not.

Not only the exterior aspect of the body, but that which is interior as well, is gradually being regenerated and transformed; so that what does not appear in photographs is also undergoing change.

Moreover, the content of my head, which is called "I," has also been radically changing, from infancy through childhood, youth and maturity to middle age. And indeed, even this present "I" is an unceasing stream of consciousness. Yet taken momentarily at a given time the stream is thought of as this self.

In this respect we are as "selves" quite like the flame of a candle. Melted by the heat of the candle, the burning wax emits light only as it passes a certain point. This place from which light is emitted remains generally constant, appearing as a fixed shape; and it is to this apparently unchanging form that we have given the name "flame." That which is called "I" is similar to the flame. Although both body and mind are an unceasing flow, because they preserve what seems a constant form we refer to them as "I." Therefore there is really no "I" existing as a "lump" of substance: there is only the ceaseless flow. And this is the case, not only of this sentient being called "I"; it is true of all things. In Buddhism this truth is expressed in the phrases '*shōgyōmujō*,' "all beings are impermanent," and '*shōhōmuga*,' "All beings are non-substantial."

This elusive concept of impermanence (*mujō*) does not imply simply negation (*mu*). In the flow of impermanence our temporary form is like an eddy in the flow of a river. Though the water is always flowing, the eddy, like the flame of the candle, arises out of various conditions in a form which appears constant. That

there is this apparently fixed form, based on various conditions is Dependent Origination. In the case of the flame it is an origination dependent on such things as the wax, the temperature, and the air; in the case of the eddy, the volume and speed of the current, the topography, etc. form the conditions of its existence.

Not only such things as eddies and flames, but indeed everything in the Universe can be considered in a similar way. For example we who live in the age of natural science can easily appreciate that however solid a thing may appear, it is not really different from the flame and the eddy—its solidity being merely a question of degree.

Now let us return to the problem of the self which we are here discussing. The notion of impermanence of course applies also to the self, which represents a particular form of conditioned existence. Buddhism teaches that our egoistic attachment to the self as some kind of substantial being is the source of all greed, anger, suffering, and strife. Therefore it is of utmost importance that we thoroughly re-examine the self, not as a substantial, but as a conditioned existence.

What is it that we think of as the self? Physically, it originates in the union of sperm and egg, and is brought to its present form through the combination of such factors as temperature, moisture, nutrition, and the like. And what forms the mental content of the self? Here again we have not chosen this self, but have simply received life in our mother's womb unconsciously (or as Buddhists say, in ignorance (*mumyō*)). We have received from our parents certain hereditary elements of character, and have been influenced by the time, place, and circumstances into which we were born. Then without realizing it we are educated according to the society, and internalize our experiences within the context of our environment. In this way, through the combination of accidental factors, the self's awareness is formed.

Thus the self, far from being our usual notion of a "lump," is merely a combination of accidents. This self may become deluded, but the delusion also is not permanent; it too can be dissolved.

This is the reality of life, a reality expressed in Shakamuni's doctrine of the Twelve-fold Chain of Dependent Origination (*jūni engi*), insight into which is said to have been the source of his enlightenment.

Let us for now put aside the problem of delusion, and concentrate on the question of the conditioned self. While the self as conditioned existence remains merely a collection of accidents, in so far as it possesses some form as a momentary aggregate it is not nothing (*mu*). This is the point of the scriptural passage quoted above: "He who truly sees the aggregation of the world does not hold to the view of non-existence."

But if this present self is not nothing, still we cannot say that it is a permanent entity; rather it is in transformation, continually being extinguished and renewed. This is the meaning of the scriptural passage, "He who truly sees the annihilation of the world does not hold to the view of existence."

"The Tathagata detaches himself from these two extremes (existence and nothingness) and preaches the law of the Middle Way." This teaches our own way—a way which does not attach both being and non-being; that is, gives up dependence on ideas, and knows Dependent Origination as it is, knows our own life as it is.

Therefore the Middle Way of Buddhism is not some idea of a thing "between," nor a thing "half-done." Rather the Middle Way consists in casting aside all such cherished concepts as being and non-being, and without clinging to any fixed entity, to let go of ideas and let life be.

But what, concretely, is this Middle Way? This will come out in the discussion of *zazen* which follows.

5. / Zazen

Buddhist *zazen* is the practice of the Middle Way; a practice in which life (dependent origination) is lived as life. In a word, *zazen* is the practice which lets go of life and lets it be.

One might well say that, even if we make no effort to let life be, we always live in this process of dependent origination, and we cannot avoid living our true lives. This is indeed so. It is what Buddhism calls (*Shitsuu bussho*—all beings have Buddha nature; that is, all beings have the possibility of realizing life.

Yet while we say this, we cannot say that we are always living in the full realization of life. This is because we human beings, unlike the flowers of the field, bear the burden of thought. And thought has a dual character: it is at once the product of life, and yet can think of things floating quite detached from the fact of life. This duality leads to some strange consequences.

“In this election I’ve got to whip A.” (Despite the fact that in the present reality of the thinker’s life he is simply alone in his room and not in the midst of competition with A at all.)

“I’m going to get that mine and make myself a fortune.” (though the immediate fact here is that this schemer neither has the mine nor knows the value of its ore.)

This duality in which thought is detached from the immediate fact prevents us from truly seeing life as it is. The scripture says, “He who truly sees the aggregation of the world does not hold the view of non-existence. He who truly sees the annihilation of the world does not hold the view of existence.” But thought detaches itself from such true seeing; and in the midst of an insubstantial world it conjures up various accumulable substantial entities (money, position, power). In our frustrated desire to possess these insubstantial things, which represent the view of

existence, we are subsequently reduced to scheming and hating, injuring ourselves and others. And we inevitably develop complexes and neuroses.

Though the world of dependent origination is insubstantial, still it has a definite order. Yet our thought ignores that order (i.e. assume the view of non-existence) and pursuing its own desires spend itself in murder and destruction, so that in a flash the spark of this friction can short circuit us.

In the end, then, it is our thought—whether it be in the view of existence or of non-existence—which is responsible for distorting and obstructing the direct expression of life. This thought, rooted in the dualism of being and non-being, Buddhism calls “ego attachment (*gashu*). Ego attachment refers to our clinging to the “substance” called “I,” which in our ignorance (*mumyo*) we have unreasonably constructed within the world of dependent origination.

Whatever we see, whatever we do we are always pushed about by this sense of “I”; and our true life is cut off, mangled and ruined. Is not to be thus tossed about by the sense of self precisely the “original sin” committed by man in his origin as man? Adam and Eve truly did us a terrible turn.

Speaking of “original sin,” I saw a fascinating cartoon in the newspaper the other day. Adam is trying with all his might to vomit what he has eaten. And Eve is standing beside him with a worried expression saying, “Adam, hasn’t that apple you ate come out yet?” It was the kind of cartoon rarely seen nowadays. This present age has a variety of problems, but aside from these there is the basic problem of this cartoon: that apple—if only man could vomit it up!

We can say that true Buddhist *zazen* is the posture which re-gurgitates the apple we have eaten at that time. But just when was it we ate that apple? It is by no means in some remote mythical past. As we have said above, we are merely a conditioned existence (*engi*), a collection of such accidental factors as heredity, temporal and social environment, customs and educational ex-

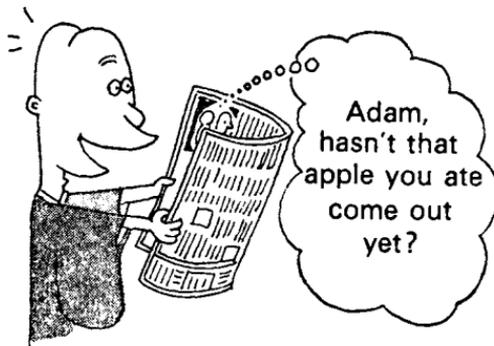


Figure 20.

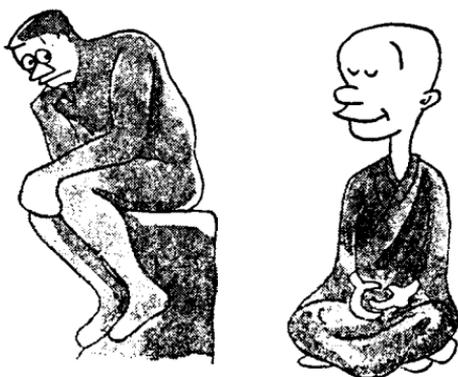
perience, along with age, temperature and humidity, physical strength and nutrition, etc. Yet in our ignorance we have attached the dignified label “self” to this aggregation, saying, “this is I,” and clinging tenaciously to this ego as though it were a fundamental and necessary being. But outside the power of this ego attachment where is the apple? We are eating that apple precisely here and now in the ignorance of our egotism.

Yet to vomit this apple is by no means an easy matter. Even if we understand that we have merely attached the label of “self” to an accidental aggregation, and that our egotism is without reason, and moreover that this attachment to ego is the source of evil, delusion and suffering and ought therefore to be given up—even if we understand all this, we cannot thereby vomit up the apple. For our ego attachment does not occur merely on the surface of consciousness; it is beyond our consciousness: we are, as it were, eating that apple deep within our subconscious. Indeed it may well be that in our very desire to throw up the apple the power of that apple’s poison is at work. Hence it does no good at all here to use one’s head; for it is precisely this using the head that is the problem.

The practice of zazen, discovered, developed, and perfected in the Orient, is an unique culture designed specifically to dissolve this lump of ignorant ego-attachment. Zazen abandons the self

to which is the product of our ignorance, egotistic thoughts as they press up from within, and assumes a posture which does not act with ego-attachment. We might say that *zazen* is the posture which here and now nails the sin-burdened body of Adam to the cross.

In regard to the actual posture of *zazen*, one puts his buttocks on a *zafu* (a small round cushion stuffed full of kapoc to give elevation to the hips), and then crosses the legs, placing first the right foot on the left thigh and then the left foot on the right thigh. For those who cannot cross both legs in this manner it is all right to only place the left foot on the right thigh. Then the right hand is placed on the left foot palm upward, and the left hand on the right hand so that the tips of the thumbs meet. The waist and spine should be erect, and one should sit as though pushing up on the sky with the back of the crown of the head. The mouth is closed tightly so that no air is held within, and the tongue is pressed firmly to the roof of the mouth. The eyes are kept open naturally, with line of vision falling a short distance in front. One should sit straight, leaning neither forward nor back, left nor right.



“The Thinker” is the posture of one given over to delusion.
 “Zazen” is the posture of one letting thought go.

Figure 21.

This posture is just the opposite of that of Rodin's "The Thinker." The Thinker's back, waist, legs and arms—even his fingers and toes—are all bent. To call such a form "The Thinker" sounds nice but actually it is the posture of one given over to delusion, peering into an internal hell. Unlike this posture, in zazen the body is straight. The blood descends from the head and there is calm. Ideas cease and the concoctions of the brain are dissolved. Thus when doing zazen one just sits, letting go of all thought. All that has been learned is given back to learning, all that is memorized, back to memory, all that has been thought is given back to thought. To let go of it all—that is the posture of zazen.

But we ought no to think that in zazen no thoughts occur at all, and that the head is just empty. As long as we live, even if we are doing zazen, it is quite natural for thoughts to occur. But the important thing is to let these thoughts come and go, without chasing them and without trying to drive them away. When a thought occurs, if you chase it, even though you are sitting in zazen, in fact you are busy thinking and not really doing zazen at all. So in zazen it is important not to follow up the thoughts that occur. Then oughtn't we to drive these thoughts from our head? If you try to do so you will be caught up in thinking, "Out with the thoughts, drive out the thoughts!" Rather, in zazen, without following thoughts and without driving them out, we simply sit with bones and muscles maintaining the correct posture. Simply sit straight leaving everything to zazen posture.

If you doze, again even though you keep the zazen posture, you are really just taking a nap; and not doing zazen at all. Even as zazen is not thinking, it is also not snoozing. The practice of zazen is just to sit with a singleness of spirit, keeping with bones and muscles the correct zazen posture.

Moreover it is of utmost importance in zazen not to reflect on yourself at all. To reflect on the results of your zazen, thinking, "I am calm," or "I am not calm." Such thoughts are not only irrelevant but they damage your zazen, and lead you completely

off the track. Zazen has nothing to do with thinking about results: one should simply sit intent on maintaining with bones and muscles the correct posture.

But you will perhaps feel quite unsatisfied with the prospect of not being able to observe yourself and see some results of your zazen. It is quite natural for you to feel this; for zazen casts aside that small self which seeks to be satisfied, and reveals the purity of life as life. The reality of immeasurable and unbounded life is not to satisfy your little desires. Yet only when you cast out all such ideas and let them go will your life find peace in the purity of full life. Only because of human thought and the delusion of being and non-being are our lives caught up in anxiety and dragged into suffering, conflict, hopelessness, and despair. Therefore, in the posture which lets go of our ideas we discover the absolute peace of life.

Yet this peace is not the cessation or extinction of life; it is not seclusion or escapism. On the contrary, the life of peace is the free realization of life, and not at all a loss of awareness. Rather the dependent origination is reflected itself, all reality as it is undisturbed by our ideas. It is like a clear mirror, which simply reflects all things just as they are, without clinging to any. In this way zazen is the actual practice of the middle way, detached from the views of existence and non-existence.

That this middle way is the true way of life can be seen even in our daily lives. Driving a car is one example. If we are lost in thought, if we are tense—if, that is, life is agitated by our ideas, then it will interfere with and make dangerous our driving. At the same time, it is also dangerous to drive while sleepily or drunk—that is, to drive when life is dull and unclear. But when we are neither agitated nor dull, when we are calm, alert and fully aware, then we can drive safely.

This kind of example from daily life allows us to understand concretely the zazen posture, the posture in which we realize most naturally and purely the power of our life.

6. | *The Religious Life of Zazen*

I. Zazen as Religion

Behind zazen there is the religion of Buddhism; and behind Buddhism there must be our own lives. Consequently true Buddhist zazen is not intended as a means to mental discipline or physical health. The idea that there is a mind to be trained and a body to be made healthy is one expression of the "view of existence," which as we have said, posits a variety of accumulable things. And the wish to train this body and mind is nothing but our own egoistic desire. For zazen as religion it is of primary concern precisely to cast out this ego-centered way of thinking which clings to body and mind.

Zazen, which lets go of all our human concepts, is the primary foundation of our lives; and as such, it watches over us, guides us and gives strength to our own lives and to society. This is the true picture of Buddhism as a religion. Therefore we can say that zazen is to the Buddhist, what God is to the Christian. In Psalms 46: 10 it is said, "Be still, and know that I am God," and zazen certainly actualizes it. Again, it is said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17: 20-21.) (See also Matthew 12: 28, Acts 17: 27-28, Romans 14: 17, First Corinthians 2: 9.) In zazen we can see directly this "kingdom of God" within us. In Matthew 6: 5-7 we have this passage:

5. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.
7. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathens do.”

There is no purer actual expression of this kind of attitude of prayer than zazen.

“Oh my Father . . . (not as I will, but) as thou wilt.” (Matthew 26: 39.)

“God be merciful to me a sinner.” (Luke 18: 13.)

“Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6: 9–10.)

This pure content of prayer is all included in the zazen form of prayer. Yet how can the zazen practiced by us who have fallen into sin contain that which approaches God Himself? This is possible as we shall see through the support of the religious vow and of repentance. To put it the opposite way, we may say that it is truly religious zazen, when it is practiced with the religious vow and repentance.

2. The Religious Vow

As we have said, zazen casts away desire. In letting go of desire we renounce all human arrogance before God. In this act we say, “As thou wilt,” and for the first time, “The works of God are made manifest.” (John 9: 3.)

Then in what form are the works of God manifest in zazen? This will be clear if we compare the way of life based on zazen with that based on other principles. Ordinarily we divide up the world into this and that on the basis of our thought. But to give up thought, to be free from thought, is to be prior to thought and hence to be before the separation of things into this and that. We can say then that when we are practicing zazen there is not yet any separation between now and eternity, or between the self and the world. This way of speaking may sound like mere theory; but for the man of zazen this is no logical deduction as such but a direct personal experience given in zazen.

Furthermore, to say that zazen is prior to the separation of things is not to say that in zazen we have no awareness. Because in zazen life is truly manifesting itself, all things are here reflected, and the self, here and now is fully apparent. But what does it mean to say that in zazen we are at once prior to the separation of things, and still do not lose sight of this self here and now? It means that this self—here and now—is eternity, the world, all life.

This is a remarkable thing. For here again we are not speaking of a logical identity: zazen actually *is* this identity; and because it is, in practicing zazen we can come to an immediate experience of the self as the Person (Persona) in which now and eternity are united. Hence living the religion of zazen is a fact of how the self as the Personified union of now and eternity is actually to work in the everyday world. That is, to live watched over and guided by zazen is to live for freedom from the desires which are always rampaging within us, and at the same time to act in such a way

that now and eternity are one.

Since we take that which precedes division as the truth, we will not conjure up the objects of desire, or opponents and competitors. So long as we follow this way we will not labor under the burdens of greed, impatience, and jealousy; we will not cheat, deceive, wound and kill one another: rather, keeping to the true self, we will rest in perfect peace. Yet at the same time we will make unceasing effort; for we are working toward the realization of that vital and immediate self in which now and eternity are united.

Here is found our life as *Persona*, a life in which we proceed while in peace, and in peace as we proceed. The Zen master Dogen calls this way the unity of training and enlightenment (*shushōichinyō*). It is indeed the structure of the realization of life.

Dogen says, "The Buddha's activity is the same as that of the entire earth and all sentient beings. If it is not in accordance with all things, it is not the Buddha's activity." (*Shōbōgenzō*, Yuibutsu Yobutsu). This teaching, which forms the basis of the everyday life of the zazen student is for one doing true zazen, not merely theoretical; he confirms it as an actual experience, and puts it to work in the world. To act in accordance with the entire earth and with all sentient beings is for the zazen student at once the course of his whole life, and at the same time his direction here and now. This way of living is what Buddhism calls the Vow (*Seigan*).

Although I have spoken above of zazen as religion, and have included passages from the Bible, it should be pointed out that in this life of living according to a vow, the way of zazen is quite different from Christian religious life. For in Buddhism there is no notion of sacrifice. What the Christian does in the spirit of sacrifice, the Buddhist does on the basis of his Vow. In sacrifice "I" and "thou" are first separated, and then "I" is given over to the service of "thou." But in Buddhism there is no "I-thou" distinction, but only one life prior to division. Thus we may say that the encounter between "I" and "thou" is like that between a mother and her child.

The mother does not deny herself for the sake of her child: rather, in watching over the child she is caring for her own life. The *Lotus Sutra* says, “The three worlds are my possessions, and the sentient beings therein are all my children.” This is the essential spirit of Buddhism; and the source of this kind of spirit is nothing other than the zazen practice which precedes all distinctions.

For he who sits zazen by the vow sees in all encounters—whether with things, events, persons, or societies—nothing but his own life. Hence he works with the spirit with which he takes care of his own life. Therefore like the mother’s efforts for her child, he offers only untiring service, asking no condition and seeking no return.

We treat things with care, devote ourselves to our work, love those we encounter, and take concern for society—never for greed or fame. We just take care of our own life, and in doing so are working to let the flower of our life bloom and the light of the Buddha shine on every different occasion. This is the meaning of the Buddha’s activity in accordance with the earth and all beings; and for the one who sits zazen it is at once the aim of his everyday activity and the avowed goal of his entire life. This way of the vow becomes our own through zazen.

3. Repentance

Though in zazen we are pointing toward the Buddha's activity, our own acts are by no means the perfect action of the Buddha. To think that we have achieved perfect action is simply to commit a sin of arrogance before zazen. For this thought is, after all, nothing but our own human judgement. But if we have taken the vow of zazen we cannot help but repent for our failure to bring it to full fruition.

Yet if we say, "I'm sorry. I have failed," will the matter be over? No; before the absolute this will not do. A pickpocket may say before the gang boss, "I'm sorry, I blew it." A soldier may say before the court martial, "I'm sorry, I wasn't brave enough to kill the enemy." This kind of apologizing is only based on some relative standard appropriate to the situation. Before the Absolute it is meaningless.

True repentance is not apology; it is to stand sinful before the absolute and to let the light of the Absolute shine on one. What does it mean to let the light of the Absolute shine? In the Kanfugen Bosatsu Gyōbō Kyō (*Samantabhadra Bodhisattva Dhya Sutra*) it is said, "When one wishes to repent, he should sit in zazen and



To say "I'm sorry, I blew it," before the absolute is meaningless.

Figure 22.

meditate on the true nature of all things.” That is, simply doing zazen is itself the realization of true repentance.

We who sit zazen take a vow in zazen which gives the direction to our lives, and at the same time in our acts of repentance we return to this zazen. Thus the life of repentance and the vow, watched over, guided and given strength by zazen is the Buddhist’s religious life. Without the vow there would be no advancement; without repentance one would lose the way. The vow gives us courage; repentance crushes our conceit—our religious life must take this kind of vivid living.

4. The Bodhisattva—Three Minds

One who finds the direction of his life in *zazen* and at the same time lives by repentance in *zazen* is called a *Bosatsu* (Bodhisattva). A *Bosatsu* is an ordinary man who has found the direction of his life in the Buddha—i.e. in *zazen*. Yet, though he is an ordinary man, to the extent that he lives by his vow the meaning of his life is completely changed. Hence he is called “one living by vows” (*ganshō no bosatsu*), as distinguished from the man lives his karma (*gosshō no bonpu*). Therefore we needn’t deprecate ourselves saying, “I am but a common man and hence unqualified to be a bodhisattva.” Because we are ordinary men we possess this actually living earthly body; but because we seek the direction of the Buddha (i.e. *zazen*) we can make our effort in peace. Consequently, without reserve, we who practice *zazen* strive to be Bodhisattvas. In the *Tenzo Kyōkun* (*Instructions in Refectory Duties*), Dogen Zenji speaks of the spirit of the Bodhisattva’s actual life in terms of the Three Minds (*Sanshin*): the Great Mind (*Daishin*), of Tenderness (*Roshin*), and of Joy (*Kishin*). This teaching forms a truly fitting conclusion to what we have been discussing.

The great mind is the mind which as we have said, does not discriminate. I like this, I don’t like that; I want that, I don’t want this without making these kinds of distinctions, the man of the great mind sees everything as equally his own life; for everything he encounters exists within his own personal experience. Yes, my life does not exist only within this one human body, in the pulsation of its heart. My life can only be in every experience, in every activity of living. The expression of life as life is revealed in every experience of encounter. Therefore in Buddhism to say the self settles in itself is to say the Universe settles in itself. The mind which sees the self and all things as one, which does not discriminate but sees every encounter as his own life, and which, however it may falter, seeks always to manifest this life—this is the *Bosatsu*’s great mind.

The great mind naturally functions as the mind of tenderness. The mind of tenderness is that attitude with which the parent looks after the child with care and attention to every detail. As we have said above, while zazen makes no distinctions, this is not a loss of awareness: rather it is constant awareness of the living present. How are we to express here and now as an eternal and universal way of being? To this we must pay strict attention. That is, in his way of life, the man who practices zazen shows in every encounter thoughtfulness, consideration, and sympathy, working to let the flower of life bloom. This is the mind of parental tenderness.

In this mind of tenderness there is life's true value—the mind of joy. The joyful mind is not the excited joy of desire: rather it is the vital enthusiasm and sense of one's own worth which one finds in the care given to every encounter. It is said that a woman first becomes an adult and knows the worth of her life in motherhood. Similarly we first discover true joy, worth, and passion—first become adults—when each encounter becomes our own life, our own child to be watched over with care. Great mind, tenderness, and joy—these three minds are the sure possession of the Bosatsu who seeks the Way of the Buddha.

To conclude what we have said we must think once again of modern civilization and the question of human progress. As we said at the very beginning, human progress is by no means the same as the advancement of natural science, nor does it follow the path of the progress of scientific civilization. Rather, does not man's progress rest on the question of how each man is to become an adult? But look at the state of men today. They are completely at the mercy of their desires, work only out of selfishness, do nothing but berate and injure one another quite like a bunch of children.

What does it mean for present day man to become an adult? As I have just said, it is nothing but his becoming a Bosatsu—one who sees his own child in every encounter, watches over that child with care, and finds his joy and passion in this activity. When

the world becomes a world of Bodhisattva-adults, in which we watch over, care for, and work for each other, man will have come of age, and we can rightly say there has been human progress. I suggest that this image of the Bosatsu, who is watched over and guided by zazen, who lives by his vow and repentance in zazen, is an ideal essential for the coming age. What do you think?