

The Method of Zen: A Scientist's Experience and Consideration

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PREFACE

I have long been in search for the truth of life, although I have not always been aware of it. When I look back, all the joys and struggles in my life have been directed, consciously or unconsciously, toward searching for the meaning of life. During this search I happened to encounter Zen. Zen has shaken me from the core of my being to fundamentally change my mental world.

In this book I will try to describe as faithfully as possible the experience of my Zen practice under the guidance of Master Kido Inoue, the Head of Shôrinkutsu Dôjô. The uniqueness of this book lies in my face-to-face dialogues with the Zen Master, and the personal commentaries and comments I include concerning my experience, from the standpoint of a natural scientist,.

There is an extensive basic literature on Zen: essays such as *Shôbôgenzô* (Treasury of the True *Dharma* Eye, by Dôgen) sermons and biography of Zen masters like the *Rinzai-roku* [The Records of Rinzai (Chinese: Lin-chi)]; lectures on classic Zen literature such as *Hekiganshû Teishôroku* (Lecture on the *Hekiganroku*, by Tôin Iida), which were written by Zen masters or their disciples. However, Zen masters, except for a few, carefully avoided describing the actual method of Zen practice because they feared that practitioners might misunderstand it without their practical guidance. Many books about Zen have been published in English also since Daisetz Suzuki (1870-1966) introduced Zen to the West. However, there is no English-language book that describes the actual method of Zen practice in a style recording a beginner's progress. In this book I will try to describe that which I have learned from Zen master, Kido Rôshi.

The reader may be able to form some idea about what Zen and Zen practice are. I should caution the reader, however, that without actual guidance by a true Zen Master, the practitioner will never be able to practice Zen properly, even by following the Zen practice described in this book.

Some readers may recognize the implicit message of this book pointing to the unlimited roles Zen can play in various fields to liberate mankind in the 21st century, not only in philosophy, psychology, and education, but also in the natural sciences, especially brain research. The reader may also take this book as a warning of the limits on the intellect regarding our mental soundness and the limitations of Western philosophy as a basis for modern civilization.

Based upon its universality and empirical proof, Zen seems to hold a shining spot in mankind's spiritual history for these 2,500 years. I would be especially pleased if thoughtful and leading persons in their particular fields who are deeply concerned about the future of mankind would endeavor to awaken to this enlightenment unattainable through Western philosophy or modern science.

Atsunobu Tomomatsu

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. Japanese words are expressed in alphabet by using the Hepburn system.
2. The symbol ^ indicates a long vowel: ô and û are pronounced similarly to the “a” and “oo” in English words “law” and “pool,” respectively.
3. The names of Chinese were inscribed according to Hisao Inagaki, *A Glossary of Zen Terms*, Nagatabunshôdô Co. Kyoto, 1995, in which in romanizing Chinese characters, a slightly modified Wade-Giles system is used.
4. Japanese names are inscribed in an order of the given name and then the family name although the way of inscription in Japanese is reverse order.
5. Abbreviations: c = Chinese, j = Japanese.

THE FIRST DAY—UNEXPECTED QUESTIONS

Early in the morning I left Tokyo heading west on a *shinkansen* (bullet train) and changed to a local train at the city of Mihara in Hiroshima Prefecture. I am getting closer to the *dôjô*. It was October 5, 1990.

It took no less than three months to ask Master Kido Inoue for permission to practice Zen at his *dôjô* Shôrinkutsu. Although reading a book written by him inspired me with the desire to practice Zen under his guidance, I hesitated to telephone him. I was intimidated. Still, the way he answered questions from Zen practitioners as described in the terrifying yet impressive dialogues recorded in the book moved me greatly.

Looking back at the time when I was working as a visiting research fellow with an international organization in the United States, I really couldn't get used to either work or the lifestyle there. Consequently, I nearly had a nervous breakdown. Even after returning to Japan, the symptoms did not go away. I couldn't relax, my daily life slowly giving rise to a sense of desperation.

I am a natural scientist. I believe that every human being is endowed with an intellect capable of thinking clearly by viewing matters carefully and objectively. However, I wonder if man's intellect is capable of maintaining a sound mind? "What are the limits of human intelligence?" The more confused I became, the more I doubted the capabilities of the human intellect. I really did not know what to do with myself. It was too much for me.

The human mind is complicated and made up of many aspects. One aspect wants to escape its own mental and emotional difficulties; another aspect wants to engage in various good-willed activities; and there's a combative spirit vying to establish superiority over others. For me, all of these were in constant conflict. On top of this was the strong need to thoroughly investigate who I was. And it was this

need alone that barely held me together.

I was poring over books almost at random in order to deepen my understanding of the fundamentals of the human mind. Every time I felt mentally exhausted, I would reflexively put a book in my hand. However, the more I read, the wearier I became, and the less flexible my thinking became. Arthur Schopenhauer, a German philosopher, wrote in his book *Parerga und Paralipomena* in 1851 that picking up a book whenever you have some free time is the best method to prevent the development of your own thoughts. He goes on to say that other people's thoughts take away one's own clear judgment, bringing about one's own psychological disorders. At that time, I did indeed seem to be suffering from this "brain ulcer" because I had almost completely lost both clarity of mind and the ability to make sound judgment.

During that time, I happened to find at the biggest bookshop in Tokyo an unusual book, *Zen Practitioners' Record: Practice Zen This Way*. It was just a book recording the experiences of several Zen practitioners, but I could somehow relate to them and became intensely fascinated by the soul-inspiring dialogues between the practitioners and the Master. The Master's recorded words that touched me the most were "This very moment is already enough."

The religion of my family is Buddhism (Shin Jôdo Shû: the New Pure Land school), but I had rarely been interested in religion of any kind. In fact, I was nearly disgusted by religion. The way religious doctrine was forced on people was just unacceptable. Not only that, blindly worshipping a God or Buddha was simply beyond my logical understanding. Despite these general feelings about religion, this book was inspiring! I do remember, though, skimming through some Zen Buddhist literature written by Daisetz Suzuki and Kitarô Nishida in my high school days. The great ancient Zen Masters in this literature were vivid, fresh, and free of fixed ideas.

Their unique character was attractive and seemed worthy of trust. I thought Zen, through unification of the mind, could be the way of overcoming the self. But I never thought that one day I myself would be practicing Zen.

In the evening when I encountered the book, having finished reading it in one sitting, I was convinced there was something exceptional about Zen. The fact that Zen was unlike other religions, which require a blind faith in a supreme being or God, appealed to me most. Scientific thinking and blind faith were just irreconcilable. So I immediately decided to begin practicing Zen.

The train left Mihara, a small city overlooking the Inland Sea of Japan, and reached Tadanoumi Station about 25 minutes later. An incredibly huge steel tower with outstretching power lines identified the small country town. A hardy-looking monk from the *dôjô* who appeared to be about 30 years old greeted me at the station with his palms joined in prayer. He drove me in a car until we reached a Buddhist temple named Shô-un-ji. In the front of the temple was a stonewall that reminded me of a Japanese castle. It looked as though it had a distinguished history.

Shôrinkutsu *Dôjô*, a small structure located behind the temple, was surrounded by bamboo groves and mountains. I was ushered to the Buddhist altar. Depending on one's perspective, the *dôjô* looked poor and simple, much like a plain, ordinary home. Void of the usual majestic-looking temple décor, it seemed in its own way very easy for a beginner to get used to the building and atmosphere.

Ten minutes later another Buddhist monk appeared. This was Kido Inoue *Rôshi*. He looked younger than I had expected. This was a little surprising since I had been expecting to see an older, more venerable-looking priest. But I was impressed by his fearless appearance. Judging from his manner, I wouldn't have been one bit surprised if he had punched me there on the spot.

After exchanging a few words of introduction, I could hear footsteps in a nearby hallway.

“This is a good opportunity to meet her. I'll introduce her now.”

Kido *Rôshi* called the person out from behind the Japanese sliding doors. A woman Zen practitioner appeared without a sound, opening the door quietly, and introduced herself. But I couldn't quite hear her name.

She was kneeling down Japanese style in the hallway and spoke to me with her head lowered and palms joined together. Her neat and delicate beauty surprised me. This may well be the epitome of elegance, I thought. I had never met a person with such profound composure. I felt at a loss and imagined she represented this region's standard of refinement. After a brief introduction the woman disappeared like the wind.

Kido *Rôshi* then immediately started explaining about Zen practice at the *dôjô*. What he taught was just as I had expected from reading the book. Yet, his talk was so true-to-life and compelling that it somehow intensely motivated me to practice.

He explained the five essential elements of Zen practice at Shôrinkutsu *Dôjô*.

I. When sitting at the *zendô* (meditation hall), just give your absolute and undivided attention to breathing. Concentrate with your entire being only on breathing, Cut off the *habitual mind*, which causes scattered and random thinking, as soon as you notice it arising.

The state of mind where random thoughts no longer arise is called *sokkon* (“absolute present”), or *Now*. The absolute present is the world *as it is*: just as one sees, hears, and experiences without the intervention of any thought, discrimination,

or consideration of any kind. The mental activities of thought, discrimination, and consideration commence being triggered by a single movement of the mind in response to activity of the sense fields. Due to the function of successive and continuous mental activity started in this way, the real world becomes an abstraction based on words and concepts. It is a world of after-the-fact.

Man lives in a relationship with his environment. This relationship initiates at the moment we receive stimuli through seeing, hearing, and feeling. This is known as the operation of the senses. Man's distress and delusion arise from such personal opinions as hatred and ill feeling towards others, which are sparked by the working of the senses. In other words, man's distress and delusion are created by the *habitual mind* characterized by the impulsive and unnoticed linking of ideas that arise compulsively and unconsciously.

Zen is the world where all such habits have disappeared. It is the world of unrestricted activity where response to the environment is always fresh, vivid, clear of all restrictions, and free of conceptualization and discrimination. It is the world of salvation. To awaken to this world is the purpose of Zen. Through the persistent effort to preserving and maintaining the present moment, Zen practice breaks the habit of linking thoughts, which causes distress and delusion,.

Many different words are used to explain the absolute present: *shikan* (*single-mindedness*), *samadhi*, *absorption*, the *true mind*, *Now*, etc. All of these point to the reality of the present moment. Strictly speaking, *single-mindedness* is "Man's free and undefiled activity just *as it is*." It is sole activity *as it is* at the absolute present where no thoughts intervene. *Single-minded* breathing is, for instance, the state where the breathing itself is doing the breathing, with no thoughts intervening. *Samadhi* is the condition where the mind is occupied only by the functioning senses—a state free of conception and miscellaneous thought. *Absorption* is the unified mind undivided by thoughts or notions. *True mind* is the mind without thought or with thoughtless thought. Although nuances may subtly

differ, all of these point from different perspectives to the absolute present. They should be understood as the same.

II. In *zazen* (“sitting Zen”) each time you breathe, turn your upper body from side to side.

Man is easily manipulated by thoughts and soon loses sight of the present moment. We can decisively and forcibly bring ourselves back to the *true mind* by turning our upper body from side to side after each breath. While sitting in the *zazen* posture it is easier to cut off random thinking by concentrating on the breathing. However, in maintaining the same posture for a lengthy period of time a kind of constricting, local, or *polarizing* fatigue naturally arises from the strain of sitting. In brief, stiffness settles in the shoulders and back, arms and legs, etc. This *polarizing* fatigue not only makes *zazen* physically impossible, but lowers the quality of *zazen* by reducing the energy necessary to endeavor.

Consciously and tenaciously turning left and right neutralizes this harmful *polarizing* fatigue and protects against drowsiness to maintain a sound physical condition. In short, it insures sharpness of mind. The main purpose of turning left and right is to promptly discover and immediately discard random thinking, and to return to our true selves.

III. Don't unreasonably endure fatigue during *zazen*.

Zazen is neither a form of penance nor the practice of austerities. It is the “Easy Gate to the *Dharma* (Law of Buddha).” *Zazen* should not be wearisome, but should be approached in a fresh physical state with an animated spirit. To master the mind, it is absolutely necessary to preserve the present moment *as it is*. Not a moment of negligence can be permitted. When physically or mentally tired, it is

difficult to maintain the clarity of the present moment. Therefore, when fatigue arises, it is best to leave the *zendô* (meditation hall) and return to your room for a rest. When overly tired one's *zazen* becomes half-hearted and dull. If your legs hurt while sitting, it is all right to adjust your sitting position. Or you can do *kinhin* ("slowly and *single-mindedly* walking") in the *zendô*. You should not tolerate pain needlessly.

IV. Zen practice in activity should be done slowly and distinctly, in order not to lose the present moment. Decrease the speed of your movements to one-tenth their usual speed.

Zen practice can be divided into two types: practice in activity, which encompasses all the activity in one's daily life; and *zazen* (the practice of quiet sitting). The main point of Zen practice—which is carried out in every action of our daily lives—is to preserve the present moment. Therefore, no distinction is made between the Zen of activity and Zen of quiet sitting.

Comparatively speaking, it is generally easier to preserve the present moment during sitting Zen. At Shôrinkutsu Dôjô, until a practitioner has a firm grasp on maintaining the present moment, sitting Zen is strongly emphasized. And when doing some activity—for example: *single-minded* walking, eating, or cleaning—one's total and clear attention is given to the activity itself. This is "Zen in activity." Each action itself is the present *as it is*. Zen practice in activity is performing each action very slowly so that the *habitual mind* does not intervene in the present moment, or act slowly in order to recognize quickly the instant that it does. This is the purpose of slowing yourself down. When we are no longer manipulated by unperceived mechanical or unconscious behavior, we can personally experience the manifestation of what is called "*Dropping-off*," "*Satori*," or "Enlightenment." *Dropping-off* is, "the absolute condition of Perfect Freedom."

V. Whenever questions arise about your practice, immediately bring them to your Master.

In practicing Zen you may encounter new experiences, uncover new insights, and at times even go through uncertainty and anguish. Various problems or doubts may arise preventing you from concentrating wholeheartedly on the present moment. Whenever such things arise, go to the Master to inquire about the Way. Inquiring in such a way is called *dokusan*. At Shôrinkutsu one can have *dokusan* anytime, day or night. Without *dokusan*, one's Zen practice does not steadily ripen. *Dokusan* is especially important at the outset of one's Zen practice.

Rôshi said if we practice in this manner, we can definitely transcend all of our *concerns*. He said that because each and every thing already is exactly *as it is*, anybody can realize this reality if his practice is correct. The reason we don't see and hear things just as they are is because unnecessary mental activity such as discriminatory thinking intervenes creating a “*gap*” between ourselves and the thing itself. This *gap* is the source of all of our *concerns*. It also prevents us from concentrating. Theoretically, I may have understood this mental mechanism. However, I could not really grasp what he meant by *concerns*. One's own *concerns* are impossible to perceive by oneself, he said. I had many *concerns* that I couldn't eliminate, and it was after I could manage to preserve the present moment that I could perceive and begin to eliminate them one by one in my daily life.

My only interest was how to resolve this *gap* created by unperceived mental habits. *Rôshi* explained that the only way to do this is to utterly become the thing itself, or to become the present reality. If you really become the thing itself,

the *gap* no longer remains and the division disappears. All unnecessary mental phenomena (all of which are generated by the *gap*) naturally disappear. This state of utterly being one with the thing is called *shikan* or *sokkon*. By following the above five essential elements of Zen practice you can become one with your present reality *as it is*.

Until now everything for me had just been reasoning piled upon reasoning. As I had read *Rôshi's* book beforehand, I had understood his explanation of everything quite well (except for the meaning of “absolute present”). Indeed, it seemed that the present moment could only be grasped by Zen practice itself. This matter had nothing to do with intellectual understanding. In this world of the present moment words and concepts are irrelevant. This I understood by reading his book. I hadn't come here for a theoretical explanation. I came to find out what Zen actually is. And actual practice was the only way to find out.

Through *Rôshi's* teaching, the way to resolve my mental and spiritual torment had been revealed. While I had thought Zen to be some incomprehensible, abstract, and mysterious religious teaching, I was astonished that *Rôshi's* teaching was not only concise, but also scientific and universal. I am a natural scientist. In my field, rationality, objectivity, and hard facts are essential factors in basic understanding. Based upon its universality and empirical proof, Zen has been transmitted from one Zen master to another for these 2,500 years.

“*Zazen* is empirical psychology based on actual practice, actual investigation, and actual proof. Do you understand the true nature of this one breath?”

“You must not be mistaken about this point. Scientifically speaking, breathing is the operation of the respiratory organs. But breathing is momentary function itself.”

“In other words, breathing is only function, without any nature or character of its own.”

“Breathing is mysterious but essential existence-without-existence, which has the direct link to our lives. It is something utterly beyond our intellectual comprehension.”

“Do you know why?”

This question surprised me. Had it ever been considered to investigate the matter of one's existence by linking it directly to the present act of breathing?

It is obvious that one's life depends on breathing. But what *Rôshi* was saying had nothing to do with scientific understanding. *Rôshi* mentioned that although breathing exists as function it has no substantiality. This, *Rôshi* said, must be investigated by and within each of us. This kind of inquiry is unknown at least in Western philosophy and probably in other religious teaching as well. It is just a matter of breathing. Nonetheless, *Rôshi* asked me to investigate this most ordinary function in this way. And within this fabric, I thought I had been able to at least steal a glimpse of the incomparable profundity of Zen.

“This one breath we take is the reality of the present moment. It is the phenomenal world *as it is*, totally distinct from the world of words and concepts. In other words, we ourselves are already an undeniably natural function in the present moment beyond human thought. There are none of the intellectual products woven by theoretical concepts. Theory is merely an explanation of function. But function exists only at each moment. The reality of this one breath is *shikan*. We are already in the world of *shikan* from the beginning.”

“When this fact is clear to you, you realize there is nothing more to do. In other words, there is no self to recognize and there is nothing to

realize. It is the world of the thing *as it is*.”

“You will see this is where the settlement lies. All notions based on intellectual and conceptual expansion drop away. You are liberated from them and get perfect freedom. This is called the Buddha's salvation, or ‘*Dropping-off* of mind and body’.”

“What has to be done in order to clarify this?”

There was nothing to say—and no way to reply. In investigating the character of natural laws, the natural sciences deal with tangible objects in the natural world. Because natural law does deal objectively with real-world objects, it can be proven clearly through experimentation. In Zen, though, the mind is the object of investigation. You yourself must give personal evidence by clarifying your spiritual world on your own. And until you have attained absolute confidence, you have to continually and persistently investigate. Moreover, if your attainment differs in the slightest from that of the ancient great Zen Masters, then it isn't the “real thing.”

Transcending everything means everything disappears. “Selflessness” is the term used to point symbolically to that world where any *concerns* disappears. There is a profound realization when you've actually evidenced for yourself the objective truth of not-existing-while-existing. This is called “Awakening” or “*Satori*.” It is a personal proof of the “Great Matter” of causality.

I thought the spiritual task of actually proving this to be absurdly difficult. First of all, I had to realize by myself the world of “no self to recognize and nothing to realize,” the world *as it is*, and the world of *sokkon*—the state of mind where random thoughts no longer arise. Moreover, I had to give personal proof of its reality without thinking and consideration, but by using this body and mind of my own. Utilizing thought would only be confusing: however, it would be impossible to be unconscious.

I wondered if consciousness of unconsciousness could be the clue to the practice.

Then, as that thought arose, all operation of theoretical thought vanished. I had just become both the experimenter and the object of inquiry.

“It is simple. Just become one with the breath.”

“If you become one with the breath, it will teach itself to you.”

“See, it's the same with the sense of taste. It's impossible to know the taste of something only through logical reasoning, because the taste itself does not exist there.”

“If you want to know the taste of something, then you just have to eat it.”

“The taste of the food teaches itself to you.”

“Do you understand! Don't try to analyze it scientifically.”

“Forget yourself by becoming one with the breath with all your might.”

One can attain the state of “*as it is*” just by becoming one with the breath. “*As-it-is*” cannot be understood logically. It is impossible to reach the state of “*as it is*” just by thinking with words. “*As-it-is*” must lie outside the framework of logical thinking.

Kido *Rôshi*'s talk was very interesting. He purposely stimulated my scientific intellect using specific words and idioms. I became interested in *as-it-ness*, a state which is impossible to objectify as a scientist. I vowed to uncover the 2,500 years old mystery of Zen. Just as Kitarô Nishida committed himself to practice Zen under the guidance of Zen Master Setsumon at Sunshin'an in Kyoto and Daisetz Suzuki knocked on the doors of Kôsen Imakita and Sô-en Shaku at

Enkaku-ji temple in Kamakura, I would do the same under Master Kido Inoue. Just as Kitarô Nishida and Daisetz Suzuki approached Zen through the study of philosophy, so would I with the assistance of the logic and experimentation of the natural sciences.

I wondered if I would reach the peaceful state of mind of *as-it-isness*, or get lost in a labyrinth of mysterious Zen concepts. My intellectual curiosity, the prerequisite quality possessed by all researchers, was stimulated all the more with the marvelous technique of the Zen Master. The only thing left to do was to verify the results through experimentation. I was eager to take on this new proposition.

The journey of this scientist looking for the state of *as-it-isness* began like this, even though it was a pretty shaky start.

I borrowed a set of clothes from Kido *Rôshi*. It consisted of some outerwear with padded sleeves and a long skirt for traditional Japanese archery. I had never worn such clothing before. After putting them on, another monk escorted me to the *zendô*. The *zendô* was a shabby sort of building that looked possibly like it had been converted from a private house. That was all that I could observe at the time, but the beautiful scenery of mountains beyond the window seemed too idyllic for Zen.

“There are many ways of sitting and rules for doing *zazen* passed down from ancient times, but we do not rigorously observe them. You can pick them up later by yourself. If you legs are tired, you can sit cross-legged or whatever way that’s comfortable for you.”

He explained to me a very simple way of doing *zazen*. He did not give me complicated instruction or other detailed rules that restrict the practitioner.

“Just throw out all thoughts of good and bad, and only concentrate on the breath. Become so close to your breathing that no thoughts have any space to arise. It's the world of things as they are.”

“When you are doing *single-minded* walking, just put all your attention on the soles of your feet. Just becoming one with the action and not allowing other thoughts to intervene is the secret. The entire body walking is the state of walking itself.”

In the *zendô* he actually showed how it should be done. *Single-minded* walking is walking slowly around the *zendô* in sort of half-steps. There were no wasted words in his explanation, and I understood what he said very well. “It surely is the thing itself. There is nothing more to it.” The figure of this man utilizing his entire body when he walked revealed his true level of Zen attainment. He must be a very wise person.

I entered the *zendô* just after 3 p.m. I breathed out slowly until I had no more air left in my lungs. Then air entered the lungs naturally. I did not think unnecessary things were coming to my mind. I felt a mysterious stillness of heart. Breathing seemed a natural function of the body. “Does this natural stillness of breath I feel mean I am already natural?” “Does this sense of stillness belong in the category of thought?” At that time, I couldn't answer these questions.

“This is not the time for abstract cognition; it is just at a hindrance. If you explain nature using words or concepts, it only transforms this meaningful experience into some inorganic, non-living matter. Isn't such epistemology the cause of an impure mind?”

It seemed that the phenomenon of breathing as a living reality itself had nothing to do with cognition. Not only this respiratory movement of the body, but

all the phenomena that take place in our bodies seem to be separate from cognition. I realized later that this discovery was very important.

At Shôrinkutsu, wooden clappers are used to call us to the dining room for meals. The clappers rang just after 6 p.m. and everybody gathered in the dining room.

“No thoughts are arising,” I timidly reported to *Rôshi* at dinner.

“That's impossible! You are just being carried away by thoughts, but you aren't aware of it!”

On hearing what I said he refused to believe my observations immediately. I didn't actually mean to say that no thoughts were arising. I only meant that my head wasn't full of thoughts. It was only natural that *Rôshi* didn't accept my observation. If I could have controlled my mind that easily, there would be no need to come to the *dôjô* to do this painful practice. Having come to practice *zazen* was a sign that a person was suffering from some psychological dilemmas and had countless incorrigible mental habits.

A fact I found out later was that *Rôshi* closely checks all of the practitioners from various angles. It is quite obvious to him whether or not a practitioner is at one with all his actions. In retrospect, I wasn't completely at one with mine. My mind was terribly diffused. On top of this, believing that no thoughts were arising was a telling sign that I was not really aware of myself. This really took me by surprise later and it made me worry about, with this meager capacity for self-awareness, how much of the truth of myself I would be able to uncover. Our cognition is looser and rougher than what we think. We call this shabby cognition “intelligence” or “rationality” and believe that our self-judgment is absolute. This

is totally absurd.

“If you are finished eating, sit comfortably. You’ve been sitting in an unnatural position in the *zendô* for a long time, so just sit comfortably now. Whenever possible, don’t senselessly try to endure pain.”

Rôshi told this to us after the meal. I was thankful for such thoughtful and humane instruction. After every meal he would have us relax. He also thoroughly checked how our practice was going and gave us additional instruction. It was always like this at the end of meals. You could ask whatever questions you wanted and he would answer until you were satisfied. I would make the most of these opportunities. It was a very meaningful time and place for me.

When one understands one fact, the human mind seems to prompt three more questions. For *Rôshi*, this must have been a trying time. But for me, the practice of Zen was a “scientific experiment” putting my own mind on the table. I posed questions utterly as if the extrapolated experimental data didn’t add up. I didn’t want half-baked reason. If his replies were insufficient or if his talks seemed nonsensical, I was ready to run out of the *dôjô* at any time. This was not the question of the Master’s competence; Zen itself was suspect to me.

“You can ask questions *after* you have sat Zen wholeheartedly! Don’t ask stupid questions now. Just practice Zen!”

This dissolved my foolish stubbornness, and I was forced to return to the *zendô*. Question and answer time was over. Everything was taken away from me. I felt at the same time both half-defeated and half-refreshed as I walked mindfully step-by-step toward the *zendô*.

“I want to rest a little more....”

I returned to my room around ten that evening. I couldn't fall asleep and had a restless night. I later learned that this was due to *polarizing* fatigue. It made me realize the importance of twisting the upper body from side to side after each breath to help relieve tension and tiredness.

THE SECOND DAY—BECOMING ONE WITH MY BREATHING

I started doing *zazen* before seven a.m.. but my back and shoulders were in pain, so I performed some stretching exercises in the *zendô* before resuming *zazen*.

With all my might I breathed in, then out. Breathe in, breathe out.

I continued doing this and occasionally did “*kinhin*,” slowly and *single-mindedly* walking, when I became tired.

At times I heard some noise, but nobody seemed to be coming into the *zendô*.

It was very difficult just to do the simple act of purely breathing one breath, not to mention doing it over and over again. It was not something you could do anything about since it had nothing to do with thinking. I was prone to forgetting the reason or purpose of trying to be one with each breath. And even before I would notice, my thoughts would be elsewhere. And I wouldn't even realize that I was in the middle of thinking because I was so absorbed in it. So entrenched is this *habitual mind* that not even effort or volition can rein it in. I would return to the present one breath only to find myself straying into thinking again. I was just repeating this recurring cycle over and over again.

There must be some sort of a powerful mechanism of the mind that habitually repeats the same pattern or action, an intellectual control mechanism that inhibits functions such as volition, resolution, and fortitude. I just had to firmly hold onto breathing to keep from straying into thought.

I asked after breakfast, “I know when breathing becomes simple and clear, thoughts don't really get involved at all. How then can I *simply* breathe?”

“To do it clearly and *simply* you just do it clearly and *simply*.”

“If you don't do it like that, there is no way that you can do it.”

“There is no result without the cause.”

At this point intellectual thinking jumped in. Just doing it the way you are told to do seemed stupid. Wouldn't that just be intellectual suicide? The intellect does not really allow you to just follow instructions obediently. Like a parent trying to coerce a rebellious child into listening, the intellect requires a “why” when being told to do something.

The intellect does not accept the logic of “To do it clearly and *simply* you just do it clearly and *simply*.” The intellect demands reasons. It is true that man's intelligence has brought about his own intellectual development. The intellect continues to repeat doubts and logical explanations for everything. This is both the strength of intelligence, as well as its weakness. The intellect indulges in intellectual satisfaction but only has limited powers over human aesthetic sentiments and virtues. The reason why intelligence cannot control human action, after all, lies here. If humans rely too much on intelligence, the gap between what he says and does widens. The contradiction of academics lies here in caricature. The intellect is not always without flaw.

Zen does not allow this kind of intellectual rebellion. Whether or not you can just follow the instructions “To do it clearly and simply, you just do it clearly and simply” is the crossroads of putting Zen into action or just searching for intellectual satisfaction. The reason why a person cannot just do a thing is due to his or her “insistence on things.”

The root of restriction on human behavior lies in his “insistence on things.” The essence of Zen lies where you can just *simply* do the thing. In the domain of “just” or “simply” one has unlimited power. A man is free of all restraints when he *just* does things without miscellaneous or idle thoughts.

Rôshi’s advice was to keep concentrating on the breath, without arguing the question of which comes first, the chicken or the egg. But I couldn’t accept the fact that there was nothing more to it. There must be something more behind preserving and becoming a single, simple action. Somewhere in his teaching *Rôshi* surely must be giving some clear and concise hidden suggestions about this.

The simple act of breathing and the cognitive operation of random thinking have an irreconcilable relationship. It is the difference between preserving this single breath, and not. There is no choice between the two in practicing Zen. Thoughts should be ignored right from the start. There is nothing, as *Rôshi* says, except putting the truth of this one breath soundly into action. The meaning of *Rôshi*’s words “before you start to make objections or ask questions, just do it thoroughly” were very important for me in passing the first gateway of Zen.

After dinner I was advised to eat and walk, as well as all my other actions, with more care. Eating is such an ordinary act that you just somehow manage to do it without any particular care. We have to make the action itself clear before we can look for the reality of the action. We must never let go of that action. You should just function naturally as a living being just doing things with your entire mind and body. That’s all there is to it. But if you don’t pay attention to what you are doing,

you fall into the world of random thinking. And it is there where one merely experiences the shadow of true action.

This meaningless, continuous thinking process must be the *habitual mind* *Rôshi* keeps talking about. Practicing Zen means to get rid of this *habitual mind*. I earnestly believed this and tried very hard to prevent this phenomenon of carelessly letting go of the truth of the present moment. From that time on, I devoutly followed his instructions and tried my best to become one with each action. There was no other way now but this.

My walking speed became meticulously slow. There were times when I even made other Zen practitioners slow down in the hall as we were walking. But to concentrate on the Zen practice I decided to ignore these inconveniences I was causing. I can apologize (“I’ll even get down on my knees to ask for pardon.”) after I have reached the state of “*as it is*.”

I left the *zendô* just after nine in the evening. I wasn't totally satisfied with my breath, but I was having a less difficult time finding the present moment by paying full attention to my breathing.

THE THIRD DAY—THE SELF DISAPPEARING WITH EACH STEP

I woke up at four in the morning and went to the *zendô*. In *Rôshi*'s book I remembered reading that he examines practitioners in the afternoon of the 3rd day of their practice. I kept thinking, “I have to practice very hard today. If I don't do it today, I won't be able to answer *Rôshi*'s questions appropriately”.

I became very anxious since time was so short. But around 6 a.m. I began

to feel very sleepy and went back to my room to rest. It became clear to me that this was *polarizing* fatigue. “*Polarizing* fatigue” diminishes mental alertness to such a low level that it markedly decreases the effectiveness of one’s Zen. This is why *Rôshi* forbids playing games of endurance. There is no meaning in practicing Zen in this way, he says. I obediently and thankfully followed his kind instruction. This seemed to me a new way of teaching Zen, placing emphasis on effectiveness rather than on form. Doubtless, this would be unthinkable in traditional, monastic Zen practice. *Rôshi*’s was a reasonable and pragmatic way to teach Zen in this global age when so many foreigners are taking up Zen practice.

I returned to my room thankfully remembering his kind teaching. In a frame hanging on the wall in my room was the Chinese character *Kan*, which means “gate” or “barrier.” In Zen this character indicates the gate one must pass through to attain the Buddha Way. I looked at this character, which was written by Giko Inoue *Rôshi*, Kido *Rôshi*’s *Dharma*-grandfather in the patriarchal lineage of Shôrinkutsu *Dôjô*. I wondered if I could somehow pass through this gate and attain *single-mindedness*, too. I resolved right there that somehow I must do it.

When I woke up at 7:30 a.m., I felt well rested. I shared breakfast with the other Zen practitioners. After the meal I made myself a cup of coffee and had a couple of biscuits. Then I forced myself to go to the *zendô*.

As I sat, I began to feel more confident, my determination becoming stronger. But I wasn’t really improving. I would soon lose myself in thought within a few seconds of breathing, and I wouldn’t even notice that I was being distracted. This continued for a while. The quality of my practice must have been terribly lacking. It made me realize how weak my determination was. My resolve, willpower, and effort seemed only superficial. I was writing a check on an empty bank account. My self-confidence was seeping away. Even my self-respect and

equanimity as a scientist began to crumble.

I did *zazen* alone after lunch. But I soon became so exhausted that I lay down where I was sitting (at Shôrinkutsu if nobody else is in the *zendô* it is permitted to lie down). I wondered if I could pass this first *Kan*. A defeated sensation gradually crept in.

For several hours I continued doing *zazen* but couldn't concentrate on my breathing at all. By now, I felt trapped and desperate. I was concentrating on breathing with all my might but still couldn't do even a single breath satisfactorily.

It's my own breath...why do I do it so awkwardly? My desperation and fatigue only increased. I thought to myself that if *Rôshi* were to come and check up on me right now I would probably feel rejuvenated.

They say that man is endowed with the marvelous qualities of originality, independence and individuality. Moved by my own volition and resolve I had decided to practice Zen. Even so, I could not even concentrate on one single breath. I came to think that my present self was not really endowed with these inherent qualities. I could not even clarify the simple act of this one, present breath. How could something so "simple" be so difficult? Nevertheless, very occasionally there were times, just by accident almost, that I could breathe with ease. When these occasions did arise, it always amazed me. But it never did last long.

As I watched the setting sun through a window in the *zendô*, I was still troubled—Is this the right way to continue doing *zazen*? I was now losing confidence somehow in the method I had been so sure of all along.

I asked myself, What is "conviction"? I didn't know. A feeling of emptiness and meaninglessness filled my heart. Everything I had heard and believed was now proving to be of no use. It seems the human mind is structured in such a way that when it reaches its limit it becomes unstable.

Seldom in real life do we intimately sense the gap between action and thought, nor the muddled state of the mind resulting from it. The mind is usually unaware of its internal world because the self is usually carried away by externals. (After I had managed in daily life to maintain the present moment *as it is*, I could then for the first time clearly grasp such agitation in detail.)

My back and shoulders were stiff from fatigue. My legs felt like logs and wouldn't bend for sitting *zazen*. I started to do *kinhin*: I could do nothing else.

When the body is under such duress, the mind becomes unstable. Anxiety overwhelmed me. Overwhelming delusive thoughts engulfed me. I tried avoiding them by continuing to do *kinhin*. There was nothing else I could do.

I kept telling myself: "It's not impossible. I *am* doing it! It's good enough to take just *this* one step."

Almost before I was aware of it, my total attention was on the soles of my feet, desperately putting them down on the floor of the *zendô* as firmly as I possibly could. The thumping sound echoed in the *zendô*. I was struggling helplessly. If I hadn't continued endeavoring like that, I would have been engulfed in a flood of delusive thoughts.

Step...Step...Step...

The evening sunshine streaming through the window reached deep inside the *zendô*. It gave me a glimmer of calm and courage.

Step...step...step...

"What's the relationship between the thought 'I'm walking' and the reality of this one step? Is there really a relationship at all?"

Ideas like this passed through my head. I did not notice it at that moment, but that was the very instant I began to become aware of the existence of reality

expressing itself before the conceptualization of it. It is a world where things are exactly as they are, just as *Rôshi* had told me.

We have the habit of supplementing everything we see and hear with conceptual thought. But the reality of a thing is just what it is, independent of conception and notion. I continued all the more earnestly to become one with each step.

Step...step...step...

“Huh?”

I became aware of a strange feeling. I felt as if the soles of my feet were firmly stuck to the floor.

Step...step...step...

Each step now offered a growing freshness. I began to feel that the soles of my feet were by themselves firmly seizing the floor.

“Good Grief! My feet are like suction cups.”

I walked around and around in the *zendô* doing *kinhin*, verifying this exquisite sensation I was experiencing for the first time in my life.

Step...step...step...

It came after several turns around the *zendô*: the fresh feeling of walking brought indescribable joy welling up throughout my body. The experience of this sensation was absolutely and supremely certain and undeniable. I stood aloof of any doubt whatsoever. Experiencing the reality of each moment *as it is*, there was no room whatsoever for words.

“Ah! This must be that what *single-mindedness* is!”

Intuitively I just knew this. I was sure that this real experience was a fact of reality, but I was not sure if this was what *single-mindedness* is. Thinking I have to clarify this, I continued walking in search of an answer to my half-doubt.

Step... step... step...

The experience of this reality did not change.

“Is this *now*? If this is what *now* is, then it is *single-mindedness*!”

Not much, but I was beginning to feel confident.

Then I heard the wooden clappers signaling suppertime. I wanted to get to the absolute bottom of this right now in one grand push, but I had no choice. I left for the dining room.

“I can’t let go of this experience!”

I walked very slowly, watching each step as carefully as if I had been carrying a vessel full of water. My steps were so slow that someone passed me. I went into the dining room.

I was hoping *Rôshi* would notice the unusual transformation I’d undergone when he sees the way I walk now.

Unfortunately, when I walked into the dining room, *Rôshi* was putting something on the table and didn’t look straight at me.

“*Rôshi*! I have understood a little about what walking is!”

That was all I could say.

Suddenly he fixed his eyes on me. His eyes still scared me, but I wanted him to know my present state. I thought he should see directly and personally as I demonstrate my condition as it is.

Just then, to my surprise, without any struggle or hesitation, I was walking in a circle in front of him. I had become that Self.

While walking I got caught up in uncontrollable emotion and began to weep.

I was certainly happy, but there was much more to it than just that.

The objective of the Zen practice is to settle undeniably the truth of the self, assenting to it unconditionally. The clearer the source of the self becomes, the less struggle and agony one encounters. I hadn’t been totally liberated from all struggle and agony, but I felt tremendously relieved as struggles and agony began to diminish. The more the self melts away, the clearer and more buoyant your heart

and mind become. You become more natural and uncontrived, openhearted and genuine. My happiness at that moment stemmed from the amazement of my own personal realization of this.

“Well, why don’t you sit down?”

I sat down as he said. I could not look him in the eye. I had no confidence in whether or not what I had realized was genuine. I wasn’t so certain that I’d still be satisfied if it had been not genuine. On the other hand, however, I did hope it was the real thing.

Tears continued to trickle down my cheek.

“Do you see now? If you practice Zen in the right way, without fail you always become like this!”

Rôshi was talking to one of his disciples, a heavily built fellow.

Tears did not stop; I could not look up. I took a few sheets of tissue paper from the box beside me to blow my nose.

“How many sheets of tissue paper are you going to use for a single tear? Show a little more regard!”

Rôshi scolded me. Strangely enough, I didn’t care. Tears were still dropping as I wept. Before I knew it, *Rôshi*’s disciple was sobbing, too. Empathy directly felt among people striving for the same thing is a wonderful attribute of human nature.

“Let’s begin the meal.”

I tried to calm down and eat, but my mind was still dancing around. The new feeling of freedom from *concerns* and the euphoria of finally finding this treasure generated mixed-up emotions. I was in a rather incomprehensible mental state.

The meal was simple: rice, *miso* soup, croquettes, and chopped cabbage.

Just as I bit into the croquette, *Rôshi* demanded,

“What is the taste [of what you’re eating]?”

It was an abrupt question. At the instant I heard the question, it was nothing but simple sound. But at the next moment, the significance of its meaning surprised me. There was no way to answer by speaking. Everything in the *dôjô* stopped dead, as if frozen rigid by his question.

My chaotic mind instantly settled down. I became utterly calm. The instantaneous transformation was amazing.

At the next moment I was *simply* biting and tasting the croquette quietly, deeply and slowly.

Here was the taste.

I was taken by or held in its actual taste. Any further understanding was completely unnecessary. Words or concepts weren’t needed to emboss the reality of its taste. The taste itself was me just as I was. That was the answer.

The world of a natural scientist is a world of explanation based on words, data, and facts obtained through experimentation utilizing a skillful command of concepts and theories. If I try to explain my experience scientifically, its description would be nothing more than what follows:

Food is decomposed by mastication and the digestive enzymes in saliva, which are stimulated by the sense receptors distributed on the tongue. The sense of taste is transmitted to the brain as electric signals, which perceives this sense of taste. The more we masticate the food, the more the food is broken down, and the more potent the taste of the food becomes.

Scientific fact is truth—but mere scientific fact alone is not. If scientific facts alone are truth, then what was the emotion I so dramatically experienced? Psychologists may consider it some sort of singular illusion under unique circumstances. But, no, this is not the case. In human mental activity there is an area of emotion and sensitivity based on actual experience that is outside the area handling concepts and logic. As an example of this in the academic world, you may imagine the difference between the natural sciences and the humanities.

Did I firmly perceive or realize the existence of such an area of activity? Did I begin to become aware of the functioning senses exactly as experienced from stimuli from the outer world (the world preceding human intelligence: the world *as it is* and the basis of the universe)?

Describing the experience in this way may arouse images of mystical experience, but this was not that kind of experience. What I had perceived was just the taste of the food. The only difference between an everyday meal routinely eaten with a scattered mind and this experience was I had forgotten myself in becoming the taste itself. This was my first experience of *Zanmai*, the state where one is totally occupied by the functioning senses alone.

Taste can not be transmitted through words. Nor can the taste of something appear on another person's tongue by describing the taste. If this were possible, we could say that words themselves create the real world. Ultimately, there is absolutely no relationship at all between words and the actual taste of something.

No skillful and qualifying descriptions or figurative embellishments have

any effect on a person who has realized the true state of things. If you try to communicate something to such a person using logic or reasoning, he will either roar at you with a thunderous cry, or he may give you a clout. This awakening was the personal discovery of an essential truth, whose influence and brilliance would be far-reaching in my future Zen practice.

Rôshi watched in silence how I peacefully chewed my food. The look on his face seemed to be saying, Very good! Well done! Mysteriously I was able to directly understand *Rôshi*'s feelings. Here was a domain where meaningful things were communicated among people without using words, a world where perception of the self was merely a supposition. And as supposition decreased, the world became more and more transparent and clear. Apparently, a structural transformation of the mind takes place, but the details of this change were still not clear to me.

There was no doubt I still dwelled in a world that utilizes words to conceptualize past experience; in other words, the world of assumption and presumption. But, thanks to *Rôshi*'s instruction, I've come to know the world of *Now*, which is born just of the present moment, the world of perception without substance or the intervention of words. The world of *Now* must surely be the state of the universe in its true form. The universe is a real existence independent of human supposition. This was a huge discovery and a grand awakening for me. It moved me beyond words. I was already in a world, beyond science, where one actually experiences reality.

“Watch everything intently, from the movement of your chopsticks to everything about the meal. If you don't, you won't become one with the present moment.”

“There is no other way. You only have to investigate your present

activity, what you are doing right now.”

“If you let go of the present, you’ll never attain what must become yours. You’ll just be wasting your effort!”

“*Just* eat, slowly and certainly.”

“There is no other reality than your present activity!”

“Things are exactly what they are!”

“The practice of Zen is to adhere, from beginning to end, to what you are doing!”

“Be so utterly attached to it that there is no time or space for anything else to arise!”

“When you utterly become your activity, the *gap* disappears naturally and there is nothing but the thing itself.”

“Whatever the circumstances, you must never let it go!”

“Do it slowly and clearly!”

I thought, “But I’m already the slowest eater of all!” As soon as I started thinking this, I knew it was just a random thought. I was surprised that I could now perceive clearly my state of the mind. Then I felt my mind settling down into a profound calm.

“What’s happening?”

I was amazed to find I was suddenly able to recognize the slightest little movement of my hands and fingers.

“It’s best we leave him alone.”

Everyone left the dining room. *Rôshi* understood my state of mind and wanted me to freely practice at the highest level. I was awed by the innovative and adroit way he guides people. He made arrangements so that I could concentrate on

eating without worrying about the time or other people.

With each bite I became more and more intimate with eating. I discovered that when the mind is undistracted, one finds the slow and careful act of chewing unexpectedly fascinating, and the food more flavorful.

I felt the natural function of every bite as deep and significant. This feeling continued to last. It was like the food itself made me eat. It was me, the one eating, that was disappearing!

I felt like I wanted to eat a little bit more, but I put down the chopsticks onto the table unaffected by such desire. There were no obstacles, *concerns*, or attachments.

“What a refreshing feeling! This freedom of control over attachments is amazing!”

There was no need to stay in the dining room after I finished eating. I did not hesitate going immediately back to the *zendô* to sit continuing with the breathing. On the other hand, though, I did want *Rôshi* to carefully check the extent of the *single-mindedness* I had attained after so much effort. For this much effort, I think I wanted his approval as much as the invaluable experience itself. On this point, I was not completely satisfied. I walked toward the *zendô* reluctantly.

I sat down but a sense of dissatisfaction still remained, perhaps because the search for *single-mindedness* was the most important task of my visit to the *dôjô* and the fundamental reason why I was here.

An important element in implementing the mind is to utilize it for purposes that are healthy and clear. With this kind of proper consciousness of purpose alone we can avoid impure, or evil, mental functions very effectively. In contrast to this, when the need for self-assertion based on desire begins to operate, the mind starts running out of control. The slightest change in psychological elements can result in

an unforeseen and outrageous outcome.

I was almost unable to concentrate on my breathing because the question about *single-mindedness* kept arising. It is no good to fall into the world of words again after the undulating mind has almost reached a point of calm. But the state of mind where questions arise one after another is really unsteady. Different from the state where many random thoughts are uncontrollably arising, this condition is difficult to clearly manage. The problem is that the doubt supplants one's concentration on the breathing. This made me wonder how in the world the mind is constructed? After sitting in the *zendô* for several minutes, I decided to ask *Rôshi* my question.

I went up to *Rôshi*'s room and called on him. One of his disciples was kind enough to convey my wishes to him. *Rôshi* came out and took me to the dining room. We sat down face to face with the dining table between us. I asked, "My realization, explained in words, was the sensation at my feet while walking. Is this genuine *single-mindedness*?"

"The sensation of your feet—or anywhere—is separate and unique. But their causal relationships are all the same"

While I was still trying to grasp what he meant, he suddenly raised his right hand up like an athlete winning a race and shouted.

"What is this!"

At that moment, my right hand went up, automatically and without any doubts. That reality itself was the only answer there was. There was no other

reason.

“That’s right!”

That was all he said. I heard his voice, and then the sound of it was gone. I perceived and understood the fact clearly.

“Was there anything else?”

“No.” As there was nothing to add, I did not say anything else.

“Watch this.”

He began to move his right hand from side to side about half an inch above the dining table. I was also moving my right hand involuntarily in the same way.

Rôshi gazed at me. Then he gently stopped me gesturing with his hand. *Rôshi* began to move his hand again in the same way. He had utterly become one with his hand. I was utterly absorbed in looking at it.

“You see this hand as if it’s yours, don’t you?”

“The eyes themselves see the hand as it is, and do not distinguish yours from others. Originally there is no distinction in the eye between yourself and others. The eyes themselves are not concerned at all by whatever they see. That is the origin and nature of the self. It is completely free and liberated from everything from the beginning.”

I thought so, too. I felt that *Rôshi* understood things much more

definitively than did scientists. *Rôshi* had said before that Zen is the science of actual experience and actual proof. I now found this to be an obvious fact.

“The true state of the world is that all things are one. Self and other are one. Originally, everyone dwells in this oneness. But people don’t awaken to this reality because they have not proven it for themselves through practice. This is a great pity! This is why we have to practice.”

There was nothing left to say.

“ Never allow a *gap* to arise between you and your Zen practice. Originally we are already one with things.”

“This means so are our ears, nose, tongue, hands, and legs; everything, including mind. The problem is the *gap* between mind and body which prevents us from being in perfect freedom. As soon as we see something, consciousness engages and restricts the mind. This is where the self arises. To remove the *gap*, you only need to become the activity itself. At every moment, never separate from what you are doing. Nothing exists outside of now! ”

Rôshi finished speaking and stared at me. I became purified by the strain, his warmth, and the renewed “Way-seeking Mind.” I could see *Rôshi*’s face clearly for the first time. There wasn’t the slightest hint of malice in his look. His face was there as it was.

“Good! Now breathe. ”

I breathed in and out slowly and naturally. *Rôshi* seemed to be able to see right through me.

“ Good, that’s it. Once you breathe out completely, you breathe in naturally. Continue this simple and clear natural function thoroughly as if you were a fool.”

“Be willing to actually die for it!”

“It’s a matter of life and death. Take a step off the top of a hundred-foot pole. Die the “Great Death.”

“Go now and continue to practice one breath. ”

When he said this, I realized that all of my questions and doubts had evaporated. My mind was crystal-clear. In no way did I want to lose this precious and genuine experience of proof. It was truly a treasure obtained through much hardship. I did not hesitate to ask, “ Will this pure mind disappear some day?” More than anything else, I was afraid that I would lose it later.

“ Sure, you will lose it. ”

His reply was quick. It appears that our normal cognition is erected on a foundation of dualistic thinking and relativity: knowing and not knowing, attainment and non-attainment, like and dislike, right and wrong, action and inaction, and perceiving and not perceiving. When we stand on this narrow plane of duality we estimate the risks of our miscalculations and even prepare for any subsequent anxiety. This kind of cognition is designed and formulated in our mental behavior. *Rôshi* regards this type of cognition as the *habitual mind*, where the *gap* arises to prevent us from seeing things as they are. This was an appropriate way of describing this pattern of cognition. If we are unaffected by duality and act

on a thing *as it is*, our minds, consequently, are liberated and our agony resolved. This is the basic principle of Zen, the antithesis of duality.

Western philosophy is a construction based on this kind of dualist thinking. On the other hand, Oriental thought—and especially Buddhism—explains the natural state of things before cognition or discrimination engages, i.e. it is the world beyond any *concerns* arising from conceptual thought. In short, the purpose of Zen is to remove the *gap*. The result is called “the True World of Reality,” “*Satori*,” “Salvation,” “*Dropping-off*,” and “*Nehan*.”

Western philosophy is founded on discrimination and conceptual thought. Buddhism—and Taoism (the philosophy of Lao-tse and Chung-tse of ancient China)—are based on cognition prior to discrimination. The limitations of the world of thought, including philosophy and ideology, became clear to me. It was all nothing but conceptualization. I felt like laughing out loud. I started to realize that the world of thought had no power at all in resolving the fundamental problem of the mind. Conceptual thought cannot resolve man’s fundamental suffering. In other words, the intellect is no candidate for settling this matter of the Self.

“You lose what you have gained.”

“What has been gained can only be lost.”

“Throw away absolutely everything and utterly become the one breath itself.”

“If you get rid of anything and everything, you’ll have nothing to lose.”

“At any point in time, and at any place, things are exactly what they are.”

“When everything disappears, everything becomes the Self *as it is*.”

“There is nothing else but that. You should know this well. ”

This was the world of Zen. Philosophy, ideology, and science are useless here. Zen is actual experience, not a philosophy or ideology. Zen is to realize the Absolute World (things as they are) preceding cognition, and to dwell in that universal world. *Zazen* practice removes the origin of our suffering, which is called the “*gap*.” But still I had the growing desire to understand intellectually what Zen was, and to theorize and articulate it. Being a researcher, that was my mission.

However, no theory can account for the world of “*as it is*,” which is nothing and everything at the same time. Intellectual satisfaction based on intellectual interpretation is a very dangerous pit hole that beginners of Zen practice can fall into. One needs to be aware that theorization about Zen only causes serious problems for both those who theorize and those who read those theories. Writing or reading about Zen only disturbs one’s practice, often leading to such things as faultfinding and self-justification.

Zen is the act of letting go of everything you have gained; learning is the act of holding on to what you have gained. Learning makes people clever; Zen makes people fools. However, we must know that this kind of fool has great power and authority. No theory is required to become a fool. The clever people seek for theories, which turn out to be additional delusion.

“The world of the intellect, after all, differs from the world of the body.”

“Notions and concepts are woven into words by means of logic. There is no time or space in words. The world of thought is inorganic and superficial.”

“But our bodies are an actual, objective existence. This body is reality and existence at this moment. In other words, each of our bodies is the existence of pure function.”

“Life is the active relationship with the outer world carried out

through the functioning body; in other words, these functions in operation. Life is just these functions taking place in our body. The persons who personally and purely experienced and savored each moment like this with undivided attention are called the ancient great Zen Masters.”

“In sum, regardless of being known or unknown, everyone is perfectly using the *Dharma* (our true Reality) from morning till night. Moreover, no trace remains; everything finishes of itself at each point in time and at each place. This is the work of emptiness, the function of nothingness; it is, in other words, salvation.”

“Making this matter clear is called ‘*Satori*.’ The purpose of Zen practice is to attain *Satori*.”

“It means our mind working according to reality.”

“‘According to reality’ means no separation or *gap*. It is the thing *as it is*.”

“To function according to reality means to become one with just this, your present condition.”

“If you try to become the thing itself or the activity itself, it will only double your delusion. The only thing to do is to devote yourself exclusively to the activity. For as long as you haven’t clarified this, it will be painful for you because you don’t properly deal with it.”

“At times like that, just start again from one breath.”

“Breathe out and breathe in. It demands great zeal and close attention to prevent yourself from dropping into scattered thinking.”

“It is not until you have completely exhausted every means that the self drops off.”

“Could you possibly permit yourself now to separate from the

present moment? Could you let your breath at the present moment get away?

“Zen practice is to throw away everything. But you try to accept, preserve, and protect a lot of junk. Don’t you understand? This is the very cause of delusion. You’re an idiot!”

“That’s why your practice doesn’t work out to your satisfaction!”

“Real Zen practice starts from now!”

“The light and hope you have attained can grow only when you throw them away each moment!”

“With great perseverance you have reached this stage, so try hard to continue your practice with great care! ”

As I was about to stand to go to the *zendô*, *Rôshi* who was staring at me slapped a table hard (*bang!*) and shouted at the same time.

“What is this?”

With a little hesitation I also slapped the table.

“You must have been thinking. For a second you had lost yourself in thought.”

“Why do you still carry such a big *gap* in your practice?”

“That kind of Zen practice is no good!”

“In now, just *as it is*, there is no room for such a *gap*!”

“What are you waiting for? ”

“.....”

As soon as I started to think, I fell into confusion.

”Go to the *zendô*, now! Don’t ask me stupid questions any more! ”

He scolded me loudly. If I had been within his reach, he would have slapped me for sure. I pressed my palms together in *gasshō* and headed for the *zendō*.

The feeling of ecstasy had disappeared completely. My mind continued to settle down to reach a profound tranquility that I had never experienced before. I realized now how great *Rōshi* was. I assumed that perhaps I had gone through the gate that Zen practitioners must pass through. I felt happy that *Rōshi* confirmed as a definite experience the small clue I had uncovered.

Unexpectedly, merely the sensation on the soles of my feet had been the gateway to such a wonderful world. This was totally unexpected, and unmistakable. Finding the entrance to *single-mindedness*, together with *Rōshi*’s advice and encouragement, gave me an unwavering confidence in my Zen practice.

While I was walking I couldn’t stop thinking, “ Perhaps the difficulty and painful struggling in my Zen practice is over now.” Then, realizing the pitfalls of such devilish thoughts, again and again I admonished myself, “Beware of such heretical demons!” When I opened the back door of the main building and began walking on the duct boards leading to the *zendō*, my *single-minded* walking was in disarray because of these thoughts. I keenly realized how easily the mind becomes unsettled, and how immature my own practice really was.

I had been in the *zendō* for a while when the hardy-looking disciple of *Rōshi*’s named Sogen walked in. He wore the black, formal robes of a monk. Bowing and sitting in the traditional manner of a monk, he began doing *zazen*. The monk swung his body fully left and right, and breathed out deeply. I was entering

single-mindedness as well by hearing this. It was the same situation as when I realized that I had become *Rôshi*'s hand when seeing his hand move left and right slowly over the table.

It felt rather odd since it was not an intellectual recognition of the disciple's actions. My entire body felt and responded to it. For sure, we are something other than just intellectual beings. Ours is an existence of more straightforward and distinct processes. And we would best regard as delusion any failure to recognize this unquestionable fact.

THE FOURTH DAY—LISTENING TO THE MASTER IS CRUCIAL

In the evening I was permitted to take a bath for the first time in four days. The hot water felt great. It felt like I was really alive for the first time. I took the bath in a simple and unconcerned manner, and was out before I knew it.

A modest party at supper was held for me at 8 pm that evening. It was a midterm observance for my efforts thus far. It was nice having the party. I like to drink, and I drank quite a bit—as much as I wanted—since I was exhausted from the practice. I felt like I could have drunk endlessly. It was remarkable that I did not feel drunk. It seemed like some vast and perfectly clear spiritual power was at work within me.

I listened to *Rôshi* speaking about his views on the world. He spoke a lot. Listening, I *just* listened. But when I had something to say, I also talked. Up until that time, I only asked questions. But now I spoke about the idea of establishing a think tank based on Oriental thought for solving the world's problems. *Rôshi* kindly listened showing some interest.

I wanted to argue that scientists, whose commodity is their intellect, are

also in great need. But I couldn't confidently say it because I knew from personal experience that the scientific intellect presents, in some cases, contradictions when aligned with human nature. Intelligent and humaneness must dwell as one in the personality. The scientific intellect alone is a handicap.

I read the *Rinzai-roku* (c: *Lin-chi-lu*) when I was a high school student. The book refers to the following story. A monk, Head Monk Ting, Ting Shang-tso, asked Zen Master Rinzai (c: Lin-chi) about the fundamental principle of Buddhism and got slapped. The monk was then scolded by another monk, who was standing near the Master Rinzai, saying, " Why don't you bow to the Master?" So the monk bowed. At this moment he attained Great Enlightenment.

I remember that I could not understand why the monk became enlightened in that situation. It was puzzling. My failure to interpret this anecdote might have encouraged me to practice Zen. I related this little episode to *Rôshi*.

"You were a bit precocious for reading the *Rinzai-roku* in your high school days."

"The monk forgot himself when he was slapped. In other words, the *gap* disappeared. At the moment he was scolded, he realized there was nothing, and that everything was one. This is an interesting episode of sudden Enlightenment. "

I recall that I read many books like that in those days. However, I realize now that I misunderstood what they meant.

I was the only one who slammed his heels on the floor so loudly while *single-minded* walking. I was perhaps also the only one who asked so many questions.

Asking so many questions is inherent of a scientist, who is naturally

prompted by his sense of purpose. They pursue the question until they find out the answer. When they understand, then there is no need for further questions.

During the period of a young child's intellectual growth it will develop intellectual interests and their world of cognition when we adults completely answer their questions one by one. In this way, children acquire the habit of thinking through things thoroughly and accurately. The ability of being able to make an appropriate question is evidence of an intellect working clearly with a precise awareness of the issues. Childhood inquisitiveness helps develop a scientific mind, the initiative for problem solving, and a healthy independence. A Zen practitioner asks questions as a child would. Questioning is the key to Zen practice. A Zen practitioner improves his or her level of practice by questioning. When a Zen master answers fully, we naturally become more eager in our pursuit of the Way.

THE FIFTH DAY—THE VITAL POINT OF RETURNING TO THE PRESENT MOMENT

I woke up at 4:30 a.m.. I tried to concentrate on the one breath, but it was difficult. Thoughts poured out ceaselessly. Most of these thoughts were about what I wasn't able to fully express the night before at supper. I thought I spoke without reservation, but I must have left something unsaid. This must be "the hell" that a beginner suffers from and must pass through.

Rôshi had already warned me the night before of what I would go through the following day.

"Tomorrow you will be scattered and unable to concentrate, and

you will not be able to return to the present moment until around midday. Do you know why?"

"All of this talk you are engaging in means that the *habitual mind*, which used to have a grip on you, has revived."

"Originally, at the present moment nothing arises: it is a world of no before-and-after, no habits, of nothing at all."

"You must penetrate thoroughly the present moment to get rid of the *gap*."

"Your clouded mind has just started to clear up, but it still stirs up easily. You've just started to get the feel of what the present moment is."

"Because the habits of the *habitual mind* are still alive, as soon as the lid to the intellect is opened, immediately all sorts of devilish mental phenomena start up."

Rôshi explained that last night's party at supper was also held to break down the unified state of the mind.

"When someone returns again to the regular world, he or she will soon lose the unified mind. Therefore it is essential to grasp the vital point of immediately returning to the present moment."

As I sat doing *zazen*, I realized how scattered my mind had become. Our minds are as unsettled as grass waving in the wind. The cause for this instability is that the mind's reaction to circumstance is disunified, unnecessary, and instantaneous. When the internal conditions that create such attributes as conviction, will, and resolve breakdown, then these qualities deteriorate and pale to the point where we lose in an instant the ability to continue our focus on the matter at hand.

Consequently, even when we are consciously engaged in conceptual or intellectual processes, there is no guarantee the mind will be unruffled. Perhaps the only way to secure peace of mind fundamentally, and at every moment, is through proper Zen practice as taught at Shôrinkutsu *Dôjô*.

I slipped into my futon again until seven o'clock in the morning. Then I got up to sit *zazen*. I was immediately able to unify my mind and fix it on a single point. This was also an unexplainable reality. Once again, I understood my fatigue, the relief from fatigue, and the tremendous power of one single breath. This was the result of the toil and labor I had gone through at the *dôjô*, and I was now thankful for my efforts. I had been worried that I wouldn't be able to return to *single-mindedness*. But this realm into which I had put my faith proved to illuminate the way.

It is impossible for a beginner to understand the state of mind of the practitioners who go several steps ahead. The beginner cannot even begin to know what stage a senior practitioner is in or what sort of Zen practice he or she is doing.

Shôrinkutsu *Dôjô*'s Principles of Conduct state, "While in the *Dôjô*, never think right and wrong; *simply* act according to the *Dharma* at each moment." The primary objective of these Principles is to preserve one's *single-mindedness* no matter what the situation may be. Whether you are taking a rest in your room, drinking coffee (or even having a drink), walking, cleaning, taking a bath, or going to the toilet—in other words, at any time and any place and in any circumstances—you must try to maintain your grasp on the present moment continuously and preciously paying extremely careful attention to every single movement you make. This requires more effort and persistence than one could imagine. And a beginner isn't yet able to see the do-or-die efforts made by senior practitioners, even in their everyday actions, to preserve this *single-mindedness*.

The great Zen Master Dôgen said, “To study the *Dharma* is to study the Self.” Inoue *Rôshi* clarified this in a refreshing manner saying that Dôgen’s words mean not losing oneself even for a second.”

In comparison to any other Zen *dôjô*, Shôrinkutsu may seem at first glance to have rather lenient rules. Except for *zazen* and sutra recitation scheduled in the morning, your time is free to do whatever you wish. But *Rôshi* and the older practitioners can tell in a moment if a beginner has strayed from *single-mindedness*. They can notice this even from a single sound someone makes.

I can say without a doubt that this *dôjô* is the strictest in Japan. When you compare Shôrinkutsu with other traditional *dôjô*-s that place more emphasis on custom and form rather than on the essentials of *zazen*, it is not difficult to say which is truly stricter. The reason Shôrinkutsu has carried on since its founding by the Master Tôin Iida *Rôshi* is due without a doubt to the *Dôjô*’s Principles of Conduct.

How to *just* sit when sitting, how to *just* eat when eating, how to *just* see when seeing, how to *just* sleep when sleeping, and how to keep focused on the present moment are all explained in the five guidelines of the Principles of Conduct.

But even while at the *dôjô* one’s Zen practice at times may lose its vitality, and you start to think in terms of good-and-bad and right-and-wrong. You may begin to wonder about others’ Zen practice and may start making judgements and criticism about their efforts and progress. When you start to judge others like this, it undoubtedly means your resolve to accomplish the Way has wavered. But perhaps I should rather say that when your resolve has weakened, you start thinking about others around you. Zen practitioners must take great care about this. It was only after repeatedly falling into such mistakes that I was able to avoid this pitfall myself.

There was once a monk whom I had met several times at Shôrinkutsu who

often would criticize others. The comments he made about others were superficial and biased, and he seemed unable to see his own character flaws. It is frightening when a Zen practitioner loses the ability to follow the teaching and truly practice. He finally began saying things like, “This is not a Zen *dôjô*. It’s like a hospice.” Why did he seem so blind? Probably he lacked the nature or disposition to follow the teaching here. Someone who does not make the needed effort to thoroughly investigate and clarify the Self cannot be called a Zen Practitioner. It would be unthinkable for anyone who is wholeheartedly absorbed in his practice to judge others. If you judge whether other people are right or wrong, you only practice Zen for the sake of your own self-righteous interests. You cannot be called a true Zen practitioner. Those persons who only make immature and superficial judgments and do not seek the True Self are not welcome at Shôrinkutsu. And even if there were such Zen practitioners in your midst, you yourself should not judge him raising views of good-and-bad or right-and-wrong. This in itself is what distinguishes the capacity of a true Zen practitioner.

THE SIXTH DAY—BECOME A REAL HUMAN BEING

I finished cleaning the garden around 10 o'clock in the morning. Then I stepped out for a walk to Tadanoumi, the little town where the *dôjô* is located. It was my first visit to town since arriving at the *dôjô*, and everything was fresh and alive. They say that it only takes about 30 minutes in town for a practitioner to lose his grasp on the present moment. I was afraid of this at the beginning, but gradually I gained courage. I could keep the present moment without random thoughts interfering. I was able to *just* see and *just* hear as I walked in town.

After tea time at the *dôjô* I climbed up the mountain behind the *dôjô*. Beyond the scattered gravestones in the graveyard, the Inland Sea of Japan spread out before me. It was remarkably beautiful, but it was still just an experience within the sense of sight to me. No thoughts crept into the scenery. The pine forest enclosing the view looked like a large, Japanese folding screen. It was infinitely refreshing.

Right at that moment, I let out a deep groan. My insides shook. Before me stretched the world independent of words! Words wouldn't form in my head, as hard as I tried. No words whatsoever connected to anything. I saw the world—the natural, normal, real world itself—absolutely free of words. There was just the world of reality and myself. It was nature itself.

“Clear mirror and still water!” [This saying means, seeing nature *as it is*.]

It became clear to me that mountains, rivers, grass, and trees—all have the Buddha-nature. My hot belly trembled all the more as tears trickled down my cheeks.

“In my entire life I have never been so deeply moved.”

I was moved by overflowing emotion from the bottom of my heart and continued to shed tears of sincere gratitude to Nature itself and to *Rôshi* for this unforgettable experience.

In the afternoon I went to a coffee shop in town. I deliberately wanted to look at nude magazines, which these shops often made available for their guests. At first I was unmoved, but gradually words started forming in my head little by little. Words like “Oh” or “Good Grief!” began to emerge. I was experimenting: under what circumstances and in what manner would my mind become confused?

I knew that tempering—or “kneading”—*single-mindedness* isn't enough when one finds the mind confused. One learns how to really “knead” the mind by experiencing the harshness of the regular world. My way of Zen practice has

included an endless number of such psychological experiments.

Rôshi gave a talk that evening. I asked *Rôshi* about the biggest question in my life: What should my goals be?

“When planning your future, the most important thing is to choose something you like.”

“Don’t set goals that are beyond your capabilities because trying to achieve them will burn you out.”

“Learn how to behave within the social structure—consider your relationships in both the vertical and horizontal makeup of the structure. Anyone who can not do this cannot be considered an adult.”

“In a social organization, one develops abilities beneficial to the organization but not his true, individual talents since it is not one’s own world of individuality.”

“Be willing to wholeheartedly invest your brain power, money, and passion in a positive and sound objective.”

“Rise above loss-and-gain, duty, and obligation; just follow your convictions.”

“A sense of purpose is one of life’s fundamental requisites. Hold on to them at all times.”

“In order to achieve your goals, do not lose the present moment.”

“Results are attained naturally if certain conditions have been achieved. Accumulate the causes that effect the desired result.”

“Everything changes. Just as bad things pass, so do good things; value the present moment.”

“Reflecting on the past is good, but don’t hang on to the past.”

“Don't forget the fact that you will die some day.”

“Credibility, virtue, honesty, and sincerity are your best friends, along with the willingness to make an effort.”

“After you have done your best, the result is in the hands of the working of cause-and-effect. It is useless to judge the result as right or wrong.”

“A heart that feels gratitude and thanks is the most beautiful and valuable quality of man's character.”

“Goodness or wholesomeness that has not been realized by resolving the problem of the *gap* is easily shattered by slander and groundless rumors, simply because it is not genuine goodness.”

“Behind ordinary, primitive love are concealed the frightening and violent feelings of hatred, jealousy, and anger, that at times can develop into the desire to kill. This arises from the power of life and the instinct to survive.”

Rôshi's talk gave me plenty to think about. As my life's goal, I wanted to attain the things he talked about. When I was thinking about my future, *Rôshi* suddenly said, as if he had seen through me,

“If you have the kind of character that won't let you to be satisfied with small achievements, then you may as well die the Great Death.”

“Me? Do I take this all the way to the end!”

What he said surprised me at first, but inside I wasn't really surprised. Perhaps Zen was the very thing I had long been searching for. I had taken Zen to be a means in my life, but he was saying to make it the goal. Anyway, this did seem a bit extreme!

Just today I had that unforgettable experience while looking at the sea. It made my trust in Zen unshakable. My favorite things had been scholarly accumulation, searching for Truth, appreciation of the arts, and self-training. They were really very ordinary pursuits, but I wasn't fully satisfied by them. Outside of Zen, there was nothing that would allow me to pursue them tirelessly. Zen is wonderful because it is complete and lacks nothing.

“As your Zen practice progresses, you will be able to see and understand things much more clearly. You attain a universal point of view. You attain an all-encompassing and profound foresight into life, along with a deep appreciation for and keen interest in it.”

A universal point of view and profound foresight are indispensable qualities for living one's life.

“After you return to regular life, you should sit everyday in the morning and evening. The regular world becomes your *dôjô*. At work, just do your job objectively, and without the *gap* between you and the thing itself.”

“In your social life, just continue to “knead” the present moment. You will then be able to work effectively without experiencing stress. Think of your daily life as religious practice, and make good use of everything because it is Zen practice.”

Rôshi's instruction was an easy-to-understand, practical handbook for daily life.

“Social life is filled with manifold objectives. It is a realm where

one must respond to them seeking specific results. To do this, we use our body and mind in order to effect the desired result. This is what social life is.”

“We are endowed with the six sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These correspondingly function with the six objects: shape, sound, odor, taste, sensation, and mental phenomenon. The mind works according to natural law responding to time and events. It functions according to circumstances, or conditions. When these circumstances pass or elapse, no trace of them remains anywhere.”

“Delusion exists nowhere. Even Enlightenment, or good-and-evil, arises in response to time and circumstances, then vanishes without any trace. It is said that delusion and Enlightenment are one, but no such thing as delusion or enlightenment can be found in the functioning senses themselves.”

“It doesn’t seem that in the regular world delusion could be identical with Enlightenment. Delusion, which is caused by the *gap* between you and the thing itself, creates problems because one thinks in terms of before-and-after.”

“Enlightenment is “*Dropping-off*” because there is no *gap* between things like front and back, or before and after.”

“You should understand that even the slightest *gap* produces a broad deviation.”

“We produce results, ultimately, by using our minds and our bodies. Our relationship with the outside world is within those realms only. The functioning of our minds and bodies themselves are causality as it is. It is the condition of the present moment, Now.”

“Now is Now. But not remaining in Now is the true Now. Zen practice is to realize this from the bottom of your heart and soul.”

“There is nothing in the world to become attached to. The Way is to *simply* do things.”

“But you do understand these things, don’t you?”

“Whatever you see, hear, write, lift, or put down, whenever you sit, stand, or walk—everything you do—capture that moment in minutest detail. And when it is finished, be done with it. This is the vital point in *simply* doing the thing itself.”

“That is all there is to our lives. Our lives are made up of our present actions, one at a time. The crux lies in whether or not we are *simply* doing things, or not. Life depends on whether or not our actions are in accordance with phenomenal reality. In other words, are we *simply* doing things, or not?”

“This sweeping statement points to the world of oneness where we become the thing itself. An ancient great Zen Master said, ‘The Way is independent of knowing or not-knowing.’ This is the natural world prior to perception. The only thing to do is to stop evaluating, and *simply* act in response to what happens each moment. Because there is no self, we assimilate with reality and are filled with a sense of truly living in profound satisfaction.”

“When you find that there is really nothing you must do, you experience with your entire being the serene self that exists *simply* and in the present moment. You experience everything with your entire being. And because you experience the thing *as it is*, there is no lack or excess. This is called the ‘Way’ or ‘*Zanmai*’.”

“Zen practice is to *simply* act according to what happens in the

moment.”

This talk contained his most important instruction. It was a concise explanation of our mental attitude toward practicing Zen in our daily lives.

“An elephant doesn’t stroll along a rabbit trail. Don’t congratulate yourself for little achievements! ”

Rôshi’s unique way of scolding someone while encouraging them at the same time was wonderful. I wanted to say something to him but couldn’t find the words.

“The effort to preserve *single-mindedness* and leave behind random thinking is called the Way.”

How much these words moved me! I knew the word “Way,” but I never knew how straightforward the word was.

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“Become a man that saves the world. Mankind has nowhere to go but to ruin, poisoned by the civilizations that man himself has created with his intellect. Today, where man’s ego has grown excessively large, it is urgent to restructure the family and society to foster human virtues and independence in their true sense.”

“Take a look at most of the families today. Fathers and mothers are not fulfilling their roles as parents. Consequently, manners and morals are not fostered in the growing family. The result will be the development of a mental makeup lacking in courtesy and a sense of responsibility.”

“Character traits of thoughtfulness and consideration for other

people or the larger good have been forfeited to self-centeredness and personal pursuits conveniently labeled in the name of ‘freedom’ or ‘independence.’”

“They are without principle, order, or discipline, and lack any reason for existence. They live merely like human animals.”

“They have no views on life, the nation, or the world. Their only view of life is based on egotism and complaining.”

“They have no healthy ideals or dreams since they have not developed the faculties of systemic planning and construction.

“They have been deprived of the essential elements of natural growth and development; accordingly, they don’t know what they want to do, nor what they have to do. Under such circumstances, society falls into ruin.”

“This is a terrible situation! We need true leaders now, leaders who have realized the true Self.”

“Don’t you think so? If you don’t, you couldn’t be human!”

“It’s up to you yourself to begin! Will you, or won’t you?”

His talk influenced me greatly. He was saying to be a True man first, then a scientist or researcher. I was concerned about how individual happiness achieved by Zen practice was conveyed to others. This was very important, and I was happy to hear that as one becomes a whole person, he or she gains the ability to give back something valuable to society.

No one could say “no” when asked, “Will you, or won’t you?” But if you answer “yes,” however, it only sounds like lip service. There could be no way to convince *Rôshi* other than by showing him actual proof. When that happens, his heartfelt blessings will be with you, I’m sure.

It is said that to really see a Zen practitioner's true form, just look at his daily life. One can surmise his or her *kyôgai* from their everyday actions. *Kyôgai* is the mind's eye that sees through human nature and has the virtuous power to influence people; i.e., one's sphere of understanding of human nature and compassion toward other human beings. I could hardly assess *Rôshi's kyôgai*. There is warmth in his eyes and kindness in his words. Sometimes he roars *Katsu!* Sometimes he drinks. Sometimes he sings. His teaching ranges from how to practice Zen to the essence of education, the philosophy of art, and the affairs of politics. The depth of his *single-mindedness* is clear when he drinks tea or types on the keyboard of his computer. There are countless things he has said that have left a deep impact on me.

THE SEVENTH DAY– A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME ENCOUNTER

At noon I practiced *single-minded* walking and breathing in the graveyard behind the *dôjô*. I was absorbed in doing a single deep breath without any thoughts. This unquestionable stillness, I thought, was like the immovable mind. Although I had heard the term before, it was the first time I really realized what the power of *Absorption* was. How firmly my mind has stabilized! My mind suddenly realized and accepted the Confucian teaching, “To have heard the Way in the morning, it is all right to die in the evening.”

In the afternoon I went into town and happened to stop in a small noodle restaurant. An old woman about my mother's age started talking to me. She talked about her poverty and the great difficulties she encountered right after the Second World War. By coincidence, she mentioned the wife of Ryûzan Inoue *Rôshi*, the elder brother of Kido *Rôshi*, and related how Ryûzan *Rôshi's* wife used to share

food with her at the time of the great food shortage after the war. I was moved to tears by her story. When I left the restaurant I joined my hands in prayer in gratitude for her sincerity. I didn't think I would meet her again.

"This must be the spirit of tea ceremony," I thought, "One encounter, once in a lifetime!"

The essence of Zen is supposed to be difficult to attain, but I was able to discover it naturally and directly. I never expected before I came here that my mind and heart would be transformed in such a short time.

I shed tears of gratitude to *Rôshi* on my way back to the *dôjô*. At the same time, the resolve to die the Great Death became firm.

I told *Rôshi* of the various changes my mind had undergone.

"When we practice Zen, impurities in our mind drop off, and our thoughts gradually become true."

It is quite a wonderful phenomenon when modesty, gentleness, thankfulness, and kindness manifest in my attitude toward others as one's mind and heart, without being aware of it, becomes purified. It was remarkable that just this one breath had reordered the mental environment for this transformation, in spite of the fact that I had never practiced Zen for such a purpose. This is a world that psychologists and educators do not know about, nor could ever dream of. Zen is indeed a miraculous world.

THE EIGHTH DAY—GIVE YOURSELF UP TO THE WORK

During the morning *zazen* I tried to count how many thoughts would arise

in my mind. When a single thought appeared, I counted it as one. If I said to myself, “A thought just appeared,” I also counted that and the count doubled. However, the count itself—one, two, three—I didn’t count as thoughts. I estimated the thought count at 54 in 30 minutes. A single thought occurred once every 33 seconds. I have the disposition of a natural scientist, I wanted objective data to determine if my random thinking occurred too often or not. I was extremely earnest.

I reported my finding to *Rôshi*. He said I had too many thoughts, then scolded me.

“Don’t do such foolish things, you poor intellectual!”

What *Rôshi* seemed concerned about was that I was scientifically analyzing Zen from the relationship between random thinking and time. Analyzing Zen inevitably harms the practitioner.

First of all, analyzing one’s Zen practice is far different from *single-mindedness* because analyzing erects both a self practicing Zen and a self analyzing it. This kind of Zen practice is dualistic. It is impossible to attain salvation through dualistic thinking. The suffering of mankind is brought about by creating numerous selves in such a way. Zen is the means to prevent such divisions from occurring. In Zen practice one becomes the thing or action itself, be it eating, walking, speaking, etc.

The second reason—one that is especially applicable to a scientist—is that humans become attached to the cognizant world, which has been created via one’s thought activity. Zen practice is void of any intellectual knowledge, comprehension or discrimination. It is the effort to maintain *single-mindedness* and is the world of non-attachment to the cognizant world erected from past experience.

Third, if one starts to analyze *single-mindedness*, it is no longer *single-mindedness*. An analysis of *single-mindedness* might be considered to be scientific

study, but it is not Zen practice. It may be possible to make Zen an object of scientific analysis. However, scientific analysis could never expand one's *kyôgai*. After that time, I often found myself at a crossroads between continuing to practice Zen and analyzing it. There is no doubt now that the spirit of an experimental scientist, however, has subsequently been the driving force in my Zen practice.

“Today forget your breathing, and let your breathing breathe as it does. Ignore arising thoughts in your mind.”

At the end of breakfast, *Rôshi* chased me into the *zendô* with these words.

His instruction seemed very difficult to put into practice, especially for a beginner like me. “Ignoring arising thoughts and emotions without dealing with them,” seems easy at first, but it is actually quite difficult.

Mental phenomena—thoughts, concepts, emotions, etc.—arise instantaneously, without relation to time or place. This also happens, of course, while doing *zazen*. Once a single movement arises in our minds, we tend to associate it with the thought arising the next moment. And so we start to think in continuously increasing thoughts like this.

An ordinary person is not able to recognize the moment that a single movement of the mind occurs or finishes. This is because most people think in a continuous stream of thoughts and have never clarified for themselves the condition of the mind without arising thoughts where before and after are cutoff. But by practicing *zazen* we can recognize the state of “before-and-after cut off,” and we can maintain it. We are then capable of ignoring any arising thoughts in our mind.

What is the difference between an ordinary man and a man who practices Zen? The ordinary person does not know the state of things as they are. He or she is easily confused and captivated by thoughts and emotions. But by Zen practice one attains or realizes the absolute present moment Now. Having attained this, you can

cut off any arising thoughts consciously, and maintain the present moment without any arising thoughts.

Only the person who has experienced the absolute present moment can ignore arising thoughts, and leave them alone without dealing with them. The most effective way of doing Zen practice is not by trying to cut thoughts off, but by ignoring them without dealing with them at all. This is the shortest path to Enlightenment, but it is impossible for a beginning practitioner to do. The beginner only loses his way when following this method and spends most of his time in confusion and doubt.

Other Zen masters whom I have since met splendidly explained the truth of Buddhism or the *Dharma*, but I was not satisfied with their general guidance because they did not understand my mental condition sufficiently, and they failed to guide me properly according to my level of practice. They seemed to be lacking in practical analysis and understanding of humanity. But Kido *Rôshi* was able to “scratch where the itch is.”

The aim of Kido *Rôshi*’s initial instructions for Zen practice is, above all else, to quickly and firmly gain the ability to ignore arising thoughts. Our cognition is based on the delusion of attachment. Accordingly, in order to precisely master the practice of Zen, step-by-step instruction according to one’s level of understanding is essential. Originally there are no steps in the *Dharma*, but guidance for a practitioner without consideration of his or her personality would result in their bewilderment. Ignoring arising thoughts is at the highest level of Zen practice. This is what *single-mindedness* is. But if this kind of practice is given to the practitioner who isn’t ready for such practice, it would probably lead them into bewilderment. Medicine, if improperly administered, can become poison. If this had been given to me in the beginning stage of my practice, I would have surely lost my way.

Nowadays we have easy access to the records of the ancient great Zen Masters such as the *Shôbôgenzô*, the *Mumonkan*, and the *Hekiganroku*. But we can hardly understand them, much less apply them to our Zen practice. As outstanding and excellent these records may be, the question of understanding them arises in the level of one's Zen practice. A Zen Master named Daie of ancient China burned the *Hekiganroku* because he was afraid that it would confuse Zen practitioners. I think he did this because of his great mercy and passion for all living beings.

The teaching, the records of ancient Zen Masters, or even Zen Masters themselves can become either poison or medicine for a Zen practitioner, if dispensed inappropriately. Although we rely on them for guidance, we have to take care not to become attached to nor become dependent upon them. Zen dislikes the practice of blind obedience. We believe in the teaching; but at the same time, we must not become attached to it. An assimilation of the subtle contradiction between these two is the essence of Zen practice. There are many people who cannot think without an established framework. I doubt these people could understand the paradoxical framework of Zen. Therefore, a Zen teacher must be a true master who has really experienced Enlightenment and personally knows the way to salvation. Only a true master of the Way can lead others in such a way that they don't become attached to the teaching.

My time was spent *simply* as it naturally passed. I could finally practice *single-minded* sitting. "Ignore arising thoughts" means, do nothing. Kido *Rôshi* had said before that this *methodless-method* is the true method of Zen practice. I could really understand what he meant (but I never expected at that time that I would still be making on-going, extreme efforts for a long time to come in order to master this *methodless-method*).

Rôshi gave a *Dharma* talk at afternoon teatime. The talk was about the mind's mental makeup and its functioning mechanisms. I was especially interested

in his description of the principle behind Zen that purifies our mental makeup and assures us of absolute comfort, which is brought about through what is called “Salvation,” “*Dropping-off*,” or “Enlightenment.”

By observing children, we can clearly understand the Zen’s principle of acting *simply*. Before a child begins to speak, it really is in the state of *single-mindedness*. And even after learning to speak, until about the age of six or seven, they remain in the condition of “before-and-after cutoff.” They *simply* cry, *simply* get angry, or *simply* eat as they please. Each action they do leaves little trace in their minds for long. It is impossible to anticipate what they will do next. They cry one moment and laugh the next. They live in the world of “before-and-after cutoff.” Zen is returning to this childlike world. “Before-and-after cutoff” is the principle extinguishing delusion and illuminating the mind. Children are fine models for Zen practitioners.

There were many things about Zen that were unclear to me. There were many things I wanted to know about Zen. But now the most important thing I wanted to know was how to practice Zen in daily life after leaving the *dôjô*. If Zen practice had nothing to do with daily life in the regular world, this kind of Zen practice would merely be another short-lived, self-satisfying experience.

A researcher’s task is to work over and through new ideas. I am constantly thinking while I work. But this kind of intellectual operation seemed to be quite the opposite of not dealing with things and leaving things just as they are. If Zen is in opposition to all kinds of intellectual activity, I wouldn’t be able to accept Zen at all. This question stirred up a certain amount of doubt and anxiety in my Zen practice.

“While you are working with a computer, it is quite natural to be thinking. Even though various thoughts arise, they do not say, ‘This is

an arising thought.' Arising thoughts during your work are totally one with your work and the computer. When each action or activity is finished, it is over; no trace of it remains to become attached to. Thoughts and other mental activity have no true or fixed form. Thoughts originally are the natural function of '*Dropping-off*'."

"The problem is the self that is conscious of arising thoughts. If there is no self to perceive, then thoughts are naturally cut off from before and after by activity of one's work. Therefore give yourself up to the work itself. Do you understand this point? Worrying whether or not thoughts are arising during your work is a waste of time and creates dualistic thinking. Forget this kind of thinking and just absorb yourself in your work."

"Just work *simply* and wholeheartedly. Sometimes you have to look away from the computer screen and carefully check if you actually are functioning freely, and not attached to your work. When you are truly and *simply* doing the work itself, and not somehow being driven by it, then the work is doing the work. This is the form of salvation and the structure of no-self."

"If there is no trace of the work in the mind after working, it means that you have worked *single-mindedly* and the self didn't arise in your work. Zen Master Dôgen said, 'How do you think non-thinking: thoughtless thought'. He is saying to utterly give yourself up to the activity *as it is*."

"Quickly cut off random thoughts and always return to the present moment. Because you erect the self-and-other viewpoint, things stress you. Cut off random thoughts so that the mind is no longer distracted; relax for a while, then start working again. If your *single-minded* devotion is strong, thoughts not related to your work drop off

naturally. Don't worry about it."

"When doing creative work where ideas have to be worked over, fresh and free thought is necessary. This is not useless, random thinking. Utilizing this kind of thought in its most constructive way is the *Dharma*. When it is time to think, thinking is the Way itself.

"When thinking is no longer necessary, you should return to the condition of thoughts 'before-and-after cutoff.' If before and after are not cut off from the present moment, thoughts and images continuously appear like someone forgetting to close the barn door. When the switch for turning on random thinking is on automatic, you lose control of the situation."

"As your *single-mindedness* matures, everything naturally drops away. Right now, you only have to keep making serious efforts."

It was a great relief to hear this. The essence of Zen is being absorbed in whatever we are doing; it has nothing to do with thinking or not thinking. When you think, you should think with your whole mind and body. What "cutting off thoughts" meant was to get rid of the *habitual mind* which creates the *gap* between us and what we are doing. We have to return to the present moment, the state of zero, after the operation of each single movement of thought is finished. The state of the mind where a single movement of thought is separate and unconnected to another is called "before-and-after cutoff." In order to maintain this condition of "before-and-after-cutoff," we have to absorb ourselves wholeheartedly in our work. In fact, we already exist in the present moment, in now, and in reality; therefore it is natural that with each passing moment past things are finished. Hearing this resolved this researcher's greatest doubt. I was greatly relieved.

A party was held at eleven o'clock after evening *zazen* in celebration of the

end of my first Zen retreat.

At Shôrinkutsu anyone can have a personal interview with *Rôshi* at any time to inquire about the Way. *Rôshi* will answer a person's questions until all doubts have been resolved. And after meals he gives valuable *Dharma* talks. Both of these were a great help to me. But these little banquets also offered a valuable opportunity. It was a chance not only to be able to express our minds frankly, but also provided a atmosphere where we could listen to *Rôshi*'s talks in a relaxed mood.

Rôshi and I were talking. His two disciples were sitting with us silently, *simply* listening. My questions were frank, and I asked many questions without any hesitation.

“What do you think about the understanding of Ikkyû and Ryôkan?”

“Their understanding and compassion are very deep. You should evaluate them for yourself. As a Zen practitioner, you should not judge great Zen Masters. You must respect them and learn from their contrasting styles in their effort to attain the Way.”

“A Zen monk of high virtue once said, 'The Zen of Ikkyû and Ryôkan is worthy of admiration, but not of learning.' You should practice hard and ascertain what he really meant by this.”

“There was a Zen Master in China named Gantô who was the disciple of Tokusan and the *Dharma* brother of Seppo. He was beheaded by a government official during the time when Buddhism was being suppressed in China. It was said that he cried out “Ouch!” at the moment his head was cut off. Later on, Japanese Zen Master Hakuin couldn't believe this incident. Hakuin wondered why Gantô, an Enlightened person, would cry out so shamelessly?”

“But when Hakuin attained Great Enlightenment, he leaped for

joy shouting, ‘How honest Gantô is!’”

“Do you know if Hakuin’s shout is the same as Gantô’s?”

“At the moment Hakuin dropped off mind and body, he himself became Gantô and started dancing for joy. When the *gap* between mind and object disappeared, he became the object itself. He could understand Gantô totally and thoroughly.”

“If you forgot your doubts, you can not distinguish clearly between truth and falseness. But Hakuin clarified his doubt with the Great Doubt.”

“‘Ouch!’ and ‘How honest Gantô is!’ are very much different in sound, time, meaning, and the person who uttered it. This is called distinction. But the function of selflessness without a *gap* works of itself. There is only that condition, and nothing else. We call this ‘Equity’. The thing is the thing itself: it is *as it is*, yet it is not *as it is*. The function of selflessness originally transcends same and different, equality and discrimination, self and other, and enlightenment and delusion.”

“This is Salvation.” The purpose of Zen Practice is to attain this for ourselves. Make no mistake of this!”

“What did Dengyo Daishi mean when he said, “Illuminate just one corner?”

“If you interpret a corner to be a tiny part of something, you misunderstand. For Dengyo Daishi, ‘a part’ means the universe and all things. ‘Illuminate’ means showing the right direction to people, in other words, presenting an ideal to people.”

Rôshi answered quickly. The talk was stimulating and full of Zen spirit. It induced a pleasant sensation throughout my whole body. At that time I did not understand the profundity of his answers. But later on, as my *single-minded* concentration deepened, I often would catch glimpses of the meaning of what *Rôshi* had said. And this would always be accompanied by a faint sense of contentment. This became a wonderfully significant source of self-confidence and positive energy in my life.

This experience is characteristic of a Zen education. It differs from Japanese school education where the emphasis is on memorization. Zen is the world of realization through actual practice and cannot be attained at all through knowledge or explanation. What the practitioner is able to grasp from the teaching of the Master depends the practitioner's present capacity. The master will never attempt to force his teaching unnecessarily. Our ability to understand and grasp the teaching expands naturally as our practice deepens. The teaching is spontaneously given to hard working practitioners, but not to those whose efforts are unworthy. The law of causality is truly fair. Realization is dependent upon one's effort. This is the essence of Zen.

A striking characteristic of Zen practice is that as our practice progresses our thinking becomes more intellectual and scientific. As our mind becomes calm, our thinking becomes multifaceted, rich, and pure. For a scientist, this is extremely beneficial.

A practitioner learns how to deal appropriately with his arising emotions. His mind is calmer and is not troubled with excessive emotion.

Although *Rôshi* is not a scientist, his lucid analytical ability must be due to the depth of his understanding. Having come this far, I can say with more devotion and effort that I, too, could probably obtain the same capability as he.

“From now on, you will be able to understand the sutras and

records of the great Zen Masters. They will become so interesting that you will not be able to stop reading them. But you shouldn't read them because it will only give you intellectual satisfaction. And it is a curse to think that you understand their meaning simply from reading them."

"An understanding of the sutras will not remove the *gap*. Understanding is of no use in actual self-cultivation."

"As much as possible, refrain from stimulating the intellect. Conceptualization is like an unending, perpetual motion mechanism; it is the biggest impediment to Zen practice."

"The inclination to practice Zen is a product of one's disposition and the desire to seek the *Dharma*. This is the 'Way-seeking Mind.' Every person's 'Way-seeking Mind' and approach to Zen practice are different. Their ability to concentrate and their intensity of purpose are also different. Even though someone may be endowed with an excellent intellect, if his aspiration to inquire about the true self is weak, his devotion to resolve this matter will be weak."

"In the end, the Mind-seeking Way is most important."

"Although not a forgone conclusion, most people who come to practice Zen are highly cultured spiritually. They realize their instability and artificiality, and they want to resolve their problem. I would say that the degree of satisfaction one desires and intensity of their aspiration to attain it, along with the degree and comprehension of their own problem, are all closely related to intelligence."

Rôshi's enlightening talk continued until midnight. He had great insight into humanity because he had closely observed (even the details of how people handled their chopsticks) from morning till night people from all walks of life in

everyday lives. The weight and importance of his discernment is much different than what a scholar would learn from books. I don't think anyone else has this kind of deep understanding of humanity.

Perhaps some day a specialist of some kind with a heart and mind like *Rôshi*'s who has devoted himself selflessly to practice Zen—even at the risk of his life—will appear and prove to be of some use in such areas as education, society, daily living, and philosophy. I would hope this would happen soon, and for the highest levels of public good.

THE NINTH DAY—A TERRIBLY BIG SOUVENIR

This was to be my final day in the *dôjô*. I got up at seven, cleaned my room, and washed up.

At breakfast *Rôshi* asked,

“What is the taste of the tea [you are drinking]?”

Silently and confidently I *just* drank the tea.

“You're still engaging the discriminating mind.”

He didn't accept my response. It was true that I had acted by means of understanding.

“You acted on pretense ruled by the intellect which understood the

question and then ordered the action.”

“As long as you keep using your head you remain in the world of delusion.”

“You see, don’t you, that you still haven’t become the thing itself?”

“You still have 40 minutes before leaving. Go sit in the *zendô* until then.”

Just as I was about to leave for home, he gave me this terribly big souvenir. Of course, at all times I must preserve the moment without a *gap*. I have to maintain the purity of my actions. In everything I do there is only endeavoring to become the thing itself.

Rôshi, his two disciples, and all the other practitioners stood by the gate and saw me off. I bowed with my palms joined in prayer and got in a car that one of the disciples would drive taking me to the train station.

In the future, I would also be seeing other practitioners off bowing in the same manner as the car would depart and watching until the car was out of sight behind the shade of the hill. Then I would bow again deeply and quietly. This is part of the Shôrinkutsu *Dôjô*’s Principles of Conduct. This time my heart is full of deep emotion finding that friends in the *Dharma* see me off in the same way. But at this time, I could not really understand the undeserved reverence.

I know how important it is to treat others well, but I wonder if I actually do show the care and kindness I should? Perhaps I really am too coarse with others. The act of truly wishing happiness for someone going home has to show in one’s conduct. This is truly a prerequisite for character building. I reflected on this deeply.

But now I do see new Zen practitioners off in a spirit true to Shôrinkutsu

Dôjô. It feels great. My feelings are in accord with my actions. It is both the foundation and an ideal for human beings.

Without a doubt, a gap forms when action is transmitted from mind to body. I understand intellectually what I must do, but sometimes I become impatient or irritated that I can't put it into practice. The reason for this is that the switchover process is so complicated and troublesome that it doesn't work clearly and directly. Our consideration, discrimination and random thinking interrupt the process.

The result of doing Zen practice is that the *gap* shrinks. After reading many *Dharma* talks and relying on personal experience, it seems that selflessness may be where mind and body become one: the *gap* between mind and action utterly disappears. Certainly, the *gap* itself must simply be nothing but a notion created by supposition. But as long as we hold on to such notions, it is necessary to make the effort to educate and cultivate ourselves. Zen practice is the effort to remove this *gap*. This is my conclusion from considering the mechanism of enlightenment.

As the *Shinkansen* was passing Okayama Station, I wept in sincere gratitude to *Rôshi*. Truly Zen practice is shedding many tears. When I arrived home, sobbing in tears of gratitude once again, I told my wife about my Zen experience.

ZEN PRACTICE THEREAFTER—NO NEED TO SEEK FOR TRUTH ANYMORE

In this way I completed my first experience in Zen practice at Shôrinkutsu

Dôjô; however, this did not mean at all that I realized *single-mindedness*. Although I sensed that I had merely taken a short glimpse into a small portion of it, there still clearly remained something unfulfilled or unsettled. After several more trips to the *dôjô* for Zen practice, I could finally reproduce the state in *zazen* where thoughts did not arise. After that, *zazen* became my life. And making monthly visits to the *dôjô* became the joy in my life. Without a doubt, one's most natural, relaxed and settled world is the realm where there is no mental surplus.

Practicing Zen in daily life was also a great problem. My work was so time consuming that I was not able to allow enough time for *zazen*. For a working person to practice Zen there is no other place to practice except in the clamorous world of appetites, loss-and-gain, and love-and-hate. But how do we temper and ripen *single-mindedness* in our daily lives and at work? Although I understood how to, I sometimes found myself in helpless situations.

At times like that, my starting point for practicing Zen would begin while walking or eating. At Shôrinkutsu, I slowed down the speed of my walking *zazen* to an extreme and concentrated on every minute movement of the muscles in the legs. At any time and any place, I tried to find a way to immediately return to the state of *as it is*. Upon leaving the *dôjô* after my first experience in *zazen*, I forgot how to walk *single-mindedly*. I visited Shôrinkutsu *Dôjô* many times just to discover how to get it back.

Another problem was the disparity between my practice at the *dôjô* and my practice in daily life. Although I could continue to “knead” *single-mindedness* at Shôrinkutsu, I could not do it satisfactorily in daily life. Also, the disparity between *zazen* in action and in quiet sitting was another problem. I could cut off random thinking while sitting *zazen*, but I was submerged in them otherwise.

Always conscious of these circumstances, I took great pains to continue to

“knead” *single-mindedness*. Sometimes, my aspiration (or “Way-seeking Mind”) was strong and I could continue my *single-minded* practice at the office on the university campus. Other times, my aspiration would be weak; I would spend months wasting my time.

It is a mistake to do Zen practice in search of some outcome or result. Erecting a goal or purpose and doing *zazen* aiming for it is called “impure Zen practice.” True training is *single-minded* sitting; it is *single-minded* activity. In short, it is to investigate sitting *zazen as it is* or the activity itself, undefiled by anything. However, *single-minded* sitting and *single-minded* activity do bring about clear and affirmative effects.

I have visited Shôrinkutsu many times in the eight years since I first started practicing there. Through continued Zen practice my character has continued to improve. This is not due to being taught by somebody, but through the continuation of *single-minded* practice itself. Without any blind belief in doctrine or Buddha, or in some obligation to religious faith, this higher moral character develops of itself. This is why Zen is to be the central school of Buddhism. I can testify that such things as anger, jealousy, and attachments have faded, and I have experienced an improvement in my character. My face and body remain the same; but as the *habitual mind* is discarded, the fluctuations in human emotions calm remarkably. Attachments to the external world have diminished, and I begin to taste the calm of composure and a presence of mind.

Man is strongly influenced by the external world through objects of sight, external circumstances, and the words of others. In particular, human beings are easily moved by the words of others. I was also one such person who was flapped like a flag by what people said. But I cannot imagine how much I’ve been set free by *Rôshi* 's words, “Listen to what others say as you would listen to the rustling wind in the pines.” Now I am fairly able to *just* listen when others talk.

My concentration has strengthened remarkably. Once I start to work, one or two hours pass in a twinkling. During that time, I harbor no self-consciousness. (This is the active state of selflessness. If one is totally selfless, there would be no perception of even the selflessness itself. But because I haven't penetrated my practice that far, the difference between the self and selflessness is still unclear.) The irritation and stress of my busy workload has diminished considerably.

But what is most delightful of all is that I have achieved the firm conviction that "Above and beyond this, there is no need to seek anywhere for Truth." The symptoms of that "brain ulcer" I had before practicing Zen have disappeared completely.

At the moment my eyes or ears pick up any stimulus from the external world, no thoughts arise. This is what is called the absolute present. But for a normal person, the mind is shaken by external stimulus, which sets off the process of thinking. If this didn't lead to engagement by the discriminating mind, there would be no problem. However, we ordinary humans feel such things as hatred when we see the other person and fear at the mention of death. It is due to personal views such as these that we suffer. In order to avoid such discomfort, first we must ignore those notions we raise, then master the method of leaving objects of the external world as they are. Finally, we must endeavor to do this constantly. The sole way to accomplish this is Zen. I have attained the means to accomplish this. But I still suffer occasionally due to my own evil feelings and wicked thoughts. Needless to say, I am not yet able to completely avoid my mental anguish.

What I have reaped from my efforts in Zen practice is a grasp of a fundamental aspect of Japanese tradition. For example, my table manners naturally improved, and some bad habits I had using chopsticks disappeared spontaneously. When I drank a cup of tea I found that both my hands naturally sustained the teacup. I have rediscovered that Zen had been a foundation of traditional Japanese

propriety.

Training a child to obediently answer yes is to train the child to just act *simply*. The scolding words of a father “Don't argue!” are clearly understandable according to the principles of Zen. A child's habit of quibbling becomes the root of future problems for the child. Unfortunately, however, we have long lost the true meaning of words like “yes” and “don't argue.” Present day fathers, who just become emotional, do not know the true meaning of these words; and children reject such upbringing as outdated mores.

The meaning of the practices of other Buddhist sects became clearly understandable when measured using the principles of Zen. Chanting the Buddha's name is one means of keeping *single-mindedness*. When repeatedly chanting, “*Namu Amida Butsu*,” the opportunity for random thoughts to arise diminishes. The *kôan* (questions used for *zazen*) practice of “*Mu*” primarily practiced by the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism functions the same way. The essence of chanting “*Mu*,” “*Namu Amida Butsu*,” or “*Namu Myôhō Renge Kyô*” are all the same.

When I look back, I find I have come to realize many things. I am relieved that my mind has become much more relaxed. However, I still have many human faults lingering and also have not yet reached the final settlement.

I resent my weak “Way-seeking Mind.”

Please laugh at me.

It will only rouse me to practice again.

I have treasured the beauty of the gardens of Zen temples in Kyoto ever since first seeing them during my junior high school days. When I think about it, Zen Buddhism has added a unique quality to Japanese culture in such fields as flower arrangement, tea ceremony, calligraphy, painting gardens, cooking, etiquette,

martial arts, etc. The hearts of many highly cultured people such as Sanraku Kanô, one of the most influential painters in the medieval period; Bashô Matsuo, a founder of the art of haiku; and so on, were hidden in the essence of Zen. Historical key figures such as Tokimune Hôjô, a Kamakura-shogunal regent who destroyed invading troops from the Mongol empire; Takauji Ashikaga, a founder of the Muromachi Shogunate; Munenori Yagyû, a master swordsman in the Edo period; Yoshio Ôishi, a chief retainer who sacrificed himself to revenge lord Kira who humiliated his lord Asano; Kaishû Katsu, a statesman who succeeded in changing the regime from the Tokugawa Shogunate to Meiji government in protecting Japan from the great powers of colonial rule; Takamori Saigô, a commander-in-chief of the armed force of Meiji government and so forth, trained their hearts and minds in Zen. Zen was the spiritual culture and grounding for military families and cultured people of Japan.

For the revival of this former way of life, I apply myself continuously, painstakingly, and solely to “kneading” *single-mindedness*.

An old road,
Where people of old used to trod,
Is now grown over
Because nobody walks there.

POSTSCRIPT

As the reader may have discovered by now, Zen may be similar to religion in appearance, but its nature is quite different. As has been indicated in the

previously mentioned five items of Zen practice, the principles of Zen are concise and concrete. Zen is not unscientific in any way.

The tranquil state of mind attained through Zen practice can be demonstrated by measuring brainwaves recording the amplified recorded movement of the electric activity of the brain nerve cells. Alpha waves are produced when one is in a tranquil state. When one is practicing Zen, alpha waves are easily generated.

Zen is totally distinct from such things as the occult, faith healing, superstition, gods or Buddha, or anything irrational or imperceptible. Bowing to an object of worship in a Zen temple is a way of showing respect to Buddha and his ancestors who have transmitted Zen to us. It is not due to some belief in the existence of some holy entity being present or expressed in the carved statues or painted figures.

Zen is clearly different from meditation. Meditation is an act of trying to fill the heart with certain feeling of happiness. On the other hand, Zen is the act of emptying the mind and discarding everything. There is obviously a great difference between emptying the mind and filling it up with some image or feeling to attain happiness.

Zen is not a mystical spiritual experience where the unification of a divine being and man occurs. Enlightenment is empirical proof of “body and mind are one.” In short, Zen is reaching the state where action and perception become one. Furthermore, it is not attaining some supernatural power through Enlightenment.

Zen is neither a concept nor a philosophy. It is action itself throughout one’s whole life. Zen is a “Transmission beyond the written scriptures.” It does not rely on the mere transmission of letters or words but is directly conveyed from teacher to student, from heart to heart. But it is also true that Zen makes a varied and prolific use of words. There are huge volumes of records left by the ancient Zen Masters. But no matter how much you read these records, you cannot attain Enlightenment through their study. Ultimately Zen does not rely on words. Zen is

like training someone in a sport, where the coach teaches by explaining the action in words and by showing the trainee how to move his body. Zen is mental training where, like sports training, the Zen master can only coach Zen practitioners after having seen them in action. Likewise, the principle of “a transmission outside the written scriptures” is not based on some secret doctrine. Should a Zen practitioner believe in the existence of some secret or hidden doctrine in Zen practice that hasn’t yet been disclosed to him, it is only because he himself blindly chooses to believe in or imagine some grander world existing elsewhere. And when the master writes down comments to correct the practitioner’s unnecessary imaginings, the practitioner yet again willfully misinterprets what the Zen master says. As long as the practitioner clings only to words, it becomes unavoidable that the master’s great mercy in trying to clear up such misunderstandings only turns into a hindrance to the practitioner.

Zen denies neither science nor scientific knowledge. But it is the viewpoint of Zen that human beings cannot ultimately be saved by scientific knowledge. The wisdom of Zen may use scientific knowledge, but only as a means and without acquiring any dependence on it. In this way Zen is supra intellectual. In the same way, Zen utilizes logos, without becoming dependent upon it. Thus, Zen is supra logos. I would hope the reader has come to understand this from the glimpses of *Rôshi* 's sphere of understanding and compassion described in this book.

On the surface Zen may appear to be anti-religious, but its essence is really most religious. The fact that Zen requires no blind belief in gods or doctrine indicates an extremely anti-religious nature on one hand. But, on the other hand, because its aim is true salvation through conscious, independent, and subjective effort it possesses a most religious nature.

In the *Bendôwa* chapter of the *Shôbôgenzô* it is written, “We all are already fully endowed with the *Dharma*. However, the *Dharma* never manifests without

practice, nor can it be attained without Great Awakening. The *Dharma* refers to the state of things as they are, but this state cannot be realized without undergoing Zen practice. Once you have realized this state, then you understand that *as-it-isness* is shared by all people equally.

It is written in the 56th chapter of *Lao-tsu*, “The person who knows does not speak, and the person who speaks does not know.” Speaking from a Zen practitioner’s point of view concerning this Taoist passage, “the person who speaks” refers to one who is only caught up in knowledge and discrimination; and “the person who knows” is the person who is comfortable in *as-it-isness*. The expression “the person who knows does not speak” would better read “the person who knows cannot tell.” It is true that *single-mindedness* and *as-it-isness* are incomprehensible. Still, Zen is not some mysterious ideology. If you study under a true Zen master, ten out of ten people will attain its essence.

The tendency in Japan is to esteem such character traits as obedience and frankness. Is it not this pure heart of *as-it-isness* itself—untainted by random, excessive, and evil thoughts, and shared equally by all human beings—which is the true religious heart of the Japanese?

It is often said that the Japanese are unreligious. There are few Japanese who could say or explain satisfactorily to other Japanese, let alone to non-Japanese, that the capacity to revere obedience and honesty is itself the religious heart of Japan. Although the Japanese don’t particularly like being labeled unreligious, they can’t even venture an explanation in their defense, and end up themselves wondering if perhaps it might be true. In reality, I think the Japanese do have a deeply religious heart. They only abhor dogmatic or strongly ideological religious systems. I think the Japanese should once again realize their true religious hearts.

There is no difference among nationalities or races in *as-it-isness*. In this sense Zen, being universal and international in character, is the light of hope for all mankind in this “Godless age.”

Zen detests understanding through knowledge. Understanding through knowledge itself, without being linked with action, is merely intellectual self-satisfaction. It is difficult to cultivate one's character only through knowledge and understanding. This is by no means an exaggeration and should be emphasized repeatedly.

There are two divergent elements coexisting in man's makeup: they are thought and action. These two are often in conflict with each another. The person inclined toward thinking does not act promptly; the person inclined toward the action does not think thoroughly enough. It is the wise men and great pioneers of the Orient who labored trying to unify thought and action. The remarkable aspect of the Orient's traditional wisdom lies in its means to unifying these two contradictions. This method of trying to unify the two is generally referred to as moral cultivation. The unification of thought and action in the teaching of Wang Yangming (1472-1529) of China is one such example.

The special feature of the modern Japanese intellect lies in the separation of thought and action. One of the reasons for this is the Japanese educational system of post-Second World War which was predisposed with gaining knowledge. But the traditional Japanese intellect was not originally like this, especially before the Meiji era (1868-1912), and even continued after that period. For example, Rohan Kôda (1867-1947), a man of letters, wrote in his book *Theory of Effort* about his own way of moral cultivation. A progressive international Christian scholar, Inazô Nitobe (1862-1933), wrote in *Shûyô* (Self-cultivation) the importance of "quiet thinking" and noted on "the exquisiteness of *zazen*." But as time passed, such tradition gradually lost its influence. The current characteristics in the separation of thought and action became obvious, and acceptance of the premise of the intellect's superiority became apparent. For example, the philosopher Kiyoshi Miki (1897-1945) in his book, *Note on the Theory of Life*, said of doubt that "at the

moment, the freedom of the human intellect lies in doubt...doubt purifies the human mind as a virtue of the intellect.” But he also states “...in doubt there must be moderation. Only those doubts [tempered] by moderation can really be called doubt.” But he never comments on the limitations of the intellect.

What I really want to stress is the almost forgotten Oriental tradition of unifying thought and action—and the restoration of it. “It” is the unification of body and mind through religious practice and the revival of moral cultivation. The modern intellects separate thought and action. As we can see, for instance, from the works of sociologist Max Weber, the modern intellect also requires a separation of scientific recognition and judgmental values. In the 20th century, the intellect had license to work self-indulgently at various levels and detached from virtue, emotion, and principle. Both the magnificence and the misery of 20th century technological development were due, perhaps, to this gap between thought and action, at least from the perspective of observing the scientists themselves. In the process of the destruction of our natural and social environment, the human mind speeds toward its own ruin in alarming haste. In the 21st century, unprecedented difficulties are expected to emerge. Will man be able to overcome these impending 21st century dilemmas with a 20th century intellect?

I am sure that the readers of this book will form various impressions of its content.

A business-person reflecting back on his life might earnestly raise the desire to enter some form of self-discipline and practice Zen for self-development. A busy company executive may begin longing for calmness and presence of mind. An idle, young man burned out from over-indulgence goes for a midnight stroll and arrives at a turning point of his life. An elementary school teacher portending the imminence of malevolence after observing the recurrent, unruly behavior of students at lunchtime, might somehow try to use Zen to teach ethics and morality at

school.

A mother who scolds her children for every little thing might someday awaken to the flawless beauty of childhood innocence. She might also realize her calling to the noble mission of taking an active role in closely educating and nurturing the next generation.

Zen will pave the way in the frontier of neuroscience. A neuroscientist may associate the principles of Zen with strengthening the mind's center of attention in the association area of the frontal lobe since *single-mindedness* is achieved by the arousal of attention. Regardless of our wishes, ordinary man will always be tossed about by the wind and waves in a sea of random thinking. This may be due to the wildly running speech center of the brain. It might be possible to consider Zen practice as an alternative regulator for the speech center.

A psychiatrist might become aware of the value of Morita therapy which, for example, has instructed neurosis patients to pick up cigarette butts in a nearby park. The principle behind such treatment is to control randomly dispersed thinking by having the patient concentrate on the action itself, in this case, collecting cigarette butts. A pharmacologist might conceive of an idea to develop a new medicine for nervous breakdowns or manic-depressive psychosis. The 21st century will be the century for the neurosciences.

A devotee of the Chinese classics like *Confucian Analects*, *The Great Learning*, *the Doctrine of the Mean*, and *The Works of Mencius* might encounter renewed and refreshing wonder in reading them. He might say, for instance, that "the state of EQUILIBRIUM" which is defined in *The Doctrine of the Mean* as "the mind while there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy" means *single-mindedness* itself.

Here at the doorstep of the 21st century where man is about to encounter many unprecedented problems, a philosopher might pay more serious attention to

the significance of ancient Oriental thought and ideas, like the Japanese philosopher Kitarô Nishida who confronted dualism with the help of Zen.

I have nearly finished writing a report on the 2,500-year-old secret of Zen.

There may be some readers who think they have now “understood” Zen by reading this book. This is the typical attitude of intellectual understanding. It is impossible to explain sweetness to those who have never tasted sugar, nor Zen to those who have never experienced it. A man knows what *hot* is by touching hot water for the first time. Zen is the world where cool is cool, and hot is hot. If you want to know what Zen is, you have to go to a *dôjô* to practice Zen under a true Zen master. Practicing Zen under a true master is everything!

I hope many people will practice Zen under a true master and that Zen will become the household medicine for everyone. Zen practice is only effective under a true Zen master. It is useless under a master who has not genuinely attained the Way for himself.

Scientific investigation of the mechanisms of Zen is of secondary importance. It should be emphasized that scientific understanding never saved man from his fundamental suffering. However, scientific investigation could shed light on the mental makeup of man in turmoil.

The scientists who want to study Zen scientifically should reach at least the stage of *methodless-method*, which needs vigorous practice of at least three years to attain. Otherwise, the scientist will not know what Zen is; and, more distressfully, his superficial understanding becomes a basis for subsequent, misguided scientific investigation.

Methodless-method is the ultimate way of Zen practice. It is conducted without the mind utilizing any method or means. In other words, no-method is the

true method of genuine Zen practice. To reach this stage without needless delay, you must keep your mind at the point of each, present action—something that is changing each moment. A Zen practitioner must pay careful attention to the real and tangible, phenomenal world of the present moment; for instance, to the bottom of your foot while walking, or your tongue or the touch of tableware while eating. Zen practice is an effort to concentrate one's mind completely on the point which is changing every moment. To reach what is called the *methodless-method*, a Zen practitioner has not only to cut off any thoughts and images that arise suddenly and unexpectedly, but also transcend all delusion and personal views, which are deeply rooted in the mind. Such delusions and personal views are the source of the mind's strongest attachments and are the most difficult mental habits to eliminate.

As we first embark on Zen practice we almost always give in to our deeply-rooted delusions and personal views. However, these are the very enemies or demons we must overcome. Zen practice is to keep fighting them, however hard it may be, without giving up. Man willfully creates his own delusions and personal views, and becomes attached to them. Attachment leads to emotional stimulation, which sometimes—depending on circumstances—leads to emotional outbreaks. One method of Zen practice has the Zen practitioner cut such emotions off by asking deeply within himself, “Where does this thing come from?” The Zen practitioner should continue this battle until the emotion is cut off at the root whenever and no matter how often the emotion arises. There is no other way to overcome emotions than cutting them off completely. There is nobody other than you yourself who can dispose of delusions and personal views because it is you yourself who has created them. Your difficulties in overcoming delusion will be indescribable. Seeking understanding from others will be impossible because others will not be able to understand even if you try to explain. Will your aspiration to seek the Way win? Or will the negligent mind triumph?

When your emotions explode, they become violent passion. They cannot be

instantly calmed. We are carried away by them. However, the Zen practitioner moves the battle line forward to the point before the eruption by perceiving the awakening of their initial stirrings in the mind, then immediately cuts off any thoughts or emotions right after they first originate. In other words, he reaches the mental state where the first thought does not trigger a second—only a single action takes place instead of chain reaction. He comes to realize that preparation for conflict in peacetime is much more effective than engaging the enemy after being harassed. At this stage of Zen practice the fear of phenomena such as emotional outbursts that grow and burn out of control rapidly disappears, and the emotions cease from becoming problematic at all. This is what is called salvation through Zen practice or the transformation in mental structure.

Reaching the stage of *methodless-method* is the juncture for Zen practice to take root in the daily life. If a practitioner is not able to reach this stage, his or her practice ends up, sooner or later, merely as a temporary experience without the capacity for salvation. It would be no exaggeration to say that everything said about Zen by a person who has never reached the stage of *methodless-method* is complete delusion and personal opinion. If you can come to the stage of *methodless-method*, your “Way-seeking Mind” endeavoring to live everyday in the Way has strengthened as much as your delusive mind has weakened.

Arriving at the *methodless-method* depends upon the strong will to transcend oneself and the effort to accomplish one’s ideal. In short, it depends on the quality of the vessel. Depending on wholehearted and extreme effort, one can attain the capacity to dwell in the present moment where one can clearly see the arising point which cultivates all random thinking and emotions. While a practitioner is still using *zazen* as a means or method, he or she differentiates *zazen* and their present reality. This distinction is a hindrance to practice. One must realize that all of our functions themselves always have been the Way from the

beginning. Realizing this, the practitioner discovers that in both quiet sitting and in daily life any method or means separate from the present moment is unnecessary. Thereafter, the practitioner's approach of the necessity of utilizing a method or means for practice changes. This is *methodless-method*. Reaching *methodless-method* he or she becomes able to deepen *single-mindedness* at any time and place, and in direct response to the thing itself. It means that they have attained the ability to give themselves up to the thing itself becoming intimate, or one, with it. From this time on, they enjoy the capacity to walk in the Way.

Methodless-method requires extreme efforts to reach. Such effort may appear odd or strange to people. The practitioner may sit in his room avoiding conversation with family. He may avoid watching TV and listening to music. Perhaps he will eat silently with a grave, aloof, and expressionless look. But through such strenuous efforts in keeping *single-mindedness*, one can preserve *methodless-method*. At times like these, one can recall and acutely understand the words of Lao Tzu who said, "When superior leaders hear of the Tao, they diligently try to practice it. When average leaders hear of the Tao, they appear both aware and unaware of it. When inferior leaders hear of the Tao, they roar with laughter. Without sufficient laughter, it could not be the Tao."

APPENDIX—PROCESS OF ZEN PRACTICE

Kido Inoue *Rôshi* explains the process of Zen practice, including the stage of *methodless-method*, [See (6) and (7)] as follows:

There are several essential points in the process of Zen practice. As stages do not exist originally, this list of stages is not definitive and is only for the sake of

reference. It is nothing more. This is because everyone's condition is different. But, practically speaking, from the teacher's standpoint this seems to be how a practitioner's mental structure is transformed.

(1) Enlightenment means attaining the Mind of Shakyamuni and mastering the *Buddha-Dharma*. In order to attain it, you must: throw away all greed; vow to all Buddhas and gods your aspiration to attain the True Way; show deep reverence and esteem for the ancient great Zen Masters; and seek a true teacher.

(2) When you find a true teacher, simply believe in his teaching and practice accordingly.

(3) Be attentive of the self in the present moment and throw away random thinking. Continue doing this without interruption. But because the power of the *habitual mind* is immense, you instantly lose the present moment. Here you must redouble your efforts. Practice can become very difficult at these times.

(4) In order to cut off random thinking and to force yourself to return to the present moment, turn your upper body from side to side after each single breath. This will also prevent physical stiffness and improve the smooth flow of both body and mind. This is also an excellent method to prevent drowsiness.

(5) As you come to distinguish the real moment from momentarily arising thoughts, less strain will be needed to return to your present self. At this point your suffering and anguish will diminish, the boundary between reality and thought will become clearer, and doing *zazen* will at once become easier.

(6) In due time, scattered thinking will subside. You will no longer be led around by random thoughts. You will be able to let them alone by ignoring them. At this point in your practice you will be able to quickly perceive the instant when thoughts, conception, and consciousness arise. And you will come to realize the world where thoughts are cut off. This is the world of emptiness. Here is where *zazen* becomes extraordinarily interesting. You will gain the ability of continuously perceiving the overall moment-to-moment movements in your daily life. The mind ceases to move toward delusion. But because random thoughts still continue to flicker tempting you to give in sometimes, you must continually be on guard that the mind is not distracted.

(7) Then you reach the point of pure thoughtless-thought, cut off from before and after. You come to realize your original nature confirming there is no need for any method or approach needed in practicing Zen. Taking an approach to do something defiles the world *as it is*. You only need to be just as you are, leaving yourself to the world of serene wholeness in absolute uniformity. After that, you only have to penetrate. True Zen practice is simply the present moment, and nothing else. There is just each moment. The serenity one experiences is an emotional calm that appears strange or abnormal to others. One realizes that one already conducts his life in Buddha Nature; *simply* seeing, hearing, feeling, and thinking as these functions operate on their own. One consents to the state of things as they are, preceding words and concepts. Various doubts melt away. Because you have gained an understanding of the writings of the ancient great Zen Masters, intellectual stimulation becomes fascinating. But it is still best to avoid reading them.

(8) Truly and incisively penetrating the thing itself, one plunges into selflessness. This is the reward of emptiness. It is a moment of great joy. When the *gap* collapses, it becomes clear that the *gap* itself was just an illusion. This is Enlightenment and

Nirvana. It is the true present. It is the world where the past drops off and *concerns* no longer arise. We become the free functioning of all our endowed faculties. They simply operate according to cause and effect. The mind, too, functions instantaneously according to the circumstances of the present, so we cannot find any place where the mind is. This is what manifests the moment the *gap* disappears. The glad tidings of “Form is emptiness; emptiness is form.” is conveyed to you, and you truly understand what *single-mindedness* is. From then on, even in the mundane world you never lose the present moment and are able to act *simply* as all your endowed faculties operate naturally. But still the ego-self remains to occasionally arise.

(9) From this time on, one enters post-Enlightenment practice. Awakening itself brings enormous conviction and strength, which conversely stands before us blocking the Way to perfect liberation. Post-Enlightenment practice is casting off even Enlightenment itself. Since originally absolutely nothing exists, perceiving Enlightenment itself is also delusion. If we possess nothing, it is possible to become anything according to circumstances. This is called true liberation or freedom. The way to discard Enlightenment is by acting *simply (single-mindedly)*. Throwing away even the *Buddha-Dharma*, Enlightenment, and Buddha, we simply “knead” the present moment by becoming pure function *as it is*. Like a rail stretching ten thousand miles, one must penetrate simply and solely into *single-mindedness*. Then through *single-mindedness*, *single-mindedness* consumes itself. It is essential for practitioners to keep on preserving the present moment without being neglectful for even a moment in making reference to the records of the ancient great Zen Masters and the Masters themselves.

(10) The crowning accomplishment of throwing away both Enlightenment and the *Buddha-Dharma* is Great Enlightenment. In True Reality there is neither what is

considered reality nor what is not considered reality. This is the same illuminating world of our great compassionate teacher Shakyamuni Buddha who declared upon awakening, “In all of heaven and earth, I alone am the World-honored One.” A man of Great Enlightenment engages in his entire life and death in joy and dignity by giving himself up to the everlasting profoundness of existence; and empowered with boundless confidence and peace of mind saves others and the world. Even at this point, the past great Zen Masters endeavored all the more to “knead” *single-mindedness*. National Teacher Daito (1282-1337), Myôchô Sôhō left a verse as his last words:

Cutting the great Zen Masters into half—
Polishing a razor-sharp sword all the time;
Where utterly inexpressible in words
Fangs bite the empty sky.

Even after they have exhausted Enlightenment they still continue to polish the world where there is nothing to polish. They had nothing to say, so words were thrown away, and they would not even open their mouths. Not even Buddha could disturb them. Buddha probably bowed his head to them in deep gratitude.

True endeavor must be accompanied by a magnificent setting. This is because results befittingly accompany their causes. Because of the very fact that the ancient great Masters left us the sacred teaching, it is possible through endeavor for anyone to accomplish the Way today. The *Buddha-Dharma* penetrating *Buddha-Dharma*, Truth fostering Truth, and Mind penetrating Mind are all due to the Way. Therefore we practice the Way for the sake of the Way. This is the Mind that seeks the Way.

Man is a creature who, above all, loves and values Truth. Through repentance he has the endowed capacity to readily transform himself. Through this capacity and the power of his ideals, man maintains a firm belief in the unfathomable preciousness of this existence. Man's center will always be his spirit and heart. And the core of this is the *true mind*, a desire for self-improvement, and compassion. It is also ideals, endurance, introspection, and repentance. This is the mind void of deceit and betrayal. It is the sanctity that values above all the Great Way that leads there.

It is said that time flies swifter than an arrow, and one's fate strikes quicker than lightning. Likewise, the ancient great Zen Master cried out, "Others are not me. There is no time to wait." Let us value and preserve these words. We should hasten to actually resurrect the ancient Masters.

AFTERWORD

I regret that I started practicing Zen at the late age of 42. It is shameful that I am slow in progressing. It is said that if you want to examine a Zen practitioner, take a look at his or her daily action. If a penetrating Zen master would inspect these writings in light of my daily actions, he would think them quite absurd. My writing can not avoid the intellectual understanding that I myself refute in the book. The essence of Zen practice is private and personal—a practitioner seeks his master's inspection continuously, while he holds the *true mind* privately and honestly. Moreover, one who has not become enlightened should never talk about Zen because it disgraces the *Dharma* by disseminating incorrect teaching.

However, this book is prepared as an introduction to Zen practice by permission of Kido *Rôshi* to provide some information about Zen as it should be

and let people know the importance of practicing Zen under the guidance of a true Zen master. Because of the immaturity of my own Zen practice, I sincerely hope that the true value and significance of Zen would not be mistakenly passed down through my writings.

One starts Zen practice by his 20s,
he will become a great being as the ancient great Zen Masters.
One commences to practice Zen in his 30s,
he will be the best professional of his field.
One begins Zen practice in his 40s,
he will be a good professional and parent.
One meets Zen in his 50s,
he will attain peace of mind.

Atsunobu Tomomatsu

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GLOSSARY

Many different words are used to explain the absolute present: *shikan* (*single-mindedness*), *samadhi*, *absorption*, *true mind*, *Now*, *before-and-after-cutoff*, etc. All of these point to the reality of the present moment. Although nuances may subtly differ, all of these point from different perspectives to the absolute present. They should be understood as essentially the same.

Absorption (Zenjô) The unified mind undivided by thoughts or notions.

Awakening Synonymous with *Satori*, Enlightenment, and *Dropping-off*. See *Satori*.

before-and-after-cutoff (Zengo Saidan) The state of mind in which the arising of a thought (*before*) and its cessation (*after*) are clearly recognized.

Buddha-Dharma (Buppô) The teaching Shakyamuni Buddha expounded as a result of his Awakening that the true nature of all things is constantly changing (transient), is without beginning or end (selfless), and cannot be perceived (formless).

concerns (kodawari) Not only something that worries you, such as the terror of death, but also a discriminatory thought, such as a personal view, a fixed idea, a prejudice, etc. As the product from discriminatory thinking, you may often overlook such *concerns* since the products themselves blind you; or, you misinterpret them as being your opinions and therefore an essential part of your identity. Similar to the *habitual mind*.

Dharma (法 or *Ho*) The provisional name given to the way things are as they are, i.e., sugar is sweet, salt is salty, etc. It is also used synonymously with Buddha-Dharma.

dôjô A place for training

dokusan (*doku*: alone, *san*: to go to the teacher to inquire) Having personal interviews with the Master to inquire about the *Dharma*. This includes inquiring about one's Zen practice in dealing with various problems or doubts encountered in one's practice. It is also an opportunity for the Master to take a look into the mental state and method of practice of the practitioner.

Dropping-off (*Datsuraku*) Synonymous with *Satori*, Enlightenment, and Awakening. See *Satori*.

Enlightenment Synonymous with *Satori*, Awakening, and *Dropping-off*. See *Satori*.

habitual mind (*kokoro no kuse*) Similar to *concerns*.

Heart Sutra (*Hannya-shingyo*) One of the most important sutras in Mahayana Buddhism and particularly emphasized in Zen. It expounds in a clear and concise manner the teaching of emptiness.

hippocampus A small region deep in each temporal lobe. It plays a major role in laying down memory traces.

Kenshō To realize Buddha-nature. It is originally synonymous with Enlightenment, however, it is treated as the beginning of true training in *kōan* Zen investigating old standard (*kosoku*) *kōan*.

kinhin Single-minded walking in the *zendō*

kōan Questions used for Zen practice. There are two types of *kōan*: an old standard *kōan* (*kosoku kōan*) and an actual *kōan* (*genjo kōan*). An old standard *kōan*, which is usually taken from ancient collections of Zen *kōan* like *Mumonkan* and *Hekiganroku*, cannot be solved rationally. The practitioner is obliged to “hold” the *kōan* constantly in mind, day and night. Concentration increases until the tension causes rational thinking to give way under the pressure and a breakthrough occurs. Some Great Zen masters warned that these *kōan* were misused by mistaken or pretended Zen masters. An actual *kōan*, for example, “What is ‘This Taste’?” “What is ‘This Thing’?” “Who is ‘This Person’ listening to the sound?” and so on, is used to become the activity or the thing itself.

kyōgai The scope of the mind’s eye to discern human nature and to influence people through its virtuous power; i.e., one’s sphere of understanding of human nature and compassion toward other human beings.

methodless-method (*kufū naki kufū*) Advanced Zen practice free from any fixed methods, with little consciousness of one’s doing practice

mistaken Zen master (*jashi*) a Zen master who believes that he has experienced Enlightenment, mistakenly assuming some unusual experience such as *makyō* (abnormal but harmless visual sensations which most beginners experience in *zazen* practice) to be an Enlightenment experience or mistaking half-baked *kōan* *Kenshō*

as Enlightenment. These kinds of mistaken Enlightenment are called *kanjô zatori* —emotional “Enlightenment.”

Now (Ima) Synonymous with the absolute present and *sokkon*. See *sokkon*.

polarizing fatigue (katayori hirô) Fatigue naturally arising locally, for instance, in the shoulder, back, waist, foot, or knee, from the strain of sitting for a long time.

post-Enlightenment practice (gogo no shugyô) Practice of throwing away Enlightenment to attain Great Enlightenment (*Daigo*).

Rôshi Traditionally, a title given to an enlightened Zen master (*rô*: old and excellent, *shi*: teacher). In present-day Japan, however, Zen priests are often addressed as “*Rôshi*” merely out of respect for their position and age.

Rôni A title given to an old virtuous nun (*rô*: old and excellent, *ni*: nun).

samadhi (zanmai) The condition where the mind is occupied only by the functioning senses—a state free of conception and miscellaneous thought.

Satori Synonymous with Enlightenment, *Dropping-off* or Awakening. An experience which, in most cases, is characterized by suddenness after a long search, an instantaneous and spontaneous realization of the oneness of the whole universe, accompanied by a great peace of mind and satisfaction in this total unity or oneness. A practitioner eager for *Satori* but unsupervised by a true Zen master may mistake certain illusions or sensations for Enlightenment. The only person who can lead practitioners along the right path to Enlightenment and judge the authenticity of the *Satori* experience is a true Zen master who himself has experienced genuine *Satori*.

under a true teacher. Here lies the importance of the *Dharma* line of transmission that has been handed down from master to master.

shikan Synonymous with *single-mindedness*. See *single-mindedness*.

single-mindedness (shikan) Sole activity *as it is* at the absolute present where no thoughts intervene. *Single-minded* breathing is, for instance, the state where the breathing itself is doing the breathing, with no thoughts intervening. See *Shikan*.

sokkon Synonymous with the absolute present and *Now*. The state of mind where random thoughts no longer arise. It is the world *as it is*: just as one sees, hears, and experiences without the intervention of thought, discrimination, or consideration of any kind.

true Zen master (*shôshi*) Zen master who has experienced Enlightenment and knows the right way to Enlightenment.

thalamus The deeper nuclear structures positioned behind the basal ganglia and medial to them. They serve largely to integrate sensory and ever more refined messages at a subcortical level. They are also engaged in complex interactions with the cortex.

true mind (shônen) The mind without thought; or, the state of thoughtless thought

zazen *Zazen* traditionally and formally means *single-minded* sitting in the lotus posture in the *zendô*. However, at Shôrinkutsu *Dôjô* practitioners, although encouraged to sit in the traditional lotus posture, are permitted to sit in any comfortable posture. Beginners are advised to turn their upper body from side to

side each time they breathe in order to stop thinking randomly and prevent *polarizing* fatigue which reduces the efficiency of *zazen*.

zendô A hall in which to practice *zazen*

AUTHOR'S PROFILE

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