

number of silk threads is large, it cannot stand the sword. It is the same with one who resolves to seek perfect wisdom. If he meets a truly good friend who by the use of [various]<sup>62</sup> convenient means shows him True Thusness directly, and if he uses the diamond wisdom (which by its reality overcomes all illusory knowledge) to cut off all afflictions in the various stages, he will be completely enlightened, and will realize by himself that the nature of dharmas is originally empty and void. As his wisdom has become sharp and clear, he can penetrate everything and everywhere without obstacle. At this moment of realization, all causes [that give rise to attachment to external objects] will perish, and erroneous thoughts as numerous as sand in the Ganges will suddenly vanish altogether. Unlimited number of merits will be complete at the appropriate time. Once the diamond wisdom issues forth, why can't [Buddhahood] be achieved?" (pp. 120-121)

Teacher of the Law Chih-te<sup>63</sup> asked, "Zen Master, you teach living beings to seek only sudden enlightenment. Why not follow the gradual cultivation of Hīnayāna? One can never ascend a nine-story tower without going up the steps gradually."

Answer: "I am afraid the tower you talk about ascending is not a nine-story tower but a square tomb consisting of a pile of earth. If it is really a nine-story tower, it would mean the principle of sudden enlightenment. If one directs one's thought to sudden enlightenment as if one ascends a nine-story tower with the necessity of going through the steps gradually, one is not aiming right but sets up the principle of gradual enlightenment instead. Sudden enlightenment means satisfying both principle (*li*) and wisdom. The principle of sudden enlightenment means to understand without going through gradual steps, for understanding is natural. Sudden enlightenment means that one's own mind is empty and void from the very beginning. It means that the mind has no attachment. It means to enlighten one's mind while leaving dharmas as they are and to be absolutely empty in the mind. It means to understand all dharmas. It means not to be attached to Emptiness when one hears about it and at the same time not to be attached to the absence of Emptiness. It means not to be attached to the self when one hears about it and at the same time not to be attached to the absence of the self. It means entering Nirvāṇa without renouncing life and death. Therefore the scripture says, '[Living beings] have spontaneous wisdom and wisdom without teacher.'<sup>64</sup> He who issues from principle approaches the Way rapidly, whereas he who cultivates externally approaches slowly.

<sup>62</sup> One word here is missing in the text.

<sup>63</sup> Nothing is known of him.

<sup>64</sup> *Saddharmapundarika sūtra* (Scripture of the Lotus of the Good Law), ch. 3, TSD, 9:13. See Soothill, trans., *The Lotus of the Wonderful Law*, p. 93.

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People are surprised and skeptical when they hear that there is supra-mundane mystery. There are sudden mysteries in the world. Do you believe it?"

*Comment.* Note the equal emphasis on wisdom and principle. The rational element of principle, which occupies an important place in Hua-yen and later in Neo-Confucianism, also has an important role in Zen. Intuition does not preclude intellectual understanding.

*Question:* "What do you mean?"

*Answer:* "For example, Duke Chou (d. 1094 B.C.)<sup>65</sup> and Fu Yüeh<sup>66</sup> were originally a fisherman and a mason, respectively. 'The choice laid in the minds of the rulers.'<sup>67</sup> Consequently, they rose as simple folks and suddenly ascended to the position of a prime minister. Is this not a wonderful thing in the mundane world? As to wonderful things in the mundane world, when living beings whose minds are clearly full of greed, attachment, and ignorance, meet a truly good friend and in one instant of thought correspond [with truth], they will immediately achieve Buddhahood. Is this not a wonderful thing in the mundane world?"

"Furthermore, [the scripture]<sup>68</sup> says, 'All living beings achieve Buddhahood as they see their own nature.' Also, Nāgākanyā, daughter of the Dragon King, achieved Buddhahood at the very moment she resolved to seek perfect wisdom.<sup>69</sup> Again, in order to enable living beings to penetrate the knowledge and perception of the Buddha but not to allow sudden enlightenment, the Tathāgata everywhere spoke of the Five Vehicles (leading to their corresponding destinations for human beings, deities, ordinary disciples, the self-enlightened ones, and bodhisattvas).<sup>70</sup> Now that the scriptures do not speak of the Five Vehicles but merely talk about penetrating the knowledge and perception of the Buddha, in the strict sense they only show the method of sudden enlightenment. It is to harbor only one thought that corresponds with truth but surely not to go through gradual steps. By corresponding is meant the understanding of the absence of thought, the understanding of self-nature, and being absolutely empty in the mind. Because the mind is absolutely

<sup>65</sup> He assisted his brother, King Wu (r. 1121–1116 B.C.) in founding the Chou dynasty and later became prime minister during the reign of King Wu's son. He used to fish.

<sup>66</sup> Fu Yüeh was helping people build dykes when the sovereign Wu-ting (r. 1339–1281 B.C.) heard of him and later appointed him prime minister.

<sup>67</sup> This is a quotation from *Analects*, 20:1.

<sup>68</sup> Hu Shih (*Shen-hui Ho-shang i-chi*, p. 131) thinks that what follows is probably a quotation from some scripture.

<sup>69</sup> Referring to the story in *Saddharmapuṇḍarika sūtra*, ch. 12, TSD, 9:35. See Soothill, p. 174.

<sup>70</sup> For the last three vehicles, see above, ch. 25, n.14. For bodhisattvas, see n.74.

empty, that says, "I contemplate the coming before. Because it is such a thing." (pp. 100–101)

*Question:*

*Answer:*

spontaneous nature has its own existence, though it is not without enlightenment (Scripture) says that at the same time, material, gold refined, the residual mind nature, where afflictions. Afflicted Buddhas, both resolve to seek emancipation

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nature. There is the nature of Taoism. The two processes of things.<sup>71</sup> From this the interpretation

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<sup>71</sup> *Wei-mo-chi*

<sup>72</sup> *Avidyā*, pa

<sup>73</sup> Paraphrasing

<sup>74</sup> Bodhisattvas but because beings.

<sup>75</sup> Lao Tzu, c.

empty, that is Tathāgata Meditation. The *Wei-mo-chieh* [so-shuo] *ching* says, "I contemplate my own body in the sense of real character. I contemplate the Buddha in the same way. I see the Tathāgata as neither coming before, nor going afterward, and not remaining at present."<sup>71</sup> Because it does not remain (no attachment), it is Tathāgata Meditation." (pp. 130-132)

*Question:* "Why is ignorance<sup>72</sup> the same as spontaneity (*tzu-jan*)?"

*Answer:* "Because ignorance and Buddha-nature come into existence spontaneously. Ignorance had Buddha-nature as the basis and Buddha-nature has ignorance as the basis. Since one is basis for the other, when one exists, the other exists also. With enlightenment, it is Buddha-nature. Without enlightenment, it is ignorance. The *Nieh-p'an ching* (Nirvāṇa Scripture) says, 'It is like gold and mineral. They come into existence at the same time. After a master founder has smelted and refined the material, gold and the mineral will presently be differentiated. The more refined, the purer the gold will become, and with further smelting, the residual mineral will become dust.'<sup>73</sup> The gold is analogous to Buddha-nature, whereas mineral is analogous to afflictions resulting from passions. Afflictions and Buddha-nature exist simultaneously. If the Buddhas, bodhisattvas,<sup>74</sup> and truly good friends teach us so we may resolve to cultivate perfect wisdom, we shall immediately achieve emancipation."

*Question:* "If ignorance is spontaneity, is that not identical with the spontaneity of heretics?"

*Answer:* "It is identical with the spontaneity of the Taoists, but the interpretations are different."

*Question:* "How different?"

*Answer:* "In Buddhism both Buddha-nature and ignorance are spontaneous. Why? Because all dharmas depend on the power of Buddha-nature. Therefore all dharmas belong to spontaneity. But in the spontaneity of Taoism, 'Tao produced the One. The One produced the two. The two produced the three. And the three produced the ten thousand things.'<sup>75</sup> From the One down, all the rest are spontaneous. Because of this the interpretations are different." (pp. 98-99)

The assistant to the governor said, "All palace monks serving the emperor speak of causation instead of spontaneity, whereas Taoist

<sup>71</sup> *Wei-mo-chieh ching*, sec. 12, TSD, 14:554.

<sup>72</sup> *Avidyā*, particularly ignorance of facts and principles about dharmas.

<sup>73</sup> Paraphrasing a passage in *Nirvāṇa sūtra*, ch. 26, TSD, 12:788.

<sup>74</sup> Bodhisattvas are beings who are enlightened and are ready to become Buddhas but because of their compassion they remain in the world to save all sentient beings.

<sup>75</sup> *Lao Tzu*, ch. 42.

priests over the world only speak of spontaneity and do not speak of causation."

*Answer:* "It is due to their stupid mistake that monks set up causation but not spontaneity, and it is due to their [stupid] mistake that Taoist priests only set up spontaneity but not causation."

The assistant to the governor asked: "We can understand the causation of the monks, but what is their spontaneity? We can understand the spontaneity of the Taoists, but what is their causation?"

*Answer:* "The spontaneity of the monks is the self-nature of living beings. Moreover, the scripture says, 'Living beings [have] spontaneous wisdom and wisdom without teacher.' This is called spontaneity. But in the case of causation of the Taoists, Tao can produce the One, the One can produce the two, the two can produce the three, and the three produce all things. All are produced because of Tao. If there were no Tao, nothing will be produced. Thus all things belong to causation." (pp. 143-144)

### C. THE RECORDED CONVERSATIONS OF ZEN MASTER I-HSUAN<sup>76</sup>

1. The Prefect, Policy Advisor Wang,<sup>77</sup> and other officials requested the Master to lecture. The Master ascended the hall and said, "Today it is only because I, a humble monk, reluctantly accommodate human feelings that I sit on this chair. If one is restricted to one's heritage in expounding the fundamental understanding [of salvation], one really cannot say anything and would have nothing to stand on.<sup>78</sup> However, because of the honorable general advisor's strong request today, how can the fundamental doctrines be concealed? Are there any talented men or fighting generals to hurl their banners and unfold their strategy right now? Show<sup>79</sup> it to the group!"

A monk asked, "What is the basic idea of the Law preached by the Buddha?" Thereupon the Master shouted at him. The monk paid reverence. The Master said, "The Master and the monk can argue all right."

*Question:* "Master, whose tune are you singing? Whose tradition are you perpetuating?"

<sup>76</sup> For his biography see *Sung kao-seng chuan*, ch. 12, TSD, 50:779. Not much is known of him. His school is called the Lin-chi school (Rinsai in Japanese) because he lived in the Lin-chi monastery in Hopei.

<sup>77</sup> He was Wang Ching-ch'u, prefect of the Honan Prefecture, and a Buddhist lay pupil of Zen Master Ling-yu (771-853).

<sup>78</sup> Commentators are not agreed on the meaning of this sentence. The present interpretation is harmonious with the spirit of independence and revolt of the Zen School.

<sup>79</sup> The phrase *cheng-chü* here does not mean evidence but to make clear.

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<sup>80</sup> This refers to 2 Mountain. For his w  
<sup>81</sup> One gets nowhe  
<sup>82</sup> *Chuang Tzu*, ch p. 215. See above, ch

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The Master said, "When I was a disciple of Huang-po,<sup>80</sup> I asked him three times and I was beaten three times."

As the monk hesitated about what to say, the Master shouted at him and then beat him, saying, "Don't nail a stick into empty space."<sup>81</sup>

2. The Master ascended the hall and said, "Over a lump of reddish flesh there sits a pure man who transcends and is no longer attached to any class of Buddhas or sentient beings. He comes in and out of your sense organs all the time. If you are not yet clear about it, look, look!"

At that point a monk came forward and asked, "What is a pure man who does not belong to any class of Buddhas or sentient beings?" The Master came right down from his chair and, taking hold of the monk, exclaimed, "Speak! Speak!" As the monk deliberated what to say, the Master let him go, saying, "What dried human excrement-removing stick is the pure man who does not belong to any class of Buddhas or sentient beings!" Thereupon he returned to his room. (TSD, 47:496)

*Comment.* This is one of the most famous *koans*. The nonsensical answer in the *koan* is a new Zen device, but witty and shocking conversations have their precedents in Taoism and Neo-Taoism. One can find many in the *Chuang Tzu* and the *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* (New Discourse on the Talk of the Times), to mention only two well-known examples.

The mention of excrement is no vulgarism. It is derived from Chuang Tzu who said that Tao is even in human excrement and urine.<sup>82</sup> Japanese scholars have invariably avoided direct translation of the term and used such expressions as "dried stick of dirt" instead. In doing so, they have missed the extremely important point in Taoism and seem to forget that the Buddha, like Tao, is everywhere.

3. The Master ascended the hall. A monk asked, "What is the basic idea of the Law preached by the Buddha?" The Master lifted up his swatter. The monk shouted, and the Master beat him.

[The monk asked again], "What is the basic idea of the Law preached by the Buddha?" The Master again lifted up his swatter. The monk shouted, and the Master shouted also. As the monk hesitated about what to say, the Master beat him.

*Comment.* The swatter was originally used to hit mosquitoes but

<sup>80</sup> This refers to Zen Master Hsi-yün (d. 850) who lived in the Huang-po Mountain. For his work, see Bibliography.

<sup>81</sup> One gets nowhere in so doing.

<sup>82</sup> *Chuang Tzu*, ch. 22, HHCC, 7:49b. cf. Giles trans., *Chuang Tzu*, 1961 ed., p. 215. See above, ch. 8, comment on C, 2.

in Zen it is used to needle the mind. Hu Shih and Suzuki are diametrically opposed in their interpretations of such a technique. For Hu Shih, the apparently nonsensical Zen gestures are calculated to force the student to think for himself, "a method of education by the hard way."<sup>83</sup> For Suzuki, the swatter and various forms of gestures represent Zen's "persistent and often violent opposition to words and then to the intellect which deals exclusively in words."<sup>84</sup> Suzuki added that Zen has no prescribed methods. We may add that in the typical Buddhist fashion of the Four Points of Argumentation,<sup>85</sup> the swatter may mean this, it may mean that, it may mean both this and that, and it may mean neither this nor that.

Thereupon the Master said, "Listen, men. Those who pursue after the Law will not escape from death. I was in my late Master Huang-po's place for twenty years. Three times I asked him about the basic idea of the Law preached by the Buddha and three times he bestowed upon me the staff. I felt I was struck only by a dried stalk. Now I wish to have a real beating. Who can do it to me?"

One monk came out of the group and said, "I can do it."

The Master picked up the staff to give him. As he was about to take it over, the Master beat him. (TSD, 47:496-497)

4. The Master ascended the hall and said, "A man stands on top of a cliff, with no possibility of rising any further. Another man stands at the crossroad, neither facing nor backing anything. Who is in the front and who is in the back? Don't be like Vimalakīrti (who was famous for his purity), and don't be like Great Gentleman Fu (who benefited others).<sup>86</sup> Take care of yourselves." (TSD, 47:497)

5. The Master told the congregation: "Seekers of the Way. In Buddhism no effort is necessary. All one has to do is to do nothing, except to move his bowels, urinate, put on his clothing, eat his meals, and lie down if he is tired. The stupid will laugh at him, but the wise one will understand. An ancient person said, 'One who makes effort externally is surely a fool.'<sup>87</sup> (TSD, 47:498)

6. *Question*: "What is meant by the mind's not being different at different times?"

<sup>83</sup> Hu Shih, "Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China: Its History and Method," *Philosophy East and West*, 3 (1953) p. 21.

<sup>84</sup> Suzuki, "Zen: A Reply to Hu Shih," *ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>85</sup> See above, ch. 22, Introduction.

<sup>86</sup> Fu Hsüan-feng (b. A.D. 28) put the fish he caught in a basket and submerged it under water so those fish which wished to escape could do so. He and his wife worked in the farm for others.

<sup>87</sup> This saying and part of what precedes immediately come from a song by Zen Master Ming-tsan (fl. 788) in TSD, 49:606.

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The Master answered, "As you deliberated to ask the question, your mind has already become different. Therefore the nature and character of dharmas have become differentiated. Seekers of the Way, do not make any mistake. All mundane and supramundane dharmas have no nature of their own. Nor have they the nature to be produced [by causes]. They have only the name Emptiness, but even the name is empty. Why do you take this useless name as real? You are greatly mistaken! . . . If you seek after the Buddha, you will be taken over by the devil of the Buddha, and if you seek after the patriarch, you will be taken over by the devil of the patriarch. If you seek after anything, you will always suffer. It is better not to do anything. Some unworthy priests tell their disciples that the Buddha is the ultimate, and that he went through three infinitely long periods, fulfilled his practice, and then achieved Buddhahood. Seekers of the Way, if you say that the Buddha is the ultimate, why did he die lying down sideways in the forest in Kuśinagara after having lived for eighty years? Where is he now? . . . Those who truly seek after the Law will have no use for the Buddha. They will have no use for the bodhisattvas or arhats.<sup>88</sup> And they will have no use for any excellence in the Three Worlds (of desires, matter, and pure spirit).<sup>89</sup> They will be distinctly free and not bound by material things. Heaven and earth may turn upside down but I shall have no more uncertainty. The Buddhas of the ten cardinal directions may appear before me and I shall not feel happy for a single moment. The three paths (of fire, blood, and swords) to hell may suddenly appear, but I shall not be afraid for a single moment. Why? Because I know that all dharmas are devoid of characters. They exist when there is transformation [in the mind] and cease to exist when there is no transformation. The Three Worlds are but the mind, and all dharmas are consciousness only. Therefore [they are all] dreams, illusions, and flowers in the air. What is the use of grasping and seizing them? . . .

"Seekers of the Way, if you want to achieve the understanding according to the Law, don't be deceived by others and turn to [your thoughts] internally or [objects] externally. Kill anything that you happen on. Kill the Buddha if you happen to meet him. Kill a patriarch or an arhat if you happen to meet him. Kill your parents or relatives if you happen to meet them. Only then can you be free, not bound by material things, and absolutely free and at ease. . . . I have no trick to give people. I merely cure disease and set people free. . . . My views are

<sup>88</sup> An arhat or arhan is the ideal being in Hīnayāna or Small Vehicle, a saint or worthy who is no longer subject to incarnation.

<sup>89</sup> For the Three Worlds, see above, ch. 20, n.38.

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few. I merely put on clothing and eat meals as usual, and pass my time without doing anything. You people coming from the various directions have all made up your minds to seek the Buddha, seek the Law, seek emancipation, and seek to leave the Three Worlds. Crazy people! If you want to leave the Three Worlds, where can you go? 'Buddha' and 'patriarchs' are terms of praise and also bondage. Do you want to know where the Three Worlds are? They are right in your mind which is now listening to the Law." (TSD, 47:499-500)

*Comment.* This "doing nothing" philosophy means more than the Taoist philosophy of leaving things alone and being absolutely spontaneous. It assumes that Ultimate Reality is everywhere and can be discovered without any special searching. Eating, sweeping the floor, simply walking, or anything will do.

7. Ma-ku<sup>90</sup> came to participate in a session. As he arranged his seating cushion, he asked, "Which face of the twelve-face Kuan-yin<sup>91</sup> faces the proper direction?"

The Master got down from the rope chair. With one hand he took away Ma-ku's cushion and with the other he held Ma-ku, saying, "Which direction does the twelve-face Kuan-yin face?"

Ma-ku turned around and was about to sit in the rope chair. The Master picked up the staff and beat him. Ma-ku having grasped the staff, the two dragged each other into the room.

8. The Master asked a monk: "Sometimes a shout is like the sacred sword of the Diamond King.<sup>92</sup> Sometimes a shout is like a golden-haired lion squatting on the ground. Sometimes a shout is like a rod or a piece of grass [used to attract fish]. And sometimes a shout is like one which does not function as a shout at all. How do you know which one to use?"

As the monk was deliberating what to say, the Master shouted. (TSD, 47:504)

9. When the Master was among Huang-po's congregation, his conduct was very pure. The senior monk<sup>93</sup> said with a sigh, "Although he is young, he is different from the rest!" He then asked, "Sir, how long have you been here?"

<sup>90</sup> Zen Master Pao-ch'e of Ma-ku Mountain.

<sup>91</sup> Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva "who sees the world's sound," or the cries of suffering. The name may also mean the one who sees reality as it is, free and at ease. Characterized by compassion, this Buddhist saint assumes many forms, has many faces and hands the better to see and help sentient beings toward salvation. In popular Chinese religion, the saint had assumed a feminine form and has come to be known in the West as Goddess of Mercy.

<sup>92</sup> A bodhisattva in the diamond-realm, the realm of wisdom as contrasted with the realm of principle, the two realms representing those of effect and cause, respectively.

<sup>93</sup> Huang-po's disciple Ch'en Mu-chou.

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## THE ZEN (CH'AN) SCHOOL

The Master said, "Three years."

The senior monk said, "Have you ever gone to the head monk (Huang-po) and asked him questions?"

The Master said, "I have not. I wouldn't know what to ask."

The senior monk said, "Why don't you go and ask the head monk what the basic idea of the Law preached by the Buddha clearly is?"

The Master went and asked the question. But before he finished, Huang-po beat him. When he came back, the senior monk asked him how the conversation went. The Master said, "Before I finished my question, he already had beaten me. I don't understand." The senior monk told him to go and ask again.

The Master did and Huang-po beat him again. In this way he asked three times and got beaten three times. . . . Huang-po said, "If you go to Ta-yü's<sup>94</sup> place, he will tell you why."

The Master went to Ta-yü, who asked him, "Where have you come from?"

The Master said, "I am from Huang-po's place."

Ta-yü said, "What did Huang-po have to say?"

The Master said, "I asked three times about the basic idea of the Law preached by the Buddha and I was beaten three times. I don't know if I was mistaken."

Ta-yü said, "Old kindly Huang-po has been so earnest with you and you still came here to ask if you were mistaken!"

As soon as the Master heard this, he understood and said, "After all, there is not much in Huang-po's Buddhism." (TSD, 47:504)

*Comment.* Not only is there not much in Huang-po's Buddhism; there is not much in Buddhism itself!<sup>95</sup> This saying has been repeated time and again by Zen Buddhists. It expresses not only a spirit of revolt, but also the determination to wipe out anything in the way of the mind's direct and immediate intuition of truth, including Buddhism itself. Fung Yu-lan is right in considering this point as one of the five most important in Zen.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>94</sup> This monk lived in the Ta-yü Mountain in Kiangsi Province.

<sup>95</sup> This was actually said in the same story recorded in *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu*, 12:3b.

<sup>96</sup> *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, 1953, p. 401.