

D.T. SUZUKI

WHAT IS ZEN?



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Two unpublished Essays and a Reprint  
of the First Edition of *The Essence*  
of Buddhism by

*Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki*



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## *Publishers' Preface*

It is not often that an interested public is offered two substantial articles, hitherto unpublished, by a writer of international fame five years after his death. Such is the privilege of the Buddhist Society, thanks to the kindness of Mr. Lunsford Yandell of Scottsdale, Arizona, who has had one MS. in his possession since he was given it by the author in 1962. At our request Mr. Yandell has written his own Introduction to these manuscripts to explain their genesis.

*The Essence of Buddhism* came into being as described in the present writer's Foreword to the First Edition, here reprinted. It is true that soon after its publication in 1946 Dr. Suzuki expressed a wish to revise the work, and in due course I received, as his agent in London, a new version no less than two and a half times the length of the original. This was published as the Second Edition in 1947. But a number of close students of Dr. Suzuki's work have expressed the view that the first version is preferable, for it is after all a translation of the actual Lectures given to the



Emperor which I wrote down in longhand at the author's dictation in his house at Kamakura within weeks of their presentation in April 1946. What was added, though valuable as fresh material on the subject of Zen Buddhism, has no immediate connection with the Lectures as originally planned.

Hence this volume, largely new to the public, contains three works written with three different types of reader in view: a small society in need of a brief introduction to Zen Buddhism, a determined enquirer needing help on a chosen theme, and for the Emperor of Japan an outline of the essence of Buddhism, which the author held to be Zen.

May this new publication serve to make still further known the work of this great mind and stimulate the reader to move towards the same enlightenment.

Christmas Humphreys

Publisher to the Buddhist Society,

London, May 1971.

London.

## Foreword

By Lunsford P. Yandell  
To "What Is Zen?" and "Self and  
the Unattainable"

The second article was written by Dr. D. T. Suzuki during the two year period which followed the asking of a single question—"How can 'herding the Ox,' Yoga, or any such forms of self-discipline fail to strengthen the very ego that must at all costs subside?" It is such a unique example of the trouble taken by a true spiritual teacher, when he felt that a genuine need existed, that the correspondence from which it arose may enhance the interest and value of the question's answer, which is the article itself.

In a conversation with Dr. Suzuki in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on October 18, 1957, he was asked—"How should one behave (conduct one's life)? What does Zen teach?" He replied—"When you contact the Creative Source, you know. The man who has contacted the Creative Source goes about his lawful, rather than unlawful occasions." This led the questioner later to ask—"How best contact the Creative Source?" On November 10, 1958, Dr. Suzuki replied from the S. S. Hoover, en route to Hawaii:

"The Creative Source you speak of can be reached, I think, by various routes. The only thing that is needed is to keep the eye wide open so that unnecessary ingredients do not obscure the reality itself. The koan method of Zen now prevalent in Japan is one of such routes. The choice of a method is more or less, I believe, accidental, or historical, or deliberately intellectual, or metaphysical, or psychological (which may be included under 'accidental,' because one's temperament is a kind of historical accident).

"When one's inner urge is so strong and imperative there is no time or room left for deliberation; there is still something intellectual in deliberation. In all circumstances, intellection alone never leads one to the realization of the original source."

From this reply came a study by the questioner of various methods. And in a letter written on January 23, 1960, the question cited above was asked—namely—"How can 'herding the ox,' Yoga, or any such forms of self-discipline fail to strengthen the very ego that must at all costs subside?"

There followed a long and intermittent correspondence, Dr. Suzuki apologising many times for the continued delay in answering my question which was due to heavy pressure of work. He was "beginning to feel his age"—he was already ninety! In the course of this correspondence he occasionally included material which lay outside the scope of my enquiry, and one such item, "a new idea to

explain the Cow-herding pictures," I have offered for separate inclusion in *The Middle Way*.

He was at this time concerned to help the Zen Studies Society formed in New York, and in a letter sent to me in January 1961, written for the benefit of this Society, he made clear his total dedication to the work for which he will ever be famous, that of making Zen better known in the West.

He wrote: "I do not feel like writing about my personal concerns, because they have nothing to do with the Society. But I wish to say this much. I am now 91 and my whole life has been devoted to the study of Zen, and yet I have recently come across a few new things about Zen which help me to get deeper understanding into the truth of Zen. I may not live very much longer, and to say this should not be thought to be a kind of self-conceit on my part, that after my passing there will not be any authoritative Zen writers in English for some time to come. I realise it myself and am desirous to serve the Society and through it the world at large.

I hope the Society will understand where I stand. Repetition is tiring, I know, but I wish to state again that I have no private interests to pursue except carrying out my plans to make Zen better known to the West, whereby they will be able to make full use of it in their way, intellectual as well as practical."

It was for the Zen Studies Society that he wrote



the article included here as "What Is Zen?", as a general answer to questions addressed by members of the Society.

By 1961 he had completed a hand-written draft of his intended reply to my original question, but lost it in the course of his many moves and exhausting overwork. Then suddenly, in February 1962, the MS. came. The accompanying letter contained the following paragraph:

"A typed copy hurriedly prepared of the article I promised you is sent by air with this mail. It has not gone through a revision, and the typist told me there are some points in it I must go over before sending it because of obscure meaning in certain places. I hope you can make something out of it. It is not meant for others to read. It won't be of any avail to those who do not know anything of my thought so far published or given in my lectures. When I have more time I will revise it."

He says here that the article is "not meant for others to read" but since there were others deeply interested in Zen and deeply devoted to him, who were most anxious to read it, his permission was sought to allow them to do so. In a further letter he gave the needed permission but repeated again that the article was "not at all finished."

Alas, he never found time to revise it, and in July 1963, he was complaining that "I am feeling a little older lately though I hate to admit it." (He was then 92.) In this letter he adds most interesting comment on contemporary teachers. "When I see so many books on Zen being published, and

some 'Zen masters' going around proclaiming that they can lead you to Satori in a week or two, I feel impatient, and that I cannot pass away until my book is finished."

He then makes clear what the book was.

"I will write again as soon as I finish the present writing, which is an introduction to Sengai's drawings. In this I am trying to explain what Zen is historically. Both Japanese and Western writers on Zen do not know very much about it. It is necessary to understand how it grew up in China under the T'ang dynasty." \*

Here, then, is the article which he sent me, offered, though 'not at all finished' to those who share my devotion to its writer, and in the hope that others may be led to his writings, and in the belief that the article's intrinsic value far outweighs the fact that it was never revised.

Scottsdale,

Lunsford P. Yandell.

Arizona, U.S.A. 1971.

\* This book is being published by Faber and Faber in London as *Sengai, The Zen Master*. Ed.



# What Is Zen?



You ask, "What is Zen?"

I answer, "Zen is that which makes you ask the question," because the answer is where the question arises. The answerer is no other than the questioner himself."

"Do you then mean that I am Zen itself?"

"Exactly. When you ask what Zen is, you are asking who you are, what your self is. It is for this reason that the Zen masters often tell you not to ask where the donkey is when you are right on it, or not to seek for another head when yours has been on your shoulders ever since you were born. It is the height of stupidity to ask what your self is when it is this self that makes you ask the question."

Now, you know what Zen is, for it is Zen that tells you what your self is, and that that self is Zen. This now saves you from asking such a stupid question.

A disciple asked the master, "What is that which made Bodhidharma come to China?" (Bodhidharma is legendarily regarded as the one who

brought Zen from India to China in the sixth century.)

The master said, "Why not ask about your own mind or self instead of somebody else's?"

"What then is my self, O Master?"

"You have to see what is known as the secret act."

"What is the secret act?"

The master opened his eyes and then closed them.

Is this the secret act? What has the opening and shutting of the eyes to do with the self? There is nothing secret about it. But suppose there is, what has it to do with the understanding of the self? After raising my eyebrows or coughing or laughing, I do not seem to be any wiser in penetrating into the secrecy of the self which is behind the acts. Did the disciple get enlightened by observing the master's "secret act"? It is recorded that he then knew where to look for his self or mind.

For ordinary people this understanding is impossible because their questions do not come out of the depth of their being. They are so intellectually possessed that whatever questions they may ask cannot be but superficial, which is characteristic of the intellect. The intellect serves us well in various practical ways when it really knows itself, that is, its own limitation. The questions arising out of the extremity of the intellect find their answers ready in the words of the master, his gestures or movements. In other words, the master

directs the questioner's mind to the point where the latter can meet the answer needed.

Since the awakening of consciousness the human mind has acquired the habit of thinking dichotomously. In fact, thinking is in itself so characterized, for without the opposition of subject and object no thinking can take place. This power of thinking has enabled us to grasp the situation in which we are working out our destiny on earth. But at the same time this power of dichotomizing has made us forgetful of the source in which it preserves its creative potentialities. This forgetfulness or neglect leads us to ignore the real value of the source or Source. The result is that the intellectually dichotomized self is placed above and over the underlying one which is the true absolute Self transcending all discriminatory distinction. We must come to this Self and personally "interview" it if we really desire to get settled at the final abode of our being.

As this ultimate Self is above all forms of dichotomy, it is neither inner nor outer, neither metaphysical nor psychological, neither objective nor subjective. If the term "Self" is misleading, we may designate it as "God" or "Being," "Man" or "the Soul," "Nothing" or anything.

The Zen master has taken hold of the real thing and is altogether free from mere verbalism.

A monk asks, "What is my real Self, O Master?"  
"Mountains and rivers and the great earth."

Do not, I warn you, thoughtlessly consider this



kind of answer to be a pantheistic interpretation of Reality. When the Zen master gives you any answer, you must remember that his standpoint is not at all conceptual. It is always deeply rooted in his innermost experience itself, and must be referred back to this experience to make it meaningful in relation to your question. Intellectually or logically, his utterances are unintelligible and nonsensical. Most people are unable to take his utterances or gestures on a level qualitatively different from their own. But you will find the master's standpoint already present in your question though deeply hidden. If this were not the case you would or rather could not have thought of asking the question.

Christ's saying that "your Father would not give you something else when you ask for bread," is illuminating in this connection. "Your Father" knows well that his response must be of the same quality as the article you ask of him. We have to think of this correspondence when we crave for a satisfying response to our innermost request. When a stone is asked, a stone is given; when bread is asked, it is no other than the thing itself that is handed to the beggar. When therefore the monk asks "What is my Self," the master answers,

"Who are you?"

In other words, "The questioner is the answerer."

Or, "Are you not John?"

Or, "You are the mountain you confront this very moment."

The Master Butsugen (1067-1120) once gave this sermon:

"A short while ago my attendant monk told me that it was raining too hard and the audience might find it too difficult to hear me, and that it is no longer raining. O Brethren, do you hear me now? I declare: when the rain keeps on very hard, that is the best moment for you all to hear. Why? Because you don't have to strain yourselves to hear anything. Most people may say that the rain itself is the great sermon. Is this right? I say no, it is not! The sound of the rain—this is the sermon *you* are giving. Do you understand? When you are immediately clear about it, there is not much after all to understand. . . .

"This will be understood when you know what your Self is. Ancient masters have taken pains to make you understand the meaning of all this. They have utilized every opportunity for this purpose. When Gensha and his monks were gathering fuel in the mountains they happened to see a tiger, and the attendant monk called out, 'Tiger!' The master said, 'It is you who are the tiger!'

When the Teacher Seppō was together with Gensha and Ummon, the teacher pointing at the fire said, "All the Buddhas of the past, present and future are revolving the great wheel of the Dharma in the midst of the fiery flames."

Gensha said, "Lately, the laws are pretty strictly carried out."

Seppō asked, "What do you mean?"

Gensha explained, "No burglars can go unarrested." (By this Gensha meant that in his teacher's remark about the Buddhas in the flames there is nothing very original and creative, nothing his own.)

Ummon said, "The flames are preaching the Dharma to all the Buddhas of the past, present and future, and the latter are at once listening to them."

To understand all these strange remarks by the masters, Butsugen tells us that it is necessary to understand what the Self is—which is the object of Zen studies. When the Self, which has nothing to do with the psychological ego, or with the logical or ontological concept, or with anything that has its significance in the realm of dichotomies and discriminations, is taken hold of, all the worlds in the ten quarters are your whole body, because you have thus broken through all the limits of dichotomous thinking, because you have touched "a little hinge" which opens up a world for which you have ever been searching, though altogether unconsciously or "innocently," since you set forth the question of "What am I?" or "What is the Self?" or "What is Zen?" You now know that the answer has been safely locked in the question itself. The questioner was no other than the answerer.

The following from Butsugen again will help us understand the situation where we are at present:

"The main subject of my discourse is 'the Self.' When I say this, you may think that that is nothing, for we all know what the self is, it is the first lesson in the study of Zen. But I tell you, don't be



hasty. The masters have given you variously-worded answers to the question of Self. For instance,

Rambling in the mountains,  
Enjoying the waters."

How do you take this?

Sometimes they would say: "That is no other than your own Self."

"The whole world is it."

"When you eat rice, the rice is it."

"Can you satisfactorily make any sense out of these statements? The rice you eat, that is you. If so, how about the whole world? How can my Self be so expanded as to embrace or identify itself with the whole objective world? How can it be possible that this changing Self, going through all vicissitudes, and finally, apparently, disappearing, be made to rise to the level of 'eternity itself? And then how do we encounter this 'mysterious' Self rambling among the mountains, crossing the streams and playing perhaps with the tiger?"

After quoting these answers to the question, "What is the Self?" Butsugen goes on to give his comments on them and first takes up the *mondō* ("question and answer") between Gensha and Kyōsei:

"I am newly initiated and wish to be instructed in Zen." Thus Kyōsei approached the master Gensha. "How do I enter in the way, Master?"

"Do you hear the rivulet running nearby?"

"Yes, I do, Master."

"There! here is the way to enter."

"This is said to have introduced Kyōsei to the 'mysteries' of Zen."

Butsugen then asks:

"When a man says he hears, what does he really hear? Some of you may say that it is the running sound of the water. But I say, as long as you are at this stage you do not understand anything. Others may suggest: 'The very moment of hearing is everything. This moment is the understanding and all is well. For all comes out of this moment.' But I say this is your conceptuality. Still others would propose: 'It's not the running sound of water, it is my Self that I hear.' As to the Self I have already said something about it. Now, let me ask:

"Do you hear it?"

"The Buddhist teaching consists in recognizing the Mind or the Nature, and there is nothing very difficult about it. It is you who establish obstacles making things hard to handle. . . .

"Just throw everything away wholeheartedly, both subject and object, both actor and acted, that which sees and that which is seen, that which hears and that which is heard. Do not say that you cannot go any further. You must make your mind up and determinedly plunge yourself right into the bottomless abyss which you think you are encountering as 'nothingness' (*nihil*) or the void. Just 'one thought' of determination is the saving agent coming from 'the other shore.'"

Summarily speaking, the world, whatever we may mean by this term, in which we carry on our

existence, is recognizable in two aspects: thinkable and unthinkable. And these two aspects are thoroughly intermingled, as it were, so that when we speak of one the other inevitably comes up. The separation is in our human thought and not in Reality, though to think this way, also being human, gives us no objective guarantee.

From the thinkable aspect of Reality, then, the world is reasonable and arranged in an orderly and intelligible way. But in the other aspect it is unintelligible, that is, intelligible as unintelligible. In Zen terms, Reality so called is at once "graspable and ungraspable." When we say "ungraspable" it means "grasped as ungraspable." The term "ungraspable" ceases to be merely negative and beyond graspability. The ungraspable when so pronounced is already grasped and here begins and ends the study of Zen.

In the story of Eka's interview with Bodhidharma regarding Eka's Mind being unobtainable,<sup>1</sup> Bodhidharma gives out his irrevocable sentence, "There! Mind is pacified." Zen consists in understanding this verdict.

When the old lady<sup>2</sup> of the tea-house on the road to the T'ai-shan monastery demanded which mind Tokusan wished to have "punctuated," the monk

<sup>1</sup> At page 19. Reference may be made to many of Dr. Suzuki's books for this reference. For example, to his *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, First Series, 1st Edition, at pp. 176-7.

<sup>2</sup> At page 19. The story of Tokusan and the old Tea-house Keeper will be found *inter alia* in the Author's *Mysticism; Christian and Buddhist* (American edition) at pp. 62-3.



failed to answer her question, and thereby lost his refreshment. The Mind is declared in the sutras to be unattainable in no "time" which is described in terms of past, present, or future. Tokusan's learning did not permit him to go beyond the negativity of "the unattainable." The old lady was great in Zen, and did justice to it when she refused the tired monk a few pieces of dumplings.

Bodhidharma interviewed the Emperor Wu<sup>a</sup> of the Liang dynasty, who was an earnest follower of Buddhism and was anxious to understand the Ultimate as it is taught in it. Seeing Bodhidharma fresh from the country of Buddha's birth, the Emperor lost no opportunity and asked, "What is the first principle of the holy truth?" Bodhidharma unreservedly gave his thunderous statement: "Absolute emptiness and nothing holy in it!" Unfortunately, the august devotee failed to grasp it.

The statement in the original Chinese as we have it now in Zen literature is graphic and impressive. Literally it means, "How vast! No holy one (or no holiness!)." The first two Chinese characters may also be translated "How unlimited!" or "How vastly unlimited!" The term is not an intellectual one, it is an effective one.

The above three stories vividly illustrate what is meant by "the grasping of the Ungraspable."

The ultimate Reality, whatever name we may

<sup>a</sup>At page 19. An account of the meeting of Bodhidharma and the Emperor Wu will be found in the Author's *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, First Series, 1st Edition at p. 175.

give to it—the Self, the Mind, the Absolute, or God—is really a something or a nothing which is altogether beyond the grasp of a thinkable thinking agency. And at the same time it is graspable as such, as beyond our grasp, for to state something positive or negative about it makes it to that extent fall within human intelligibility. To ask a question about it therefore demonstrates the fact that it is within the range of answerability. Only, we have to make this provision, that the question is asked by the intellect when the latter goes beyond itself, and that this going out is possible only when the intellect is prompted by something deeper and more fundamental than itself, and that therefore the intellect is to look for it. This means that the intellect must give itself up to something which does not belong to its realm of thinkability. Here enters the Unthinkable, or the Unintelligible, or the Ungraspable, or the Unattainable. And we speak about the graspability of the Ungraspable as such. This has no meaning in the field of thinkables as it is beyond the net of logic.

As long as we are all social beings we cannot exist without the use of language, but what trouble it gives us all in one form or another! The more we try to be exact with definitions, statements or propositions the more we face complexities and confusions and ambiguities. We depart further and further from facts and realities. This is not to despise or disparage language; its importance as a human communication is accepted. It is accepted, too, that language stimulates the development and

enrichment of the human mind. The main point is to realize that language with all its logicality has its limit in dealing with experience which takes place in the realm of unthinkables or ungraspables. We must know that the most effective and judicious use of language is limited to our practical and thinkable world. When the Zen masters use it in a way our ordinary reasoning minds are not accustomed to, we are not to give forth our premature and outright criticism. It is best to look within ourselves and reflect over the superficial absurdities or contradictions.

Butsugen in his *Sayings* gives one of the most significant discourses in his collection of sermons:

"O you, Brethren, how is it that you fail to understand what Zen is? Wherein lies the fault? The fault lies where you fail to understand that all is beyond understanding. Not one, nor several, nor many, but each and all is fundamentally ununderstandable, and you are trying to find the way somehow to understand it.

"An ancient wise man says: 'Do not quit one thing in order to run to something else.' As long as you are thus moving from one thing to another, you will never come to a (final) understanding. So I tell you that the fundamental reality itself is beyond the understanding. Why do you not see things in this light?"

"While Hōgen was travelling in search (of the truth), he saw Jizō who asked, 'Where are you going?'"

"I am an itinerant."



"Do you understand your business?"

"No, I do not understand."

"If you wish to know your business, it is no other than this *not-understanding*."

This is said to have opened Hōgen's eye to the truth of Zen.

In another place, Butsugen goes on:

"Now, I want to ask you: If the thing is 'un-understandable' where is your attainment of it? (How do you attain the Unattainable? How do you understand the Ununderstandable?) You should know that there is a way to the Ununderstandable and that it is not anything forced or going against the nature of things. However much and varied your understanding, it is of no use if the fundamental is not understood (as ununderstandable). You are to deliberately inquire into the matter and see where this Ununderstandable comes from. Being so, what about this Ununderstandable? When it's all clear, your Ununderstandable has nowhere to pass away.

"In this way you are to look into the matter. When this is taken in, all will be clear to you. Only, keep yourselves ignorant. People claiming to be Buddhists employ themselves busily in worldly affairs and reserve no time for studying this matter. How can they ever come to the understanding? When they are asked they talk glibly and knowingly. But this is not the way things ought to be.

"In the olden days, I used to hear about an old priest who talked about Kōrin the Master. When he saw a monk approaching he would say, 'As to

your talk you do pretty well, but as soon as you begin to go down a few steps, you leave your talk behind. It is best for you not to talk too freely.'

"O Brethren, you can thus see how people of old pursued their inquiries into the fundamentals. There is nothing in the Buddha's Dharma that is not profitable in one way or another. Try to understand this, I repeat. Take good care of yourselves."

And again another sermon by Butsugen:

(Butsugen came into the Hall and stood in front of the chair and addressed his audience): "I am out here and want you, O Brethren, to come to a realization all at once. Can you?" (So saying, the master remained silent for a while. Then getting into the chair he continued): "See, O Brethren, I have it all! It is not a very easy business to be one's own master. An ancient master once called out to a monk, 'O Brother!' He turned around. The master said, 'O you simpleton!'"

"Let me ask you, at this moment how would you manage to be your own master and save yourself from being designated a simpleton? This is no easy matter—to attain to a realization. For our consciousness (*karma-vijñāna*)<sup>4</sup> is so vastly over-prevailing!

"Isan asked Kyōzan, 'You see, all the people on earth are under the influence of this all-too-vastly prevailing consciousness. How do you demonstrate it?'

<sup>4</sup> Karma-vijñāna is a special term in the psychological school of the Mahayana. It corresponds to the Western concept of "I" consciousness.

"Kyōzan said, 'I have my way of demonstrating it.'

"Isan said, 'How?'

"At the time a monk passed right in front of them. Kyōzan called out, 'O Brother, Brother!'

"The monk looked back and Kyōzan remarked, 'There, Master, we have an example of the "consciousness vastly prevailing.'"

"O you Brethren, how at that moment can you be your own master and be saved from becoming an example of the 'consciousness vastly prevailing?' Some Zen teachers, striving to show off their mastery of the situation would tell you to just go on your way without paying any attention whatever to a stranger's call; what is the use of responding to it? But I say, you are not a block of wood.

"There may be other Zen teachers whose instruction differs from the preceding. They may tell you, 'Just raise a fist, or utter a pshaw!' They pretentiously call this a gesture of mastership. Let me ask you: While you are thus here, you are able to give or make the gestures in the way these teachers suggest. But when you are elsewhere, such as in the back or front parts<sup>5</sup> of the Hall where free movements of the body are not possible, what gestures would you make when confronting

<sup>5</sup> This refers to the wash-closet of the monastery, which is very small.

All references to the Sayings of Butsugen will be found in *Kosonshuku Goroku*, "Collection of Sayings and Sermons of the Ancient Masters." The Chinese names are given in Japanese readings.



the questioner? The true (masterly response) would be given only when one is so minded. Zen knows no social or other distinctions, all is equal to it."

Chinsō, a high government officer and a lay Zen student, happened to be on the upper floor of a building with his colleagues. Seeing a party of monks with bundles pass on the road below, one official remarked, "A party of Zen monks!" Chinsō said, "Not exactly. Let's wait and see." The detachment approached the building and Chinsō called out, "Reverend Sirs!" They all looked up. Chinsō turning to his colleagues said, "Did I not say so?" (or "Don't you believe me?")

"In a situation like this, how do you make yourselves the master? How do you thus save yourselves from being thoroughly probed? As to their being designated by ancient masters as simpletons, we would not say much here. But if posterity takes up the case and asks you why the monk is a simpleton in turning around when called to, what would you say? And how do you understand the Buddha's Dharma in these connections? I wish you would truly realize that there is something way down deep in all these *mondō* which awaits your penetration. Don't try to be master of yourselves in any hasty manner."

The fundamentals including the Self, Mind, Mastership and so on are beyond our understanding as long as we are in the realm of intellection, and try to bring them down to the level of logic or dialectics. We must realize that there is besides

the realm of the thinkables and understandables another of unthinkables and ununderstandables. Though they are not exclusive of each other—in which case each would cease to be itself—they are to be kept in thought as separate. When we are thus mindful of this separation or distinction which is in reality no distinction, we can understand how the two contradictory realms enter into each other in the most thorough-going manner of interfusion. This is called the understanding of the ununderstandables, and it is this understanding that makes one master of oneself in whatever situation one may find oneself. Whether you turn around or not, or look up or not when you are called to, that has nothing to do with your mastership; you are free and creative and authentic as ever. Your being designated a simpleton does not at all interfere with your authenticity and originality.

When this understanding of the Ununderstandable is grasped, what Sekitō means by his “I do not know,” or “I do not grasp” will readily become comprehensible!

Monk: What is the idea of Bodhidharma coming to China?

Sekitō: Ask the post standing there.

Monk: I do not understand.

Sekitō: Nor do I.

Monk: Who has attained to the understanding of Hui-neng?

Sekitō: The one who understands Buddha-Dharma.

Monk: Do you understand?

Sekitō: No, I do not.

A monk was found sitting in meditation.

Sekitō: What are you doing here?

Monk: Doing nothing.

Sekitō: If so, that is idling.

Monk: Idling is doing something.

Sekitō: You say "doing nothing"; what is this "nothing"?

Monk: All the sages put together do not know what "that" is.

Sekitō then composed a poem on "That":

Since of old have I been abiding together with you,  
And your name I have never learned.  
You and I thus hand in hand walk on  
In the way of suchness as things are.  
Even ancient sages and superior men—  
They know not who you are.  
How then could men of ordinary calibre ever have  
The slightest knowledge of who you are?

You must not try to catch the Self or the ultimate Reality in the way you perceive a star, a tree or a table before you. To know Zen is to know that to know is not to know, and that not to know is to know. Zen deals in knowledge of this order. Zen is therefore not a ware on sale in the public market.

Let me repeat: When you ask what Zen is, I say that Zen is you and you are Zen. The questioner is the answerer. Before you ask somebody



outside what Zen is, you turn inwardly and ask, who am I? The "I" seems to be harassed in every way all day, and it feels constricted, inhibited, fearful of acting in the way it likes, and depending upon outsiders all the time for directions. What is this "I"? This inner "I" that resents all these oppressions from without, revolting, complaining, irritated, upset, despondent, wavering, unable to be decisive—what is this inner "I"? This "I" is the real questioner. When you question a question in the Zen sense of the term, you must feel somewhere deep within yourself another "you" or "I" who is really above these psychological annoyances. Zen wants you to put your finger on this "I" that is working through the superficial one as if it were revolting or resenting its authentic behaviour, its being interfered with. We may tentatively call this "I" the genuine one, keeping in mind that the genuine one is far beyond the reach of language or concept on our relative plane.

But wait! Here is the critical point. It is Zen's business to keep the genuine "I" from being abandoned to itself, being consigned to a category of the merely ununderstandable, unthinkable, unattainable, or the ungraspable. Zen wants you to be decidedly positive and not negative, not agnostic, not skeptical. Zen wants you to take hold of this "I" as ungraspably graspable. Zen wants you to be thoroughly dogmatic and self-assertive. Zen has its own way to express this realm of understanding. For instance, take Butsugen again:

(When the Brethren were gathered in the Hall,

Butsugen appeared, and walked in front of them twice from one end to the other. Drawing a long breath, he declared):

"I have finished twice circumambulating inside your body. Do you know? Not only today but all the time I am circumambulating inside your body in the freest manner possible. Do you know (the Mind that renders this freedom possible)? The Mind never cheats. And because of this Mind of suchness I know you through and through, where you are in the wrong and where in the right.

"It is for this reason that Ryōsui says: 'All that you know I know, but what I know you do not.' He is the one who understands. He is well experienced in this matter.

"Ryōsui got his understanding this way. He saw Mayoku one day, and Mayoku seeing him come paid no attention. Carrying a hoe he went out to his vegetable garden. Ryōsui followed him. Still no attention. Mayoku now returned to his residence and shut the door. This behaviour on the part of his master opened Ryōsui's Mind to what motivated Mayoku to his apparently unfriendly conduct. Ryōsui finally said, 'No more playing with me, O Master!'

"O Brethren, can you be like him or not? The understanding is no easy job. . . ."

Butsugen, in another place, gives further warning:

"O Brethren, what do you think you are really in need of since of old (from the beginningless beginning of time)? Make your own livelihood

and do not rely on others. Let them talk whatever they like, but you must find the way to get along by yourself. Jōshū discovered it when he was about eighteen. You too must realize it. What is it that is needed for this independent livelihood? It is not to seek it outside of yourself; do not rely on what comes from the outside. Your learning, your memory—they won't avail because they do not after all belong to you. Reflect deeply within until you get down to the bottom which is no bottom. It takes many years. But do not abandon (your search). The efforts are truly rewarding. You are everywhere—in the East you are there, in the West you are there; wherever you are you find yourself. Inquire within, 'Who is this I?' Do not tell me, 'It is I.' That (kind of) I is not 'you,' the source of your being. O Brethren, strive on!"

# Self and the Unattainable



When Eka (Hui-Ke, 487-593) came to Bodhi-dharma (Daruma, Tamo) for advice because of his *kokoro* (*hsin*, mind or heart) not being pacified, Dharma told him, "Bring your *kokoro* out here and I'll have it pacified." Eka replied, "I have been in search of it all these years, but I have not taken hold of it yet." Dharma then declared, "There! I have your *kokoro* pacified!" At this Eka was enlightened.

When the Zen masters pronounce the mind (*kokoro*) to be not attainable or graspable, they mean that the mind is no-mind, that there is no substance or existence or being or subjectness which can be held out as if it were a table or a cat or a gaseous body or an atomic particle or a logical concept, or something that can be definitively brought down to the intellectually analysable level. The idea symbolically is that while we constantly talk about the *kokoro*, we fail to have a clearly cut-out notion of it; it is somewhat like an airy nothing.

We all seem to know what the body is, but as



to what the mind is we cannot go any further than making it a psychological concept. No doubt it is not a physiological substance like the blood or nervous system or a kind of central secretion. Perhaps we can define it as a most intricate system of relations between the various cells and fibers, or a form of epiphenomenon the human body produces when all its organs come to a certain definite system of grouping. There may be a number of hypotheses of this sort among the scientists. But the one thing all these analytical scientific explanations fail to account for is the authentic feeling of freedom even when the movements or functionings are to be objectively considered compulsory or against one's free will, so called. Where does this feeling of consciousness of authenticity come from? All living beings other than the human are apparently lacking in this specifically "human" moral feeling, which I sometimes call "unconscious consciousness" or "conscious unconsciousness." It is deeply connected with the instinct of creativity. We may say that Zen revolves around this feeling of autonomusness.

The following statements are some of what we may designate as the logical counterparts of our inner feeling of freedom, autonomy, authenticity, and creativity:

To be is not to be, not to be is to be;  
To have is not to have, not to have is to have;  
Is-ness is not is-ness;  
A is A because A is not A.

More realistically:

The willow is green and not green;  
I am you and you are I;  
George drinks and John is drunk;  
The waves of dust rise in the well; etc., etc.

These are indeed "non-sensical" and "idiotic," but when Zen opens our eyes to the Self which is altogether "unattainably attainable," it presses absurdities to its service and makes them work splendidly for it.

Daiye (1089-1163) of the Sung Dynasty once gave the following advice to his disciples before going to his regular sermon:

"In the study of worldly things rational interpretation is required, while in the study of things not of this world it is just the contrary: rationalisation is to be set aside and it is at this very point that one has to appeal to another source of information. How can such source be found where no rationalisation is possible? I say just go on wrestling with this proposition:

'The wooden man sings and the stone woman dances.'"

We must thus remember that if we say that Zen is all there, when it is logically or psychologically treated as I have so far partly been doing, we shall be committing the greatest possible error in the understanding of Zen. I may sometimes be criticised that I extract such factors from the Zen experience as being amenable to logical or psychological treatment, and make the most of them in one way or another. But I insist that my intention has been far from it, for I have only been trying

to make my lay readers, even tentatively or remotely, get acquainted with Zen, probably at the sacrifice of accuracy, which may do much damage to the naked is-ness of Zen. I have to warn them to be scupulously circumspect about imagining that Zen is all there when it is paraphrased above. What follows may be more appropriate in presenting Zen to our readers.

Before I proceed further, I find it advisable to clarify the relationship between the terms used at the beginning, such as "Self," "Self-mastership," "Innocence," and "*kokoro*."

I use here "the Self" as synonymous with "*kokoro*." When the *kokoro* is said to be essentially "unattainable" or beyond our intellectual definability, we are not to apply the method we ordinarily resort to when we wish to be objective, or the Self in its absolute nakedness eludes altogether our intellectual attempt to grasp it. But this by no means indicates that it is a nothing, an illusion with no substantiality in any sense.

Zen makes Buddha more "sophisticated" than Adam was when he came out of God's hands. His innocence has not yet received the baptism of Zen, his "unconscious" has not yet been awakened to a state of Enlightenment (*bodhi* or *satori*). The sense of Self-mastership of which Zen makes so much is the outcome of the awakening. In this respect I would say that the Jewish and Christian myth must be Buddhistically christened.

Thus from the Zen point of view we are innocent and at the same time sinful, we are sinful and



at the same time innocent. In metaphysical terminology we are and yet we are not, we are not and yet we are. We may also say this: we are in the midst of birth-and-death, and yet we are transcending it; we are never born and never dead. The karmic law of causation is heavily on us, we are in the devilish clutch of necessity and inevitability, and yet we are our own master and leading a life of absolute freedom. We are a zero in which infinite possibilities are overflowing. Somewhat in this light the following Zen stories are to be understood.

Jōshū (778-897) was once approached by a monk who said, "How is it when one is not burdened with anything!" The master said, "Throw it down!" Monk: "How could one do that?" Master: "If you cannot, shoulder it away!"

Butsugen Shōyen (1067-1120), one of the chief disciples of Goso Hōyen (d. 1104), had a sermon to the following effect:

"Kassan Zenye (804-881) once remarked to the congregation of his monks, 'No monk-audience in front of me, no old man in the seat of the teacher!' How did the Master come to make such a remark when there was in actuality a congregation and the 'old abbot' of the monastery was seated in the pulpit? How did he testify to the negation of his honourable Self in the seat of the instructor? This is really no trifling matter and you are not to dispose of Kassan's pronouncement as not of much significance. You are to devote yourselves to the earnest study of the matter. For as long as you are



a plaything day and night of the sense-experiences, and unable to transcend the karmic whirlwind of birth-and-death, you can never attain to a perfect state of inner freedom. Even when you think you have the thing you may yet be far from the reality itself.

"In the meantime let me give you another incident which took place among certain Zen masters.

"When Nansen (749-834) and Jōshū, two of the greatest and best renowned Zen masters of the T'ang Dynasty, were flourishing between the 8th and the 9th century, there was a Zen follower who lived in a humble hut built over a flat rock in the mountains. One day a monk happened to encounter him and ventured the following suggestion: 'The great master Nansen is at present leading a large group of the monks. Why don't you go over there and join the brotherhood instead of idly passing your time here?' The lone resident of the mountain-hut replied, 'Don't tell me about Nansen's appearance in the world as a Zen leader. Even were Buddha himself to come among us, I would not move away from here!' The monk brought the story of this incident to Nansen. The latter was much impressed with the remark by the recluse follower of Zen, and told Jōshū to go and interview him and find what kind of man he could be. When Jōshū came to the mountain-hut where the lonely anchorite was sitting in meditation, Jōshū began to walk from east to west in front of the hut. The anchorite paid no attention to

him. Jōshū then walked back from west to east. Still no attention was paid to him. Jōshū now stood at the entrance-gate, and addressing the resident of the hut made this announcement: 'O master of the hut, you are defeated!' No attention was given as before. Jōshū now pulled down the curtain and left the hut. Still no attention came from the recluse resident.

"This may be mystifying; the one is utterly immovable abiding in a state of absolute indifference, whereas the other is kept busy doing all sorts of things, trying to stir up the silent monk to some form of activity, but in vain."

Butsugen's conclusion of this sermon was in this way: "If you think Jōshū and Nansen failed to understand the anchorite, you are mistaken. If on the other hand you consider the monk a helpless recluse who knows nothing of the mutual response which is usually exchanged between Zen-masters, you are also sadly mistaken. What is needed here is to transcend all the apparent discrepancies among these three masters and to see into the ideality in which they, including you, my audience, all are. Such insight is allowed only to those who have the Tao-eye clear and undefiled."

In another sermon, says Butsugen: "There are two kinds of disease the Zen students are liable to suffer from these days: (1) Seeking for the donkey while riding on one; and (2) Once on it, neglecting to get off it. You may say that the seeking for the donkey while you are already on it is the

greater disease. But, I tell you, it does not necessarily take a man of great intelligence to become conscious of the stupidity of seeking for the donkey when you are right on it. The more serious one is not to dare come down from the donkey even after realising that you are on it, for this induces in you a state of self-complacency and makes you go on riding.

"The most important thing in the study of Zen is not to keep on riding on the donkey but to realise that you are the donkey itself, and in fact, that the whole universe is the donkey itself. How then would you still be riding? If you go on riding it means that you have not yet become conscious of your own disease. When you quit riding how wide the whole world is (as the field of experience for your freedom)! Get rid of these two forms of disease at once and you will find nothing beclouding your *kokoro*. You are then declared as a man of Tao (the Way). What is there then that will trouble you in any possible way?

"It is for this reason that Nansen Fugwan (749–835) gave this answer, 'Everyday-mindedness is Tao,' when asked by Jōshū Jūshin (778–897) 'What is Tao?' When Jōshū was given this answer by his teacher Nansen, all his hankering and running-about came at once to an end. He then thoroughly realised what was meant by 'Buddha-disease' and 'Patriarch-disease.' Wherever he went later on he was able to detect what kind of disease these masters he saw were troubled with. He thus



became one of the greatest Zen doctors of the time (who knew everything in relation to the Zen diseases).

"Let me give you one incident Jōshū had with a master known as Shūyū, the Teacher of Gaku-shū. When Jōshū came to Shūyū he was seen carrying a cane and walking from east to west in front of his room. Asked Shūyū, 'What are you doing?' Jōshū replied, 'I am trying to locate a spring.' 'There is not a drop of water in my quarters. What is the use of trying to locate it?' Giving no answer, Jōshū left the cane hanging by the roadside and departed.

"In this one can catch a glimpse of what constitutes the style of Zen, which is most excellent. These days the monks are apt to take the diseases for the Dharma. Let them be fortunate enough not to burden their *kokoro* thereby any longer."

To know the diseases means to be altogether independent, self-reliant, authentic, and not to be concerned with externalities. When this state of mind is genuinely attained, one is master of oneself. While he knows where he stands, he moves on as if knowing nothing. Yet when he is accosted and asked questions, he knows how to answer them. He may declare that he knows nothing, he is utterly innocent of all things. Yet he is no simpleton, no sheer ignoramus. For when he is asked he expresses himself intelligently, he is content with himself as well as with the whole world, and he knows that he is so. He may not be able to give you the why of his just-so-ness, but he is



fully conscious of his just-so-ness and, more than that, he is totally well content with the himself that is his world, for his just-so-ness includes the totality of being as well as himself. It is not that "It *was* good," but "It *is* good." This is where he is "the most honoured one." In this light the following sermon by Butsugen is to be read:

"What people of these days need most is self-esteem, self-respect, self-standing. When this is fulfilled, one realises where his resting-abode is. Though he has his resting-abode, he is fully mindful not to cling to this abode as something fixed. If he did, he would be bound to be deluded by the imagination and to go astray in the management of affairs. Let him know that the *hossu* in my hand is really like a *hossu*. Do you wish to know how this is? (The master now raised his *hossu*, saying, 'Do you see it?' and continued.) If you say you see, you do not know my *hossu*. If you say you do not see, you do not know my *hossu* either. If so, where is your self-esteem, your self-respect?

"Recently, our Brothers go around visiting various mountains and monasteries and call it studying Tao and advancing in disciplinary peregrination. Do you really desire to improve yourselves in the disciplinary peregrination? Do you really wish to see the Godai, Shōryō, the capital, the two *setsu*, Rosan, Kenan, Tendai, Ganto, Kōnan, Kōhoku, and other fine mountains and rivers and lakes and temples?"

(The master raised his *hossu* and continued:) "Carefully see into the matter! When you do, your

life-business of peregrination comes to its end. If otherwise, you would be vainly belabouring yourselves by going over the mountains and rivers, which is truly slighting your own dignity. O Brethren, do not forget to respect yourselves, to honour yourselves. You may ask, 'Where do we get by thus recognising our dignity and treating ourselves accordingly?' 'Nowhere,' I would say, 'and nothing gained or lost!' You need not keep on standing and listening to me. A nun is a woman, the elder sister-in-law is nobody else but your elder brother's wife. O good Brethren, now go back to your quarters."

"Nowhere, and nothing gained or lost" is the paraphrasing of *mu-ji* or *bu-ji*, or *wu-shih* in Chinese. It literally means "no business," "nothing happening," "no disturbance," "quietness," "a peaceful state of mind," and this not objectively but subjectively in one's inner feeling where there is no consciousness of compulsion or necessity. Hence the sense of authenticity and self-mastery, which is paying full respect to one's own being. The following terms we frequently come across in Zen literature are all synonymous: self-reverence, self-esteem, self-doing, self-standing, self-dependence, self-being, master of oneself.

When *mu-ji* is psychologically regarded as corresponding to "mu-shin" (no-mind) or "mu-nen" (no-thought), the question rises, What is the relation of "no-mind" to Self, whose thorough cleansing is said to be the object of Zen discipline? Is no-mind to be identified with the Self thus cleansed?

To say "self-cleansed" may be misleading because the self purged of all its contents may be considered remaining as a sort of empty shell or as a mere concept. What Zen means by the Self cleansed is the "unattainability" of such a thing universally known as Self, and the unattainability has been no other meaning than nothingness or emptiness. To say the Self is unattainable means that there is no such substance corresponding to what traditionally goes by the name of "Self."

So with the "no-mind," it means the unattainability of mind or *kokoro*, or its nothingness or emptiness (*sūnyatā*). And it is all because of this emptiness that one gains the sense of absolute freedom in spite of every restriction and compulsion growing out of one's sense-experience of individuation. The nothingness of all things means a zero, and their multitudinousness an infinity; and because of this apparent contradiction, the equation becomes possible,  $O=\infty$  and  $\infty=O$ .

This equation is given expression by Butsugen in the following Zen way:

"It is said that anciently Prince Nata gave his flesh back to his mother and his bones back to his father, and that then manifesting himself in his original form the Prince displayed great miracles. O Brethren, how do you think this could take place? His fleshy parts are returned to his mother and his bony portions to his father; in what original body did the Prince manifest himself? If you, O Brethren, could see into the meaning of the story, you would have your five *skandhas* (com-



posites') thoroughly purged, and swallow up the ten quarters. Listen to my gatha:

The bones to his father and the flesh to his mother,  
What body has the Prince?  
Attentively listen to me, O my Brethren!  
The mountains and rivers and the great earth—  
There is his Body in full display:  
All the worlds in the ten quarters are on it,  
All the kalpas with all living beings therein  
Show neither goings nor comings.  
And remember, this talk of mine is not to be verbally  
interpreted!

"When Prince Nata is shorn of his bodily existence, where is his so-called Original Body? Is it a spirit? What then is the spirit? Buddhists would say it is a sheer Nothing, that is, a zero, and just because of it it swallows up all the universe with its multitudinous existences, with its mountains and rivers, its stars and moons: The Zero=the Infinite. Nata manifests himself in his Original Self devoid of all its psychological contents; that is to say, he is master of himself. He makes use of his desires, his imaginations, his thoughts, not for his *selfish* purposes but for his primary will, which is *karuna*.

"Prince Nata shorn of his existence of sense and intellect may be likened to a circle with no circumference and therefore with its centre everywhere. This kind of circle has an infinite number of centres, they are nowhere and everywhere, everywhere and nowhere. The Princely Body is, metaphysically



speaking, the Here-Now, in which all the past is absorbed and out of which all the future evolves."

Butsugen's gatha just quoted is for this reason prefaced thus:

Seven times seven is forty-nine;  
Look south for the North Star,  
Birth and death, death and birth;  
The mud-made cow gives loud roars.  
While still in Tusita Heaven  
The Buddha is already born in his royal palace;  
While still in the mother's body  
He has achieved his work of universal salvation.

$7 \times 7 = 49$ ,  $4 \times 9 = 36$ , or  $9 \times 9 = 81$ —this is sound arithmetic, nobody will impugn it. But how does the Master suddenly turn about and tell us to look south for the North Star? Where is his notion of relative space? The Self shorn of all its sense-intellect experiences must be a queer sort of "unattainability," one might say.

Perhaps those who challenge Butsugen for his sanity may be justified or excused because they have never personally encountered the unattainable, their "knowledge" of it has never gone beyond conceptualisation. The unattainable, however, strange to say is something real and attainable in an unattainable way. This means that it is not an object of discriminatory knowledge but of non-discriminatory insight or of primary sense, which the Zen masters sometimes call "everyday-mindedness." I have translated it occasionally as intuition or immediate experience. But I now think it is after

all better to leave it in its original form, *akalpilājnā*. A few instances from Zen literature may make the point clear:

1. There was a Zen student under a master to whom he was very much devoted. Each time he approached the master, the latter waved his hand, saying, "Not yet, not yet." Some time passed. One evening he became desperate: "How can this be? I have no word of instruction which will lead me to the realisation. The master simply chases me, saying, 'Not yet, not yet.' What can I do? What do I have to think about it all?" He went on like this in utter desperation, but tenaciously clinging to his object of inquiry and pondering it from every possible point of view, when all of a sudden something flashed on his mind and he realised at once what the master wanted him to discover. The following morning he visited the master, wishing to let him know what happened to him. But the master seeing him come burst out, "You have it now, you have it now!"

2. When Ryūtan Sōshin was studying Zen under Tennō Dōgo for some time, he had no special instruction. One day he approached the master and said, "Ever since I came to you, you have not given me any direction as to the essence of *kokoro*." Dōgo said, "Ever since you came to me, I have been pointing out to you what the essence of *kokoro* is." "When? Please tell me, O master!" "When you bring me a cup of tea in the morning, I take it

from you. When you bring me some food to eat, I accept it. When you bow to me, I return it. Where do I not point out for you the essence of *kokoro*?" Sōshin bent his head and began to think about it for some while. Dōgo the teacher told him, "When you want to see into the matter, just see it, give no time for deliberation. As soon as you begin to deliberate, you miss it." This is said to have opened Sōshin's mind.

3. When Yakusan heard of Zen, he came to Sekitō and asked, "As to the Buddhist teachings as expounded in the Triple Basket I have studied them pretty well. But as to Zen which I understand tells us to see directly into our *kokoro*, thereby making us at once attain Buddhahood, I am not at all clear about it. May I be instructed?"

To this, Sekitō said, "When you say 'It is so,' you do not get it; when you say 'It is not so,' you do not get it; when you say 'It is at once so and not so,' you do not get it either." Yakusan failed to understand it. Sekitō then told him to go to Kōsei and see Baso there who might enlighten him on the matter.

Yakusan came to Baso as instructed and asked him as he had asked Sekitō. Baso answered him. "I make one sometimes raise the eyebrows or twinkle the eyes, but sometimes I do not make him do either. Sometimes when he does it he is all right; sometimes when he does it, he is not all right."

At this Yakusan experienced *satori*, and did not know how to express himself. What he did was



simply to make bows to Baso. When Baso asked him for the reason, Yakusan said, "When I was with Sekitō, I was like a mosquito on the iron-bull." Baso agreed with him.

Both Sekitō and Baso are here saying the same thing in different phraseology. They both are pointing at the Unattainable. Yakusan's mind was however more prepared to get to the Unattainable after his encounter with Sekitō.

4. Tōzan seeing Ummon was asked, "Where do you come from this time?" "Sato." "Where did you pass the summer session?" "Hōji, of Konan." "When did you leave the monastery?" "The 25th of the 8th month."

Ummon unexpectedly announced, "I'll save you blows of my stick." This took Tōzan aback and he passed the evening uneasily wondering where his fault was in answering Ummon's every question straightforwardly. When he saw the master in the morning, he asked what was the matter with him. Ummon the master severely reproached him in this manner: "O you, bag of rice! Is this the way you go around from one place to another, wishing to study Zen?" This merciless rebuke awakened Tōzan to the Unattainable and made him realise that the Unattainable was something after all.

This Unattainable—attainable is in our everyday exchange of greetings when the *kokoro* once becomes conscious of the circle with no circumference, which envelops us all and makes every-



one of us its centre. But as soon as one says, "I have attained it" it is no more there, hence unattainable. Nothing remarkable or extraordinary is here, and yet the remarkable thing is that it solves the problem of the greatest significance in our life. It is for this reason that when Tokusan was asked, "What is the most remarkable thing in Zen?", he answered, "There are no words or phrases in Zen, nor is there in it any *Dharma* to be given as such." This may be taken in the sense that Zen has no words for the Unattainable because it is not a *Dharma* or a thing or a definite concept which can be pointed out to others as this or that. Thus when Seppō was asked by a monk, "What did you bring back after interviewing Tokusan?" Seppō said, "I went out empty-handed and came back empty-handed." To go about empty-handed points to the Unattainable.

Bokujū was an elder contemporary of Rinzai who used to say, whenever he saw a monk turn back or respond to his call, "O you, simpleton!" "A simpleton" may be regarded either as derogatory or as complimentary according to the situation. When complimentary, it is equivalent to "Oh, you have it (the Unattainable)!"; and when derogatory to "Oh, you have no realisation yet!" In the first case a simpleton means "a wise man" while in the second he is literally one.

The Unattainable is unattainable because it is attainable everywhere and at any time just like a circle with its centre everywhere. The elusiveness so called, or even the delusiveness, of Zen is due

to this fact. It is nowhere and therefore everywhere, it is everywhere and therefore nowhere.

It is not necessary, the masters sometimes advise, that the students should apply themselves, stiffly sitting cross-legged, to the habit of meditating on the Unattainable. The reason for this is given: the harder one strives to attain an object the farther it recedes from one, especially when this "object" is not a thing attainable in its relative sense. In fact the object so designated is not an object at all.

5. Once when a government dignitary called Ō (Wang) was late in coming to Bokujū, Bokujū asked the officer why he was delayed. He said that he had attended a polo playing. The master asked, "Who strikes the ball, the rider or the horse?" The officer replied, "the rider." "Was he tired?" "Yes, he was tired." "Was the horse tired?" "It too was tired." Bokujū, then asked, "Was the goal-post tired?" Ō, the officer, was at a loss how to answer such a question. After returning home, he spent his evening thinking of the master's strange question. In the middle of the night the solution dawned on him unexpectedly. Ō, the officer, called on the master next day and reported that he understood the master's question. Bokujū asked, "Was the post tired?" "Yes, tired!"

"This is the meaning of Zen which was first introduced to China by Bodhidharma, the Great Teacher," Butsugen concludes. "The post does not play the game of polo and how could it get tired? Do you understand what this means? The horse

is tired, so is the man, but this is not enough. When the post is tired, there is really getting-tiredness. It is all well when the officer realised the Unborn (which is the unattainable in the terminology we have been using here) by means of the words, but you would commit a great mistake if you seek here something reasonable."

Life is the blending of the measurable and the immeasurable, of the attainable and the unattainable, of the finite and the infinite. Unless one is "clear-eyed," one is liable to be one-sided and fall into a hole of one form or another. A master says: "If you say you see, your eyes are bedimmed; if you say you do not, your eyes are blind." Tokusan makes a similar remark: "If you say something, thirty blows of my staff will be on you; if you do not say anything, just the same thirty blows on you!" When you see something you fall into one hole; and when you say you have attained the Unattainable, this is also a hole. The Unattainable is beyond any form of attainability; hence the Unattainable. To see this requires "a clear eye."

As said before, the first disease is to seek for the donkey when you are on it; the second disease is not to get down from the donkey when you have realised that you are riding it. The ultimate experience is to forget both the donkey and yourself, which is the eighth and the ninth of the ten cow-herding pictures. In fact, the eighth and the ninth are one; they are not to be separated one from the other. They are like two sides of the shield whose obverse cannot be torn off from reverse, and vice



versa. When the one is severed from the other, there will be no shield. Indeed, this is an impossibility? An impossibility can be made possible ideationally but not in actuality. The empty circle of the eighth picture is an ideational representation. When this is taken as the ultimate object of the Zen discipline, we have the Zen disease number 11. The circle is a zero and a zero has no sense by itself, it must be backed by the equation  $0=00$ , that is, the eighth + ninth. When this unification or identification takes place, we have the tenth which is the moral or spiritual version of  $0=00$  and  $00=0$ . Zen advocates a morality practised on the higher level and not on the ego-centred level, where morality is generally backed by an impure motive of one sort or another.

To purge the Self of all its impure contents is to make it its own master, to make it recover its original just-so-ness where its movements come out as when water follows its own course. Hōkoji's question: "What kind of personality is one who has no companion among all dharmas?" which means "What is the Absolute?" Butsugen comments on this: "Is this not transcending the worldly ways of thinking and feeling? When the *kokoro* is not conscious of itself, when the eye does not see itself, we go somewhere beyond a realm of relativities. When one sees a form and yet does not see anything visible, when one hears a sound and yet does not hear anything audible, is this not transcending the worldly ways? When one enters where there is no passageway, when one sees into



where there is no opening, one realises that the Buddha-way has nothing to do with the three dimensions of space. I would not say, then, that you are my disciples and I am your teacher. When you can see your Self clearly, there is nothing that is not in its proper place. Then, interviewing your teacher you are not conscious of his being a teacher; interviewing yourself, you are not conscious of its being yourself. In the same way, when you are reading the sutra, you do not see the sutra; when you are having your meal, you do not see it; when you are sitting in meditation, you do not see yourself sitting. In your daily activities nothing goes wrong, and there is not a thing that is at all attainable. When you are thus able to see into the just-so-ness of things, is this not relying on yourself and being yourself (that is, enjoying absolute freedom)?"

The main point is not to take a dichotomous view of existence for a finality and yet not to cling to a transcendental interpretation. A Zen master would declare: "Before the Zen enlightenment mountains are mountains and water is water; when one gains an initiatory experience, this is denied, but when one gets into the ultimate understanding, everything is asserted again; mountains are mountains and water is water." In Chinese rhetorical usage, mountains and water go together, meaning "land and ocean" or "solidity and fluidity," "static and dynamic," etc. Physically, the phrase refers to the whole universe; logically, when mountains are mountains and water is water, it symbolises "yes"

or "affirmation," and when mountains are not mountains and water is not water, it stands for negation. Morally, the affirmation means the "yes" attitudes toward the totality of being while the negation is its opposite.

When these opposites are transcended and the Zen master pronounces mountains to be mountains and water to be water, the statement is logically or literally the same as the first naive "innocent" affirmation; but innerly or spiritually there is, between the two statements, the first and the second, a distance or separation, as the Chinese would say, as great as it is between heaven and earth. In fact, there is no comparison whatever between them because they belong to altogether different categories, they are qualitatively differentiated. Zen, not being logical and rational yet being common-sense and everyday-minded, would express its "advaitistic" (not two) understanding of reality or no-reality in our ordinary language.

(a) Chū, the National Teacher was asked by a monk, "What is the original body of Vairochana Buddha?" This corresponds to our modern saying, "What is reality?" or "What is divinity?" The National Teacher did not try to explain it in words, which he knew would involve the inquirer in an endless labyrinth of speculation, but he had somehow to use language, and he said, "Be good enough to pass me that pitcher there." The monk did as was told. Then the Teacher asked him to put it back in its former place. The monk followed the instruc-

tion and repeated his first question, "What is the original body of Vairochana Buddha?" Chū, the National Teacher announced, "The old Buddha is gone some time ago!" Those who do not know who is Vairochana Buddha may propose all kinds of suggestion as to the meaning of this "story," but, Butsugen comments, they are all wild propositions issuing out of imagination. "We are now in the midst of a fine autumnal session, O Brethren! Who is Vairochana Buddha? Return to your quarters and have each a cup of tea." So saying he descended from the platform.

(b) Butsugen gave them the following "stories" in order to demonstrate what precious treasure there is hidden in our common-sense remarks:

Jōshū did not come down from his seat to greet the Duke of his district, who happened to pay his respects to the old master. Jōshū remarked, "O Lord, do you understand?" The Lord confessed his not understanding. Jōshū then said, "Since my young days I have been a good observer of the monkish precepts. I am now old and have no energy to move from my seat."

Tōto Oshō was taken in audience to the presence of the Empress Sokuten who was the virtual sovereign of the T'ang Dynasty at the time. He looked up to Her Majesty, and said, "Does Your Majesty understand?" "No," said the Empress. The monk said, "I observe the precept of silence."

When Chū the National Teacher interviewed the Emperor, the Teacher pointed at his own cap



with one of his fingers, and said, "Does Your Majesty understand?" The Emperor said, "No." The Teacher then remarked, "It is cold and will Your Majesty be pleased to allow my keeping the cap on?"

All these masters seem to be making fun of the august personages, or, as the Japanese proverb has it, "They rather look as if their noses had been pinched by a fox." In this is there any Zen? But-sugen comments, "When you understand the meaning of these 'stories' you get an immense amount of treasure enough to keep all the needy. When you do not, you are kept outside the entrance gate and as poverty stricken as before. This, is, however, no fault on the part of the Treasure, but your own."

(c) Anciently there was a master who was asked by a monk, "What was the idea of Bodhidharma coming from the West?" This is quite a common question in Zen. The meaning is: What made Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of Zen, come to China from India? Was there any specific motive in him whereby he wished to propagate Zen in China? What is Zen, then? Is there or was there no Zen in China before he came over there from the West? Is Zen anything specifically requiring propagation? Is Zen anything remarkable which one has to point out as such? The master appeared as if surprised when the question was proposed, and said, "Why not ask about your own idea when you have nothing to do, instead of asking about



somebody else's idea?" This means, "Be concerned with yourself, instead of being curious about others' business." The monk said, "What then is mine?" "You have to recognise something secretive which is ordinarily not made public." "What is it, O master?" Thereupon the latter opened his eyes wide and then closed them.

This may seem to be another case of poking a joke at the expense of the inquirer. What secret message is there in one's opening and closing the eyes? This is what we might do any time of the day. No specific motivation on the part of the actor. There is no need of making such behavior something of secret significance. What secrecy did the Zen master wish to communicate to his inquirer?

When Yenō, the sixth patriarch, was pursued by his fellow disciple called Ming, who used to be a soldier before he embraced Buddhism, he realized he could not escape him, so he put his baggage down and sat on the ground quietly waiting for the pursuer. He then asked the latter what he wanted. Ming said, "I am not after anything particular except the secret message you are reported to have been entrusted with by our Master Gunin. I want to know what that is." Yenō said, "If so, think neither of good nor of evil, and at that moment what is your original face which you have even before your parents gave birth to you? Let me have it." This unexpected demand at once awakened him to the ultimate reality for which he had been searching. He then said, "Is there any other se-

cret?" Yenō replied, "If there is any secret at all, it is on your side. I have nothing to do with it."

The so-called transmission from one patriarch to another, or from the master to his disciple, is no more than the handing over of the "original face" from one to the other. This being so, there is no personal transmission anywhere. The "face" is one's own. I do not borrow it from anybody else. If I do that it is not mine and why should I wish to carry an extra "face" to the one I already have? All that is needed in Zen is to become conscious of the original face each of us has even prior to our birth. It is no other than the Self shorn of all its contents, good and evil, right and wrong, logical and illogical. It is the just-so-ness of a thing. No koan is needed, no "katz!" is to be uttered. It is cold and I have my cap. I am old and I carry my stick wherever I go. Zen is here and in no other place, the masters would say.

(d) Goso Hōyen was asked by a monk, "What is the ultimate law of all things?" The master said, "There is nothing remarkable." And then he recited a *mondō* which took place between Roya and a monk. The latter wishing to be instructed quoted the statement from a sutra, "It is said that 'reality' in its so-ness is pure and undefiled. If so, how do mountains and rivers and the great earth happen to come into existence?" The master gave no specific answer but echoed the question, "'Reality' in its so-ness is pure and undefiled, and how do mountains and rivers and the great earth happen

to come into existence?" This made the monk come to an understanding. Goso Hōyen concludes, "However precious gold dust may be, it injures the eye when it enters it."

A monk asked Tōsu, "Is there anything remarkable in the Great Basket (of teaching) by Buddha?" The Great Basket refers to the whole literature of Buddhism which originally used to be kept in three baskets: (1) Sutra Basket, (2) Vinaya Basket and (3) Sāstra Basket. The question may be converted into Christian terms as: "Is there anything miraculous in the Holy Bible?" Tōsu the master gave this reply, "The Great Basket is produced!" Goso comments, "What a stupid answer this! Pity that Tōsu being asked a question cannot do any better! If I were he I would not answer as he did. Let a monk come to me and ask, 'Is there anything remarkable in the Great Basket of Buddhism?' and I will say to him 'Make bows and retire, reciting respectfully I accept and will follow the teaching as given!'" (The last sentence is generally found at the end of a sutra; it somewhat corresponds to the Christian "Let thy will be done, Amen.") "While my answer may differ quite widely from that of Tōsu I ask you, O Brethren, 'What does it all finally come to?' I hope you will keep your eyes open and see what's what."

We are always looking for something remarkable or miraculous in things religious or spiritual, thereby wishing to transcend this humdrum life of ours. The Zen masters are in a way prosaic and inclined to be matter of fact in their attitude to-



ward their religious experiences. To them "the willow is green and the flowers are pink, the mountain towers high and all the rivers run long to join the ocean." They are not at all surprised to find God as an old man sawing wood as Par Lagerboist has him in *"The Eternal Smile."* When God was reproached for not having his creatures wiser and more humane he simply said, "I did not intend life as anything remarkable. I have done the best I could." Zen people have never reproached God for not being anybody else than himself. They go on sawing wood with the old man and are happy with the work.

Zen people, however, do not blame these pious Christians for asking God about the meaning of life, for what is known as religious life begins with reflecting on the Self and asking questions all around. Let us have a simile to illustrate the awakening of the religious consciousness.

It starts, psychologically speaking, with feeling unsteady about the Self. The Self is likened to a point. When it finds itself to be just a solitary point with nothing deep behind it it shudders at itself. What am I naturally follows. The point is surrounded with the Unknown. The question has really been raised due to this fact, but the questioner himself is not aware of the fact except that it feels uneasy, unsteady, as if it had no anchorage. It is this feeling that instigates the intellect. Thus instigated the intellect looks around and encounters the Unknown. Ordinarily, wherever a similar encounter is presented, the intellect somehow gets



over it, because it is something definite, tangible and attainable. But this time the situation is not so readily manageable. The wall standing before it, in fact surrounding it, has apparently no foundation; there is no handle or lever whereby the threatening monster can be lifted up for examination and brought out for intellectual analysis. In Buddhist terminology, the Self-point or point-self sits on the unattainability. For this reason it feels compelled or impelled by an unknown power, and has no control over itself, is not master of itself, enjoys no freedom whatever though it feels a certain inkling of freedom which however, is no more than self-illusion and self-delusion. And because of this illusion and delusion the Self is tortured, harassed and frustrated. The only solution for this situation, the only way to be master of itself, to transcend the threatening obstacles around it, is to negate itself, to annihilate itself, to shake off itself all the restraining conditions. This can never be carried out so long as the Self has something against it, and imagines itself to be at the point of being swallowed up by the void. All the dualistic imageries must be done away with. Psychologically, the point must perform a leap into the nothingness of the void. The point then finds itself to be at the centre of a circle with no circumference. This means that the point is the circle itself or that the circle has vanished itself into the point. The circle now ceases to be the threatening wall. The point is now everywhere, filling as it were the whole area of the circle which has no

circumference. The Self-point is shorn of its fictitious contents which are now replaced by an infinite number of Self-points overflowing the circle. Every one of such Self-points is my Self—the Self in its original just-so-ness.

This experience is called the Unattainable. The unattainability of the Unattainable is now attained in the manner it is never attained. The questioning that started all these complications was due to the instigation caused by the unknown which is the Unattainable. It is therefore said that the questioning is the answering or that when we raise a question we already have the answer in the question. This is the enigma of human life; it starts from the Unattainable and ends in the Unattainable, and in this unattainable life finds its anchorage which is no-anchorage. To the logicians, or in fact to anybody who likes to treat the Unattainable conceptually, all that has been said may sound strange and unintelligible, which is natural because the point Zen wants to make is not on the plane of conceptualisation but on that of one's actual personal experience. As long as one conceptualises the experience, the latter is regarded as not belonging to oneself but to somebody else. The Unattainable is kept away from the person and treated as something altogether foreign. Zen discipline is in this respect altogether different from intellectualisation. It does not stand away from the Unattainable, but plunges right into it and experiences it as Unattainable. When this situation is realised, most of the unintelligibility attached to Zen vanishes.

When Hōgen, while travelling from one monastery to another, happened to interview a master called Jizō, Jizō asked, "Where are you going?" "I am a travelling monk." "Do you understand what all your travelling comes to?" Hōgen confessed, "No, I do not know." Jizō said, "If you want to know what your travelling comes to, this 'I do not know' is the very thing you are after." Hōgen is said to have had a glimpse into ultimate reality. We can never know a thing in Zen way as long as we keep the thing away from us, that is, when we go on indulging in conceptualisation. The questioning starts in this manner, and when it is answered one finds oneself no more at the level of intellection. This is known as identifying oneself with the Unattainability.

Zen never despises intellection as such, but it wants intellection to know its place and not to go beyond the sphere it properly belongs to. Intellection introduces us to the Unattainable or points at it, telling us where it lies. It is not the intellect that will take us right into the realm of the Unattainable. It as it were stops at the entrance and it is we ourselves who must go in, abandoning everything that has been around ourselves. Even when one piece of thread is left round the body, this will be the hindrance that will make the gate closed up in front of us. The thread of intellection is sure to lead us back to the region where the attainable is the ruling power.

The one grave error we are apt to commit in this connection is our desire to stay inside the realm



of the unattainable. When this prevails, our situation becomes worse than before. Zen then loses all that it has prepared for its students. For here the Unattainable turns into a dichotomy and confines itself within a self-created prison of utter darkness. The spiritual life is not a one-way passage, but a two-way one. It never runs in one direction, it always comes back where it started. It never stays in the Pure Land. As soon as it attains it, it turns right back to the world of impermanence and tribulation. The Shin Buddhist philosophers call it the backing movement while one for the Land of Happiness is the going-forward. In fact they are one movement, but conceptually they distinguish one from the other. Zen has this too. As soon as the Unattainable is attainable one comes back to the attainable world of sense-intellect, though in actuality there are no such two ways of movement. The Unattainable is what it is only when it is in the world of attainability. The answer is not separated from the question and vice versa.

Thus to attain the Unattainable, one must raise questions and make inquiries into the source of all things. And these inquiries must be pushed as far as they can go. For this, a most scrutinising self-inspection is needed. The clouds of darkness that hide the gem of *prajñā* from illuminating all things around us and ourselves can be brushed aside only when existential inquiries known as *kufū* (*kung-fu*) are most assiduously carried on.

Daiye Sōkō, a younger contemporary of Butsu-



gen Shō-on and a disciple of Bukka Yengo, strongly and definitively expresses his views about the relation between Zen and intellection. I quote from one of his letters to his lay disciples, who are generally high government officers and scholars. Being scholarly they are apt to interpret Zen from an intellectual point of view and try to get into its meaning by means of written documents and oral instructions of the masters. Daiye is very much against this tendency on the part of his literary-minded followers. The letter is to Chang the councillor:

"If you are determined to shoulder this luggage (of Zen study), you must be prepared to build up yourself like a frame wrought with steel of good quality, then there will be something of accordance (between you and Zen). As long as you go on depending as before on your learning and cogitation and feeding yourself on the dregs left over by the ancient wise men you are nourishing your karma-root of birth-and-death. Did not the sages of old say, 'If one has even a little bit of worldly interests and concerns, this will prove a bondage for many a kalpa?' Names holy and profane are no more than empty sounds, forms superior and inferior are all delusive images. If one's thoughts are after them, one is sure to be distressed in one way or another. But one may also be involved in great calamities when one is averse to them. Detachment as well as attachment, aversion as well as concern—all alike are causes of frustra-

tion. Even the disciplinary measures set up by the ancient masters, who thought them to be necessary, are more or less a matter of expediency."

For this reason Rinzai uttered a "Katz!" as soon as a monk appeared at the gate; Tokusan flourished his stick on the same occasion. Those who follow the shadow instead of the object itself think the masters were unreasonably strict and merciless and ignoring human feeling. But in fact they were too grandmotherly, indulging in cajolery. But they could not be patient with those who strive to find something profound or something yielding to ratiocination in what comes out of the master's mouth. As long as they seek the meaning of Zen in verbal instruction by means of intellection and imagination, they are like people who look in the west for things which can be discovered only in the east. This urgent search will naturally make the situation worse.

If you wish to transcend the karmic chain of birth-and-death and to be released from a life of bondage, it is best for you to throw away the books you have been studying into another world and to give up the habit of resorting to intellection or speculation. Be like a man who neither hears nor sees though provided with ears and eyes and who remains dumb, that is, turn yourself into a piece of wood or brick. And keep your mind thoroughly devoid of its erudition and intelligence and be like empty space.

When this is accomplished, you are approaching the goal.

But you may question, when one is like a piece of wood or brick and his mind is thoroughly emptied of all its content, where is he approaching? Who is going to be intimate with him? You must remember that when such a question is raised in you, your intelligence is still claiming its rights and misinterpreting the Zen masters' well-directed instruction.

Sakyamuni, being repeatedly requested by his disciples, finally discloses in the *Lotus Sutra* the nature of the Dharma as altogether beyond the reach of intellectual analysis. This may sound unacceptable to most of Zen students who imagine that there is nothing of value beyond ratiocination. Buddha further declared at the end of his missionary career of forty-nine years that not a word was uttered by him during that long period. Those of intellectual bent may again object to this pronouncement of Buddha. When his sermons are filling up everywhere how could he say that he had not uttered a word?

You seem to like the old saying: "To say so is all right; to say not so is all right; to say at once so and not-so is also all right. To rightly understand this saying, however, requires an experience. You have first to go through one of absolute negation before you come to absolute affirmation. You must go through the crucible of 'not so, not so, altogether not so.' To come to this one must be constantly on the watch over oneself, one's whole being must be set in work, and one's world of sense-intellect must at least temporarily retire from



the field of consciousness. The time will come when you feel like an old rat cornered into a horn. When you are completely at a loss as to what to do or how further to proceed, your *kufū* is coming to a full maturity. Then most unexpectedly a passage will open, when the door of perception or enlightenment is found open ahead of you."

Inasmuch as we are living in the world of sense-intellect, and so constituted as to ask questions at every situation we come to meet, there is nothing wrong on our part in resorting to our intelligence and trying to find a solution intellectually. What Zen objects to is when we take the intellect for the sole agency to give us some sort of solution to any question we may raise. It is in the nature of the intellect to probe into the mysteries of life. But it will be a grave mistake to trust it absolutely or to think that it will give us satisfaction in every way when the questions are concerned with our being itself.

Such questions are raised in fact not by the intellect in its own right, but they come out of a very much deeper source than mere curiosity. They rise from the depths of consciousness, which are beyond the reach of the intellect. For the latter belongs to the periphery of our being.

When intellectualised or conceptualised, the Being is no more itself. Hence its unattainability. The deepest spiritual satisfaction and the peace of mind that follows it must come from this fact of unattainability. The Unattainable must be preserved

undisturbed by our intellectual agitation. It must be left to itself until it is ready to give an answer to the question which comes apparently from the intellect but which in fact is the outcome of the intellect being instigated by the Unattainable itself. We may ask, "What is it that has stirred up the Unattainable to take this step? Why did it not remain quiet in its just-so-ness instead of stirring up all the commotion that has been going on ever since our consciousness was awakened?"

It is the intellect that asks the questions, seeking reason for everything, but there is one thing we have to take in its is-ness without asking any question about its being-so. And the strange fact is that when we have the thing itself we do not have to ask anything about it. We are just so completely satisfied that we forget all the commotions we have caused because of it. The more the commotions the deeper the satisfaction. This is the mystery of being and we rest contented in its is-ness. Mystery or no mystery—it is no more of our concern.

When we set intellection on one side and the Unattainable on the other side, we can never get at it. Do not try to keep them separated one from the other, do not let them stand in opposition. As long as this separation and opposition is kept we can never come to a solution. When the Unattainable is taken in as unattainable, it ceases to be an unattainability. Whatever opposition there was in the beginning between the attainable and Unat-

tainable, between the knowable and the unknowable, between conceptualisation and reality, is no more obtainable. This is called the Zen experience.

When this experience prevails, the attainable is merged in the Unattainable, and the Unattainable in the attainable. As soon as one is picked up the other comes along with it. But we must remember that this does not take place on the conceptual plane but existentially or experientially, or we may adopt another terminology and say, not statically but dynamically.

Scholars of these days make it their business to cultivate much learning and to do a great deal of memorisation. They want to know everything, to have an understanding of everything. After they have comprehended things of this world they go out to comprehend also things not belonging to this world. Unfortunately they fail to realise that between things of this world and those of another world there are no points of similarity whatever. As to things of another world, one can comprehend them only by cultivating no-mind and no-action, by rejecting all verbalism and letter-learning, by sweeping away everything attainable by means of study and memory, by becoming like a mere puppet that knows nothing and is incapable of doing anything. By entering into this realm one can really talk about things of another world as well as those of this world. A man who, solely depending on intelligence, talks about the worldly reasonableness of things, systematises them by prin-



ciples of relative knowledge, and carries on calculation and projection of all kinds and finally requests other people's acknowledgment of them, such is called by Buddha an arrogant man. He is the one who cuts Buddha's *prajñā* life of transcendental wisdom, scorns the truth of Mahāprajñā, and whose repentance would not be accepted by any one of a thousand Buddhas who may appear simultaneously on earth.

Baso tells us, "No other than your *kokoro* is Buddha." If you strive to attain realisation by merely following this diction, you can never be in accord with reality. Because when you take your own *kokoro* for ultimate reality you will find something against yourself. There will always be an opposition between two objects. You go from one to another endlessly. It is like plunging into a fire in order to avoid being drowned. What is the use of running between opposites?

The delusive body on the mirror reflects its image.  
The image and the delusive body, they are not different.

You wish to get away with the image, only  
retaining the body,  
Forgetting that the body and the image are from the  
first empty.

The body and the image, not being two, since the  
beginning,

The one cannot exist by itself while the other is  
non-existent.

If you wish to retain the one while giving the other  
away.

You go on floating and sinking in the ocean of  
"birth-and-death."

"O Tohwan Koji! If you really wish to see your *kokoro* open and free, you just place your faith in the diction, 'Buddha is no other than your *kokoro*' and do not try to trust your intelligence."

A non-Buddhist philosopher asked Buddha, "I am not going to ask you about that which is expressible in words, nor am I going to ask you about that which is beyond words." The World-honoured One sat for a while without uttering a word. The philosopher praised Buddha, saying, "The World-honoured One's great compassionate heart has opened up for me the clouds of delusion and let me have an entrance."

When the philosopher left, Ananda asked Buddha, "What realisation did the philosopher have to make him say that he had an entrance?" Buddha said, "It is like an intelligent horse who knows where to go by seeing the shadow of the whip move."

Our world of sense-intellect is destined to be dichotomous: black and white, good and evil, right and wrong, to be and not to be. But it is our human situation that we cannot remain contented without going beyond the dualistic interpretation of reality. The contradictions which beset us everywhere in life must be somehow solved. If we take the contradictions as unavoidable and unsolvable, we must somehow find the reason or sense that makes them unavoidable and unsolvable and at the same time makes us feel satisfied and contented with it. The intellect may insist on the dissolution or reduction of all the contradictions which cause

such a confusion and annoyance in our daily living. It is probable that what we generally regard as "logically harmonious" may not be quite logical and we may have to transcend logic as traditionally set out. We may have to start a new logic which evaluates the contradictions from a higher point of view so as to absolve all such into a field where they altogether lose their annoying quality. "The pacification of the *kokoro*" comes first and the intellect must adjust itself to serve it. The question may still remain as to how this service is rendered.

The question proposed to Buddha by the non-Buddhist philosopher as referred to in the *Mumon-kan* (XXXII) touches the very point raised above. In fact the study of Zen comes to its termination when this point is satisfactorily answered. How do the Zen masters solve the contradiction of "to be and not to be?" It is naturally to be expected that they do not appeal to argumentation. They strive to get at the most fundamental and most concrete facts of our human living. All kinds of reasoning or analysing or scientific experimentation lead them to conceptualisation, which is to go further away from our immediate personal experiences. Conceptualization means generalization and generalization leaves many concrete individual particular facts out of consideration. The way of Zen is drastic and radical and cuts off analysis at its very start. It never permits the logical process to unfold itself endlessly. When Nansen saw monks of two sections of his monastery quarrel over the ownership of a cat, he held up the animal before them



and declared, "If you say a word I will not cut it in two." Nobody uttered a word and the poor creature was sacrificed for their not being able to solve the dilemma of "to be" and "not to be."

Baso was asked, "Apart from all negations and affirmations, will you tell me what brought Bodhidharma from India to China?" This is to reach the ultimate truth without resorting to all possible forms of logical quibblings, one might say. Baso simply said, "I am tired today. I cannot answer you. You had better go to Chizō." (Chizō was one of Baso's main disciples.) This is no way for any philosopher to answer a question brought to him in his classroom. Secchō, the great Zen master who is noted for his versified comments on some of the well-known Zen stories, writes on Baso here: "Beyond four statements and one hundred negations—'Heaven above and among men, it is I alone that knows it all.'"

These two cases are enough to demonstrate the direction the Zen masters have in mind whereby they solve the problem of logical contradiction.

Secchō's versified comments on the non-Buddhist philosopher's question on things expressible and inexpressible in words starts somewhat satirically, we may say, but ends thus:

The wheel of reality always remains unmoved,  
But, once moved, it is sure to divide itself into two.  
The bright mirror comes up to be set on the pedestal  
And no time is lost to reflect the bifurcation of the  
beautiful and the ugly.

The beautiful and the ugly bifurcated!  
clouds of delusion dispersed!

Anywhere in the field of great compassion  
We detect not a particle of dust!

We now think of the intelligent steed feeling the  
shadow of the whip.

Galloping one thousand miles away—  
Would he be called back?

If he would, I snap my fingers three times.

If the wheel of reality remains unmoved it is no wheel. The wheel is a wheel only when it revolves on. The Unattainable must turn into the attainable, but the one must be in the other. The bifurcation of all sorts must go on infinitely and eternally, but the great compassionate heart of Buddha is seen brightly illuminating the whole world where no particles of dust obscures the face of the mirror or, it is better to say, where the Buddha-heart retains its illuminating quality. Among the infinitely dusty particles of bifurcation and its consequent complications and confusions the illuminating quality of the Buddha's compassionate heart is possible because of the dusty particles of this world.

Philosophically stated, the main point in the study of Zen is, in terms of Sōsan (died 606) the third patriarch, "Do not pursue Being, nor get attached to Not-Being. Be ever in Oneness and the two will vanish by themselves. When you wish to return to the Unmoved by stopping the moving, the Unmoved begins to move all the more. As long as you abide with dualism, how can you be ac-

quainted with the one? . . . The two are two because of the one, and never hold on to the one. The one mind is the Unborn and the ten thousand things are faultless. . . ."



# THE ESSENCE OF BUDDHISM



Being the Author's Translation from the Japanese  
of his Command Address to H.M. The Emperor  
of Japan on April 23rd and 24th 1946 by

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## *Preface*

As part of a general scheme for making the Japanese Imperium more democratic, it was decided early this year to provide the Emperor with information on various aspects of Japanese life with which his previously secluded position had made it difficult for him to become familiar. Experts in various subjects are therefore addressing him from time to time, and the first subject chosen was naturally Buddhism, the religion of most of the Japanese people for the last thousand years. The choice of lecturer was easy, for few in Japan would claim to rival Dr. Suzuki in his knowledge of all forms of Japanese Buddhism. As it was impossible to cover such a subject in one lecture, the speaker divided it into two, but it will be noticed that Dr. Suzuki resisted the temptation to devote one talk to Zen and the other to Shin Buddhism, or any other such contrasting arrangement, but has chosen vital doctrines from the various sects and therewith presented what he claims to be the Essence of Buddhism.

As I happened to be in Japan when the two



Addresses were given, I asked Dr. Suzuki to dictate to me an English translation of his original manuscript, and this he was good enough to do. He was also good enough to go over my typed transcription of his English version to satisfy himself that what is published here is what he meant to say. He wishes me to add, however, that had there been more time available he would have revised the English text more thoroughly, and he still hopes to do so for a later edition.

I am grateful to the officials of the Household for obtaining Imperial permission for the publication of the two Addresses.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS,

President of the Buddhist Society, London.

Tokyo,

July 1946.

# *The Essence of Buddhism*



## PART ONE

Before I speak about Buddhism, I should like to say something about religion in general. For Buddhism, like other religions, is often considered as having no direct communication with life itself, and many think that they can get along quite well without it. Some go further, and say that it is mere superstition, and that whether heaven and hell exist is no concern of theirs. Some have gone further still, and described religion as the opium of the masses, a means used by capitalists and bureaucrats to make the people blindly obey their will. At the least they claim that God is merely an object of selfish prayer. If this is what is meant by Buddhism, there is no understanding of the function which religion plays or should play in our daily life.

In the ordinary way we do not recognise the fact that we are living in two worlds, a world of sense and intellect, and a world of spirit. We are apt to consider the former real and the latter unreal, imaginary, existing only in the minds of poets, visionaries and the so-called spiritualists. But from

the religious point of view this latter world is far more real than that of the sense-intellect, which, contrary to our common-sense notion, is a reconstruction, and not the one immediately revealed to the spirit. This explains the constant feeling that there is something in our conception of life which is unaccounted for, a feeling which torments us in various ways until the missing part is found. Quite apart from the problem of philosophy our daily life is full of contradictions, and though some ignore them others are deeply troubled. In the course of the troubled wondering they struggle to find a way out, and immediately notice the unreality of the life which they are leading day by day. Having reached this stage, they begin to look for some other world on a different plane; meanwhile all which they had previously regarded as true and real begins to lose its significance. Then they begin to realise that what they had previously thought to be real is not truly unreal either, but real only in connection with a greater reality behind it. The two worlds already described are found to be two phases of one world, and it is only by not understanding the fact of one world that they foolishly believed that there were two. For this relative world in which we know that we live, and the more real world which lies behind it, form a complete and undivided whole, and neither is more real than the other. Or, it may be better to say that the relative world gains its reality by being merged into the spiritual world, though this does not mean that relativities are thereby lost, and



sink into the chaotic state of the undifferentiated. The cause of our unhappiness is found to be the fundamental error that there are two separate and uncoordinated worlds, when the truth is that the world is one.

Now how do we come to regard this one world as two separate worlds? The one is the world of distinction and discrimination, of the intellect and reasoning; the other is the world of non-distinction and non-discrimination, of the spirit. We live in the world of distinction and discrimination which is dominated by reason, and take it to be real. But in fact it is inter-penetrated by the world of non-distinction and non-discrimination, and only when the former is viewed in the light of the latter do we arrive at the true meaning of distinction and discrimination. It is not too much to say that religion arises from this understanding.

This conception of non-distinction<sup>1</sup> admittedly runs counter to our daily experience, which is based on innumerable distinctions and the ensuing processes of thought. For this reason most of us will not subscribe to the idea of non-distinction, and

<sup>1</sup>The Japanese for distinction is *shabetsu*, and its opposite is *mushabetsu*. *Shabetsu* literally means "cutting and separating," implying a world of differentiation, where the principle of individuation rules. According to Buddhist philosophy this world of multitudes gains its reality by being sustained by another world of *mushabetsu*, non-differentiation. The latter is not a separate existence, but is merged in the world of daily experience, and because of this merging the world in which we live is neither one nor two. Buddhism expresses this idea by saying that the One is the Many and the Many is One, or distinction is non-distinction and vice versa.

yet this contradiction—being distinct yet not distinct—and its consequent unintelligibility is what makes up the religious life. It is for this reason that there are so many things in our religious experience which go counter to our rational experience. This unintelligibility is absolute so long as it is understood on the plane of mere rationality, but when it is reduced to the point where the merging of distinction and non-distinction takes place, all irrationalities will disappear.

This world of non-discrimination is the spiritual world as the West understands it. In Buddhism, it is Nirvana, or Bodhi, or the attaining of Buddhahood, or being born into the Western Paradise. To the Japanese mind, some of these terms are associated with an after-death condition, and may therefore appear negative. But this is only because we are still under the bondage of the analytic and discriminating mind, which loves to dichotomise even where this is impossible. To understand these terms properly, we have first to destroy the intellect, in the sense of completely transcending its power, and so reaching the foundation of all things. For in the world of analysis and discrimination the self is predominant, and so long as the self is not destroyed we cannot enter the world of non-distinction. This is why these terms are, from the lower point of view, always negative. Yet the spiritual world of non-distinction is positive and affirmative, for it is only when surveyed from the spiritual point of view that this analytical intellect acquires significance in our daily life of distinction and dis-

crimination. We have always to keep in mind the fact that the things discriminated have value only when they are referred to the world of spirit.

Buddhists often speak of the "Great Death," which means dying to the ordinary life, or putting an end to the analysing intellect. Slay, they would say, with one stroke this meddling intellect, and throw it to the dogs. This is a strong phrase, but the idea is plain; it is to transcend the intellect. For the spiritual world of non-discrimination will never open its doors until the world of the discriminating mind is destroyed to its foundations. Then only comes the birth of Prajna, the illuminated, non-discriminating mind. Vijnana is enlightened, and is now Prajna, and moves in its own straight path. When Vijnana, our normal consciousness lacks the light of Prajna, it loses its way. When Prajna shines there is still distinction, but the distinctions are viewed in the light of non-distinction, and the self is dead. But we must not think that Prajna exists in separation from Vijnana, or vice versa. Separation means distinction, and where there is distinction in any form there is no Prajna. And without Prajna, Vijnana loses its way.

Prajna is therefore the knowledge of non-distinction or non-thinking, in the sense that all thought involves the distinction of this and that, for to think means to analyse. Achintya, non-thinking, means not to divide, that is, to pass beyond all intellection, and the whole of Buddhism revolves about this central idea of non-thought, or non-thinkingness.



But to repeat, we must not assume that the spirit of non-distinction has a separate existence of its own apart from the intellect, for if it were separate it would have no vital connection with our daily life, and there would be no non-thinking. There is, however, non-thinkingness just because distinction is interfused with non-distinction, and non-distinction with distinction, however paradoxical this may be. The spirit is always at the back of the intellect, but the intellect conveniently, though often to its own ruination, forgets that it only functions by virtue of the spirit of non-distinction shining through. To realise this fact, that thinking is non-thinking and non-thinking is thinking, is to attain enlightenment, to become Buddha, to enter the Western Paradise. It is the "second birth" of Hindu philosophy, the giving up life in order to gain it of the New Testament.

The Emperor Hanazono (reigned 1308-1318), a most devout Buddhist, once invited Daito, the National Teacher who founded the Daitoku-Ji Temple at Kyoto, to a talk on Buddhism. When Daito appeared before the Emperor and had seated himself, the Emperor remarked, "Is it not a matter of unthinkability that the Buddha-Dharma should face the royal Dharma on the same level?" Daito replied, "Is it not a matter of unthinkability that the royal Dharma should face the Buddha-Dharma on the same level?" The Emperor was pleased at the reply.

This famous *mondō* is most suggestive. The Buddhist authority here represents the world of spirit,



and the royal or civil authority the world of distinction. So long as we live in the dual world of distinction we must obey its laws. A tree is not a bamboo and a bamboo is not a tree; a mountain is high and rivers flow; the willow is green and the flower is red. In the same way, where social order obtains the Master is Master and the subject is subject. Daito was a subject, and must therefore sit below the Emperor, and the Emperor's remark was made with this in mind. As long as we stay in the world of the intellect we cannot allow the intrusion of the non-thinking spirit. As long as the Emperor was living in a world of distinction, and did not recognise the existence of a world above his own, Daito must stand below the Emperor. Then Daito, revealing the existence of a higher world, explained that as long as the Emperor looked at the Master from his own point of view he would be unable to see how the world of non-distinction could break through into the world of distinction, and there claim its place. But as soon as the Emperor was awakened to the truth that there is a world of non-distinction, thoroughly interfused with and actually in the world of distinction and discrimination, he understood how Daito came to him and sat facing him on the same level. The Emperor's unthinkability was relative, for he looked at things with discriminative eyes. Daito's viewpoint on the other hand, was absolute, for he looked at things from a purely transcendental point of view where there was no room for intellection. Thus the two men, though using the same terms,

were poles apart in thought. Inasmuch as the Emperor stayed on the plane of intellectual discrimination he could never rise to the level of Daito's understanding, and would not be able to resolve the doubts which remained in his mind.

The Master's way of handling unthinkability was not the Emperor's, and the latter had to learn to handle the position for himself by ceasing to think, that is, by not resorting to ratiocination in spiritual affairs. Thereafter no doubt would remain in his mind about distinction and non-distinction. There were words in the realm of spiritual significance which were not in the Emperor's vocabulary as such. As the Master used them they were on the plane of distinction, but they came from the plane of non-distinction. Yet the remark made by the Master must have to some extent enlightened the Emperor, for he allowed the Master to remain seated on the same level as himself.

On another occasion when the Emperor had an interview with the Master he asked, "Who is he who remains companionless within the ten thousand things?" a reference to the Absolute which defies analysis, and has none facing it. Yet the very question showed that the Emperor had not emerged from the clouds of doubt, and that he needed further enlightenment. The Master did not directly answer the question, but standing on the same level as the Emperor, that is, in the world of discrimination, he just moved his fan and said, "I long enjoy being bathed in the Imperial breeze." In spring we bathe in the breeze and enjoy tran-

quility. The Master tried to express by the use of his fan the spring breeze of the Absolute, and a state of spiritual relaxation issuing therefrom, and ascribed it to the Imperial grace. Here the Absolute which stands without companion is the Emperor, is Daito himself, is the present lecturer.

The fundamental purpose of Buddhism is to pass beyond the world of opposites, a world built up by intellectual distinction and emotional defilement, and to realise a spiritual world of non-distinction, which involves achieving an absolute point of view. Yet the Absolute is in no way distinct from the world of discrimination, for to think so would be to place it opposite the discriminative mind, and so create a new duality. When we speak of an Absolute we are apt to think that, being the denial of the opposites, it must be placed in opposition to the discriminative mind. But to think so is in fact to lower the Absolute into the world of opposites, and necessitates the conception of a greater Absolute which will contain both. The Absolute, in brief, is in the world of opposites and not apart from it. Nor can this contradiction be understood so long as we stay in the world of distinction. To go beyond this world will not help, nor to stay in it either. Hence the intellectual dilemma from which we all struggle to escape.

So the Master points out in silence that Buddhism is beyond the comprehension of the intellect. Discrimination and non-discrimination are two yet one; otherwise there is no way in which to transcend the contradiction involved in the intellect.



In one way the intellect is denied, yet without its help there is no way of transcending it, and Buddhists claim that the paradox can only be solved by personal experience.

Prince Shotoku (Prince Regent, 593-621), the founder of the Horyuji Temple at Nara, wrote commentaries on three Mahayana Sutras, the *Saddharma Pundarika*, the *Vimalakirti* and the *Srimala*, and in all of them emphasised the unthinkability of Buddhist experience. In the *Srimala*, the Tathagata-Garbha is described as being buried in innumerable defilements, yet it remains beyond their control. The Tathagata-Garbha is the spiritual world of non-discrimination, and the defiling world is that of thought. That these two are separate yet one is beyond our power to understand completely, for perfect understanding amounts to Buddhahood. Yet all religious people finally come to this experience. It is the state of mind which in Christian experience is called divine revelation, something supernatural and not attainable by human reason alone. But most people, living as they do on the plane of the intellect, submit everything to intellectual domination, and so reject as unworthy of consideration all which the intellect cannot understand. In their folly they treat Buddhism in the same way, but sooner or later they have to pick up what they had cast away, and place it on the altar of the heart. For whether they realise it or not it was there all the time, though sadly 'unrecognised. When the bird sings we know it is a bird; when the bell is struck it rings. When the

Buddha held out a golden flower, Mahakasyapa smiled. No word was exchanged, for who knows, knows! The Emperor Goyozei (reigned 1586-1629) wrote a poem about it:

Smiling eyebrows are opened.  
Is it cherry or peach blossom?  
Who does not know?  
Yet nobody knows!

From the viewpoint of non-distinction nobody knows. The flower is offered and somebody smiles. Intellectually no communication has passed, but something must have passed between the two minds beyond the plane of the intellect. Where there is understanding no comment is needed, but where there is no understanding the abyss cannot be crossed intellectually at all.

To understand this unthinkability, the mind must escape from the prison of the intellect and pass beyond the field of opposites, even as the Emperor Hanazono faced the Master Daito and rose to the higher point of view. In the *Pundarika Sutra* we frequently find such phrases as, "However much we try to measure Buddha-knowledge by means of thought we can never succeed." In the chapter on Longevity we have, "In the immeasurably long past I obtained my Buddha-hood, and I have been living here for an incalculably long period of time. I am indeed immortal." According to history, Sakya Muni attained Enlightenment at a spot not far from his royal palace when he was 29. In spite of this fact he says in the Scrip-

ture that his Enlightenment took place hundreds of thousands of kalpas ago. The two statements are obviously contradictory, and the contradiction is inevitable so long as we let ourselves be bound by the intellect. And when the intellectual contradiction is transferred to the emotional life we suffer all forms of disturbance. As we live most of our life on the emotional plane we are apt to forget that these disturbances are the outcome of the contradictions in the intellectual mind.

Contradictions and unthinkability are inevitable companions, and when functioning on the plane of distinction they lead to doubt and confusion. Only when they rise to the spiritual plane do they produce a sense of bliss, and become the source of faith and fearlessness.

This contradiction was the subject of a discussion between the Master Daito and the Emperor Godaigo (reigned 1318-1339), another student of Zen. The Master said, "We were parted many thousands of Kalpas ago, yet we have never been separated, even for a moment. We are facing each other all day long yet we have never met." This idea is expressed by Sakya Muni himself in the *Saddharma Pundarika*, as stated before. In spite of the historical fact that he attained Enlightenment near Buddha Gaya he says that he was fully enlightened before the world was born. The historical fact of his Enlightenment is a record which we make with the intellect. Likewise the fact that the Master and the Emperor were facing each other is a fact based on the concept of time. But



from the point of view which is only possible in the field of non-discrimination, where no rational calculation is possible, historical facts have no significance at all. In other words, "You and I have been in each other's presence through all eternity, and have never been separated even for a moment." Or, expressed conversely, "I have been with you all day long, but have never entered your presence." The Master is viewing things from his non-discriminative point of view, which the Emperor was at first unable to understand. Nor are any of these things understandable when given to the judgement of our everyday experience. Buddhists learn to disregard these intellectual "facts," and to express themselves in a way which is quite irrational, and we must change our point of view to accord with the Buddhist viewpoint, which comes from the non-discriminative mind. The reason we are so annoyed in our daily life, and unable to escape from its annoyance, is due to our intellectual inability to go beyond the intellect. Here, then, is a need for a major operation, to sever the knots of the intellect. A mountain is not a mountain; a river is not a river. Yet a mountain is a mountain and a river is a river. Negation is affirmation and affirmation is negation. Nor is this a mere play in words. We must admit that all the vexations and anxieties of life are due to our failure to sink into our own centre, and then to rise out of it on to the plane of non-distinction where the problems at once disappear. Buddhists strive not to be tied by words from the higher point of view. Yet words are

needed to transcend words, and intellection is needed to rise above the intellect. Yet this rising must never be made in a dualistic or "escapist" sense, for no such escape is possible.

We are now in a position to say something about Karma. Human suffering is due to our being bound in Karma, for all of us, as soon as we are born, carry a heavy burden of past Karma, which is therefore a part of our very existence. In Japan the term is connected with bad deeds, and evil people are spoken of as bearing the Karma of the past. But the original meaning of the term is "action," and human acts may be good, bad or indifferent. In this sense, human beings are the only beings which have their own Karma. All others move in accordance with the laws of their own being, but humans alone design and calculate, and are conscious of themselves. We humans are the sole self-conscious animals, or, as Pascal says, "We are thinking reeds." Now to think means to be conscious, designing, planning beforehand, which implies that we are free to plan. It follows that Karma is only found in human beings, and in fact as soon as we enter the world our Karma attaches to us. Not only are we wrapped up in our Karma but we know it, and the fact that we are aware of our bondage is a privilege of humanity. This privilege implies freedom, and with freedom comes responsibility and struggle, the struggle itself implying freedom. Thus the value of human life lies in the fact of suffering, for where there is no suffering, no consciousness of Karmic bondage, there will be

no power of attaining spiritual experience and thereby reaching the field of non-distinction. Unless we agree to suffer we cannot be free from suffering. Only by accepting our bondage can we be free.

As long as we are human we cannot escape from Karma, and yet we are always trying to escape. Hence a contradiction. Yet it is this very contradiction which raises man above all other forms of existence, and provides the spiritual urge to break through the ordinary plane of consciousness. Karma oppresses us all the time, yet all the time we are trying to rise above it, and this very impulse to transcend our Karma is a power which issues from our spiritual nature. One may describe this urge as prayer, and prayer is of the essence of the religious life. It is an attempt to separate ourselves from things which are inseparably part of ourselves, and it follows that by prayer we add to our suffering. Hence the declaration by early Buddhists that all life is suffering, and many in consequence regarded Buddhism as mere pessimism. This erroneous belief inspired many of the early Buddhists to escape from the world, but others, regarding this attempt as negative, wished to be more positive. They dug deeper and deeper into the foundations of being, and eventually tapped the source of life itself, thereby opening the door to the spirituality of human existence. And this is the spiritual awakening.

The intellect is dualistic, and divides things into opposites. This opposition is a source of suffering, which is Karma, but it also means freedom. To be



free means to be able to choose between two or more courses open to us, yet as long as we stay on the plane of the intellect the choice or decision invariably leads to a further choice or decision. To be really free we must go beyond all intellection, which is separation, opposition, and mutual conditioning, and without this going beyond there will never be freedom from Karma. To be bound by Karma, yet to be free from it, here is a spiritual mystery. On the intellectual plane it must ever remain a mystery, and so long as the intellect tries to walk on its own feet it will be threatened by this mystery, which stands for ever against it. Yet in the end the mystery must be solved without being solved, for as soon as we reach the spiritual plane it may be allowed to remain a mystery, though in a different sense. To the intellect it is still a mystery insoluble, but to the spirit it is already solved and no more mystery, yet still a mystery in the highest sense of the word. To the intellect it is a mystery, in the sense that it defies the power of intellection. To the spirit it is not so in its intellectual sense, but still remains a mystery. For mystery is spiritual as well as intellectual. Unthinkability is an intellectual term in reference to the things of spirit, and as far as the spirit is concerned intellection is of no avail. A mountain is a mountain and yet not a mountain, and because it is not a mountain it is a mountain—such is the bold statement to be found in the *Prajnaparamita* Sutras. But as our daily experience is so cut

through and through with intellectuality we have to speak of mystery as such. Speech implies the plane of the intellect and this is why I speak of the distinction of non-distinction and the non-distinction of distinction.

To return to Karma, Karma implies causation, and to be free from Karma means to be free from causation. But ethics are built on the moral law of causation, even as the physical world is held together by the law of cause-effect. To be free from causation will thus mean a denial of the moral world as well as the physical world, which is tantamount to the denial of life itself, for we cannot conceive of life apart from the notion of causation. Does Buddhism want us to deny life, that is, to commit suicide? If not, what does "being free from Karma and causation" mean? The following famous story of Pai-Chang will clarify the position of Zen in regard to its significance.

When Pai-Chang, a Master of the T'ang Dynasty, had one day finished his preaching, an old man who used to attend his sermons regularly came to him and said, "In the days of Kasyapa Buddha, innumerable kalpas ago, I lived here on this mountain, and one day a student asked me, 'Does an enlightened man fall into causation or not?' I answered, 'No,' and for this answer I have lived in the form of a wild fox ever since. Will you give me the proper answer, that I may be free from this fox-form?" And again he asked, "Does an enlightened man fall into cause-effect or not?"

The Master answered, "He does not evade the law of cause effect." The fox-man was thereupon enlightened.

The meaning of the story is this, that the enlightened man allows the law to take its course, and is therefore no longer bound by it. When the appropriate conditions are manifest, causation arises. The sun shines on all, good and bad. The law operates for all, enlightened and unenlightened, for it is the law which governs alike the moral and physical world. The intellect requires ratiocination, and therefore cannot admit irrationality, and even on the spiritual plane it is the same. The spirit does not negate the intellect, it simply transcends it, in the sense that it has its own realm within the intellectual boundaries and yet is not bound by them. It therefore makes use of the intellect, it expresses itself through the intellect, and yet it has its own way of interpreting it. It belongs to a world of distinction, and at the same time is above it. Its world is one of distinction and non-distinction, and for this reason Karma as causation is not to be contrasted with non-causation, for on the spiritual plane beyond the intellect no such distinction exists. Yet apart from distinction and causation there is no spiritual world of non-distinction, for which reason the enlightened man cannot escape Karma, does not evade causation, but submits himself to it willingly and cheerfully, and thereby transcends it. And he does this, not on the intellectual plane, as philosophers and scientists might do, but in a spiritual way, a way of distinc-



tion not distinguished, of discrimination not discriminated. Therefore his enlightenment takes place in the world of causation, and he is not bound by the law. If it took place in the spiritual world, severed from the intellectual and causal world, it would no longer be the spiritual world. When a bell is struck, it rings and we hear it, and this hearing is the same for ordinary beings as for enlightened men. When the old man asserted, therefore, that an enlightened man is not bound by causation, he committed the grave mistake of making the spiritual world stand apart from the intellectual world of distinction. Pai-Chang, knowing this, knew where the old man's fault lay. So he made it clear that there is no evasion of Karma for the enlightened or the unenlightened man. The enlightened man, in other words, falls into cause-effect just as much as the unenlightened, but his falling is merely the paying of an old debt.

This non-evasion of causation illustrates the logic of the Prajna class of Mahayana Sutras in which Prajna is Prajna because it is not Prajna, and this logic of contradiction runs through all the Mahayana texts. To say that causation is not causation is to rise above it, not to destroy it or evade it, and when we rise above it by immersing ourselves in it we accept it with its full consequences. I am, for example, born, I may become ill, I shall grow old, and die. I cannot ignore this wheel of causation, but the fact that I am conscious of its revolutions and yet at the same time conscious that there is something that is never touched by the causal

revolutions, enables me to "escape" from it. Thus we never fall into cause-effect, because we are already in it. To fall into it, or to be delivered from it presupposes that there has been a state where there was no falling and no deliverance. When we find ourselves on the wheel, and move continuously with it, there is neither falling nor being delivered, for we have become the wheel itself.

In another Zen story it is said that someone asked the Master, "Summer comes, winter comes. How shall we escape from this?" The Master answered, "Why not go to the place where there is neither summer nor winter?" "Where can such a place be found?" asked the enquirer. The Master replied, "When winter comes, it is cold. When summer comes, it is hot." As Pascal says, even the Universe can be destroyed, and we are all subject to birth and death. One drop of poison will kill the most virtuous man, but the poison is not conscious of its destructive power. Man alone is aware of the distinction between consciousness and non-consciousness, and he alone is self-conscious. His consciousness has therefore a great significance, and enlightenment is no more than a recognition of this fact. Enlightenment is spiritual cognition becoming spiritually conscious of the facts of our everyday experience. And this form of consciousness is different from our consciousness of the world of sense. Cold may be felt by the ignorant as well as the enlightened. When a bird sings, all hear it, whether or not enlightened, but the consciousness experienced by the ignorant does not

rise above the sensuous plane. To the spiritually enlightened the hearing of the bird and the feeling of the cold is on the spiritual plane which penetrates the world of sense, and the enlightened man interprets the facts of daily experience from the spiritual point of view. When the world is thus interpreted spiritually it is no more an object of the senses and the intellect. The world, with all its suffering, shortcomings and dualities, is one with the spiritual world, and for those who are enlightened suffering is no more suffering. Causation in this sense no longer affects them. When Pascal speaks of the thinking reed, this thinking is no mere cogitation or contemplation, but a process of becoming spiritually conscious. The importance of contemplation was highly stressed by the early Buddhists, but the Mahayana insists on something more. All contemplation suggests a form of dualism, for where there is an object of contemplation there must be a mind which contemplates. Being spiritually conscious is therefore more than contemplation, though consciousness itself suggests a form of dualism. But spiritual consciousness implies that there is neither one to be conscious nor the fact of which the mind is conscious. To be conscious yet not conscious of anything at all is true spiritual consciousness. Here the object and the mind are one, and from this oneness arises the world of multiplicity. As long as we are bound up with these multiplicities we cannot escape their domination, but as soon as we rise in consciousness to the source of consciousness, where there is yet



no separation, no distinction, no opposition between this and that, we are free, and all the multiplicities can hurt no more. But, as I have repeatedly said, this does not mean the denial of the sensuous world, which has always been a cardinal doctrine of Hinayana Buddhism.

It is for this reason that we say that we are far greater than the universe in which we live, for our greatness is not of space but of the spirit. And there is nothing spiritual in the universe apart from human spirituality. The greatness of the world comes from our own greatness, and all about us acquires its greatness only from ourselves. And we only realise our greatness when we become conscious of human suffering, and this consciousness is emancipation. According to legend, when the Buddha was born he cried, "Above heaven and below heaven I alone am the Honoured (Fully Enlightened) One." This shows that he had realised in himself the greatness which each one of us has within him, and this supreme affirmation is reached by going through with suffering, and contradictions, and Karma. For contradiction is pain and we feel this pain. By this feeling we rise above ourselves, and this rising is emancipation.

## PART TWO

There are two pillars supporting the great edifice of Buddhism, the Dai-Chi, or Maha Prajna, the Great Wisdom, and the Dai Hi, or Maha Karuna, the Great Compassion. The Wisdom flows from the Compassion and the Compassion from the Wisdom, for the two are in fact one, though from the human point of view we have to speak of them as two. Regarding them as one, we may think of them as a person, for the two are not united mathematically but spiritually. As living principles, therefore, they may be thought of as uniting in an absolute Person. This Person is, of course, objectively a contradiction, but the distinction of non-distinction is revealed in such a Person, and it is just because he is a field of contradiction that he is full of life and can manifest in action.

The climax of Buddhist philosophy is reached in the Kegon conception of Jiji-mu-ge (literally, each thing no hindrance). As I see it, this is the summit of oriental thought as developed by the finest Buddhist minds, and represents Japan's contribution to world philosophy. Kegon philosophy

teaches a four-fold conception of the world: (1) The world viewed as individual existences; (2) The world viewed as the Absolute; (3) The world conceived as individuals retaining their individuality in the Absolute, and (4) The world conceived as each revealed through each other, so that each individual has no hindrance from being merged in every other. Note that here the conception of the Absolute has been dropped. There is thus a pantheism without *theos*, or in Western terminology, all is God and there is no God.

When the world is so conceived it ceases to be a mere world of the senses, and becomes the spiritual world which Buddhists call the Dharma-loka. If the notion of a physical world is retained, each individual will lose its ultimate significance, but in a spiritual world all which was lost is restored. Each individual is asserted to exist, and the physical world is restored, but this time as a spiritual world. In Christian terminology, it reflects the divine glory. The earth acquires heavenly splendour and this world of misery becomes a land of purity, or the Pure Land.<sup>1</sup> In this world of individual realities no one can ever be converted into another. A flower is a flower and a leaf a leaf. The mountains are towering high, and water flows downwards. This world is a world of the intellect, where everything retains distinctively its indi-

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese term for the individual here is *Ji*, which ordinarily means event or happening, and early Chinese translators of the Mahayana texts have been troubled to find an appropriate term for the Sanskrit word *vastu*.



viduality. At first we take this world as real, but after reflection we realise that it is not ultimate, because what we think to be individual never retains its individuality, being destined to re-dissolve into its elements. Buddhists have therefore sought for the underlying principle which does not change, and have found it in the conception of Sunyata. This Sunyata is what was referred to before as the Absolute, but the Absolute and Sunyata, the Void, are synonymous, as pertaining to non-distinction. This Void, or emptiness, however, as I have said repeatedly, is not to be taken as mere nothingness. Sunyata is absolute, not relative nothingness, and when it is understood in a dualistic sense nothingness becomes a somethingness, and all understanding of Buddhism is made impossible.

We have, however, to guard ourselves against making the Absolute dualistically transcend this dual world of individualities. Unless such polarisation is avoided, the Kegon philosophy can never be understood, for the intellectual world of distinction gains its meaning only when it is related to the spiritual world of non-distinction. The world is, as it were, double-decked, intellectual and spiritual, and these are both distinct and non-distinct. Distinction is an awkward term, but it is the best way of expressing the idea repeated in the Prajna Sutras. Form is Void and the Void is Form.

This idea of the interpenetration of the Absolute and individuals, of one and all, totality and individuality, is generally explained by an analogy.

Each wave is a part of the ocean, but the ocean cannot exist apart from the waves. The waves are not the ocean, but we cannot speak of the ocean apart from the waves, not of the waves apart from the ocean. Conceptually they are distinct, but in actuality the waves are the ocean and the ocean is the waves. The ocean of non-distinction expresses itself in the waves of distinction, and distinction is possible only in the ocean of non-distinction. We are apt to consider the waves apart from the ocean, and forget the ocean, or to take the ocean alone as reality and ignore the waves, and this logical confusion ends in a tragedy of misunderstanding. In a similar way, the doctrine of interpenetration upholds the individual's actuality, and at the same time acknowledges the realm of the Absolute.

The oriented mind, however, was not satisfied with this doctrine of interpenetration. It wanted to go one step further, and the result was to revert to this world of individuals alone, although it meant in a way reverting to the world of sense. Keron therefore developed the notion of Jiji-mu-ge, wherein takes place the interpenetration in its perfect form. The principle may be formulated in four stages as follows. First, each individual embraces the all, and enters into the all. Secondly, the all embraces each individual and enters into each individual. Thirdly, each individual embraces itself, and enters into itself, and fourthly, the all embraces itself and enters into itself.

To explain this conception, Keron uses the

analogy of ten mirrors, placed in the zenith, the nadir and at the eight points of the compass. Each mirror reflects the other nine, individually and together. Each mirror, containing all these reflections individually and together, is also reflected in all the other nine mirrors, and each of these is reflected again in the original mirror. In this conception of interpenetration or reflection, it will be noted that there is no reference to the Absolute, or to any transcending reality. The world of everyday is taken in its entirety, and the world of multiplicity is affirmed. This may be called a form of radical empiricism, but note that there is a fourth stage after the preceding three. This sense world is restored, though it is not the same as that which existed before.

Now there are two forms of intuition, intellectual and spiritual; and the latter is needed to understand the Kegon world conception of Jiji-mu-ge. But before we can realise this Kegon conception in its full significance, another is needed. So far we have confined ourselves to a spatial interpretation of the Dharma-loka, but loka also exists in terms of time. This loka is not static but dynamic, and there is a constant interplay between individual realities. Where great Wisdom is emphasised, great Compassion is apt to be overlooked. The moving power in the world of Jiji-mu-ge is the great Compassionate Heart by which we expand into and become all other selves; that is to say, our own self is a self only to the extent that it disappears into all other selves. Thus does the



Mahayana depict Dharma-loka, and this perfect state of interpenetration is strongly emphasised when the Buddhist doctrine of compassion is worked out into experience. In the sense world there is a need for regulation, and each has to fulfil his duty in his own place, but in the spiritual world no such sense of obligation obtains. There is no self-sacrifice, no giving of oneself to others, for what appears such would be, so far as the agent himself is concerned, like cutting the spring breeze in two in the shadow of the lightning. In such a state no trace is left, no distinctions remain, and one moves from one part of the whole to another without hindrance. As the Buddhist would say, "When I am hungry, I eat, and if I don't want to eat I refrain from eating." There is no artificial effort here, no moral restraint or striving, for the spirit is perfectly free when working on the plane of no moral choice, of no intellectual distinctions.

This condition is well illustrated by a Zen story. The Zen Master Bokuzu, of the late T'ang Dynasty, had a disciple called Ō, who was a high government official. One day the disciple was late in arriving, and the Master asked him why. He replied, "I have been watching a polo match." The Master asked him, "Are the men tired?" The official answered, "Yes." The Master asked, "Are the horses tired?" and the official answered, "Yes." Then the Master asked, "Is this wooden post here tired?" and the official could not answer. That night he could not sleep, yet towards morning the answer dawned on him. He hurried back to the Mas-

ter and said, "I understand." Again the Master asked, "Is this post tired?" and the official answered, "Yes!" The Master nodded and smiled. A Master of the Sung Dynasty, commenting on this story, pointed out that unless the post was tired too there could be no tiredness.

The Kegon doctrine of interpenetration must be intuitively understood if we are to understand this story and the Master's comment on it. For interpenetration is not an intellectual experience, but comes directly from the spirit, manifesting itself as a great Compassionate Heart. Pure Land Buddhists personify this manifestation and call it Amida: other Buddhist names are Avalokita and Kwan-non. Amida vowed that he would not attain enlightenment until by his enlightenment all sentient beings were also enlightened, and as he had attained it in the infinite past it follows that we are enlightened already. When this is interpreted intellectually it is absurd, for Amida is here conceived as an individual reality, and as such is different from myself. How, then could his enlightenment affect me? But when the spiritual world has been attained we know that his vow has already been realised in us, and we are enlightened individuals. My attainment of enlightenment assumes others' enlightenment, and hence the saying that when one individual attains enlightenment on earth a lotus flower unfolds in the Pure Land to provide a seat for him. The Pure Land is a spiritual world, and this is a physical world, but the two are interfused, and what takes place in one is re-

flected in the other. The spiritual world of non-distinction and the sense-world of distinction are found thus to be one.

As long as we remain in the realm of dualistic logic this world of Jiji-mu-ge, controlled by the great Compassion, will be unintelligible, and as a result we shall encounter all manner of suffering in our daily life. We Japanese have for the last ten years been groaning under the misguided principles of totalitarianism and individualism, which are alike inimical to Jiji-mu-ge, for both lack a true understanding of Compassion. Even modern science may be a misery to mankind unless this great Compassion is understood. Much of the friction existing between nations comes from a lack of understanding and applying this great Compassion, while even democracy, of which we in Japan have lately heard so much, must, if it is to succeed, be founded upon it. However much of legalism and the technical arrangements of economy and industry are used to make it work as smoothly as possible, so long as the great heart of Compassion is missing there will always be some measure of unease, a lack of spiritual lubrication, as it were, among the people.

Buddhists have personified this great spirit of Compassion, and many Buddhist images are meant to represent as many aspects of it. Two of the most popular of these in Japan are Amida and Kwanon, both being regarded as saviours of mankind. Amida is famed for his forty-eight "Original Vows," while Kwannon manifests himself in thirty-three



different forms, some of them female, or in whatever form he may be sought. Some of Amida's forty-eight Vows are out of relation with modern life, but the common theme is to save all sentient beings from the sufferings which ensue from intellectual discrimination, which is in turn the cause of passion, selfish desire and karmic hindrances. When the self is asserted, and that which is above self neglected, i.e., when the world of individualism is emphasised at the cost of the higher self, the whole becomes involved in misery, the world from which Amida wants to save us by leading us to a realisation of the spiritual life. When, on the other hand, the absolute is over-emphasised, individualism is effaced, and the so-called sameness aspect throws us all into confusion. Some ask, is it not enough to stay in this world of individuals? Where is the need to move into a realm of non-distinction? The moral world is quite sufficient, and there is no need to talk of religion or salvation. But those who talk in this way fail to realise that ethics alone can never give full satisfaction to the spirit. Most of us are not conscious of this spiritual life, for it is hidden under so many layers of intellection that it is hard to find. But in fact it is working all the time through the layers of intellection, and just as we are not ordinarily conscious of the existence of air, so we are apt to overlook the existence and reality of spirit in our ordinary experience. But when we meet with happenings incompatible with our selfish desires we are baffled, and realise the feebleness of human aspiration.

This is the time when spirit asserts itself, and forces us to look beyond mere intellectuality. Even when suffering is not so keenly experienced, we find an aspiration deep in our minds which whispers to be heard. Some are sensitive enough to listen, but the karma of some is too heavy to be lifted easily. Even when we listen to this "still small voice" we may not realise at once what it means, though once we have learned to listen to it we shall sooner or later learn its full significance. This is in one way an allurements, yet in another way it is a threat, for we are forced by a power stronger than ourselves to choose between the self and the not-self. Those who live on the plane of discrimination and ethics may remain indifferent, but those who have never experienced a spiritual awakening will always be difficult to interest in a higher plane. For religion never grows from ethics and logic; it is the latter which emerge from religion. Even when religion and ethics are talking of the same thing they are moving in the world of spirit and the intellect respectively. Both may refrain from evil, but in the moral man there is a feeling of constraint, whereas the spiritual man moves naturally, showing no trace of conflict or the need of choice. Amida Buddha wakens us from this life of choosing and constraint and this awakening to the presence of Amida is a self-awakening to the spiritual life and seeing into the world of Jiji-mu-ge. This is the beginning of the Buddhist or religious life, as distinct from the life of self-righteousness.

There is an old Chinese song which runs,

When the sun rises I work in the fields;

When the sun sets I rest.

I dig a well and I drink;

I till the soil and I eat.

What has the Imperial Power to do with me?

According to Chinese history, the period of Yao was an ideal age, for the people were not conscious of political restraint. Everything went on as smoothly as the growth of a plant. But from the Buddhist point of view this Arhat life is not enough, for we do not live unto ourselves and we must think of others. The Bodhisattva, seeing misery around him, can never be content until these sufferers have reached the same plane as his own. We are always aspiring for Utopias, but it is in the nature of Utopias that they cannot be realised on this earth. In this sense Amida's Vows are eternal. He knows that there are some who will never reach a full realisation of the spirit, for it is the very nature of existence that it drags along a certain residue of discrimination. Yet it is because of this residue of distinction that spiritual activity never ceases. All the Bodhisattva's Vows are therefore purposeless, and in the same way the Buddhist life is purposeless. Some may call this purposeless life merely animal, but from the spiritual point of view the divine or higher life is also purposeless. There is truth in Voltaire's saying, that we need not trouble about salvation, for that is God's business, and if we are content with this statement there will be no spiritual disquietude. We need to see



God face to face, that we may live in each other. There is need for an immediate communication, and this also in a way is Jiji-mu-ge. In Christianity self is non-assertive, and God stands above and beside the self. There is always a sharp distinction between the two, and the two are never merged. If there is merging it takes the form of merging the self in God, and God never merges Himself in the Self. There is no mutuality between the two. In this sense Christianity is thoroughly dualistic, whereas in Buddhism God stands on the same level as man. God becomes man and man becomes God. Christians may think that this reflects on the dignity of God, but Buddhism asserts not only the merging but the distinction retained, for merging does not efface distinction. God and man are distinct yet mutually merged. Thus Buddhist mysticism, if it is a form of mysticism, is not the same as Christianity in its experience of the mystic union. "Knock and it shall be opened unto you" has its equivalent in Buddhism, though with a difference. Says Kwannon, "Seek and there will be a response," but the response does not come from above but from those fellow-beings of the seeker who are in sympathy.

In the Kwannon Sutra we find repeatedly the phrase, "To think of the power of Kwannon," yet this thinking does not mean merely to call Kwannon to memory, but to seek him deep in our own being. In fact Kwannon is not living outside the seeker but within, and the seeker endeavours to reach Kwannon in the depths of his own being.

But though we speak of seeking Kwannon in the depths of our own being, this does not mean that he lives within us, for when the seeker digs deep enough he will find that he has got out of himself, and is now in Kwannon. In other words, he has ceased to be himself, and when he finds Kwannon, Kwannon will not be in him but he in Kwannon. This is the true meaning of thinking of Kwannon, and he who thinks in this way is no longer living life in the intellect, but living it in Kwannon and he in him. In other words, he is no longer living unto himself but with and in someone above him. From this point of view the life so lived is purposeless. If God has a secret purpose to accomplish he will be bound by that purpose, and his life to that extent constrained and limited. Yet this lack of purpose is not to be confused with licence. As I have repeatedly said in this lecture, distinction is as much to be emphasised as non-distinction, for individuality is never ignored in Buddhism. In order to reach the spirit the intellect is for a while denied, but as soon as the spirit has been reached the intellect works through it, and finds thereafter its proper place and function. In this way life is purposeless and at the same time purposeful, which is distinction and non-distinction too.

It is in this sense that the Old Chinese poem I quoted is to be understood. The spontaneous life of the poet, as nature made it, is genuine and complete, and altogether beautiful. In another Chinese poem we read,

My nap was so deep  
I never heard the passing shower,  
When I woke  
I found the air in the room refreshed.

From this point of view the making of vows, the offering of prayers, the working for salvation are all to no purpose. In spite of them there is suffering for all sentient beings, and Gods and Bodhisattvas are found to be shedding tears of compassion for mankind. On the one hand purposelessness and on other eternal striving; this problem will never be solved on the plane of intellectual distinction, but when it ceases to be a contradiction we see the dawn of the spiritual life. In the Lotus Sutra, Sakya Muni is said to have attained his Enlightenment in the infinite past, yet at the same time he declares this triple world to be his home, and all men to be his children. And in the Lankavatara Sutra we read that Prajna, Dai Chi, transcends the dualism of being and not-being. Yet the great heart of Compassion is moved. In the Vimalakirti Sutra the sick man says, "I am sick because all beings are sick." This self-contradiction is found along with and in self-identification, because from the spiritual point of view contradiction is identification and identification is contradiction. To experience this is the spiritual life. The one is many and the many is one; Prajna is Karuna and Karuna, Prajna. And to understand this is spiritual awakening. In Japanese Buddhism Zen represents the Prajna phase of the Mahayana, and the Pure Land claims to represent the Karuna



phase. Zen is apt to emphasise the Arhat ideal and Jodo the Bodhisattva ideal. Zen is closely related to what is known as nature mysticism, while Pure Land moves among mankind, among ignorant, Karma-laden sentient beings. Zen developed in China, yet lives in Japan in the daily life of the people, while the Pure Land School developed in Japan from the teachings of Honen and Shinran, who may be regarded as one personality. Pure Land is supposed to appeal more to the masses, but from a certain point of view its teaching goes very deep, with its friendliness to all forms of life as compared with the greater aloofness of Zen.

Shomatsu, a Shin devotee noted for his spirituality, once visited a Buddhist temple in the country, and as soon as he entered the main Hall where Amida was enshrined proceeded to stretch himself out before the Shrine and make himself comfortable. Asked by a friend why he was so lacking in respect for Amida, he said, "I am back in my parents' home, and you who make that kind of remark must be only a step-child," an attitude of mind which reminds one of a child asleep at its mother's breast. He seemed so happy in the embrace of the Great Compassionate One that he did not realise that he was still in the world of tribulation.

Again, when the same Shin devotee was returning home to Stukoku from Kyoto, he had to cross an arm of the sea. While in the sailing boat with his companions a storm arose, and so fierce was the sea that it seemed that the boat would sink.

The others lost their all-important faith in the Nembutsu and invoked the aid of Kōmpira, the god of the sea. Only Shōmatsu slept on until his companions waked him to ask him how he could sleep in the face of such calamity. "Are we still on earth (sahaloka)?" asked Shōmatsu, for it was a matter of indifference to him whether he was in this world or the next.

To express this attitude in terms of Zen, Tao is our everyday thought, and everyday thought here means to live on the plane of spirit, which is yet not separate from the intellectual life. To the mind of Shōmatsu the Pure Land was not somewhere beyond this world, but here. His life in this world was life in the Pure Land, where the sea is always calm and boats are steady. In the midst of turmoil, therefore, he had no cause to be afraid. When he was sleepy he slept. When he wanted to sit up he sat up. When the boat was tossed up and down, he too was tossed up and down, for he identified himself with the turmoil, and accepted whatever came as though unconcerned with consequences. Even in the rising waves he felt the loving arms of the great Compassionate One, and he slept in the boat even as he laid himself down before the image of Amida. This consciousness of the embracing arms of Amida meant that his everyday thought was never disturbed by outward circumstances.

On another occasion, when he had been working in the rice fields and was tired, he came home to rest. When he felt a cool refreshing breeze he

thought of the Amida in his shrine. He therefore took it out and set it beside him, saying, "You too shall enjoy the breeze." This may seem an extraordinary act, but in terms of pure feeling everything which needs one's care has life, just as a child makes a living being out of a doll. In the same way we read in a Chinese story of a son who on a stormy night lay on his father's tomb, covering it from the rain with his body. Yet in this world of pure feeling there is no consciousness of a process of personification. It is only the intellect which makes the distinction between animate and inanimate, sentient and non-sentient. From the spiritual point of view all is alive, and the object of affectionate regard. Nor is this a case of symbolism, but a taking of actualities as actualities, for this is the life of Jiji-mu-ge and Buddhist experience.

In concluding this lecture I want to refer to our social life, for the whole universe is regulated by Jiji-mu-ge. In society each individual remains an individual, and his rights must never be violated. At the same time each must give up certain rights of his own for the welfare of the community. In exchange, the community looks after him, but never interferes with his freedom of thought. In this way the whole life of a community should be based on the Buddhist doctrine of Great Compassion, and the application of this doctrine would, in my belief, solve most of the problems now demanding solution. When Jiji-mu-ge is politically translated there is a true democracy.

In Buddhism God is immanent in his being,

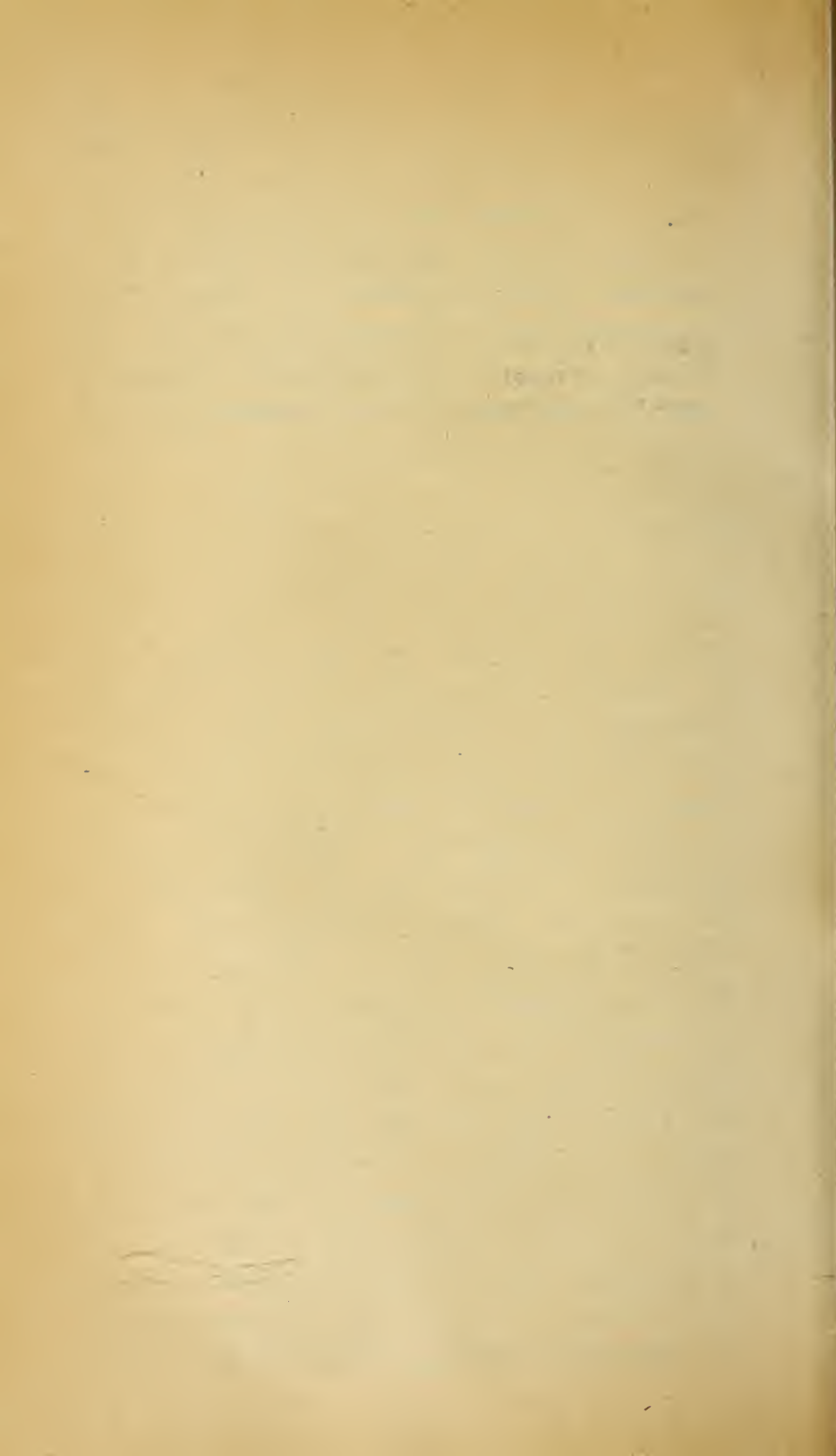


while Christianity cherishes a transcendental God. But so long as we retain a one-sided way of thought, this transcendental God will never satisfy. We want God working immanently, but if he is only immanent we shall crave for a transcendental God as well. Christianity conceives God as transcendent, without neglecting his immanent existence, while Buddhism conceives God, first as immanent, yet without forgetting his transcendental nature as well. In Christianity God is transcendental immanence: in Buddhism God is conceived as immanently transcendental. According as emphasis is placed on one or the other, each works out in its own way, and I believe that because Buddhism emphasises its immanent conception of God its devotees should study its transcendentalism, and that Christianity would do well to emphasise God's immanence. For there is no reason why the two should not work together in harmony.

A Zen Master was asked whether he would go to the Pure Land after his death, as a reward for his high moral life on earth. "At least I am sure," said the questioner, "that you will never go to hell." "On the contrary," said the Master, "I shall be the first to go to hell, for if I do not go to hell who will help people like you when they arrive?" For the first thing required of a Buddhist is to forget self and to work for others. This is the reason for all attempts at self-perfection, that one wants thereby to help others, but to be able to help others one must train oneself to that end, and this is the essence of the great Compassion. Yet perfection

in helpfulness is only reached when the helping has become unconscious. So long as one is conscious of helping others this very consciousness interferes with the flow of the great Compassion, and only when Compassion flows while drinking tea and walking in the street will even drinking tea and walking in the street be the actions of the great Buddha heart of the All-Compassionate One.

<sup>1</sup>In this case the Chinese character is Li.





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# D.T. SUZUKI

## WHAT IS ZEN?

"As far as Zen is concerned Suzuki was the apostle of the West...The fact that Zen has now become a household word in the English-speaking world is almost entirely due to him."

—Times Literary Supplement

"You ask, 'What is Zen?'

"I answer, 'Zen is that which makes you ask the question, because the answer is where the question arises. The answerer is no other than the questioner himself.'

" 'Do you then mean that I am Zen itself?'

" 'Exactly. When you ask what Zen is, you are asking who you are, what your self is. It is for this reason that the Zen masters often tell you not to ask where the donkey is when you are right on it, or not to seek for another head when yours has been on your shoulders ever since you were born. It is the height of stupidity to ask what your self is when it is this self that makes you ask the question.' "

—from the Book

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