

Zen hyakudai

“One Hundred Zen Topics”

PART I

SUZUKI DAISETZ

Foreword

OF THE OCCASIONAL note or two jotted down as it came to mind, quite a number have collected of those which were published. If left as such, they would be scattered, so following the advice of a friend, I have brought them together in one volume. Thus this book came into being. In compiling this work, some emendments have been made and at places new material added. I thought of ordering the entries in some way but at present I haven't the spare time.

It is felt that there is something or other Eastern at the bottom of the flow of Zen thought. This “feeling” underlies our everyday life. When this “feeling” is rendered into a framework of philosophical thought, there can be brought to expression something able to move the Western peoples, not to mention the Eastern peoples. By this means, Westerners can possibly leap beyond the pale of their own thoughts in which they have been deadlocked and through it come to develop something altogether new. This I firmly believe.

The fact is, this book compiled from notes at random, is based on the abovementioned idea. I wish to point out that these notes were not written impromptu.

“One Hundred Zen Topics” does not mean there are exactly one hundred entries. This collection should be regarded as notes about Zen written down as the thoughts occurred to me.

Daisetz

Yafūryū Hermitage, 1951

* *Zen hyakudai* 禅百題 [“One Hundred Zen Topics”], Suzuki Daisetz Zenshū v (Matsugaoka Library, 1955), pp. 1, 13–22. We wish to thank the Matsugaoka Library in Kamakura for permission to use it here. Slight editorial revisions have been made. All footnotes are by the translators. [We wish to thank Professor K. Nishitani for his assistance in preparing the manuscript—*Trans.*]

Zen and everyday life

It was truly to the advantage of Japanese Buddhism that Zen had to come by way to China to Japan. Arriving during the Nara-Heian period, the Buddha Dharma provided for our ancestors a weal which, intellectually, artistically, and in terms of culture in general, was immense. Had it not been for the Buddha Dharma, the then immature faculty of thinking of the Japanese might have remained as such, undeveloped. The Buddha Dharma, newly emerged in the Kamakura period, helped develop in our religious consciousness a new direction: it taught us the true meaning of Amida's compassionate vow. However, were it not for Zen, we could not have come to gain fully—that is to say, in actual life—the experience of the truth that the things done daily are in themselves Buddha Dharma.

While it is taught in the Lotus Sutra that administering worldly affairs, keeping livestock, and so on, are not against the Buddha Dharma, this was not actualized by Japanese Buddhists before the advent of Zen. The Buddha Dharma had yet to divest itself of the ways of the Indian people. It was only among the Chinese people that Zen could ever have come to be established.

In the gatha of layman P'ang (*d.* 808) it says,

How wondrously supernatural,
And how miraculous this!
I draw water, and I carry fuel!¹

and this the Zen man must personally implement in actuality. Someone once asked the master Nan-chüan (*d.* 835), "After you die, where will you go?" Nan-chüan without a moment's thought said, "Why, I am to be reborn a water buffalo to the house of the parishioner by the gate." Speaking neither of Pure Land, nor heaven, nor hell, he would be born into the parishioner's house as a water buffalo (even as a horse would do), to toil mightily tilling fields or drawing carts, if only in an effort to repay some of the kindness shown him. This sentiment of Nan-chüan clearly reflects the atmosphere of the Zen world of his day. Here is manifested the Chinese mentality of never being detached from the great Earth, in contrast to the self-complacent transcendentalism of Indian meditation.

¹ Translation by D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* II, p. 319 (hereafter EZB).

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Muscular work and thought

When Gandhi advocates the handwheel for spinning, it implies the meaning of working against the mechanization of industry in modern civilization. The psychological basis, however, is found in this man's not wishing to be separated from the meaningfulness of direct muscular exertion. The meaning of this lies in never becoming distant from one's intercourse with the great earth. But whether a man falls down or stands up, he cannot be separated from the surface of the great earth. The spirit of the Chinese people—their toughness, practicality, composure, and sense of eternal nature—actually derives from their never forgetting always to be *there where they are*. While India sought through yogic contemplation to embrace eternity, working in eternity for the Chinese lay in the "felling of trees, tilling the cleared land, and burning the fields to prepare the soil for sowing."² These two elements are found interwoven in the spiritual training of Zen as it exists today among us, the Japanese people.

If Zen were but being hit with a stick or shouting "*Kwatz!*" or sitting-only, it is not likely to have had any contact with our lives. It was fortunate for us that, as Zen at all times treads firmly the great earth, we did not find ourselves to be like paper balloons ever drifting giddily on the rise.

But again, it will not do to be "stuck" on the great earth without understanding what it means to gaze up at the great sky. Thus in Zen one needs a background of thought or a source of insight, so to speak. For example, in "Here we sow the fields and harvest the rice to eat," it seems there is no way of going beyond the mere life of farmers. However, one should not fail to see the insight pervading the words "Then what is that which you call the three worlds?" The story behind this was as follows:

A Zen master named Ti-ts'ang Kuei-ch'en (d., 930) was in the fields using a trowel to do some weeding or to plant shoots, when a monk on pilgrimage appeared. The master called out, "Where have you come from?" The answer was, "I come from the south." So master Ch'en asked, "How is the Zen teaching in the south?" The monk replied, "A veritable din of deliberation!"—that is, Zen discussion by means of mondo deliberation was in full flourish. Master Ch'en said, "Perhaps that isn't bad. But here, we tend the fields, harvest the rice, mill it, cook it and eat it together. This way I think is better."

² An idiomatic phrase from the *Tung Annals*, describing the labor of primitive agriculture. Such quotations appear occasionally in Zen works.

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This probably was difficult for the monk to grasp. He asked, "What then becomes of the three worlds?" In other words, "As the work of improving the lot of people is indispensable, what do you think about the methods of rescuing those beings, including myself, who are transmigrating through the three worlds of suffering and delusion?"

There was a way of thinking in master Ch'en; there was deep insight. There was open to him a profound religious dimension to which he had penetrated. "What is this you call the 'three worlds'?" he said. "Wherever could this thing be you speak of?"

Only when we see this in the light of his farming experiences can we come to understand what principle is working in his everyday life. As long as we too are inhabitants of this Land of Abundant Ears of Rice,³ we should not forget the labor of clearing lands for cultivation, of planting groves of trees, of tending vegetables and fruit, and of tilling fields to harvest rice.⁴ At the same time, we should not forget that there must also be thought and insight.

The Zen master Fa-jung (*d.* 657) of Mt. Niu-t'ou of the Sui dynasty is the founder of the so-called Oxhead Zen line. Although he penetrated greatly in the contemplation on emptiness of the *prajñā-parāmitā*, his realization did not fall to rest one-sidedly on "emptiness only"; he grasped emptiness without merely dwelling in its confirmation. He worked emptiness. He studied emptiness. ("Study" here does not mean "to learn" but rather "to work actively.") As his followers grew numerous, their provisions came to be insufficient. So they descended from the mountain to do *takuhatsu*, religious mendicancy, in the city of Tan-yang which was eighty *li* distant. (Even in Japanese measure, this has to be a good deal more than a few *ri*.) Master Fa-jung took part in this practice as well and returned with a load of rice on his shoulder. The records say that it weighed one *koku* five *to*, and what this is in Japanese measure I have no idea. Nor am I sure whether Fa-jung carried this alone, as stated in some reports. In any case, it is said of him that, leaving mornings to return evenings to the monastery, not failing to procure provisions for twice daily meals, he managed the sustenance of three hundred monks: what a wonderful story, I must say!

³ *Mizuko no kuni* 瑞穂の國. A rhetorical name for Japan which appears in the *Nihon-shoki* (The Chronicle of Japan).

⁴ Here the author uses Chinese idioms from classical literature.

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Mechanized culture and Zen

Certainly the Sui-T'ang era cannot be said to be one and the same with the world of today. The structure of society and the development of civilization, especially in terms of the progress of science, machinery, and economic systems, are such that the modern world, compared with the world of a thousand years ago, could even be said to be an altogether different world. However, as far as the nature of man is concerned, going back one thousand, or two, or three thousand years, not much has changed. Man, as always, is nothing but the crystallization of greed, anger, and stupidity. So too, in regard to the means of spiritual cultivation, we can say that no difference exists between the Sui-T'ang era and the present day. Or rather, in some respects, it can be said that a complex of difficulties have since come to be added.

The most fundamental of difficulties lies in the fact that modern life shows an uncontrollable tendency towards aloofness from the great earth. The problem is how to rid ourselves of the ever-tightening shackles of mechanized culture that bind modern man. This is the overwhelming dilemma confronting us today.

However, we can in no way find ourselves separate from the great earth. An aeroplane, without an airfield, is unable to soar into the sky. And if it falls, it most certainly falls to the great earth. A wireless message sent through the sky as well cannot function without the great earth. Of course, the benefit which we do derive from relying on mechanized culture, the benefit in practical life, is truly immeasurable. Owing to this, however, we have come to be part of the machinery we employ; that is, we wobble and waver in going through the paces of our everyday life, as if our feet can find no sure footing on the earth.

What kind of counter-measure does Zen want to take against this modern life? It is impossible to impede the advance of mechanized culture and scientific research, nor is it necessary to do so. There has arrived only that which eventually had to arrive. We ought only to take precaution to allay as much as possible the vicious effects which must necessarily arise. Or more positively, what will be the contribution of Zen toward elevating the original meaning of human life? I feel we ought to think about this.

The great earth and Zen

The industrialization of farms cannot be stopped, nor can the mechaniza-

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tion of the manual arts be prevented. Human life in the future cannot help but become increasingly estranged from the great earth. However, if we are not to find ourselves estranged from the great earth, what ought we to do?

To be unable to be separate from the great earth means to be unable to deny that which we call our "body." Even if the mind is thought of as something existing outside of the body—while that is at variance with fact—it still requires the body as a mediator. The mind is not an independent being which is real in itself; it is but a conditional being on the plane of conception. Although the body is equally a conditional being, it must be regarded, after all, as an individual entity standing opposite to other individual entities of various kinds. And among these, that which has the most intimate relationship with the individual entity of the body in particular, is the great earth.

Granted that there is yet much to be considered in regards to the education of youth, I think that in the re-education of adults, Zen as an outward discipline should be approached through the practicing of zazen. If possible, sitting crosslegged for some time in a meditation hall in a quiet forest glade or deep in the mountains should prove the most effective. Zazen means being in contact with the great earth. Zazen is the way of "sitting" with the greatest stability. To sit in a chair with both feet dangling or to stand with both feet merely placed on the ground, does not give the stability and composure which zazen affords. Yet is not this stability and composure the very characteristic essential to the great earth?

To take a hoe in both hands and cultivate the soil means to enter into an interaction with the great earth, materially and activity-wise. The experience of realizing through zazen the tranquil and composed state of mind can be called a spiritual or inner intermingling with the great earth.

Machines and science are apt to stimulate our intellect and our inclination to certain behaviour at the expense of our peace of mind. This we should in every way endeavour to restore. It must be said that in this respect the practice of zazen holds great meaning.

Zazen

Zazen as an outward discipline is a therapy for the blight of the modern age. A true therapy must arise from within. To the extent that the religious transformation of our inner life is not brought to perfection, the afflictions

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plaguing modern man can never be dispelled. The fact that modern men have become remote from the great earth comes after all from their inner life being so wobbly and unsettled that a thorough frivolity has ensued. Here, what comprises the very character of the great earth—stability, peacefulness, stillness, generosity, and relaxation—is lost, leaving no trace. As long as this is not recovered, I feel that man's life cannot help but develop the symptoms of illness: hot head, cold feet. Among modern men, there are none who are not patients of this kind. The cause of this is no other than the notion of the supremacy of the intellect.

The progress of science and the flood of machines may well be given a grand welcome. But when this leads to an overvaluation of the intellect and man's life makes a mad dash conceptually, his head swells, his feet grow unsteady, and it is as if his stomach sticks to his back. In losing the stability of his body as a whole, it is inevitable that man's inner life spoils. It is for this reason that we find in zazen the only avenue of rescue from this illness.

It is necessary to know well the inwardness of zazen. It is not only in its outward form that zazen is in close affinity with the great earth. We can say that the great earth and the phenomenal body have been attributed nothing more than symbolic meaning. The truth rather is this: that the inner dimension of each of these "individual" entities or "individual" events implies in itself one true reality and it is this truth we should penetrate to in zazen. For this reason, one should not see zazen from its outward manifestation. As the Zen master Dōgen says, "Zazen is the dharma-gate to peace." Zazen is not appreciated only in its form of sitting crosslegged on a cushion. Peace is the character of the great earth. At the moment one attains to the peace of the great earth, for the first time man fulfils his religious nature, reposing himself there wherein he should originally have reposed. Like a stone tossed into the air, man cannot help but fall to rest on the earth.

Body and mind

When I spoke above of the physical body and the spirit, or what have been called body (*rūpa*) and mind (*citta*), they were distinguished as though they were particular entities separate from one another. In reality, "body" and "mind" are abstractions, and do not exist in particular as individual entities. It is only that to treat them as such is of practical convenience

in general conversation, and this has been assumed since ancient times. To say this is the body and that is the mind, viewing in them separate particular substances, is merely the result of thinking yet to go deep enough. Every one of us remains yet unawakened from this delusive dream of such duration that it could be said to be beginningless kalpas in time.

In the fact of our experience itself, there is no body or mind, there is no subject or object, there is no self or not-self. These dualities are all the result of reflection, a reconstruction, a polarization. The sheer fact of experience as-it-is can only be called discrimination of non-discrimination, non-discrimination of discrimination. Insofar as *experience* is spoken of, there must be something to be experienced. But the moment we say *experience*, a discriminative function is already present. We must pinpoint the spot from which this discriminative function issues. But that point of issuance is "abiding of non-abiding"; it is therefore an issuance of non-issuance. It is the coming-and-going which does not come and go. This is called the discrimination of non-discrimination, or "always to know fully." This knowing is not discriminative knowledge, but knowing of non-knowing, that is, *prajñā*. Man's discriminative knowledge should be reduced once to this non-discrimination of fundamental *prajñā*. Through that reduction we can understand what is meant by discrimination. However, the reduction to non-discrimination does not mean any *a priori* in terms of logic or any postulate. Here, discrimination as such is non-discrimination. While the term "reduction" may suggest a process occurring over a certain interval of time, there is no time in the discrimination of non-discrimination. It is one and the same time. In one thought-instant it is accomplished. That is also what was called "no distinction from mind to mind."³ Again it is expressed by the formula, "one *qua* many, many *qua* one." We can assume as above that "one" is symbolized by the great earth, and many by the individual bodies.

The final aim of zazen is to gain experience of the Dharma stated above.

³ This phrase means that there is no difference between the mind of one thought-instant 念 (*ann*) and the mind of the next 念. It derives from the writing of the Third Patriarch Seng-ts'an 僧璨 (*d.* 606), entitled *Hsin-hsin-ming* 信心銘 (On Believing in Mind) T.51.457. A translation of this work by Suzuki is found in *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, pp. 76-82.

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"Hey!" and "Yessir!"

To discourse on the actual nature of body and mind, to advocate their "non-duality" or their "distinct existences," has been the task of psychology since ancient times. This was dealt with as a problem of interest, not merely in scholarly pursuits but among learned men in general. Whether any final resolution has ever been attained or not is, of course, an open question. At any rate, Zen at all times dwells on the fact of experience itself, and it is from here that the Zen mondo springs.

Shih-shuang Ch'ing-chu (*d.* 888) was a man of the latter T'ang who revered as his master Tao-wu Yüan-chih (*d.* 835). A monk once asked him, "Tao-wu's skull is shining in golden colour, and when it is struck it gives a resonant sound like that of copperware. But where did he [Tao-wu] himself go?"⁴

Shih-shuang did not attempt any explanation. He simply said, "Hey!" and called the monk's name. The monk replied, "Yessir!" Shih-shuang immediately said, "You do not understand what I say. Get out!" What was it Shih-shuang said? He called the monk by name and the monk merely responded. As to the question, the response was nothing that we might have expressed through discrimination. Thus it seems quite unwarranted for him to say, "You do not understand. . . . Get out!"

This mondo is the same as the exchange between master Huang-po (*d.* 850?) and the lay official P'ai-hsiu (*d.* 870).⁷ From the outset it is irrelevant to determine in spatial terms where the "late master" went or the place "that man" was destined. We must first look at the fact of experience itself which is there before the discrimination of "this" or "that" arises; then for the first time a solution is obtained. For this reason the topic of this mondo is not something you hear from someone else and remember. It is something that you ought to perceive within your own awareness in that instant at which "Hey!" is answered by "Yessir!" Here you can thoroughly penetrate to the working of the knowledge of wondrous clarity, the knowledge of non-knowledge. Without separating yourself from it, the moment you recognize in seeing-hearing-perceiving-knowing⁸ that which does not belong to it, for the first time you under-

⁴ This mondo is presented in a different form in EZB II, p. 261, from which portions have here been quoted.

⁷ See EZB I, p. 304.

⁸ That is, empirical knowledge.

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stand what is called "mind" or "body" are abstractions. In the ultimate fact of experience, there is no subject or object, no "this" or "that"; distinctions that emerge emerge therefrom. They emerge and yet, at the same time, they do not emerge. Shih-shuang wanted to say, "Look there!" If we do not understand this then all the more must we do zazen.

A hundred bones and one thing

It is stated in the instruction of T'ien-i I-huai (d. 1060): "Take apart the hundred bones and the one thing eternally spiritual remains. The hundred bones disassembled all return to the earth. Where then is the one thing eternally spiritual to find repose?"

This in plain language means, "Where do we go when we die?" After the four elements disperse, if there is such a thing as the soul, where it may go is something that everyone asks about. Zen, too, has an answer.

Later, a monk asked Ch'in of Ch'ing-liang temple "Take apart the hundred bones and the one thing eternally spiritual remains. I wonder how far apart the hundred bones and one thing are from one another?"

Ch'in answered, "The hundred bones one thing, one thing the hundred bones."

Here again the excellence of expression in Chinese along with its quality of ambiguity is manifested to perfection. What sort of interrelation is there between the hundred bones and the one thing or one spirit? I think there are more than one or two ways of reading this phrase.

Does it mean, "The hundred bones and one thing, one thing and the hundred bones," so that both are simply being counted up as this and that in two different orders? If so counted, what meaning would be derived from it? Does this mean that plural entities, such as this and that, are to be taken as plural entities? Or could it be that, while leaving plural entities as such, within the fact itself of their being counted up, we see something above or with this and that, something which is not this and that?

If the phrase were read, "The hundred bones are one thing, one thing is the hundred bones," logically the meaning is clear. It can be understood as meaning "one *qua* many, many *qua* one." It can also be seen as what is commonly called pantheism. Read in that way, however, it is wholly prosaic, lacking poetic depth, and it somehow cannot come upon Zen essence.

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It can also be read, "Making a hundred bones one thing, making one thing a hundred bones." Although at points resembling the second reading above, in this case there is the element of movement involved, there being between the hundred bones and one thing not a mutual contiguity in terms of space but a mutual interpenetration in terms of time. Herein lies the link which brings the first reading to mind. The first case, however, exhibited neither mutual contiguity nor mutual interpenetration. Plural entities are simply left as plural entities and the interrelation seems to be left to the degree of refinement of the reader's understanding. Which of the two readings, then, is right?

In addition to the above three ways of reading, there are yet others:

Are a hundred bones one thing?

Is one thing a hundred bones?

One thing of a hundred bones,
A hundred bones of one thing.

When the hundred bones are one thing,
One thing is the hundred bones.

In a hundred bones there is one thing.
In one thing there are a hundred bones.

The hundred bones of one thing is
One thing of a hundred bones.

Still other readings are possible. But even these cannot be said to be without meaning. A suitable theoretical framework can, in any case, be attached. Which, then, is right?

At any rate, let us set aside the problem of right or wrong. If we leave the Chinese phrase to display its own excellence, its own superb and profound qualities, and at the same time are able to grasp in full Zen meaning, nothing can exceed this. Thus, the best way is to lay aside its Japanese renderings, read it straight, "The hundred bones one thing, one thing the hundred bones," and then entrust it to the understanding of each individual. Those who understand profoundly will partake profoundly, those superficially superficially. This is the way appropriate to writings of special signification such as these. It is also better that the Zen man leave it alone, like a staff cast down, without adding anything by way of commentary.

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To return to the beginning of this discussion, the classical reading, "Body and mind are of One Suchness, Outside the body there is no surplus," would in my words be, "Even though they appear on the field of conception and discrimination as two particular entities, body and mind should not be distinguished in any way whatever in the field of experiential fact."

In discourse it is very convenient to distinguish between the hundred bones (body) and the one thing (mind). So it is not only in the common world but also in rationalistic argument that we are apt to speak of body or of mind. But it is for this very reason that unnecessary doubts come to arise, causing confusion. For example, what becomes of us when we die? The body rots, but where does the mind go? Such doubts always arise because we err in the first step, and with such clouds of doubt piling one on another, it can hardly become clear.

Translated by Satō Taira and
Wayne Shigeto Yokoyama

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PART II

The sheer fact of Zen mondo

What is the purpose of a Zen mondo? It seeks within the daily routine of what we say and do to bring forth what is suggested by such phrases as "one is many, many is one," "the discrimination of non-discrimination," "the knowing of non-knowing, the non-knowing of knowing" or "empirical knowledge which, as such, is not empirical knowledge." It seeks to express the fact of Zen experience—the most fundamental, the most concrete of human experiences—via the most direct and effective of means.

It is already the outcome of reflection to refer to the fundamental fact of Zen experience by such phrases as "knowing of non-knowing." Zen people do not use such terms and ordinarily prefer plain, direct means of expression. This we can see in a mondo such as the following. The Zen master Tsung-yin (ca. 750) of Mt. San-chiao in T'an province, the direct Dharma disciple of Nan-yüeh Huai-jang (d. 744), once stated in formal lecture: "If we are to discuss this matter, even the raising of the eyebrows puts us out of the way."¹ Herein fundamental experience is expressed by the phrase "*this matter*." I think there is nothing more concrete than calling it "*This*." Whatever the designation might be it defines some

* The first part of this article appeared in *EB* xi, 1. The following selections are taken from *Zen hyakudai* (Tokyo, 1951), pp. 22-31. A few editorial changes have been made. Footnotes provided are by the translators.

¹ See *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind*, p. 90 (hereafter ZDNM).

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thing. In point of fact, however, even to say "This" already puts us out of the way. Therefore, Tsung-yin's words, "Even the raising of the eyebrows." He would say that even the smallest movement of the eyebrows is no good. It is already not this matter. "This matter" is something far more than "the raising of the eyebrows," however—man is so constituted that he feels he must somehow say something. It is characteristic of a Zen mondo that it makes man do his utmost to come to a realization and awareness of this basic contradiction in an actual experience. It is in active awareness that this contradiction dissolves. So a Zen monk named Ma-yu (*n.d.*) at that time leveled this remark at Tsung-yin: "We don't talk about the raising of the eyebrows; what do you mean by 'this matter'?" he asked. He plunges like a knife directly to the other's heart in order to bring "this matter" to realization here and now, stripped of all notions of it. Tsung-yin replied, "There, you are already out of the way." It would be impossible to go further than this in the realm of language or logic, and yet we are left with the feeling that something is still wanting. Ma-yu then started to upset the meditation chair on which the master sat; the master forthwith struck Ma-yu with his stick.

This is not simply the physical grappling between two people. Indeed, when the fact of basic Zen experience is to be brought forth by the most effective of means there is no difference between what one does physically or what one says verbally. There may be times when depending on the tip of the tongue one may think it possible to settle matters conceptually. In the action of one's body, there is something direct.

Living and learning

Nonetheless we must concede that even one's taking direct action needs some support from the tip of the tongue. Direct action by itself makes no sense. It is only with the background of the tip of the tongue that direct action as expressed by the phrases "to upset the meditation chair" and "to strike Ma-yu" finally fall into place. This is something that even Zen people should not forget.

The mondo between Tsung-yin and Ma-yu ends, after the master "struck" Ma-yu, with the words "Ma-yu was silent." Later, substituting a word for Ma-yu, Ch'ang-ch'ing (*d. 932*) said "lonesome." Either way touches the fundamental ground of Zen experience which is prior to the bifurcation of subject and object. "Silent" or "lonesome"

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directly points to the quintessence of non-discrimination. "Silent" is Ma-yu's attitude as described by a looker-on, and "lonesome" is the frank ascription added by Ch'ang-ch'ing. The conclusion here reached is that this matter is ultimately "silent" and "lonesome." It would be to no end to go beyond this.

No matter how basic one's Zen experience may be, in such cases some reflection has already come to be added and some interpretation made to apply. For man, who lives in society and yet does not merely follow the mass mind, the need for "explanations" inevitably arises. In explanations, the very thing does not there appear to move of itself, but rather there is something said *about* it. This is the "raising of the eyebrows." As it is already explanation to even say "this matter," it amounts to building a house atop a house if there is then a raising of the eyebrows. It is naturally in the grain of being human to reflect, to interpret, to explain; and in yet another sense, we must in every way endeavor to let *this matter* as such come *alive*—we must live *this matter*.

For this reason, while on the one hand we feel we must discriminate, discuss, and discourse on "this matter" with the tip of the tongue, on the other it is essential that we use the mode of expression which can effect a direct encounter with "this matter" in its unadorned bareness. The Zen mondo always places its greatest concern in this latter direction. Thus it is said that Zen is difficult to understand. Zen is difficult because it issues from *this matter* as such. Nonetheless those outside the sphere of Zen seek to reach *this matter* via explanation and interpretation. This is the point of divergence between the two. I have elsewhere written on Zen and sutra-reading;² that entire discourse could well be brought to benefit here. To try to enter Zen experience by sutra-reading is the approach of explanation. It cannot help but be conceptual. In contrast the Zen man endeavors to make the fact of experience emerge forth within the mondo.

The four elements (body) and Buddha-nature (mind)

Huai-yün (d. 815) of Chang-chin in Ching-pe prefecture was, like Tsung-yin, the direct Dharma disciple of Nan-yüeh. A monk one day asked him, "What is that called the Buddha-nature in this body of the Four Elements

² For example, entry 62, "Sutra-reading and thought," in *Zen hyakudai*, pp. 105-108.

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and Five Skandhas?"³ There is a great mistake in seeking the original Buddha-nature within the physical body composed of the four elements and five skandhas. Buddha-nature is not an individual entity but something conceptually formed *in proviso*. For this reason, to first see it as distinct from the body, a product composed of the four elements and five skandhas, and to then try to abstract it from out of that product, is to commit an error in terms of logic—a practice long common to the general populace as well as to some learned men. It is the task of the Zen man to rescue us from this error. Thus Huai-yün did not field the question in some commonplace way by giving comment or critique. He called the monk by name, "Hey, headmonk Yūan!" to which the monk immediately responded, "Yessir!" The master for the moment said nothing, and then concluded, "There is no Buddha-nature in you." This means, "Sorry, but despite your inquiry, the very Buddha-nature you ask about isn't in you."

What we call Buddha-nature does not exist as a separate entity within each of us. To say this is the body and this is Buddha-nature or mind does not mean that they actually exist as separate, individual entities. It is only a matter of convenience in real life that we speak of them as though they actually existed. We shouldn't think that something provisionally wrought from practical considerations actually exists as such. Reality manifests itself when we are aware of what calls "Hey!" and answers "Yessir!" In this awakening or direct encounter is Buddha-nature, the fact of fundamental Zen experience. It is totally mistaken for one to seek Buddha-nature herein as a separate entity. At all events, it is necessary for one to have an awakening. Without it, Buddha-nature cannot be said to exist. As a human being one should be aware of (directly encounter) what exists *as* what exists. When there is no awareness, existence is not existence: it is nothing. Thus the conclusion: "There is no Buddha-nature in you." Although it is already reflection to say even *this matter*, we must not forget that this reflection is the discrimination of non-discrimination. It is for this reason that Zen awareness is not self-consciousness in the psychological sense. Self-consciousness of the latter type is something constructed on the basis of discrimination and has yet to penetrate into the fact of Zen experience.

³ ZDNM, p. 95.

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The knowing of non-knowing

When I say that we must see the Buddha-nature in the very act of calling and answering, one is apt to think of it as self-consciousness in the psychological sense, as something within the realm of empirical knowledge. But Zen experience as such is the awareness prior to self-consciousness. It is thus the knowing of non-knowing, the discrimination of non-discrimination, and thus prior to psychology and the like. This point we should bear deep in mind.

In the reign of the T'ang emperor Hsien-tsung (806-821) a mondo took place between the Zen master Ta-i (*d.* 818) of E-hu and some other Dharma masters. The topic at that time was "Way." Whether Way or Buddha-nature or this matter, all point to the fact of basic Zen experience. To the query "What is the Way?" one Dharma master answered, "Knowing is the Way." Ta-i rejected this answer by saying, "The Way is neither knowable by wisdom, nor distinguishable by discrimination. How can knowing be the Way?" Then someone else stated, "Non-discrimination is the Way." Ta-i once again refuted this saying, "The Way is able to discriminate well the myriad facets of the Dharma, and yet remains unmoved in its first principle. How can non-discrimination be the Way?"

It is clear from this that Ta-i's standpoint is that the ultimate ground of actual experience is neither mere non-discrimination nor mere knowing (discrimination). Ta-i is quite right. This "knowing" is merely a matter of discrimination, that is, self-consciousness in the psychological sense. With it one can never give direct account of the fact of Zen experience. The next step, then, is to ask whether it is non-discrimination. My answer would be no. With non-discrimination the myriad and particular aspects of the Dharma cannot be discriminated. With total non-discrimination everything is pitchblack darkness. This cannot be said to accord with the fact of basic experience.

It is for this reason we speak of going beyond empirical knowledge *in* empirical knowledge by saying that ultimate Zen experience is found in the discrimination of non-discrimination, the non-discrimination of discrimination.

Knowing and working—Playing with the lion

By the use of such expressions as "discrimination of non-discrimination" or "knowing of non-knowing" the fact of Zen experience might be given only a logical cast, which neglects its working. "This matter" is knowing, yet since it is at the same time "working," what is essential for us to do is to know just what in our everyday life this working is. There is the saying: "Ordinary people of all vocations do not know they are using it every day."⁴ In point of fact "knowing of non-knowing" must be directly encountered in its working: working is knowing, knowing is working. Zen experience is originally such. "One is many, many is one" and "knowing is working, working is knowing"—these do nothing more than refer to the selfsame thing in two different ways. "Many" is not meant in a spatial or static sense but in its temporal, dynamic sense: "many" is working and "working" is none other than many. The following mondo has much to offer in this regard.

Yüeh-shan Wei-yen (*d.* 834) once asked his disciple Yün-yen T'an-sheng (*d.* 841): "I understand you know how to play with the lions. Am I correct?"

Yün-yen: "Yes, you are right."

Yüeh-shan: "How many lions can you play with?"

Yün-yen: "Six."

Here, the lion should be regarded as the mind, six referring to the six faculties or the mind working through the six senses. In Buddhism it is taught that there are six, not five, faculties. This is the link connecting what is outside the mind with what is inside. After hearing what Yün-yen had to say, Yüeh-shan remarked, "I also know how to play with the lions."

Yün-yen: "How many?"

Yüeh-shan: "Just one."

To which Yün-yen said, "One is six and six is one."⁵

"One is six and six is one" is the same as "one is many, many is one." However, it must be noted that while "one is six and six is one" is an expression of deep significance, more than that one should appreciate the subtle nature of the word "play." Play is the sheer fact of working.

⁴ A quotation from the I Ching.

⁵ *Studies in Zen*, p. 189 (hereafter SZ).

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Whether it is playing with one or playing with six, if we allow that they point to the selfsame thing, then knowing is working, working is knowing. We can say that the fact of Zen experience is a configuration of this sort. This dimension of our everyday life presents itself where there is found both knowing and working.

The anecdote of playing with the lion does not end here. It is taken up again by Kuei-shan (*d.* 853). Yün-yen later visits Kuei-shan, who asks, "I am told that you knew how to play with the lion when you were at Yüeh-shan. Is that right?"

Yün-yen: "That is right."

Kuei-shan goes on: "Do you play with it all the time? Or do you sometimes give it a rest?"

Yün-yen: "If I wish to play with it, I play; if I wish to give it a rest, I give it a rest."

Kuei-shan: "When it is at rest, where is it?"

Yün-yen: "At rest, at rest."⁶

This is one version of Yün-yen's playing with the lion. Yün-yen's answer, "At rest, at rest," to Kuei-shan's question, "When it is at rest, where is it?" is something that fully expresses the wonderfulness of Zen mondo. Were it only a matter of knowing or being, it would be static, spatial, "self-nature in its purity," and a preserving of oneness. Then the working aspect tends to be hidden, and there is danger of misinterpretation. Becoming conceptualized, aspects of living, moving, and playing are forgotten. This is a pitfall that thinkers since ancient times have unwittingly fallen into. This tendency to conceptualization has come to form an almost inseparable feature of Indian thinking and its way of expression. It is fortunate that Buddhism was transmitted by way of China where it was infused with the active disposition of the Chinese people. It was from this that the realm of spiritual experience peculiar to Zen Buddhism evolved, the blessings of which we Japanese have come to be favored with.

Kuei-shan: "When it is at rest, where is it?"

Yün-yen: "At rest, at rest."

This form of question and answer (*mondō*) could never have come forth outside of Zen Buddhism.

⁶ SZ, *ibid.*

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The monkey who reached in from the window

Hung-en (ca. 850) of Chung-i in Lang-chou was the disciple of Ma-tsu Tao-i (d. 788). The story "Playing with the lion" reminds me of the mondo held between him and Yang-shan Hui-chi (d. 883). Here it is not a lion but a monkey which is involved. The mondo opens with Yang-shan asking Chung-i, "How can one see into one's self-nature (*kenshō*)?" Chung-i responded:

"It's like a cage with six windows, and there is in it a monkey. When someone calls at the east window, 'O monkey, O monkey,' it answers. At the other windows the same response is obtained.⁷ That's how."

Having heard this, Yang-shan thanked him for his instruction, and said: "Your instructive simile is quite intelligible, but there is one thing I wish to be enlightened. If the monkey inside is asleep, tired out, what happens when the one outside wants to interview it?"

With this, master Chung-i stepped down from the straw seat where he was sitting, took hold of Yang-shan's hand and began to dance, saying, "O monkey, O monkey. My interview with you is finished."

Though it may be said that the discriminations of inside-outside, subject-object, body-mind, this-that, are possible only when reflection is made within the basic fact of non-discriminative Zen experience, it may further be asked how that reflection comes to arise. Such a question, however, is the sort of doubt which arises only after discrimination and reflection: no such discrimination can come of non-discrimination itself, for non-discrimination—while being discriminated and not being apart from discrimination—remains, as such, non-discrimination. To be tired, fall asleep, and take a rest, or to be wide awake and responsive to calls from the six windows, is a reconstruction made on the field of discrimination and reflection. In the mode of non-discrimination, one is wide awake when awake, and one is wide awake when asleep, too. This can only be called the discrimination of non-discrimination.

Hung-en is a Zen man. He does not write down an explanation or commentary as we would. He forthright takes Yang-shan's hand and begins to dance, saying, "My interview with you is finished." Thus a Zen mondo cannot be fit into any pattern. Something alive is always active in it.

⁷ ZDNM, p. 87.

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The master of garden sweeping

In the ultimate ground of Zen mondo, there is always found something that attempts to elucidate the emergence of discrimination from non-discrimination. To say that discrimination arises out of non-discrimination might be misleading: in essence, discrimination is non-discrimination, non-discrimination is discrimination. In order to clearly convey this, Zen masters since ancient times have made use of various means (*upāya*). The means in this case is the mondo. Because it always appears from some unexpected quarter to move to another unexpected quarter, one can never enter into its working as long as one lingers in the realm of discrimination and explanation.

Yün-yen (*d.* 841) was sweeping the garden one day, when Tao-wu (*d.* 895) saw him and said, "You are busily employed, are you not?" whereupon Yün-yen replied, "Even when I am busy, there is one who is not at all busily employed."⁸ This answer is clearly discriminative: that which is divided and that which is not divided, many and one, motion and stillness, working and reality. Tao-wu took the advantage, saying, "In that case you mean to say there is a second moon?" Discrimination gouges a hole in Chaos,⁹ it slices in two the perfect iron mallet. The moon no longer being One, there necessarily arises a second moon, then a third, and so on, piling up in endless succession. With the Many growing more and more as the Many, the One is gone. This is a point of great difficulty in ordinary logic. Here, our discriminative analysis is unable to do the job, and enters a maze. How would Yün-yen find a way out of this dilemma? He is a Zen man. He did not say it was or was not a second moon. He did not add explanation or adaptation or interpretation about whether that which is divided is one or two with that which is not divided. He brandished high the broom in his hands, and turned back the question: "What number moon is this?" Tao-wu stopped questioning.

A solitary Zen monk sweeping the garden front of a monastery. Planting his broom, he stands firm as if demanding, "What is this!" Needless to say, the stance struck, as it is, is the answer. And therein is to be found both the eternal "?" and the eternal "!"

⁸ A reference to the story of Chaos in Chuang-tzu.

⁹ SZ, pp. 190-191.

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Standing there with arms crossed

When no explanation, interpretation or reconstruction is possible, what is there left but to raise high the broom, flick the walking stick, lift the whisk, let down one's feet, wave one's hand or do something of the sort. Therefore it is said that even such things as raising the eyebrows, winking the eyes, clearing one's throat or flapping one's arms, are all none other than the practice of Buddha activity. Seen in this light, words and letters, too, are Buddha activity, fully expounding the fact of Zen experience. Since words and letters are always tinged with conceptuality, they are mistaken for mere concepts. Zen people of course do not avoid making use of words and letters. They sometimes go into rationalistic argumentations which outdo even philosophical thinkers. Before introducing a few examples, I would like to tell one more story similar to that of Yün-yen's broom.

Yang-shan was once asked by his master Kuei-shan, "Where are you coming from?" "I'm coming from the fields," was the answer. "Are there a lot of people in the fields?" asked Kuei-shan. Yang-shan wouldn't answer either way, but just stuck his hoe in the ground and stood there with arms crossed. "Arms crossed" means that both arms were folded on his chest. It can be taken as standing straight and unmoving, as at attention. Seeing this, Kuei-shan only said, as if he were not making any critical observation, "Today a lot of people are cutting thatching on the south mountain." Hearing this, Yang-shan, also with no comment, abruptly went off with hoe on shoulder.

While the records do not tell us where he went, any place would have done: he could have returned to the fields, or gone to help the south mountain group, or returned to the monks' quarters.

At any rate Yang-shan went from standing straight and unmoving, arms crossed, into totally unobstructed activity, hoe on shoulder—going when he wants to go and stopping when he wants to stop. He makes no attempt to preserve the basic experience of non-discrimination. Rather, it is characteristic of that experience that one is unable to maintain it even though one may so desire; hence, the standpoint of the discrimination of non-discrimination, the non-discrimination of discrimination, wherein you are not in motion while moving and in motion while not moving. Yün-yen, in the activity of sweeping the grounds, returned to the static state of standing still with broom raised. Yang-shan

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in the "arms-crossed" static state passed into the dynamic state of "pulling up his hoe and going away." It is mere explanation to speak of this as the non-duality of the dynamic and static. And yet, even when nothing is said, the message implied can be construed without difficulty by those who are capable of doing so.

TRANSLATED BY SATŌ TAIRA AND
WAYNE SHIGETO YOKOYAMA

Zen hyakudai

“One Hundred Zen Topics”

PART III

SUZUKI DAISSETZ

Zen experience and “words and letters”

THE ULTIMATE Zen experience can be said to be that which is inexpressible in words and letters. One could also say that it is simply there, without our being able to express it, or again, that the very moment we do try to express it, we run into contradiction. It could also be said that this contradiction is in itself the Zen experience, and thus it is quite natural that we should encounter it. The matter can be viewed in various ways, depending on one's standpoint. But in any case, the Zen man emphasizes that without having encountered the reality of the Zen experience itself, whatever is said about it is a downright lie. The truth underlying this statement is the very life of Zen. The stories which follow are full of contradictions if examined logically. Anyone coming across these mondo unprepared would surely be left wondering where exactly their meaning lies.

Ch'en Tsun-su (d. 877?) of Mu-chou province was a disciple of Huang-po and the man who recognized the ability of Lin-chi. Once, meeting a learned man of exceptional intelligence, he asked:

“What are you studying?”

“I'm studying the Book of Changes,” came the answer.

“Is that so?” said Ch'en Tsun-su, “Well, then, in that work there's a

* The above is a translation of *Zen hyakudai*, Suzuki Daisetz zenshū xv (Tokyo, 1966), pp. 190–201. We wish to thank the Matsugaoka Library, Kamakura, for their permission to use it here.

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line that goes: *'People from all walks of life use it daily but never know it.'* Tell me now, what exactly is it that they don't know?"

"They don't know the Way," said the learned man.

"Well then," Ch'en Tsun-su continued, "I'd like to ask you this: what is this 'Way' you speak of?"

This was a direction in which the studies of the learned man had never taken him. He had often spoken of the Way and had assumed from the start that he understood its meaning. This is our usual disposition. We never press our inquiry far enough, and thus we tend to be haphazard in everything we do. And so too for the learned man. There was nothing he could do but remain silent.

This silence can be taken in either of two ways, however. It can be the silence of one who simply doesn't understand. Or it could be the absolute silence of Vimalakīrti or Sakyamuni.

"It is natural that you don't understand," said Ch'en Tsun-su.

This too can be taken in either of two ways. It can be taken at face value to mean that since the Way is inexpressible, there is nothing we can do except be silent in "not-knowing." Again, it might be seen to contain an admonition of sorts: *"Do you understand what you didn't know?"* The choice is left up to the reader.

The Way is not understandable

A monk once came to Kuei-shan Ling-yu (d. 853) and asked: "What is the Way?" To the Chinese the word "Way" indicates the principle basic to all experience. It corresponds to the concept of God in Judaism or to that of Buddha-nature in Buddhism, although, of course, it is impossible for one term to be selected to represent the entire, vast store of Buddhist words. Here we will use the word "Way" to indicate the basic Zen experience. Zen monks often start out with people asking, "What is the Way?" Kuei-shan's answer to this question was:

"No-mind is the Way."

Nan-chüan's answer was, "Everyday mind is the Way." Everyday mind is no-mind, no-mind is everyday mind. It is what people from all walks of life use daily and never know. It is to eat when hungry and rest when tired. It is only natural that we do not know it. As expected, the monk said:

"I don't understand."

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As in the previous essay, this reply may be taken in either of two ways, but here it can be taken to mean a simple lack of understanding. Kuei-shan then said:

“Then understand that which you don't understand.”

This is the not-understanding of understanding, the understanding of not-understanding.

“What understanding is there in that?” the monk again asked.

It is a contradiction to understand that which is not understandable. How is this contradiction to be resolved? Or is the attempt at resolution futile in itself? Could it be that contradiction exists only in the person who strives for resolution, that, fundamentally, no such thing exists? Contradiction being a phenomena that occurs only when an experience is reconstructed, couldn't it be said that no such thing exists in the experience itself? It could also be said, however, that without such mental reconstruction, there would be no way for us to approach the actual experience. Isn't this the reason why Zen mondo come about in the first place?

Kuei-shan then said, “You are you and not someone else.”

That is, “There is only you yourself and no one else.” Is this the “understanding of not-understanding”? When Yüeh-shan Wei-yen (d. 828) was asked how the unthinkable can be thought of, he replied, “By *non-thinking!*” Are “non-thinking” and “You are you and not someone else,” the same or are they different? Be that as it may, when the declaration, “In all the universe I stand alone and revered,” bursts forth in us, there is nothing which exists of either contradiction or paradox.

To say is to not say

Yün-yen (d. 841) once told his following:

“There is a child in a certain house who can reply to anything he is asked.”

The child is never at a loss for words. He comes up with an appropriate response to anything said to him. If you say “Hey!” he says “Yessir!” When he sees a willow he says “Green!” When he sees a flower he says “Red!” When he touches hot water he says “Hot!” When he hears cawing he says “Crow!” Totally free and unrestricted, he is never without an appropriate response. Who is this child? Where is he?

Tung-shan (d. 869), who was in the assembly, came forward and asked,

“Does the child have a lot of books in his house?”

Is the child's ability due to his having read a lot? Perhaps his house is full of all kinds of books. This is what Tung-shan had in mind.

“Not one,” answered Yün-yen.

“Then how did he come to know so much,” asked Tung-shan.

“He never sleeps,” said Yün-yen.

But it wouldn't be possible for him to know so much simply by doing without sleep. If he were not one who is “all-knowing at all times,” he wouldn't be capable of doing all that Yün-yen says he can. Unless we take into consideration the Zen realization of the discrimination of non-discrimination, nothing would be solved. As Tung-shan knew well what Yün-yen had in mind, one could say that they were in league from the start. It might even be said that Tung-shan let Yün-yen get the last word in.

“There's always one more thing that must be said,” Tung-shan said. “Can you say what it is?”

How will the child be able to answer Tung-shan's question?

“That which has to be said,” Yün-yen replied, “is, rather, that which has to go unsaid.”

Here, the word “rather” should be taken to indicate identification; that is, “to say” is “to not say.” We said earlier that the child is never without something to say, but as we reach the end of the dialogue, we find that “to say” and “to not say” are the same. The contradiction has become self-identity. Although Tung-shan and Yün-yen talk about such things as the child not sleeping and whether there are books in his house as if these were matters of real importance, it is just a kind of game. It turns out that what we are ultimately seeking is that which cannot be expressed.

That which is unknowable, incomprehensible, inexpressible, unexplainable, unnameable, inconceivable—it is along this path that the reconstruction of the Zen experience has to return to arrive at its point of origin.

You are deluded because you question

One shouldn't practice Zen as if it were simply a matter of solving riddles. Life itself being one great riddle, however, everything comprising it and everything issuing from it is also a riddle. We spend our whole lives with the conscious desire to somehow solve this riddle, and yet, unable to do so, we live the riddle unconsciously in everything we do. Feeling it half-

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solved and half-unsolved, we are born, we live, and die. Say what you will, this is an inescapable fact. In the end even a philosopher is a poet. It is perhaps more human to sing than to think. And yet singing and thinking are not so very different. It might even be said that the thinking of a man is in no way superior to the singing of a frog, though to say so may anger the thinkers of this world. And this too is one of life's mysteries, another riddle of the universe.

In other words, the root of all man's troubles lies in the fact that he stopped for a moment to think. If he could act in accordance with his true nature as do cats and dogs or the pine tree and bamboo, there would be no problem. But because he stopped his car for a moment to view the autumn leaves, he is no longer able to go on as before. He finds himself separated from things. Questions appear, names are given. Once this happens there is no end. We are deluded by that which we make. When we act on something, the action comes right back to us. A single wave set in motion leads to wave upon wave in endless, ever increasing numbers. This may fascinate you or it may trouble you. It all started because a question was asked.

T'ou-tzu (d. 1083) said:

It is because you ask questions that I must use words. If you did not ask, then what I say to you would suffice. All matters you yourself bring out of yourself. I have nothing to do with any of them.

All our troubles arise because we ask questions. Once this happens, there appear our entanglements, our joys and angers, sorrows and pleasures, heaven and hell, the myriad things of the universe, the countless differences and distinctions, to which there is no end.

The Way before one's eyes

Let us return to the subject of Zen epistemology, from which our discussion has strayed.

The question this time is: "Where is the Way?" Asking "*Where* is the Way?" is the same thing as asking, "*What* is the Way?" *What* has to exist *somewhere*, inasmuch as it has to be *somewhere* to be a "*what*."

Wei-k'uan (d. 817) of Kuo-shan temple in Ching-chao answered this question by saying:

"Right before one's eyes!"

This is the same as Chao-chou's "Beyond the fence!" or "In front of the gate!" or "Right underfoot!" Confucianists say: "*The Way is near, nevertheless it is sought far away.*" The Zen man, not dealing in such vague concepts as "near" or "far," says, "Right before one's eyes!" But even so, those who can't see, can't see.

"Why don't I see it?" asked the monk.

Wei-k'uan was unlike other Zen men of the T'ang. His way of thinking was quite modern or, rather, Indian, and because of this we find him easy to understand. Even a scholar would find a mondo like this suitable grist for his mill.

"It's because you have a self," Wei-k'uan answered.

("It's because of your self that you can't see. Remove the self and you will be able to see.")

In Zen, as in Buddhism in general, the word "self" indicates an individual entity, one of the plurality of existent things which arises from the discrimination of subject and object. It is this which makes human experience possible, but it is also that which destroys the very ground of experience. This is the root of the problem. It is along these lines that the present mondo develops.

"If I don't see because of my self," the monk asked, "what about you—do you see?"

"Self" in its usual sense indicates religious or ethical self-attachment. We might say that since such defiling attachments are found in ordinary people, they are unable to see the Great Way lying right before their eyes. But this could hardly be the case with a true Zen man. Wei-k'uan, then, must have been able to see the Great Way as clearly as he could the broad highway leading to the capital. Still, the monk's question seems quite natural from our usual point of view.

"It is impossible to see when 'I am I,' 'you are you,' move around in mutual opposition," Wei-k'uan said.

What Wei-k'uan wants to say is probably something like this: "As long as one is caught up as you are in discriminating self and other, this and that, saying 'What am I like?' 'What are you like?' one will be confined to the relative world of mutual opposition, the world of plural entities. As long as you are limited like that, you can't say things like, 'I see but you can't.' " Since Wei-k'uan and the monk exist on different dimensions, it is impossible for any mutual understanding to be reached between

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them. Thus it is natural that the following question should come up.

The monk asked, "When there is no I, no you, then can it be seen?"

In the world of sheer nothingness, with no you and no I, the world where all individual existences have been swept out, there can be no seeing, no Way, much less a man who tries to see the Way.

At this point, what ultimately happened? What ought to happen? Did the monk see the Way? Or did he wander into a still deeper fog? How about you?

To pursue it takes us in the opposite direction

There's no limit to how much can be written on topics like this. I only do it in the hope that the reader will get at least some idea of what the Zen experience is like.

Kuei-tsung Chih-ch'ang (ca. eighth century) of Lu-shan was a Dharma heir of Ma-tsu Tao-i. He admonished his disciples to "never rely on others when seeking the Way." He said, "If what you say comes from what you got from another, then everything comes to a standstill. It's because there's *something* in front of your eyes that no light is able to get through." To have something in front of one's eyes means that one knows only the world of discrimination, the world of plural entities, and does not realize that discrimination is in itself the discrimination of non-discrimination.

"What is the Profound Meaning?" a monk asked.

(The Profound Meaning is the same thing as the Way.)

"No one can understand it," Kuei-tsung replied.

"How about one who pursues it?" asked the monk.

(If you say that no one can understand it, what are we to do? Shouldn't we pursue it and try to understand what it is?)

"To pursue it takes us in the opposite direction," replied Kuei-tsung.

(We must pursue it—whatever "it" may be—and try to understand what it is by going after it. While this may be so, it is virtually impossible to get hold of it, for "to pursue it takes us in the opposite direction." This contradiction itself is the Profound Meaning.)

It cannot be attained simply by pursuing it. If the Profound Meaning or the Way is taken to be "*something* in front of your eyes," and you try to grasp it, it is like clutching at shadows—the more you pursue it, the more it evades your grasp. If so,

"What if we don't pursue it?" the monk asked.

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This is the question that has to come next. As long as the questioner holds on to his own point of view, the whole day will be wasted in fruitless deliberation about pursuit and non-pursuit.

“Who is it that seeks the Profound Meaning?” asked Kuei-tsung.

If there is nothing to pursue, such things as the Profound Meaning would pose no problem from the start. The questioner, absorbed in the pursuit of the non-existent shadows of his own creation, finally found out there was nothing there. If you pursue it, it takes you in the opposite direction; if you don't pursue it, it cannot be attained. To go forward is wrong, to go back is wrong—this is the crossroads of contradiction. How can we penetrate this great impassable koan?

TRANSLATED BY SATŌ TAIRA AND
WAYNE SHIGETO YOKOYAMA

Zen hyakudai

One Hundred Zen Topics

PART FOUR

D. T. SUZUKI

The practice of Avalokitesvara

When caught on the horns of a dilemma and unable to move either forward or backward, what in creation are we to do? The Zen man tells us that unless we pass through this fundamental impasse of Zen experience, we can never receive the final nod of approval. To pass through this fundamental impasse means we must recognize it to underlie all that we experience; that is, *this* is what we must struggle to perceive, to grapple with, to understand in the midst of all we see, hear, feel and think. Thus we are told that heat and cold are things we learn on our own, not from another. Let me give a further example of what I mean.

In another story about the same Kuei-tsung,¹ a monk came to him, asking, "If you would pardon a know-nothing novice like myself asking, how is it possible for a seeker to enter the enlightened realm?" Kuei-tsung responded by deftly rapping the cauldron three times.

"You can hear that, can you not?" he asked.

"Certainly I can," came the reply.

* This is an adapted translation of *Zen hyakudai* (1943), from the *Collected Works of D. T. Suzuki* (1966), volume 15, pp. 200-207. Footnotes have been provided by the translators. We wish to thank Matsugaoka Library, Kamakura, for permission to publish it here.

¹ A Zen master of ninth-century China, mentioned in a previous installment; see *Eastern Buddhist* 13,1 (1980).

"That's odd," said Kuei-tsung, "I didn't hear a sound." He then proceeded to strike the cauldron again, one, two, three times.

"And that? Can you hear that?" he asked.

This time the monk replied warily, "No, sir, nary a sound."

The Master countered him swiftly, saying, "Odder still, then, for certainly I heard it most distinctly."

The monk did not know what to make of all this and lapsed into silence. The Master then recited a passage from the sutra:

"Through her marvelous functioning is Avalokitesvara able to rescue those caught in the world of suffering."

That is, Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva who contemplates the sphere of sound, rescues sentient beings through the medium of sound and is even said to appear to listeners when their auditory faculties are heightened; this is the so-called practice of Avalokitesvara.

There was another occasion at which Kuei-tsung sought to impress upon his fellow monks the import of the practice of Avalokitesvara. When the Master had assumed the platform, he addressed the assembly, saying: "I now wish to explain Zen to you, so I want all of you gathered here to move forward." Hearing this, the entire assembly as a body pressed forward eagerly. The Master then recited the passage: "Seekers of the Way, listening is the practice of Avalokitesvara that accommodates itself perfectly to all who are in need." The marvelous functioning of Avalokitesvara expresses itself wherever sentient beings turn their thoughts to the bodhisattva—is that not truly wonderful? This was the gist of the passage. It was in this statement that Kuei-tsung placed his wholehearted sincerity, explaining Zen quite tersely. Somewhat too tersely for some; for a monk felt compelled to ask: "Just what is this practice of Avalokitesvara?"

Now, he had just demonstrated the practice of Avalokitesvara, and yet the monk asks what that practice is—here lies the contradiction of the human mind. It is because of this contradiction, though, that we are able to be truly conscious of our own existence. Zen issues from here as well.

Kuei-tsung started snapping his fingers and asked: "Tell me, you are capable of hearing—yes? no?"

The monk replied, "Yes, I hear it all right."

Seeing that it was hopeless to go on talking, Kuei-tsung leaped up and bellowed, "What in creation brings you here in the first place!"

Then with staff aflay, he dispersed the assembly under a rain of blows. Shortly after, though, he was seen sauntering off to his quarters, enjoying a great belly laugh to himself as if nothing had happened. An observer witnessing the scene might think this Zen priest had crossed the line. Announcing his intent to explain Zen, there is no evidence of his ever making such an explanation. "Move forward!" he commanded the assembly, and so everyone did. He then recited the sutra passage. When queried as to its meaning, he began snapping his fingers, demanding, "You hear this, do you not?" When the monk said he did, the Master roared, "Dundering idiot, out, out!" He was then seen laughing to himself as he returned to his quarters. In all events, it's completely baffling, a clear case of perjury when deliberated upon by judge and jury.

Where, then, does the story fall in place? If there were an angle through which we could make sense of it all, well, I'm afraid it would not be Zen. But if there were no real point to the story, then that curious religion known as Zen would have long ago vanished under the sands of time. An ancient worthy once said, "A Buddha is what he is by virtue of his Awakening." That one word—Awakening—is what puts the eye on the dragon.²

Zen's transcendental feeling of freeness and kambun literature

A while ago, I published a book called *The World of the Absolute* (1941), copies of which I sent out to some people I knew. One of them was a bright, upcoming scholar, who said of it, "When I read your book, I could feel the sense of serenity pervading the world you described." What he said in the sequel to his review I cannot recall. Was it "Oh, how I envy you!" or "Now, really, is that good enough?" or "Such a splendid work of world-transcending freeness!"? Whatever his response, my own intention in writing the work was to draw people's attention to that serene world; for the more oppressive our situation, the more important it becomes to tread in some way the path to that transcendent world. It is not even necessary to tread the path, so long as we can get a glimpse of it. Without it, people cannot live as human beings. It is not whether one is alive or not; it is a question, rather,

² An allusion to the well-known story of the artist who painted a dragon so real that it flew off when he made the final touch, painting in the eye of the dragon.

of whether one is attuned to a sense of being alive. For more than merely existing, I find it essential to have a sense of being alive. Seen in this light, it may well be that in Zen we find a religion of transcendence like no other. While Zen is located in the realm of worldly concerns, of what to wear and how to eat, at the same time it dwells in the realm of absolute freeness, of mountain, cloud, sea and moon. Generally speaking, the religious life is of this transcendent character, wherein the emotions and passions that ordinary people experience are sublimated.

The vagabond Buddhist poets, Han-shan and Shih-te of seventh-century China, and Ryōkan (1758–1831) and Bashō (1643–1694) of Japan, were men of eccentric ways who knew nothing of the world of social convention, who would have refused any dealings with the world. They would no doubt have been lumped together with the many things commonly regarded as nonessentials, such as the alcove (*tokonoma*) in the Japanese house, or the eyebrows over each person's eyes, or the stars in the heavens above, or the family crest on formal wear (*haori*). Yet we cannot simply declare them superfluous and do away with them out of hand; that is, they exist not in the negative sense of filling a pre-existing need; they possess, rather, a greater, affirmative function. Unless we are in tune with that function, the horizons of the serene world they point to do not present themselves; in which case, whatever our poet monks have to say, wherever they begin to say it, simply does not click. In this case those who hail from different dimensions are bound to fail in their dealings with one another. Zen's transcendent character is truly to be found in its penetrating knowledge of the world as such. But this knowledge, it must be remembered, is not a relative knowledge, but an absolute one, the absolute knowledge of *prajñā*-intuition.

I would contend that the ultimate expression of Zen's character is to be found in *kambun*, that is, in Chinese.³ As a product of the soil of Chinese culture, Zen is inextricably bound up with Chinese literature. We Japanese are familiar with works written in Chinese through the

³ The primacy of *kambun* literature in Zen studies was also emphasized by D. T. Suzuki's teacher, Zen master Shaku Sōen (1860–1919). It was no doubt from training under Sōen that the importance of the Chinese Zen *kōan* literature was impressed upon Suzuki at an early age.

early Japanese classics, the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. Like the proverbial shrimp that snaps into the air only to land back where it started, so too are we Japanese unable to distance ourselves psychologically (in the broad meaning of the term) from the feeling of always being in a *kambun* culture; nor is there any real reason for us to want to do so, for are we not one of the peoples of Asia? To put ourselves at a remove from *kambun* would be to abandon the world of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, which would be a form of cultural suicide. It goes without saying that it is important for the Japanese people in general, even down to the lowly public servant, to come into contact with the spirit of Asian culture; how much more so is it that the leaders charged with the education of the younger generations make the conscious decision not to abandon *kambun* studies, if they wish to impart an appreciation of this world-class culture to future generations. No matter how much those like Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801)⁴ ridicule *kambun* studies, it would be disastrous to let such narrow-minded views rule the day.

From the time Zen entered Japan until the Edo period (Tokugawa era, 1600–1868)—nay, even unto the present day—Zen monks have enjoyed Chinese poetry immensely, taking great pleasure in the critical annotations and poetic comments that go with them, a pastime that served to take the edge off the typically hard life of monastic training. As Zen pervaded every facet of Japanese culture, it adapted itself to the ways peculiar to the Japanese people. Though Zen was influenced to a marked degree by its new surroundings, what would be designated as Zen literature proper remained unchanged in its basic framework in *kambun* literature. Here is a Zen passage:

There is nothing in the triple world; Where can mind be found?
 The white clouds form a canopy,
 The flowing spring makes a lute—
 One tune, two tunes; no one understands,
 When the rain has passed the autumn water is deep
 in the evening pond.

⁴ A strong advocate of national studies (*kokugaku*) over Chinese studies, Motoori Norinaga rejected foreign philosophical systems such as Confucianism and Buddhism in favor of native Japanese ones.

三界無法 何處求心 白雲為蓋 流泉作琴 一曲兩曲無人會 雨過夜塘秋水深⁵

It is impossible to adequately render the full range of nuances conveyed by the original Chinese when translating into a Western language or even into Japanese—so much has been condensed into that one string of *kanji* that it virtually defies analysis. A straight reading⁶ of the first phrase would be, *Sangai muhō*, literally, “Three worlds, no dharma.” These words say virtually all there is to say about Zen, about Buddhism, about life, about all that is. In them we encounter a striking statement pointing directly to ultimate truth—so much so that all that follows, from “Where can mind be found?” on, is reduced to mere echoes of those first stirring words.

So beguiling are the charms of *kanji* that the Chinese are said to go to great lengths to compose verse, even to the point of exerting a baneful effect on the culture as a whole. Calligraphy is not only a kind of writing, but also a kind of painting. As such, not only is the semantic content of the *kanji* important, but also the aesthetic form it takes. The inscription of poetry is not simply a matter of the content of the words, but the expression of that content in the shape of the written characters; here we must pay attention to the manner in which the characters were inscribed when the verse was set down on paper. The verse that follows is not necessarily Zen in content, but through it we can get a sense of whither lies the Absolute. I would be the first to admit that saying “whither lies” is exceedingly vague in meaning, that a more precise definition is needed here, but since this is not an academic paper, I have purposely left it vague. In fact we might even say that where we find that “vagueness” we come into contact with one aspect of the Asian outlook on life. If the term “vagueness” does not suit your tastes, then perhaps some other term, such as haziness, obscureness, mysteriousness or nebulosity, might do as well.

⁵ P'an-shan's (Banzan) statement followed by Hsueh-tou Ch'ung-hsien's (Setchō Jūken, 980–1052) verse appears in *Pi-yen lu* 碧巖錄 (*Hekiganroku*; 1128), Case 37. The translation given here is from Thomas and J. C. Cleary, *The Blue Cliff Record* (Boulder and London: Shambhala, 1977), Vol. 2, p. 276. This passage is compiled in *Zenrin kushū* (1688).

⁶ A “straight reading” here means that the lexical elements have not been recast into the syntax of Japanese or English, but have been retained in the order they were found in the original Chinese.

ZEN HYAKUDAI (4)

Ten years atop a cushion, the site of myriad dreams,
Before that half night's awakening
To the mind detached from things.

十年枕上塵中夢 半夜燈前物外心⁷

Since I am ignorant of the sound patterns of Chinese speech, I cannot begin to appreciate the charming meter in which this verse is no doubt set. I do know, however, that when this verse is put into Japanese syntax, it requires the inclusion of certain grammatical features, such as the preposition "of" or "from" as in "the site of myriad dreams" or "the mind detached from things." While this merely introduces the possessive case to the phrases, it causes a subtle shift in the nuance of this string of *kanji* that alters how we engage the poem conceptually and affectively. In Chinese literature, especially in the composition of Chinese verse, a tremendous effort must be made to select and effectively organize just the right combination of *kanji* (that is, those that most richly suggest the topic being treated) within the dictates of grammar. One must then distribute the selected *kanji* over the breadth of a blank sheet of paper in an aesthetic manner, adding to it, as is suitable to the theme, craggy mountains here, a flowing stream there, offset by some trees or grasses or people as needed. Thus, bringing together one's intuition, experience and feeling, one sets down on paper these various elements of the painted scroll. In the process of its composition the Japanese haiku closely resembles Chinese verse. It requires the genius of the haiku poet to select and arrange the precise lexical items. And it requires all of the reader's skills (which also are a special gift) to perceive the relationship binding the elements of the haiku, with the reader sometimes experiencing the poem at a more profound level than the poet himself. The attraction of Zen literature springs from these sources.

One of the wonderful features of calligraphic art is that it can be appreciated directly, without any need for explanation. Zen's wonderful

⁷ *Ten years atop a cushion*. From the *Lu-shan wai chi* 廬山外集 (*Rozan geshū*; 1324) 1.17:1. Lu-shan is a mountain in northern Kiangsi province that has been associated with Buddhist activity from as early as the fifth century. The *Lu-shan wai chi* was later printed in Japan in 1663. This particular citation is also included in *Zenrin kushū*.

principle can also be pointed to directly and can be described forthwith, with no need to resort to logic or analysis. When we start to interpret the written text, each of the *kanji* is forced to take on a grammatical function, of subject, predicate, copula and so on. Zen is concerned only with the expression of the Subject, that is, with the expression of the ultimate truth by which we come to know the actual Subject at hand. From this perspective *kanji* are very Zen-like; by this I mean, the character of *kanji* is such that they can always be seen as expressions of the ultimate truth.

Yün-men's (Ummon, 864–949) wielding the staff is a statement of ultimate truth. (In Zen, this is called an *ikku*, “a verse of singular character.”) Here, grammar does not operate. It distorts the original statement when we start to insert all sorts of grammatical elements; that is, it is not correct to say “*as* the staff “ or “*of* the staff ,” or “*through* the staff,” or “*by* the staff.” It is just the staff, as indicated by the string of *kanji*. Indeed, here, with wielding of the staff, Yün-men's sermon comes to a close. Then he announces he will descend the platform to return to his quarters, leaving the staff behind. Yuan-wu's (Engō, 1063–1135) comment (*agyō*) on the staff is: “A sword that takes life, a sword that gives life.” A staff that can transform itself equally well into a life-taking sword or a life-giving one cannot be fixed at one end of the spectrum or the other; it cannot be found in the world of *as*, *of*, *through* or *by*. The seer can use it in whichever way he or she wishes. This dimension of “whichever” depends on where the seer stands. Yuan-wu's comment, “A sword that takes life, a sword that gives life,” is striking, but he does not give a clue as to the relation between the two phrases. Are we to count them numerically, as one and two? Is one two, two one? Is it one *and* two, or one *or* two? The staff, the sword that takes life, the sword that gives life—how are we to negotiate these as three separate notions? That, dear reader, is left entirely up to you.

To have the matter brusquely tossed in our faces, with the words, “That's up to you,” is, on the one hand, extremely annoying and, on the other, ushers in a newfound sense of freedom. The rationalist will find this obfuscation of matters most unwelcome, but that's because he is always trying to grasp things with a mind of scientific objectivity. But once we distance ourselves from that mode of thinking to activate our own creative thoughts on the matter, then suddenly it all becomes most

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intriguing. We are reacting mechanically when we say, "Is that all there is to it?" and refuse to accept the matter as given. Nor does Zen operate on quietistic principles. In this regard, a string of Chinese characters inscribed as calligraphy can play an important role in "catching us" and bringing us to this active awareness. And so it is not without reason that Zen developed on the Asian continent.

TRANSLATED BY SATŌ TAIRA AND W. S. YOKOYAMA