

ESSAYS IN ZEN BUDDHISM

(THIRD SERIES)

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PREFACE

In this Third Series of *Zen Essays* I have tried to trace the relationship which exists between Zen and the two chief Mahāyāna sūtras, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and then the transformation through which Indian Buddhism had to go while adapting itself to Chinese psychology. The Chinese are a practical people quite different from the Indian, who are highly endowed with the power of abstraction as well as an inexhaustible mine of imagination. It was natural that the Mahāyāna teachings had to be so transformed as to make them appreciated by the Chinese. This meant that the *Prajñāpāramitā* and the *Gaṇḍavyūha* were to be converted into Zen dialogues.

As regards Zen contributions to Japanese culture, a special volume has been written.¹ Apart from Buddhism, apart from Zen after the Kamakura era, Japanese cultural history has no significance, so deeply has Buddhism entered into the lifeblood of the people. My attempt here is merely tentative. The section on 'The Zen Life in Pictures' is also a suggestion; a fuller and more systematic treatment awaits another opportunity.

A few facts are to be mentioned concerning the matter treated in this Series, which have come up while it was in the press. (1) The Tun-huang MS. of the *Sayings of Shên-hui* mentioned in p. 21 fn. and p. 37 fn. has already been reproduced in facsimile, while its printed and fully revised edition will be published before long. (2) Dr. Keiki Yabuki has published a book giving detailed explanations of the Tun-huang MSS. collected in his *Echoes of the Desert*. He supplies us with a wealth of useful information regarding them. (3) All page references to the *Gaṇḍavyūha* are either to the Idzumi MS. or to the R.A.S. one. (4) The Tun-huang MS. of Hui-nêng's *Tan-ching* (p. 15 fn.) will be printed and

¹ See *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture*, 1938.

I. FROM ZEN TO THE GAṆḌAVYŪHA

I

IN THE beginning of its history Zen had no special affiliation with the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* such as it had with the *Laṅkāvatāra* or the *Vajracchedikā*. The *Laṅkāvatāra* was given by Bodhidharma to his chief Chinese disciple, Hui-k'ê, as the sūtra containing a doctrine closely related to Zen, and after Hui-k'ê the sūtra was studied chiefly by Zen followers. The *Vajracchedikā* came to be known among them at the time of Hung-jên and Hui-nêng, about one hundred and fifty years after Bodhidharma. Shên-hui, however, who was one of the principal disciples of Hui-nêng, goes so far as to declare that it was indeed the *Vajracchedikā* that was handed by the father of Zen to Hui-k'ê.¹ Though this statement may not be historically correct, we may safely assert that the *Vajracchedikā* came to exert great influence upon the study of Zen about this time, i.e. late in the seventh century. The connection of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* with Zen did not begin until the time of Têng-kuan (738-839), the fourth Patriarch of the Avatamsaka School of Buddhism in China, who studied Zen under Wu-ming, a disciple of Shên-hui. Têng-kuan was a great philosopher and endeavoured to incorporate the teaching of Zen into his own system. After him came Tsung-mi of Kuei-fêng (780-842), who also studied Zen and produced the great commentary on the *Engaku-kyo*,² 'Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment', which he interpreted according to the philosophy of his school. He also wrote a book on the different ways of understanding

¹ According to a recently recovered MS. containing sayings of Shên-hui. The MS. will be edited and published before long by the author of the present *Essays*.

² *Yüan-chiao-ching*.

Zen which, except for the introduction, is unfortunately lost. The idea was to point out the essentials of Zen and to distinguish them from the misinterpretations which were then prevalent not only as regards Zen itself but as regards its relationship to Buddhist philosophy. Thus through Tsung-mi Zen came to be related to other sūtras than the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the *Vajracchedikā*, and especially to the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.

While scholars of the Avataṃsaka School were making use of the intuitions of Zen in their own way, the Zen masters were drawn towards the philosophy of Identity and Interpenetration advocated by the Avataṃsaka, and attempted to incorporate it into their own discourses. For instance, Shih-t'ou¹ in his 'Ode on Identity' depicts the mutuality of Light and Dark as restricting each other and at the same time being fused in each other; Tung-shan² in his metrical composition called 'Sacred Mirror Samādhi' discourses on the mutuality of *P'ien*, 'one-sided', and *Chéng*, 'correct', much to the same effect as Shih-t'ou in his Ode, for both Shih-t'ou and Tung-shan belong to the school of Hsing-szü³ known as the Ts'ao-tung branch of Zen Buddhism. This idea of Mutuality and Identity is no doubt derived from Avataṃsaka philosophy, so ably formulated by Fa-tsang.⁴ As both Shih-t'ou and Tung-shan are Zen masters, their way of presenting it is not at all like that of the metaphysician. Perhaps Lin-chi's 'Fourfold *Liao-chien*'⁵ too may be traced back to the system of Fa-tsang.

The influence of Avataṃsaka philosophy on Zen masters grew more and more pronounced as time went on, and reached its climax in the tenth century after the passing of Tsung-mi, the fifth patriarch of the Avataṃsaka School in China. It was Fa-yen Wên-i,⁶ the founder of the Fa-yen branch of Zen Buddhism, who incorporated the philosophy of the Avataṃsaka into his treatment of Zen. Though he did not belong to their school he must have been greatly impressed with the works of Tu-shun (died 640) and Fa-tsang

¹ 699-790.

² 806-859.

³ Died 740.

⁴ Died 712.

⁵ *Liao-chien* means 'to consider', 'to estimate'.

⁶ 885-958.

(died 712), and other Avataṃsaka philosophers; for there is evidence of his having made his pupils study their writings as an aid to the mastery of Zen. He also wrote a commentary on Shih-t'ou's 'Ode on Identity', which is, as I said before, based on the metaphysics of the *Avataṃsaka*.

The culmination of this movement, the syncretic movement to unite Zen with the philosophy of the *Avataṃsaka* or of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, was reached when Yên-shou of Yung-ming¹ wrote his *magnum opus* the *Tsung-ching-lu*, 'Records of the Spiritual Mirror', in one hundred fascicles. In this he attempts to melt all the differences of Buddhist thought in the doctrine of Mind-only—understanding by 'Mind' an ultimate reality which is aware of itself, and is not the seat of our empirical consciousness. This doctrine of Mind-only is not to be confused with the Vijñaptimātra philosophy of the Yogācāra, for Yên-shou follows the thought-current running through the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the *Avataṃsaka*, the *Śraddhotpāda*, etc.²

2

Properly speaking, Zen has its own field where it functions to its best advantage. As soon as it wanders outside this field, it loses its natural colour and to that extent ceases to be itself. When it attempts to explain itself by means of a philosophical system it is no longer Zen pure and simple; it partakes of something which does not strictly belong to it. However rational the explanation may be, Zen is then adulterated. For this reason, the masters have been jealous to see that it was not associated with any school of metaphysics, whether Buddhist or Taoist or Confucian. Even when Bodhidharma handed the *Laṅkā* over to Hui-k'ê, the latter and his followers refused to write anything on it in the

¹ 904-975.

² It may incidentally be mentioned that a Zen master's commentary on the *Avataṃsaka* was written as early as the seventh century, for a catalogue of the Chinese Tripitaka records that Shên-hsiu, who died in 706, wrote thirty fascicles on the *Avataṃsaka*.

nature of a commentary or an exposition. Though Hui-nêng seems to have edited the *Vajracchedikā* according to his own light, his descendants altogether neglected it, and their sermons and dialogues developed in quite a different direction. Of course, they make frequent references to all kinds of sūtras and śāstras, quoting passages from them freely, but they are always careful not to get involved in the letter, not to be tinged with the philosophical ideas forming the background of these writings.

The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* was quoted by Zen masters even prior to Tu-shun, for, according to the *Masters and Disciples of the Laṅkā*, Hui-k'ê extensively refers to the sūtra in support of his view that the One circulates throughout a world of particulars, while Tao-hsin, a contemporary of Tu-shun, also quotes a passage from the sūtra saying that a particle of dust contains innumerable worlds within itself. Being Zen masters, they made no attempts to systematize their Zen intuitions; they were satisfied with quoting for authority passages which harmonized with their ideas. Therefore, their quotations were not limited to the *Avataṃsaka*; wherever they found statements they could use they did so, for example from *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, *Vimalakīrti*, *Vajracchedikā*, *Laṅkāvatāra*, *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Dharmapada*, etc. But in the case of the *Avataṃsaka*, the reference is more than local and specific, it is concerned with the entire thought pervading the sūtra. It is likely from this fact that Zen masters regarded the sūtra from the first as one which supported their experiences even to the extent of the *Laṅkā* and *Vajra*. But as their position was to uphold the spirit and neglect the letter altogether, they did not go so far as to formulate a Zen philosophy after the *Avataṃsaka*. They were always careful to abide with facts and not ideas. For they say, quoting the *Avataṃsaka*:

‘It is like a poor man counting up day and night treasures which do not belong to him, while he has not a cent to his name. So with much learning. Again, for a while you may read books, but be careful to set them aside as soon as possible. If you do not quit them, you will get into the habit

of learning letters only. This is like seeking ice by heating running water, or like seeking snow by boiling up hot water. Therefore, it is sometimes said by the Buddhas that [ultimate truth] is explicable and sometimes that it is not explicable. The fact is that there is nothing explicable or inexplicable in Reality itself, which is the state of all things that are. When this one thing is thoroughly grasped, all the other thousand things follow. So it is said in the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* that [Reality] is neither real nor unreal, neither such nor not such.¹

3

The sūtras, especially Mahāyāna sūtras, are direct expressions of spiritual experiences; they contain intuitions gained by digging deeply into the abyss of the Unconscious, and they make no pretension of presenting these intuitions through the mediumship of the intellect. If they appear to be at all ratiocinative and logically demonstrative, this is merely accidental. All the sūtras attempt to give the deepest intuitions of the Buddhist mind as they presented themselves to the early Indian Mahāyāna followers. Therefore, when the sūtras declare all things to be empty, unborn, and beyond causation, the declaration is not the result of metaphysical reasoning; it is a most penetrating Buddhist experience. This is why so many scholars and philosophers of Buddhism who endeavour to understand or interpret these intuitions according to rules of logic fail in their endeavours; they are outsiders, so to speak, in Buddhist experience, and consequently they are bound to miss the mark.

The sūtra intuitions and those of the Zen Master are the same in so far as they are all Buddhist. Whatever differences there may be in expression are owing to the psychology of the Indian and the Chinese genius. Inasmuch as

¹ A sermon given by Hui-k'ê as recorded in the *Masters and Disciples of the Laṅkā*.

Zen is a form of Indian Buddhism transplanted into China, its experiences are fundamentally the same as those of Buddhism. But the psychological differentia of the people assert themselves when the experiences begin to be localized in harmony with the new conditions under which they are to develop. The process of this differentiation is clearly traceable in the sermons of the Zen masters as they are separated further from the direct influence of the first master from India. As Zen takes hold of the Chinese mentality, its expressions grow typically Chinese, and one even begins to suspect their essential identity with the original. When the differentiation has progressed so far as to make it look as if it were going to revolt against itself, the masters hurry to repair the damage and to reconcile it with its own source. This is really the meaning of that movement which manifested itself strongly in the eighth and the ninth century, for instance under Tsung-mi or Fa-yen.

Let me give examples of the gradual change which took place in the expression of Zen intuition during the five hundred years which followed the introduction of Zen into China by Bodhidharma, a monk from India who died presumably in A.D. 528. In the following pages are quoted sermons given by Zen masters of the various schools which arose during those years. In them we mark the shifting of the sūtra type of discourse to that of the Chinese Zen type.

4

Let us start with Bodhidharma, the father of Chinese Zen, who writes on *Wu-hsin* (literally, 'no-mind'):¹

¹ This is taken from Dr. Keiki Yabuki's *Echoes of the Desert* (folio 77) containing collotype reproductions of some of the Tun-huang Buddhist MSS. kept in the British Museum. This Discourse ascribed to Bodhidharma is not mentioned in any of the Zen histories we have at present and there is no way to decide its authenticity. The MS. is not in the best style of writing.

Wu-hsin is one of those difficult Chinese words which are untranslat-

'The ultimate Reason itself is without words, but to give expression to it words are borrowed. The great Way has no form, but in order to come in contact with the uncultivated it reveals itself in form. Now let us suppose that there are two persons engaged in the discussion of the Unconscious. The disciple asks the master:

'D.: Is [the ultimate Reason] conscious or unconscious?

'M.: It is unconscious.

'D.: If it is unconscious, who is it that does all the seeing, hearing, remembering, and recognizing?¹ Who is it that recognizes the Unconscious?

'M.: Just because of the Unconscious, seeing, hearing, remembering, and recognizing are possible; just because of the Unconscious, the Unconscious is recognized.

'D.: How is it possible for the Unconscious to see, to hear, to remember, or to recognize? The Unconscious would be incapable of all this.

'M.: Though I am of the Unconscious, I can see, hear, remember, and recognize.

'D.: If you can see, hear, remember, and recognize, you cannot be of the Unconscious; you must be a conscious being.

'M.: To see, to hear, to remember, and to recognize—these are the very acts of the Unconscious. Apart from the seeing, hearing, remembering, and recognizing, there is no Unconscious. I am afraid you do not understand this, and I will see to it that the matter is explained step by step and you are led to see into the truth. For instance, seeing being done, it is said that there is a seeing, and this is because

able. *Wu* is a negative term and *hsin* comprises various meanings. It is 'mind', 'heart', 'soul', 'a regulating principle', 'a mental attitude', 'consciousness', 'voluntariness', etc. In the present case, *Wu-hsin* is 'unconsciousness' in its ordinary, empirical sense, and at the same time it means the Unconscious as underlying all our activities mental and bodily, conscious and unconscious. In this translation the term is freely translated according to the sense it acquires in the context.

¹ Literally, 'the seen, heard, thought, and known', *dr̥ṣṭa-śr̥uta-mata-jñāta* in Sanskrit, comprehensively sums up the activities of mind, that is, consciousness. It is most important not to confuse the Unconscious with the unconscious referred to in psychology and biology.

there is the not-seeing; the seeing thus is even of the Unconscious. Hearing being done, it is said that there is a hearing, and this is because there is the not-hearing; the hearing is even of the Unconscious. Remembering being done, it is said that there is a remembering, and this is because there is the not-remembering; the remembering is even of the Unconscious. Recognizing being done, it is said that there is a recognizing, and this is because there is the not-recognizing; the recognizing is even of the Unconscious. A work being done, it is said that there is a doing, and this doing is indeed not-doing; the doing is even of the Unconscious. Therefore, we say that seeing, hearing, remembering, and recognizing—all these are of the Unconscious.

'D.: How can we know that this is of the Unconscious?

'M.: You examine into the matter more closely and tell me if Mind has any perceivable form. If you say that it has, such will not be real Mind. Is it to be considered existing within, or without, or midway? Mind is not to be located at any of these three points. Nor is it to be perceived as existing in any other possible places. Hence the Unconscious.

'D.: O master, if it is the Unconscious that prevails everywhere, there should be neither guilt nor merit. Why do all beings transmigrate in the six paths of existence and constantly go on through birth and death?

'M.: This is because all beings are so confused in mind as to conceive the illusive idea of [an individual] reality in the Unconscious, and, creating all kinds of deeds, erroneously cling to the notion that there is really a conscious mind. For this reason, they transmigrate in the six paths of existence and constantly go on through birth and death.

'It is like a man's seeing in the dark a table or a piece of rope which he takes for a departed spirit or for a snake, and getting terrified at his own imagination. In like manner all beings illusively cling to their own creations. Where there is the Unconscious, they erroneously imagine the reality

of a conscious mind. Thus various sorts of deeds are performed, and there is really transmigration in the six paths of existence. Such beings are advised to see a good friend, great [in his spiritual insight], and to practise meditation which will lead them to the realization of the Unconscious. When this is done, all their karma-hindrances vanish and the chain of birth and death is cut asunder. As the sunlight once penetrating into the darkness dispels all that is dark, all their sins are destroyed when they realize the Unconscious.

'D.: Being an ignoramus, my mind is not yet quite clear as to the functioning of the six senses as they respond everywhere [to the stimulation].¹

'M.: Various contrivances are carried on by words.

'D.: Evil passions and enlightenment, birth-and-death and Nirvāṇa—are these indeed of the Unconscious?

'M.: Assuredly they are of the Unconscious. Just because of all beings' erroneous clinging to the idea of a conscious mind there are all kinds of evil passions and birth-and-death, enlightenment, and Nirvāṇa. If they are awakened to the Unconscious, there are no evil passions, no birth-and-death, no Nirvāṇa. Therefore, for the sake of those who harbour the idea of a conscious mind, the Tathāgata talks of birth-and-death; enlightenment is opposed to evil passions, and Nirvāṇa to birth-and-death. All these names are mutually conditioning. When the Unconscious is attained, there are neither evil passions nor enlightenment, neither birth-and-death nor Nirvāṇa.

'D.: If there is neither enlightenment nor Nirvāṇa, how do we account for the enlightenment which is said to have been attained by Buddhas of the past?

'M.: This is talked of because of conventional phraseology. As long as absolute truth is considered, there is no such thing. Therefore, it is said in the *Vimalakīrti* that there is no body in which enlightenment is to be realized, no mind by which enlightenment is to be realized. Again, it is

¹ Something is missing in this question and as it stands it yields no sense. The master's reply too does not seem quite to the point.

said in the *Vajracchedikā* that there is not a thing, not a reality which one can claim to have attained, that all the Buddhas' attainment is really non-attainment. Therefore, let it be known that all things rise when a conscious mind is asserted, and that all things cease to exist when the Unconscious is realized.

'D.: O master, you say that the Unconscious obtains everywhere. Now, wood and rock are of the Unconscious; are not then [all sentient beings] like wood and rock?

* 'M.: But the Unconscious realized in my conscious mind is not that of wood and rock. Why? It is like the celestial drum, which, while lying still, spontaneously and without conscious efforts, produces varieties of exquisite sound in order to teach and discipline all beings. It is again like a wish-fulfilling gem (*maṇi*) which, without conscious effort on its own part, creates spontaneously varieties of form. In like manner, the Unconscious works through my conscious mind, making it understand the true nature of Reality; it is furnished with true transcendental wisdom, it is the master of the Triple Body, it functions with the utmost freedom. So, we read in the *Ratnakūṭa* that the mind functions by means of the Unconscious without being conscious of it. How can we then be like wood and rock? The Unconscious is the true Mind, the true Mind is the Unconscious.

'D.: How shall we discipline ourselves then with this [relative] mind of ours?

'M.: Only let us be awakened to the Unconscious in all things, in all our doings—this is the way of discipline, there is no other way. Thus we know that when the Unconscious is realized, all things cease to trouble us.

'Hearing this, the disciple all at once had an illumination and realized that there is no matter outside mind, and no mind outside matter; in all his behaviour and activities he acquired perfect freedom; all his net of doubts was torn to pieces, and he felt no obstructions.'

(Tao-hsin,¹ generally regarded as the Fourth Patriarch of

¹ Died A.D. 651.

Zen Buddhism in China, gives the following sermons on 'The Abandoning of the Body'.¹

'The method of abandoning the body consists first in meditating on Emptiness, whereby the [conscious] mind is emptied. Let the mind together with its world be quietened down to a perfect state of tranquillity; let thought be cast in the mystery of quietude, so that the mind is kept from wandering from one thing to another. When the mind is tranquillized in its deepest abode, its entanglements are cut asunder. How unfathomable! How abysmal! The mind in its absolute purity is the Void itself. How almost unconcerned it appears! Like death there is no breathing. It abides in the utmost purity of the Dharmakāya, and is no longer subject to a future becoming. When a [conscious] mind is stirred and confusion takes place in it, one cannot escape suffering another form of existence. Therefore, let a man discipline himself first of all in the realization of a perfect state of quietude in his mind and also in its world. This is the way the discipline ought to be carried out.

'But in this discipline there is really nothing to take hold of as a definite achievement, and this non-achievement is what is achieved by the discipline, for Reality is grasped by non-striving, and non-striving is truth itself. Therefore, we read in the sūtra, "Emptiness, non-striving, desirelessness, formlessness—this is true emancipation!" For this reason, Reality is non-striving.

'The way to abandon the body is to have a penetrating insight into its provisional nature, when the mind together with its world becomes transparent and its functions illuminated.

'Further, said the master, according to Chuang-tzū, "Heaven and earth are one finger, and ten thousand things are one horse." [But this is not exact.] The *Dharmapada* says: "The One is not to be thought one. In order to destroy the idea of multiplicity, the One is said to be one, but this is

¹ This is recorded in the *Masters and Disciples of the Laikā* recently recovered at Tun-huang and published at Peiping, 1932.

meant for the shallow-minded." [This being so,] we can state that Chuang-tzŭ fails to go beyond oneness.

'According to Lao-tzŭ: "How unfathomable! How abysmal! Within, there is Essence!" With Lao-tzŭ, an outside form is got rid of, but he still holds on to a mind within. The *Avatamsaka* states, "Do not cling to dualism, because there is neither one nor two!" The *Vimalakīrti* states, "Mind is not within, nor without, nor in the midway—this is realization." For this reason, we know that Lao-tzŭ still stands with the idea of a mind-essence.'

In another place Tao-hsin explains what is meant by quietude and Emptiness in the following manner:

'Reflect on your own body and see what it is. It is empty and devoid of reality like a shadow. It is perceived [as if it actually exists], but there is nothing there to take hold of. Prajñā rises in the midst of these shadowy objects, where it is fixed it has no ultimate abode. Remaining itself immovable, it enters into relations and endlessly suffers transformations.

*
 'Out of the midst of Emptiness there rise the six senses, and the six senses too are of Emptiness, while the six sense-objects are perceived as like a dream or a vision. It is like the eye perceiving its objects; they are not located in it. Like the mirror on which your features are reflected, they are perfectly perceived there in all clearness; the reflections are all there in the emptiness, yet the mirror itself retains not one of the objects which are reflected there. The human face has not come to enter into the body of the mirror, nor has the mirror gone out to enter into the human face. When one realizes how the mirror and the face stand to each other and that there is from the beginning no entering, no going-out, no passing, no coming into relation with each other, one comprehends the signification of Suchness and Emptiness.'¹

¹ The translation is a free one.

It can readily be seen that Bodhidharma and Tao-hsin are speaking of the same subject from different angles of understanding. Bodhidharma's *Wu-hsin*, 'the Unconscious', is 'the Empty', 'the Serene', 'the Abysmal', etc., of Tao-hsin. The one uses psychological terms while the other is inclined to Prajñā philosophy. While Bodhidharma's discourse on *Wu-hsin* may be regarded as still in accordance with the Indian way of thinking, Tao-hsin's is more or less tinged with Taoist thought. Nothing properly of Zen, however, has yet made its appearance with them. It was with Hui-nêng and his successors that Zen began to be distinctly Chinese both in its expression and in its interpretation.

The consciousness of Zen specifically as the 'immediate understanding' of the Unconscious¹ dawned in the mind of Hui-nêng. If Bodhidharma used the term, *wu-hsin*, for the Unconscious, Hui-nêng replaced *hsin* by *nien*. *Nien* is generally 'memory', 'recollection', 'thinking of the past', etc., and is used as equivalent to the Sanskrit *smṛti*. Therefore, when it is used in connection with *wu* as *wu-nien*, this is *asmṛti*, that is, 'loss of meaning' or 'forgetfulness', and in this sense it is used in the Sanskrit texts. The use of *wu-nien*, however, in the sense of 'unconsciousness', and pregnant with a deep spiritual significance, as far as I can gather, begins with Hui-nêng. *Wu-nien* is not here mere forgetfulness, or not remembering what one is doing; it is not a simple psychological term. When Hui-nêng makes the *Wu-nien* the most fundamental fact in the life of Zen, it corresponds to the Triple Emancipation—*śūnyatā*, *animitta*, and *apraṇihita*²—for the realization of the *Wu-nien* means emancipation for Zen followers. And the term is essentially Chinese.

The other idea original with Hui-nêng is the doctrine of 'Abruptness' (*tun*), i.e. of immediate understanding of

¹ *Tun-wu*, *wu-nien*.

² Emptiness, no-form, and non-striving.

Reality. According to him, Zen realization is characterized by abruptness or immediacy, for this is the nature of Prajñā itself. The doctrine of 'Gradualness' (*chien*) maintained by his rival, Shên-hsiu, ought not to be applied to the intuition which takes place in Zen meditation. Prajñā acts intuitively, and what it perceives is perceived at once, without any mediation or deliberation or interrupting process. 'In my teaching,' so says Hui-nêng, 'there is no distinction between Dhyāna and Prajñā;¹ Dhyāna is the body of Prajñā, and Prajñā is the function of Dhyāna. When you have Prajñā, Dhyāna is in Prajñā; when you have Dhyāna, Prajñā is in Dhyāna. They are one and not two.' By thus diving deeply into the abyss of Reality, Hui-nêng instructed his followers to see the intuitive light of Prajñā flash through the hard crust of an empirical consciousness. The mere sinking into the deep abyss was not the object of Zen discipline; unless Dhyāna culminated in an immediate intuition (*tun-wu*), there was no Zen in it. Let us now see what Hui-nêng has to say about the Unconscious (*wu-nien*).²

'Good friends, our teaching, since days of yore, whether of the "Abrupt" school or of the "Gradual", is established on the foundation of the Unconscious (*wu-nien*), while formlessness (*wu-hsiang*) is its body and not-abiding-anywhere³ (*wu-chu*) is its root. What is meant by formlessness? It means not to get attached to form while admitting it. To be unconscious means to be innocent of the working of [a relative mind]. Not-abiding-anywhere is the original nature of a living being. [Consciousness as we perceive its working] moves ever forward, never halting in its progress through divisions of time as one thought succeeds another uninterruptedly. In order to get down, however, to the Dharma-kāya [which is the Unconscious], the stream is to be cut through for once, for then we shall be separated from the

¹ *Ting* and *hui*.

² The following passage is taken from the Tun-huang MS. of the *Tan-ching* incorporated in the Taisho Edition of the Tripitaka, No. 2007.

³ *Wu-hsiang wei t'i, wu-chu wei pên*.

Rūpakāya [i.e. this physical body], and there is here no abiding of thought anywhere on anything. If thought abides anywhere on anything for once, the whole series ceases to flow unclogged—this is called being in bondage. When there is no abiding of thought anywhere on anything—this is being unbound. Thus, not-abiding-anywhere is the root [of our life].

‘Good friends, to be separated from all the external form is to be formless. When this is realized, the nature and body [of the Unconscious] is found pure and devoid of impurities. Hence formlessness is the body.

‘Not to be defiled by any external objects—this is known to be one with the Unconscious, that is, to be detached from objects though they are present in consciousness; for consciousness is not engaged in weaving thoughts concerning them. When thus all [irrelevant] thoughts are discarded, consciousness is cleared off from all its defilements. When this consciousness is once for all swept clean, there will be no future becoming. Let students of Buddhism take heed not to go astray in this matter. When the meaning is not well grasped, not only they themselves become confused but others take share in the confusion and will be led to blaspheme the teaching. Hence the Unconscious is established as the foundation.

‘When people are merely dependent on names, they contrive to have varieties of thought about the objective world, and these thoughts lead further on to evil intentions. All erroneous ideas that characterize this worldly life take their rise here. So it is that our teaching is established on the foundation of the Unconscious. Let people be advised to get rid of their one-sided views in order not to give rise to entangling thoughts. When thoughts are not at all aroused the Unconscious itself will cease to be obtrusive.

‘When we speak of annulling (*wu*), what is it that is to be annulled? What is meant by thought or consciousness (*nien*)? To annul means to be separated from dualism, to be freed from all worldly thoughts. Consciousness rises from Suchness; Suchness is its body, and consciousness is the

functioning of Suchness. Consciousness, inevitably from the nature of Suchness, functions to see, to hear, to recollect, and to comprehend, but Suchness itself is not defiled by multiplicities of objects, it forever remains free, master of itself. So we read in the *Vimalakīrti*, "When all external objects and conditions are adequately discriminated, the ultimate inner principle retains its immovability."

Wu-nien, the Unconscious, according to Hui-nêng, is the name not only for ultimate reality but for the state of consciousness in which the ultimate presents itself. As long as our individual consciousness remains severed from Reality which is at its back, its strivings are ego-centred consciously or unconsciously, and the outcome is a feeling of loneliness and pain. Consciousness must be made somehow to relate to the Unconscious, if it is not; and if it is, the relation must be realized, and this realization is known as *Wu-nien*, literally, a state of 'thoughtlessness'.

Chinese or Sanskrit terms when translated literally are frequently subject to gross misunderstandings. *Wu-nien* is one of them, for 'thoughtlessness' will surely be a most undesirable state of mind as the goal of Zen discipline, in fact as the goal of any spiritual exercise. Even 'the Unconscious' may not be a very appropriate term. Let us further listen to Hui-nêng, who goes on to explain what he means by *Wu-nien*, 'the unconscious':

'Good friends, to have an insight for once is to know what Buddhahood means. When the light of Prajñā¹ penetrates the ground nature of consciousness, it illuminates inside and outside; everything grows transparent, and one recognizes one's own inmost mind. To recognize the inmost mind is emancipation. When emancipation is attained, Prajñā-Samādhi obtains. To realize Prajñā-Samādhi means to have the Unconscious.

'What is the Unconscious? It is to see all things as they are and not to become attached to anything; it is to be present in all places and yet not to become attached anywhere; it is to remain for ever in the purity of self-nature;

¹ *Prajñā* is another significant idea with Hui-nêng.

it is to let the six sense-robbers run out of the six sense-gates into the world of the six sense-objects, and yet not to become defiled therein, nor to get away therefrom; it is but to retain perfect freedom in going and coming. This is to realize Prajñā-Samādhi, to be master of oneself, to become emancipated, and is known as living the Unconscious. If no thought rises on anything whatever, this means the cessation of consciousness, and such is in the bondage of the Dharma, it is a one-sided view.

'He who understands the teaching of the Unconscious has a most thoroughgoing knowledge of all things. He who understands the teaching of the Unconscious sees into the spiritual realm of all Buddhahood. He who understands the "abrupt" teaching of the Unconscious reaches the stage of Buddhahood.'

The doctrine of the Unconscious (*wu-nien*) together with that of immediate understanding (*tun-wu*) was the chief topic of interest in the days of Hui-nêng and his followers. 'Immediate understanding' is the Chinese translation of Prajñā, and 'the Unconscious' is the Chinese way of describing the realization of Emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and No-birth (*anutpāda*). In one sense the Laotzŭan teaching of Non-action (*wu-wei*) may be said to be living in the Unconscious of Hui-nêng. It is true that Buddhist philosophy has *Wu-shêng*, *Wu-yüan*, *Wu-tso*, *Wu-kuang-yung*,¹ etc., and *Wu-nien* can be regarded as coming from these conceptions.² There is no doubt, however, that Taoism had something to contribute to the establishment of Zen Buddhism, which we consider distinctively an elaboration of the Chinese genius.

¹ *Anutpāda*, *apraṇihitā*, *anabhisamkāra*, *anābhoga*.

² In the *Aṣṭasahasrikā* (Mitra Edition, p. 5), we have: *Punarāparam bhagavan bodhisatvena mahāsattvena prajñāpāramitāyām caratā prajñāpāramitāyām bhāvayatā evaṃ śikṣitavyaṃ yathāśau śikṣyamāṇas tenāpi bodhicittena na manyeta. Tat kasya hetos tathā hi tac cittam acittam prakṛitī cittasya prabhāvarā. Further on (p. 19) we read: Kena kāraṇena āyuṣman subhūte tatrāpi citte aśakto 'paryāpannaḥ. Subhūtir āha: Acittatvād āyuṣman sārīputra tatrāpi citte aśakto 'paryāpannaḥ. Na manyeta and acittatva may be regarded as corresponding to the Chinese *wu-nien* and *wu-hsin*. There is another Sanskrit term, *manaskāra*, which is generally rendered by *tso-i*, and the negation, *amanaskāra*, by *wu-tso-i*. *Wu-tso-i* conveys essentially the same ideas as *wu-nien*.*

Shên-hui¹ was one of the great disciples of Hui-nêng, and it was his school that flourished most immediately after the death of the master, for he bravely erected the standard of 'the abrupt school' against 'the gradual school' of Shên-hsiu, the rival of Hui-nêng. The following passages are quoted from the sayings of Shên-hui:²

'Chang Yen Kung³ asked: Master usually speaks of the Unconscious (*wu-nien-fa*), advising people to discipline themselves in it. Is this Unconscious to be regarded as existent or non-existent?

'A.: The Unconscious is not describable as either existent or non-existent.

'Q.: Why is it not describable as either existent or non-existent?

'A.: When it is said to be existent, this is not in the sense which people of the world give to it. When it is said to be non-existent, it is not in the sense which people of the world give to it. For this reason, the Unconscious is not to be considered either existent or non-existent.

'Q.: What kind of thing do you call it, then?

'A.: The term "thing" is inapplicable here.

'Q.: If so, what term is applicable?

'A.: No designation is possible. Hence the Unconscious. It is beyond characterization. The reason why it is spoken of here at all is that questions are asked about it. If no questions were ever raised, there would be no talking about it whatever. For instance, when the mirror has no objects

¹ 686-760. He was one of the most noteworthy characters in the early history of Zen thought.

² Professor Hu Shih, of Peiping University, published in 1930 Shên-hui's sayings as recovered from the Tun-huang cave. The present author's is also one of the ancient MSS. preserved in the cave, but it differs from the Hu Shih edition in several respects. The quotation here cited is taken from the author's own; the reader who is already in possession of the Hu Shih will notice certain dissimilarities recognizable even in these translations.

³ Cf. Hu Shih, pp. 115-16.

before it, there will be no images in it. That images are now perceivable in it is due to the fact that it stands before objects. Images are therefore there.

'Q.: If the mirror has no objects before it, is it illuminating, or not illuminating?

'A.: I just spoke of its illuminating objects, but whether it stands before an object or not, it is ever illuminating.

'Q.: If it has no form, if it is not to be described in any sense, as it is altogether beyond existence and non-existence, and yet if it is said to be illuminating, what does it illuminate?

'A.: When the mirror is said to be illuminating, it is because its self-nature has this quality of brightness. When the Mind of all beings is pure, the great light of knowledge which by nature belongs to it will illuminate all the worlds.

'Q.: If this be the case, when is it possible to have it?

'A.: Only by seeing into nothingness (*wu*).

'Q.: Nothingness—is this not something to see?

'A.: Though there is the act of seeing, the object is not to be designated as a "something".

'Q.: If it is not to be designated as a "something", what is the seeing?

'A.: To see into where there is no "something"—this is true seeing, this is eternal seeing.'

A little further on Shên-hui continues:

'Q.: What is meant by the Unconscious (*wu-nien*)?

'A.: Not to think (*nien*) of being and non-being, not to think of good and evil, not to think of limit and no-limit, not to think of measurement, not to think of Bodhi (enlightenment), not to fix your thought on Bodhi, not to think of Nirvāṇa, not to fix your thought on Nirvāṇa—this is to attain the Unconscious.

'This Unconscious¹ is no other than Prajñāpāramitā, and Prajñāpāramitā is no other than Ekavyūha-Samādhi.² Good friends, if those who are still in the stage of the

¹ The MS. has here *wu* (un-) only, which the translator takes for *wu-nien*, i.e. 'un-conscious'.

² The term occurs in the *Śaptaśatikā-Prajñāpāramitā* taught by Mañjuśrī. See my *Zen Essays*, Second Series, p. 151fn.

learner conceive a thought (*nien*) in their minds, this thought may lead up to enlightenment; but when even such a thought is no more stirred in their minds, enlightenment itself will be no longer—which is no other than the Unconscious. In the Unconscious there are no states;¹ if there are any states [to be referred to as something definable in one's mind], they are not in accord with the Unconscious. . . . Those who see into the Unconscious have their senses cleansed of defilements. Those who see into the Unconscious are moving towards Buddha-wisdom. Those who see into the Unconscious are known to be with Reality. Those who see into the Unconscious are in the Middle Path, in the ultimate truth itself. Those who see into the Unconscious are furnished at once with merits as numerous as the sands of the Gangā. Those who see into the Unconscious are able to create all kinds of things. Those who see into the Unconscious embrace all things within themselves. . . .

When a man has a most decided realization he remains unmoved as solidly as Vajra, and because he has seen into the Unconscious, he sits in perfect quietude even when in the clash of armies a forest of swords cuts him to pieces. Even when the Buddhas like the sands of the Gangā come to greet him, not a thought of happiness is stirred in his mind. Even when beings like the sands of the Gangā are destroyed all at once, not a thought of grief is stirred in his mind. For this strong-willed man has attained Śūnyatā (emptiness) and Samacittatā (equal-mindedness).²

The Lord Szū-tao wanted to know if this teaching of the Unconscious was meant for holy men or for ordinary people. He was evidently doubtful as to the value of such an exalted teaching for the latter. Answered Shên-hui, the master, 'The teaching of the Unconscious belongs to holy men, but if the ordinary man disciplines himself in it, he is no more an ordinary man.'³

¹ *Ching-chieh*, that is, particular states of mind definable in one way or another; enlightenment too is one of such states, and is to be transcended by those who really wish to attain the Unconscious.

The term *wu-nien* is given not only to ultimate reality itself, where all individual consciousness finds its final abode, but to the functioning of Reality in our minds. It is by this functioning that our empirical psychological consciousness is enabled to dive down into the abysmal depths of Reality. And this functioning is not to be separated from Reality, the Unconscious. Consciousness so called may thus be regarded as the field where the Unconscious functions. But when we have cut ourselves off from the source by imagining that our consciousness is an independent and ultimate reality, we have gone astray and know not where to go or where to stop—the result being a state of utmost spiritual unrest. However this may be, the Lord Szū-tao wishes to know what *wu*, ‘to annul’, means and what *nien*, ‘to think of’, means.

‘A.: “To annul” means to annul the notion of duality, “to think” is to think of Suchness.

‘Q.: What is the difference between one who thinks and Suchness itself?

‘A.: There is no distinction between the two.

‘Q.: If there is no distinction, why this thinking of Suchness?

‘A.: “To think of” is the function of Suchness, and Suchness is the body of this thinking. For this reason, non-thinking [or to be unconscious, *wu-nien*] is said to be the principle [of Zen teaching]. When this is attained [the Unconscious], with all its seeing, hearing, recollecting, and knowing, remains for ever quiet and empty.’

7

With Tai-chu Hui-hai,¹ the Unconscious still continues to be one of the deeply absorbing subjects for discussion. While there is nothing especially new in his point of view, the following may be culled from his work called the

¹ A disciple of Ma-tsu (died 788).

*Tun-wu Ju-tao Yao-mên Lun.*¹ Hui-hai distinguishes between *hsieh nien* and *chêng nien*² and says that in the Unconscious there is right thought but no wrong thought.

'Q.: What is right thought?

'A.: Right thought is to be conscious of Bodhi, enlightenment.

'Q.: Is Bodhi attainable?

'A.: No, it is unattainable.

'Q.: If it is unattainable, how can one think of it?

'A.: As to Bodhi, it is no more than a provisionally made-up word, and there is no [corresponding individual reality to be the object of sense-] attainment. Nor is there any one who has ever attained it in the past or ever will attain it in the future; for it is something beyond attainability. Thus there is nothing for one to think of, except the Unconscious itself. This is called true thought.

'Bodhi means not to have any thought on anything [i.e. to be unconscious of all things]. To be unconscious of all things is to have no-mind (*wu-hsin*) on all occasions. . . . When this is understood, we have the Unconscious (*wu-nien*), and when *Wu-nien* is realized, emancipation follows by itself.'

In this passage, Hui-hai evidently identified *Wu-hsin*, no-mind, with *Wu-nien*, no-thought, and as they mean the same thing, they can be translated as 'the Unconscious' or 'to be unconscious' according to the case. *Wu-hsin* was used by Bodhidharma and *Wu-nien* by Hui-nêng and Shên-hui. Hui-hai, here using them as synonyms, explains Bodhi (enlightenment) and Moksha (emancipation) by them. Whatever this is, the ultimate end of Zen discipline consists, to use more popular phraseology, in not having any attachment to anything, because everything belonging to this world of particulars is predictable in one way or another and not at all final. Final reality is above all categories, and therefore beyond thinkability or attainability;

¹ 'Discourse on the Entering into Truth by Means of Immediate Understanding.' This is one of the most interesting and illuminating works on Zen Buddhism when it was about to attain its full development after Hui-nêng.

² Wrong thought, right thought.

'The monk-scholar failed to answer this, and had to admit the unsurpassability of the master. After a while he asked again:

'S.: How can one attain Great Nirvāṇa?

'M.: Have no karma that works for transmigration.

'S.: What is the karma for transmigration?

'M.: To seek after Great Nirvāṇa, to abandon the defiled and take to the undefiled, to assert that there is something attainable and something realizable, not to be free from the teaching of opposites—this is the karma that works for transmigration.

'S.: How can one be emancipated?

'M.: No bondage from the very first, and what is the use of seeking emancipation? Act as you will, go on as you feel—without second thought. This is the incomparable way.

'S.: The master is really a wonderful personage.

'So saying, they bowed and retired.'

8

As this is not meant to be a history of Zen thought in the T'ang dynasty (A.D. 618-922), I shall not quote many more masters except Chao-chou T'sung-shên (778-897) and Lin-chi (died 867) and some others. For these will sufficiently show where Zen teaching was drifting, and how finally Zen masters themselves attempted to bring it into harmonious accord with the Indian phraseology and way of thinking in the sūtras.

The following was once given out by Chao-chou T'sung-shên¹ in one of his sermons:

'The Bronze buddha is not to be placed in the furnace, the wooden Buddha is not to be placed in fire, the clay Buddha is not to be placed in the water. The true Buddha sits in the interior. Bodhi and Nirvāṇa, Suchness and Buddha-nature—all these are outer clothings too tightly

¹ In his *Sayings* (*wu-lu*).

fitting the body. They are also known as defilements (*klesā*). When no questions are asked, there are no defilements. In the limit of reality, in the ground of absolute truth, there is nothing there to which you get yourselves attached. When no thoughts are stirred within yourselves, no faults are committed anywhere. In order to reach the depths of Reality, only sit down quietly, say, for twenty or thirty years, and if you still fail to understand, cut off this old man's head. All things are like a dream, a vision, an ethereal flower, and to run after them is an altogether idle occupation. When you can keep your thoughts from wandering about, all things will go on well with you. Nothing comes to you from the outside, why then get busy with these? What boots it just to go around like a sheep sticking its nose into every corner, picking up any old thing, and putting it into its mouth? When I was with Shih-t'ou, he used to say whenever anybody asked him a question, "Close your mouth, no barking like a dog!" I follow his example and say, "Close your mouth, no barking like a dog!" There is defilement when the ego is asserted, there is purity when it is not asserted. You are like a hunting dog, and only wish to have something in your mouth. If so, when can you come to the understanding of Buddhism? Thousands, nay, tens of thousands of people all go about seeking Buddhahood. There is none indeed who can be called a true man. If you wish really to be disciples of the King of Emptiness, beware of becoming incurably sick in mind. Even before the world was, this Reality is; this Reality remains undestroyed when the world is no more. Ever since my interview with this old man, I am no other person than myself—I am master of myself. It does not profit you to seek this man in the outside world. When he is right here do not fail, by turning round and looking in the wrong way, to interview him.'

Chao-chou's 'Sayings' consists mostly of 'questions and answers', and not many sermons are to be found in it. What sermons there are, are very short and to the point.

The master once came up to the pulpit, and for a while remained silent. Finally he said, 'Are you all here, or not?'

'All here, master.'

'I withhold my discourse until another one turns up.'

'I will tell you when no one turns up,' said a monk.

'Difficult indeed to know the man,' the master remarked.

Another time the master told the monks: 'When a thought moves, multiplicities of things rise; when no thoughts are aroused, multiplicities vanish. What do you say to this?'

A monk remarked, 'How about it when thoughts neither rise nor disappear?'

The master said, 'I grant you this question.'¹

The master on another occasion declared: 'When you say it is all bright, it is not quite so; the pathway is still dark as at twilight. Whereabouts are you?'

A monk said, 'I am on neither side.'

'If so, you are in the midway.'

'If in the midway, that means to be on either side.'

'You seem to have stayed with me for some time, since you have learned to make such a statement. But you have not yet gone beyond the triple statement. Even though you may say you have gone beyond it, I declare you are still in it. What would you say to it?'

'I know how to use the triple statement.'

Said the master, 'Why did you not say so before this?'

Another time Chao-chou's remark was: 'The Great Way is right before your eye, but difficult to see.'

A monk asked, 'What form does it take so that we can see it before us?'

'To the south of the River or to the north of it just as you please.'

[Continued on page 50]

¹ Cf. the teaching of the Unconscious (*wu-hsin* or *wu-nien*) as expounded by Bodhidharma, etc.

Once Chao-chou asked Nan-ch'üan, 'Please say a word that goes beyond the four statements and one hundred negations.'¹

Nan-ch'üan uttered not a word but went back to his own quarter.

Chao-chou said, 'Our old master ordinarily talks glibly enough, but when he is asked, he utters not a word.'

The attendant remarked, 'You had better not say that.'

Chao-chou gave him a slap.

Nan-ch'üan then closed the gate leading to his quarters, and scattering ashes around, said to the monks, 'If you can say a word, the gate will be opened.'

There were many who expressed their views, but the master Nan-ch'üan was not pleased with any of them.

Chao-chou gave the exclamation, 'O heavens!'

Nan-ch'üan then opened the gate.

9

Lin-chi was one of the greatest masters of the ninth century, and it is his school which is still flourishing in Japan and China, though in the latter country Zen itself is somewhat on the wane. Lin-chi's 'Sayings' are regarded by many as the strongest Zen treatise we have. One of his sermons runs:

'The main thing in the study of Buddhism now is to understand it in the proper way. When there is the proper understanding of it, a man is not defiled by birth-and-death; wherever he goes he enjoys perfect freedom. He may not seek to achieve anything specifically excellent, but this will come by itself.

'Friends, the ancient masters all had their way of helping others; as to my method, it consists in keeping others away from being deceived. If you want to use what you have in yourselves, use it, do not stand wavering. What is the trouble with students these days that they are unable to

¹ Briefly, 'What is the Absolute?'

reach realization? The trouble lies in their not believing themselves enough. As you are not believing enough, you are buffeted about by the surrounding conditions in which you may find yourselves. Being enslaved and turned around by objective situations, you have no freedom whatever, you are not masters of yourselves. If you cease from running after outward things all the time, you will be like the old masters.

'Do you wish to know what the old masters were like? They were no other than those who are right before you listening to my discourse. Where faith is lacking, there is constant pursuing after outward objects. And what you gain by this pursuing is mere literary excellence which is far from the life of old masters. Make here no mistake, O my friends!

'If you miss it in this life, you will have to go through the triple world for ever so many kalpas. If you run after and cling to your own enjoyments, you will be reborn in the womb of an ass or a cow.

'Friends, as far as I can see, my insight into Reality and that of Śākyamuni himself are in perfect agreement. As we move along, each according to his way, what is wanting to us? Are we not all sufficient unto ourselves? The light emanating from each one of our six senses knows no interruptions, no obstructions. When your insight is thus penetrating enough, peaceful indeed is your life!

'Reverend Sirs, there is no rest in this triple world, which is like a house on fire. It is no abode for any of you long to remain in. The devil of impermanence may visit any of us at any moment regardless of rank and age. If you desire to be like the old masters, do not look outward. The light of purity which shines out of every thought you conceive is the Dharmakāya within yourselves. The light of non-discrimination that shines out of every thought you conceive is the Sambhogakāya within yourselves. The light of non-differentiation that shines out of every thought you conceive is the Nirmāṇakāya within yourselves. And this triple body is no other than the person listening to my discourse

this very moment right in front of each of you. The reason why these mysteries are possible is because one ceases to pursue outward objects.

'According to scholars, this triple body is the ultimate reality of things. But as I see into the matter, this triple body is no more than mere words, and then each body has something else on which it depends. An ancient doctor says that the body is dependent on its meaning, and the ground is describable by its substance. Being so, we know that Dharma-body and the Dharma-ground are reflections of the [original] light. Reverend Sirs, let us take hold of this person who handles these reflections. For he is the source of all the Buddhas and the house of truth-seekers everywhere. The body made up of the four elements does not understand how to discourse or how to listen to a discourse. Nor do the liver, the stomach, the kidneys, the bowels. Nor does vacuity of space. That which is most unmistakably perceivable right before your eyes, though without form, yet absolutely identifiable—this is what understands the discourse and listens to it.

'When this is thoroughly seen into, there is no difference between yourselves and the old masters. Only let not your insight be interrupted through all the periods of time, and you will be at peace with whatever situation you come into. When wrong imaginations are stirred, the insight is no more immediate; when thoughts are changeable, the essence is no more the same. For this reason, we transmute in the triple world and suffer varieties of pain. As I view the matter in my way, deep indeed is [Reality], and there is none who is not destined for emancipation.

'Friends, Mind has no form and penetrates every corner of the universe. In the eye it sees, in the ear it hears, in the nose it smells, in the mouth it talks, in the hand it seizes, in the leg it runs. The source is just one illuminating essence, which divides itself into six functioning units. Let all interfering thoughts depart from Mind, and you experience emancipation wherever you go. What do you think is my idea of talking to you like this? I simply wish to see you stop

wandering after external objects, for it is because of this hankering that the old masters play tricks on you.

‘Friends, when you come to view things as I do, you are able to sit over the heads of the Enjoyment- and Transformation-Buddhas; the Bodhisattvas who have successfully mounted the scale of ten stages look like hirelings; those who have attained the stage of full enlightenment resemble prisoners in chains; the Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas are cesspools; Bodhi and Nirvāṇa are a stake to which donkeys are fastened. Why so? Because, O Friends, you have not yet attained the view whereby all kalpas are reduced to Emptiness. When this is not realized, there are all such hindrances. It is not so with the true man who has an insight into Reality. He gives himself up to all manner of situations in which he finds himself in obedience to his past karma. He appears in whatever garments are ready for him to put on. As it is desired of him either to move or to sit quietly, he moves or sits. He has not a thought of running after Buddhahood. He is free from such pinings. Why is it so with him? Says an ancient sage, “When the Buddha is sought after, he is the cause of transmigration.”

‘Reverend Sirs, time is not to be wasted. Do not commit yourselves to a grave mistake by convulsively looking around your neighbourhood and not within yourselves. You make mistakes by trying to master Zen, to master the Way, to learn words and phrases, to seek for Buddhas and Fathers and good friends. There is just one parenthood for you, and outside of it what do you wish to acquire? Just look within yourselves. The Buddha tells us the story of Yajñadatta. Thinking he had lost his head, he wildly ran after it; but when he found that he had never lost it, he became a peaceful man. O Friends, be just yourselves, stop your hysterical antics. There are some old bald-headed fools who know not good from bad. They recognize all kinds of things, they see spirits, they see ghosts, they look this way and that way, they like fair weather, they like rainy weather. If they go on like this, they are sure one day to appear before the King of Death, who will ask them to pay up their debts by

swallowing red-hot iron balls. Sons and daughters of good families become possessed of this uncanny fox-spirit and go wildly astray even against their original sanity. Poor blind followers! Some day they will have to pay up their board.'

Here we see Lin-chi as a great smasher of the conventional Buddhism whose ideas are ordinarily couched in Indian phraseology. He did not like the round-about way in which Buddhist experience was treated by philosophers and learned doctors. He wanted to reach the goal directly. He destroyed every obstacle that was found in his approach to Reality. He wielded his Vajra right and left, not only against those intellectualists but against the Zen masters of his day. He stands so majestically among his contemporaries, and no doubt his attitude appealed greatly to the Chinese mind. Chinese psychology is practical and does not like to be hampered by too many conventionalities, intellectual and otherwise. It produced Lao-tzū and Chuang-tzū, and asserted itself again with Zen, especially in the Lin-chi method of handling Zen. Quite refreshing and vivifying it is to see Lin-chi all naked and shorn of trumperies in his wrestling with Zen.

But at the same time it will be well to remember that this Zen attitude towards Buddhist lore and philosophy tended to slight its study in an orderly manner, to neglect the sūtras and what metaphysics there is in them.

10

In the following sections more Zen masters will be quoted who lived between late T'ang and early Sung. The object is to see the trend of development of Zen teaching when it gradually superseded the other Buddhist schools in China. At the same time we will notice in what relation their sermons and 'questions and answers' stand to the sūtra teaching which is characteristically Indian.

Yang-shan Hui-chi¹ gave among others the following sermon: 'You monks, turning back your light look within; do not try to memorize my words. Since the beginningless past you have turned your backs to your light, throwing yourselves into darkness. The root of false thinking goes deeply into the ground; it is hard to pull it out. The many contrivances are meant for the destruction of coarser imaginations. They are like the yellow leaves given to a child to stop its crying. They are in themselves of no value whatever. Again, it is like a shop where all sorts of goods are sold together with genuine golden wares. The goods light and heavy are delivered to suit the requirements of the customers. So, I say, Shih-t'ou keeps a shop dealing in solid gold only, but mine handles varieties of wares. If a man comes for a rat's droppings I let him have them. If he wants solid gold, I also meet his wish.'

A monk came out and said, 'I do not wish a rat's droppings, but give me, master, a piece of solid gold.'

Yang-shan said, 'One who tries to open his mouth while biting the point of an arrow is for ever unable to understand.'

The monk made no reply.

The master continued: 'When sought out and called for, there is an exchange of goods; but with no seeking, no calling, there will be no exchange of any sort. When I demonstrate Zen in its genuine form, nobody is able to accompany me however much he may desire it; much less a company of five or seven hundred. But when I talk this way and that, they crowd into my room and view with one another to pick up whatever leavings there are. It is like cheating a child with an empty palm; in truth there is nothing real. I now tell you most distinctly where the holy man's abode is. Do not attempt to work out your various imaginations on the matter. Only sincerely discipline yourselves so as to be in the ocean of your original nature. The sciences and miracles are not needed at all. Why not? Because such are the fringes of Reality. When you want to

¹ Chuan, XI.

know Mind, penetrate into the very source of things. Attain the source, and the rest need not bother you; some day you will come to a realization and know what I mean. But so long as you are kept away from the source, nothing else will be of any value to you; with all your learning and knowledge you are not there yet. Has not Wei-shan the master told us this? When all your imaginations, holy and worldly, are exhausted, Reality presents itself, true and eternal, in the unity of One and Many, and this is where the Buddha of Suchness abides.'

Yao-shan Wei-yen¹ was one day approached by a monk, who said to him, 'I have a doubt which I wish you would settle.' The master replied, 'Wait till the time comes for my sermon when I will settle it.'

The evening came, the master appeared in the hall, the monks were all gathered.

'Where is the monk who wished today to have his doubt settled?'

The monk came out of the gathering and stood before the master. The master thereupon came down from his chair, and seizing the monk said, 'O monks, here is one who has a doubt.' Releasing him then, the master went back to his room.

One evening Yao-shan climbed the mountain for a walk. Seeing the moon suddenly appearing from behind the clouds he laughed most heartily. The laugh echoed ninety *li* east of Li-yang where his monastery was. The villagers thought the voice came from their neighbours. In the morning the inquiry went eastwards from one door to another until it reached the monastery, and the villagers concluded, 'Last night the master gave us the greatest laugh of his life at the top of the mountain.' Li-ao, philosopher-governor of the Lang-chou,² who was one of Yao-shan's lay-disciples, composed a poem on the incident and sent it to the master:

¹ *Chuan*, XIV.

² See also my *Zen Essays*, Series II, Plate facing p. 256.

A lonely shelter is chosen,
His rustic taste is appeased;
None to greet, none to bid adieu,
Alone all the year round is he.
One eve he climbed
Straight up the solitary peak;
Revealed in the clouds the moon he saw,
And what a hearty laugh he gave!

Chao-chou Tai-tien¹ was a disciple of Shih-t'ou, and even after his retirement in Ling-chou he was besieged by monks. This is one of his sermons:

'Those who wish to master the truth must know first what is their own original Mind. This is attained when it is pointed out by means of its forms and manifestations. But most people nowadays, being unable to penetrate into the very essence of things, are falsely led to take a mere raising of the eyebrows, glancing this way and that way, remaining silent, or uttering a word, for the finality of Zen truth. In point of fact, this is far from being satisfactory. I will tell you now most plainly how to proceed in this matter, and you will listen attentively. Only when all your erroneous imaginations, thought-constructions, and experiences are put aside, will you come to the realization of your true Mind. This Mind has nothing to do with a world of defilements, with your being silent, with your holding on to quietude. Mind is no other than Buddha, and there is in it no artifice, no elaboration. Why? It responds to calls, it illuminates objects as they come, and its functions are cool and self-originating. The mysterious source of all these activities is beyond conception. And we call this mystery our own original Mind. Take heed, monks, not to let it wander away from your hold.'

When Yüan-chih and Yün-yen² were attending on their master Yao-shan, the latter said: 'Where human understanding fails to reach, refrain by all means from putting in

¹ Chuan, XIV.

² Chuan, XIV.

any words; if you do, horns will grow on your head.
 Brother Chih, what would you say to this?"

Yüan-chih without saying a word left the room.

Yün-yen asked the master, "Why did not Brother Chih answer you?"

The master said: "My back aches today. You'd better go to Chih himself and ask, for he understands."

Yün-yen now sought out Brother Chih and asked, "How is it that you gave no answer to our master just now?"

Yüan-chih remarked, "It's best for you to ask master himself."

Later, Yün-chü was asked by a monk, "What did Yao-shan mean when he said, "Refrain by all means from putting in any words"?"

Yün-chü said, "This is full of poison."

The monk further asked, "How is it so poisonous?"

Yün-chü simply replied, "It strikes down dragons and snakes at one blow."

Tung-shan Liang-chieh,¹ a disciple of Yün-yen and the founder of the Sōtō School of Zen Buddhism, said: "Even when you say straightway that from the very beginning there is not a thing, this does not entitle you to be an inheritor of Zen tradition. I want you to say a word in this connection. What would you say?"

There was a monk who expressed himself ninety-six times to please the master. Each time he failed until he had his ninety-seventh trial. The master blurted out, "Why did you not say that sooner?"

Later on, another monk learning of the incident came to the first monk and asked him to repeat the answer he had given to the master. For three years the second monk was in attendance upon the first monk in order to learn the secret from his own mouth. No chance, however, was given to the contriving attendant-monk. In the meantime the first monk fell sick. The attendant-monk made up his mind to get the desired answer by any means, fair or foul. "I have

¹ *Chuan*, XV.

been with you for these three years wishing for you to tell me about your answer given to the master. You have persistently refused to acquiesce in my request. If I cannot get it by any honest means, I am going to get it this way.' So saying, he drew his sword and continued, 'If you refuse once more to give me the answer, I am ready to take your life.'

The first monk was taken aback and said: 'Wait, for I will tell you. It is this: "Even if it is brought out, there is no place to set it."'

The murderous monk made profound bows.

Nan-ch'an Ch'i-fan¹ said: 'As to fine words and exquisite phrases, you have enough of them in other places. If today there is any one in this assembly who has gone even beyond the first principle, let him come forward and say one word. If there is, he has not betrayed our expectations.'

A monk asked, 'What is the first principle?'

'Why do you not ask the first principle?'

'I am asking it this very moment.'

'You have already fallen on a second principle.'

Chin-lun K'ê-kuan,² seeing his monks depart, called out, 'O monks!' When they turned back, he said, 'Look at the moon.' They looked at the moon. The master remarked, 'When the moon looks like a bent bow, there is more rain and less wind.' The monks made no reply.

Hsüan-sha Shih-peï³ sat quietly in his pulpit for some time without saying a word. The monks thought he was not going to give them a sermon and began to retire all at once. He then scolded them: 'As I observe, you are all of one pattern; not one of you has sagacity enough to see things properly. You have come here to see me open my mouth, and, taking hold of my words, imagine they are ultimate truths. It is a pity that you all fail to know what's what. As long as you remain like this, what a calamity!'

¹ Chuan, XIX.

² Chuan, XIX.

³ Chuan, XVIII.

Yên-jui of Yang-lung monastery¹ came up to the pulpit, the monks crowded into the hall; the master rose from his seat and danced and said, 'Do you understand?'

'No, master,' the monks answered.

Yên-jui demanded, 'I performed, without abandoning my religion, a deed belonging to the world; why do you not understand?'

Hsüan-fa of the Lo-han² once gave this: 'In this whole universe, extending to the furthest ends of infinity, there is not a bit of doctrine which I can give you as an object of learning, study, or perception comparable even to a particle of dust. This, however, is beyond you until you have had an insight into Reality. Do not make light of it. Have you not heard an old master say this, "If you are unable to understand the multiplicities of your actual experience, however clear your perception of your own self may be, your insight is not comprehensive enough"?' Do you follow me, monks?'

A monk asked, 'When a proposition, not even as little as a particle of dust, is asserted, how do these multitudes of good and bad come into our sight?'

'Distinctly committing this to your memory, go and ask elsewhere.'

'The monks are crowding here, and who among them has gained an insight to this?'

'Who has ever lost it?' was the counter-question of the master.

Another monk asked, 'Who is the Buddha?'

The master asserted, 'You are a monk-pilgrim.'

When Tao-ch'ien³ first saw Ching-hui, Hui was much impressed with him. One day Hui asked, 'What sūtras do you read besides your study of Zen?'

'I read the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*.'

'The sūtra refers to the six aspects of existence; general

¹ Chuan, XXII.

² Chuan, XXV.

³ Chuan, XXV.

The master recited the following:

'Walking up the mountain path I come to the source of the stream;

While sitting in quietude I watch how the clouds rise.'

II

I have given here sufficient varieties of Zen sermons and *mondo* ('questions and answers') to show how Zen developed in its characteristic way during the three hundred years after Hui-nêng. We can say, after examining all these examples promiscuously culled from biographies of the Zen masters in T'ang and Sung, that Zen has succeeded to a certain extent in establishing itself on the basis of Chinese psychological experiences. Not only is this true in the terminology which the masters have adopted to express themselves, but in the way by which their experiences are made communicable. Zen Buddhism has achieved a unique development in the history of religion and of mysticism generally.

The one thing I wish especially to notice in this connection is that the Zen neglect of the latter and consequently of philosophy began to manifest an undesirable tendency in the tenth century. By this I mean that the study of scholastic Buddhism was regarded by Zen masters and especially by their followers, to a degree which was more than actually necessary, as a pair of worn-out straw sandals—an attitude which hindered rather than helped Zen realization. Such an attitude was justifiable in a sense, but when it is carried to excess, as was perhaps the case with ignorant followers of Zen, Zen turns into antinomianism, and licentiousness becomes confounded with the free movement of the spirit.

There is a history of Chinese Buddhism written early in the thirteenth century from the standpoint of the T'ien-t'ai sect. It is entitled *The Orthodox Transmission of the Śākya*

likely mere learners of the letter, but those who came to interview the Zen masters are recorded to have experienced an ignoble defeat in one way or another. Besides, did the masters actually forbid the study of the sūtras? In Hui-hai's writings we have this:

A monk asked, 'Why do you not allow us to recite the sūtras which are regarded as recording other people's words?'

The master explained. 'It is like a parrot repeating human language without understanding what it means. The sūtras transmit the thought of the Buddha; if you read them without understanding the sense this is just repeating his words. This is why the sūtra-reading is not permitted.'

The monk asked again, 'Can the meaning be expressed by other means than words and letters?'

The master said, 'What you say is again repeating another's words.'

'Words are the same everywhere, and why are you so prejudiced against me?'

'You listen, O monk, for I will tell you. In the sūtra it is distinctly stated that "What I teach contains words full of meaning and not mere words; but what ordinary people talk are mere words and have no meaning. Those who know the meaning have gone beyond senseless words; those who have an insight into Reason have transcended the letter. The teaching itself is more than words and letters, and why should we seek it in numbers and phrases?" This being so, he who is awakened to Bodhi attains the meaning and forgets words, has an insight into Reason and leaves the teaching behind. It is like a man's forgetting the creel when he has the fish, or his forgetting the noose when he has the hare.'

Yao-shan was one day reading a sūtra when a monk appeared and asked, 'Master, you ordinarily do not allow us to read the sūtras, and how is it that you yourself are reading one?'

The master said, 'I just want to keep it before my eyes.' 'Cannot I follow your example?'

'In your case, your eyesight ought to be penetrating enough to go through the cow-hide.'¹

This making light of sūtra-study on the part of the Zen masters shows its symptoms already at the time of Hui-nêng. According to his *Tan-ching* ('Platform Sermons') as we have it today, Hui-nêng did not know how to read, and when he was asked to explain the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* and the *Puṇḍarika Sūtra*, he said, 'I cannot read, you read it for me, and then I will tell you what is the meaning.' It is true that there are as many parrot-like followers of the scriptures among Buddhists as among Christians, but at the same time we cannot ignore the letter altogether, as it is one of the important vehicles not only of thought but of feeling and of spiritual experience.

The Zen masters were all right so far as they themselves were considered, but their ignorant and half-enlightened followers were always ready to go beyond the limits and to justify their own ignorance by claiming to imitate their masters. It was quite natural, therefore, to find some movement among the masters themselves to effect a reconciliation between Zen and sūtra-learning. This meant that the Chinese genius was to be nourished and enriched by the Indian imagination.

That the *Gaṇḍavyūha* together with other sūtras came to be systematically utilized for the philosophical interpretation of the Zen experience need not now surprise us. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* especially, with its rich and beautiful imageries, whose equal could not be found in the whole range of Chinese literature, provided a timely and fitting support to which Zen could be affixed for its sound healthy growth.

If Zen retained the idea that the dispensing with the letter accomplished the whole thing, its achievement in the history of Buddhist life in China could not be very great. Of course, to rise above fine phraseology and mere abstraction is in itself a weighty thing; for when this is

¹ Yang-shan once declared that the forty fascicles of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* are no less than the Devil's talk. (Quoted by T'ui-yin in his *Mirror for Zen Students*.)

successfully achieved, we can say that nine-tenths of the work is finished. But at the same time we must remember that there is a positive work for the Zen master to carry out. The insight he has gained into Reality must be organized into a system of intuitions so that it will grow richer in content. The insight itself is contentless, for to be so is its very condition. As soon as it begins to have something in it, it ceases to be itself. But this contentlessness of Zen insight is not an abstraction. If so, it turns into a metaphysical idea and is to be so treated, that is, according to the logic of epistemology. Hereby Zen loses its reason. In point of fact the insight is dynamical; in other words, it is characterized by fluidity. It thus gains its meaning by being connected with other intuitions, the *ensemble* of which really constitutes the Buddhist life. The study of the sūtras thus could not be neglected by the followers of Zen, however much they revolted against it.

To reduce all existence with its multiplicities into Śūnyatā (emptiness) is the great accomplishment of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*—one of the highest achievements carried out by the Indian mind. To hold up the realization of noble wisdom (*pratyātmāryajñānagocara*) as the foundation of the Buddhist life is the mission of the *Laṅkāvatāra* as far as the Zen interpretation of it is concerned, and this too is something the Chinese Buddhists before Bodhidharma did not quite fully comprehend. But if the Zen masters had not had something more for the consolidation of their work, the life of Zen could not have effected such a signal success in the general moulding of the spiritual life of the Far-Eastern peoples. The grand intuitions—grand not only in scope and comprehensiveness but in penetration—which make up the substance of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* are the most imposing monument erected by the Indian mind to the spiritual life of all mankind. Zen thus inevitably takes up its abode also in the royal palatial structure of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. Zen becomes one of its incalculable Vyūhas. To describe it from another point of view, Zen develops into all the Vyūhas that are the ornaments of the Dharmadhātu.

the Buddha enters into a certain kind of Samādhi, the pavilion where he is situated all of a sudden expands to the fullest limits of the universe; in other words, the universe itself is dissolved in the being of the Buddha. The universe is the Buddha, and the Buddha is the universe. And this is not mere expanse of emptiness, nor is it the shrivelling-up of it into an atom; for the ground is paved with diamonds; the pillars, beams, railings, etc., are inlaid with all kinds of precious stones and gems sparkling brilliantly, and glittering with the reflection of one another.

Not only is the universe of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* not on this side of existence, but the audience surrounding the Buddha is not a mortal one. The Bodhisattvas, the Śrāvakas, and even the worldly lords who are assembling here are all spiritual beings. Though the Śrāvakas and lords and their followers do not fully comprehend the significance of the miracles going on about them, none of them are those whose minds are still under the bondage of ignorance and folly. If they were, they could not even be present at this extraordinary scene.

How does all this come about?

The compilation of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* was made possible owing to a definite change which took place in the mind of the Buddhist concerning life, the world, and especially the Buddha. Thus in the study of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, what is most essential to know is that that the Buddha is no more the one who is living in the world conceivable in terms of space and time. His consciousness is not that of an ordinary mind which must be regulated according to the senses and logic. Nor is it a product of poetical imagination which creates its own images and methods of dealing with particular objects. The Buddha of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* lives in a spiritual world which has its own rules.

In this spiritual world there are no time-divisions such as the past, present, and future; for they have contracted themselves into a single moment of the present where life quivers in its true sense. The conception of time as an objective blank in which particular events as its contents

succeed one after another has completely been discarded. The Buddha in the *Gaṇḍa* thus knows no time-continuity; the past and the future are both rolled up in this present moment of illumination, and this present moment is not something standing still with all its contents, for it ceaselessly moves on. Thus the past is the present, so is the future, but this present in which the past and the future are merged never remains the present; in other words, it is eternally present. And at the centre of this eternal present the Buddha has fixed his abode which is no abode.

Space. As with time, so with space. Space in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is not an extension divided by mountains and forests, rivers and oceans, lights and shades, the visible and the invisible. Extension is here indeed, as there is no contraction of space into one single block of existence; but what we have here is an infinite mutual fusion or penetration of all things, each with its individuality yet with something universal in it. The general fusion thus taking place is the practical annihilation of space which is recognizable only through change and division and impenetrability. To illustrate this state of existence, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* makes everything it depicts transparent and luminous, for luminosity is the only possible earthly representation that conveys the idea of universal interpenetration, the ruling topic of the sūtra. A world of lights transcending distance, opacity, and ugliness of all sorts, is the world of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.

With the annihilation of space and time, there evolves a realm of imagelessness or shadowlessness (*anābhāsa*). As long as there are lights and shades, the principle of individuation always overwhelms us human mortals. In the *Gaṇḍavyūha* there is no shadowiness; it is true there are rivers, flowers, trees, nets, banners, etc., in the land of purity, in the description of which the compiler taxes his human imagination to its utmost limits; but no shadows are visible here anywhere. The clouds themselves are luminous bodies inconceivable and inexpressible in number,¹ hanging all over the Jetavana of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*—which are described

¹ *Acintya* and *anabhilāpya* are numbers of high denominations.

other. This meant that Buddhism, instead of being a practical, social, everyday religion, had turned into a sort of mysticism which keeps its votaries on the giddy height of unapproachable abstractions making them refuse to descend among earthly entanglements. Such a religion may be all very well for the *élite*, for Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas, but it lacks vitality and democratic usefulness when it is kept from coming in contact with the concrete affairs of life. The Mahāyānists revolted against this aloofness and unconcernedness of the Śrāvaka-ideal. Thus they could not help reviving and upholding the Bodhisattva-ideal, which marked the career of the Buddha before his attainment of supreme enlightenment; they then endeavoured to unfold to its furthest limits all that was to be found in the ideal. I have therefore selected the opening chapter of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, where the Bodhisattva-ideal is contrasted in strong colour to the Śrāvaka-ideal, to show what was in the consciousness of the Mahāyāna followers when they developed their own thoughts and aspirations.

Towards the end of this Essay, I intend briefly to touch upon the further progress of the Bodhisattva-ideal among the Zen followers in China. They have induced even the Buddha himself to take an active part in the common life of the masses. He no more sits on a high seat decorated with seven kinds of jewels, discoursing on such abstract subjects as Non-ego, Emptiness, or Mind-only. On the contrary, he takes up a spade in his hands, tills the ground, sow seeds, and garners the harvest. In outward appearances he cannot be distinguished from a commoner whom we meet on the farm, in the street, or in the office. He is just as hard-working a person as we are. The Buddha in his Chinese Zen life does not carry his *Gaṇḍavyūha* atmosphere ostentatiously about him but quietly within him. A Buddha alone discovers him.

The following points may then be noted in the reading of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*:

1. The one dominant feeling, we may almost assert, that runs through the text is an active sense of grand inscrutable

no such inquiries belonging to a world of relativity are needed. For this reason, Yüeh's triple question can be considered essentially simple and reducible in this case to the question, 'Where is your self-nature?' (i.e. 'Where is your abode?')—the abode from which all your activities rise. And this abode is the abode of Bodhisattvahood, the subject I wish here to treat, mainly by passages from the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.

Psychologically, the answer to 'Where?' indicates one's fundamental mental attitude towards the objective world generally, and in Zen the question usually takes the form 'Where do you come from?', by which the Zen master wishes to see where his monks find their spiritual refuge located. The whole training of Zen Buddhism, it may be said, consists in this location, or searching, or digging-down. Enlightenment, therefore, is no more than coming in touch with the rockbed of one's own being, if there is really such. The form which the question 'Where?' takes in Zen Buddhism is thus, 'Where do you come from?' This is quite a conventional question, but those who know knew what a tremendous question this is. The question may also be, 'Whither do you go?' 'Whence?' and 'Whither?'—those who can adequately answer these are really the enlightened.

The venerable Ch'ên,¹ also known as Mu-chou, where he used to reside, often asked his monks, 'Where do you come from?' or 'Where did you spend your last season?' One monk said, 'When you have your own regular residence, I will tell you where I come from.' The venerable master sarcastically remarked, 'The fox does not belong to the lion-family; a lamp does not shine like the sun or the moon.'

When this question was put to a monk who had newly arrived at his monastery, the latter opened his eyes widely and gazed at the master without saying a word. Remarked the master, 'O you who run after the horse!'

A third one answered, 'O master, I come from the west of the river.' Said the master, 'How many sandals did you wear out [to make such a stupid answer]?'

¹ A senior contemporary of Lin-chi (867). *Chuan-têng Lu*, XII.

Lin-chi's¹ answer to Huang-po, his master, is one of the most noted answers given to the question, 'Where do you go?' He said, 'If not to the south of the river, it will be to the north.'

It is thus natural that the question 'Where?' is sometimes expressed in terms relating to the master's own residence. In this case the questioner is generally the monk wanting to know what are the characteristic sights (*ching*) of the monastery where the master resides. The Chinese character *ching* means, besides, 'sights' or 'views', 'ground', 'territory', 'boundary', or 'realm', and is generally used as equivalent to the Sanskrit *gocara* or *viśaya*. *Viśaya* is 'sphere', 'dominion', 'district', 'range', 'abode', while *gocara* is 'pasture ground for cattle', 'field for action', 'dwelling-place', 'abode'. When it acquires a subjective sense, as it does in Buddhist literature, it is a general characteristic psychic or spiritual attitude a person assumes towards all stimuli. But, strictly speaking, Zen Buddhists do not regard *gocara* or *ching* as a mere attitude or tendency of mind but as something more fundamental constituting the very ground of one's being, that is to say, a field where a person in the profoundest sense lives and moves and has his reason of existence. This field is essentially determined by the depth and clarity of one's spiritual intuitions. 'What are the sights (*ching*) of your monastery?' means, therefore, 'What is your understanding of the ultimate truth of Buddhism?' or 'What is the ruling principle of your life, whereby you are what you are?' While thus the questions, 'Whence?' 'Where?' or 'Whither?' are asked of a monk who comes to a master to be enlightened, the questions as to the residence, abode, site, or sights are asked of a master who feels no more need now of going on pilgrimage for his final place of rest. These two sets of questions are, therefore, practically the same.

Lin, of Ts'ang-chi,² answered when asked about the sights of Ts'ang-chi, 'Eastward flows the mountain stream as you see it before yourself.'

¹ Died 867. *Chuan-têng Lu*, XII.

² Disciple of Yün-mên (died 949). *Chuan*, XXIII.

Ming, of Hsiang-t'an,¹ answered, 'The mountain here belongs to the Tai-yüeh range and the stream runs into the Lake Hsiao-hsiang.'

T'ai-ch'in,² of Ch'ing-liang, gave this while residing at Shang-lin, 'You cannot paint it however much you try.'

Ch'ing-hsi,³ of Yün-chü, was not apparently inclined to give any positive answer about the sights of his monastery, for his counter-question was, 'What do you mean by "sights" (*ching*)?' When the monk further asked, 'Who is the man living here?' the master was not at all communicative, and simply made this remark, 'What did I say to you just now?'

All these sayings concern the abode of Bodhisattvahood. The way the master expresses himself is characteristic of Zen Buddhism, and it may be difficult for general readers to find the connection between these statements as above cited and the following descriptions of the abode of the Bodhisattva as quoted from the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. To help them understand this, let me first quote some passages from other Mahāyāna texts with which we are already familiar.

2

In many Mahāyāna sūtras, reference is quite frequently made to 'the raising of thought unattached to anything'. One of the most famous of such phrases occurs in the *Vajracchedikā*, which is said to have awakened the mind of Hui-nêng, the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism in China, to a state of enlightenment, and which has ever since been utilized by Zen masters for the exposition of their teaching. The phrase runs in Chinese, *Ying wu so chu êrh shêng ch'i hsin*, the original Sanskrit of which is, *Na kvacit pratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam*.⁴ Freely translated, it is, 'Let your

¹ Disciple of Yün-mên (died 949). *Chuan*, XXIII.

² A disciple of Fa-yen (died 958). *Chuan*, XXV.

³ Another disciple of Fa-yen. *Chuan*, XXV.

⁴ Max Müller, p. 27.

mind (or thought) take its rise without fixing it anywhere.' *Citta* is generally rendered as 'thought', but more frequently it is 'mind' or 'heart'. The Chinese character *hsin* has a much wider connotation than 'thought' or 'mind', for it also means the 'centre or reason of being' and is one of the most significant and comprehensive terms in Chinese philosophy as well as in conventional everyday Chinese. In this case, 'to set up one's mind without fixing it anywhere' means 'to be perfect master of oneself'. When we are dependent on anything, we cannot be perfectly free; and it is then that the idea of an ego-soul or of a creator known as God is generally found to be taking hold of us. For this reason, we cannot act without attaching ourselves to something—a state of dependence and slavery. To the question, 'Where are you?' we have to say, 'I am tied to a pole'; and to the question, 'What are the sights or limits (*ching*) of your monastery?' 'I move within the circle whose radius is the full length of the rope which is attached to the pole.' As long as this rope is not cut off, we cannot be free agents. The rope has its length which is measurable, and the circle described by it has its calculable limits. We are puppets dancing on somebody else's string. But a circle whose circumference knows no limits, because of its having no central pole and its string, must be said to be a very large one indeed, and this is where a Zen master locates his residence. The circle, the field (*ching* or *gocara*), whose range is infinity, and therefore whose centre is nowhere fixed, is thus the fit site for the Bodhisattva to have his abode.

In the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā*¹ we have: 'The Tathāgata's thought is nowhere fixed, it is not fixed on things conditioned, nor it is fixed on things unconditioned; and it is therefore never put out of fixation.'² By 'thought not being fixed' is meant psychologically that consciousness rises from an unconscious source, because, according to Buddhism, there is no such psychological or metaphysical

¹ Mitra, p. 37.

² *Apratiṣṭitamāso hi tathāgato 'rhan samyaksaṃbuddhaḥ. Sa naiva saṃskṛite dhātau sthito nāpy asuṃskṛite dhātau sthito na ca tato vyutthitah.*

entity as that which is known as the ego-soul, and which is generally regarded as making up the basis of an individual being, and which is therefore the point of fixation for all its mental activities. But as this point of fixation is to be wiped off in order to reach the state of Buddhahood, the Mahāyāna sūtras, especially the *Prajñāpāramitās*, lay the entire stress of their teaching upon the doctrine of Emptiness. For it is by means of this alone that one can be cut off from a fixation and free for ever from the shackles of transmigration.

Buddhism being a practical spiritual training, whatever statements it makes are direct expressions of experience, and no interposition of intellectual or metaphysical interpretation is permitted here. It may sound quaint and unfamiliar to say that thought or mind is to be set up without any point of fixation behind it, like a cloud which floats away in the sky with no screws or nails attached to it. But when the sense is grasped the idea of no-fixation is altogether to the point. It is generally better to leave the original expressions as they are, and let the reader experience them within himself. Their conversion into modern terminology may frequently be very desirable, but the intelligibility thus gained is generally the result of abstraction or intellectualization. This gain naturally means the loss of concrete visualization, a loss which may well outweigh the gain.

In the *Vimalakīrti* also, we have such phrases as 'Bodhi has no abode, therefore it is not to be attained'; or 'Depending on a source which has no abode, all things are established'; and in the *Śurāṅgama*: 'Such Bodhisattvas make all the Buddha-lands their abode, but they are not attached to this abode, which is neither attainable nor visible.' Expressions of this sort are encountered everywhere in the Mahāyāna texts.

The *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, again, which are disposed to be negative in their statements, give among others the following: 'The truth as given out by the Tathāgata is unattainable, it knows no obstruction, its non-obstructi-

bility resembles space as no traces (*pada*) are left; it is above all forms of contrast, it allows no opposition, it goes beyond birth and death, it has no passageway whereby one may approach it. This truth is realizable by one who follows the Tathāgata as he is in his Suchness (*tathatā*). For this Suchness is something uniform, something beyond going and coming, something eternally abiding (*sthītā*), above change and separateness and discrimination (*nirvikalpā*), absolutely one, betraying no traces of conscious striving, etc.¹ As the truth (*dharma*) of the Tathāgata cannot be defined in any positive way, the *Prajñāpāramitā* has a series of negations. The only affirmative way is to designate it *tathatā*, 'state of being so', or 'suchness', or 'so-ness'. To those who know, the term is expressive and satisfying, but from the logical point of view it may mean nothing, it may be said to be devoid of content. This is inevitable; terms of intuition are always so, and all the truths belonging to the religious consciousness, however intellectual they may appear, after all belong to this class of terminology. 'What am I?' 'Where am I?' or 'Whither am I bound'—the questions are raised by the intellect, but the solution is not at all logical. If it is not a series of negations it is simply enigmatical, defying the ordinary way of understanding. In this respect the Zen sayings are the worst. Note the following, which will conclude this part of an introductory to the *Gaṇḍavyūha* description of the abode of Bodhisattvahood.

San-shêng, a disciple of Lin-chi,² once sent a monk-messenger Hsiu to Ching-ch'ên of Chang-sha who succeeded Nan-ch'üan³ as a master of Zen, and made him ask Ching-ch'ên this question, 'Where has Nan-ch'üan, your late master, gone after his death?'

Ch'ên replied, 'When Shih-tou⁴ was still a boy-novitiate, he personally attended on the Sixth Patriarch.'

This is simply stating an historical fact. Shih-tou was still a young boy while the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-nêng,⁵ was

¹ Abridged, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, Chapter XXVI, on 'Tathatā'.

² Died 867.

³ 748-834.

⁴ 700-790.

⁵ 673-713.

Is he come? Is he come?
To the shore I go to meet him.
But on the shore there's nothing but the breeze
That sings among the pine-trees.

The following Chinese poem is taken from *Selections from T'ang Poetry*, which may also throw some light on Chin-ch'ên's understanding of Zen:

Under the pine-tree I ask the attendant-boy
[where the master is].
Says he, He's gone out hunting for herbs.
No doubt he is in the mountain somewhere,
But the fog is too deep; how I long to locate him!

When the intellect fails to give an accurate analytical account of the truth, our resource is the imagination, which goes deeper into the constitution of Reality. Reality evidently refuses to expose itself before the intellect, for it is something that can never be exhausted. Unknowability here is not to be referred to the domain of logic, but somewhere else where visions are created. Intellectually more or less hazy, but fundamentally quite satisfying is this realm of inconceivabilities. The intellect struggles to penetrate this density of the mystic fog or to locate the wherefore of the capricious breeze, but the riddle remains for ever unsolved.

Having viewed the principle of life that regulates the activities of Bodhisattvahood as it is asserted by the Zen master and also as it is conceived by compilers of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, etc., let us proceed to see how it is described in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. The Zen master does not use abstract terms such as the principle of life; he always makes use of events of daily life and the concrete objects with which he is surrounded and with which his monks are quite familiar. When he asks them whence they come or whither they go, he can tell at once by the answer he gets where

their abode is, that is, what is that which prompts them to a definite set of actions. This method of training may be considered too difficult for ordinary minds to grasp what is really behind it.

Nor may the doctrine of no-fixation be easy to take hold of for those who are not used to this way of expressing their spiritual conditions. To have their minds set to working without anything behind them, without anything holding them to a definite intelligible centre, may sound like jargon. When we state that the abode of the Bodhisattva is really no abode, that he is fixed where he is not fixed, that he wanders or floats like a cloud in the sky without anything at its back, the statements may seem to have no meaning whatever. But this is the way the Mahāyāna Buddhists have been trained in their religious life, to which no stereotyped rules of syllogism can be applied.

We are now perhaps ready to see what we can gather from the *Gaṇḍavyūha* on this subject: 'Where is the abode of the Bodhisattva?' This it has been from the first our intention to find out, especially in contrast to the Zen way of handling the same idea. In the *Gaṇḍavyūha* the question 'Where?' stands out before us in the form of the Tower known as Vairocana-vyūha-alāṅkāra-garbha—that is, the 'tower which holds within itself an array of brilliantly shining ornaments'. Sudhana, the young pilgrim, stands before it and describes it as he looks at it, knowing that it is the site of residence for the Bodhisattva Maitreya. The description is not of an objective sort, it is based on the reflections of the young aspirant after Bodhisattvahood, reflections taken from all his past experiences and whatever instructions he has gained in his long pilgrimage. When the Vairocana Tower is thus described as the Vihārā (abode or retreat) of Maitreya, the attributes enumerated here apply not only to Maitreya himself but to all the Bodhisattvas of the past, present, and future, including all the Zen masters also who have really attained spiritual enlightenment. In short, the Tower is the abode of all the spiritual leaders who have followed the steps of the Buddha.

All that is said here is not Sudhana's own idea as to where the Bodhisattva should have his spiritual residence; it is in fact the Mahāyāna ideal.

3

'This Tower¹ is the abode where they are delighted to live who understand the meaning of Emptiness, Formlessness, and Will-lessness; who understand that all things are beyond discrimination, that the Dharmadhātu is devoid of separateness, that a world of beings is not attainable, that all things are unborn.

'This is the abode where they are delighted to live who are not attached to any world, who regard all the habitable worlds as no home to live in, who have no desire for any habitation, refuge, devotion, who have shaken off all thoughts of evil passions.

'This is the abode where they are delighted to live who understand that all things are without self-nature; who no more discriminate things in any form whatever; who are free from ideas and thoughts; who are neither attached to nor detached from ideas.

'This is the abode where they are delighted to live who have entered into the depths of Prajñā-pāramitā; who know how to penetrate into the Dharmadhātu which looks out in all directions; who have quieted all the fires of evil passions; who have destroyed by means of their superior knowledge all the wrong views, desires, and self-conceit; who live a playful life issuing from all the Dhyānas, Emancipations, Samādhis, Samāpattis, Miraculous Powers, and Knowledges; who produce all the Bodhisattvas' realm of Samādhis; who approach the footsteps of all the Buddhas.

'This is the abode of all those who make one kalpa (eon)

¹ These quotations are based mainly on the palm-leaf MS. kept by the Royal Asiatic Society, London. Folio 247b et seq., corresponding to MMG, p. 1264 ff.

enter into all kalpas and all kalpas into one kalpa; who make one kshetra (land) enter into all kshetras and all kshetras into one kshetra, and yet each without destroying its individuality; who make one dharma (thing) enter into all dharmas and all dharmas into one dharma, and yet each without being annihilated; who make one sattva (being) enter into all sattvas and all sattvas into one sattva, and yet each retaining its individuality; who understand that there is no duality between one Buddha and all Buddhas and between all Buddhas and one Buddha; who make all things enter into one thought-moment (*kṣaṇa*); who go to all lands by the raising of one thought; who manifest themselves wherever there are beings; who are always mindful of benefiting and gladdening the entire world; who keep themselves under perfect control.

“This is the abode of all those who, though they themselves have already attained emancipation, manifest themselves into this world for the sake of maturing all beings; who, while not attached to this earthly habitation, go about everywhere in the world in order to do homage to all the Tathāgatas; who, while not moving away from their own abode, go about everywhere in order to accept all the orderly disposition of things in all the Buddha-lands; who, while following the footsteps of all the Tathāgatas, do not become attached to the idea of a Buddha; who, while depending upon good friends, do not become attached to the thought of a good friend; who, while living among the evil ones, are yet free from the enjoyment of desires and pleasures; who, while entering into all kinds of thoughts, are yet in their minds free from them; who, while endowed with the body after the manner of the world, yet have no dualistic individualistic thoughts; who, while endowed with the body belonging to the Lokadhātu, are not separated from the Dharmadhātu; who while desiring to live through all the time that is yet to come, are free from the thought of duration; who manifest themselves in all the worlds without moving a hair’s breath from the place where they are.

'This is the abode of all those who preach the Dharma which rarely falls in one's way; who enjoy the Dharma which is difficult to understand, deep in meaning, non-dualistic, formless, having nothing in opposition, beyond obtainability; who abide in good-will and compassion all-embracing; who are not immersed in the realm of all the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas; who have gone beyond the realm of all evil beings; who are not soiled by any worldly conditions; who are abiding where all the Bodhisattvas are, where all the Pāramitā-virtues are amassed, where all the Buddhas are enjoying their comfortable habitations.

'This is the abode of all those who have severed themselves from all form and gone beyond the order of all the Śrāvakas; who are enjoying themselves where all things are unborn, and yet do not stay in the unbornness of things; who live among impurities, not penetrating into the absolute truth which is detached from greed, though they are in no way attached to objects of greed; who enjoy practising compassion with a heart unattached to the defilement of morbidity; who dwell in the world where the chain or origination prevails, but absolutely free from being infatuated with things of the world; who practise the four Dhyānas but are not born according to the bliss they bring about; who practise the four immeasurables but are not born in the world of form because of their wish to mature all beings; who practise the four formless Samāpattis but are not born in the world of no-form because of their wish to embrace all beings with a great loving heart; who practise tranquillization (śamatha) and contemplation (vipaśya), but for the sake of maturing all beings do not themselves realize knowledge and emancipation; who practise great indifference but are not indifferent to affairs of the world; who enjoy Emptiness but do not give themselves up to wrong views of mere nothingness; who, putting themselves in the realm of formlessness, are ever bent on instructing beings attached to form; who have no vows for their own sake but do not cut themselves off from the vows

belonging to the Bodhisattva; who are masters of all karma- and passion-hindrances and yet show themselves for the sake of maturing all beings, as if subject to karma- and passion-hindrances; who thoroughly know what is meant by birth and death and yet show themselves as if subject to birth and transformation and death; who are themselves beyond all the paths of existence, but for the sake of disciplining all beings show themselves entering into the various paths; who practise compassion but are not given up to petty kindnesses; who practise loving-kindness but are not given up to attachments; who are joyous in heart but ever grieved over the sight of suffering beings; who practise indifference but never cease benefiting others; who are disciplined in the nine successive Samāpattis, but are not horror-stricken with the idea of being born in the world of desire; who are detached from all efforts but do not live in the realization of the limit of reality (*bhūtakoti*); who are living in the triple emancipation but do not come in contact with the emancipation of Śrāvakahood; who view the world from the viewpoint of the four noble truths but do not live in the realization of the fruit of Arhatship; who perceive the deep significance of the doctrine of origination but do not take to absolute annihilation; who discipline themselves according to the eight noble paths but do not seek for an absolute deliverance; who have gone beyond the state of commonalty but do not fall into the state of Śrāvakahood and Pratyekabuddhahood; who know well what is the destiny of the five grasping Skandhas but do not look for the absolute annihilation of the Skandhas; who have gone beyond the path of the four Māras¹ but do not make distinction between them; who go beyond the six Āyatanas but do not desire their absolute annihilation; who enjoy Suchness but do not remain in the limit of reality; who appear as if teaching all the vehicles (*yāna*) but by no means forsake the Mahāyāna. This is indeed the abode of beings endowed with such virtues.'

¹ The four Māras (evil ones) are: Skandha (aggregates), Kīṣa (passion), Devaputra (son of a god), and Mṛtyu (death).

Sudhana the youth then uttered the following gāthās :

'Here is the venerable compassionate Maitreya endowed with a great loving heart and undefiled knowledge and intent on benefiting the world. He who abides in the stage of Abhisheka is the best son of all the Victorious Ones; he is absorbed in the contemplation of the Buddha-realm.

'This is the abode of all the sons of enlightenment, whose renown is far-reaching, who are established in the realm of supreme knowledge and emancipation, who walk around in the Dharmadhātu, unattached and companionless.

'This is the abode of those who have grown powerful in self-control, charity, morality, patience, and strenuousness; who are thoroughly equipped with the supernatural powers gained by means of Dhyāna; who are established in the transcendental wisdom and power of the vows; who are in possession of the Pāramitā virtues of the Mahāyāna.

'This is the abode of those whose intelligence knows no attachment; whose heart is broad, expansive, and unfettered as the sky expands; who know all that is moving in time and all that exists and becomes.

'This is the abode of those wise men endowed with transcendental wisdom, who enter into the reason of all things as unborn, examine into the original essence of things as by nature like space, which like a bird in the sky neither works nor is dependent on anything else.

'This is the abode of those who understand that greed, anger, and folly have no self-nature, and that the rise of falsehood is caused by imagination, and yet who do not discriminate as to detaching themselves from greed, anger, and folly, and who have thus reached a state of peace and quietude.

'This is the abode of those who are skilful in the use of transcendental wisdom, knowing what is meant by the triple emancipation, the doctrine of the twofold truth, the eightfold noble path, the Skandhas, Dhātus, Āyatanas, and

the chain of origination, and yet not falling into the way of disquietude.

'This is the abode of those who have acquired perfect peace as they see into the realm of knowledge which is free from obstruction and in which all the Buddha-lands and beings with their imaginations and discriminations are quiescent, observing that all things have no self-nature.

'This is the abode of those who go about everywhere in the Dharmadhātu, unattached, depending on nothing, with no habitation, burden-free, like the wind blowing in the air, leaving no track of their wanderings.

'This is the abode of those who are renowned on account of their love and compassion, for when they see those suffering beings in the evil paths of existence they would descend into the midst of the sufferers and experience their sharp pain on themselves, shedding their light of sympathy on all unfortunate ones.

'This is the abode of those who are like the leader of a caravan; for they, observing how a company of wanderers is out of the track, destitute, and lost like men born blind in the wrong narrow path of transmigration, lead them to the highway of emancipation.

'This is the abode of those who are brave and unconquerable in rescuing and giving a friendly consolation to all those beings who are seen entrapped in the net of birth, old age, and grief and death—the threatening fate that befalls the Skandhas.

'This is the abode of those who, seeing people struggle under the bonds of the passions, give them, like the great kind physician, the wonderful medicine of immortal knowledge, and release them by means of great expanding love.

'This is the abode of those who, like the boatman, carry people on the boat of the immaculate Dharma across the ocean of birth and death where they are seen suffering all forms of grief and pain.

'This is the abode of those who, like the fisherman, lift all beings from the ocean of becoming and carry them over

the waves of evil passions where they are seen drowning themselves, and who will arouse in them the desire for all-knowledge which is pure and free from sensualities.

'This is the abode of those who have reached where great vows are made and things are always viewed with love, and who, like the young king of Garuda, looking upon all beings immersed in the ocean of becoming, lift them up.

'This is the abode of those who are illuminators of the world, going about like the sun and the moon in the sky of the Dharmadhātu, and pouring the light of knowledge and the halo of vows into the homes of all beings.

'This is the abode of those who, being devoted to the salvation of the world, do not relax their efforts for nayutas of kalpas to bring one being to maturity, and would do so with the entire world as with one being.

'This is the abode of those whose determination is as hard as Vajra; for in order to benefit beings in one country they put forward their untiring efforts until the end of time, and would do so also for all beings in all the ten quarters.

'This is the abode of those whose intelligence is as deep as the ocean; for they never feel exhausted in their minds even when nayutas of kalpas expire before they can preach all the truth-clouds as declared by the Buddhas in the ten quarters, not to speak of their making an assembly at one sitting, unbewildered, imbibe all the truth.

'This is the abode of those who wander about, unattached, visiting an indescribable ocean of countries, entering into the ocean-like assemblies of the Buddhas, and making an ocean of offerings to all the Buddhas.

'This is the abode of those who have practised all kinds of virtue by entering into the ocean of deeds from the midst of eternity, by persistently arousing the ocean of vows, and, in order to benefit all beings, by going about in the world for ever so many kalpas.

'This is the abode of those who are endowed with an eyesight that knows no obstructions; for they can penetratingly see into all the innumerable countries at the end of

plishes illimitable karma all of which issues from their wisdom, while the wisdom of worldly thought ends nowhere but in complete madness.

'This is the abode, the immaculate shelter, of those who, being the owners of unimpeded intelligence, walk about in utmost freedom through the Dharmadhātu, and whose minds go even beyond the limits of intelligibility.

'This is the abode of those peerless ones who walk about everywhere and enjoy staying everywhere without ever leaving a track behind, as their knowledge rests on absolute oneness.

'This is the abode of those spotless ones who, seeing into the original nature of all things as quiet and homeless as the sky, live in a realm which may be likened unto the vastness of space.

'Here abide those compassionate ones whose loving hearts and intelligence, being deeply stirred as they observe all beings groaning with grief and pain, are ever contriving for the welfare of the world.

'Here abide those who make themselves visible like the sun and the moon everywhere where there are beings, and deliver them from the snare of transmigration by means of Samādhi and emancipation.

'Here abide those Buddha-sons, who, following the footsteps of the Buddhas, manifest themselves in all countries through endless kalpas.

'Here abide all the Buddha-sons who, in conformity with the dispositions of all beings, are seen manifesting themselves in their transformation-bodies like clouds universally in all the ten quarters.

'Here abide those great beings who have entered the realm of all the Buddhas, and are never tired of enjoying it and walking in it for nayutas of kalpas.

'Here abide those who, knowing well what characterizes each one of the innumerable indescribable Samādhis, manifest the Buddha-realm as they enter into it.

'Here abide those who hold in one thought-moment all the kalpas, countries, and Buddha-names, and whose

9. That the Dharmadhātu is a world of radiance where not only each object of Alaṅkāra shines in its own light variously coloured, but it does not refuse to take in or reflect the light of others as they are;

10. That all these wonderful phenomena, and indeed the Dharmadhātu itself, take their rise through the sustaining power of the Bodhisattva which is symbolized in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* by the 'snapping of fingers';

11. That the sustaining power, Adhishṭhāna, while not expressly defined, is composed of the Bodhisattva's Praṇidhāna (vow) and Jñāna (knowledge);

12. That when this Dharmadhātu, where such an exquisitely beautiful and altogether inconceivable spectacle takes place, is psychologically described, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* has this: *Abhiṣyanditakāyacittaḥ sarvasaṃjñāgatavidhūta-mānasaḥ sarvāvaraṇavivarjitacittaḥ sarvamohavigataḥ*.¹ And it was in this state of mind that Sudhana could remember all he saw and all he heard, that he could survey the world with a vision which knew no obstructions in whichever directions it moved, and that he could circulate in the Dharmadhātu with his body, nothing checking its perfectly free movements.

(Compare this with the instruction of Dōgen and his teacher Ju-ching. When Dōgen, who is founder of the Japanese Sōtō School of Zen, was studying Zen in China under Ju-ching early in the thirteenth century, the master used to tell him, 'Mind and body dropped-off; dropped-off mind and body!' Dōgen repeats the idea in one of his sermons: 'Dropped off! Dropped off! This state must once be experienced by you all; it is like piling [fruit] into a basket without a bottom, it is like pouring [water] into a bowl with a pierced hole; however much you may pile or pour you cannot fill it up. When this is realized, we say that the pail bottom is broken through. As long as there is

¹ R.A.S. MS., folio 270a; MMG, p. 1376. 'Sudhana the young pilgrim felt as if both his body and mind completely melted away; he saw that all thoughts departed away from his consciousness; in his mind there were no impediments, and all intoxications vanished.'

a trace of consciousness which makes you say, "I have this understanding, or that realization," you are still playing with unrealities.')

9

The Tower described in these terms, one may suspect, is a symbolical creation issuing from some abstract philosophical conceptions. Indeed, this wonderfully mysterious spectacle was once the object of metaphysical speculation on the part of some brilliantly-gifted Chinese intellects, and from them started what is now known as the Hua-yên School (*Avatamsaka*) of Buddhism. But I gravely doubt whether this philosophical systematization did such good as was expected to the proper understanding of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*; that is to say, whether the truest and deepest significance of the Vairochana Tower has gained by being so analysed and rendered more or less comprehensible by the intellect. By this I do not mean that those great Chinese minds did something altogether unnecessary for the advancement of human culture. But I mean this, that the outcome of their systematization of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* has been a pushing of its spiritual value behind the screen of intelligibility, and consequently that the general reader now comes to discover its original message in the conceptualism of speculative analysis itself. If this had really been the case throughout the history of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* it would have been a most unfortunate state of affairs. In order, however, to see how the Chinese intellects of the first order endeavoured to grasp the wonders of the Vairochana Tower, let me refer to the so-called doctrine of the fourfold Dharmadhātu advanced by Têng-kuan, and also to the theory of Identity by Fa-tsang.

The idea of the fourfold Dharmadhātu did not entirely originate with Têng-kuan, who is said to have lived over one hundred years (738-839). The idea was more or less definitely foreshadowed by his predecessors such as Fa-tsang

(643-712), Chi-yen (602-668), and Tu-shun (557-640), but it was by the final formulation of Têng-kuan that the philosophy of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* came to be identified with the doctrine of the fourfold Dharmadhātu. According to this, there are four ways of viewing the Dharmadhātu: (1) the Dharmadhātu as a world of individual objects, in which case the term *dhātu* is taken to mean 'something separated'; (2) the Dharmadhātu as a manifestation of one spirit (*ekacitta*) or one elementary substance (*ekadhātu*); (3) the Dharmadhātu as a world where all its particular existences (*vastu*) are identifiable with one underlying spirit; and (4) the Dharmadhātu as a world where each one of its particular objects is identifiable with every other particular object, with whatever lines of separation there may be between them all removed.

Of these four views of the Dharmadhātu, the last is what is most characteristic of the teaching of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* as distinguished from other schools of Buddhism. According to Fa-tsung, in the following infinite series

$$a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots\dots\dots$$

each term may be considered related to the others in two ways, existentially and functionally, or statically and dynamically. From the existential point of view, the relation is known to be *hsiang-chi*, that is, identical, thus:

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots\dots\dots \\ a_2 &= a_1, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots\dots\dots \\ a_3 &= a_1, a_2, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots\dots\dots \end{aligned}$$

and so on. For the relation of each term to the whole series is such that a_1 is a_1 because of the series, while the series itself gains its meaning because of a_1 . The relation is reversible and one can say that

$$\begin{aligned} a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots\dots\dots &\approx a_1 \\ a_1, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots\dots\dots &= a_2 \\ a_1, a_2, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots\dots\dots &= a_3 \end{aligned}$$

and so on. As long as an infinite series cannot be complete without its individual terms, and the latter without the whole series in which they are what they are, says Fa-tsang, the theory of existential statical identity must hold good.

The series can be viewed also as functionally or dynamically related. In the series

$$a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots\dots\dots$$

each term as contributing to the general make-up of the series is functioning in its own way to make the latter possible. Even with one term dropped out of the series, the series will cease to be itself—that is, it will no more function as such. This being the case, there is a state of perfect interpenetration (*hsiang-ju*) throughout the series. When a_1 is picked up independent of the series, it has no meaning, hence no existence, because a_1 is a_1 in the series. Thus, a_1 is at once a_1 and $a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5 \dots\dots\dots$. When $a_1 = a_1$, a_1 is 'exhaustible'; when $a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5 \dots\dots\dots = a_1$, a_1 is 'inexhaustible',¹ to use *Gaṇḍavyūha* terminology. In the same manner each term: $a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, \dots\dots\dots$ is at once 'exhaustible' and 'inexhaustible'. So, we have the following formulas :

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= a_1; \\ a_1 &= a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10}, \dots\dots\dots \\ a_2 &= a_2; \\ a_2 &= a_1, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10}, \dots\dots\dots \\ a_3 &= a_3; \\ a_3 &= a_1, a_2, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10}, \dots\dots\dots \\ &\dots\dots\dots \\ &\dots\dots\dots \end{aligned}$$

There is another way of looking at the whole series of $a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10}, \dots\dots\dots$, whereby each term is to be regarded as embracing in itself the entirety of

¹ *Kṣaya* and *akṣaya*.

the series, and not, as in the first case, as an independent and separable unit entering into the system. Then, let each term be picked up, and the whole series comes along with it. When an image is reflected in the mirror, there is a state of identity between mirror and image, for outside the mirror there will be no reflection and without the reflection the mirror is non-existent. A mirror is distinguishable only when there are some images to bring forth its existence, and the same can be affirmed of the images that come to reflect themselves on the mirror. The one without the other will mean the non-existence of both. From this point of view, the relations between each term of the series and the series itself may be formulated thus in triplicity :

$$\begin{aligned}
 a_1 &= a_1; \\
 a_1 &= a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots \dots; \\
 a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots \dots &= a_1. \\
 a_2 &= a_2; \\
 a_2 &= a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots \dots; \\
 a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots \dots &= a_2. \\
 a_3 &= a_3; \\
 a_3 &= a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots \dots; \\
 a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots \dots &= a_3. \\
 a_4 &= a_4; \\
 a_4 &= a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots \dots; \\
 a_1, a_2, a_3, a_4, a_5, a_6, a_7, a_8, a_9, a_{10} \dots \dots &= a_4.
 \end{aligned}$$

and so on, *ad infinitum*. In this case, the distinction between existential identity and functional interpenetration may not be so noticeable as in the first case where each unit was considered individually separable. If any such distinction is to be applied to the present case, it will be for the reason of conceptual exactitude. Interpenetration implies the functioning of each unit upon the others individually and as a whole, while identity is a static conception. Whatever this is, the practical outcome of these considerations amounts to the same, that is, that all things in fine array embellishing the whole universe are in a state of perfect

the Bodhicitta is made possible in each sentient being, and this awakening in turn causes a response in the realm (*kṣetra*) of all the Buddhas. A Shin Buddhist expresses this idea by saying that each time there is a new convert to the Pure land teaching there opens a fresh Lotus-flower in the pond of the country of Amitābha.

The doctrine of interpenetration may also be expressed in the terminology of causal relativity. But in this case the term must be understood in a much higher or deeper sense, for the *Avatamsaka* world is not that of forms and appearances which are governed by such laws as mechanical causation, or teleological biological causation, or statical mutuality. The Dharmadhātu, which is the world of *Avatamsaka*, is the one which reveals itself to our spiritual insight—an insight attainable only by transcending the dualism of being (*asti*) and non-being (*nāsti*). The Dharmadhātu is, therefore, realizable only when all the traces of causation (*hetupratyaya*) are wiped off from our vision. Interpenetration is then directly perceived without any medium of concepts, which is to say, not as the result of intellectualization.

It is also in this sense that this world constructed by the notions belonging to the category of causation is declared by Mahāyāna Buddhists to be empty (*śūnya*), not born (*anutpāda*), and without self-nature (*asvabhāva*). This declaration is not a logical inference, but the intuition of the Mahāyānist genius. When it is interpreted as relativity or as connected with the idea of causal relation, the spirit of the statement is altogether lost, and Mahāyāna Buddhism turns into a system of philosophy, which, however, has been the attempt on the part of some European Buddhist scholars. This Emptiness of all things (*sarvadharmasya śūnyatā*), enveloping, as it were, all the worlds with their multitudinous objects, is what makes possible the *Avatamsaka* intuition of interpenetration and unobstructedness. Emptiness is a Mahāyāna perception of Reality itself. When it is conceptually reconstructed, the significance of the perception is completely struck out. Those who make a trial of such

reconstruction are doing so against the spirit of the Mahāyāna. And for these reasons I recommend the study of the sutras themselves and not that of the śāstras or philosophical treatises of Mahāyāna Buddhism—that is, if students really wish to grasp the spirit, or share in the experience, of the Mahāyāna.

Whatever intellectual analysis was given by Fa-tsang, one of the finest philosophical minds of China, to the state of affairs in the Vairocana Tower as presented to the spiritual eye of Sudhana the young Buddhist pilgrim, the fact itself has nothing to do with the analysis. The analysis may satisfy the intellect, but the intellect is not all of our being. We with Fa-tsang and Sudhana must once be in the Tower itself and be a witness to all the Vyūhālaṅkāras shining by themselves and reflecting one another unobstructedly. In matters religious, life and experience count far more than analysis. Therefore, the Tower with all its Vyūhas¹ must come out of one's own life.

IO

To a certain extent, let us hope, we have succeeded in delineating the inner nature and constitution of the Vairocana Tower both in terms of experience and from the point of view of intellectual clarification. After 'What' comes 'Whence' and 'Whither'. Without these, indeed, our inquiry into life will not be a complete one. Sudhana, therefore, naturally asks, after seeing all the wonders of the Tower, whence it comes and whither it passes. The Bodhisattva Maitreya answers that it comes from the Jñāna (knowledge) and the Adhishṭhāna (sustaining power) of the Bodhisattva. What is this Jñāna? What is this Adhishṭhāna?

¹ *Vyūha*, as explained elsewhere, means 'dispositions', or 'arranging in order', and in Buddhist literature it is often used in the sense of 'embellishment' or 'ornamentation'. But here it is equivalent to 'multiplicity of existences'. The Tower with its Vyūhas is, therefore, this universe extending before us with all its particular objects; and Dharmadhātu = Lokadhātu, Lokadhātu = Dharmadhātu.

Jñāna is a difficult term to translate, for 'knowledge' or 'intellection' does not cover its entire sense. It is something more fundamental. It is man's innate urge to discriminate, his constitutional inclination to dualism whereby subject and object, seer and the seen, are separated; it is that which makes a world of multiplicities possible. When, therefore, it is said that all the Vyūhas come forth from the midst of *Jñāna*, it has no other meaning than this, that the world evolves itself from the very constitution of our mind, that it is the content of our consciousness, that it is there simultaneously with the awakening of a mind which discriminates, that it comes and departs as mysteriously as our consciousness does. It is not proper in fact to ask whence is the world, or whither. The question itself issues from the very source of all mysteries and inconceivabilities, and to ask it is to defeat its own end. Its answer is possible only when we stand away from the conditions in which we are. That is to say, the question is answered only when it is no more asked. It is like fire's asking: 'What am I?' 'Whence do I come?' 'Whither do I go?' 'Why do I burn?' As long as fire is fire and keeps on burning these questions are unanswerable, because fire is to burn, just to burn, and not to reflect on itself; because the moment it reflects it is no more fire; because to know itself is to cease to be itself. Fire cannot transcend its own conditions, and its asking questions concerning itself is transcending them, which is to deny itself. The answer is possible when it contradicts itself. While standing still, we cannot leap. This contradiction is in the very essence of all intellectual questions as to the origin and the destiny of life. Hence Maitreya's statement: *na kvacid gato, nānugato, na rāśibhūto, na saṃcayabhūto, na kūṣastho, na bhāvastho, na deśastho, na pradēśasthaḥ*.¹ These negations, one may think, lead us nowhere, and naturally so, because the real answer lies where the question has not yet been asked.

Our next dealing will be with Adhishṭhāna. What does

¹ MMG, p. 1413. 'The Tower comes from nowhere, passes away nowhere; is neither a mass nor a collection; is neither static nor becoming; it is not to be located, nor is it to be located in a definite quarter.'

this mean? This is generally translated in Chinese as *shên-li* or *wei-li*, or *chia-chih-li*. It is 'power', 'will-power', 'spiritual power' belonging to a great personality, human or divine. As long as we remain on the plane of Jñāna, the world does not seem to be very real, as its Māyā-like existence in which it presents itself to Jñāna is too vapoury; but when we come to the Adhishṭhāna aspect of Bodhisattvahood, we feel as if we have taken hold of something solid and altogether sustaining. This is where life really begins to have its meaning. To live ceases to be the mere blind assertion of a primordial urge, for Adhishṭhāna is another name for Praṇidhāna, or it is that spiritual power emanating from the Praṇidhāna which constitutes with Jñāna the essence of Bodhisattvahood. Adhishṭhāna is not mere power which likes to assert itself against others. Behind it there is always a Buddha or Bodhisattva, who is endowed with a spiritual insight looking into the nature of things and at the same time with the will to sustain it. The will to sustain means the love and desire to save the world from its delusions and entanglements. Praṇidhāna is this will, love, and desire, called 'inexhaustible' (*akṣaya*).

Jñāna and Praṇidhāna are what constitutes Bodhisattvahood or Buddhahood, which is the same thing. By means of Jñāna we climb, as it were, and reach the summit of the thirty-three heavens; and sitting quietly we watch the underworld and its doings as if they were clouds moving underneath the feet; they are the whirling masses of commotion, but they do not touch one who is above them. The world of Jñāna is transparent, luminous, and eternally serene. But the Bodhisattva would not remain in this state of eternal contemplation above the world of particulars and hence of struggles and sufferings; for his heart aches at the sight. He is now determined to descend into the midst of the tempestuous masses of existence. His vows (*praṇidhāna*) are made, his power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) is added to all who look towards him, and every attempt (*upāya*) is made to lift up all those who are groping in the darkness and reduced to a state of utter subjugation. Praṇidhāna as an aspect of

Adhishṭhāna is thus the descending ladder, or the connecting link between Bodhisattva and Sarvasattva (all beings). From this grows what is technically known as Nirmāṇakāya, or the transformation-body, and in many Mahāyāna texts as Vikurvita or Vyūhavikurvita, an array of wonders.

II

That the Bodhisattva with all his penetrating and illuminating insight into the self-nature of things which is no self-nature should become himself entangled in the ever-ravelling intricacies of a world of particulars is a mystery of mysteries, and yet here opens the gate of inconceivable emancipation (*acintya-vimokṣa*) for him who is the embodiment of Jñāna and Prañidhāna. And in this way we have to understand the contradiction between Maitreya's coming from nowhere and his being born in the province of Maladi.

This contradiction must have struck the reader as quite inexplicable, though contradictions are generally of this nature; but in this case of Maitreya the contradiction comes too soon and in a glaring manner. At one moment, he says, he has no abode, and before we have hardly risen from this startling exclamation we are told that his native country (*jamnabhūmī*) is Maladi and that his mission is to teach Gopālaka, son of a wealthy household, in Buddhism. Is this not too sudden a descent from the Tushita heaven upon earthly business? Ordinarily, quite so. But when we realize what enters into the constitution of Bodhisattvahood we shall not think so. For he is born in Maladi as if born nowhere, as if coming nowhence. He is born, and yet unborn is he; he is before us, and yet he has not come from anywhere. He is with Sudhana in the Vairocana Tower as we are told in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, but he has never left his abode in the Tushita heaven. So, says a Zen master, 'The Bodhisattva's assemblage listening to the discourse of the Buddha at the Mount of Holy Vulture has never been dispersed; it is still going on, and the discourse is still reverberating

in the Mount.' This—what seems to be 'too sudden a descent'—is in fact a prearranged order in the Bodhisattva's life of devotion (*bodhisattvacaryā*).

Where then is his real native country?¹

'1. Wherever there is the awakening of the Bodhicitta there is the Bodhisattva's native land, because it belongs to the Bodhisattva-family.

'2. Wherever there is deep-heartedness, there is the Bodhisattva's native land, because it is where the family of good friends rises.

'3. Wherever there is the experience of the Bhūmis, there is the Bodhisattva's native land, because it is where all the Pāramitās grow.

'4. Wherever the great vows are made, there is the Bodhisattva's native land, because it is where deeds of devotion are carried on.

'5. Wherever there is a great all-embracing love, there is the Bodhisattva's native land, because it is where the four ways of acceptance develop.

'6. Wherever there is the right way of viewing things, there is the Bodhisattva's native land, because it is where transcendental knowledge takes its rise.

'7. Wherever the Mahāyāna thrives well, there is the Bodhisattva's native land because it is where all the skilful means unfold.

'8. Wherever there is the training of all beings, there is the Bodhisattva's native land because it is where all the Buddhas are born.

'9. Wherever there are means born of transcendental knowledge,² there is the Bodhisattva's native land, because

¹ R.A.S. MS., folio 276b, et. seq. Cf. MMG, p. 1415, et. seq.

² *Prajñā-upāya*. When Upāya is used in its technical sense in Buddhism, it is the expression of the Buddha's or Bodhisattva's love for all beings. When the Buddha sees all the sufferings that are going on in the world owing to ignorance and egotism, he desires to deliver it and consequently contrives every means to carry out his intense desire. This is his Upāya. But as his desire has nothing to do with egotism or the clinging to the individualistic conception of reality, his Upāya is said to be born of his transcendental knowledge. See infra where the philosophy of the Prajñāpāramitā is expounded.

Monk: 'Who is the man enjoying the sights?'

Master:

'Carrying a cane he walks along the lonely mountain stream;

With the bowl well cleansed, invited he goes out to the village to dine.'

Monk: 'As regards the sights and the man I have now your kind instruction; please let me be acquainted with the ultimate truth of Zen.'

Master: 'The wooden horse neighs against the breeze, and the mud-made bull walks over the waves.'

When Shou-ch'u¹ of Tung-shan came to Yün-mên,² the latter asked, 'Where do you come from?'

Ch'u: 'I come from Ts'o-tu.'

Master: 'Where did you pass your summer?'

Ch'u: 'At Pao-tzu, of Hu-nan.'

Master: 'When did you leave that place?'

Ch'u: 'August the twenty-fifth.'

Master: 'I spare you thirty blows.'

This must have puzzled the poor monk very much; his answers were all straightforward, and he thought there was nothing deserving 'thirty blows' which for some reason the master was lenient enough to spare him. He must have spent the night in great mental agony. He came up to the master again the following day and asked, 'Yesterday you were good enough to spare me thirty blows, but pray tell me where was my offence to deserve such punishment?'

Master: 'You stupid rice-bag! Is that the way you wander about through Chiang-hsi and Hu-nan?'

This apparently sarcastic remark caused a general upheaval in the spiritual constitution of Shou-ch'u, who now exclaimed to the following effect:

'After this, I will go out into the street crossings, and while myself not hoarding up one grain of rice, not planting one

¹ *Chuan-têng Lu*, XXIII.

² Died 949.

stalk of herb, I will treat all the pilgrimaging monks who go about visiting one master after another for their spiritual edification, and I will make them take off their dirty grimy caps, I will make them cast their foul-smelling shirts. For they will thereby be set free with nothing obstructing their movements, with nothing bedimming their eyesight. Is this not a perfect joy?"

The master remarked sarcastically again, but in a different mood this time, I surmise: 'O you rice-bag! With a body hardly as large as a cocoa-nut, how widely you open your mouth!'

TRANSLATION OF THE *Prajñā-pāramitā-hṛidaya Sūtra*

When (1)¹ the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was engaged in the practice of the deep *Prajñāpāramitā*, he perceived: there are the five Skandhas (2); and these he saw in their self-nature to be empty (3).

'O Śāriputra, form is here emptiness (4), emptiness is form; form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form; what is form that is emptiness, what is emptiness that is form. The same can be said of sensation, thought, confection, and consciousness.

'O Śāriputra, all things are here characterized with emptiness: they are not born, they are not annihilated; they are not tainted, they are not immaculate; they do not increase, they do not decrease. Therefore, O Śāriputra, in emptiness there is no form, no sensation, no thought, no confection, no consciousness; no eye (5), ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; no form (6), sound, odour, taste, touch, objects; no Dhātu of vision (7), till we come to (8) no Dhātu of consciousness; there is no knowledge, no ignorance (9), no extinction of knowledge, no extinction of ignorance, till we come to there is no old age and death, no extinction of old age and death; there is no suffering (10), accumulation, annihilation, path; there is no knowledge, no attainment, [and] no realization,² because there is no attainment. In the mind of the Bodhisattva who dwells depending on the *Prajñāpāramitā* there are no obstacles;³ and because there are no obstacles in his mind, he has no fear, and, going beyond the perverted views, reaches final Nirvāṇa. All the Buddhas of the past, present, and future, depending on the *Prajñāpāramitā*, attain to the highest perfect enlightenment.

¹ See following Notes.

² *Nābhīsamayaḥ* is missing in the Chinese translations as well as in the Hōryūji MS.

³ For *varaṇa* all the Chinese have 'obstacle', and this is in full accord with the teaching of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. Max Müller's rendering, 'envelop', is not good.

2. From the modern scientific point of view, the conception of Skandha seems to be too vague and indefinite. But we must remember that the Buddhist principle of analysis is not derived from mere scientific interest; it aims at saving us from the idea of an ultimate individual reality which is imagined to exist as such for all the time to come. For when this idea is adhered to as final, the error of attachment is committed, and it is this attachment that for ever enslaves us to the tyranny of external things. The five Skandhas ('aggregates' or 'elements') are form (*rūpam*), sensation or sense-perception (*vedanā*), thought (*saṃjñā*), confection or conformation (*saṃskāra*), and consciousness (*viññāna*). The first Skandha is the material world or the materiality of things, while the remaining four Skandhas belong to the mind. *Vedanā* is what we get through our senses; *saṃjñā* corresponds to thought in its broadest sense, or that which mind elaborates; *saṃskāra* is a very difficult term and there is no exact English equivalent; it means something that gives form, formative principle; *viññāna* is consciousness or mentation. There are forms of mentation distinguishable as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking.

3. Hsüan-chuang's translation has this added: 'He was delivered from all suffering and misery.'

4. 'Empty' (*śūnya*) or 'emptiness' (*śūnyatā*) is one of the most important notions in Mahāyāna philosophy and at the same time the most puzzling for non-Buddhist readers to comprehend. Emptiness does not mean 'relativity', or 'phenomenality', or 'nothingness', but rather means the Absolute, or something of transcendental nature, although this rendering is also misleading as we shall see later. When Buddhists declare all things to be empty, they are not advocating a nihilistic view; on the contrary an ultimate reality is hinted at, which cannot be subsumed under the categories of logic. With them, to proclaim the conditionality of things is to point to the existence of something altogether unconditioned and transcendent of all determination. Śūnyatā may thus often be most appropriately rendered by the Absolute. When the sūtra says that the five Skandhas have the character of emptiness, or that in emptiness there is neither creation nor destruction, neither defilement nor immaculacy, etc., the sense is: no limiting qualities are to be attributed to the Absolute; while it is immanent in all concrete and particular objects, it is itself not at all definable. Universal negation, therefore, in the philosophy of Prajñā is an inevitable outcome.

5. No eye, no ear, etc., refer to the six senses. In Buddhist

Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, of which there are several compilations such as the *Śatasāhasrikā*, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, the *Saptaśatikā*, etc. in Sanskrit, and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* in six hundred fascicles in Chinese, and the corresponding works in Tibetan. This being so, we can say that the *Hṛidaya* is a later production, and that there is an admixture of foreign elements. This, however, is not the essential point I would discuss in this Essay. There is another point in the *Hṛidaya*, apart from its reference to Avalokiteśvara, that makes us suspect its later compilation. By this I mean the *Prajñāpāramitā*'s being identified with the Mantram which forms the conclusion of Avalokiteśvara's discourse on Śūnyatā (emptiness). The *Prajñāpāramitā* literature is singularly free from the intrusion of magical formulas known as Vidyā, or Mantram, or Dharāṇi. It is true that the *Prajñāpāramitā* itself is regarded as a great wondrous Vidyā in the text, but no special independent Mantrams are given, which is actually the case with the *Hṛidaya Sūtra*. For in this latter there is a Mantram to be specifically known as 'Prajñāpāramitā', consisting of these phrases: 'Gate, gate, pāragate, pārasaṃgate, bodhi, svāhā.' This insertion is quite a departure and requires special attention.

Keeping these two points in mind—the appearance of Avalokiteśvara and the insertion of the Mantram—let us proceed to analyse the contents of the *Hṛidaya* text itself.

What superficially strikes us most while perusing the text is that it is almost nothing else but a series of negations, and that what is known as Emptiness is pure negativism which ultimately reduces all things into nothingness. The conclusion will then be that the *Prajñāpāramitā* or rather its practice consists in negating all things. The five Skandhas are negated; the eighteen Dhātus are negated; the eighteen Ayatanas are negated; the twelvefold Chain of Origination is negated; the fourfold Noble Truth is negated. And at the end of all these negations, there is neither knowledge nor attainment of any sort. Attainment (*prāpti* or *labdhi*) means to be conscious of and be attached to an understanding

which is the result of relative reasoning. As there is no attainment of this nature, the mind is entirely free from all obstructions, that is, errors and confusions which arise from intellectualization, and also from the obstructions that are rooted in our conative and affective consciousness, such as fears and worries, joys and sorrows, abandonments and infatuations. When this is realized, Nirvāṇa is reached. Nirvāṇa and enlightenment (*saṃbodhi*) are one. Thus from the Prajñāpāramitā arise all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future. The Prajñāpāramitā is the mother of Buddhahood and Bodhisattvahood, which is reiterated throughout the Prajñāpāramitā literature.

So far, we can say that the *Hṛidaya* is in perfect concordance with the spirit of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. Beginning with negations it winds up with an affirmation called in Buddhist terminology 'Enlightenment'. The idea of Emptiness may startle the uninitiated, because they are generally apt to regard it as an utter annihilation, especially when the *Hṛidaya* appears to be no more than a string of denials. But since this *via negativa* leads us finally to something definite, although this latter is far from being definite in its ordinary sense, the *Hṛidaya* is not after all a gospel of nihilism. The *Prajñāpāramitā* which achieves this wonder, that is, the deducing, or conjuring of an affirmation from those invincible negations, may rightly be designated a great incomparable Mantram. The *Hṛidaya*, ordinarily speaking, must end with this statement; Avalokiteśvara's discourse addressed to Śāriputra has found its natural conclusion; and there is no need of going further on and declaring most dramatically that the Mantram is '*Gate, gate, etc.*'.

To state that the *Prajñāpāramitā* is a great Mantram is intelligible, but to say that this great *Prajñāpāramitā* Mantram is '*Gate, gate, etc.*' does not seem to give any sense. What has been so far clear and rational goes at once through a miraculous transformation. The *Hṛidaya Sūtra* is turned into a text of mystic formula, a book of incantation. This is apparently a degradation or a degeneration. What is

ritualism many Mantrams and Dhāraṇīs which properly belong to the Shingon. For this reason, I think that the production of the *Hṛidaya* was in a much later period than the entire body of Prajñāpāramitā literature itself. However this may be, what is the signification of the 'Gate!' Mantram in the *Hṛidaya Sūtra* as one of the most important texts in the teaching of Zen? If the Mantram occupied an indifferent position in the sūtra, although it is difficult in such a short work as this to find room for anything of secondary importance, the question as to the meaning of the Mantram might not be a very weighty one. But even a superficial reader will at once recognize the very prominent position filled by the Mantram in the evolution of the doctrine of Prajñāpāramitā. In fact, the whole sūtra seems to have been written for the sake of the Mantram and for nothing else. If so, all the more what is the meaning of the Mantram apart from its literary sense? Why does it form the climax of the whole series of negations in the *Hṛidaya*?

To my mind, the solution of this mystery gives the key to the understanding not only of the whole philosophy of the Prajñāpāramitā, but of its most essential relationship to the teaching of Zen. This is why I have said so much about the interposition of the Mantram in the *Hṛidaya*.

Before the Mantram 'Gate!' yields up its secret in connection with the doctrine of Emptiness and Enlightenment, it may not be inopportune to see what are the essential teachings of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*. This knowledge will make the valuation of the *Hṛidaya* much easier, especially in its vital connection with the experience of Zen.¹

From what I am going to remark about the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* in the succeeding pages, we can see that the teaching of the *Hṛidaya* agrees in one sense, and disagrees in another, with that of the principal sūtras. The agreement takes place

[Continued on page 226]

¹ The main teachings of the *Prajñāpāramitā* are given below in a separate *Essay*, entitled 'The Philosophy and Religion of the *Prajñāpāramitā*'. See p. 234 ff.

He followed this advice faithfully, and was thus finally enabled to reach in safety the land of his heart. The sūtra was at that time referred to as containing the quintessence of the Buddha-mind.¹

The story is interesting, but the recitation is concerned here with the avoidance of physical troubles and not with the opening of the mind to supreme enlightenment. As to the identification of the *Prajñāpāramitā* with the Mantram as clearing one's mind of all its obstructions and agitations, there is no reference here. The meaning of this is to be found somewhere else.

When the Mantram is repeated without thinking of the result that may come out of it, and in the way the *Prajñāpāramitā* advises those who would take up the study of the *Prajñā*, is it possible that in some miraculous way the spiritual eye is opened and sees into the secrets of the *Prajñā*? When a Zen master was asked about the number of monks in his monastery, he answered, 'Ahead, three and three; behind, three and three.' To the ordinary mind such an answer does not give any idea as to what the master had in his mind at the time. Perhaps the 'Gate!' Mantram has something of this in it, and only those who have been initiated into it can understand it; and when this mystery in the answer is understood, the question itself becomes clear, and all that is contained in the *Prajñā* is laid bare before the eye. That may be so; then why this particular 'Gate!' Mantram and not any other? The Mantram, senseless enough in one sense, is not altogether unintelligible as far as its literary meaning is concerned. Its senselessness comes out when it is considered in relation to the whole content of the *Hṛidaya* as it is already known to us. Our question here will be: What inherent relationship is there between this statement or rather exclamation, 'Gone, gone to the other shore, O Bodhi!' and the general teaching of the *Hṛidaya*?

¹ From Tzū-ên's preface to the *Hṛidaya*. Taishō, No. 256.

answered the purpose as it did even prior to the time of Hui-nêng. When Hsüan-chuang told his story of wonders achieved by the recitation of the *Hṛidaya*, the Zen masters took to it, and at the same time saw something more in it. This 'something more' might have escaped scholars of the Vijñaptimātra philosophy, but not the Zen masters who put experience before philosophy, and who were keenly alive to the psychological value of all Buddhist literature. They understood the meaning of the Mantram in a way very different from that of the Shingon followers.

It is a noteworthy fact that the 'Gate!' Mantram is also found at the end of the Chinese version by Hsüan-chuang of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*. It seemed to have been added in the Yüan period, for the Yüan edition of the text contains it. Was the idea of affixing the Mantram possibly derived from the *Hṛidaya* when it began to circulate extensively among the Buddhists? The *Prajñāpāramitā* is said in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* to be a great, immeasurable, unfathomable, incomparable, and most supreme magical formula (*vidyā*); if so, it is easy to take the 'Gate!' as such in view of the *Hṛidaya*'s extolling of the Mantram in such glowing terms.

To come back to the main subject, the disciplining oneself in the deep *Prajñāpāramitā* is the koan exercise, to which the first Essay in the Second Series of my Zen Essays has been devoted. Avalokiteśvara is the Zen student, and the Buddha in the *Hṛidaya* tells us how Avalokiteśvara studied the *Prajñā*. For the *Prajñā* is the koan given to him for solution, as the means of realizing supreme enlightenment. His course of realization is along the *via negativa*. He is told to negate everything which he can intellectually comprehend as an object of thought. This is the way with Zen. It starts intellectually. Ignorance which has possessed the mind from the beginningless past is to be dispelled, this being the first step towards enlightenment. And ignorance means not seeing the truth (*dharma*) as it really is, *yathābhūtam*. The *Hṛidaya* thus gives us a series of negations, even knowledge being denied; for as long as there is the consciousness of having attained something, this is a real

obstacle in the way to supreme enlightenment. Becoming master of oneself and all things means having the way to move thoroughly cleansed of all obstacles that may thwart the free, self-governing course of the Prajñā. Negation is this cleansing, this purgation. In the koan exercise, the cleansing is also the preliminary procedure.

Negation, as we know, is a mere means whereby we reach somewhere. In the *Prajñāpāramitā* also it is meant to lead us to the goal of its discipline. Zen from the very beginning gives us a koan which defies intellectual interpretation, and thus without explicitly telling us to walk the path of negation it makes us do so. The *Hridaya*, which belongs to the Prajñā literature, follows the general course, and is filled with No's. But where do we land after abandoning every intellectual, conceptual treasure? Is it mere nothingness, mere vacuity of space, mere emptiness which is supposed to be the sense of Śūnyatā? If it were so, we are still in the realm of concepts. 'Nothingness' is still one of our thought-objects. This must also be abandoned, being one of the 'perverted thoughts and illusive dreams'.

In Shin Buddhism the abandoning of 'self-power' means being born in the land of Amitābha. The negation is at once an affirmation. Shin avoids being intellectual. Its negativism is not so frightening or despairing as that of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. Even here, however, a state of mind which knows 'no fears', 'no obstacles' is held up as the goal. What is this goal? What is this supreme enlightenment? Where is it? When is it reached?

It is reached when Avalokīteśvara exclaimed, '*Gate, gate, pāragate, pārasaṃgate!*' For this is the ejaculation which came out of his inner being when he went through the entire course of negations. He as Yogin of the *Prajñāpāramitā* could not eternally be going round and round in a circle of negations. Once he came to an end, exhausted and in despair, there was no hope before him, and he knew what he had left behind. But there was still something that urged him to go ahead. Utterly exhausted intellectually and emotionally, he made a final leap. The last tie which held

him to the world of relativity and 'self-power' completely snapped. He found himself on the other shore. Overwhelmed with his feelings, he could only keep uttering the 'Gate!' The 'Gate!' then became his Mantram, the 'Gate!' became the Mantram of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. With this ejaculation everything was cleared up, and Avalokiteśvara's discipline in the *Prajñā* was brought to a finish.

This, I conclude, is the meaning of the *Hridaya*. By thus interpreting the text we can understand why the 'Gate!' is the conclusion, and why this conclusion expresses in a most conclusive manner the content of the *Hridaya*. The Mantram taken in itself conveys no meaning, and its vital relation to the *Prajñāpāramitā* is unintelligible. The *Hridaya* must not be approached by an intellectual passageway, though it superficially suggests that. It must be approached along the line of religious experience, that is, by the line we have taken hold of in the study of the koan exercise. The meaning of the Mantram thus yields up its secrets, and as the result the *Hridaya* becomes a wholly comprehensible document of great religious value.

If the *Hridaya* were a product of the Chinese genius, the Mantram would not have taken the shape of 'Gate!' As we have already seen on various occasions, the Mantram of the Zen masters has assumed quite different colourings. But, psychologically speaking, the spiritual process experienced by the Chinese as well as the Indians was exactly the same—this could not, indeed, be otherwise. When a Chinese was asked who the Buddha was, he answered, 'It is like a pail full of water which is broken through the bottom.' This sounds like a *Dhāraṇī*, judged by the ordinary standard of logic. To compare the Buddha to a pail of water may seem desecrating, but from the Zen point of view the pail must be broken through the bottom and all the water be completely poured out, with no moon reflecting herself in it. The Buddha then reveals himself with his thirty-two marks of excellence. The *Hridaya* is not so concrete as this, but its depiction of the Zen experience is illuminating enough.

In the 'Gate!' the *Hridaya* negations have reached the

long as enlightenment is considered something to be sought after by means of Prajñā, not only is enlightenment far away from you but Prajñā fails to function in its native activity. Prajñā to be Prajñā must be identified with enlightenment. We can say, therefore, that Prajñā finds itself, recognizes its own undisguised, unspoiled figure in enlightenment. When the practice of the Prajñāpāramitā is to be brought to its judicious culmination, the identification of Prajñā and enlightenment must be achieved, must become fact.

Conceptually, Prajñā makes its first movements towards the apprehension of what it supposes its object. When it is actually taken hold of, however, the seizer and the seized become one; dualism ceases and there is a state of perfect identity which is known as enlightenment, and also all-knowledge (*sarvajñatā*). This experience may be described in this way too: Prajñā first divides or contradicts itself in order to see itself, starting a state of duality such as means and end, subject and object, this and that, the seer and the seen. When the work of seeing itself is accomplished, in Prajñā there is no more duality. Prajñā is seen in enlightenment, and enlightenment in Prajñā. It sees everywhere its own names, only differently spelt; Prajñā is one name, enlightenment is another, Nirvāṇa is a third, and so on. That is to say, all these names are only conceptual, they are discriminated as such for the convenience of our intellection. What really and truly is, is the identity of these names, and nothing more.

Prajñā is then Sambodhi (enlightenment), Prajñā is Sarvajñatā (all-knowledge), Prajñā is Nirvāṇa, Prajñā is Tathatā (suchness), Prajñā is Citta (mind), Prajñā is Buddhātā (Buddhahood); Prajñā taken in itself then is pre-eminently the Unattainable (*anupalabdha*) and the Unthinkable (*acintya*). And this Unattainable and Unthinkable is the basis of all realities and thoughts. Quite naturally, therefore, the writers of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* extol the Prajñā as a worker of miracles, almost personifying Prajñāpāramitā as an object of worship and finally urging its devotees

to pay the highest homage even to all the texts containing the teaching of the *Prajñāpāramitā* as if the texts themselves were active living embodiments of the agency that achieves wonders. Not only their study (*paryavāpti*), recitation (*vācāna*), memorizing (*dhāraṇa*), and copying (*lekhaṇa*) are recommended, but the reverence (*satkāra*) and worship (*gurakāra*) of them are encouraged, by means of offerings (*pūjā*) of flowers, wreaths, incense, ointment, lamps, flags, banners, canopies, and robes. As to the spiritual merit that accrues from believing (*abhiśraddhā*) and trusting (*adhimukti*) with the utmost sincerity (*adhyāśayata*) in the *Prajñāpāramitā*, no one can begin to estimate it accurately. The devotional side of the *Prajñāpāramitā* is curiously blended with its most high-soaring metaphysics.

The subject of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* is, however, properly speaking, the Bodhisattva-life which consists in the practice of the *Prajñā* whereby one comes to the realization of supreme enlightenment. The question how to practise the *Prajñā* is constantly raised and answered—this indeed being the most absorbing topic of all the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*. When it is successfully carried out the Buddhist discipline comes to an end. But as was said before, the practising of the *Prajñā* is not something heterogeneous in nature with what makes up enlightenment itself. Enlightenment grows out of this practising as the flower grows out of the plant; there is a continuity of life between the two terms, and continuity is no less than a form of identity. Thus, the following logic holds good: the *Prajñā* takes form in its being practised, and this practising is the content of enlightenment; therefore, the *Prajñā* is enlightenment. *Prajñā* = *Sambodhi* may be ascertained also from the practical side of the question. As these terms are constantly used interchangeably in all the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, what characterizes the one is equally applicable to the other. In fact the trinity *Prajñā* = *Sambodhi* = *Sarvajñatā* is the thread linking the various chains of teaching in them. You pick up one of the links and the rest follow. But if we wish to make a differentiation here we can define *Prajñā* as an

epistemological instrument with which Sarvajñatā is attained, while Sambodhi (enlightenment) is more or less psychological in the sense that it connotes a state of spiritual awakening. Prajñā is shared by all beings without distinction, although it may not be found in them functioning in its absolute purity. In the Buddha Prajñā is Sarvajñatā because he is in the state of perfect enlightenment.

Enlightenment is described in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* in the following terms:¹ 'By enlightenment (*bodhi*) is meant emptiness (*śūnyatā*), suchness (*tathatā*), reality-limit (*bhūta-koṭi*), spiritual realm (*dharmadhātu*), and essence (*dharmatā*). These are, however, names, words, provisional connotations. Enlightenment itself is the highest truth and ultimate reality; it is the norm not subject to change; it is indestructible, beyond discrimination; it is the true, pure, and all-pervading knowledge possessed by all the Buddhas; it is the most fundamental perfection whereby the Buddhas gain an insight into the nature of all realities, of all forms; it is beyond every mode of expression, beyond all thought-constructions created by the mind.'

When the Bodhi, enlightenment, is thus described with further identifications the result may appear somewhat confusing, and further remarks will be made on these later on. As far as the characterization itself is concerned, it is bodily transferable to Prajñā, and we can say this: that the Prajñā is seeing into the essence of things as they are (*yathābhūtam*); that the Prajñā is seeing things as in their nature empty; that the thus seeing things is to reach the limit of reality, i.e. to pass beyond the realm of the human understanding; that, therefore, the Prajñā is grasping the ungraspable, attaining the unattainable, comprehending the incomprehensible; that when this intellectual description of the working of the Prajñā is translated into psychological terms, it is not becoming attached to anything whether it is an idea or a feeling.

We read in the 'Devaparavarta' of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*: 'Those who have first taken up the practice

¹ Fas. 526, Division III, Chapter 26 (4), 'On Skilful Means', 29a.

of the Prajñā should practise all the six Pāramitās in such a way as to turn all the merit thereby gained to the realization of enlightenment. To do this, however, they should never cling (*parāmrkṣā*) to enlightenment as the goal of their exercises nor to the five Skandhas as irreducible individual realities. For all-knowledge (*sarvajñatā*) is something beyond grasp (*aparāmrṣṭā*).¹

'Beyond grasp' means 'not being attached'. The Unattainable and the Unthinkable being the nature of the Prajñā, the Bodhisattva who has regained its original function will naturally have no attachment even to Prajñā, Sarvajñatā, or Saṃbodhi. This is an important phase in the life of the Bodhisattva, to which I may later have occasions to make further reference.

5. *Prajñā as Seeing Things Yathābhūtam*

Because of this virtue of non-attachment we can say that Prajñā is able to see the world as it is, to see things in their aspect of suchness (*yathābhūtatā*). This is the most characteristic function of the Prajñā, which is gained by the Bodhisattva when he realizes that he comes, such as he is, from the Prajñā itself, and, therefore, that the latter is the begetter of him as well as of all the Buddhas. Once his eyes are open to this truth, he surveys the world and all its multiplicities in the state they truly are. That is to say, as far as our senses go, the world is seen to be all the time changing, undergoing various forms of combination and decomposition. But the Bodhisattva whose Prajñā is fully awakened perceives that the five Skandhas which make up this world, in spite of their superficial transformations, are in their self-nature (*svabhāva*) never destroyed, show no signs of destruction, are never subject to vicissitudes, to birth and death, to taking forms, to cherishing desires or passions.

The *Prajñāpāramitā* being at once a philosophy and a

¹ Ibid., p. 292.

religion, its teaching is always a mixture of ontology and psychology. In fact, it is not concerned with being as such, but with its human implications. To know the world is to know the human spirit and its workings. There are no metaphysical questions which are not at the same time questions of salvation and enlightenment. Therefore, when the Bodhisattva perceives the world as *yathābhūtam*, he also perceives human minds as they are; he is thus prepared to work out his skilful means (*upāya*). So, says the sūtra, the Bodhisattva perceives by means of his Prajñā-eye the minds of all sentient beings, and he knows how inexhaustibly varied they are in character, in function, in response, in moral value, in spirituality, and so on. Yet his perception *yathābhūtam* penetrates through these superficialities and recognizes that whether their minds are pure or impure, collected or scattered, greedy or not-greedy, they are all devoid of self-substance, of attachment, of discrimination. This is known as seeing all beings in their aspect of suchness, where pluralities in all forms vanish, revealing themselves such as they are in the light of the Prajñā.¹

It is evident therefore that the seeing things *yathābhūtam* in the *Prajñāpāramitā* means to see them through the veil of multiplicity which obscures our sight, and to grasp them with Prajñā in their state of suchness. Suchness (*tathatā*) is an uncouth term, but in Buddhist phraseology one of the most expressive terms. To understand exactly what it means is to understand the whole system of Buddhist thought. Suchness is not to be confounded with the sameness or oneness of things. When 'the vanishing of pluralities' is talked of, one may imagine that they are ignored or annihilated in order to reveal their aspect of oneness. But what the Prajñā devotees mean is that they are understood in their true relations, not only to one another but to that which makes up their reason of being.

There is a section² in the *Prajñāpāramitā* devoted to the discussion of Subhūti's being an Anujāta of the Tathāgata.

¹ *Fo-mu*, 35b; *Aṣṭa*, p. 259 ff.

² *Aṣṭa*, Chap. XVI, 'On Tathatā'.

Anujāta means 'to be born after' or 'to be born in accordance with'. That Subhūti who is the expounder of the philosophy of the *Prajñāpāramitā* is born after the Tathāgata, i.e. his younger brother, or, better, that he is born in accordance with what makes the Tathāgata such as he is, is one of the most significant statements in the *Prajñāpāramitā*, especially when this is considered in relation to the teaching of Suchness.

Tathāgata, which is generally regarded as another title of the Buddha, literally means either 'one who has thus come' or 'one who is thus gone'. What is important here is the meaning of *tathā* rather than *āgata* or *gata*; and apparently the author of the *Prajñāpāramitā* places great stress on *tathā* as the key to the understanding of the doctrine of Tathatā or Yathābhūtatā (suchness). When he refers to the suchness of Tathāgatahood (*tathāgata-tathatā*), he means the reason, or cause, or ground principle that makes possible the appearance of the Tathāgata on earth. Therefore, Subhūti's being born after (*anujata*) the suchness of Tathāgatahood means that Subhūti and Tathāgata come from the same cosmic womb, which is called, in the *Laṅkāvatāra* and other Buddhist texts, *tathāgatagarbha* or the 'Womb of Tathāgatahood'. With this preliminary explanation the following passage on Anujāta and Tathatā will become more intelligible.

'When it is said that Subhūti is born after the Tathāgata, it means this: that the suchness of the Tathāgata is the suchness of Subhūti, that there is no difference between the two suchnesses, for suchness is one in all sentient beings and here is no dualism, no separation, no twofoldness; that in all suchness there is neither coming nor going as they have never been born; that they have no abiding place where they can be located as particularities; that they are non-doing, by which it is meant that they are not to be perceived as functioning in a certain definite manner so as to reveal their specific characteristics which are their limitations; and yet that they are not to be taken as remaining for ever quiescent and doing nothing; that they retain their suchness in all

places, at all times, under all circumstances, in all causal combinations; that in them there is neither past nor present nor future though sentient beings themselves are reckoned as coming into existence, abiding, and passing away; they are not subject to discrimination, do not take particular forms, are beyond attainability; and finally that in spite of all these qualifications they appear as realities, capable of being named and defined and discriminated, though when they are thus treated they are no more of suchness. For these reasons Subhūti's suchness is the Tathāgata's suchness, and the Tathāgata's suchness is the suchness of all beings, and between these no division is conceivable. One uniform suchness prevails here, but as soon as this definite statement is made of suchness, suchness ceases to be suchness. It is the most elusive thought, yet without this thought there are no Tathāgatas, no Subhūtis, no Buddhas, no Arhats, no sentient beings. To understand this is the Tathāgata; no other beings can grasp this truth. Subhūti, since he understands, can expound the deep mysteries of the Prajñāpāramitā, and for this reason he is the Anujāta of the Tathāgata.'

Further, we read in Chapter XVII, 'On the Special Features of the Avinivarta Stage of Bodhisattvahood': 'There are varieties of spiritual stages in the Buddhist life, but they are all one as regards their aspect of suchness, and no discrimination is to be made among them. For it is through this oneness of suchness that the Bodhisattva can enter into the Dharmatā (briefly, Truth). Thus entering into the Dharmatā, he does not therein cherish any discrimination. Even when he listens to other teachings he refrains from criticizing them, for he knows how to get into the Dharmatā through various avenues of approach. Even when he listens to all forms of verbal and conceptual argumentations, he entertains no doubts as to the absolute validity of suchness which he embraces within himself.'

One of the functions of the Prajñā is then seen as perceiving things *yathābhūtam* or in their aspect of suchness (*tathatā*). In this suchness, all beings are found to be free

from defilement, and therefore to be one with the Buddhas who may in this especial respect be called Tathāgatas. As they are thus all one, they are brothers (*anujāta*) to one another, including Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The motherly womb from which all these brothers issue is truly known as 'Tathāgata-garbha'. The motherhood of the Prajñā becomes more convincing than ever, and the meaning of the reverence paid to the Prajñāpāramitā more natural.

6. *Prajñā and Śūnyatā*

The *Prajñāpāramitā* is generally regarded as exclusively teaching the philosophy of Emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Most people, including scholars of Buddhism, subscribe to this view, but as to what is really meant by Emptiness they do not seem to have a very clear conception. Since the study of the *Prajñāpāramitā* means viewing all things in their aspect of suchness or emptiness, let me make a few remarks here about the doctrine of Emptiness.

In Hsüan-chuang's version of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, eighteen¹ forms of emptiness are enumerated, and they are explained in detail in Nāgārjuna's commentary on the sūtra. This enumeration is in fact concerned with so many ways of definitely arriving at the idea of emptiness. The eighteen ways of describing it are: (1) Adhyātmā-śūnyatā, emptiness of the inner things, (2) Bahirdhā-śūnyatā, emptiness of the outer things, (3) Adhyātmā-bahirdhā-śūnyatā, emptiness of the inner-and-outer things, (4) Śūnyatā-śūnyatā, emptiness of emptiness, (5) Mahā-śūnyatā, great emptiness, (6) Paramārtha-śūnyatā, emptiness of the ultimate truth, (7) Saṃskṛta-śūnyatā, emptiness of things created, (8) Asaṃskṛta-śūnyatā, emptiness of things uncreated, (9) Atyanta-śūnyatā, ultimate emptiness, (10) Anavarāgra-śūnyatā, emptiness of limitlessness, (11) Anavakāra-śūnyatā, empti-

¹ Twenty in the *Śatasāhasrikā*, but no such reckoning in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*.

ness of dispersion, (12) Prakṛita-sūnyatā, emptiness of primary nature, (13) Svalakṣaṇa-sūnyatā, emptiness of selfhood, (14) Sarvadharmā-sūnyatā, emptiness of things, (15) Anupalambha-sūnyatā, emptiness of unattainability, (16) Abhāva-sūnyatā, emptiness of non-being, (17) Svabhāva-sūnyatā, emptiness of self-nature, and (18) Abhāva-svabhāva-sūnyatā, emptiness of the non-being of self-nature.

1. By 'the inner things' are meant the six consciousnesses (*viññāna*). When they are said to be 'empty' is meant that all our psychological activities have no ego-soul behind them, as is commonly imagined by us. This is another way of upholding the doctrine of Anātman or Anatta.

2. 'The outer things' are objects of the six Vijñānas, and their emptiness means that there are no self-governing substances behind them. As there is no Ātman at the back of the psychological phenomena, so there is no Ātman at the back of the external world. This is technically known as the 'egolessness of things'. Primitive Buddhism taught the theory of Anātman in us, but it was by the Mahāyānists, it is said, that the theory was applied to external objects also.

3. We generally distinguish between the inner and the outer, but since there is no reality in this distinction it is here negated; the distinction is no more than a form of thought-construction, the relation can be reversed at any moment, there is no permanent stability here. Change the position, and what is inner is outer, and what is outer is inner. This relativity is called here emptiness.

4. When things outside and inside are all declared empty we are led to think that the idea of emptiness remains real or that this alone is something objectively attainable. The emptiness of emptiness is designed to destroy this attachment. To maintain the idea of emptiness means to leave a speck of dust when all has been swept clean.¹

5. The 'great emptiness' means the unreality of space. Space was conceived in olden days to be something object-

¹ Cf. Jōshu's remark on nothingness. *Zen Essays*, Series I, p. 175.

but when the broom is retained it is not absolute emptiness. Nay, the broom, together with the sweeper, ought to be thrown aside in order to reach the idea of *Atyanta-sūnyatā*. As long as there is even one dharma left, a thing or a person or a thought, there is a point of attachment from which a world of pluralities, and, therefore, of woes and sorrows, can be fabricated. Emptiness beyond every possible qualification, beyond an infinite chain of dependence—this is *Nirvāṇa*.

10. When existence is said to be beginningless, people think that there is such a thing as beginninglessness, and cling to the idea. In order to do away with this attachment, its emptiness is pronounced. The human intellect oscillates between opposites. When the idea of a beginning is exploded, the idea of beginninglessness replaces it, while in truth these are merely relative. The great truth of *Sūnyatā* must be above those opposites, and yet not outside of them. Therefore, the *Prajñāpāramitā* takes pains to strike the middle way and yet not to stand by it; for when this is done it ceases to be the middle way. The theory of Emptiness is thus to be elucidated from every possible point of view.

11. There is nothing perfectly simple in this world. Everything is doomed to final decomposition. It seems to exist as a unit, to retain its form, to be itself, but there is nothing here that cannot be reduced to its component parts. It is sure to be dispersed. Things belonging to the world of thought may seem not to be subject to dissolution. But here change takes place in another form. Time works, no permanency prevails. The four Skandhas—*Vedanā*, *Saṃjñā*, *Saṃskāra*, and *Vijñāna*—are also meant for ultimate dispersion and annihilation. They are in any way empty.

12. *Prakṛiti* is what makes fire hot and water cold, it is the primary nature of each individual object. When it is declared to be empty, it means that there is no *Ātman* in it, which constitutes its primary nature, and that the very idea of primary nature is an empty one. That there is no individual selfhood at the back of what we consider a particular object has already been noted, because all things are

products of various causes and conditions, and there is nothing that can be called an independent, solitary, self-originating primary nature. All is ultimately empty, and if there is such a thing as primary nature, it cannot be otherwise than empty.

13. Lakshana is the intelligible aspect of each individual object. In some cases Lakshana is not distinguishable from primary nature, they are inseparably related. The nature of fire is intelligible through its heat, that of water through its coolness. The Buddhist monk finds his primary nature in his observance of the rules of morality, while the shaven head and patched garment are his characteristic appearance. The *Prajñāpāramitā* tells us that these outside, perceptible aspects of things are empty, because they are mere appearances resulting from various combinations of causes and conditions; being relative they have no reality. By the emptiness of self-aspect or self-character (*svalakṣaṇa*), therefore, is meant that each particular object has no permanent and irreducible characteristics to be known as its own.

14. The assertion that all things (*sarvadharma*) are empty is the most comprehensive one, for the term *dharma* denotes not only an object of sense but also an object of thought. When all these are declared empty, no further detailed commentaries are needed. But the *Prajñāpāramitā* evidently designs to leave no stone unturned in order to impress its students in a most thoroughgoing manner with the doctrine of Emptiness. According to Nāgārjuna, all dharmas are endowed with these characters: existentiality, intelligibility, perceptibility, objectivity, efficiency, causality, dependence, mutuality, duality, multiplicity, generality, individuality, etc. But all these characterizations have no permanence, no stability; they are all relative and phenomenal. The ignorant fail to see into the true nature of things, and become attached thereby to the idea of a reality which is eternal, blissful, self-governing, and devoid of defilements. To be wise simply means to be free from these false views, for there is nothing in them to be taken hold of as not empty.

15. This kind of emptiness is known as unattainable (*anupalambha*). It is not that the mind is incapable of laying its hand on it, but that there is really nothing to be objectively comprehensible. Emptiness suggests nothingness, but when it is qualified as unattainable, it ceases to be merely negative. It is unattainable just because it cannot be an object of relative thought cherished by the Vijñāna. When the latter is elevated to the higher plane of the Prajñā, the 'emptiness unattainable' is understood. The *Prajñāpāramitā* is afraid of frightening away its followers when it makes its bold assertion that all is empty, and therefore it proceeds to add that the absence of all these ideas born of relativity does not mean bald emptiness, but simply an emptiness unattainable.

With the wise this emptiness is a reality. When the lion roars, the other animals are terrified, imagining this roaring to be something altogether extraordinary, something in a most specific sense 'attained' by the king of beasts. But to the lion the roaring is nothing, nothing specifically acquired by or added to them. So with the wise, there is no 'emptiness' in them which is to be regarded as specifically attained as an object of thought. Their attainment is really no-attainment.

16, 17, and 18. These may be treated together. Existence is viewed here from the point of being (*astitva*) and non-being (*nāstitva*), and these two views, whether taken individually or relatively, are said to be empty. *Abhāva* is the negation of being, which is one sense of emptiness; *svabhāva* means 'to be by itself', but as there is no such being it is also empty. Is then the opposition of being and non-being real? No, it is also empty, because each term of the opposition is empty.

What 'emptiness' really means I believe has been made clear by these detailed explanations. Emptiness is not to be confounded with nothingness; nor is one to imagine that there is an object of thought to be designated as emptiness, for this idea goes directly contrary to the nature of emptiness itself. Nor is it to be defined as relativity, as is done by

some scholars. It is true that the *Prajñāpāramitā* teaches that things exist mutually related as results of causal combinations and therefore they are empty. But for this reason we cannot state that relativity and emptiness are synonymous. In fact, it is one thing to say that things are relative, but quite another to say that they are empty. Emptiness is the result of an intuition and not the outcome of reasoning, though the use here of the particle of inference, 'therefore', gives this effect. The idea of Emptiness grows out of experience, and in order to give it a logical foundation the premise is found in relativity. But, speaking strictly logically, there is a gap between relativity and Emptiness. Relativity does not make us jump over the gap; as long as we stay with relativity we are within a circle; to realize that we are in a circle and that therefore we must get out of it in order to see its entire aspect presupposes our once having gone beyond it. The experience of Emptiness has been there all the time when we began to talk about relativity. From Emptiness we can pass to relativity, but not conversely. This analysis is important in the understanding of the *Prajñāpāramitā* philosophy. It is the Prajñā that sees into all the implications of Emptiness, and not the intellect or Vijñāna, and they are wise who have opened their Prajñā-eye to the truth of Emptiness. If the Mahāyāna system were built upon the idea of relativity, its message would never have called out such responses as we see in its history in India, China, and Japan. That the teaching of Emptiness has actually achieved wonders in the spiritual life of the Far-eastern peoples is the irrevocable proof of its deep insight into the abyss of human consciousness.

Emptiness, for these reasons, is called the unattainable (*anupalabdha*) or the unthinkable (*acintya*), showing that it is not a notion to be subsumed in any categories of logic. It is synonymous with suchness (*tathatā*). Tathatā or Śūnyatā is thus truly the object of study for the Bodhisattvas.

disciplining exercises may be terribly frightened and led astray, if they are not properly guided by good spiritual teachers.¹

Such a discourse as this, indeed, if the hearer is not properly instructed by a great competent master of the Prajñāpāramitā, will lead us to the follies of libertinism. Listen further to this:

'The Buddha: It is like a magician (*māyākāra*) conjuring up by his magical art a large crowd of beings at a crossroad. As soon as they are seen to come into existence they vanish. O Subhūti, what do you think? Do they really come from some definite locality? Are they real realities? Do they really pass away somewhere? Are they really destroyed?

'Subhūti: O no, Blessed One.

'The Buddha: It is the same with the Bodhisattva. Although he leads innumerable sentient beings to Nirvāṇa, in reality there are no sentient beings to be led to Nirvāṇa. Those who are not frightened at all, even when listening to such discourses as this, are true Bodhisattvas well fortified in the Mahāyāna armour.²

'Subhūti said to Pūrṇa: The Rūpam of the magical creation is neither in bondage nor released from it; so with his Vedanā, Saṃjñā, Saṃskāra, and Vijñāna—they are neither in bondage nor released from it. The same is to be said of the suchness of his Rūpam and the other four Skandhas. Nothing of him has ever been in bondage, and he is therefore never released from anything. Why? Because of non-actuality (*asadbhūtatvāt*), there is for him neither bondage nor emancipation; because of detachment (*vivikṭatvāt*), there is for him neither bondage nor emancipation; because of no-birth (*anutpannatvāt*), there is for him neither bondage nor emancipation. Those Bodhisattvas who realize this are really abiding in the Mahāyāna and are well furnished with the Mahāyāna armour.³

'Then the Devaputras asked Subhūti: Are all beings like Māyā, or are they not?

² *Aṣṭa*, pp. 16-17 (Fo-mu, 3b).

² *Ibid.*, p. 21 (Fo-mu, 4a).

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-3 (Fo-mu, 4b).

all is a dream, is surely horrifying. But let us here rise above the dualistic interpretation of existence, and we realize that what is is because of what is not, and that what is not is not because of what is. We cannot single out one thing and declare it to be final. But this is what we are practising in our daily life and in our ordinary logic. When the *Prajñāpāramitā* says that all is *Māyā*, it simply describes what it sees *yathābhūtam* in this sense-world. *Māyā*, more exactly stated, is 'to exist as if not existing'.¹ This is not denying the world in a wholesale manner. Superficially, it is a denial, but at the same time it is asserting something behind. It is at once a negation and an affirmation. Logic cannot uphold this position, but the *Prajñā* intuition does. Students of the *Mahāyāna sūtras* are always advised to keep this in mind.

9. *The Prajñā as Unattainable, and Relativity*

This position of the *Prajñāpāramitā* attained by the awakening of the inner sense is called *anupalabdha*, 'unattainable'. Paradoxes are here unavoidable. The Hegelian dialectic may explain them as being also in accordance with the law of logic. But in the *Prajñāpāramitā* there is no need to go through the process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis because there is no room in the *Mahāyāna* world of intuitions to admit such a roundabout process of moving from one idea to another. Once beyond a world dualistically constructed, the unattainable is the attainable, and the attainable is the unattainable. This may be called the transcendental viewpoint of the *Prajñāpāramitā*.

We can now see why those scholars are in the wrong who want to identify the doctrine of Emptiness (*śūnyatā*) with that of relativity. According to them, all things are empty because their existence is thoroughly conditioned by the principle of relativity, which is the same as saying that all things are bound up by the law of causation. If Buddhist philosophy is based on causation and karma, this means

¹ *Yathā na samvidyante tathā samvidyante. Aṣṭa*, p. 15.

relativity; and if all things are what they are because of the causal net pervading the entire range of existence, and if they are thus characterized as Emptiness, Emptiness is relativity. But this identification of Emptiness and relativity is untenable; the so-called identification is confusion. The scholars have not fully grasped the purpose of the Mahāyāna teaching; they are still holding to their former position, that is, the position we generally have prior to the awakening of the inner sense to which allusion has already been made.

To understand truthfully, *yathābhūtam*, what Emptiness is, the awakening (*sambodhi*) is indispensable. The awakening is the turning-up (*parāvṛtti*), so repeatedly mentioned in the Mahāyāna sutras such as the *Laṅkāvatāra*, etc. This turning-up or turning-back means reversing the order of one's mental outlook. What used to be dualistic is now to be seen from the 'wrong side' of it. The inside which was hitherto hidden out of sight now stands revealed in full view. Things are now surveyed from this newly discovered position. Naturally, one's view of the world must change; things seen from the outside cannot be the same as things seen from the inside. A tree was observed as expressed in colour and with its branches swaying in the wind; but now there is no more a tree distinct from its fellow-trees, from its surroundings; the leaves are no more green; there are no swaying branches; no flowers are in bloom; and all these have vanished; what has appeared to the senses and been constructed by thought is all gone. Here lies a new world. All that has been 'attainable' remains here; but this is changed—though not to a state of nothingness, for nothingness still savours of somethingness. Lacking in all forms of expression, the *Prajñāpāramitā* calls this 'the unattainable', 'the empty', 'the unobstructed', etc.

There is no room here for relativity to design its machinery. Relativity is one of the notions we have formed while observing existence from the point of *astitva* and *nāstitva*, where everything has its second, where every 'A' is accompanied by its 'not-A'. From this position it is im-

possible to penetrate into a realm of Emptiness; the position must once for all be quitted; as long as the philosopher clings to this, his relativity dogs his every step; he cannot draw anything else out of it; it never transforms itself into Emptiness. In order to get into the world of Emptiness, existence itself must be made to turn a somersault. One must once experience sitting at the centre of existence and viewing things from this hub. Let one remain at this side of dualism and the gap between relativity and Emptiness can never be bridged. Things of this world are relative because of their being empty by nature; and not conversely. Śūnyatā is realized only after the awakening of the inner sense, after the turning-over (*parāvṛitti*) in the Ālayavijñāna. It is only after this 'turning' which is also a leaping that we can make such statements as these: 'All is bound up in the chain of origination, and therefore all is empty', or 'All is Māyā, all is Śūnyatā'; or 'All is such as it is (*yathābhūtam*), and yet all is not'.

When the Buddhists refer to the chain of origination (*hetupratyaya* or *kāraṇasamutpāda*), in order to explain the making-up of a fleet or the production of a Buddha-image,¹ and say that nothing is produced without the combination of various causes and conditions, and further that they do not come from any definite quarters, nor do they disappear into any definite quarters, the idea may seem to point towards the identification of relativity and Emptiness. In one of the Chinese versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, known as the *Tao-hsing Pan-jê*,² we have the following:³

'It is like those heavenly mansions which are inhabited by beings of the Akanisṭha Heaven. Their glowing beauty surpasses everything we on earth can think of. But they have been made by themselves; they have not been brought

¹ See *Zen Essays*, Series II, p. 299-300 ff.

² *Tao-hsing* is the title of the first chapter. This was translated by Lou-chio-sh'an (Lokarakṣa), of the Eastern Han dynasty (A.D. 25-220), and is the earliest *Prajñāpāramitā* done into the Chinese language. In the Kumārajīva and the Hsüan-chuang 'Tao-hsing' is 'Miao-hsing', and in the Sanskrit *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* 'Sarvākārajñātācaryā'.

³ This part is missing in Kumārajīva, and also in Shih-hu.

over here from anywhere else, nor is there any creator who has created them out of nothing, nor is their whence and whither known to anybody. Their coming into existence is due to the law of causation; when those celestial beings were matured on account of their previous deeds to enjoy such radiantly shining celestial palaces, the latter came into existence. In like manner, when various causes and conditions are matured, sentient beings are able to see the Buddha-body. They first conceive the desire to see the Buddha; they then accumulate all kinds of merit by practising good deeds; they avoid being born in the eight undesirable habitations; being intelligent they have full faith in the Buddha. When these several conditions are fulfilled, they will interview the Buddha. As to the Buddha-body itself, it has no whence and whither; it knows no creator; there is no one who has brought it over here for the benefit of the devotees, it has no form; it is not attached to anything; like the palaces of the Akanishṭa, it just manifests itself there in order to make all sentient beings attain final emancipation. . . .'

The doctrine of causation (*kāraṇasamutpāda*) as upheld here is only applicable to a world of dualities and combinations. Where there are no such happenings, the doctrine at once loses its significance. As long as we are bound to a world of particulars we see causation and relativity everywhere, because this is the place for them to function. But since we are never satisfied with this state of affairs, not only spiritually but logically in the deeper sense of the word, we leap for life or death over the bottomless abyss gaping before us. The leap lands us in the realm of Emptiness, and we realize that it is after all this Emptiness that lies underneath the world of causes and conditions.

Emptiness is that which makes the work of causation possible, it is a form of canvas on which causation paints its most variegated pictures. Emptiness thus comes first though not in time, for time presupposes a chain of causation; the coming first means being fundamental. When causation or relativity is made at all thinkable, there is already in it

Emptiness. This distinction is most vital in all our religious experience and, I should think, also in all our clear philosophical thinking. The *Prajñāpāramitā* philosophers, therefore, insists that Emptiness is the most fundamental idea when their intuitions strive to express themselves through the medium of the intellect. It is not a negative notion but decidedly positive. It sounds negative only to those who have not gone to the other side of the screen. When penetration is imperfect the intellect becomes muddled, and wrong inferences are many.

Scholars unfortunately slur over the fact that in the *Prajñāpāramitā* and other Mahāyāna texts Śūnyatā (emptiness) and Tathatā or Yathābhūtā (suchness) are synonymously used as expressing an identical thought. If Emptiness is a negative term and connotes nothing of affirmation, it can never be made to build up the grand edifice of the religion known as Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is really astonishing to see how prejudiced and superficial some of the critics are who fail to see the needs of the human sense for something really affirmative and therefore soul-supporting. The oriental mind, generally speaking, is more inner and intuitive, working outwardly, as it were, from the centre of its being. It may not be so logical and system-loving as the Western mind, and for this reason it is capable of more deeply grasping the fundamental facts of life. Those who start from a dualistically constructed world are unable to destroy this construction and to return to its source which really is no-source. Thesis (*astitva*) and antithesis (*nāstitva*) may be raised to a synthesis, but this after all remains an idea, a concept, and never becomes an experience; and, therefore, when they are asked 'Where does the One return?' they are at a loss where to find the way out.¹

Intuition may be despised by the philosopher, but there are grades of intuition. The deepest are those experienced by religio-philosophical minds belonging to the order of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. But when their intuitions are translated into terms of relative knowledge, how insipid, negative, and

¹ See *Zen Essays*, Series I, p. 283.

nonsensical! The understanding of the Prajñāpāramitā becomes an impossibility. Hence its repeated warnings not to hide oneself under a cover, not to cherish a shadow of doubt, not to feel dejected or frightened or threatened.

10. *The Prajñā and Irrationalities*

Seeing thus where the Prajñāpāramitā stands, we can realize why it abounds with negative phrases and irrational assertions. Its intuitions could not be conveyed in any other way if they were to be expressed at all. In fact, we can say that all the deep soul-stirring truths are paradoxically stated, so much, indeed, that we are almost led to imagine that the authors are incorrigibly and deliberately enigmatic. The following quotations supply examples:

'Subhūti asked: How does the Bodhisattva come to the knowledge of the five Skandhas when he disciplines himself in the deep Prajñāpāramitā?

'Buddha said: He comes to the knowledge of the five Skandhas when he disciplines himself in the deep Prajñāpāramitā by perceiving *yathābhūtam* (1) what the characteristic marks (*lakṣaṇa*) of the Skandhas are, (2) whence they come and whither they go, and (3) what is meant by their suchness.

'(1) Rūpam (form) has no ultimate solidity; it is full of cracks and holes; it is like a bubble. Vedanā is like a boil; it is like an arrow, quickly rising and quickly disappearing; it is like a foam, deceiving and fleeting; it takes its rise when there is a triple combination of conditions. Saṃjñā is like a mirage, there are no real fountains in it; because of thirst of desire it rises, and expresses itself in words though there is nothing substantial in it. Saṃskāra is like a plantain tree; when each leaf is peeled off, nothing remains. Vijñāna is like a Māyā creation; it is there when causes and conditions are variously combined. It is a provisional construction; the magically created soldiers are seen marching through the streets; though they look real they are in fact without substantiality.

'(2) As regards the whence and whither of the five Skandhas, the Bodhisattva knows *yathābhūtam* that they come from nowhere although they seem to manifest themselves actually before him; that they depart nowhere although they seem to disappear altogether out of sight, and yet that there is in the Skandhas a happening known as their rise or their disappearance.

'(3) Lastly, the Bodhisattva perceives *yathābhūtam* that there is what is to be known as the suchness of the five Skandhas, which is neither born nor dead, neither comes nor departs, is neither pure nor tainted, neither loses nor gains; which for ever remains in the state of suchness free from all falsehood, from all forms of change.'¹

The position of the *Prajñāpāramitā* is not necessarily to deny the so-called phenomenal world; it gives the world its judicious claim as a stage of birth and death, of being and non-being. But at the same time it never forgets to assert that what we see here displayed or performed are passing shadows of something behind, and that when the latter is not finally grasped by our experience the meaning of the passing shadows will never be properly recognized and appraised. Therefore, the Mahāyānists are always meticulously careful about distinguishing between 'the attainable' and 'the unattainable', technically so called. 'The attainable' belongs to this world dualistically constructed and 'the unattainable' to a world beyond that. Wherever the contrast between *astitva* (being) and *nāstitva* (non-being) is possible, there is attainability, and, therefore, attachment which is the enemy of enlightenment and emancipation.

'The Buddha says to Subhūti: Wherever there is a form of duality, this is attainability; wherever there is no duality in whatever form, this is non-attainability. When the eye stands against form (*rūpam*), or the mind against ideas (*dharma*) there is a duality. When there is what is known as supreme enlightenment set against the Buddha who is regarded as having attained it, this is again a duality. Any

¹ Abstract from Hsüan-chuang's translation of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, Fas. 532, Chapter 29 (1) 55 ff.

teaching that is based on dualism is incorrect, it belongs to a realm of the attainables.

'Let the duality of eye and form, ear and sound, mind and thought be altogether done away with; likewise with that of the enlightened and enlightenment, let us have nothing to do; and then there will be a state of non-duality, free from all false teachings and illegitimate speculations. The unattainable is thus attained.

'Subhūti asks: 'Is it the unattainable because of depending on the attainable? Or because of depending on the unattainable?

'The Buddha: It is the unattainable because of depending on neither the attainable nor the unattainable. It is termed "unattainable" when the attainable and the unattainable are regarded as one. The discipline of the Bodhisattva in the Prajñāpāramitā consists in realizing this oneness of the attainable and the unattainable. Let him be freed both from the idea of the attainable and that of the unattainable; he will then be free from all faulty entanglements.

'O Subhūti, you may ask: if the attainable and the unattainable are one, how does the Bodhisattva, who is defined as progressively going through from one stage to another, finally reach the enlightenment of the all-knowing one? O Subhūti, the Bodhisattva's life is a series of unattainables. He has nothing attained while going through the various stages of Bodhisattvahood; for in the Prajñāpāramitā there is nothing attainable, nor is there any in the enlightenment of the all-knowing one. When the Bodhisattva is disciplining himself in the Prajñāpāramitā, there is in his discipline nothing to be recognized as attained, and in this non-attainment there is also really nothing attained in any time and at any place.'¹

This sounds nonsensical when we confine ourselves to the relativity aspect of existence, or to the discursive understanding of the human mind. But let us reverse the order of things; let us see the world of pluralities from the other side which reveals itself to the inner eye now opened by a process

¹ Ibid., Fas. 525, Chapter 26 (3) 23a.

known as Parāvṛitti and we shall realize that all these irrationalities are possible. Irrationalities are such because of our position. The question is whether we can abandon this position, whether we can adopt an altogether new one where things are surveyed from their aspect of suchness. As we have already seen, the acquirement of this is made possible by the supreme efforts we put forward when impelled by a certain inner urge. The new position is open only to our will-power and not to the intellect. Logic halts here; ideas are unable to array themselves in regular sequence of cognition and analysis. The intellect surrenders itself to the dictates of the will. The door is forced to open, and we see a realm of unattainables extending itself before the eye. It is in this realm that we attain an unattainability by not really attaining it. Critics may declare: 'By this we have not gained anything, for we stand where we were before the Parāvṛitti. If this is so, what is the use of exercising ourselves so much over the so-called situation? When we have a thing as if not having it, it is practically the same as not having it at all from the first.' The reasoning is sound as far as intellection is concerned. But we may remember that we have already gone over to the other side of intellection, and that whatever statements we make are made after the leap. There is the history of an experience intervening; this is a great event which creates an unsurpassable gap between philosophy and the teaching of the *Prajñāpāramitā*.

11. *The Unattainable and the Unattached*

'Unattainable' (*anupalabdha*), otherwise expressed, is 'not-seized' or 'unattached' (*apāramiṣṭa*). 'Unattainable' has still an intellectual ring, while 'unseizable' or 'unattached' belongs to the terminology of emotion. The assertion that 'All-knowledge is indeed unattached' (*apāramiṣṭa hi sarvajñatā*) is in fact one of the refrains we constantly come across in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. In this we are made to be

strongly convinced that the Mahāyāna text is a document describing the views of the other side of existence where the dualism of *astitva* and *nāstitva* ceases to hold good. In the following passages, *apāramiṣṭa* is replaced by *aśleṣa* and *asamga*, which denote the same idea; our author tries hard to impress us with the importance of this teaching of non-attachment.

'When the Bodhisattva attains enlightenment, he teaches all beings with the doctrine of non-attachment (*aśleṣa*). By non-attachment is meant not to be bound by Rūpam (*rūpasyā-sambandhā*), by Vedanā, Saṃjñā, Saṃskāra, and Vijñāna. When a person is not bound by them, he is unconcerned with their rise and disappearance. Being unattached to these happenings, he is neither in bondage nor emancipated.'¹

'This teaching of the *Prajñāpāramitā* is difficult to understand, difficult to believe. Because form itself (*rūpam*) is neither bound nor emancipated. Why? Because form has no self-nature (*asvabhāva*). The same may be said of the rest of the Skandhas. There is no self-nature in any one of them, neither in the beginning, nor in the midway, nor at the end. As this having no self-nature is its self-nature, there is nothing bound, nothing emancipated. The *Prajñāpāramitā* is, therefore, difficult to grasp.'²

'But as soon as we cling to name (*nāma*) and appearance (*nimitta*), there is attachment (*saṃga*). Name and appearance are products of discrimination (*vikalpa*). Discrimination takes place when the *Prajñāpāramitā* is clung to as such. Discrimination, attachment, and the losing sight of the *Prajñāpāramitā* are synonymous and interchangeable in the lexicon of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Form is empty (*rūpam śūnyam*), but when it is so asserted, there is clinging (*saṃga*), and the clinging separates us from the *Prajñāpāramitā*.

'Here is a novitiate Bodhisattva who has awakened the desire for enlightenment; he has gone through with a disciplinary course in the life of Bodhisattvahood; and he may

¹ *Aṣṭa*, p. 294 (*Fo-mu*, 41a).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 185-6; Hsüan-chuang, Fas. 545, Chapter 8, 19b.

have conceived the idea that he has thereby accumulated a certain amount of merit. But no sooner is this idea stirred in him than he commits a deed of clinging, he is no more in the *Prajñāpāramitā*. Wherever there is discrimination, this leads to clinging; or we may reverse it and state that wherever there is clinging there is discrimination. Enlightenment is attained only when there is no clinging, no conscious striving, no dualism of *astitva* and *nāstitva*; for enlightenment is non-attainment, and its self-nature consists in not having self-nature.¹

This being free from discrimination, from clinging or attachment, and having no self-nature is sometimes called a state of 'absolute purity' (*atyantaviśuddhi*). And it is said that because of this absolute purity the *Prajñāpāramitā* is unfathomably deep, glowingly brilliant, a perfect unit, unattainable, unseizable, unknowable, unborn, indestructible, abiding nowhere, etc.²

To illustrate further the philosophy of the unattainable or of absolute solitude as described in the *Prajñāpāramitā*, I quote another passage from the sūtra where a chapter is devoted to the treatment of *Māyā*.³

'Subhūti then said: How can the mind which is like *Māyā* attain supreme enlightenment?

'The Buddha: Do you see the mind which is like *Māyā*?

'Subhūti: No, I do not.

'Buddha: Do you see *Māyā*?

'Subhūti: No, I do not.

'Buddha: When you do not see *Māyā*, nor the mind which is like *Māyā*, do you think there is an existence (*dharma*)—other than the *Māyā* or the *Māyā*-like mind—which attains supreme enlightenment?

'Subhūti: No, I do not see any such existence (*dharma*). If there is any existence apart from the mind which is like *Māyā*, nothing can be predicated of it, for it is neither a being (*asti*) nor a non-being (*nāsti*). All is absolutely

¹ Ibid., p. 190 (*Fo-mu*, 25b).

² Ibid., p. 186 et seq. (*Fo-mu*, 25b).

³ Ibid., Chapter XXVI, 'On the Simile of *Māyā*'.

solitary (*atyantaviviktā*), and in this absolute solitude there is nothing of which we can assert either as being or as not being; there is nothing in which discipline is possible, or of which attainment is to be avouched. For this reason, the Prajñāpāramitā is absolutely solitary. So is supreme enlightenment. Between these two absolutely solitary terms there cannot be any relationship; we cannot describe the one as the means of attaining the other, nor the other as something attainable. The Bodhisattva is spoken of as attaining supreme enlightenment because of the Prajñāpāramitā. But the Bodhisattva himself is also an absolutely solitary being (*dharma*), and we cannot make any assertion about his attaining anything, even enlightenment.

*
 'Buddha: Well done, Subhūti. It is just as you state. Absolutely solitary are all things (*dharma*)—the Bodhisattva, the Prajñāpāramitā, and supreme enlightenment. And yet amidst those absolutely solitary dharmas the Bodhisattva is awakened to the true nature of the Prajñāpāramitā and attains the knowledge that the Prajñāpāramitā is absolutely solitary, and that what is known as Prajñāpāramitā is not Prajñāpāramitā. There is really the attainment by the Bodhisattva of supreme enlightenment, and yet in this attainment there is really nothing that can be held out as something attained, something seized; and all things (*dharma*) remain absolutely solitary as if nothing ever happened.'¹

12. Reality as Seen from the Other Side

'Absolutely solitary' (*atyantaviviktā*), 'absolutely pure' (*atyantaviśuddhī*), 'unattainable' (*anupalabdha*), 'unattached' (*aśleṣa*, or *asaṅga*, or *aparāmarīṣṭa*), 'neither bound nor emancipated' (*abaddhāmukta*), 'neither born nor extinguished' (*anutpādānirodha*), 'not abiding anywhere' (*asthita*), 'not depending on anything' (*anāśrāya*), 'not exhausted' (*akṣaya*), 'pathless' (*apatha*), 'trackless' (*apada*), etc.—all these belong

¹ *Aṣṭa*, p. 438 ff; *Fo-mu*, 61; *Māhā*, Fas. 553, 60a; *Kumārajīva*, 78b.

to the terminology to be met with in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, and come from the realm of Emptiness. When we try to understand them from our ordinary logical point of view, which deals with the relativity aspect of existence, they do not seem to convey much sense; they are too negative or too obscure in meaning for us to locate the definite quarters where they intend to lead us. As soon, however, as we abandon our dualistically built up relativity standpoint, and enter into the inner life of things, we seem to understand those obscure terms; we even come to think that this inner world is only describable by means of this kind of mystical phraseology. The religious life is after all a life to live and experience and not a concept to think about, yet the human mind is so constructed that it cannot avoid giving expression to the life. The expressions in the *Prajñāpāramitā* are thus the more or less intellectual outpourings of the Mahāyāna genius.

To study or discipline oneself in the *Prajñāpāramitā* is, therefore, to approach this realm of absolute solitude or absolute emptiness. The *Prajñā* generally lies obscured in the deepest recesses of consciousness. Unless this is successfully awakened and made to see the other side of reality, which is to see reality *yathābhūtam*, there is no escape from the bondage of ignorance and suffering. This release is called attaining supreme enlightenment or all-knowledge (*sarvajñatā*).

The *Prajñāpāramitā* is the objective of all the Buddhist discipline. But when this is attained there is really nothing of which one can say that one has attained it. This is the meaning of such phrases: 'There is no perception of Suchness in Suchness'; 'Not by means of absolute solitude is absolute solitude realized'; 'There is something accomplished, and yet no discrimination (*avikalpa*) we have, because of the *Prajñāpāramitā*'s being non-discriminative'; etc. Some may call these phrases mystical in the sense that they are irrational and beyond syllogistic reasoning. This may be right, for 'incomprehensible' (*acintya*) is one of the terms most frequently used in all Mahāyāna literature. But

from the standpoint of the Prajñā philosophers they are far from talking irrationalities; they are simply giving expression to what they actually see with their own Prajñā-eye.

In the beginning, not being satisfied with themselves and their so-called objective world, they had everywhere searched for Reality in or with which they could peacefully live. The Parāvṛtti took place somewhere in their mind. The order of things is reversed. The universe (*sarvadharmā*) is no more observed from the point of view with which they have hitherto been so deeply, so inextricably, involved. This is now completely abandoned. Things are seen, as it were, from the reverse side. A world of Rūpam, Vedanā, Saṃjñā, Saṃskāra, and Vijñāna is there as before, but it is seen lined with the silver lining of Tathatā (suchness) and no more indeed as an isolated event cut off from its roots. Without the roots, which are, however, no roots, we merely drifted like a dead leaf before the autumn wind, and the drifting had no meaning whatever, which was, to use Buddhist terminology, ignorance and transmigration and torture. The scene has changed, and to describe this change simply, and in a most unsophisticated manner, the *Prajñāpāramitā* writers now exhaust their literary power. The 'irrationalities' so called belong to the philosopher and logician, and not to the Prajñā-devotee.

Teachers of the *Prajñāpāramitā* have their foothold or dwelling (*sthāna*) always on the other side (*pāram*) of this world of relativity. They thus seem to be negating the latter, regarding it as Māyā, as a dream, as an echo, and so on. Even when reference is made to their own quarters of Śūnyatā, this Śūnyatā is also empty and has no fixed abode. Because theirs is an absolute Śūnyatā and allows nothing to oppose it, it is absolutely without predicates of any sort whatever. Suchness has thus come to be one of the most favourite terms they use to designate Śūnyatā. 'Absolute emptiness' or 'absolute solitude' is indeed difficult for dualistically-minded beings to comprehend. This is the reason why the *Prajñāpāramitā* repeatedly warns its readers not to become frightened or depressed when they hear of the

doctrine of Emptiness; it must sound to them as trumpeting a universal annihilation. And those who would embrace the teaching at once without the least hesitation are praised as being those who have listened to it for many times in their past existences. The warning and the assurance prove that the *Prajñā* is something most extraordinary; and most extraordinary indeed it is, seeing that the ordinary order of things is completely reversed in the *Prajñāpāramitā*. Is it not shocking to know that the Mount Hiei which we people of Kyoto see every day in the north-eastern part of the city is no more a reality; more than that, all the heavens including all the luminaries whose lights are measured to reach this earth after millions of years are said to be mere bubbles in the ocean of eternal Emptiness? Who would not be terrified before this audacious proclamation? But this is the proclamation that rings through the *Prajñāpāramitā*. What a grand, thoroughly penetrating intuition it must be that would blow out this entire cosmos like a soap bubble into the immensity of absolute Emptiness (*atyanta-sūnyatā*)!

Emptiness is absolute when it stands alone, rejecting all predicability. As long as reference is made to inner or outer, created or uncreated, substance or appearance, Emptiness is not yet absolute, it remains still relative and predicated. All must be set aside, Emptiness must stand shorn of all its trappings when its true features will strike us with their primeval awfulness. Primeval awfulness I say because Emptiness itself is now vanished; it is as if this physical body were left in mid-air, with nothing covering its head, nothing supporting its feet. It is awful to imagine such a situation. But the *Prajñāpāramitā* unmistakably contrives to create it for us. No wonder it gives us warnings constantly on this point.

'All is empty' (*sarvaṃ sūnyam*)—by this one of the legs is broken off. 'Emptiness itself is empty' (*sūnyatāśūnyatā*)—by this the remaining one departs; and at the same time the entire earth vanishes from beneath one. I am like Hsiang-yen's man up in a tree,¹ and even the teeth are now

¹ *Zen Essays*, Series I, pp. 277-8.

letting go the hold. Out of this great negation there is the awakening of the Prajñā, and the great affirmation takes place, which is Sarvajñatā and Sambodhi, all-knowledge and enlightenment. Śūnyatā seems to have changed into Tathatā, but in reality Śūnyatā is Tathatā, and Tathatā Śūnyatā. The solid earth has not vanished. Mount Hiei stands before one even more solemnly than before, and the starry heavens are an ever-inspiring wonder not only for the philosopher but for all of us. We now really know what is meant by seeing *yathābhūtam*. The world is revealed as thoroughly pure, detached, unattainable, free from an ego-thought, and therefore the home of peace and happiness. The Mahāyāna sūtras talk so much of embellishing¹ the world. When the Bodhisattva is awakened in Tathatā, he is the embellisher.

13. *The Prajñā as Handled by Zen Masters*

Does all this sound vague? The Prajñāpāramitā itself being a Māyā creation, we are deprived of every possible point of reference whereby to give an intellectual account of this existence. This may be the idea of our readers after perusing the above characterization of the Prajñā. But the Mahāyānist would say that he knows (*abhibudhyate*) that there is really the experience of the Prajñāpāramitā, and that this knowledge is the foundation stone of the spiritual structure called Buddhism. In the following quotations the reader will see how this Prajñāpāramitā dialectics is handled by Zen followers, and also how their method is distinguishable from that of their Indian predecessors as well as from that of modern philosophers and logicians.

Tai-hui² once quoted Yung-chia Hsüan-chiao:³ 'How clearly it is seen! Yet nothing to see! Neither a person nor

¹ *Alaṃkāra*, or *vyūha*.

² Daiye in Japanese, 1089-1163. See *Zen Essays*, Series II, p. 24, and elsewhere.

³ Yo-ka Gen-kaku in Japanese. Died 713. See also *ibid.*, p. 61.

antithesis is fundamental in the *Prajñāpāramitā* and also in all the other teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The contrast is, however, conceptual, and, therefore, superficial, as in all other cases; for in the actual life of a Bodhisattva this opposition is not felt and offers no obstruction in the execution of all the Buddha works. Or we may say that one is a Bodhisattva when these apparently contradicting notions disappear from one's religious consciousness. For instance, we read in the sūtra:¹

"To practise Prajñā means to practise Sarvajñatā, which in turn means realizing Tathatā. For the title "Tathāgata" means one who has realized Tathatā, suchness of all things. And in this Suchness (*tathatā*) there is neither extinction (*kṣaya*), nor birth (*utpāda*), nor disappearance (*nirodha*), nor rising (*janaka*), nor manifesting (*vibhāvana*), nor defilement (*raja*), nor freedom from defilement, nor existing like space, nor being in any state. And yet in practising this Prajñā the Bodhisattva perfects his own virtues, affords a refuge for others, and performs all that comes forth from a loving compassionate heart, a joyous spirit, and a great charitable feeling towards all beings. Not only this, the Bodhisattva helps others to discipline themselves in the way of emancipation, and keeps the family of the Tathāgata in continuous prosperity. . . ."

(b) *Practising Dhyāna and yet Refusing its Fruits.*² 'Disciplining himself in the Prajñā, the Bodhisattva refuses to be born in the various heavens according to the various Dhyānas, in which he is a thorough adept. This is by virtue of the skilful means (*upāyakaśālya*) inborn of the Prajñā, for it is the Upāya that keeps him from giving himself up to the enjoyment of the heavenly pleasures. Adepts in the Dhyānas are destined to be born in the celestial abodes, where, free from worldly cares, they are recipients of all kinds of untainted pleasures. But the Bodhisattva has no

¹ *Fo-mu*, 59b (Hsüan-chuang, Fas. 552, 56b ff.; Kumārajīva, 77ab). Hsüan-chuang's version differs widely from the other two in that it negates what the latter affirm. I have drawn my own conclusion.

² Hsüan-chuang, Fas. 552, 57b (*Fo-mu*, 60a; *Hsiao-p'in*, 77b).

desire to leave this world of suffering where his fellow-beings are still kept in bondage. To be in the world, of the world, and yet not to be tainted by it—this is the Bodhisattva's discipline. In spite of his worldly life he is fully endowed with the purities.

'Subhūti asks: If all things are in their original nature pure and free from defilements—which is the Buddha's teaching—how does the Bodhisattva in any special sense attain the purities as if he were not by nature pure?

'The Buddha answers: Yes, all things, as you say, are primarily pure, and the Bodhisattva disciplining himself in this purity—which is the Prajñā—realizes all things pertaining to it. This is the Upāya inherent in and born of the Prajñā. He sees into this reality as it is, and is free from fright and despondency.'

(c) *The Bodhisattva versus the Śrāvaka.* In all the Mahāyāna texts this opposition is made the most of, for the life of the Bodhisattva stands sharply against that of the Śrāvaka. The latter is ready to quit this world for his own enlightenment and emancipation, he is willing to lend his ear to the advice of Māra the Tempter who would tell him: 'The heavenly pleasures are of the most exquisite and transcendent nature, and cannot be compared with those of this world which is characterized with transiency, suffering, emptiness, and dissolution. Train yourself so as to enjoy the fruits of the various religious disciplinary measures, so as not to suffer the karma of rebirth on this earth.' The course of the Bodhisattva is, however, otherwise destined, he wants to remain with us, to do something for us. Disciplining himself in the Prajñā, he accepts every spiritual advantage accruing from the life of the Śrāvaka, but rejects the idea of forever abiding with its fruits. He knows that the Prajñā is the mother of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and that what constitutes the reason of Buddhahood is Sarvajñatā, and further that Sarvajñatā is Prajñā and Prajñā is Sarvajñatā because each is born of the other.¹ Knowing this, he devotes himself to the study of the

¹ See Kumārajīva, 60b, 63b, 64b, 78b, etc.

Prajñā. But he never thinks of himself as studying and disciplining himself in the Prajñā, nor does he think that his study and discipline will bring him to the realization of the Prajñā. His Prajñā-life consists in neither seeing, nor hearing, nor thinking of, nor being conscious of, the Prajñā; for this is truly practising it, studying it, and disciplining himself in it.

Why? Because when you think, 'This is my mind', 'I am conscious of this', 'I take hold of the mind', etc., the Prajñā is no more there, for the Prajñā is no-mind (*acitta*).¹

(d) *Realities versus Māyā*. Superficially, the Prajñā-pāramitā seems to deny realities, declaring them to be Māyā-like existences; and Śūnya and Māyā are taken as synonymous. In the understanding of the sūtra this is perhaps one of the most difficult points, as has been repeatedly pointed out.

According to the Sūtra,² all things are Māyā, the five Skandhas are Māyā, since all things have no hindrances, i.e. no self-substance. Not only all things are Māyā, but the Buddha-dharmas are Māyā, Nirvāṇa is Māyā; even when there is something surpassing Nirvāṇa, it is Māyā; there is no distinction whatever between one thing and another (*sarvadharmā*) including Nirvāṇa and Māyā. However this may be, Māyā is not to be understood in the sense of illusion or unreality as when we say that all is a dream. The Buddhist sense of Māyā is that the Prajñā is to be found neither in the five Skandhas nor away from it, that it is to be sought for 'where Subhūti moves about'. As long as the world is statically conceived, it has no reality behind it, it is Māyā; the world must be grasped as it 'moves about', as it becomes, as it passes from one state of being to another. When this movement is arrested, there is a corpse. When movement is thought of as something distinct by itself and apart from the things in which it is conceived as manifested it loses all its significance. To understand this, *yathābhūtam*, is Prajñā.

Most people are frightened when they are told that the

¹ Ibid., 46b.

² Ibid., 47, 49a, and elsewhere.

world is illusion, and imagine that if it is so their life is of no value and they can do anything they like and are not responsible for their deeds. This is one of the greatest misinterpretations of the Māyā theory. When the Mahāyānists make this announcement, they do not mean to ignore certain laws regulating the Māyā. Even when all is Māyā there are laws in it, and nothing in it can escape them; all must conform to them. The Māyā does not release anybody in it from being controlled by them. Only those who have found a realm of reality in the Māyā, and yet are not conditioned by it, can be masters of it and its laws. That all is Māyā can be declared by such seers of the truth and by no others.

The Mahāyānists are, therefore, those who, in conformity with the truth of Śūnyatā, abide in the Prajñā, refusing to find their foothold in Rūpam, Vedanā, Saṃjñā, Saṃskāra, and Vijñāna, neither in a world of Saṃskṛitas nor in a world of Asaṃskṛitas. This abode is called an abode in which there is no abode. For this reason, abiding in the Prajñā must mean not abiding in it; to abide in the Prajñā-pāramitā in any other sense means to have a fixed point of attachment, and this is to be avoided if one wishes to be the free master of oneself. When a point is fixed anywhere, even in the Prajñā, this has a binding effect on us, and we cease to be independent intellectually, morally, and spiritually. The Prajñāpāramitā thus teaches us to wipe off every possible point of fixture or reference in our consciousness. When a world of no references is obtained, this is a no-abode, or abiding in Śūnyatā. The Buddha or the Bodhisattva gives out his teaching from this abode of no references; therefore, in them there is nobody teaching, nothing taught, and no audience listening. This is the meaning of the Māyā.¹

(e) *Prajñā versus Discrimination.* As soon as a thought that discriminates arises (*saṃjñāsyate*) we leave the Prajñā behind, we separate ourselves from the Prajñā.² Discrimination (*vikalpa*) or the awakening of consciousness is the destroyer of the Prajñā, it puts a stop to the triumphant

¹ See *ibid.*, 49a, etc.

² *Aṣṭa*, pp. 189-190.

course of the latter. Discrimination is no doubt born of the Prajñā, for without it Saṃjñā itself is impossible. The only trouble with it is that it asserts itself at the expense of Prajñā. It takes no notice of Prajñā, in spite of the fact that its function prevails because of Prajñā. This one-sidedness is so characteristic of Saṃjñā that the latter always stands contrasted to Prajñā, and causes attachment (*saṃga*) to exercise its baneful influence over the entire field of consciousness. Discrimination itself is harmless, but when it is coupled with attachment—and this coupling takes place inevitably in all consciousness—it does a great deal of harm. So says the sūtra, 'Because of name (*nāma*) there is attachment; because of form (*nimitta*) there is attachment.' Naming is discrimination, so is recognizing form, and from this naming and recognizing there arises attachment. Intellection and conation always go hand in hand.

'When you declare Rūpam to be empty, this is attachment (*saṃga*). When you declare Vedanā, Saṃjñā, Saṃskāra, and Vijñāna to be empty, this is attachment. When you declare dharmas of the past, present, and future as belonging to the past, present, and future, this is attachment. When you recognize yourself to be a Bodhisattva in whom the desire for enlightenment has for the first time been awakened and who thereby has succeeded in accumulating so much merit, this is attachment. When you recognize yourself to be a Bodhisattva of long standing in whom much more merit has already been stored up, this is attachment.'¹

Therefore, to practise the Prajñā means not to practise according to Rūpam, Vedanā, Saṃjñā, Saṃskāra, and Vijñāna, but to practise it as if practising nothing. Practising is doing something, and yet to be doing nothing—this is the Upāya born of Prajñā, this is the way the Mahāyānists describe the Bodhisattva's life as *sasaṃgatā cāsaṃgatā*, i.e. 'attached and not attached'. When this state of consciousness in which neither discrimination nor attachment obtains, the depths of Prajñāpāramitā are said to have been fully sounded.

¹ Ibid., p. 190; *Fo-mu*, 25b.

For this reason it is inevitable that Prajñā has come to be defined in self-contradicting terms, and finally declared to be beyond the sphere of relative knowledge. The following are some of the terms we encounter everywhere in the *Prajñāpāramitā*, all of which tend to show that there is a deep cleavage between the intellect and the Prajñā experience: (1) Incomprehensible (*acintyā*); (2) Difficult to understand (*duranubodhā*); (3) Isolated [from all knowledge] (*viviktā*); (4) Not at all intelligible (*na kaścīd abhirambudhyate*); (5) Not to be known by the intellect, not accessible to the intellect (*na cittena jñātavyā, na cittagamanīyā*); (6) Not a thing made (*akṛtā*), because no maker is obtainable (*kāraṇānupalabdhitā*); (7) What is regarded as the original nature (*prakṛti*) of all things, that is no no-nature (*aparakṛti*), and what is *aparakṛti* that is *prakṛti*; (8) All things are characterized with oneness (*ekalakṣaṇa*), which has the nature of no-character (*alakṣaṇa*).

A quotation from a chapter in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*¹ will conclude this part of the Essay:

‘Śāriputra asked Subhūti: When the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas practise the Prajñā, does this mean that they practise something which is firmly fixed (*sāra*) or something which is not firmly fixed?

‘Subhūti said: They practise something which is not firmly fixed, and not something which is firmly fixed. Why? Because in the *Prajñāpāramitā* as well as in Sarvadharma (all things) there is nothing firmly fixed. Why? Because when the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas practise the deep *Prajñāpāramitā*, they do not perceive in it as well as in Sarvadharma even that which is not firmly fixed, much less anything that is firmly fixed and attainable.

‘At that time there was a present a numberless crowd of the heavenly beings from the world of Kāma and from the world of Rūpa, and they thought: Those beings belonging to the Bodhisattva-vehicle cherish the desire for supreme enlightenment, practise the *Prajñāpāramitā* whose deep signification is beyond measure. Yet they do not in them-

¹ Hsüan-chuang, Fas. 558, 61a.

selves realize the reality-limit (*bhūtakoti*), thereby keeping themselves away from the state of the Śrāvaka and the Pratyekabuddha. For this reason, those Bodhisattvas are wonderful beings, they set for themselves a task most difficult to accomplish. Deep reverence is to be paid to them. Why? Because although they practise the truth of all things, they do not in themselves realize the reality-limit.

'Knowing what thought was being cherished by those heavenly beings, Subhūti then said: That those beings of the Bodhisattva-vehicle do not in themselves realize the reality-limit so as not to fall into the state of the Śrāvaka and the Pratyekabuddha is not anything so wonderful and difficult to accomplish.

'What is most wonderful and difficult to accomplish with the Bodhisattvas is this: even though they fully know that all things and all sentient beings, in their ultimate nature, are not to be regarded as being and attainable, they raise the desire for supreme enlightenment for the sake of all beings, innumerable and immeasurable; and, putting on the armour of strenuousness (*vīrya*), they bend all their efforts towards the salvation of all beings so that the latter will all be led finally to Nirvāṇa.

'This is indeed like attempting to put vacuity of space under discipline. Why? Because vacuity of space is by nature transcendental (*vivikta*), empty (*śūnya*), and not firmly fixed (*asāra*), and to be regarded as not being (*na samvidyate*); and so are all sentient beings transcendental, empty, not firmly fixed, and to be regarded as not being. And yet the Bodhisattvas attempt to convert all beings and lead them to final Nirvāṇa.

'They put on the armour of great vows (*mahāpraṇidhāna*) in order to benefit all beings, to discipline all beings. And yet they are fully aware of the truth that all beings as well as their great vows are in their ultimate nature transcendental, empty, not firmly fixed, and to be regarded as not being. With this knowledge, they are not at all frightened, or depressed, or mortified. They thus practise the deep Prajñāpāramitā. . . .'

Bhūtakoti. But the Bodhisattva refuses to identify himself with the Absolute, for the identification puts a stop to the pulsations of his heart which feels for a world of particulars and iniquities. In other words, with the eye of absolute purity he perceives the Tathatā (suchness) of all things, which is Śūnyatā, but keeps his other eye open, seeing into multiplicities, i.e. the world of ignorance and suffering. Technically, this is known as 'not realizing Bhūtakoti (reality-limit) within oneself'.¹

7. Why and how can the Bodhisattva achieve this wonder—to be in it and yet not to be in it? This contradiction is inherent in the Prajñā, for the Prajñā is not only an intellectual seeing into the emptiness of things but an emotional plunging into realities as they appeal to the will. The Prajñā is thus found unifying in itself the seeing and the feeling. The feeling aspect is known as being 'skilful in means' (*upāyakaśālyā*). The Prajñā harbours in it the Upāya that works out a complete scheme of salvation for all sentient beings. This logic of contradiction is what may be called the dialectics of Prajñā.

8. This Prajñā dialectics prevails through the entire system of Mahāyāna thought. The Bodhisattva being a living spirit lives this dialectics in his so-called Prajñā-pāramitācaryā. This is his life (*caryā*), not mere behaviour conventionally regulated according to the logic of the philosopher. The two contradicting principles, Prajñā and Karuṇā, are found harmoniously living in the person of a Bodhisattva. This is the main teaching of the *Prajñā-pāramitā*.

9. Readers are apt to make more of the philosophy of Śūnyatā or Tathatā than of the practical moral aspect of it. This in fact has been the case with some Buddhist scholars. But we must never close our eyes to the meaning of Praṇidhāna, the Bodhisattva's vow to enlighten and benefit all his fellow-beings. The Praṇidhāna is frequently lost sight of because of the too startling nature of the Śūnyatā. The Śūnyatā, however, is the chief qualification of the Hīna-

¹ *Aṣṭa*, p. 373. *Na bhūtakotiṃ sākṣātkaroti.*

yāna, and in this the latter is, according to all the Mahāyāna texts, placed in diametrical opposition to the Bodhisattva ideal.

10. When Sarvadharmā or existence generally is regarded as empty and unattainable, all the means and vows which are cherished by the Bodhisattva seem to be really 'like waging war against the sky or vacuity of space (*ākāśa*)'. This idea is quite frightening or at least very depressing. Frightening because all our moral strivings seem to come to naught; depressing because, in spite of the vows and means, all the ignorance and suffering in the world are Māyā-like phenomena and do not substantially yield to the Bodhisattva's skilful treatment. This is the mystery of the religious life, that is, of the Prajñā life.

11. The Bodhisattva lives this mystery, which is regarded in the *Prajñāpāramitā* as *āścaryam*, as marvellous. His eye turns in two opposite directions, inwardly and outwardly; so does his life proceed in two opposite directions, that is, in the direction of *Śūnyatā* and in the direction of Sarvasattva (all beings). He does not immerse himself in the ocean of eternal tranquillity; if he does, he is no more a Bodhisattva; he somehow keeps himself on the wavy surface of the ocean, allowing himself to suffer the fate of an aspen leaf on the turbulent waters. He does not mind subjecting himself to the tyranny of birth-and-death (*saṃsāra*); for he knows that thereby he can be a good friend to all his fellow-beings who are also like him tormented and harassed to the extreme.

12. This Prajñāpāramitācaryā of the Bodhisattva corresponds to the *Laṅkāvatāra*'s Anābhogacaryā. In both there is no thought of accumulating merit for oneself, every good performed by the Bodhisattva is turned over (*pariṇāmana*) to the general attainment by all beings of Sarvajñatā or Anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi; but even in this he has no conscious feeling of elation, he cherishes no thought of having achieved something praiseworthy. This is also known as the life of no-discrimination (*avikalpa*), or, we may say, the life of the lilies of the field.

13. To understand the *Prajñāpāramitā* we must entirely abandon what may be called the 'this side' view of things, and go over to the 'other side' (*pāram*). The 'this side' view is where we generally are, that is, where a world of particulars and discrimination extends. The shifting of this position to the 'other side' of *Sūnyatā*, *Tathatā*, *Viviktā*, and *Sarvajñatā* is a revolution in its deepest sense. It is also a revelation. The *Prajñāpāramitā* reviews all things from this new position. No wonder that its expressions and demonstrations are full of paradoxes or irrationalities. Nothing else could be expected.

14. When this revolution is not complete, our position involves many complexities from which it is difficult to extricate ourselves. Because when we are imagining a complete about-facing, our legs are still carrying the ancient dust; each time we try to walk, the path of absolute purity (*atyantaviśuddhi*) is found bespotted. By this it is meant that the reasoning and wording we resort to are ever remindful of the 'this side' view. We are caught in the net we have ourselves set up. The *Prajñāpāramitā*, therefore, uses every possible cleverness to keep us away from this self-working snare. The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, 'the sūtra of 8,000 verses', has thus developed into the *Śatasāhasrikā*, 'the sūtra of 100,000 verses'.

15. One of the reasons why all these sūtras are so repetitious, so full of reiterations which are tiring to us modern readers, is due to the fact that all the Mahāyāna sūtras, especially the *Prajñāpāramitā*, are not meant to appeal to our reasoning faculties, that is, to our intellectual understanding, but to a different kind of understanding, which we may call intuition. When the *Prajñāpāramitā* is recited in Sanskrit or Chinese or Tibetan, without trying to extract its logical meaning, but with a devotional turn of mind and with the determination to go through masses of repetitions, the *Prajñā*-eye grows gradually more and more penetrating. Finally, it will see, through all the contradictions, obscurities, abstractions, and mystifications, something extraordinarily transparent which reveals the 'other side' together with 'this

side'. This is the awakening of the Prajñā and the study of the deep Prajñāpāramitā. Herein lies the secret of the sūtra-recitation.

16. The mystery of 'not realizing Bhūtakoti although deeply immersed in it' may thus become comprehensible. As long as we are on 'this side', it is impossible to carry two diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive ideas; if we have a thing, we cannot not-have it; if we do a thing, we cannot not-do it; having and not-having, doing and not-doing, being and not-being—they exclude each other. Between these two sets of thoughts there is an impassable chasm. The Bodhisattva, however, has crossed this chasm and is setting himself on the 'other side', which is the realm of Tathatā. He finds here that things formerly impossible to accomplish are readily accomplished as if they were nothing extraordinary. There is a spade in his hands and yet the tilling of the ground is done by him empty-handed. He is riding on the back of a horse and yet there is no rider in the saddle and no horse under it. He passes over the bridge, and it is not the water that flows, but the bridge. The Śrāvaka still stays in spite of his realization on 'this side', and therefore his realization is something quite distinct from his experience. The very idea of Śūnyatā hinders his really living it. With the Bodhisattva Śūnyatā ceases to be Śūnyatā. He is just living his life, and is no more troubled with Śūnyatā and Aśūnyata, with Nirvāṇa and Saṃsāra, with Saṃbodhi and Avidyā. This is what is termed in the *Prajñāpāramitā* 'not realizing Bhūtakoti although already in the Samādhi of Śūnyatā'. And it is one of the most characteristic attitudes of the Bodhisattva towards existence.

17. That, by virtue of Upāya which is inherent in the Prajñā, the Bodhisattva suffers the miseries of birth and death with the rest of his fellow-beings is the description of his actual life. And it is because of this actual suffering on the part of the Bodhisattva that he is able to know what life means and what pain means. If not for this actual living, all his 'skilful means' would be no more than mere abstraction and productive of no effects whatever. His vows, too,