



THE THREE PILLARS OF ZEN

TEACHING / PRACTICE / ENLIGHTENMENT

compiled & edited by
PHILIP KAPLEAU
foreword by HUSTON SMITH

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HERE at last is a book that approaches the very heart of Zen, stripping away the cloak of enigma and abstract verbiage in which it has been shrouded by friends and critics alike. The author, an American who has himself spent twelve years in Japan in rigorous study and training, including three years of practice as a lay monk in two leading Zen monasteries, is eminently qualified to speak, and in terms the West can understand. In a sense the book is an anthology since it consists mainly of precise translations of a number of basic Zen documents never before available in English, as well as of transcriptions recording actual Zen experiences of the present day. But it is in the choice of material, in the skillful interweaving of disparate elements, and in penetrating introductions and

notes that the author himself emerges to give the book its remarkable clarity and organic wholeness.

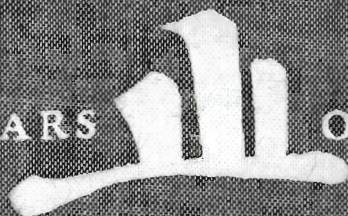
The Three Pillars of Zen makes it admirably clear that authentic Zen is every bit as valid for the West as for the East, that it is neither an intellectual toy nor a historical oddity but a unique system of body-mind training whose aim is spiritual enlightenment. In short, Zen is here presented as the great religion it is, one which, in the author's words, "is demonstrably capable of liberating man from his deep-seated fears and anxieties so he can live and die in peace and dignity." The book not only explains how and why Zen works in this way, but for those who wish to pursue the subject further, it becomes nothing less than a manual of self-instruction.

Among the outstanding Zen texts offered are Yasutani-roshi's "Introductory Lectures on Zen Training," called the best introduction to Zen Buddhism yet written in any language, and his discerning "Commentary on the Koan Mu." From the classics of Zen come Bassui's sermon on One-mind and his letters to his disciples, both containing detailed instructions in the steps leading to Zen enlightenment. The enlightenment letters of the girl Yaeko Iwasaki surely constitute one of the

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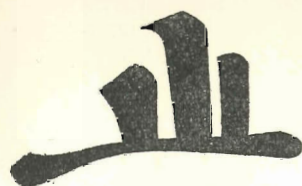


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OF ZEN

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THREE PILLARS OF ZEN
TICE, AND ENLIGHTENMENT
lations, introductions & notes, by PHILIP KAPLEAU



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A NOTE ON THE DECORATIONS / The section-head-
ing devices, dating from about one to five centuries
ago, are *kao*, the fanciful brush-drawn “signatures” or
personal ciphers that were often adopted by Zen priests
and other cultured Japanese in their literary and artistic
avocations. *Kao* were only vaguely related to orthography
and are used here, not for meaning, but abstractly, for
their decorative quality. On the title page is the *kao* of
Butcho-kokushi, a seventeenth-century Zen master.

First edition, June, 1965

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FOREWORD / by HUSTON SMITH /

Tradition has it that it was in the sixth century A.D., with the journey of Bodhidharma from India to China, that Zen Buddhism first moved east. Six hundred years later, in the twelfth century, it traveled east again, to Japan. Now that more than another six hundred years have elapsed, is it to take a third giant stride eastward, this time to the West?

No one knows. Current Western interest in Zen wears the guise of the fad it in part is, but the interest also runs deeper. Let me cite the impression Zen has made on three Western minds of some note, those of a psychologist, a philosopher, and a historian. The book C. G. Jung was reading on his deathbed was Charles Luk's *Ch'an and Zen Teachings: First Series*, and he expressly asked his secretary to write to tell the author that "he was enthusiastic. . . . When he read what Hsu Yun said, he sometimes felt as if he himself could have said exactly this! It was just 'it'!"¹ In philosophy, Martin Heidegger is quoted as saying: "If I understand [Dr. Suzuki] correctly, this is what I have been trying to say in all my writings."² Lynn White is not the molder of modern thought that Jung and Heidegger have been, but he is a fine historian, and he predicts: "It may well be that the publication of D. T. Suzuki's first *Essays in Zen Buddhism* in 1927 will seem in

¹ From an unpublished letter from Dr. Marie-Louise von Franz to Charles Luk dated September 12, 1961.

² In William Barrett (ed.), *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. xi.

EDITOR'S PREFACE / Briefly stated, Zen is a religion with a unique method of body-mind training whose aim is satori, that is, Self-realization. Throughout this volume I have tried to convey the essentially religious character and spirit of Zen—yes, its rituals and symbols, its appeal to the heart no less than to the mind—for as a Buddhist Way of liberation Zen is most assuredly a religion. Grounded in the highest teachings of the Buddha, it was brought from India to China, where the methods and techniques which are characteristically Zen's were evolved, and then through the centuries further elaborated in Japan. Zen Buddhism is thus the consummation of the spiritual experiences of three great Asian civilizations. In Japan today this tradition is still very much alive; in Zen temples, monasteries, and private homes men and women from every walk of life can be found actively engaged in zazen, the principle discipline of Zen.

At its profoundest level Zen, like every other great religion, transcends its own teachings and practices, yet at the same time there is no Zen apart from these practices. The attempt in the West to isolate Zen in a vacuum of the intellect, cut off from the very disciplines which are its *raison d'être*, has nourished a pseudo-Zen which is little more than a mind-tickling diversion of highbrows and a plaything of beatniks.

The best way to correct this distortion, it seemed to me, was to compile a book setting forth the authentic doctrines and practices of

Zen from the mouths of the masters themselves—for who knows these methods better than they?—as well as to show them come alive in the minds and bodies of men and women of today. This I have done chiefly through a contemporary Soto master, Yasutani-roshi; a fourteenth-century Rinzai master, Bassui-zenji; and the enlightenment stories of Japanese and American followers of Zen. Yasutani-roshi's introductory lectures on Zen practice, his lecture (*teisho*) on the koan Mu, and his private instructions (*dokusan*) to ten of his Western students form a unity which embraces the whole structure of Zen training in its traditional sequence. One lacking access to a bona fide roshi yet wishing to discipline himself in Zen will find this material to be nothing less than a manual for self-instruction.

Both the Soto and Rinzai disciplines are presented here—for the first time in a European language, we believe—as one integral body of Zen teaching, and this not academically but as living experience. The West as yet knows little of Soto. The popular interpreters of Zen to the West, in their enthusiasm for Rinzai, have paid scant heed to the methods and doctrines of Dogen-zenji, the father of Japanese Soto Zen and in the view of many the most seminal mind Japanese Buddhism has produced. It is not surprising therefore that for large numbers of Zen-oriented Westerners *shikan-taza*, the heart of Dogen's meditative discipline, is pretty much of an enigma. In this volume the aims and methods of *shikan-taza* as well as those of koan zazen, the mainstay of the Rinzai sect, are authoritatively expounded by Yasutani-roshi, who utilizes both in his own system of teaching.

In the introductions I have presented background and supplementary material which I felt would aid the reader to grasp the substance of each section, but I have resisted the temptation to analyze or interpret the masters' teachings. This would only have encouraged the reader to reinterpret my interpretations, and willy-nilly he would find himself sucked into the quicksands of speculation and ego-aggrandizement, from which one day, if he would seriously practice Zen, he would painfully have to extricate himself. For precisely this reason "idea-mongering" has always been discouraged by the Zen masters.

This book owes much to many people. First and foremost it owes an enormous debt to Zen Master Yasutani, whose teachings encom-

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pass more than half of it and who has graciously allowed them to be made available here to a wider public. My collaborators and I, all his disciples, are deeply grateful for his sage counsel and magnanimity of spirit which inspired us throughout.

My special thanks are due Dr. Carmen Blacker, of Cambridge University. Her on-the-spot interpretations of many of Yasutani-roshi's lectures on Zen practice were incorporated by me into the translation which appears in this book. Further, I have taken the liberty of adopting without alteration several paragraphs from her own translation of sections of this same material which was published in the British Buddhist magazine *The Middle Way*, since her expression was so felicitous that I could hardly hope to have improved upon it.

I am exceedingly grateful to Dr. Huston Smith, Professor of Philosophy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and author of *The Religions of Man*, for his invaluable advice and encouragement at an early stage of the manuscript, and for his Foreword.

I acknowledge with thanks the help given me by Brigitte D'Ortschy, a Dharma friend. Her thoughtful reading of the entire manuscript produced many valuable suggestions.

Meredith Weatherby and Ralph Friedrich, both of John Weatherhill, Inc., in Tokyo, have been most understanding editors throughout the preparation of this book, and I am grateful for their help.

My debt to my wife, deLancey, is no small one. At all stages of the writing she has encouraged and worked with me. Indeed, for several years these labors constituted her major practice of zazen. I am also indebted to her for the drawings of the zazen postures.

The Ten Oxherding Pictures of section VIII are used by kind permission of the artist, Gyokusei Jikihara. He is a highly esteemed contemporary painter in Kyoto and a lay disciple of Shibayama-roshi, the former abbot of Nanzen Monastery, under whom he trained in Zen for many years.

I reserve for special mention the names of my two collaborators in the translations, Kyozo Yamada and Akira Kubota. Mr. Yamada has disciplined himself in Zen for some twenty years. He is Yasutani-roshi's Dharma successor and often acts in his stead. Long ago he completed the almost six hundred koans given by Yasutani-roshi and

received *inka* from him. We collaborated on these translations: Bassui's sermon on One-mind and his letters, portions of the Iwasaki letters, the Ten Oxherding Verses, the quotations from Dogen and other ancient masters, and the extract from Dogen's *Shobogenzo*. But for his wise advice and generous assistance, my overall task would have been immeasurably more difficult if not impossible, and I am correspondingly grateful to him.

Akira Kubota, my second collaborator, has trained under Yasutani-roshi for some fifteen years and is one of his foremost disciples. Together we translated the lecture on the koan Mu, parts of the Iwasaki letters, and the fourth and sixth accounts in the section on enlightenment experiences. I acknowledge my indebtedness to him for his conscientious labors.

In our translations we have striven to avoid the evils of either a free, imaginative rendering on the one hand or an exactly literal reading on the other. Had we yielded to the first temptation, we might have achieved a stylistic elegance now lacking, but only at the expense of that forthright vigor and calculated repetition which is a characteristic feature of Zen teaching. On the other hand, had we slavishly adhered to the letter of the texts, we inevitably would have done violence to their spirit and thus obscured their deep inner meaning.

Our translations are interpretive in the sense that all translation involves the constant choice of one of several alternative expressions which the translator believes may convey the meaning of the original. Whether a translator's choices are apposite or not depends, in the ordinary translation, on his linguistic skill and his familiarity with his subject. Zen texts, however, fall into a special category. Since they are invariably terse and pithy and the ideograms in which they are written susceptible of a variety of interpretations, one key character often conveying a whole spectrum of ideas, to select the shade of meaning appropriate to a particular context demands from a translator more than philological acuity or an extensive academic knowledge of Zen. In our view, it requires nothing less than Zen training and the experience of enlightenment, lacking which the translator is almost certain to distort the clarity and emasculate the vigor of the original in important respects.

It may not be out of place, therefore, to point out that every one of

a genuine master, a Buddha-like figure who could set his feet on the true path. At forty he finally found him in Harada-roshi, and with this meeting his life took a decisive turn.

He relinquished his principalship, became a temple priest in fact as well as name, and began attending sesshin regularly at Harada-roshi's monastery, Hosshin-ji. At his very first sesshin he attained *kensho* with the koan Mu.

Yasutani-roshi was fifty-eight when Harada-roshi gave him his seal of approval (*inka shomei*) and named him a Dharma successor. This signal honor implied that his spiritual Insight was deep, his moral character high, and his capacity to teach proven.

Like his modest temple, Yasutani-roshi is simple and unaffected. His two meals a day include neither meat, fish, eggs, nor alcohol. He can often be seen trudging about Tokyo in a tattered robe and a pair of sneakers on his way to a zazen meeting, his lecture books in a bag slung over his back, or standing in the crowded second-class inter-urban trains. In his utter simplicity, his indifference to finery, wealth, and fame, he walks in the footsteps of a long line of distinguished Zen masters.

THE LECTURES / 1 / THEORY AND PRACTICE OF ZAZEN / What I am about to tell you is based upon the teachings of my revered teacher, Daiun¹ Harada-roshi. Although he himself was of the Soto sect, he was unable to find a truly accomplished master in that sect and so went to train first at Shogen-ji and then Nanzen-ji, two Rinzai monasteries. At Nanzen-ji he eventually grasped the inmost secret of Zen under the guidance of Dokutan-roshi, an outstanding master.

While it is undeniably true that one must undergo Zen training himself in order to comprehend the truth of Zen, Harada-roshi felt that the modern mind is so much more aware that for beginners lectures of this type could be meaningful as a preliminary to practice. He combined the best of each sect and established a unique method of teaching Zen. Nowhere in Japan will you find Zen teaching set

¹ A Zen name meaning "Great Cloud." See "clouds and water" in section x.

forth so thoroughly and succinctly, so well suited to the temper of the modern mind, as at his monastery. Having been his disciple for some twenty years, I was enabled, thanks to his grace, to open my Mind's eye in some measure.

Before commencing his lectures Harada-roshi would preface them with advice on listening. His first point was that everyone should listen with his eyes open and upon him—in other words, with his whole being—because an impression received only through the hearing is rather shallow, akin to listening to the radio. His second point was that each person should listen to these lectures as though they were being given to him alone, as ideally they should be. Human nature is such that if two people listen, each feels only half-responsible for understanding, and if ten people are listening each feels his responsibility to be but one-tenth. However, since there are so many of you and what I have to say is exactly the same for everybody, I have asked you to come as a group. You must nonetheless listen as though you were entirely alone and hold yourselves accountable for everything that is said.

This discourse is divided into eleven parts, which will be covered in some eight lecture sessions. The first involves the rationale of zazen and direct methods of practice; the next, special precautions; and the following lectures, the particular problems arising from zazen, together with their solution.

In point of fact, a knowledge of the theory or principles of zazen is not a prerequisite to practice. One who trains under an accomplished teacher will inevitably grasp this theory by degrees as his practice ripens. Modern students, however, being intellectually more sophisticated than their predecessors in Zen, will not follow instructions unreservedly; they must first know the reasons behind them. Hence I feel obliged to deal with theoretical matters. The difficulty with theory, however, is that it is endless. Buddhist scriptures, Buddhist doctrine, and Buddhist philosophy are no more than intellectual formulations of zazen, and zazen itself is their practical demonstration. From this vast field I will now abstract what is most essential for your practice.

We start with the Buddha Shakyamuni.¹ As I think you all know,

¹ The traditional Japanese term is *O-Shaka-sama*. It is both respectful and intimate. The *O* and *sama* are honorifics, and rather than attempt an arbitrary translation of

he began with the path of asceticism, undergoing tortures and austerities which others before him had never attempted, including prolonged fasting. But he failed to attain enlightenment by these means and, half-dead from hunger and exhaustion, came to realize the futility of pursuing a course which could only terminate in death. So he drank the milk which was offered him, gradually regained his health, and resolved to steer a middle course between self-torture and self-indulgence. Thereafter he devoted himself exclusively to zazen for six years¹ and eventually, on the morning of the eighth of December, at the very instant when he glanced at the planet Venus gleaming in the eastern sky, he attained perfect enlightenment. All this we believe as historical truth.

The words the Buddha uttered involuntarily at this time are recorded variously in the Buddhist scriptures. According to the Kegon sutra, at the moment of enlightenment he spontaneously cried out: "Wonder of wonders! Intrinsically all living beings are Buddhas, endowed with wisdom and virtue, but because their minds have become inverted through delusive thinking they fail to perceive this." The first pronouncement of the Buddha upon his enlightenment seems to have been one of awe and astonishment. Yes, how truly marvelous that all human beings, whether clever or stupid, male or female, ugly or beautiful, are whole and complete just as they are. That is to say, the nature of every being is inherently without a flaw, perfect, no different from that of Amida or any other Buddha. This first declaration of Shakyamuni Buddha is also the ultimate conclusion of Buddhism. Yet man, restless and anxious, lives a half-crazed existence because his mind, heavily encrusted with delusion, is turned topsy-turvy. We need therefore to return to our original perfection, to see through the false image of ourselves as incomplete and sinful, and to wake up to our inherent purity and wholeness.

The most effective means by which to accomplish this is through zazen. Not only Shakyamuni Buddha himself but many of his disciples attained enlightenment through zazen. Moreover, during the 2,500 years since the Buddha's death innumerable devotees in India, China,

them, I have followed the usual English rendering of this title. (See "Buddha" in section X.)

¹ Other accounts say six years elapsed from the time he left his home until his supreme enlightenment.

and Japan have, by grasping this selfsame key, resolved for themselves the most fundamental question, What are life and death? Even in this day there are many who have been able to cast off worry and anxiety and emancipate themselves through zazen.

Between a Nyorai (i.e., a supremely perfected Buddha) and us, who are ordinary, there is no difference as to substance. This "substance" can be likened to water. One of the salient characteristics of water is its conformability: when put into a round vessel it becomes round, when put into a square vessel it becomes square. We have this same adaptability, but as we live bound and fettered through ignorance of our true nature, we have forfeited this freedom. To pursue the metaphor, we can say that the mind of a Buddha is like water that is calm, deep, and crystal clear, and upon which the "moon of truth" reflects fully and perfectly. The mind of the ordinary man, on the other hand, is like murky water, constantly being churned by the gales of delusive thought and no longer able to reflect the moon of truth. The moon nonetheless shines steadily upon the waves, but as the waters are roiled we are unable to see its reflection. Thus we lead lives that are frustrating and meaningless.

How can we bring the moon of truth to illumine fully our life and personality? We need first to purify this water, to calm the surging waves by halting the winds of discursive thought. In other words, we must empty our minds of what the Kegon sutra calls the "conceptual thought of man." Most people place a high value on abstract thought, but Buddhism has clearly demonstrated that discriminative thinking lies at the root of delusion. I once heard someone say: "Thought is the sickness of the human mind." From the Buddhist point of view this is quite true. To be sure, abstract thinking is useful when wisely employed—which is to say, when its nature and limitations are properly understood—but so long as human beings remain slaves to their intellect, fettered and controlled by it, they can well be called sick.

All thoughts, whether ennobling or debasing, are mutable and impermanent; they have a beginning and an end even as they are fleetingly with us, and this is as true of the thought of an era as of an individual. In Buddhism thought is referred to as "the stream of life-and-death." It is important in this connection to distinguish the role of transitory thoughts from that of fixed concepts. Random ideas are

relatively innocuous, but ideologies, beliefs, opinions, and points of view, not to mention the factual knowledge accumulated since birth (to which we attach ourselves), are the shadows which obscure the light of truth.

So long as the winds of thought continue to disturb the water of our Self-nature, we cannot distinguish truth from untruth. It is imperative, therefore, that these winds be stilled. Once they abate, the waves subside, the muddiness clears, and we perceive directly that the moon of truth has never ceased shining. The moment of such realization is *kensho*, i.e., enlightenment, the apprehension of the true substance of our Self-nature. Unlike moral and philosophical concepts, which are variable, true Insight is imperishable. Now for the first time we can live with inner peace and dignity, free from perplexity and disquiet, and in harmony with our environment.

I have spoken to you briefly about these matters, but I hope I have succeeded in conveying to you the importance of *zazen*. Let us now talk about practice.

The first step is to select a quiet room in which to sit. Lay out a fairly soft cushion about three feet square, on top of which place a second small circular pillow measuring about twelve inches in diameter to sit on, or use a square cushion folded in two. Preferably one should not wear trousers or socks, since these interfere with the crossing of the legs and the placing of the feet. For a number of reasons it is best to sit in the full-lotus posture. To sit full-lotus you place the foot of the right leg over the thigh of the left and the foot of the left leg over the thigh of the right. The main point of this particular method of sitting is that by establishing a wide, solid base, with the crossed legs and with both knees touching the cushion, you achieve absolute stability. With the body thus immobile, thoughts are not stirred into activity by physical movements and the mind more easily becomes tranquil.

If you have difficulty sitting in the full-lotus posture because of the pain, sit half-lotus, which is done by putting the foot of the left leg over the thigh of the right. For those of you who are not accustomed to sitting cross-legged, even this position may not be easy to maintain. You will probably find it difficult to keep the two knees resting on the pillow and will have to push one or both of them down again

and again until they remain there. In both the half- and the full-lotus posture the uppermost foot can be reversed when the legs become tired.

For those who find both of these traditional zazen positions acutely uncomfortable, an alternative position is the traditional Japanese one of sitting on the heels and calves. This can be maintained for a longer time if a cushion is placed between the heels and the buttocks. One advantage of this posture is that the back can be kept erect easily. However, should all of these positions prove too painful, you may use a chair.¹

The next step is to rest the right hand in the lap, palm upward, and place the left hand, palm upward, on top of the right palm. Lightly touch the tips of the thumbs to each other so that a flattened circle is formed by the palms and thumbs. Now, the right side of the body is the active pole, the left the passive. Hence during practice we repress the active side by placing the left foot and left hand over the right members, as an aid in achieving the highest degree of tranquility. If you look at a figure of the Buddha, however, you will notice that the position of these members is just the reverse. The significance of this is that a Buddha, unlike the rest of us, is actively engaged in the task of saving.

After you have crossed your legs, bend forward so as to thrust the buttocks out, then slowly bring the trunk to an erect posture. The head should be straight; if looked at from the side, your ears should be in line with your shoulders and the tip of your nose in line with your navel. The body from the waist up should be weightless, free from pressure or strain. Keep the eyes open and the mouth closed. The tip of the tongue should lightly touch the back of the upper teeth. If you close your eyes you will fall into a dull and dreamy state. The gaze should be lowered without focusing on anything in particular. Experience has shown that the mind is quietest, with the least fatigue or strain, when the eyes are in this lowered position.

The spinal column must be erect at all times. This admonition is important. When the body slumps, not only is undue pressure placed on the internal organs, interfering with their free functioning, but the vertebrae by impinging upon nerves may cause strains of one

¹ See section IX for sketches of all these postures, including one widely used in the Southeast Asian Buddhist countries.

realize that no matter how intently you count your breaths you will still perceive what is in your line of vision, since your eyes are open, and you will hear the normal sounds about you, as your ears are not plugged. And since your brain likewise is not asleep, various thought-forms will dart about in your mind. Now, they will not hamper or diminish the effectiveness of zazen unless, evaluating them as "good," you cling to them or, deciding they are "bad," you try to check or eliminate them. You must not regard any perceptions or sensations as an obstruction to zazen, nor should you pursue any of them. I emphasize this. "Pursuit" simply means that in the act of seeing, your gaze lingers on objects; in the course of hearing, your attention dwells on sounds; and in the process of thinking, your mind adheres to ideas. If you allow yourself to be distracted in such ways, your concentration on the counting of your breaths will be impeded. To recapitulate: let random thoughts arise and vanish as they will, do not dally with them and do not try to expel them, but merely concentrate all your energy on counting the inhalations and exhalations of your breath.

In terminating a period of sitting do not arise abruptly, but begin by rocking from side to side, first in small swings, then in large ones, for about half a dozen times. You will observe that your movements in this exercise are the reverse of those you engage in when you begin zazen. Rise slowly and quietly walk around with the others in what is called *kinhin*, a walking form of zazen.

Kinjin is performed by placing the right fist, with thumb inside, on the chest and covering it with the left palm while holding both elbows at right angles. Keep the arms in a straight line and the body erect, with the eyes resting upon a point about two yards in front of the feet. At the same time continue to count inhalations and exhalations as you walk slowly around the room. Begin walking with the left foot and walk in such a way that the foot sinks into the floor, first the heel and then the toes. Walk calmly and steadily, with poise and dignity. The walking must not be done absent-mindedly, and the mind must be taut as you concentrate on the counting. It is advisable to practice walking this way for at least five minutes after each sitting period of twenty to thirty minutes.

You are to think of this walking as zazen in motion. Rinzai and Soto differ considerably in their way of doing kinhin. In the Rinzai

demns them to interminable suffering incarnated as beasts or demons in countless future existences owing to the inexorable law of karma. So mere death is not the end. Hence what they are seeking is a way of avoiding rebirth, a method of dying without being reborn.

Shojo Zen provides the answer to this need. It has as its aim the stopping of all thoughts so that the mind becomes a complete blank and enters into a state called *mushinjo*, a condition in which all the sense functions have been eliminated and the faculty of consciousness suspended. With practice this power can be cultivated by anyone. In case there is no wish to die one can enter this trance-like state for a limited period—say an hour or two or one or two days—or one can remain in it indefinitely, in which event death follows naturally and painlessly, without—and this is most important—rebirth. This entire process of death without rebirth is set forth in great detail in a Buddhist philosophical work called the *Kusharon*.

The fourth classification is called *daijo*, Great Vehicle [Mahayana] Zen, and this is a truly Buddhist Zen, for it has as its central purpose *kensho-godo*, i.e., seeing into your essential nature and realizing the Way in your daily life. For those able to comprehend the import of the Buddha's own enlightenment experience and with a desire to break through their own illusory view of the universe and experience absolute, undifferentiated Reality, the Buddha taught this mode of Zen. Buddhism is essentially a religion of enlightenment. The Buddha after his own experience of satori spent some fifty years teaching people how they might themselves realize their Self-nature. His methods have been transmitted from master to disciple right down to the present day. So it can be said that a Zen which ignores or denies or belittles satori is not true daijo Buddhist Zen.

In the practice of daijo Zen your aim in the beginning is to awaken to your True-nature, but upon enlightenment you realize that zazen is more than a means to enlightenment—it is the actualization of your True-nature. In this type of Zen, which has as its object satori-awakening, it is easy to mistakenly regard zazen as but a means. A wise teacher, however, will point out from the outset that zazen is in fact the actualization of the innate Buddha-nature and not merely a technique for achieving enlightenment. If zazen were no more than such a technique, it would follow that after satori zazen would be unnecessary. But as Dogen-zenji himself pointed out, precisely the reverse is

true; the more deeply you experience satori, the more you perceive the need for practice.¹

Saijojo Zen, the last of the five types, is the highest vehicle, the culmination and crown of Buddhist Zen. This Zen was practiced by all the Buddhas of the past—viz., Shakyamuni and Amida²—and is the expression of Absolute Life, life in its purest form. It is the zazen which Dogen-zenji chiefly advocated and it involves no struggle for satori or any other object. We call it *shikan-taza*, and of this I shall speak in greater detail in a subsequent lecture.

In this highest practice, means and end coalesce. Daijo Zen and *saijojo* Zen are, in point of fact, complementary. The Rinzai sect places daijo uppermost and *saijojo* beneath, whereas the Soto sect does the reverse. In *saijojo*, when rightly practiced, you sit in the firm conviction that zazen is the actualization of your undefiled True-nature, and at the same time you sit in complete faith that the day will come when, exclaiming, "Oh, this is it!" you will unmistakably realize this True-nature. Therefore you need not self-consciously strive for enlightenment.

Today the Soto sect holds that as we are innately Buddhas we need not experience satori. This is so egregious an error that it has reduced *shikan-taza*, which properly is the highest form of sitting, to nothing more than *bompu* Zen, the first of the five types.

This completes my account of the five varieties of Zen, but unless I now tell you about the three objectives of zazen my presentation of these five types, especially the last two, will be incomplete.

5 / THE THREE AIMS OF ZAZEN / The aims of zazen are three: 1) development of the power of concentration (*yoriki*), 2) satori-awakening (*kensho-godo*), and 3) actualization of the Supreme Way in our daily lives (*mujodo no taigen*). These three form an inseparable unity, but for purposes of discussion I am obliged to deal with them individually.

Joriki, the first of these, is the power or strength which arises when the mind has been unified and brought to one-pointedness through concentration. This is more than the ability to concentrate in the usual

¹ See p. 281.

² See "Amida" in section x.

sense of the word. It is a dynamic power which, once mobilized, enables us even in the most sudden and unexpected situations to act instantly, without pausing to collect our wits, and in a manner wholly appropriate to the circumstances. One who has developed joriki is no longer a slave to his passions, neither is he at the mercy of his environment. Always in command of both himself and the circumstances of his life, he is able to move with perfect freedom and equanimity. The cultivation of certain supranormal powers is also made possible by joriki, as is the state in which the mind becomes like perfectly still water.

The first three of the five kinds of Zen I have spoken about depend entirely on joriki, as does the state of mushinjo in shojo Zen—the state of blankness in which the conscious functioning of the mind has been stopped. Now, although the power of joriki can be endlessly enlarged through regular practice, it will recede and eventually vanish if we neglect zazen. And while it is true that many extraordinary powers flow from joriki, nevertheless through it alone we cannot cut the roots of our illusory view of the world. Mere strength of concentration is not enough for the highest types of Zen; concomitantly there must be satori-awakening. In a little-known document handed down by the Patriarch Sekito Kisen, the founder of one of the early Zen sects, the following appears: “In our sect, realization of the Buddha-nature, and not mere devotion or strength of concentration, is paramount.”

The second of these aims is kensho-godo, seeing into your True-nature and at the same time seeing into the ultimate nature of the universe and “all the ten thousand things” in it. It is the sudden realization that “I have been complete and perfect from the very beginning. How wonderful, how miraculous!” If it is true kensho, its substance will always be the same for whoever experiences it, whether he be the Buddha Shakyamuni, the Buddha Amida, or any one of you gathered in this temple. But this does not mean that we can all experience kensho to the same degree, for in the clarity, the depth, and the completeness of the experience there are great differences. As an illustration, imagine a person blind from birth who very gradually begins to recover his sight. At first he can only see very vaguely and darkly and only objects close to him. Then as his sight improves he is able to distinguish things a yard or so away, then objects at ten yards,

then at a hundred yards, until finally he can recognize anything up to a thousand yards. At each of these stages the phenomenal world he is seeing is the same, but the differences in the clarity and accuracy of his views of that world are as great as those between snow and charcoal. So it is with the differences in clarity and depth of our experiences of kensho.

The last of the three objectives is *mujodo no taigen*, the actualization of the Supreme Way throughout our entire being and our daily activities. At this point we do not distinguish the end from the means. Saijojo, which I have spoken of as the fifth and highest of the five types of Zen, corresponds to this stage. When you sit earnestly and egolessly in accordance with the instructions of a competent teacher—i.e., with your mind as free of thoughts as a pure white sheet of paper is unmarred by a blemish—there is an unfoldment of your intrinsically pure Buddha-nature whether you have had the specific experience of satori or not. However, what must be emphasized here is that only with true enlightenment do you directly apprehend the truth of your Buddha-nature and perceive that saijojo, the purest type of Zen, is no different from that practiced by all Buddhas.

The practice of Buddhist Zen should embrace all three of these objectives, for they are interrelated. There is, for instance, an essential connection between joriki and kensho. Kensho is "the wisdom naturally associated with joriki," that is, the power arising from concentration. Joriki is connected with kensho in yet another way. Many people may never be able to reach kensho unless they have first cultivated a certain amount of joriki, for otherwise they may find themselves too restless, too nervous and uneasy to persevere with their zazen. Moreover, unless fortified by joriki, a single experience of kensho will have no appreciable effect on your life, and will fade away into a mere memory. For although through the experience of kensho you have apprehended the underlying unity of the cosmos with your Mind's eye, without joriki you are unable to act with the total force of your being on what your inner vision has revealed to you.

Likewise there is an interconnection between kensho and the third of these aims, *mujodo no taigen*. Kensho when manifested in all your actions is *mujodo no taigen*. With perfect enlightenment (*anuttara samyak-sambodhi*) we apprehend that our conception of the world as

then at a hundred yards, until finally he can recognize anything up to a thousand yards. At each of these stages the phenomenal world he is seeing is the same, but the difference in the accuracy of his views of that world is like the difference between charcoal and charcoal. So it is with the experiences of kensho.

The last stage is the actualization of the Sutra and our daily activities. In the actualization of the five types of Zazen, earnestly and egolessly in the teacher—i.e., with you of paper is unmarred or intrinsic—cally pure Buddhist experience that only of your Buddha-nature of your Zen, is no different from

The practice of these objectives, for the essential connection between freedom naturally associated with concentration. Jorin Many people may have first cultivated a certain and themselves too restless with their zazen. Moreover, the total force of your being away into a mere mental you. kensho you have apprehended with your Mind's eye, and total force of your being you.

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¹ For a poetic description of the differences between Rinzai and Soto, the following from an unpublished manuscript of the late Nyogen Senzaki may be of interest: "Among Zen students it is said that 'Rinzai's teaching is like the frost of the late autumn, making one shiver, while the teaching of Soto is like the spring breeze which caresses the flower, helping it to bloom.' There is another saying: 'Rinzai's teaching is like a brave general who moves a regiment without delay, while the Soto teaching is like a farmer taking care of a rice field, one stalk after another, patiently.'"



CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP:

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dual and antithetical is false, and upon this realization the world of Oneness, of true harmony and peace, is revealed.

The Rinzai sect tends to make satori-awakening the final aim of sitting and skims over *zoriki* and *mujodo no taigen*. Thus the need for continued practice after enlightenment is minimized, and koan study, since it is unsupported by *zazen* and scarcely related to daily life, becomes essentially an intellectual game instead of a means by which to amplify and strengthen enlightenment.

On the other hand, while the practice advocated in the official quarters of the Soto sect today stresses *mujodo no taigen*, in effect it amounts to little more than the accumulation of *zoriki*, which, as I pointed out earlier, "leaks" or recedes and ultimately disappears unless *zazen* is carried on regularly. The contention of the Soto sect nowadays that *kensho* is unnecessary and that one need do no more than carry on his daily activities with the Mind of the Buddha is specious, for without *kensho* you can never really know what this Buddha-mind is.

These imbalances in both sects¹ in recent times have, unfortunately, impaired the quality of Zen teaching.

This concludes the discussion of the three aims of *zazen*.

6 / INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION / Continue to practice the exercise I gave you last time, namely, concentrate on your incoming and outgoing breaths and endeavor to see each breath clearly.

This lecture will deal with *dokusan* (individual instruction), which is the time allotted for bringing all problems pertaining to practice before the roshi in private. This tradition of individual teaching started with the honored Shakyamuni himself and has continued unbroken until today. We know this because one of the great masters

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of Tendai, Chisha-daishi, in his systematization of all the sutras under Eight Teachings and Five Periods, lists the Secret Teaching, which corresponds to dokusan.

Without this individual guidance we cannot say that our practice of zazen is authentic. Unfortunately, since the Meiji period, nearly a hundred years ago, dokusan has virtually died out in the Soto sect, continuing only in the Rinzai tradition. If we compare zazen to a journey on which some start rapidly and then slow down, others begin slowly and later accelerate their pace, some find one phase of the journey more hazardous than another, and all carry different burdens of luggage (i.e., preconceived ideas), we can begin to understand why individual guidance in dokusan cannot be dispensed with.

It may be asked why it is necessary to keep dokusan secret. Since nothing immoral is involved, why can it not be open and in public? First of all, since we are ordinary people, with ego, in the presence of others we are inclined to make ourselves out to be better than we are. We cannot bare our souls and stand naked, as it were. Likewise we hesitate to speak the whole truth for fear of being laughed at. Or if the roshi scolds us, using harsh language, we become more concerned with the effect of this on others than in listening to him open-mindedly.

There is yet another reason for privacy in dokusan. After your first experience of kensho you move from koan to koan as your understanding deepens, and were others to be present when you demonstrated these koans, listening to the roshi's replies, they might think, "Oh, so that's the answer!" without fully understanding the import of the koan. Obviously this would hurt their practice, for instead of coming to their own realization and presenting it to the roshi, they would remember that this was an acceptable answer but that was not, and thus, to their own detriment, their koan practice would degenerate to mere intellection. For these reasons you should remain silent when asked about a koan which the questioner has not yet passed. Irresponsible talk may lead to other harmful consequences. Rumors may spread that one is savagely beaten in dokusan, for example, giving Zen an undeservedly bad name. Therefore do not discuss your koans with anybody, not even your best friends or members of your family.

It is precisely this violation of the secrecy which formerly sur-

rounded the koan system that has brought about a steady deterioration in Rinzai teaching. What I am about to say does not apply to laymen, who are generally serious in their practice. But in the monasteries, where there are monks who resent the entire training, being there in the first place only to serve the period required to inherit the resident priesthood of a temple, this problem becomes serious. In monasteries where the discipline is faulty an older monk will often say to a younger one: "What koan are you working on?" When told, the older one will say: "Do you understand it?" "No." "All right, I will tell you the answer," the older monk says, "and you buy me some cakes in return." The roshi can tell whether the answer is authentic or not, but if for some reason he himself becomes lukewarm, he may accept an answer which is not the monk's own. This practice may not be particularly harmful if such a monk spends only two or three years at a monastery before becoming the resident priest of a temple, as his duties there will not require his evaluating another's satori. But it can happen that there is no opening when he completes this minimal training so that he may remain at the monastery for perhaps eight or ten years, going through the entire koan system with answers which are not his own. Finally, as is the custom in the Rinzai sect when one completes all the koans, he receives the title of teacher. In this way one with no real understanding becomes "qualified" to guide others. This insidious practice is undermining Zen teaching. Soto scholars studying Zen academically justifiably attack the koan system on just these grounds.

The next point concerns what questions are appropriate during dokusan. All questions should relate to problems growing directly out of your practice. This naturally excludes personal problems. You may feel that the privacy of dokusan offers an excellent opportunity for the discussion of personal matters, but you must bear in mind that there are others waiting and that if you take up problems other than those of your practice, you are hindering them. Properly, you may ask about your stomach, for instance, if it is growling, or about your teeth hurting so that you cannot eat, or about visions you may be experiencing. You should not, however, ask about Buddhist doctrine or comparative philosophy or the difference between one sutra and another. You may ask anything so long as it arises directly out of your practice.

The procedure for a new student is to present an incense offering to the roshi before taking dokusan. Why, it may be asked, all this formality? Dokusan, it cannot be emphasized too strongly, is not a frivolous matter. While everyone is free to practice zazen and to listen to the roshi's commentary at sesshin, the essential character of dokusan is the forming of a karmic bond between teacher and disciple, the significance of which is deep in Buddhism. Dokusan therefore is not to be taken lightly. Moreover, since what passes between the roshi and the student in dokusan concerns problems of a deep and ultimate nature, only the truth must be spoken between them. Very often in public meetings one hesitates to say things which might offend others, but this is not so in dokusan, where the absolute truth must always prevail. For these reasons the proprieties which establish this relationship are not to be slighted.

It is proper to wear ceremonial dress to dokusan, but as this is not insisted upon nowadays you may wear anything which is presentable. When dokusan is announced take a position in line behind the bell outside the zazen hall. When your turn comes and you hear my handbell, strike the bell in front of you twice and come to this room. You should not come dashing in, as that would cause confusion and you would not be in a frame of mind to benefit from dokusan. Neither should you saunter in, for there are others waiting. It was the custom originally to make three prostrations at the threshold, three in front of the roshi, and then three more at the doorway when you left, but this has now been abbreviated to three prostrations altogether, one at each of the places mentioned.

In making your prostrations you should touch the tatami mat with your forehead, with your hands extended in front of your head, palms upward. Then, bending your arms at the elbows, raise your hands, palms upward, several inches above your head. This gesture of receiving the feet, the lowliest members of the Buddha's body, symbolizes humility and the grateful acceptance into your life of the Way of the Buddha. Unless you have submerged your ego, you cannot do this. Bear in mind that the roshi is not simply a deputy of the Buddha but actually stands in his place. In making these prostrations you are in fact paying respect to the Buddha just as though he himself were sitting there, and to the Dharma.

Next take a position about a foot in front of me and announce the

nature of your practice. Simply say, "I am counting my breath," "I am doing Mu," or "I am practicing shikan-taza." Make any questions you have brief and to the point. Should I have anything to say to you, I will say it after you have finished. But do not come in and waste time wondering what to talk about; remember, others are waiting to see me. My ringing of this bell is your signal to bow down and leave. After that if you should remember something, you will have to bring it up at the following dokusan, because the next person will already be coming in.

This concludes the fifth lecture.

7 / SHIKAN-TAZA / Up to now you have been concentrating on following your breaths with your mind's eye, trying to experience vividly the inhaled breath as only inhaled breath and the exhaled breath as only exhaled breath. From now on I want you to practice shikan-taza, which I will shortly describe in detail. It is neither usual nor desirable to change so quickly from these different exercises, but I have followed this course in order to give you a taste of the different modes of concentration. After these introductory lectures are completed and you come before me singly, I will assign you a practice corresponding to the nature of your aspiration as well as to the degree of your determination, that is to say, the practice of counting or following your breaths, shikan-taza, or a koan.

This lecture will deal with shikan-taza. *Shikan* means "nothing but" or "just," while *ta* means "to hit" and *za* "to sit." Hence shikan-taza is a practice in which the mind is intensely involved in just sitting. In this type of zazen it is all too easy for the mind, which is not supported by such aids as counting the breath or by a koan, to become distracted. The correct temper of mind therefore becomes doubly important. Now, in shikan-taza the mind must be unhurried yet at the same time firmly planted or massively composed, like Mount Fuji let us say. But it must also be alert, stretched, like a taut bowstring. So shikan-taza is a heightened state of concentrated awareness wherein one is neither tense nor hurried, and certainly never slack. It is the mind of somebody facing death. Let us imagine that you are engaged in a duel of swordsmanship of the kind that used to take place in

ancient Japan. As you face your opponent you are unceasingly watchful, set, ready. Were you to relax your vigilance even momentarily, you would be cut down instantly. A crowd gathers to see the fight. Since you are not blind you see them from the corner of your eye, and since you are not deaf you hear them. But not for an instant is your mind captured by these sense impressions.

This state cannot be maintained for long—in fact, you ought not to do shikan-taza for more than half an hour at a sitting. After thirty minutes get up and walk around in kinhin and then resume your sitting. If you are truly doing shikan-taza, in half an hour you will be sweating, even in winter in an unheated room, because of the heat generated by this intense concentration. When you sit for too long your mind loses its vigor, your body tires, and your efforts are less rewarding than if you had restricted your sitting to thirty-minute periods.

Compared with an unskilled swordsman a master uses his sword effortlessly. But this was not always the case, for there was a time when he had to strain himself to the utmost, owing to his imperfect technique, to preserve his life. It is no different with shikan-taza. In the beginning tension is unavoidable, but with experience this tense zazen ripens into relaxed yet fully attentive sitting. And just as a master swordsman in an emergency unsheathes his sword effortlessly and attacks single-mindedly, just so the shikan-taza adept sits without strain, alert and mindful. But do not for one minute imagine that such sitting can be achieved without long and dedicated practice.

This concludes the talk on shikan-taza.

8 / THE PARABLE OF ENYADATTA / In the last half of this lecture I will take up the tale of Enyadatta, which comes from the Ryogon sutra. This is an exceptionally fine parable. I assure you that if you reflect carefully upon it, it will clarify many abstruse points of Buddhism.

This event is said to have occurred at the time of the Buddha. Whether it is true or legendary I cannot say. In any case, Enyadatta was a beautiful maiden who enjoyed nothing more than gazing at herself in the mirror each morning. One day when she looked into her mirror she found no head reflected there. Why not on this par-

This is the rapture of kensho. If the experience is genuine, you cannot sleep for two or three nights out of joy. Nevertheless, it is a half-mad state. To be overjoyed at finding a head you had from the very first is, to say the least, queer. Nor is it less odd to rejoice at the discovery of your Essential-nature, which you have never been without. The ecstasy is genuine enough, but your state of mind cannot be called natural until you have fully disabused yourself of the notion, "I have become enlightened." Mark this point well, for it is often misunderstood.

As her joy subsided Enyadatta recovered from her half-mad state.

So it is with satori. When your delirium of delight recedes, taking with it all thoughts of realization, you settle into a truly natural life and there is nothing queer about it. Until you reach this point, however, it is impossible to live in harmony with your environment or to continue on a course of true spiritual practice.

I shall now point out more specifically the significance of the first part of the story. Since most people are indifferent to enlightenment, they are ignorant of the possibility of such an experience. They are like Enyadatta when she was unconscious of her head as such. This "head," of course, corresponds to the Buddha-nature, to our innate perfection. That they even have a Buddha-nature never occurs to most people until they hear *Shujo honrai hotoke nari*—"All beings are endowed with Buddha-nature from the very first." Suddenly they exclaim: "Then I too must have the Buddha-nature! But where is it?" Thus like Enyadatta when she first missed her head and started rushing about looking for it, they commence their search for their True-nature.

They begin by listening to various teisho, which seem contradictory and puzzling. They hear that their Essential-nature is no different from the Buddha's—more, that the substance of the universe is coextensive with their own Buddha-nature—yet because their minds are clouded with delusion they see themselves confronted by a world of individual entities. Once they establish firm belief in the reality of the Buddha-nature, they are driven to discover it with all the force of their being. Just as Enyadatta was never without her head, so are we never separate from our essential Buddha-nature whether we are enlightened or not. But of this we are unaware. We are like Enyadatta

when her friends told her: "Don't be absurd, you have always had your head. It is an illusion to think otherwise."

The discovery of our True-nature can be compared to Enyadatta's discovery of her head. But what have we discovered? Only that we have never been without it! Nonetheless we are ecstatic, as she was at the finding of her head. When the ecstasy recedes, we realize we have acquired nothing extraordinary, and certainly nothing peculiar. Only now everything is utterly natural.

9 / CAUSE AND EFFECT ARE ONE / You cannot hope to comprehend the exalted nature of Zen without understanding this lecture on *inga ichinyo*, the meaning of which is that cause and effect are one. This expression comes from Hakuin-zenji's *Chant in Praise of Zazen*. Bear in mind that this lecture will not be an explanation of cause and effect in the broad sense but only in relation to the practice of zazen.

Strictly speaking, you ought not to think of zazen in terms of time. While it is generally true that if you do zazen for a year, it will have an effect equal to a year's effort; and that if you practice zazen for ten years, it will produce an effect proportionate to ten years' effort; yet the results of zazen in terms of enlightenment cannot be measured by the length of your practice. The fact is, some have gained deep enlightenment after only a few years' practice, while others have practiced as long as ten years without experiencing enlightenment.

From the commencement of practice one proceeds upward in clearly differentiated stages which can be considered a ladder of cause and effect. The word *inga*, meaning cause and effect, implies both degree and differentiation, while *ichinyo* signifies equality or sameness or oneness. Thus while there are many stages corresponding to the length of practice, at every one of these different stages the mind substance is the same as that of a Buddha. Hence we say cause and effect are one. Until satori-awakening, however, you cannot expect to have a deep inner understanding of inga.

Now let us relate this to the parable of Enyadatta, of which I spoke earlier. The time she saw no head reflected in her mirror and rushed about wildly looking for it—this is the first, or bottom, step. When her friends tied her to a pillar and insisted she had a head; when

she began to think, "Possibly this is so"; when they whacked her and she yelled "Ouch!" and realized she had a head after all; when she rejoiced at finding it; when finally her joy abated and having a head felt so natural that she no longer thought about it—all these are different steps or degrees of progression—when viewed retrospectively, that is. At every one of these stages she was never without her head, of course, but this she realized only after she had "found" it.

In the same way, after enlightenment we realize that from the very first we were never without the Buddha-nature. And just as it was necessary for Enyadatta to go through all these phases in order to grasp the fact that she had always had a head, so we must pass through successive stages of zazen in order to apprehend directly our True-nature. These successive steps are causally related, but the fact that we are intrinsically Buddha, which in the parable is Enyadatta's realization that she had always had a head—this is equality, or undifferentiation.

Thus Dogen-zenji in his *Shobogenzo* states: "The zazen of even beginners manifests the whole of their Essential-nature." He is saying here that correct zazen is the actualization of the Bodhi-mind, the Mind with which we are all endowed. This zazen is saijojo, wherein the Way of the Buddha suffuses your entire being and enters into the whole of your life. Although we are unaware of all this at first, as our practice progresses we gradually acquire understanding and insight, and finally, with satori, wake up to the fact that zazen is the actualization of our inherently pure Buddha-nature, whether we are enlightened or not.

10 / THE THREE ESSENTIALS OF ZEN PRACTICE / What I am about to say is especially applicable to daijo Zen, which is specifically directed toward satori, but it also embraces saijojo, though in a lesser degree.

The first of the three essentials of Zen practice is strong faith (*dai-shinkon*). This is more than mere belief. The ideogram for *kon* means "root," and that for *shin*, "faith." Hence the phrase implies a faith that is firmly and deeply rooted, immovable, like an immense tree or a huge boulder. It is a faith, moreover, untainted by belief in the supernatural or the superstitious. Buddhism has often been de-

scribed as both a rational religion and a religion of wisdom. But a religion it is, and what makes it one is this element of faith, without which it is merely philosophy. Buddhism starts with the Buddha's enlightenment, which he attained after strenuous effort. Our supreme faith, therefore, is in the Buddha's enlightenment experience, the substance of which he proclaimed to be that human nature, all existence, is intrinsically whole, flawless, omnipotent—in a word, perfect. Without unwavering faith in this the heart of the Buddha's teaching, it is impossible to progress far in one's practice.

The second indispensable quality is a feeling of strong doubt (*dai-gidan*).¹ Not a simple doubt, mind you, but a "doubt-mass"—and this inevitably stems from strong faith. It is a doubt as to why we and the world should appear so imperfect, so full of anxiety, strife, and suffering, when in fact our deep faith tells us exactly the opposite is true. It is a doubt which leaves us no rest. It is as though we knew perfectly well we were millionaires and yet inexplicably found ourselves in dire need without a penny in our pockets. Strong doubt, therefore, exists in proportion to strong faith.

I can illustrate this state of mind with a simple example. Take a man who has been sitting smoking and suddenly finds that the pipe which was in his hand a moment before has disappeared. He begins to search for it in the complete certainty of finding it. It was there a moment ago, no one has been near, it cannot have disappeared. The longer he fails to find it, the greater the energy and determination with which he hunts for it.

From this feeling of doubt the third essential, strong determination (*dai-funshi*), naturally arises. It is an overwhelming determination to dispel this doubt with the whole force of our energy and will. Believing with every pore of our being in the truth of the Buddha's teaching that we are all endowed with the immaculate Bodhi-mind, we resolve to discover and experience the reality of this Mind for ourselves.

The other day someone who had quite misunderstood the state of mind required by these three essentials asked me: "Is there more to believing we are Buddhas than accepting the fact that the world as it is is perfect, that the willow is green and the carnation red?" The

¹ In Zen, "doubt" implies not skepticism but a state of perplexity, of probing inquiry, of intense self-questioning.

fallacy of this is self-evident. If we do not question why greed and conflict exist, why the ordinary man acts like anything but a Buddha, no determination arises in us to resolve the obvious contradiction between what we believe as a matter of faith and what appears to us to be just the reverse, and our zazen is thus deprived of its prime source of power.

I shall now relate these three essentials to daijo and saijojo Zen. While all three are present in daijo, this doubt is the main prod to satori because it allows us no rest. Thus we experience satori, and the resolution of this doubt, more quickly with daijo Zen.

In saijojo, on the other hand, the element of faith is strongest. No fundamental doubt of the kind I mentioned assails us and so we are not driven to rid ourselves of it, for we sit in the unswerving faith that we are inherently Buddhas. Unlike daijo Zen, saijojo, which you will recall is the purest type of zazen, does not involve the anxious striving for enlightenment. It is zazen wherein ripening takes place naturally, culminating in enlightenment. At the same time saijojo is the most difficult zazen of all, demanding resolute and dedicated sitting.

However, in both types of zazen all three elements are indispensable, and teachers of old have said that so long as they are simultaneously present it is easier to miss the ground with a stamp of the foot than to miss attaining perfect enlightenment.

11 / ASPIRATION / Even while we all do zazen, our individual aspirations are not identical. These aspirations resolve themselves into four main groups or levels.

The first and shallowest level involves neither faith in Zen Buddhism nor even a cursory understanding of it. One just happens to hear about it and decides he would like to sit with a zazen group or in a sesshin. Nevertheless, that out of millions of deluded people (entirely ignorant of Buddhism) one particular individual should be led to this 2,500-year-old, unbroken line of teaching is, in the Buddhist view, not a fortuitous but a karmic circumstance and hence of vast spiritual significance.

The second level of aspiration is a level which goes no deeper than the desire to do zazen in order to improve physical or mental health

or both. This, you will recall, falls into the first of the five classifications of Zen, namely, *bompu* (ordinary) Zen.

At the third level we find people who, no longer satisfied merely to increase their physical and mental well-being, want to tread the path of the Buddha. They recognize how exalted is the Buddhist cosmology, which views existence as not confined to one life-span but endlessly evolving lifetime after lifetime, with the circle of human destiny completed only upon the attainment of Buddhahood. More, they have established faith in the reality of the enlightenment experience, and though the resolve to attain it has not yet been awakened, the desire to pursue the Buddha's Way is clear and real.

The fourth level comprises those determined to realize their True-self. They know this experience to be a living reality, for they have encountered people who have had it, and they are convinced they can likewise attain it. When they come before their teacher they come with an open mind and a humble heart, ready to follow whatever course he prescribes, secure in the knowledge that by so doing they can realize their goal in the shortest time.

I will now quickly recapitulate these four classes of aspirants: those who, having no particular faith in Zen, come to it through fortunate karmic circumstances; those who practice *zazen* through a desire only to add to their physical or mental health or both; those who practice Zen out of belief in the exalted nature of the Buddha's teaching; and those who have a strong determination to become enlightened.

Hereafter you will come before me one by one and I will ask you what you feel to be the nature of your aspiration, that is, into which of the four classes you fall. Tell me your feelings honestly. Do not add anything through pride, and do not subtract anything out of false modesty. Depending upon what you tell me, I will assign you the *zazen* most appropriate for you.

There is no definitive practice which applies to everyone. Generally speaking, one who puts himself in the first class is assigned the practice of counting his breaths; one in the second category, the following of his breaths; in the third class, *shikan-taza*; and in the fourth, a koan, usually *Mu*.

When students come before me individually for the first time, they make all manner of curious replies. Some say: "I think I belong *between* the first and second classes." Others tell me: "I have a chron-

ically bad stomach, so would you assign me a type of zazen that will help this condition?" Or sometimes a person will say: "I am somewhat neurotic; what kind of zazen would be good for that?"

Depending on the type of person and the strength of his determination, I prescribe what I believe to be a suitable practice. With a stolid individual it is usually desirable to spur him on with the *kyosaku*, whereas a somewhat nervous or sensitive person can do better zazen without it. Only if your appraisal of your feelings is frank can I select for you the most effective practice.

eight koans. Although a few English translations of the *Mumonkan* have appeared, they leave much to be desired. More often than not, instead of revealing the essential spirit of the koans, they obscure it. It is eloquent proof of the misplaced awe that Zen has engendered in the minds of many that the more "mystical" or downright incomprehensible a koan reads in English, the more profound it is judged to be.

Every koan is a unique expression of the living, indivisible Buddha-nature which cannot be grasped by the bifurcating intellect. Koans appear bewildering to people who cherish the letter above the spirit. Those who grasp their spirit know that koans, despite the incongruity of their various elements, are profoundly meaningful. All point to man's Face before his parents were born, to his real Self.

The aim of every koan is to liberate the mind from the snare of language, "which fits over experience like a strait jacket."¹ Koans are so phrased that they deliberately throw sand into our eyes to force us to open our Mind's eye and see the world and everything in it without distortion.

Koans take as their subjects tangible, down-to-earth objects such as a dog, a tree, a face, a finger to make us see, on the one hand, that each object has absolute value and, on the other, to arrest the tendency of the intellect to anchor itself in abstract concepts. But the import of every koan is the same: that the world is one interdependent Whole and that each separate one of us is that Whole.

The Chinese Zen masters, those spiritual geniuses who created these paradoxical dialogues, did not hesitate to thumb their noses at logic and common sense in their marvelous creations. By wheedling the intellect into attempting solutions impossible for it, koans reveal to us the inherent limitations of the logical mind as an instrument for realizing ultimate Truth. In the process they pry us loose from our tightly held dogmas and prejudices, strip us of our penchant for discriminating good from bad, and empty us of the false notion of self-and-other, to the end that we may one day perceive that the world of Perfection is in fact no different from that in which we eat and excrete, laugh and weep.

The great merit of koans, which range over the vast area of the Mahayana teachings, is that they compel us, in ingenious and often

¹ A phrase of William Golding's, quoted by Raynor C. Johnson in *Watcher on the Hills* (Harper, N.Y., 1959), p. 27.

dramatic fashion, to learn these doctrines not simply with our head but with our whole being, refusing to permit us to sit back and endlessly theorize about them in the abstract. What Heinrich Zimmer says about certain types of meditation is especially true of koans, the spirit of which must be demonstrated before the roshi and not merely explained: "Knowledge is the reward of action. . . . For it is by doing things that one becomes transformed. Executing a symbolical gesture, actually living through, to the very limit, a particular role, one comes to realize the truth inherent in the role. Suffering its consequences, one fathoms and exhausts its contents. . . ."¹

The complete solution of a koan involves the movement of the mind from a state of Ignorance (delusion) to the vibrant inner awareness of living Truth. This implies the emergence into the field of consciousness of the immaculate Bodhi-mind, which is the reverse of the mind of delusion. The determination to struggle with a koan in the first place is generated by faith in the reality of the Bodhi-mind, the struggle itself being the effort of this Mind to cast off the shackles of Ignorance and come to its own Self-knowledge.

Now, what is the source of Mu's power, what has enabled it to hold first rank among koans for over a thousand years? Whereas such koans as "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" and "What is your Face before your parents' birth?" bait the discursive mind and excite the imagination, Mu holds itself coldly aloof from both the intellect and the imagination. Try as it might, reasoning cannot gain even a toehold on Mu. In fact, trying to solve Mu rationally, we are told by the masters, is like "trying to smash one's fist through an iron wall." Because Mu is utterly impervious to logic and reason, and in addition is easy to voice, it has proven itself an exceptionally wieldy scalpel for extirpating from the deepest unconscious the malignant growth of "I" and "not-I" which poisons the Mind's inherent purity and impairs its fundamental wholeness.

A vivid, penetrating commentary (apart from the comment accompanying the koan) is invaluable for any aspirant who wishes to utilize a koan as his spiritual exercise. Besides familiarizing him with the backgrounds of the *dramatis personae* and setting forth in contemporary language obscure terms and metaphorical allusions com-

¹ *Philosophies of India*, by Heinrich Zimmer, edited by Joseph Campbell (Meridian Books, N.Y., 1960), p. 544.

or subtle, cannot lead to that inner understanding which alone enables one to demonstrate the spirit of the koan with certainty and conviction. Zen masters in fact look upon mere definitions and explanations as dry and lifeless, and as ultimately misleading because inherently limited. The one word "Imbecile!" uttered from the guts conveys more than any hundred words defining it. Nor does the roshi burden his listeners with a purely philosophical lecture on Buddhist doctrine or on the metaphysical nature of ultimate reality.

The roshi's object is to re-live the spirit and drama of the koan, to bring alive through his charged words and gestures the truth inherent in the roles of the various protagonists. Keenly aware of the different levels of comprehension of his hearers, he pitches his commentary so that each receives according to his capacity to understand, even as he relates the spirit of the koan to his hearers' common life experiences. In Zen parlance, the roshi "strikes against" the koan from his hara, trusting that the emitted sparks of truth will illumine the minds of his hearers.

Hara literally denotes the stomach and abdomen and the functions of digestion, absorption, and elimination connected with them. But it has parallel psychic¹ and spiritual significance. According to Hindu and Buddhist yogic systems, there are a number of psychic centers in the body through which vital cosmic force or energy flows. Of the two such centers embraced within the hara, one is associated with the solar plexus, whose system of nerves governs the digestive processes and organs of elimination. Hara is thus a wellspring of vital psychic energies. Harada-roshi, one of the most celebrated Zen masters of his day,² in urging his disciples to concentrate their mind's³ eye (i.e., the *attention*, the summation point of the total being) in their hara, would declare: "You must realize"—i.e., make real—"that the center of the universe is the pit of your belly!"

To facilitate his experience of this fundamental truth, the Zen novice is instructed to focus his mind constantly at the bottom of his hara (specifically, between the navel and the pelvis) and to radiate

¹ "Psychic" here does not relate to extrasensory phenomena or powers but to energies and body-mind states which cannot be classified either as physiological or psychological.

² For further information about him, see pp. 273-76.

³ See "mind" in section x.

all mental and bodily activities from that region. With the body-mind's equilibrium centered in the hara, gradually a seat of consciousness, a focus of vital energy, is established there which influences the entire organism.

That consciousness is by no means confined to the brain is shown by Lama Govinda, who writes as follows: "While, according to Western conceptions, the brain is the exclusive seat of consciousness, yogic experience shows that our brain-consciousness is only *one* among a number of possible forms of consciousness, and that these, according to their function and nature, can be localized or centered in various organs of the body. These 'organs,' which collect, transform, and distribute the forces flowing through them, are called *cakras*, or centers of force. From them radiate secondary streams of psychic force, comparable to the spokes of a wheel, the ribs of an umbrella, or the petals of a lotus. In other words, these *cakras* are the points in which psychic forces and bodily functions merge into each other or penetrate each other. They are the focal points in which cosmic and psychic energies crystallize into bodily qualities, and in which bodily qualities are dissolved or transmuted again into psychic forces."¹

Settling the body's center of gravity below the navel, that is, establishing a center of consciousness in the hara, automatically relaxes tensions arising from the habitual hunching of the shoulders, straining of the neck, and squeezing in of the stomach. As this rigidity disappears, an enhanced vitality and new sense of freedom are experienced throughout the body and mind, which are felt more and more to be a unity.

Zazen has clearly demonstrated that with the mind's eye centered in the hara the proliferation of random ideas is diminished and the attainment of one-pointedness accelerated, since a plethora of blood from the head is drawn down to the abdomen, "cooling" the brain and soothing the autonomic nervous system. This in turn leads to a greater degree of mental and emotional stability. One who functions from his hara, therefore, is not easily disturbed. He is, moreover, able to act quickly and decisively in an emergency owing to the fact that his mind, anchored in his hara, does not waver.

With the mind in the hara, narrow and egocentric thinking is

¹ *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, by Lama Govinda, p. 140.

are rich, live with your riches. All this is the functioning of Buddha-nature. In short, Buddha-nature has the quality of infinite adaptability.

Coming back to the koan, we must approach the question "Has a dog Buddha-nature or not?" with caution, since we do not know whether the monk is ignorant or is feigning ignorance in order to test Joshu. Should Joshu answer either "It has" or "It has not," he would be cut down. Do you see why? Because what is involved is not a matter of "has" or "has not." Everything being Buddha-nature, either answer would be absurd. But this is "Dharma combat." Joshu must parry the thrust. He does so by sharply retorting "Mu!" Here the dialogue ends.

In other versions of the same koan the monk continues by inquiring: "Why hasn't a dog Buddha-nature when the Nirvana sutra says all sentient beings do have it?"¹ Joshu countered with: "It has its own karma." What this means is that the dog's Buddha-nature is not other than karma. Acts performed with a delusive mind produce painful results. This is karma. In plainer words, a dog is a dog as a result of its past karma's conditioning it to become a dog. This is the functioning of Buddha-nature. So do not talk as though there were a particular thing called "Buddha-nature." This is the implication of Joshu's Mu. It is clear, then, that Mu has nothing to do with the existence or non-existence of Buddha-nature but is itself Buddha-nature. The retort "Mu!" exposes and at the same time fully thrusts Buddha-nature before us. Now, while you may be unable fully to understand what I am saying, you will not go astray if you construe Buddha-nature in this wise.

Buddha-nature cannot be grasped by the intellect. To experience it directly you must search your mind with the utmost devotion until you are absolutely convinced of its existence, for, after all, you yourself are this Buddha-nature. When I told you earlier that Buddha-nature was ku—impersonal, devoid of mass, unfixed, and capable of endless transformation—I merely offered you a portrait of it. It is possible to *think* of Buddha-nature in these terms, but you must understand that whatever you can think or imagine must necessarily be unreal. Hence there is no other way than to experience the truth in

¹ The monk evidently construed Joshu's "Mu!" to mean "has not."

your own mind. This way has been shown, with the greatest kindness, by Mumon.

Let us now consider Mumon's comment. He begins by saying: "In the practice of Zen. . . ." Zazen, receiving dokusan (i.e., private instructions), hearing teisho—these are all Zen practice. Being attentive in the details of your daily life is also training in Zen. When your life and Zen are one you are truly living Zen. Unless it accords with your everyday activities Zen is merely an embellishment. You must be careful not to flaunt Zen but to blend it unpretentiously into your life. To give a concrete example of attentiveness: when you step out of the clogs at the porch or the kitchen or out of the slippers of the toilet room, you must be careful to arrange them neatly so that the next person can use them readily even in the dark. Such mindfulness is a practical demonstration of Zen. If you put your clogs or shoes on absent-mindedly you are not attentive. When you walk you must step watchfully so that you do not stumble or fall. Do not become remiss!

But I am digressing. To continue: ". . . you must pass through the barrier-gate set up by the Patriarchs." Mu is just such a barrier. I have already indicated to you that, from the first, there is no barrier. Everything being Buddha-nature, there is no gate through which to go in or out. But in order to awaken us to the truth that everything is Buddha-nature, the Patriarchs reluctantly set up barriers and goad us into passing through them. They condemn our faulty practice and reject our incomplete answers. As you steadily grow in sincerity you will one day suddenly come to Self-realization. When this happens you will be able to pass through the barrier-gate easily. The *Mumonkan* is a book containing forty-eight such barriers.

The next line begins: "To realize this wondrous thing called enlightenment. . . ." Observe the word "wondrous." Because enlightenment is unexplainable and inconceivable it is described as wondrous. ". . . you must look into the source of your thoughts, thereby annihilating them." This means that it is useless to approach Zen from the point of view of supposition or logic. You can never come to enlightenment through inference, cognition, or conceptualization. Cease clinging to all thought-forms! I stress this, because it is the central point of Zen practice. And particularly do not make the mistake of thinking enlightenment must be this or that.

"If you cannot pass through the barrier, i.e., exhaust the arising of thoughts, you are like a ghost, clinging to the trees and grass." Ghosts do not appear openly in the daytime, but come out furtively after dark, it is said, hugging the earth or clinging to willow trees. They are dependent upon these supports for their very existence. In a sense human beings are also ghostlike, since most of us cannot function independent of money, social standing, honor, companionship, authority; or else we feel the need to identify ourselves with an organization or an ideology. If you would be a man of true worth and not a phantom, you must be able to walk upright by yourself, dependent on nothing. When you harbor philosophical concepts or religious beliefs or ideas or theories of one kind or another, you too are a phantom, for inevitably you become bound to them. Only when your mind is empty of such abstractions are you truly free and independent.

The next two sentences read: "What, then, is this barrier set up by the Patriarchs? It is Mu, the one barrier of the supreme teaching." The supreme teaching is not a system of morality but that which lies at the root of all such systems, namely, Zen. Only that which is of unalloyed purity, free from the superstitious or the supernatural, can be called the root of all teachings and hence supreme. In Buddhism Zen is the only teaching which is not to one degree or another tainted with elements of the supernatural—thus Zen alone can truly be called the supreme teaching and Mu the one barrier of this supreme teaching. You can understand "one barrier" to mean the sole barrier or one out of many. Ultimately there is no barrier.

"One who has passed through it cannot only see Joshu face to face. . . ." Since we are living in another age, of course we cannot actually see the physical Joshu. To "see Joshu face to face" means to understand his Mind. ". . . can walk hand in hand with the whole line of Patriarchs." The line of Patriarchs begins with Maha Kashyapa, who succeeded the Buddha, it goes on to Bodhidharma, the twenty-eighth, and continues right up to the present. ". . . eyebrow to eyebrow. . . ." is a figure of speech implying great intimacy. ". . . hear with the same ears and see with the same eyes" connotes the ability to look at things from the same viewpoint as the Buddha and Bodhidharma. It implies, of course, that we have clearly grasped the world of enlightenment.

"How marvelous!" Marvelous indeed! Only those who recognize the preciousness of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Patriarchs can appreciate such an exclamation. Yes, how truly marvelous! Those who do not care for the Buddha and the Dharma may feel anything but marvel, but that cannot be helped.

"Who would not want to pass through this barrier?"—this phrase aims at enticing you to search for truth within yourself. "For this you must concentrate day and night, questioning yourself about Mu through every one of your 360 bones and 84,000 pores." These figures reflect the thinking of the ancients, who believed that the body was constructed in this fashion. In any case, what this refers to is your entire being. Let all of you become one mass of doubt and questioning. Concentrate on and penetrate fully into Mu. To penetrate into Mu means to achieve absolute unity with it. How can you achieve this unity? By holding to Mu tenaciously day and night! Do not separate yourself from it under any circumstances! Focus your mind on it constantly. "Do not construe Mu as nothingness and do not conceive it in terms of existence or non-existence." You must not, in other words, think of Mu as a problem involving the existence or non-existence of Buddha-nature. Then what do you do? You stop speculating and concentrate wholly on Mu—just Mu!

Do not dawdle, practice with every ounce of energy. "[You must reach the point where you feel] as though you had swallowed a red-hot iron ball. . . ." It is hyperbole, of course, to speak of swallowing a red-hot iron ball. However, we often carelessly swallow a hot rice-cake which, lodging in the throat, causes considerable discomfort. Once you swallow Mu up you will likewise feel intensely uncomfortable and try desperately to dislodge it. ". . . that you cannot disgorge despite your every effort"—this describes the state of those who work on this koan. Because Self-realization is so tantalizing a prospect they cannot quit; neither can they grasp Mu's significance readily. Hence there is no other way for them but to concentrate on Mu until they "turn blue in the face."

The comparison with a red-hot iron ball is apt. You must melt down your delusions with the red-hot iron ball of Mu stuck in your throat. The opinions you hold and your worldly knowledge are your delusions. Included also are philosophical and moral concepts, no matter how lofty, as well as religious beliefs and dogmas, not to men-

tion innocent, commonplace thoughts. In short, all conceivable ideas are embraced within the term "delusions" and as such are a hindrance to the realization of your Essential-nature. So dissolve them with the fireball of Mu!

You must not practice fitfully. You will never succeed if you do zazen only when you have the whim to, and give up easily. You must carry on steadfastly for one, two, three, or even five years without remission, constantly vigilant. Thus you will gradually gain in purity. At first you will not be able to pour yourself wholeheartedly into Mu. It will escape you quickly because your mind will start to wander. You will have to concentrate harder—just "Mu! Mu! Mu!" Again it will elude you. Once more you attempt to focus on it and again you fail. This is the usual pattern in the early stages of practice. Even when Mu does not slip away, your concentration becomes disrupted because of various mind defilements. These defilements disappear in time, yet since you have not achieved oneness with Mu you are still far from ripe. Absolute unity with Mu, unthinking absorption in Mu—this is ripeness. Upon your attainment to this stage of purity, both inside and outside naturally fuse. "Inside and outside" has various shades of meaning. It may be understood as meaning subjectivity and objectivity or mind and body. When you fully absorb yourself in Mu, the external and internal merge into a single unity. But, unable to speak about it, you will be like "a mute who has had a dream." One who is dumb is unable to talk about his dream of the night before. In the same way, you will relish the taste of samadhi yourself but be unable to tell others about it.

At this stage Self-realization will abruptly take place. Instantaneously! "Bursting into enlightenment" requires but an instant. It is as though an explosion had occurred. When this happens you will experience so much! "You will surprise the heavens and move the earth." Everything will appear so changed that you will think heaven and earth have been overturned. Of course there is no literal toppling over. With enlightenment you see the world as Buddha-nature, but this does not mean that all becomes as radiant as a halo. Rather, each thing *just as it is* takes on an entirely new significance or worth. Miraculously, everything is radically transformed though remaining as it is.

Whoever heard of a heavenly being having to undergo the pangs of childbirth? There are neither midwives nor obstetricians in heaven or hell.

Wherever you may be born, and by whatever means, you will be able to live with the spontaneity and joy of children at play—this is what is meant by a “samadhi of innocent delight.” Samadhi is complete absorption. Once you are enlightened you can descend to the deepest hell or rise to the highest heaven with freedom and rapture.

“How, then, do you concentrate on Mu?” Through zazen. “Devote yourself to it energetically and wholeheartedly.” Persevere with all the force of your body and spirit. “If you continue thus without intermission. . . .” You must not start and then quit. You must carry on to the very end, like a hen sitting on an egg until she hatches it. You must concentrate on Mu unflinchingly, determined not to give up until you attain kensho. “. . . your mind, like a lamp flashed on in the dark, will suddenly become bright. Wonderful indeed!” With enlightenment the mind, released from the darkness of its infinite past, will brighten immediately. “Wonderful indeed!” is added since nothing could be more wonderful.

The first line of Mumon's verse reads: “A dog, Buddha-nature”—there is no need for “nature.” “A dog *is* Buddha”—“is” is superfluous. “A dog, Buddha”—still redundant. “Dog!”—that's enough! Or just “Buddha!” You have said too much when you say “A dog *is* Buddha.” “Dog!”—that is all. It is completely Buddha.

“This is the . . . whole, the absolute imperative!” That is to say, it is the authentic decree of Shakyamuni Buddha—it is the correct Dharma. You are this Dharma to perfection! It is not being begrudged—it is fully revealed!

“Once you begin to think ‘has’ or ‘has not’ your life will be lost.” What does “your life will be lost” mean? Simply that your precious Buddha life [of Oneness] will vanish.

of encouragement or dokusan lacking in general interest have been omitted. Where a number of dokusan of one student are involved, a period of a month or two might intervene between them.

Each of these dokusan took place during the secluded training period called sesshin (which will be described fully in a later section). While most of them are brief, necessarily so to accommodate the needs of as many as thirty-five or forty persons three times a day, their length is ultimately dictated by the requirements of the individual and not by any arbitrary time limitation.

All the students were beginners in the sense that none had passed his first koan (i.e., had the experience of satori) with one exception,¹ and all had practiced Zen in Japan for periods ranging from several weeks to two years. It is possible in individual cases to discern a developing pattern of understanding but an understanding which has not yet matured into enlightenment.

The material speaks for itself, and any attempt to analyze or interpret it would not only be superfluous but presumptuous. However, for those readers lacking access to qualified Zen teachers a certain amount of background information relative to dokusan practice in Japan today, especially as it affects Westerners, may be found helpful in enabling them to utilize to the fullest in their own spiritual practice the advice and instructions of the roshi as it is revealed in these interviews.

Together with zazen and the teisho (the formal commentary), dokusan forms the third leg of the tripod upon which traditional Zen training rests. For the beginner, this face-to-face encounter with the roshi within the privacy of his inner chamber can be anything from an inspiring and wonderfully enriching experience, giving impetus and direction to his practice, to a fearful ordeal of mounting frustrations, depending on the strength and quality of his ardor, the point to which his zazen has matured, and, most importantly, on the roshi's own personality and teaching methods.

Once the student enters the roshi's inner sanctum and makes his prostrations as a mark of respect and humility, he is perfectly free to

¹ Student H. This has been included so that the reader may compare the different approach by the roshi for a student on a more advanced level.

appear at even one daily dokusan. Instead of making a spirited dash for the line-up point when the dokusan bell rings,¹ he sits glued to his seat out of fear of being rebuked for having no ready solution to his koan. If he is not coldly ignored by the head monks (in the monastery) or by the monitors (in a temple) for his reluctance, thus proving himself unworthy of even a clouting to encourage him, very likely in a strict monastery he will be yanked from his seat and dragged or pushed into dokusan. When, dispirited, he finally appears before the roshi, the roshi may castigate him for his faintheartedness, then summarily dismiss him without asking a question or making a comment. Or he may crack the student with his baton while he is in the act of making his prostrations, and then order him out with a ring of his handbell, leaving him, pained and bewildered, to reflect on the reasons for this peremptory dismissal.

This strategy of placing the student in a desperate situation where he is relentlessly driven from the rear and vigorously repulsed in front often builds up pressures within him that lead to that inner explosion without which true satori seldom occurs.

However, such extreme measures are by no means universal in Zen. Generally, they are more common in the Rinzai sect than in the Soto, less frequent in the temples than in the monasteries, where the outward discipline is rigid and often harsh. Even so, it is an unusual temple sesshin that does not resound to furious shouts of encouragement of the monitors and flailings of the kyosaku. Westerners unused to the idea that beatings with a stick can precipitate kensho are always surprised to learn that not only has the kyosaku been relentlessly used on those Japanese who have had satori at sesshin but that it has actually been asked for.

Contrary to what many believe, the use of such force is not a uniquely Japanese expression of Buddhism. As we shall see in a later section, the kyosaku itself is of Chinese origin, not Japanese, as are

¹ Westerners attending their first sesshin are often puzzled and confused by this sight, construing it to be part of some prescribed ritual. Actually it is nothing of the sort. The sudden clanging of the bell for dokusan affords release from the accumulated tension developed during the intensive effort at concentration. Simultaneously there is an uncontrollable urge to race to the roshi to be tested. Occasionally the student who reaches the bell first does not wait for a signal from the roshi but enters the roshi's room at once.

other forceful devices employed in Zen. In his *Shobogenzo* (in the section called *Zuimonki*) Dogen relates that while in China he heard the following from a Chinese Zen master: "... When I was young I used to visit the heads of various monasteries, and one of them explained to me: 'Formerly I used to hit sleeping monks so hard that my fist just about broke. Now I am old and weak, so I can't hit them hard enough. Therefore it is difficult to produce good monks. In many monasteries today the superiors do not emphasize sitting strongly enough, and so Buddhism is declining. The more you hit them, the better,' he advised me."¹

That an intense inner energy must be aroused for the tremendous effort of reaching enlightenment, whether it be instigated from the outside by a stick or from the inside by sheer will power, has been taught by all great masters. It was underscored by the Buddha himself in an early sutra in the following words: "... One should with clenched teeth, and with tongue pressing on palate, subdue, crush, and overpower the mind by the mind, just as if a strong man, having taken a very weak man by the head or shoulders, were to subdue him, crush him, and overpower him. Then the bad harmful thoughts connected with desire, hate, and delusion will pass away, disappear."²

The fact that there are Rinzai masters in Japan who seldom employ the *kyosaku* and Soto masters who persistently use it only proves that, in the last analysis, it is the roshi's own personality together with the training he himself received which determines his methods, and not the circumstance of the sect to which his temple belongs.

In the person of a genuine roshi, able to expound the Buddha's Dharma with a conviction born of his own profound experience of Truth, is to be found the embodiment of Zen's wisdom and authority. Such a roshi is a guide and teacher whose spirit-heart-mind is identical with that of all Buddhas and Patriarchs, separated though they be by centuries in time. Without him Zen's past is lifeless, its future "powerless to be born." Zen, as a transmission from mind to mind, cherishes pulsating, living truth—truth in action. Like music imprisoned in a phonograph disc which needs electrical energy and a reproducing

¹ *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, edited by William Theodore de Bary, p. 254.

² The *Satipatthana Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikaya* (translated by Soma Maha Thera in his booklet *Foundations of Mindfulness*, p. iii).

device to enable it to live, so the Heart-mind of the Buddha, entombed in the sutras, needs a Living Force in the person of an enlightened roshi to re-create it.

In dokusan the roshi fulfills the dual roles traditionally ascribed to a father and a mother. Alternately he is the strict, reproving father who prods and chastens and the gentle, loving mother who comforts and encourages. When the student slackens his effort he is coaxed or goaded, when he displays pride he is rebuked; and conversely, when he is assailed by doubt or driven to despair he is encouraged and uplifted. An accomplished roshi thus combines stern detachment with warm concern, flexibility, and an egolessness which can never be mistaken for weakness or flabbiness, in addition to self-confidence and a commanding air. Because his words are charged with the force and immediacy of his liberated personality, what he says has the power to rejuvenate the student's flagging spirit and reinvigorate his quest for enlightenment despite pain, frustration, or temporary boredom.

But what the student responds to most keenly is the visible evidence of the roshi's liberated mind: his childlike spontaneity and simplicity, his radiance and compassion, his complete identification with his (the student's) aspiration. A novice who watches his seventy-eight-year-old roshi demonstrate a koan with dazzling swiftness and total involvement, and who observes the flowing, effortless grace with which he relates himself to any situation and to all individuals, knows that he is seeing one of the finest products of a unique system of mind and character development, and he is bound to say to himself in his moments of despair: "If through the practice of Zen I can learn to experience life with the same immediacy and awareness, no price will be too high to pay."

All the roshi's unique skills and compassion come into full play once he senses that the student's mind is ripe, i.e., barren of discriminating thoughts and clearly aware—in other words, in a state of absolute oneness—revealed variously in how the student strikes the dokusan bell, how he walks into the dokusan room, how he makes his prostrations, and the way he looks and acts during dokusan. In a variety of ways the roshi will prod and nudge this mind into making its own ultimate leap to satori. Up to this point the roshi's main effort has been directed toward cajoling and inspiring the student to apply himself with energy and single-mindedness in his concentration, and

their way home from sesshin. Usually, but not always, satori follows a period of intense concentration and absorption.

In view of the foregoing, the intriguing words with which many koans or *mondo* conclude, "With this the monk suddenly came to enlightenment" or "Then the monk's Mind's eye was opened," will be seen to be less imaginary than at first supposed. Puzzled students frequently ask: "How is it possible to achieve satori as quickly and easily as these koans would have one believe?" What is important to observe here is that the master's crucial phrase or blow which broke open the disciple's deluded mind was effective only because it came at a time when the latter's mind was ripe for this type of stimulus, and that this ripeness doubtlessly was the outcome of a long period of zazen and a number of dokusan with the master. In other words, koans in their formulation reveal the precipitating circumstances only; they make no mention of the years of relentless, anxious search for truth which led to this crowning experience.

The proof of the student's satori lies in his ability to respond instantly in a "live" way to questions which demand a concrete demonstration of the spirit of his koan.¹ What convinces the roshi are not merely the student's words or gestures or silence (which can be equally effective), but the conviction and certainty informing them, i.e., the comprehending look in the eye, the decisiveness of the tone of voice, and the spontaneity, freedom, and thoroughness of the gestures and movements themselves. Thus it is possible for two different students, one just enlightened and the other not yet, to respond with identical words and gestures at dokusan and for the roshi to accept the responses of the one and reject those of the other.

The roshi's acceptance of the student's demonstration is tacit confirmation that the student has had a genuine enlightenment,² even though it be shallow as many first experiences are. Where Zen differs radically from other Buddhist disciplines is precisely in this insistence that the student demonstrate his Understanding "beyond all understanding," and not merely verbalize about it. What Zen values are expressive gestures, movements, and phrases which spontaneously issue from the deepest level of the total being, and not arid explana-

¹ For the nature of some of these questions, see pp. 227, 228.

² Unfortunately, this is by no means uniformly true. An easy-going roshi will often pass students who have not had a genuine satori experience.

STUDENT: I guess we can't disagree on anything, can we [laughing]?

ROSHI: Now go back to your place and apply yourself more seriously.

* * *

STUDENT: Can you tell me what is most essential in shikan-taza?

ROSHI: The quality of your sitting is of vital importance. The back must be straight and the mind taut—ever watchful. A sagging body creates a sagging mind, and vice versa. The mind must be thoroughly alert, yet not tense. If you look at the picture of Bodhidharma painted by Sesshu and carefully study the eyes, you will see what I mean. Bodhidharma is doing shikan-taza. This is the degree of alertness required: If you were sitting in one corner of a room doing shikan-taza and a door on the other side was quietly opened half an inch, you would know it instantly.

* * *

STUDENT: This will be my last sesshin, as I have to return to the United States next month. Will it be all right to train under a Soto priest there?

ROSHI: Yes, but I would advise you not to be guided by him with respect to satori unless you are sure he is enlightened himself. Very few Soto priests these days have realized their True-nature and therefore they pooh-poo the experience, saying in effect: "Since in possessing the Buddha-mind we are all inherently enlightened, why is satori necessary?" But this argument is specious, because until they have directly perceived their Buddha-mind they don't really know that they possess it.

STUDENT: Then, is it possible for me to carry on my practice without a teacher?

ROSHI: Whether you have no teacher in America or only a mediocre one, you can continue to discipline yourself in Zen by following what you have learned at this temple. Any teacher, even an unenlightened one, is able to supervise your practice. He can check your posture, for instance, and your breathing, and can guide you in other respects. But he ought not try to pass on satori unless he himself has had it and it has been verified by his teacher.

STUDENT: Oh, yes, that reminds me of something I wanted to ask

you. This morning in your lecture you spoke about the necessity of having one's enlightenment confirmed by one's teacher because only in this way could correct Zen be transmitted. I don't quite understand this. Why is it necessary to be authenticated by anyone?

ROSHI: Starting from the time of the Buddha Shakyamuni, correct Buddhism has been transmitted from teacher to disciple. Where the teacher's enlightenment has been authentic and sanctioned by *his* teacher, he has been able to sanction the enlightenment of his own disciples by using his own experience of enlightenment as a guide.

You ask why this is necessary. It is necessary, first of all, in order to insure the transmission of true Buddhism from teacher to disciple. If this hadn't been done, there would be no authentic Zen today. But the truth is, you can never be sure by yourself that what you take to be satori actually is satori. With a first experience it is quite possible to misjudge it.

STUDENT: But isn't enlightenment self-authenticating?

ROSHI: No, it isn't. In fact, there are many examples of persons who became teachers without having enlightenment at all. It is like a person searching alone for diamonds in the mountains. If he has never seen a real diamond, he may think when he finds glass or quartz or some other mineral that he has found a genuine diamond. If he could verify his find through somebody who has had experience with diamonds, he could be sure. Failing that, he could easily make a mistake regardless of how brightly his stones glittered.

STUDENT: This business of the transmission from the Buddha down to the present time—it isn't really true, is it? It's myth, isn't it?

ROSHI: No, it is true. If you don't believe it, that's too bad.

8 / STUDENT H (WOMAN, AGE 37) / STUDENT: I am pregnant and probably won't be able to attend any more sesshin until after the birth of my child a couple of months away. How should I continue to do zazen in my own home during the rest of my pregnancy?

ROSHI: Continue to concentrate on your present koan. When a solution comes to you, put it on the shelf, so to speak, as you did with the other koans, and go back to shikan-taza until you come before me

has it any coloration of good or bad. It cannot be compared with anything, so it is called Buddha-nature. Yet countless thoughts issue from this Self-nature as waves arise in the ocean or as images are reflected in a mirror.

If you want to realize your own Mind, you must first of all look into the source from which thoughts flow. Sleeping and working, standing and sitting, profoundly ask yourself, "What is my own Mind?" with an intense yearning to resolve this question. This is called "training" or "practice" or "desire for truth" or "thirst for realization." What is termed *zazen* is no more than looking into one's own mind. It is better to search your own mind devotedly than to read and recite innumerable sutras and *dharani* every day for countless years. Such endeavors, which are but formalities, produce some merit, but this merit expires and again you must experience the suffering of the Three Evil Paths. Because searching one's own mind leads ultimately to enlightenment, this practice is a prerequisite to becoming a Buddha. No matter whether you have committed either the ten evil deeds or the five deadly sins, still if you turn back your mind and enlighten yourself, you are a Buddha instantly. But do not commit sins and expect to be saved by enlightenment [from the effects of your own actions. Neither enlightenment] nor a Buddha nor a Patriarch can save a person who, deluding himself, goes down evil ways.

Imagine a child sleeping next to its parents and dreaming it is being beaten or is painfully sick. The parents cannot help the child no matter how much it suffers, for no one can enter the dreaming mind of another. If the child could awaken itself, it could be freed of this suffering automatically. In the same way, one who realizes that his own Mind is Buddha frees himself instantly from the sufferings arising from [ignorance of the law of] ceaseless change within the Six Realms. If a Buddha could prevent it, do you think he would allow even one sentient being to fall into hell?¹ Without Self-realization one cannot understand such things as these.

What kind of master is it that this very moment sees colors with

¹ What is implied here is that Buddhas are not supernatural beings who can prevent one from falling into hell by conferring enlightenment, but that enlightenment, through which one can be saved from the sufferings of such a fate, is attainable solely through one's own efforts.

the eyes and hears voices with the ears, that now raises the hands and moves the feet? We know these are functions of our own mind, but no one knows precisely how they are performed. It may be asserted that behind these actions there is no entity, yet it is obvious they are being performed spontaneously. Conversely, it may be maintained that these *are* the acts of some entity; still the entity is invisible. If one regards this question as unfathomable, all attempts to reason [out an answer] will cease and one will be at a loss to know what to do. In this propitious state deepen and deepen the yearning, tirelessly, to the extreme. When the profound questioning penetrates to the very bottom, and that bottom is broken open, not the slightest doubt will remain that your own Mind is itself Buddha, the Void-universe. There will then be no anxiety about life or death, no truth to search for.

In a dream you may stray and lose your way home. You ask someone to show you how to return or you pray to God or Buddhas to help you, but still you can't get home. Once you rouse yourself from your dream-state, however, you find that you are in your own bed and realize that the only way you could have gotten home was to awaken yourself. This [kind of spiritual awakening] is called "return to the origin" or "rebirth in paradise." It is the kind of inner realization that can be achieved with some training. Virtually all who like zazen and make an effort in practice, be they laymen or monks, can experience to this degree. But even such [partial] awakening cannot be attained except through the practice of zazen. You would be making a serious error, however, were you to assume that this was true enlightenment in which there is no doubt about the nature of reality. You would be like a man who having found copper gives up the desire for gold.

Upon such realization question yourself even more intensely in this wise: "My body is like a phantom, like bubbles on a stream. My mind, looking into itself, is as formless as empty-space, yet somewhere within sounds are perceived. Who is hearing?" Should you question yourself in this wise with profound absorption, never slackening the intensity of your effort, your rational mind eventually will exhaust itself and only questioning at the deepest level will remain. Finally you will lose awareness of your own body. Your long-held conceptions and notions will perish, after absolute questioning, in the way that every drop of water vanishes from a tub broken open

at the bottom, and perfect enlightenment will follow like flowers suddenly blooming on withered trees.

With such realization you achieve true emancipation. But even now repeatedly cast off what has been realized, turning back to the subject that realizes, that is, to the root bottom, and resolutely go on. Your Self-nature will then grow brighter and more transparent as your delusive feelings perish, like a gem gaining luster under repeated polishing, until at last it positively illumines the entire universe. Don't doubt this! Should your yearning be too weak to lead you to this state in your present lifetime, you will undoubtedly gain Self-realization easily in the next, provided you are still engaged in this questioning at death, just as yesterday's work half done was finished easily today.

While you are doing zazen neither despise nor cherish the thoughts that arise; only search your own mind, the very source of these thoughts. You must understand that anything appearing in your consciousness or seen by your eyes is an illusion, of no enduring reality. Hence you should neither fear nor be fascinated by such phenomena. If you keep your mind as empty as space, unstained by extraneous matters, no evil spirits can disturb you even on your deathbed. While engaged in zazen, however, keep none of this counsel in mind. You must only become the question "What is this Mind?" or "What is it that hears these sounds?" When you realize this Mind you will know that it is the very source of all Buddhas and sentient beings. The Bodhisattva Kannon is so called because he attained enlightenment by perceiving [i.e., grasping the source of] the sounds of the world about him.

At work, at rest, never stop trying to realize who it is that hears. Even though your questioning becomes almost unconscious, you won't find the one who hears, and all your efforts will come to naught. Yet sounds can be heard, so question yourself to an even profounder level. At last every vestige of self-awareness will disappear and you will feel like a cloudless sky. Within yourself you will find no "I," nor will you discover anyone who hears. This Mind is like the void, yet it hasn't a single spot that can be called empty. This state is often mistaken for Self-realization. But continue to ask yourself even more intensely, "Now who is it that hears?" If you bore and bore into this question, oblivious to anything else, even this feeling of

voidness will vanish and you will be unaware of anything—total darkness will prevail. [Don't stop here, but] keep asking with all your strength, "What is it that hears?" Only when you have completely exhausted the questioning will the question burst; now you will feel like a man come back from the dead. This is true realization. You will see the Buddhas of all the universes face to face and the Patriarchs past and present. Test yourself with this koan: "A monk asked Joshu: 'What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming to China?' Joshu replied: 'The oak tree in the garden.'"¹ Should this koan leave you with the slightest doubt, you need to resume questioning, "What is it that hears?"

If you don't come to realization in this present life, when will you? Once you have died you won't be able to avoid a long period of suffering in the Three Evil Paths.² What is obstructing realization? Nothing but your own half-hearted desire for truth. Think of this and exert yourself to the utmost.

THE LETTERS / 1 / TO A MAN FROM KUMA-

SAKA / You ask me to write you how to practice Zen on your sickbed. Who is he that is sick? Who is he that is practicing Zen? Do you know who you are? One's whole being is Buddha-nature. One's whole being is the Great Way. The substance of this Way is inherently immaculate and transcends all forms. Is there any sickness in it? Man's own Mind is the essential substance of all Buddhas, his Face before his parents' birth. It is the master of seeing and hearing, of all the senses. One who fully realizes this is a Buddha, one who does not is an ordinary human being. Hence all Buddhas and Patriarchs point directly to the human mind so man can see his own Self-nature and thereby attain Buddhahood. For the best remedy for one perplexed by shadows is to see the real thing.

Once a man was invited to his friend's house. As he was about to

¹ *Mumonkan* No. 38. For more about Joshu, see p. 72 and "Joshu" in section x.

² According to Buddhist teaching, enlightenment can be attained only with a human body. What is meant here and in the preceding passage is that if one loses his human form, and with it the opportunity for enlightenment and higher states of consciousness, one will have to undergo long suffering in sub-human states of existence.

drink a cup of wine offered him, he believed he saw a baby snake inside his cup. Not wishing to embarrass his host by drawing attention to it, he bravely swallowed it. Upon returning home he felt severe pains in his stomach. Many remedies were applied but in vain, and the man, now grievously ill, felt he was about to die. His friend, hearing of his condition, asked him once more to his house. Seating his sick friend in the same place, he again offered him a cup of wine, telling him it was medicine. As the ailing man raised his cup to drink, once again he saw a baby snake in it. This time he drew his host's attention to it. Without a word the host pointed to the ceiling above his guest, where a bow hung. Suddenly the sick man realized that the "baby snake" was the reflection of the hanging bow. Both men looked at each other and laughed. The pain of the sick man vanished instantly and he recovered his health.

Becoming a Buddha is analogous to this. The Patriarch Yoka said: "When you realize the true nature of the universe you know that there is neither subjective nor objective reality. At that very moment karmic formations which would carry you to the lowest hell are wiped out." This true nature is the root-substance of every sentient being. Man, however, can't bring himself to believe that his own Mind is itself the Great Completeness realized by the Buddha, so he clings to superficial forms and looks for truth outside this Mind, striving to become a Buddha through ascetic practices. But as the illusion of an ego-self does not vanish, man must undergo intense suffering in the Three Worlds. He is like the one who became sick believing he had swallowed a baby snake. Various remedies were of no avail, but he recovered instantly upon realizing the basic truth.

So just look into your own Mind—no one can help you with nostrums. In a sutra the Buddha said: "If you would get rid of your foe, you have only to realize that that foe is delusion." All phenomena in the world are illusory, they have no abiding substance. Sentient beings no less than Buddhas are like images reflected in water. One who does not see the true nature of things mistakes shadow for substance. That is to say, in zazen the state of emptiness and quiet which results from the diminution of thought is often confused with one's Face before one's parents were born. But this serenity is also a reflection upon the water. You must advance beyond the stage where your reason is of any avail. In this extremity of not knowing what to

think or do, ask yourself: "Who is the master?" He will become your intimate only after you have broken a walking stick made from a rabbit's horn or crushed a chunk of ice in fire. Tell me now, who is this most intimate of yours? Today is the eighth of the month. Tomorrow is the thirteenth!

2 / TO THE ABBESS OF SHINRYU-JI / In order to become a Buddha you must discover who it is that wants to become a Buddha. To know this Subject you must right here and now probe deeply into yourself, inquiring: "What is it that thinks in terms of good and bad, that sees, that hears?" If you question yourself profoundly in this wise, you will surely enlighten yourself. If you enlighten yourself, you are instantly a Buddha. The Mind which the Buddhas realized in their enlightenment is the Mind of all sentient beings. The substance of this Mind is pure, harmonizing with its surroundings. In a woman's body it has no female form, in a man's body it has no appearance of male. It is not mean even in the body of the lowly, nor is it imposing in the body of the noble. Like boundless space, it hasn't a particle of color. The physical world can be destroyed, but formless, colorless space is indestructible. This Mind, like space, is all-embracing. It does not come into existence with the creation of our body, nor does it perish with its disintegration. Though invisible, it suffuses our body, and every single act of seeing, hearing, smelling, speaking, or moving the hands and legs is simply the activity of this Mind. Whoever searches for Buddha and Truth outside this Mind is deluded; whoever directly perceives that his intrinsic nature is precisely that of a Buddha is himself a Buddha. A Buddha has never existed who has not realized this Mind, and every last being within the Six Realms of Existence is perfectly endowed with it. The statement from a sutra "In Buddha there is no discrimination" confirms this.

Everyone who has realized this Mind, attaining to Buddhahood, wants to make it known to mankind. But men, clinging stupidly to superficial forms, find it hard to believe in this purposeless Dharma-kaya, this pure, true Buddha. To give it a name Buddhas resort to such metaphors as "Treasure Gem of Free Will," "Great

Path," "Amitabha Buddha," "Buddha of Supreme Knowledge," "Jizo," "Kannon," "Fugen," "One's Face before one's parents were born." The Bodhisattva Jizo¹ is the guide through the Six Realms of Existence, [he being the symbol of the power which] controls the six senses. Every epithet of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva is simply a different designation for the One-mind. If one believes in his own Buddha-mind, it is the same as believing in all Buddhas. Thus in a sutra we read: "The Three Worlds are but One-mind; outside this Mind nothing exists. Mind, Buddha, and sentient beings are One, they are not to be differentiated."

Since the sutras deal only with this Mind, to realize it is to accomplish at one stroke the reading and understanding of all the sutras. One sutra says: "The teachings of the sutras are like a finger pointing to the moon." Now, these teachings are the sermons that have been preached by all the Buddhas. "Pointing to the moon" is pointing to the One-mind of sentient beings. Just as it is said that the moon shines upon both sides of the earth, in the same way the One-mind illumines the inner and outer world. When it is said, then, that great merit can be derived from reciting the sutras, this means what has just been said and nothing more.² Again, it is said that through services for the Buddha one can attain Buddhahood, but to attain Buddhahood simply means to realize this Mind. Thus the merit of realizing this One-mind in a single-minded instant is infinitely greater than that of reciting the sutras for ten thousand days, just as perceiving one's own Mind in a moment of single-mindedness is incomparably greater than hearing for ten thousand years why this is so. But just as one must progress from shallow to deep by degrees, so is it a blessing for beginners, either deluded or obtuse, to recite sutras enthusiastically or to invoke the names of Buddhas. For them it is like getting on a raft or boat as a first step. But if they do not yearn to reach the shore of realization, contenting themselves to remain forever on the raft, they only deceive themselves. Shakyamuni Buddha underwent many austerities yet failed to attain Buddhahood.

¹ Jizo has always occupied a special niche in the hearts of Japanese Buddhists, and perhaps that is why Bassui, rather gratuitously it would seem, singles out this Bodhisattva.

² Namely, that the sutras say that they themselves are not truth but are like an arrow pointing to the truth.

After this he did zazen for six years, giving up everything else, and at last realized this One-mind. Following his perfect enlightenment he gave sermons about the Mind he had realized for the sake of all mankind. These sermons are called sutras and are the words flowing from the realized Mind of the Buddha.

This Mind is latent in everyone, it is the master of the six senses. The effects and causes of all transgressions vanish in a flash, like ice put into boiling water, when one awakens to this Mind. Only after gaining such direct Insight can you affirm that your own Mind is itself Buddha. The Mind-essence is intrinsically bright and unblemished, in it there is no distinction of Buddha and sentient beings. But its clarity is hidden by delusive thoughts just as the light of the sun or the moon is obscured by clouds. Yet such thoughts can be dispelled by the power of practicing zazen, in the same way that clouds can be dissipated by a blast of wind. Once they vanish, the Buddha-nature reveals itself, just as the moon makes its appearance when clouds disappear. This light has ever been present, it is not newly obtained outside oneself.

If you would free yourself from being driven within the Six Realms of Existence or from [the sufferings of] birth-and-death, you must dispel your delusive feelings and perceptions. To dispel them you must realize this Mind. To realize this Mind you must do zazen. How you practice is of the utmost importance. You must penetrate your koans to the very core. The foundation of every koan is one's own Mind. The deep yearning for the realization of Mind we call "desire for truth" or "thirst for realization." He is wise who deeply fears falling into hell.¹ Only because the terrors of hell are so little known to them do men have no desire for the teachings of the Buddha.

There was a Bodhisattva who attained enlightenment by concentrating intently on every sound he heard, so Shakyamuni Buddha called him Kannon.² If you would know the substance of the Mind-

¹ What is implied in this and the following sentence is that the plane of existence or state of consciousness called hell is excruciatingly painful, and that it is the dread of falling into such a miserable life which gives rise to a deep yearning for Self-realization. For it is enlightenment that takes the terror out of hell.

² Kannon is a simplification of Kanzeon, which means "hearer (or receiver) of the voices (cries) of the world." Sometimes Bassui uses the term Kanzeon and sometimes Kannon. To avoid confusion we have adhered throughout to Kannon.

Buddha, the very instant you hear a sound search for this one who hears. Thus you will unfailingly come to the realization that your own Mind is no different from Kannon's. This Mind is neither being nor non-being. It transcends all forms and yet is inseparable from them.

Do not try to prevent thoughts from arising and do not cling to any that have arisen. Let thoughts appear and disappear as they will, don't struggle with them. You need only unremittingly and with all your heart ask yourself "What is my own Mind?" I keep urging this because I want to bring you to Self-realization. When you persistently try to understand [with the intellect] what is beyond the domain of intellect, you are bound to reach a dead end, completely baffled. But push on. Sitting or standing, working or sleeping, probe tirelessly to your deepest self with the question "What is my own Mind?" Fear nothing but the failure to experience your True-nature. This is Zen practice. When this intense questioning envelops every inch of you and penetrates to the very bottom of all bottoms, the question will suddenly burst and the substance of the Buddha-mind be revealed, just as a mirror [concealed] in a box can reflect [its surroundings] only after the box is broken apart. The radiance of this Mind will light up every corner of a universe free of even a single blemish. You will be liberated at last from all entanglements within the Six Realms, all effects of evil actions having vanished. The joy of this moment cannot be put into words.

Consider a person suffering intensely in a dream where, having fallen into hell, he is being tortured. Once he awakens, his suffering ceases, for he is now liberated from this delusion. In the same way, through Self-realization one frees himself from the sufferings of birth-and-death. For enlightenment, not nobility of birth or wide learning but only strong determination is essential. Buddhas bear the same relation to sentient beings as water does to ice. Ice, like stone or brick, cannot flow. But when it melts it flows freely in conformity with its surroundings. So long as one remains in a state of delusion he is like ice. Upon realization he becomes as exquisitely free as water. And remember, there is no ice which does not return to water. So you will understand there is no difference between ordinary beings and Buddhas except for one thing—delusion. When it is dissolved they are identical.

Don't allow yourself to become discouraged. If your desire for

truth is wanting, you may be unable to attain enlightenment in this life. But if you carry on your Zen practice¹ faithfully, even while dying, you will unquestionably achieve enlightenment in your next existence. But don't dawdle. Imagine yourself on your deathbed at this very moment. What alone can help you? What alone can prevent you from falling into hell because of your transgressions? There is fortunately a broad path to liberation. From your very roots ask this one question: "What is my Buddha-mind?" If you would see the substance of all Buddhas in a trice, realize your own Mind.

Is what I say true or false? Ask yourself this instant: "What is my own Buddha-mind?" Upon your enlightenment the lotus will blossom in a roaring fire and endure throughout eternity. Man inherently is no different from the lotus. Why can't you grasp this?

3 / TO LORD NAKAMURA, GOVERNOR OF AKI PROVINCE / You ask me how to practice Zen with reference to this phrase from a sutra: "Mind, having no fixed abode, should flow forth." There is no express method for attaining enlightenment. If you but look into your Self-nature directly, not allowing yourself to be deflected, the Mind flower will come into bloom. Hence the sutra says: "Mind, having no fixed abode, should flow forth." Thousands of words spoken directly by Buddhas and Patriarchs add up to this one phrase. Mind is the True-nature of things, transcending all forms. The True-nature is the Way. The Way is Buddha. Buddha is Mind. Mind is not within or without or in between. It is not being or nothingness or non-being or non-nothingness or Buddha or mind or matter. So it is called the abodeless Mind. This Mind sees colors with the eyes, hears sounds with the ears. Look for this master directly!

A Zen master [Rinzai] of old says: "One's body, composed of the four primal elements,² can't hear or understand this preaching. The spleen or stomach or liver or gall bladder can't hear or understand this preaching. Empty-space can't understand it. Then what does hear and understand?" Strive to perceive directly. If your mind remains attached to any form or feeling whatsoever, or is affected by

¹ That is, asking: "What is the true substance of my Mind?"

² Namely, solids (earth), liquids (water), heat (fire), gas (air).

logical reasoning or conceptual thinking, you are as far from true realization as heaven is from earth.

How can you cut off at a stroke the sufferings of birth-and-death? As soon as you consider how to advance, you get lost in reasoning; but if you quit you are adverse to the highest path. To be able neither to advance nor to quit is to be a "breathing corpse." If in spite of this dilemma you empty your mind of all thoughts and push on with your zazen, you are bound to enlighten yourself and apprehend the phrase "Mind, having no fixed abode, should flow forth." Instantly you will grasp the sense of all Zen dialogue as well as the profound and subtle meaning of the countless sutras.

The layman Ho asked Baso: "What is it that transcends everything in the universe?" Baso answered: "I will tell you after you have drunk up the waters of the West River in one gulp."¹ Ho instantly became deeply enlightened. See here, what does this mean? Does it explain the phrase "Mind, having no fixed abode, should flow forth," or does it point to the very one reading this? If you still don't comprehend, go back to questioning, "What is hearing now?" Find out this very moment! The problem of birth-and-death is momentous, and the world moves fast. Make the most of time, for it waits for no one.

Your own Mind is intrinsically Buddha. Buddhas are those who have realized this. Those who haven't are the so-called ordinary sentient beings. Sleeping and working, standing and sitting, ask yourself, "What is my own Mind?" looking into the source from which your thoughts arise. What is this subject that right now perceives, thinks, moves, works, goes forth, or returns? To know it you must intensely absorb yourself in the question. But even though you do not realize it in this life, beyond a doubt you will in the next because of your present efforts.

In your zazen think in terms of neither good nor evil. Don't try to stop thoughts from arising, only ask yourself: "What is my own Mind?" Now, even when your questioning goes deeper and deeper you will get no answer until finally you will reach a cul-de-sac, your thinking totally checked. You won't find anything within that can

¹ The West River is a large river in China. Another version of this koan states: "Ho replied to Baso: 'I have already drunk up the waters of the West River in one gulp.' 'Then I have already told you!' retorted Baso."

be called "I" or "Mind." But who is it that understands all this? Continue to probe more deeply yet and the mind that perceives there is nothing will vanish; you will no longer be aware of questioning but only of emptiness. When awareness of even emptiness disappears, you will realize there is no Buddha outside Mind and no Mind outside Buddha. Now for the first time you will discover that when you do not hear with your ears you are truly hearing, and when you do not see with your eyes you are really seeing Buddhas of the past, present, and future. But don't cling to any of this, just experience it for yourself!

See here, what is your own Mind? Everyone's Original-nature is not less than Buddha. But since men doubt this and search for Buddha and Truth outside their Mind, they fail to attain enlightenment, being helplessly driven within cycles of birth-and-death, entangled in karma both good and bad. The source of all karma bondage is delusion, i.e., the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions [stemming from ignorance]. Rid yourself of them and you are emancipated. Just as ash covering a charcoal fire is dispersed when the fire is fanned, so these delusions vanish once you realize your Self-nature.

During zazen neither loathe nor be charmed by any of your thoughts. With your mind turned inward, look steadily into their source and the delusive feelings and perceptions in which they are rooted will evaporate. This is not yet Self-realization, however, even though your mind becomes bright and empty like the sky, you have awareness of neither inner nor outer, and all the ten quarters seem clear and luminous. To take this for realization is to mistake a mirage for reality. Now even more intensely search this mind of yours which hears. Your physical body, composed of the four basic elements, is like a phantom, without reality, yet apart from this body there is no mind. The empty-space of ten quarters can neither see nor hear; still, something within you does hear and distinguish sounds. Who or what is it? When this question totally ignites you, distinctions of good and evil, awareness of being or emptiness, vanish like a light extinguished on a dark night. Though you are no longer consciously aware of yourself, still you can hear and know you exist. Try as you will to discover the subject hearing, your efforts will fail and you will find yourself at an impasse. All at once your mind will burst into great enlightenment and you will feel as though you have

risen from the dead, laughing loudly and clapping your hands in delight. Now for the first time you will know that Mind itself is Buddha. Were someone to ask, "What does one's Buddha-mind look like?" I would answer: "In the trees fish play, in the deep sea birds are flying." What does this mean? If you don't understand it, look into your own Mind and ask yourself: "What is he, this master who sees and hears?"

Make the most of time: it waits for no one.

4 / TO A DYING MAN / Your Mind-essence is not subject to birth or death. It is neither being nor nothingness, neither emptiness nor form-and-color. Nor is it something that feels pain or joy. However much you try to know [with your rational mind] that which is now sick, you cannot. Yet if you think of nothing, wish for nothing, want to understand nothing, cling to nothing, and only ask yourself, "What is the true substance of the Mind of this one who is now suffering?" ending your days like clouds fading in the sky, you will eventually be freed from your painful bondage to endless change.

5 / TO THE LAYMAN IPPO (HOMMA SHOKEN) / You are meeting *him* face to face, but who is *he*? Anything you say will be wrong. And if you hold your tongue, you will be equally wrong. Who is *he*, then? On top of a flagpole a cow gives birth to a calf. If you come to Self-realization at this point, you need do nothing further. If you cannot, look inward to behold your Buddha-nature. Everyone is perfectly endowed with this Buddha-nature. Its substance is the same in ordinary human beings as in Buddhas, with not the slightest difference in degree. But because man can't bring himself to believe this, he binds himself to delusion with the rope of unreality by saying: "The realization of my Self-nature is beyond me. It is better that I recite sutras, bow down before Buddhas, and enter the Way gradually through the grace of all Buddhas." Most of those who hear this accept it as true. It is as though one blind man were leading many blind men in the wrong direction. These people do not really believe sutras and Buddhas—on the contrary, they set no store by them. [For if they truly accepted them, they

would know that] merely reciting the sutras is no more than looking at them from the outside, and speaking of "Buddha" but another way of speaking of the essence of Mind. A sutra says: "Mind, Buddha, and sentient beings, these are not to be discriminated from one another." Accordingly, a man who does not believe in the reality of his own Mind but says he believes in Buddha is like one who puts trust in a symbol while spurning the real thing. How then can he realize this Mind? One who wants only to recite sutras is like a hungry man who refuses food offered in the belief that he can allay his hunger by merely looking at a menu. Each sutra is but a catalogue of the Mind-nature. One of the sutras says: "The teachings of the sutras are like a finger pointing to the moon." Can the Buddha have intended that you acknowledge the finger and not perceive the moon? Everybody contains within himself the [substance of the] sutras. If you catch even a glimpse of your Self-nature, it is the same as reading and understanding all the sutras simultaneously, none excepted, without so much as holding one in your hand and reading a word. Isn't this real sutra-"reading"? Look, that green bamboo grove over yonder is precisely your own Mind, and this mass of yellow flowers is nothing less than the supreme wisdom of the universe!

As for the practice of bowing down before Buddhas, this is merely a way of horizontalizing the mast of ego in order to realize the Buddha-nature. To attain Buddhahood one must come to Self-realization through his own efforts no matter what his talents or capabilities may be. Unfortunately, most who understand this and practice zazen begin to dawdle along the way and thus never come to complete realization. Then there are those who take the state of no-thoughts and no-awareness, where all reflection and discrimination stop for a time, to be true realization; others think it sufficient Zen practice to remember every single koan; still others insist that the true way of the Zen devotee is not to violate the precepts, or else to dwell in forests to escape from the problem of good and evil in the world; while still others maintain that the right way is to avow that there is no truth to be realized, or that there is no other truth to grasp than that of drinking tea when tea is offered or eating when food is served, or of shouting "Katsu!" when asked about Buddhism, or of leaving suddenly with a flourish of the kimono sleeve, pretending to repudiate everything, while calling anyone who practices zazen seriously and seeks

out accomplished Zen masters a bore. If such individuals can be called truth-seekers, then a child of three can be said to understand Zen. Again, there are those who think that when one's mental functions have ceased, leaving one like a decayed tree or cold stone, one has attained no-mindness; while still others maintain that in the practice of Zen a decisive point has been reached when one feels a deep void with awareness of neither inner nor outer, the entire body having become shining, transparent, and clear like a blue sky on a bright day.

This last appears when the True-nature begins to manifest itself, but it cannot be called genuine Self-realization. Zen masters of old would call it the "deep pit of pseudo-emancipation." Those who reach this stage, believing they have no more problems in [the study and practice of] Buddhism, behave haughtily through lack of wisdom; engage eagerly in debates on religion, taking delight in cornering their opponents but becoming angry when cornered themselves; appear perpetually discontented while no longer believing in the law of causation; go about telling jokes in a loud, jabbering voice; deliberately disturb and ridicule those who study and strive earnestly, calling them clods whose practice is not Zen. This is as though a lunatic were to laugh at a sane person. The conceit of these idiots knows no bounds and they fall into hell as quick as an arrow. The first Patriarch, Bodhidharma, said: "One who thinks only that everything is void but is ignorant of the law of causation falls into everlasting, pitch-black hell." These would-be teachers sometimes sound like Zen masters, but they are unable to free themselves from their delusive feelings and perceptions. Most beginners mistake the barest manifestation of truth for Self-realization. An ancient Zen master [Rinzai] said: "The body of the True-nature' and 'the ground of the True-nature,' these, I know for certain, are shadows [i.e., concepts]. You must find the subject that casts the shadows. It is the very source of all Buddhas."

Certain people say: "In the practice and study of Zen we acquire various ideas about it,¹ and such notions [we are told] are a kind of mind illness; for this reason Self-realization through Zen is difficult. But what if we don't realize our Self-nature, or understand [the Truth] through reading the sutras? Need we fear retribution if we

¹ That is, conceptions about satori, Mu, ku, etc.

extending over innumerable years past is instantly annihilated, like snow put into a roaring furnace. No thought of Buddha or Truth remains. How, then, can any mind illness persist? Why can't the karmically begotten delusions and the manifold discriminative thoughts and notions of the unenlightened mind be quelled? Simply because true Self-realization has not taken place. You can no more stop yourself from being driven within the Six Realms of ceaseless change without [first] realizing your Self-nature than you can stop water from boiling without quenching the fire beneath it.

Fortunately, you believe there is a truth specially transmitted outside the scriptures and scholastic teachings. Then why bother about the meaning of these scriptures? Renounce forthwith all such reflections and see the master directly. What is the master who at this very moment is seeing and hearing? If you reply, as most do, that it is Mind or Nature or Buddha or one's Face before birth or one's Original Home or Koan or Being or Nothingness or Emptiness or Form-and-Color or the Known or the Unknown or Truth or Delusion, or say something or remain silent, or regard it as Enlightenment or Ignorance, you fall into error at once. What is more, if you are so foolhardy as to doubt the reality of this master, you bind yourself though you use no rope. However much you try to know it through logical reasoning or to name or call it, you are doomed to failure. And even though all of you becomes one mass of questioning as you turn inward and intently search the very core of your being, you will find nothing that can be termed Mind or Essence. Yet should someone call your name, something from within will hear and respond. Find out this instant who it is!

If you push forward with your last ounce of strength at the very point where the path of your thinking has been blocked, and then, completely stymied, leap with hands high in the air into the tremendous abyss of fire confronting you—into the ever-burning flame of your own primordial nature—all ego-consciousness, all delusive feelings and thoughts and perceptions will perish with your ego-root and the true source of your Self-nature will appear. You will feel resurrected, all sickness having completely vanished, and will experience genuine peace and joy. You will be entirely free. For the first time you will realize that walking on water is like walking on ground and walking on ground like walking on water; that all day

long there is speaking, yet no word is ever spoken; that throughout the day there is walking, yet no step is ever taken; that while the clouds are rising over the southern mountains their rain is falling over the northern range; that when the lecture gong is struck in China the lecture begins in Korea; that sitting alone in a ten-foot-square room you meet all the Buddhas of the ten quarters; that without seeing a word you read the more than seven thousand volumes of the sutras; that though you acquire all the merits and virtues of good actions, yet in fact there are none.

Do you want to know what this Mind is? The layman Ho asked Baso: "What is it that transcends all things in the universe?" Baso answered: "I will tell you after you have swallowed all the water of the West River in one gulp." Upon hearing this, Ho became deeply enlightened. Now, how do you swallow all the water of the West River in one gulp? If you grasp the spirit of this, you will be able to go through ten thousand koans at one time and perceive that walking on water is like walking on ground and walking on ground like walking on water. If you imagine I am describing something supernatural, you will one day have to swallow a red-hot iron ball before Yama-*raja*. But if it is not supernatural, what is it? Face up to this!

6 / TO A MONK IN SHOBO HERMITAGE (AT HIS URGENT REQUEST) / In my boyhood this question perplexed me: Aside from this physical body, what replies "I am so-and-so" when asked "Who are you?" This perplexity having once arisen, it became deeper year by year, resulting in my desire to become a monk. Then I made this solemn vow: Now that I have determined to be a monk, I cannot search for truth for my own sake. Even after winning the supreme Truth I will defer full Buddhahood¹ until I have saved every sentient being. Furthermore, until this perplexity has been dissolved I will not study Buddhism or learn the rituals and practices of a monk. So long as I live in the human world I will stay nowhere except with great Zen masters, and in the mountains.

After I entered a monastery my perplexity increased. At the same time a strong resolve arose from the bottom of my heart and I

¹ That is, the highest perfected state. (See "Buddha" in section x.)

thought: Shakyamuni Buddha has passed already and Miroku, the future Buddha, has not yet appeared. During this period¹ when authentic Buddhism has declined to the point where it is about to expire, may my desire for Self-realization be strong enough to save all sentient beings in this Buddha-less world. Even should I suffer the pangs of everlasting hell as a result of this sin of attachment [to saving], so long as I can shoulder the sufferings of sentient beings, I will never become discouraged or forsake this eternal vow. Furthermore, in practicing Zen I will not idle away my time thinking of life and death or waste even a minute in trifling good works. Nor will I blind others to the truth by trying to minister to them so long as my own [spiritual] strength is insufficient to lead them to Self-realization.

These resolutions became part and parcel of my thinking, bothering me to some extent in my zazen. But I could not do otherwise. I constantly prayed² to Buddhas for strength to carry out these resolutions, which I made the standard of my conduct in both favorable and unfavorable circumstances, under the watchful but friendly eyes of heavenly beings.³ Thus it has been up to the present.

It is really pointless to tell you about these delusive states of mine, but as you make bold to ask I write here of my aspirations as a novice.

7 / TO THE NUN FURUSAWA / You have written me that the object of Zen practice [you believe] is the manifestation of Mind-in-itself. But how does it manifest itself? What can be

¹ Like many others of his time, Bassui believed he was in the beginning of the period of the destruction of the true Law as prophesied by the Buddha himself. The Mohasannipata Candragarbha sutra quotes the Buddha as saying that in the first five hundred years after his Nirvana his disciples would attain emancipation according to the right Law; in the second five hundred they would only be sure of attaining samadhi; in the third five hundred, of reading and reciting the sutras; in the fourth five hundred, of building temples and pagodas; and in the fifth five hundred, of the destruction of the Law. If the date of the Buddha's Nirvana is accepted as around 476 B.C., Bassui's birth, in 1327, would have been within the fourth period.

² Petitionary prayer is not unknown in Zen. Beginners often pray to Buddhas and Patriarchs for strength to purge themselves of evil and delusion so they may carry on their spiritual practice successfully. Dogen's *Hotsugammon* contains a number of such supplications.

³ This is, those in the Sixth Realm of Existence.



seen with the eyes or be known by reason cannot be called Mind-in-itself. You must begin your zazen by looking into your own mind. As your thoughts diminish you will become aware of them, but it is a mistake to struggle to stop them from arising. Neither loathe nor cherish your thoughts, only realize the source from which they stem. By constantly questioning whence thoughts arise, the time will come when your mind, unable to answer, will be free of even a ripple of thought. Yet even now you will find no answer. But still ask "What is this Mind?" to the very rock bottom and the questioning mind will suddenly vanish and your body feel as though it were without substance, like the empty-space of the ten quarters.

This is the first stage to which Zen beginners attain and they are encouraged to some extent. But if they mistake this for the manifestation of Mind-in-itself (or Truth-in-itself), they are like one who takes fish eyes for pearls. Those who persist in such error become haughty, malign Buddhas and Patriarchs, and ignore the law of causation. So they have to struggle with evil spirits in this life and tread thorny paths in the next. But with favorable karmic relations they will eventually attain enlightenment. Men, however, who cannot perceive the truth of all this, who do not believe their own Mind is Buddha and who look for Buddha, or Truth, outside this Mind, are infinitely worse off than non-Buddhists who attach themselves to the phenomenal world.

As I have already written you, when some insight comes to you go to a competent Zen master and openly demonstrate to him what you have perceived, exactly as it came to you. If it is faulty and needs to be dissolved, let it be done like boiling water destroying ice. At last, like a bright moon shining in an empty sky through clouds that have broken open, your Face before your parents' birth will be revealed, and for the first time you will understand what is meant by "the saw dances the Sandai." Now, Sandai is the name of a dance. Just consider: a saw dances the Sandai! What does this mean? Tackle it resolutely but without reasoning, for it has no meaning in the usual sense. You will be able to comprehend it only upon Self-realization.

You next mentioned that you are going to fast. Fasting is a non-Buddhist practice. Don't ever do it! Renunciation of your wrong views which discriminate gain from loss, good from bad—this is true

fasting. Relinquishment of delusion in the wholehearted practice of Zen—this is self-purification. To desire abnormal experiences¹ is as misguided as wanting to appear different from ordinary people. You have but to keep your mind steadfast yet flexible, concerning yourself with neither good nor evil in others and not obstructing them. If you remind yourself that this world is but a dream in which there is no grief to avoid and no joy to look for, your mind will become visibly serene. Not only this, but your illnesses will disappear as your delusive feelings and perceptions fall away. You must even discard whatever you realize through enlightenment. What is more, you must not attach yourself to or be repelled by visions of any kind, for they are all illusional. Don't involve yourself in such fantasies but only inquire: "What is the master who sees all this?"

I have fully answered the questions you have raised. Should you not realize your True-self in this lifetime even though you practice Zen exactly as I now advise you, you will unquestionably meet a perfectly enlightened Zen master in your next life and attain Self-realization a thousand times over through one Sound [of Truth].

I dislike writing you in such detail, but since you have written me from a sickbed to which you have long been confined, this is the only way I can answer so you will readily understand.

8 / FIRST LETTER TO THE ZEN PRIEST IGUCHI

I have read your presentation at length, but it misses the point of the koan. The Sixth Patriarch said: "The flag doesn't move, the wind doesn't move, only your mind moves."² To realize this clearly is to perceive that the universe and yourself are of the same root, that you and every single thing are a unity. The gurgle of the stream and the sigh of the wind are the voices of the master. The green of pine, the white of snow, these are the colors of the master, the very one who lifts the hands, moves the legs, sees, hears. One who grasps this directly without recourse to reason or intellection can be said to have some degree of inner realization. But this is not yet full enlightenment.

An ancient Zen master [Rinzai] said: "You should not cling to the

¹ That is, hallucinations or fantasies arising from prolonged fasting.

² *Mumonkan* No. 29.

idea that you are Pure-essence." And again: "Your physical body, composed of the four basic elements, can't hear or understand this preaching. The empty-space can't understand this preaching. Then what is it that hears and understands?" Meditate fully and directly on these words. Take hold of this koan as though wielding the jewel-sword of the Vajra king. Cut down whatever appears in the mind. When thoughts of mundane matters arise, cut them off. When notions of Buddhism arise, likewise lop them off. In short, destroy all ideas, whether of realization, of Buddhas, or of devils, and all day long pursue the question "What is it that hears this preaching?" When you have eradicated every conception until only emptiness remains, and then cut through even the emptiness, your mind will burst open and that which hears will manifest itself. Persevere, persevere—never quit halfway—until you reach the point where you feel as though you have risen from the dead. Only then will you be able to wholly resolve the momentous question "What is it that hears this preaching?"

I am afraid it may be inconvenient for you to write me often, so I am writing you this [kind of detailed] letter. After you have read it drop it into the fire.

9 / SECOND LETTER TO THE ZEN PRIEST IGUCHI / I have read your letter carefully.

Having long admired you for your determination to come to Self-realization, I was highly gratified to learn that you have not forgotten the great question. Your answer has been noted in all respects. Here I want to tell you to make this your koan: "What is the substance of my fundamental nature?" In your search for the master that hears and speaks, though thousands of thoughts arise don't entertain them but only ask "*What is it?*" Every thought and all self-awareness will then disappear, followed by a state not unlike a cloudless sky. Now, mind itself has no form. What is it, then, that hears and works and moves about? Delve into yourself deeper and deeper until you are no longer aware of a single object. Then beyond a shadow of a doubt you will perceive your True-nature, like a man awakening from a dream. Assuredly at that moment flowers will bloom on withered trees and fire flame up from ice. All of Buddhism, all worldly con-

cerns, all notions of good and evil, will have disappeared, like last night's dream, and your fundamental Buddha-nature alone will manifest itself. Having come to such inner understanding, you must not then cherish the notion that this Mind is fundamentally Buddha-nature. If you do you will be creating for yourself another thought-form.

Only because I regard your desire for Self-realization so highly do I write in such detail.¹

Thank you for sending the five hundred packets of caked rice and the pound of tea.

10 / THIRD LETTER TO THE ZEN PRIEST IGUCHI / I have read your letter with particular care. I am much pleased to hear about your Zen practice. But if I answer you at any length, you are bound to make your own interpretations of what I write and that will become somewhat of a hindrance to your Self-realization.

Try to perceive directly the subject that is presently inquiring. Buddhas and Patriarchs say that this subject is inherently Buddha-mind. Yet this Mind is without substance. In your physical body what can you call Mind or Buddha? Now intensely ask yourself, "What is *this* which can't be named or intellectually known?" If you profoundly question "What is it that lifts the hands, moves the legs, speaks, hears?" your reasoning will come to a halt, every avenue being blocked, and you won't know which way to turn. But relentlessly continue your inquiry as to this subject. Abandon intellection and relinquish your hold on everything. When with your whole heart you long for liberation for its own sake, beyond every doubt you will become enlightened.

With the passage of time one's thoughts are stilled and one experiences a void like that of a cloudless sky. You must not, however, confuse this with enlightenment. Putting aside logic and reason,

¹ At first blush this statement may seem to be at variance with others in these letters wherein Bassui says it is unwise to write in detail. Bassui is always afraid of saying too much, of burdening his correspondents with ideas which may hang in their minds and thus prove a hindrance to enlightenment. At this point Bassui is implying that he is so moved by Priest Iguchi's ardor that, despite his better judgment, he has written him this type of letter.

question yourself even more intensely in this wise: "Mind is formless, and so right now am I. What, then, is hearing?" Only after your search has permeated every pore and fiber of your being will the empty-space suddenly break asunder and your Face before your parents were born appear. You will feel like a man who abruptly awakens from a dream. At such time go to a reputable Zen master and ask for his critical examination. While you may not come to Self-realization in this life, you will surely become enlightened in your next, Zen masters have taught, if on your deathbed your mind is barren of every thought and you only ask "What is this Mind?" dying unconcerned like fire expiring.

I have written as you have asked me to, but reluctantly. Once you have read this letter burn it. Don't reread it but only search deeply for the one hearing. My words will seem like so much nonsense when you experience enlightenment yourself.

11 / FOURTH LETTER TO THE ZEN PRIEST IGUCHI

I am glad to learn how ardently you are practicing zazen. What you have reported to me is a little like a Zen experience, but it is essentially what you have understood with your intellect. The Great Question cannot be resolved by the discursive mind. Even what becomes clear through realization is delusion of a kind. In a previous letter I wrote you that only when you have come back from the dead, so to speak, will that which hears manifest itself. Your persistent inquiry "What is it that hears?" will eventually lead you to awareness of nothing but the questioning itself. You must not, however, be misled into thinking this is the subject which hears.

You say that in working on this koan you feel as though you have taken hold of a sword and cut away every idea in your mind, including the impression of emptiness, and that questioning alone remains. But *what* is doing all this? Delve to your inmost being and you will discover it is precisely that which hears.

Even though you experience your Self-nature again and again, and understand Buddhism well enough to discourse upon it, your delusive thoughts will survive, inevitably precipitating you into the Three Evil Paths in your next life, unless their root is severed through perfect enlightenment. If, on the other hand, still unsatisfied, you per-

severe in your self-inquiry even to your deathbed, you will unquestionably come to full enlightenment in your next existence.

Don't allow yourself to become discouraged and don't fritter away your time, just concentrate with all your heart on your koan. Now, your physical being doesn't hear, nor does the void. Then what does? Strive to find out. Put aside your rational intellect, give up all techniques [to induce enlightenment], abandon the desire for Self-realization, and renounce every other motivation. Your mind will then come to a standstill, and you won't know what to do. No longer possessing the desire to attain enlightenment or to use your powers of reason, you will feel like a tree or a stone. But go further yet and question yourself exhaustively for days on end, and you will surely attain deep enlightenment, cutting away the undermost roots of birth-and-death and coming to the realm of the non-self-conscious Mind. The undermost roots of birth-and-death are the delusive thoughts and feelings arising from the self-conscious mind, the mind of ego. A Zen master [Rinzai] once said: "There is nothing in particular to realize. Only get rid of [the idea of a] Buddha and sentient beings."¹ The essential thing for enlightenment is to empty the mind of the notion of self.

To write in such detail is unwise, but as you have written me so often I feel obliged to reply in this way.

12 / TO A NUN / I have read your letter carefully. It is gratifying to see how eagerly you are practicing Zen, putting it before everything else.

You say you once thought you ought to have gone west to the capital but that you now see it was a mistaken idea, that the capital is everywhere, and that therefore you need do no more than question yourself one-pointedly "What is it?" But this is not enough, for though you have found the capital to be everywhere you have not seen the Ruler face to face. The Ruler is your Face before your parents were born.

When you "pierce" the question somewhat, your mind becomes like the void; [ideas of] Buddhas, sentient beings, past or present, are

¹ In other words, of a Buddha *as opposed to* sentient beings.

no more. A tranquility not unlike the serenity of moonlight flooding the countryside suffuses the heart, but this can't be put into words. Such serenity is the outcome of some Zen practice, yet the mind is still sick, for the Self is still topsy-turvy, and this inversion is the root-source of delusion. What is meant by cutting away the root is breaking through this serene state of mind.

One who lacks a genuine thirst for Self-realization digs up old koans and, reasoning out "answers," considers himself enlightened. You must not become attached to anything you realize, you must only search directly for the subject that realizes. Thus like something burnt to a crisp or slashed to bits, your preconceived notions will all be annihilated. You will perceive the master only after you have probed "What is it?" with your last ounce of strength and every thought of good and evil has vanished. Not until then will you feel like one who has actually been resurrected.

Tokusan said: "Even though you can say something about *it*, I will give you thirty blows of the stick. . . ."¹ Can you avoid the stick? If you can, you understand the import of "The East Mountain strides over the water."²

I am afraid I have written too much, but I have done so because I admire your determination to become enlightened. These ideas are not mine but what I have learned from the teachings of the ancient Zen masters.

¹ The koan in its entirety reads: "Even though you can say something about it, / I will give you thirty blows of the stick. / And if you can't say anything about it, / I will also give you thirty blows of the stick."

² This is from Ummon's *Collected Sayings*. A monk asked Ummon: "Where do Buddhas come from?" (i.e., What is the Buddha-mind?) Ummon replied: "The East Mountain strides over the water."



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(continued from front flap) most humanly appealing religious records of modern times, while no less significant are the vividly told enlightenment experiences of eight contemporary Japanese and Westerners. Perhaps most striking of all is the series of private interviews between a contemporary Zen master and his Western students—material never before made available even in Japanese.

To these invaluable documents the author adds several helpful supplements, including a detailed glossary of Zen vocabulary and Buddhist doctrine. Another feature of the book is the fact that it presents both the Rinzai and Soto disciplines (the latter virtually unknown in the West) as one integral body of Zen teaching—not academically but as living experience.

In his Preface the author gives an apt summation of the purposes of *The Three Pillars of Zen*: "The attempt in the West to isolate Zen in a vacuum of the intellect, cut off from the very disciplines which are its *raison d'être*, has nourished a pseudo-Zen which is little more than a mind-tickling diversion of highbrows and a plaything of beatniks. The best way to correct this distortion, it seemed to me, was to compile a book setting forth the authentic doctrines and practices of Zen from the mouths of the masters themselves—for who knows these methods better than they?—as well as to show them come alive in the minds and bodies of men and women of today."

The success with which the book achieves its purposes is well recognized by Professor Huston Smith in the Foreword when he calls it "a remarkable book that is certain to assume a permanent place in the library of Zen literature in Western languages."

Jacket calligraphy by Yasutani-roshi (with his seals), based on the personal cipher of Butcho-kokushi, a 17th-century Zen master. Jacket designed by Weatherhill.

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PHILIP KAPLEAU was born in Connecticut in 1912, studied law, and had a successful career as a court reporter, later also organizing a court-reporting company. He was chief reporter for the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg and also covered the war-crimes trials at Tokyo. He began his study of Buddhist philosophy in 1950 under Daisetz Suzuki at Columbia University and in 1953 retired from his company to begin his long period of intensive study and practice of Zen Buddhism in Japan under the three outstanding masters to whom he dedicates this book. Nor has he confined himself to Zen, having also studied and practiced Hinayana Buddhism and other meditation systems in Burma, Ceylon, and India for shorter periods. Although he himself makes light of the fact, saying titles are no measure of understanding, it is worth recording that his considerable accomplishments in Zen—probably surpassing those of any other Westerner—were formally recognized in 1964 by his ordination as a priest in the Zen sect by Yasutani-roshi, one of Japan's most highly reputed Zen masters. Mr. Kapleau lives with his wife and young daughter at Kamakura, a center of Zen activities near Tokyo, where he is continuing his studies and practice.



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