AN INTRODUCTION TO ZEN BUDDHISM

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To Brother Thomas

In memory of our

brotherly meeting

Daisy.

CONTENTS

rather its utterances, assume quite a peculiar, uncouth, and even enigmatical aspect. Such people, looking at Zen more or less conceptually, consider Zen utterly absurd and ludicrous, or deliberately making itself unintelligible in order to guard its apparent profundity against outside criticism. But, according to the followers of Zen, its apparently paradoxical statements are not artificialities contrived to hide themselves behind a screen of obscurity; but simply because the human tongue is not an adequate organ for expressing the deepest truths of Zen, the latter cannot be made the subject of logical exposition; they are to be experienced in the inmost soul when they become for the first time intelligible. In point of fact, no plainer and more straightforward expressions than those of Zen have ever been made by any other branch of human experience. "Coal is black"—this is plain enough; but Zen protests, "Coal is not black." This is also plain enough, and indeed even plainer than the first positive statement when we come right down to the truth of the matter.

Personal experience, therefore, is everything in Zen. No ideas are intelligible to those who have no backing of experience. This is a platitude. A baby has no ideas, for its mentality is not yet so developed as to experience anything in the way of ideas. If it has them at all, they must be something extremely obscure and blurred and not in correspondence with realities. To get the clearest and most efficient understanding of a thing, therefore, it must be experienced personally. Especially when the thing is concerned with life itself, personal experience is an absolute necessity. Without this experience nothing relative to its profound working will ever be accurately and therefore efficiently grasped. The foundation of all concepts is simple, unsophisticated experience. Zen places the utmost emphasis upon this foundation-experience, and it is around this that Zen constructs all the verbal and conceptual scaffold which is found in its literature known as "Sayings" (*goroku*, J.; *yu-lu*, Ch.). Though the scaffold affords a most useful means to reach the inmost reality, it is still an elaboration and artificiality. We lose its whole significance when it is taken for a final reality. The nature of the human understanding compels us not to put too much confidence in the superstructure. Mystification is far from being the object

of Zen itself, but to those who have not touched the central fact of life Zen inevitably appears as mystifying. Penetrate through the conceptual superstructure and what is imagined to be a mystification will at once disappear, and at the same time there will be an enlightenment known as *satori*.[1]

Zen, therefore, most strongly and persistently insists on an inner spiritual experience. It does not attach any intrinsic importance to the sacred sutras or to their exegeses by the wise and learned. Personal experience is strongly set against authority and objective revelation, and as the most practical method of attaining spiritual enlightenment the followers of Zen propose the practice of Dhyana, known as *zazen*[2] in Japanese.

A few words must be said here in regard to the systematic training by Zen of its followers in the attainment of the spiritual insight which has been referred to before as the foundation-experience of Zen. For this is where Zen pre-eminently distinguishes itself from other forms of mysticism. To most mystics such spiritual experience, so intensely personal, comes as something sporadic, isolated, and unexpected. Christians use prayer, or mortification, or contemplation so called, as the means of bringing this on themselves, and leave its fulfilment to divine grace. But as Buddhism does not recognize a supernatural agency in such matters, the Zen method of spiritual training is practical and systematic. From the beginning of its history in China there has been such a tendency well marked; but, as time went on, a regular system has finally come into existence, and the Zen school at present has a thoroughgoing method for its followers to train themselves in the attainment of their object. Herein lies the practical merit of Zen. While it is highly speculative on the one hand, its methodical discipline on the other hand produces most fruitful and beneficial results on moral character. We sometimes forget its highly abstract character when it is expressed in connection with the facts of our everyday practical life; but here it is where we have to appreciate the real value of Zen, for Zen finds an inexpressibly deep thought even

[1] See below.

[2] *Za* means "to sit", and *zazen* may be summarily taken as meaning "to sit in meditation". What it exactly signifies will be seen later in connection with the description of "The Meditation Hall" (*zendo*, J.; *ch'an-t'ang*, Ch.).

in holding up a finger, or in saying a "good morning" to a friend casually met on the street. In the eye of Zen the most practical is the most abstruse, and *vice versa*. All the system of discipline adopted by Zen is the outcome of this fundamental experience.

I said that Zen is mystical. This is inevitable, seeing that Zen is the keynote of Oriental culture; it is what makes the West frequently fail to fathom exactly the depths of the Oriental mind, for mysticism in its very nature defies the analysis of logic, and logic is the most characteristic feature of Western thought. The East is synthetic in its method of reasoning; it does not care so much for the elaboration of particulars as for a comprehensive grasp of the whole, and this intuitively. Therefore the Eastern mind, if we assume its existence, is necessarily vague and indefinite, and seems not to have an index which at once reveals the contents to an outsider. The thing is there before our eyes, for it refuses to be ignored; but when we endeavour to grasp it in our own hands in order to examine it more closely or systematically, it eludes and we lose its track. Zen is provokingly evasive. This is not due of course to any conscious or premeditated artifice with which the Eastern mind schemes to shun the scrutiny of others. The unfathomableness is in the very constitution, so to speak, of the Eastern mind. Therefore, to understand the East we must understand mysticism; that is, Zen.

It is to be remembered, however, that there are various types of mysticism, rational and irrational, speculative and occult, sensible and fantastic. When I say that the East is mystical, I do not mean that the East is fantastic, irrational, and altogether impossible to bring within the sphere of intellectual comprehension. What I mean is simply that in the working of the Eastern mind there is something calm, quiet, silent, undisturbable, which appears as if always looking into eternity. This quietude and silence, however, does not point to mere idleness or inactivity. The silence is not that of the desert shorn of all vegetation, nor is it that of a corpse forever gone to sleep and decay. It is the silence of an "eternal abyss" in which all contrasts and conditions are buried; it is the silence of God who, deeply absorbed in contemplation of his works past, present, and future, sits

II

WHAT IS ZEN?

BEFORE proceeding to expound the teaching of Zen at some length in the following pages, let me answer some of the questions which are frequently raised by critics concerning the real nature of Zen.

Is Zen a system of philosophy, highly intellectual and profoundly metaphysical, as most Buddhist teachings are?

I have already stated that we find in Zen all the philosophy of the East crystallized, but this ought not to be taken as meaning that Zen is a philosophy in the ordinary application of the term. Zen is decidedly not a system founded upon logic and analysis. If anything, it is the antipode to logic, by which I mean the dualistic mode of thinking. There may be an intellectual element in Zen, for Zen is the whole mind, and in it we find a great many things; but the mind is not a composite thing that is to be divided into so many faculties, leaving nothing behind when the dissection is over. Zen has nothing to teach us in the way of intellectual analysis; nor has it any set doctrines which are imposed on its followers for acceptance. In this respect Zen is quite chaotic if you choose to say so. Probably Zen followers may have sets of doctrines, but they have them on their own account, and for their own benefit; they do not owe the fact to Zen. Thereore, there are in Zen no sacred books or dogmatic tenets, nor are there any symbolic formulae through which an access might be gained into the signification of Zen. If I am asked, then, what Zen teaches, I would answer, Zen teaches nothing. Whatever teachings there are in Zen, they come out of one's own mind. We teach ourselves; Zen merely points the way. Unless this pointing is teaching, there is certainly nothing in Zen purposely set up as its cardinal doctrines or as its fundamental philosophy.

Zen claims to be Buddhism, but all the Buddhist teachings as propounded in the sutras and sastras are treated by Zen as mere waste paper whose utility consists in wiping off the dirt of

intellect and nothing more. Do not imagine, however, that Zen is nihilism. All nihilism is self-destructive, it ends nowhere. Negativism is sound as method, but the highest truth is an affirmation. When it is said that Zen has no philosophy, that it denies all doctrinal authority, that it casts aside all so-called sacred literature as rubbish, we must not forget that Zen is holding up in this very act of negation something quite positive and eternally affirmative. This will become clearer as we proceed.

Is Zen a religion? It is not a religion in the sense that the term is popularly understood; for Zen has no God to worship, no ceremonial rites to observe, no future abode to which the dead are destined, and, last of all, Zen has no soul whose welfare is to be looked after by somebody else and whose immortality is a matter of intense concern with some people. Zen is free from all these dogmatic and "religious" encumbrances.

When I say there is no God in Zen, the pious reader may be shocked, but this does not mean that Zen denies the existence of God; neither denial nor affirmation concerns Zen. When a thing is denied, the very denial involves something not denied. The same can be said of affirmation. This is inevitable in logic. Zen wants to rise above logic, Zen wants to find a higher affirmation where there are no antitheses. Therefore, in Zen, God is neither denied nor insisted upon; only there is in Zen no such God as has been conceived by Jewish and Christian minds. For the same reason that Zen is not a philosophy, Zen is not a religion.

As to all those images of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and Devas and other beings that one comes across in Zen temples, they are like so many pieces of wood or stone or metal; they are like the camellias, azalias, or stone lanterns in my garden. Make obeisance to the camellia now in full bloom, and worship it if you like, Zen would say. There is as much religion in so doing as in bowing to the various Buddhist gods, or as sprinkling holy water, or as participating in the Lord's Supper. All those pious deeds considered to be meritorious or sanctifying by most so-called religiously minded people are artificialities in the eyes of Zen. It boldly declares that "the immaculate Yogins do not enter Nirvana and the precept-violating monks do not

go to hell". This, to ordinary minds, is a contradiction of the common law of moral life, but herein lies the truth and life of Zen. Zen is the spirit of a man. Zen believes in his inner purity and goodness. Whatever is superadded or violently torn away, injures the wholesomeness of the spirit. Zen, therefore, is emphatically against all religious conventionalism.

Its irreligion, however, is merely apparent. Those who are truly religious will be surprised to find that after all there is so much of religion in the barbarous declaration of Zen. But to say that Zen is a religion, in the sense that Christianity or Mohammedanism is, would be a mistake. To make my point clearer, I quote the following. When Sakyamuni was born, it is said that he lifted one hand toward the heavens and pointed to the earth with the other, exclaiming, "Above the heavens and below the heavens, I alone am the Honoured One!" Ummon (Yun-men), founder of the Ummon School of Zen, comments on this by saying, "If I had been with him at the moment of his uttering this, I would surely have struck him dead with one blow and thrown the corpse into the maw of a hungry dog." What unbelievers would ever think of making such raving remarks over a spiritual leader? Yet one of the Zen masters following Ummon says: "Indeed, this is the way Ummon desires to serve the world, sacrificing everything he has, body and mind! How grateful he must have felt for the love of Buddha!"

Zen is not to be confounded with a form of meditation as practised by "New Thought" people, or Christian Scientists, or Hindu Sannyasins, or some Buddhists. Dhyana, as it is understood by Zen, does not correspond to the practice as carried on in Zen. A man may meditate on a religious or philosophical subject while disciplining himself in Zen, but that is only incidental; the essence of Zen is not there at all. Zen purposes to discipline the mind itself, to make it its own master, through an insight into its proper nature. This getting into the real nature of one's own mind or soul is the fundamental object of Zen Buddhism. Zen, therefore, is more than meditation and Dhyana in its ordinary sense. The discipline of Zen consists in opening the mental eye in order to look into the very reason of existence.

To meditate, a man has to fix his thought on something; for instance, on the oneness of God, or his infinite love, or on the impermanence of things. But this is the very thing Zen desires to avoid. If there is anything Zen strongly emphasizes it is the attainment of freedom; that is, freedom from all unnatural encumbrances. Meditation is something artificially put on; it does not belong to the native activity of the mind. Upon what do the fowl of the air meditate? Upon what do the fish in the water meditate? They fly; they swim. Is not that enough? Who wants to fix his mind on the unity of God and man, or on the nothingness of this life? Who wants to be arrested in the daily manifestations of his life-activity by such meditations as the goodness of a divine being or the everlasting fire of hell?

We may say that Christianity is monotheistic, and the Vedanta pantheistic; but we cannot make a similar assertion about Zen. Zen is neither monotheistic nor pantheistic; Zen defies all such designations. Hence there is no object in Zen upon which to fix the thought. Zen is a wafting cloud in the sky. No screw fastens it, no string holds it; it moves as it lists. *No amount of meditation will keep Zen in one place.* Meditation is not Zen. Neither pantheism nor monotheism provides Zen with its subjects of concentration. If Zen is monotheistic, it may tell its followers to meditate on the oneness of things where all differences and inequalities, enveloped in the all-illuminating brightness of the divine light, are obliterated. If Zen were pantheistic it would tell us that every meanest flower in the field reflects the glory of God. But what Zen says is "After all things are reduced to oneness, where would that One be reduced?" Zen wants to have one's mind free and unobstructed; even the idea of oneness or allness is a stumbling-block and a strangling snare which threatens the original freedom of the spirit.

Zen, therefore, does not ask us to concentrate our thought on the idea that a dog is God, or that three pounds of flax are divine. When Zen does this it commits itself to a definite system of philosophy, and there is no more Zen. Zen just feels fire warm and ice cold, because when it freezes we shiver and welcome fire. The feeling is all in all, as Faust declares; all our theorization fails to touch reality. But "the feeling" here must be understood in its deepest sense or in its purest form. Even to say that "This is the

feeling" means that Zen is no more there. Zen defies all concept-making. That is why Zen is difficult to grasp.

Whatever meditation Zen may propose, then, will be to take things as they are, to consider snow white and the raven black. When we speak of meditation we in most cases refer to its abstract character; that is, meditation is known to be the concentration of the mind on some highly generalized proposition, which is, in the nature of things, not always closely and directly connected with the concrete affairs of life. Zen perceives or feels, and does not abstract nor meditate. Zen penetrates and is finally lost in the immersion. Meditation, on the other hand, is outspokenly dualistic and consequently inevitably superficial.

One critic[1] regards Zen as "the Buddhist counterpart of the 'Spiritual Exercises' of St. Ignatius Loyala". The critic shows a great inclination to find Christian analogies for things Buddhistic, and this is one of such instances. Those who have at all a clear understanding of Zen will at once see how wide of the mark this comparison is. Even superficially speaking, there is not a shadow of similitude between the exercises of Zen and those proposed by the founder of the Society of Jesus. The contemplations and prayers of St. Ignatius are, from the Zen point of view, merely so many fabrications of the imagination elaborately woven for the benefit of the piously minded; and in reality this is like piling tiles upon tiles on one's head, and there is no true gain in the life of the spirit. We can say this, however, that those "Spiritual Exercises" in some ways resemble certain meditations of Hinayana Buddhism, such as the Five Mind-quieting Methods, or the Nine Thoughts on Impurity, or the Six or Ten Subjects of Memory.

Zen is sometimes made to mean "mind-murder and the curse of idle reverie". This is the statement of Griffis, the well-known author of *Religions of Japan*.[2] By "mind-murder" I do not know what he really means, but does he mean that Zen kills the activities of the mind by making one's thought fix on one thing, or by inducing sleep? Mr. Reischauer in his book[3] almost endorses this view of Griffis by asserting that Zen is "mystical self-intoxication". Does he mean that Zen is intoxicated in the "Greater

[1] Arthur Lloyd: *Wheat Among the Tares*, p. 53. [2] P. 255.
[3] *Studies of Buddhism in Japan*, p. 118.

himself, being lost in one vast emptiness, whatever this may be. This interpretation again fails to hit Zen aright. It is true that there are some such expressions in Zen as might suggest this kind of interpretation, but to understand Zen we must make a leap here. The "vast emptiness" must be traversed. The subject must be awakened from a state of unconsciousness if he does not wish to be buried alive. Zen is attained only when "self-intoxication" is abandoned and the "drunkard" is really awakened to his deeper self. If the mind is ever to be "murdered", leave the work in the hand of Zen; for it is Zen that will restore the murdered and lifeless one into a state of eternal life. "Be born again, be awakened from the dream, rise from the death, O ye drunkards!" Zen would exclaim. Do not try, therefore, to see Zen with the eyes bandaged; and your hands are too unsteady to take hold of it. And remember I am not indulging in figures of speech.

I might multiply many such criticisms if it were necessary but I hope that the above have sufficiently prepared the reader's mind for the following more positive statements concerning Zen. The basic idea of Zen is to come in touch with the inner workings of our being, and to do this in the most direct way possible, without resorting to anything external or superadded. Therefore, anything that has the semblance of an external authority is rejected by Zen. Absolute faith is placed in a man's own inner being. For whatever authority there is in Zen, all comes from within. This is true in the strictest sense of the word. Even the reasoning faculty is not considered final or absolute. On the contrary, it hinders the mind from coming into the directest communication with itself. The intellect accomplishes its mission when it works as an intermediary, and Zen has nothing to do with an intermediary except when it desires to communicate itself to others. For this reason all the scriptures are merely tentative and provisory; there is in them no finality. The central fact of life as it is lived is what Zen aims to grasp, and this in the most direct and most vital manner. Zen professes itself to be the spirit of Buddhism, but in fact it is the spirit of all religions and philosophies. When Zen is thoroughly understood, absolute peace of mind is attained, and a man lives as he ought to live. What more may we hope?

Some say that as Zen is admittedly a form of mysticism it

cannot claim to be unique in the history of religion. Perhaps so; but Zen is a mysticism of its own order. It is mystical in the sense that the sun shines, that the flower blooms, that I hear at this moment somebody beating a drum in the street. If these are mystical facts, Zen is brim-full of them. When a Zen master was once asked what Zen was, he replied, "Your everyday thought." Is this not plain and most straightforward? It has nothing to do with any sectarian spirit. Christians as well as Buddhists can practise Zen just as big fish and small fish are both contentedly living in the same ocean. Zen is the ocean, Zen is the air, Zen is the mountain, Zen is thunder and lightning, the spring flower, summer heat, and winter snow; nay, more than that, Zen is the man. With all the formalities, conventionalisms, and superadditions that Zen has accumulated in its long history, its central fact is very much alive. The special merit of Zen lies in this: that we are still able to see into this ultimate fact without being biased by anything.

As has been said before, what makes Zen unique as it is practised in Japan is its systematic training of the mind. Ordinary mysticism has been too erratic a product and apart from one's ordinary life; this Zen has revolutionized. What was up in the heavens, Zen has brought down to earth. With the development of Zen, mysticism has ceased to be mystical; it is no more the spasmodic product of an abnormally endowed mind. For Zen reveals itself in the most uninteresting and uneventful life of a plain man of the street, recognizing the fact of living in the midst of life as it is lived. Zen systematically trains the mind to see this; it opens a man's eye to the greatest mystery as it is daily and hourly performed; it enlarges the heart to embrace eternity of time and infinity of space in its every palpitation; it makes us live in the world as if walking in the garden of Eden; and all these spiritual feats are accomplished without resorting to any doctrines but by simply asserting in the most direct way the truth that lies in our inner being.

Whatever else Zen may be, it is practical and commonplace and at the same time most living. An ancient master, wishing to show what Zen is, lifted one of his fingers, another kicked a ball, and a third slapped the face of his questioner. If the inner truth that lies deep in us is thus demonstrated, is not Zen the most

practical and direct method of spiritual training ever resorted to by any religion? And is not this practical method also a most original one? Indeed, Zen cannot be anything else but original and creative because it refuses to deal with concepts but deals with living facts of life. When conceptually understood, the lifting of a finger is one of the most ordinary incidents in everybody's life. But when it is viewed from the Zen point of view it vibrates with divine meaning and creative vitality. So long as Zen can point out this truth in the midst of our conventional and concept-bound existence we must say that it has its reason of being.

The following quotation from a letter of Yengo (Yuan-wu in C. 1566–1642) may answer, to a certain extent, the question asked in the beginning of this chapter, "What is Zen?"

"It is presented right to your face, and at this moment the whole thing is handed over to you. For an intelligent fellow, one word should suffice to convince him of the truth of it, but even then error has crept in. Much more so when it is committed to paper and ink, or given up to wordy demonstration or to logical quibble, then it slips farther away from you. The great truth of Zen is possessed by everybody. Look into your own being and seek it not through others. Your own mind is above all forms; it is free and quiet and sufficient; it eternally stamps itself in your six senses and four elements. In its light all is absorbed. Hush the dualism of subject and object, forget both, transcend the intellect, sever yourself from the understanding, and directly penetrate deep into the identity of the Buddha-mind; outside of this there are no realities. Therefore, when Bodhidharma came from the West, he simply declared, 'Directly pointing to one's own soul, my doctrine is unique, and is not hampered by the canonical teachings; it is the absolute transmission of the true seal.' Zen has nothing to do with letters, words, or sutras. It only requests you to grasp the point directly and therein to find your peaceful abode. When the mind is disturbed, the understanding is stirred, things are recognized, notions are entertained, ghostly spirits are conjured, and prejudices grow rampant. Zen will then forever be lost in the maze.

"The wise Sekiso (Shih-shuang) said, 'Stop all your hankerings; let the mildew grow on your lips; make yourself like unto a perfect piece of immaculate silk; let your one thought be

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s what is meant by
'Once gained, eternally gained, even unto the end of time.' Yet really there is nothing gained; what you have gained is no gain, and yet there is something truly gained in this."

Br Clement —

Here is Suzuki.

The underscoring was done by Fr. Louis.

Doc Zip

P.S. Take a Siesta after dinner if you can manage it. Doctor's orders.

B.C

eternity; let yourself be like dead ashes, cold and lifeless; again let yourself be like an old censer in a deserted village shrine!'

"Putting your simple faith in this, discipline yourself accordingly; let your body and mind be turned into an inanimate object of nature like a stone or a piece of wood; when a state of perfect motionlessness and unawareness is obtained all the signs of life will depart and also every trace of limitation will vanish. Not a single idea will disturb your consciousness, when lo! all of a sudden you will come to realize a light abounding in full gladness. It is like coming across a light in thick darkness; it is like receiving treasure in poverty. The four elements and the five aggregates are no more felt as burdens; so light, so easy, so free you are. Your very existence has been delivered from all limitations; you have become open, light, and transparent. You gain an illuminating insight into the very nature of things, which now appear to you as so many fairylike flowers having no graspable realities. Here is manifested the unsophisticated self which is the original face of your being; here is shown all bare the most beautiful landscape of your birthplace. There is but one straight passage open and unobstructed through and through. This is so when you surrender all—your body, your life, and all that belongs to your inmost self. This is where you gain peace, ease, nondoing, and inexpressible delight. All the sutras and sastras are no more than communications of this fact; all the sages, ancient as well as modern, have exhausted their ingenuity and imagination to no other purpose than to point the way to this. It is like unlocking the door to a treasury; when the entrance is once gained, every object coming into your view is yours, every opportunity that presents itself is available for your use; for are they not, however multitudinous, all possessions obtainable within the original being of yourself? Every treasure there is but waiting your pleasure and utilization. This is what is meant by 'Once gained, eternally gained, even unto the end of time.' Yet really there is nothing gained; what you have gained is no gain, and yet there is something truly gained in this."

theory of Sunyata (emptiness).[1] Even among those scholars who are well acquainted with the general teaching of Mahayana Buddhism, some still cling to the view that Zen is the practical application of the "Sanron" (*san-lun*) philosophy, otherwise known as the Madhyamika school. *Sanron* means the "three treatises", which are Nagarjuna's *Madhyamika Sastra* and *The Discourse of Twelve Sections*, and Deva's *Discourse of One Hundred Stanzas*. They comprise all the essential doctrines of this school. Nagarjuna is thought to be its founder, and as the Mahayana sutras classified under the head of Prajnaparamita expound more or less similar views, the philosophy of this school is sometimes designated as the Prajna doctrine. Zen, therefore, they think, practically belongs to this class; in other words, the ultimate signification of Zen would be the upholding of the Sunyata system.

To a certain extent, superficially at least, this view is justifiable. For instance, read the following:

"I come here to seek the truth of Buddhism," a disciple asked a master.

"Why do you seek such a thing here?" answered the master. "Why do you wander about, neglecting your own precious treasure at home? I have nothing to give you, and what truth of Buddhism do you desire to find in my monastery? There is nothing, absolutely nothing."

A master would sometimes say: "I do not understand Zen. I have nothing here to demonstrate; therefore, do not remain standing so, expecting to get something out of nothing. Get enlightened by yourself, if you will. If there is anything to take hold of, take it by yourself."

Again: "True knowledge (*bodhi*) transcends all modes of expression. There has been nothing from the very beginning which one can claim as having attained towards enlightenment."

Or: "In Zen there is nothing to explain by means of words, there is nothing to be given out as a holy doctrine. Thirty blows whether you affirm or negate. Do not remain silent; nor be discursive."

[1] What the theory of Sunyata really means is explained somewhat in detail in my *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, Series III, under "The Philosophy and Religion of the Prajnaparamita-Sutra" (pp. 207–88).

The question "How can one always be with Buddha?" called forth the following answer from a master: "Have no stirrings in your mind; be perfectly serene toward the objective world. To remain thus all the time in absolute emptiness and calmness is the way to be with the Buddha."

Sometimes we come across the following: "The middle way is where there is neither middle nor two sides. When you are fettered by the objective world, you have one side; when you are disturbed in your own mind, you have the other side. When neither of these exists, there is no middle part, and this is the middle way."

A Japanese Zen master who flourished several hundred years ago used to say to his disciples, who would implore him to instruct them in the way to escape the fetters of birth-and-death, "Here is no birth-and-death."

Bodhidharma (Daruma, J.; Tamo, C.), the First Patriarch of the Zen sect in China, was asked by Wu, the first Emperor (reigned A.D. 502–549) of the Liang dynasty, as to the ultimate and holiest principle of Buddhism. The sage is reported to have answered, "Vast emptiness and nothing holy in it."

These are passages taken at random from the vast store of Zen literature, and they seem to be permeated with the ideas of emptiness (*sunyata*), nothingness (*nasti*), quietude (*santi*), no-thought (*acinta*), and other similar notions, all of which we may regard as nihilistic or as advocating negative quietism.

A quotation from the *Prajnaparamita-Hridaya Sutra*[1] may prove to be more astounding than any of the above passages. In fact, all the sutras belonging to this Prajna class of Mahayana literature are imbued thoroughly with the idea of Sunyata, and those who are not familiar with this way of thinking will be taken aback and may not know how to express their judgment. This sutra, considered to be the most concise and most comprehensive of all the Prajna sutras, is daily recited in the Zen monasteries; in fact it is the first thing the monks recite in the morning as well as before each meal.

[1] See also the quotation from Sekiso, *supra*, often misunderstood as expressly advocating the doctrine of annihilation. For the original Sanskrit, Hsuan-chuang's Chinese translation, and a more literary and accurate English rendering, see my *Zen Essays*, Series III, pp. 190–206, where the author gives his own interpretation of the signification of this important sutra.

"Thus, Sariputra, all things have the character of emptiness, they have no beginning, no end, they are faultless and not faultless, they are not perfect and not imperfect. Therefore, O Sariputra, here in this emptiness there is no form, no perception, no name, no concepts, no knowledge. No eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind. No form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no objects. . . . There is no knowledge, no ignorance, no destruction of ignorance. . . . There is no decay nor death; there are no four truths, viz. there is no pain, no origin of pain, no stoppage of pain, and no path to the stoppage of pain. There is no knowledge of Nirvana, no obtaining of it, no not-obtaining of it. Therefore, O Sariputra, as there is no obtaining of Nirvana, a man who has approached the Prajnaparamita of the Bodhisattvas dwells unimpeded in consciousness. When the impediments of consciousness are annihilated, then he becomes free of all fear, is beyond the reach of change, enjoying final Nirvana."

Going through all these quotations, it may be thought that the critics are justified in charging Zen with advocating a philosophy of pure negation, but nothing is so far from Zen as this criticism would imply. For Zen always aims at grasping the central fact of life, which can never be brought to the dissecting table of the intellect. To grasp this central fact of life, Zen is forced to propose a series of negations. Mere negation, however, is not the spirit of Zen, but as we are so accustomed to the dualistic way of thinking, this intellectual error must be cut at its root. Naturally Zen would proclaim, "Not this, not that, not anything." But we may insist upon asking Zen what it is that is left after all these denials, and the master will perhaps on such an occasion give us a slap in the face, exclaiming, "You fool, what is this?" Some may take this as only an excuse to get away from the dilemma, or as having no more meaning than a practical example of ill-breeding. But when the spirit of Zen is grasped in its purity, it will be seen what a real thing that slap is. For here is no negation, no affirmation, but a plain fact, a pure experience, the very foundation of our being and thought. All the quietness and emptiness one might desire in the midst of most active mentation lies therein. Do not be carried away by anything outward or conventional. Zen must be seized with bare hands, with no gloves on

Zen is forced to resort to negation because of our innate ignor-

brusqueness to his disciple. He forbids outwardly, and yet in the spirit he is affirming. This must be comprehended if Zen is to be at all understood.

The attitude of Zen towards the formal worship of God may be gleaned more clearly from Joshu's (Chao-chou, 778–897) remarks given to a monk who was bowing reverently before Buddha. When Joshu slapped the monk, the latter said, "Is it not a laudable thing to pay respect to Buddha?" "Yes," answered the master, "but it is better to go without even a laudable thing." Does this attitude savour of anything nihilistic and iconoclastic? Superficially, yes; but let us dive deep into the spirit of Joshu out of the depths of which this utterance comes, and we will find ourselves confronting an absolute affirmation quite beyond the ken of our discursive understanding.

Hakuin (1685–1768), the founder of modern Japanese Zen, while still a young monk eagerly bent on the mastery of Zen, had an interview with the venerable Shoju. Hakuin thought that he fully comprehended Zen and was proud of his attainment, and this interview with Shoju was in fact intended to be a demonstration of his own high understanding. Shoju asked him how much he knew of Zen. Hakuin answered disgustingly, "If there is anything I can lay my hand on, I will get it all out of me." So saying, he acted as if he were going to vomit. Shoju took firm hold of Hakuin's nose and said: "What is this? Have I not after all touched it?" Let our readers ponder with Hakuin over this interview and find out for themselves what is that something which is so realistically demonstrated by Shoju.

Zen is not all negation, leaving the mind all blank as if it were pure nothing; for that would be intellectual suicide. There is in Zen something self-assertive, which, however, being free and absolute, knows no limitations and refuses to be handled in abstraction. Zen is a live fact, it is not like an inorganic rock or like an empty space. To come into contact with this living fact—nay, to take hold of it in every phase of life—is the aim of all Zen discipline.

Nansen (Nan-chuan, 748–834) was once asked by Hyakujo (Pai-chang, 720–814), one of his brother monks, if there was anything he dared not talk about to others. The master answered, "Yes."

Whereupon the monk continued, "What then is this something you do not talk about?"

The master's reply was, "It is neither mind, nor Buddha, nor matter."

This looks to be the doctrine of absolute emptiness, but even here again we observe a glimpse of something showing itself through the negation. Observe the further dialogue that took place between the two. The monk said:

"If so, you have already talked about it."

"I cannot do any better. What would you say?"

"I am not a great enlightened one," answered Hyakujo.

The master said, "Well, I have already said too much about it."

This state of inner consciousness, about which we cannot make any logical statement, must be realized before we can have any intelligent talk on Zen. Words are only an index to this state; through them we are enabled to get into its signification, but do not look to words for absolute guidance. Try to see first of all in what mental state the Zen masters are so acting. They are not carrying on all those seeming absurdities, or, as some might say, those silly trivialities, just to suit their capricious moods. They have a certain firm basis of truth obtained from a deep personal experience. There is in all their seemingly crazy performances a systematic demonstration of the most vital truth. When seen from this truth, even the moving of the whole universe is of no more account than the flying of a mosquito or the waving of a fan. The thing is to see one spirit working throughout all these, which is an absolute affirmation, with not a particle of nihilism in it.

A monk asked Joshu, "What would you say when I come to you with nothing?"

Joshu said, "Fling it down to the ground."

Protested the monk, "I said that I had nothing; what shall I let go?"

"If so, carry it away," was the retort of Joshu.

Joshu has thus plainly exposed the fruitlessness of a nihilistic philosophy. To reach the goal of Zen, even the idea of "having nothing" ought to be done away with. Buddha reveals himself when he is no more asserted; that is, for Buddha's sake Buddha is to be given up. This is the only way to come to the realization

of the truth of Zen. So long as one is talking of nothingness or of the absolute one is far away from Zen, and ever receding from Zen. Even the foothold of Sunyata must be kicked off. The only way to get saved is to throw oneself right down into a bottomless abyss. And this is, indeed, no easy task.

"No Buddhas," it is boldly asserted by Yengo (see p. 46), "have ever appeared on earth; nor is there anything that is to be given out as a holy doctrine. Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch of Zen, has never come east, nor has he ever transmitted any secret doctrine through the mind; only people of the world, not understanding what all this means, seek the truth outside of themselves. What a pity that the thing they are so earnestly looking for is being trodden under their own feet! This is not to be grasped by the wisdom of all the sages. However, we see the thing and yet it is not seen; we hear it and yet it is not heard; we talk about it and yet it is not talked about; we know it and yet it is not known. Let me ask, How does it so happen?"

Is this an interrogation as it apparently is? Or, in fact, is it an affirmative statement describing a certain definite attitude of mind?

Therefore, when Zen denies, it is not necessarily a denial in the logical sense. The same can be said of an affirmation. The idea is that the ultimate fact of experience must not be enslaved by any artificial or schematic laws of thought, nor by any antithesis of "yes" and "no", nor by any cut and dried formulae of epistemology. Evidently Zen commits absurdities and irrationalities all the time; but this only apparently. No wonder it fails to escape the natural consequences—misunderstandings, wrong interpretations, and ridicules which are often malicious. The charge of nihilism is only one of these.

When Vimalakirti asked Manjusri what was the doctrine of non-duality as realized by a Bodhisattva, Manjusri replied: "As I understand it, the doctrine is realized when one looks upon all things as beyond every form of expression and demonstration and as transcending knowledge and argument. This is my comprehension; may I ask what is your understanding?" Vimalakirti, thus demanded, remained altogether silent. The mystic response —that is, the closing of the lips—seems to be the only way one can get out of the difficulties in which Zen often finds itself involved,

when it is pressed hard for a statement. Therefore, Yengo (Yuan-wu), commenting on the above, has this to say:

"I say, 'yes', and there is nothing about which this affirmation is made; I say, 'no', and there is nothing about which this is made. I stand above 'yes' and 'no', I forget what is gained and what is lost. There is just a state of absolute purity, a state of stark nakedness. Tell me what you have left behind and what you see before. A monk may come out of the assembly and say, 'I see the Buddha-hall and the temple gate before me, my sleeping cell and living room behind.' Has this man an inner eye opened? When you can discriminate him, I will admit that you really have had a personal interview with the ancient sages."

When silence does not avail, shall we say, after Yengo, "The gate of Heaven opens above, and an unquenched fire burns below"? Does this make clear the ultimate signification of Zen, as not choked by the dualism of "yes" and "no"? Indeed, so long as there remains the last trace of consciousness as to this and that, *meum et tuum*, none can come to a fuller realization of Zen, and the sages of old will appear as those with whom we have nothing in common. The inner treasure will remain forever unearthed.

A monk asked, "According to Vimalakirti, one who wishes for the Pure Land ought to have his mind purified; but what is the purified mind?" Answered the Zen master: "When the mind is absolutely pure, you have a purified mind, and a mind is said to be absolutely pure when it is above purity and impurity. You want to know how this is to be realized? Have your mind thoroughly void in all conditions, then you will have purity. But when this is attained, do not harbour any thought of it, or you get non-purity. Again, when this state of non-purity is attained, do not harbour any thought of it, and you are free of non-purity. This is absolute purity." Now, absolute purity is absolute affirmation, as it is above purity and non-purity and at the same time unifies them in a higher form of synthesis. There is no negation in this, nor any contradiction. What Zen aims at is to realize this form of unification in one's everyday life of actualities, and not to treat life as a sort of metaphysical exercise. In this light all Zen "Questions and Answers" (*Mondo*) are to be considered. There

are no quibblings, no playing at words, no sophistry; Zen is the most serious concern in the world.

Let me conclude this chapter with the following quotation[1] from one of the earliest Zen writings. Doko (Tao-kwang), a Buddhist philosopher and a student of the Vijnaptimatra (absolute idealism), came to a Zen master and asked:

"With what frame of mind should one discipline oneself in the truth?"

Said the Zen master, "There is no mind to be framed, nor is there any truth in which to be disciplined."

"If there is no mind to be framed and no truth in which to be disciplined, why do you have a daily gathering of monks who are studying Zen and disciplining themselves in the truth?"

The master replied: "I have not an inch of space to spare, and where could I have a gathering of monks? I have no tongue, and how would it be possible for me to advise others to come to me?"

The philosopher then exclaimed, "How can you tell me a lie like that to my face?"

"When I have no tongue to advise others, is it possible for me to tell a lie?"

Said Doko despairingly, "I cannot follow your reasoning."

"Neither do I understand myself," concluded the Zen master.

[1] This is taken from a work by Daiju Yekai (Tai-chu Huihai), disciple of Baso (Ma-tsu, died 738). For other quotations see elsewhere.

IV

ILLOGICAL ZEN

Empty-handed I go, and behold the spade is
in my hands;
I walk on foot, and yet on the back of an ox
I am riding;
When I pass over the bridge,
Lo, the water floweth not, but the bridge doth
flow.

THIS is the famous gatha of Jenye (Shan-hui, A.D. 497–469), who is commonly known as Fudaishi (Fu-tai-shih) and it summarily gives the point of view as entertained by the followers of Zen. Though it by no means exhausts all that Zen teaches, it indicates graphically the way toward which Zen tends. Those who desire to gain an intellectual insight, if possible, into the truth of Zen, must first understand what this stanza really means.

Nothing can be more illogical and contrary to common sense than these four lines. The critic will be inclined to call Zen absurd, confusing, and beyond the ken of ordinary reasoning. But Zen is inflexible and would protest that the so-called common-sense way of looking at things is not final, and that the reason why we cannot attain to a thoroughgoing comprehension of the truth is due to our unreasonable adherence to a "logical" interpretation of things. If we really want to get to the bottom of life, we must abandon our cherished syllogisms, we must acquire a new way of observation whereby we can escape the tyranny of logic and the one-sidedness of our everyday phraseology. However paradoxical it may seem, Zen insists that the spade must be held in your empty hands, and that it is not the water but the bridge that is flowing under your feet.

These are not, however, the only irrational statements Zen makes. There are many more equally staggering ones. Some may declare Zen irrevocably insane or silly. Indeed, what would our readers say to such assertions as the following?

"When Tom drinks, Dick gets tipsy."

"Who is the teacher of all the Buddhas, past, present, and future? John the cook."

"Last night a wooden horse neighed and a stone man cut capers."

"Lo, a cloud of dust is rising from the ocean, and the roaring of the waves is heard over the land."

Sometimes Zen will ask you such questions as the following:

"It is pouring now; how would you stop it?"

"When both hands are clapped a sound is produced: listen to the sound of one hand."

"If you have heard the sound of one hand, can you make me hear it too?"

"When we see about us mountains towering high and seas filling hollow places, why do we read in the sacred sutras that the Dharma is sameness, and there is nothing high, nothing low?"

Have the followers of Zen lost their senses? Or are they given up to deliberate mystification? Have all these statements no inner meaning, no edifying signification except to produce confusion in our minds? What is Zen through these apparent trivialities and irrationalities really driving us to comprehend? The answer is simple. Zen wants us to acquire an entirely new point of view whereby to look into the mysteries of life and the secrets of nature. This is because Zen has come to the definite conclusion that the ordinary logical process of reasoning is powerless to give final satisfaction to our deepest spiritual needs.

We generally think that "A is A" is absolute, and that the proposition "A is not-A" or "A is B" is unthinkable. We have never been able to break through these conditions of the understanding; they have been too imposing. But now Zen declares that words are words and no more. When words cease to correspond with facts it is time for us to part with words and return to facts. As long as logic has its practical value it is to be made use of; but when it fails to work, or when it tries to go beyond its proper limits, we must cry, "Halt!" Ever since the awakening of consciousness we have endeavoured to solve the mysteries of being and to quench our thirst for logic through the dualism of "A" and "not-A"; that is, by calling a bridge a bridge, by making the water flow, and dust arise from the earth; but to our great

disappointment we have never been able to obtain peace of mind, perfect happiness, and a thorough understanding of life and the world. We have come, as it were, to the end of our wits. No further steps could we take which would lead us to a broader field of reality. The inmost agonies of the soul could not be expressed in words, when lo! light comes over our entire being. This is the beginning of Zen. For we now realize that "A is not-A" after all, that logic is onesided, that illogicality so-called is not in the last analysis necessarily illogical; what is superficially irrational has after all its own logic, which is in correspondence with the true state of things. "Empty-handed I go, and behold the spade is in my hands!" By this we are made perfectly happy, for strangely this contradiction is what we have been seeking for all the time ever since the dawning of the intellect. The dawning of the intellect did not mean the assertion of the intellect but the transcending of itself. The meaning of the proposition "A is A" is realized only when "A is not-A". To be itself is not to be itself —this is the logic of Zen, and satisfies all our aspirations.

"The flower is not red, the willow is not green." This is regarded by Zen devotees as most refreshingly satisfying. So long as we think logic final we are chained, we have no freedom of spirit, and the real facts of life are lost sight of. Now, however, we have the key to the whole situation; we are master of realities; words have given up their domination over us. If we are pleased to call a spade not a spade, we have the perfect right to do so; a spade need not always remain a spade; and, moreover, this, according to the Zen master, expresses more correctly the state of reality which refuses to be tied up to names.

This breaking up of the tyranny of name and logic is at the same time spiritual emancipation; for the soul is no longer divided against itself. By acquiring the intellectual freedom the soul is in full possession of itself; birth and death no longer torment it; for there are no such dualities anywhere; we live even through death. Hitherto we have been looking at things in their contradicting and differentiating aspect, and have assumed an attitude toward them in accordance with that view, that is, more or less antagonistic. But this has been revolutionized, we have at last attained the point where the world can be viewed, as it were, from within. Therefore, "the iron trees are in full bloom"; and "in

the midst of pouring rain I am not wet". The soul is thus made whole, perfect, and filled with bliss.

Zen deals with facts and not with their logical, verbal, prejudiced, and lame representations. Direct simplicity is the soul of Zen; hence its vitality, freedom, and originality. Christianity speaks much of simplicity of heart, and so do other religions, but this does not always mean to be simple-hearted or to be a Simple Simon. In Zen it means not to get entangled in intellectual subtleties, not to be carried away by philosophical reasoning that is so often ingenuous and full of sophistry. It means, again, to recognize facts as facts and to know that words are words and nothing else. Zen often compares the mind to a mirror free from stains. To be simple, therefore, according to Zen, will be to keep this mirror always bright and pure and ready to reflect simply and absolutely whatever comes before it. The result will be to acknowledge a spade to be a spade and at the same time not to be a spade. To recognize the first only is a common-sense view, and there is no Zen until the second is also admitted along with the first. The common-sense view is flat and tame, whereas that of Zen is always original and stimulating. Each time Zen is asserted things get vitalized; there is an act of creation.

Zen thinks we are too much of slaves to words and logic. So long as we remain thus fettered we are miserable and go through untold suffering. But if we want to see something really worth knowing, that is conducive to our spiritual happiness, we must endeavour once for all to free ourselves from all conditions; we must see if we cannot gain a new point of view from which the world can be surveyed in its wholeness and life comprehended inwardly. This consideration has compelled one to plunge oneself deep into the abyss of the "Nameless" and take hold directly of the spirit as it is engaged in the business of creating the world. Here is no logic, no philosophizing; here is no twisting of facts to suit our artificial measures; here is no murdering of human nature in order to submit it to intellectual dissections; the one spirit stands face to face with the other spirit like two mirrors facing each other, and there is nothing to intervene between their mutual reflections.

In this sense Zen is pre-eminently practical. It has nothing to do with abstractions or with subtleties of dialectics. It seizes the

way; but when they come across three kinds of invalids, how would they treat them? The blind cannot see even if a stick or a mallet is produced; the deaf cannot hear however fine the preaching may be; and the dumb cannot talk however much they are urged to do so. But if these people severally suffering cannot somehow be benefited, what good is there after all in Buddhism?" The explanation does not seem to explain anything after all. Perhaps Butsugen's (Fo-yen) comment may throw more light on the subject. He said to his disciplies: "You each have a pair of ears; what have you ever heard with them? You each have one tongue; what have you ever preached with it? Indeed, you have never talked, you have never heard, you have never seen. From whence then do all these forms, voices, odours, and tastes come?" (That is to say, where does this world come from?)

If this remark still leaves us where we were before, let us see whether Ummon (Yun-men, died 966), one of the greatest of Zen masters who ever lived, can help us. A monk came to Ummon and asked to be enlightened upon the above remark by Gensha. Ummon ordered him first to salute him in the formal way. When the monk stood up after prostrating himself on the ground, Ummon pushed him with his stick, and the monk stepped back. The master said, "You are not blind, then." He now told the monk to come forward, which he did. The master said, "You are not deaf, then." He finally asked the monk if he understood what all this was about, and the latter replied, "No, sir." Ummon then concluded, "You are not dumb, then."

With all these comments and gestures, are we still travelling through a *terra incognita*? If so, there is no other way but to go back to the beginning and repeat the stanza:

> Empty-handed I go, and behold the spade is
> in my hands;
> I walk on foot, and yet on the back of an ox
> I am riding;

A few more words: the reason why Zen is so vehement in its attack on logic, and why the present work treats first of the illogical aspect of Zen, is that logic has so pervasively entered into life as to make most of us conclude that logic is life and without it life has no significance. The map of life has been so definitely

and so thoroughly delineated by logic that what we have to do is simply to follow it, and that we ought not to think of violating the laws of thought, which are final. Such a general view of life has come to be held by most people, though I must say that in point of fact they are constantly violating what they think inviolable. That is to say, they are "holding a spade and yet not holding it", they are making the sum of two and two sometimes three, sometimes five; only they are not conscious of this fact and imagine that their lives are logically or mathematically regulated. Zen wishes to storm this citadel of topsy-turvydom and to show that we live psychologically or biologically and not logically.

In logic there is a trace of effort and pain; logic is self-conscious. So is ethics, which is the application of logic to the facts of life. An ethical man performs acts of service which are praiseworthy, but he is all the time conscious of them, and, moreover, he may often be thinking of some future reward. Hence we should say that his mind is tainted and not at all pure, however objectively or socially good his deeds are. Zen abhors this. Life is an art, and like perfect art it should be self-forgetting; there ought not to be any trace of effort or painful feeling. Life, according to Zen, ought to be lived as a bird flies through the air or as a fish swims in the water. As soon as there are signs of elaboration, a man is doomed, he is no more a free being. You are not living as you ought to live, you are suffering under the tyranny of circumstances; you are feeling a constraint of some sort, and you lose your independence. Zen aims at preserving your vitality, your native freedom, and above all the completeness of your being. In other words, Zen wants to live from within. Not to be bound by rules, but to be creating one's own rules—this is the kind of life which Zen is trying to have us live. Hence its illogical, or rather superlogical, statements.

In one of his sermons a Zen master[1] declares: "The sutras preached by the Buddha during his lifetime are said to amount to five thousand and forty-eight fascicles; they include the doctrine of emptiness and the doctrine of being; there are teachings of immediate realization and of gradual development. Is this not an affirmation?

[1] Goso Hoyen (Fa-yen of Wu-tsu-shan).

V

ZEN A HIGHER AFFIRMATION

SHUZAN (Shou-shan, 926–992) once held up his *shippe*[1] to an assembly of his disciples and declared: "Call this a *shippe* and you assert; call it not a *shippe* and you negate. Now, do not assert nor negate, and what would you call it? Speak, speak!" One of the disciples came out of the ranks, took the *shippe* away from the master, and breaking it in two, exclaimed, "What is this?"

To those who are used to dealing with abstractions and high subjects this may appear to be quite a trivial matter, for what have they, deep learned philosophers, to do with an insignificant piece of bamboo? How does it concern those scholars who are absorbed in deep meditation, whether it is called a bamboo stick or not, whether it is broken, or thrown on the floor? But to the followers of Zen this declaration by Shuzan is pregnant with meaning. Let us really realize the state of his mind in which he proposed this question, and we have attained our first entrance into the realm of Zen. There were many Zen masters who followed Shuzan's example, and, holding forth their *shippe*, demanded of their pupils a satisfactory answer.

To speak in the abstract, which perhaps will be more acceptable to most readers, the idea is to reach a higher affirmation than the logical antithesis of assertion and denial. Ordinarily, we dare not go beyond an antithesis just because we imagine we cannot. Logic has so intimidated us that we shrink and shiver whenever its name is mentioned. The mind made to work, ever since the awakening of the intellect, under the strictest discipline of logical dualism, refuses to shake off its imaginary cangue. It has never occurred to us that it is possible for us to escape this self-imposed intellectual limitation; indeed, unless we break through the antithesis of "yes" and "no" we can never hope to live a real life of freedom. And the soul has always been crying

[1] A stick about one and a half feet long, made of split bamboo bound with ratan. To be pronounced *ship-pei*.

for it, forgetting that it is not after all so very difficult to reach a higher form of affirmation, where no contradicting distinctions obtain between negation and assertion. It is due to Zen that this higher affirmation has finally been reached by means of a stick of bamboo in the hand of the Zen master.

It goes without saying that this stick thus brought forward can be any one of myriads of things existing in this world of particulars. In this stick we find all possible existences and also all our possible experiences concentrated. When we know it—this homely piece of bamboo—we know the whole story in a most thoroughgoing manner. Holding it in my hand, I hold the whole universe. Whatever statement I make about it is also made of everything else. When one point is gained, all other points go with it. As the Avatamsaka (Kegon) philosophy teaches: "The One embraces All, and All is merged in the One. The One is All, and All is the One. The One pervades All, and All is in the One. This is so with every object, with every existence." But, mind you, here is no pantheism, nor the theory of identity. For when the stick of bamboo is held out before you it is just the stick, there is no universe epitomized in it, no All, no One; even when it is stated that "I see the stick" or that "Here is a stick," we all miss the mark. Zen is no more there, much less the philosophy of the Avatamsaka.

I spoke of the illogicalness of Zen in one of the preceding chapters; the reader will now know why Zen stands in opposition to logic, formal or informal. It is not the object of Zen to look illogical for its own sake, but to make people know that logical consistency is not final, and that there is a certain transcendental statement that cannot be attained by mere intellectual cleverness. The intellectual groove of "yes" and "no" is quite accommodating when things run their regular course; but as soon as the ultimate question of life comes up, the intellect fails to answer it satisfactorily. When we say "yes", we assert, and by asserting we limit ourselves. When we say "no", we deny, and to deny is exclusion. Exclusion and limitation, which after all are the same thing, murder the soul; for is it not the life of the soul that lives in perfect freedom and in perfect unity? There is no freedom or unity in exclusion or in limitation. Zen is well aware of this. In accordance with the demands of our inner life, there-

fore, Zen takes us to an absolute realm wherein there are no antitheses of any sort.

We must remember, however, that we live in affirmation and not in negation, for life is affirmation itself; and this affirmation must not be the one accompanied or conditioned by a negation; such an affirmation is relative and not at all absolute. With such an affirmation life loses its creative originality and turns into a mechanical process grinding forth nothing but soulless flesh and bones. To be free, life must be an absolute affirmation. It must transcend all possible conditions, limitations, and antitheses that hinder its free activity. When Shuzan held forth his stick of bamboo, what he wanted of his disciples was for them to understand and realize this form of absolute affirmation. Any answer is satisfactory if it flows out of one's inmost being, for such is always an absolute affirmation. Therefore, Zen does not mean a mere escape from intellectual imprisonment, which sometimes ends in sheer wantonness. There is something in Zen that frees us from conditions and at the same time gives us a certain firm foothold, which, however, is not a foothold in a relative sense. The Zen master endeavours to take away all footholds from the disciple which he has ever had since his first appearance on earth, and then to supply him with one that is really no foothold. If the stick of bamboo is not to the purpose, anything that comes handy will be made use of. Nihilism is not Zen, for this bamboo stick or anything else cannot be done away with as words and logic can. This is the point we must not overlook in the study of Zen.

Some examples will be given for illustration. Toku-san (Teh-shan, 780–865) used to swing his big stick whenever he came out to preach in the hall, saying, "If you utter a word I will give you thirty blows; if you utter not a word, just the same, thirty blows on your head." This was all he would say to his disciples. No lengthy talk on religion or morality; no abstract discourse, no hair-splitting metaphysics; on the contrary, quite rough-shod riding. To those who associate religion with pusillanimity and sanctimoniousness the Zen master must appear a terribly unpolished fellow. But when facts are handled as facts, without any intermediary, they are generally rude things. We must squarely face them, for no amount of winking or evading will be of any avail. The inner eye is to be opened under a shower of

thirty blows. An absolute affirmation must rise from the fiery crater of life itself.

Hoyen (Fa-yen, died 1104), of Gosozan (Wu-tsu-shan), once asked, "When you meet a wise man on your way, if you do not speak to him or remain silent, how would you interview him?" The point is to make one realize what I call an absolute affirmation. Not merely to escape the antithesis of "yes" and "no", but to find a positive way in which the opposites are perfectly harmonized—this is what is aimed at in this question. A master once pointed to a live charcoal and said to his disciples, "I call this fire, but you call it not so; tell me what it is." The same thing here again. The master intends to free his disciples' minds from the bondage of logic, which has ever been the bane of humanity.

This ought not to be regarded as a riddle proposed to puzzle you. There is nothing playful about it; if you fail to answer, you are to face the consequences. Are you going to be eternally chained by your own laws of thought, or are you going to be perfectly free in an assertion of life which knows no beginning or end? You cannot hesitate. Grasp the fact or let it slip—between these there is no choice. The Zen method of discipline generally consists in putting one in a dilemma, out of which one must contrive to escape, not through logic indeed, but through a mind of higher order.

Yakusan (Yueh-shan, 751–834) studied Zen first under Sekito (Shih-t'ou, 700–790) and asked him: "As to the three divisions and twelve departments of Buddhism, I am not altogether unacquainted with them, but I have no knowledge whatever concerning the doctrine of Zen as taught in the South.[1] Its followers assert it to be the doctrine of directly pointing at the mind and attaining Buddhahood through a perception of its real nature. If this is so, how may I be enlightened?" Sekito replied: "Assertion prevails not, nor does denial. When neither of them is to the point, what would you say?" Yakusan remained meditative, as he did not grasp the meaning of the question. The master then told him to go to Badaishi (Ma Tai-shih) of Chiang-hsi, who might be able to open the monk's eye to the truth of Zen. Thereupon, the monk Yakusan went to the new teacher with the

[1] Zen, in contradistinction to the other Buddhist schools, originated in the southern provinces of China.

same problem. His answer was, "I sometimes make one raise the eyebrows, or wink, while at other times to do so is altogether wrong." Yakusan at once comprehended the ultimate purport of this remark. When Baso asked, "What makes you come to this?" Yakusan replied, "When I was with Sekito, it was like a mosquito biting at an iron bull." Was this a satisfactory reason or explanation? How strange this so-called affirmation!

Riko (Li K'u), a high government officer of the T'ang dynasty, asked Nansen (Nan-chuan): "A long time ago a man kept a goose in a bottle. It grew larger and larger until it could not get out of the bottle any more; he did not want to break the bottle, nor did he wish to hurt the goose; how would you get it out?" The master called out, "O Officer!"—to which Riko at once responded, "Yes!" "There, it is out!" This was the way Nansen produced the goose out of its imprisonment. Did Riko get his higher affirmation?

Kyogen (Hsiang-yen)[1] said: "Suppose a man climbing up a tree takes hold of a branch by his teeth, and his whole body is thus suspended. His hands are not holding anything and his feet are off the ground. Now another man comes along and asks the man in the tree as to the fundamental principle of Buddhism. If the man in the tree does not answer, he is neglecting the questioner; but if he tries to answer he will lose his life; how can he get out of his predicament?" While this is put in the form of a fable its purport is like those already mentioned. If you open your mouth trying to affirm or to negate, you are lost. Zen is no more there. But merely remaining silent will not do, either. A stone lying there is silent, a flower in bloom under the window is silent, but neither of them understands Zen. There must be a certain way in which silence and eloquence become identical, that is, where negation and assertion are unified in a higher form of statement. When we attain to this we know Zen.

What, then, is an absolute affirmative statement? When Hyakujo (Pai-chang, 720–814) wished to decide who would be the next chief of Tai-kuei-shan monastery, he called in two of his chief disciples, and producing a pitcher, which a Buddhist monk generally carries about him, said to them, "Do not call it a pitcher

[1] A younger contemporary of Kuei-shan (771–853).

but tell me what it is." The first one replied, "It cannot be called a piece of wood." The Abbot did not consider the reply quite to the mark; thereupon the second one came forward, lightly pushed the pitcher down, and without making any remark quietly left the room. He was chosen to be the new abbot, who afterwards became "the master of one thousand and five hundred monks". Was this upsetting a pitcher an absolute affirmation? You may repeat this act, but you will not necessarily be regarded as understanding Zen.

Zen abhors repetition or imitation of any kind, for it kills. For the same reason Zen never explains, but only affirms. Life is fact and no explanation is necessary or pertinent. To explain is to apologize, and why should we apologize for living? To live—is that not enough? Let us then live, let us affirm! Herein lies Zen in all its purity and in all its nudity as well.

In the monastery of Nansen monks of the eastern wing quarrelled with those of the western wing over the possession of a cat. The master seized it and lifting it before the disputing monks, said, "If any of you can say something to save the poor animal, I will let it go." As nobody came forward to utter a word of affirmation, Nansen cut the object of dispute in two, thus putting an end forever to an unproductive quarrelling over "yours" and "mine". Later on Joshu (Chao-chou) came back from an outing and Nansen put the case before him, and asked him what he would have done to save the animal. Joshu without further ado took off his straw sandals and, putting them on his head, went out. Seeing this, Nansen said, "If you were here at the time you would have saved the cat."

What does all this mean? Why was a poor innocent creature sacrificed? What has Joshu's placing his sandals over his head to do with the quarrelling? Did Nansen mean to be irreligious and inhuman by killing a living being? Was Joshu really a fool to play such a strange trick? And then "absolute denial" and "absolute affirmation"—are these really two? There is something fearfully earnest in both these actors, Joshu and Nansen. Unless this is apprehended, Zen is, indeed, a mere farce. The cat certainly was not killed to no purpose. If any of the lower animals is ever to attain Buddhahood, this cat was surely the one so destined.

The same Joshu was once asked by a monk, "All things are reducible to the One; where is this One to be reduced?" The master's reply was, "When I was in Tsin district I had a monk's robe made that weighed seven *chin*." This is one of the most noted sayings ever uttered by a Zen master. One may ask: "Is this what is meant by an absolute affirmation? What possible connection is there between a monk's robe and the oneness of things?" Let me ask: You believe that all things exist in God, but where is the abode of God? Is it in Joshu's seven-*chin* cassock? When you say that God is here, he can no more be there; but you cannot say that he is nowhere, for by your definition God is omnipresent. So long as we are fettered by the intellect, we cannot interview God as he is; we seek him everywhere, but he ever flies away from us. The intellect desires to have him located, but it is in his very nature that he cannot be limited. Here is a great dilemma to put to the intellect, and it is an inevitable one. How shall we find the way out? Joshu's priestly robe is not ours; his way of solution cannot be blindly followed, for each of us must beat out his own track. If someone comes to you with the same question, how will you answer it? And are we not at every turn of life confronted with the same problem? And is it not ever pressing for an immediate and most practical solution?

Gutei's (Chu-chih)[1] favourite response to any question put to him was to lift one of his fingers. His little boy attendant imitated him, and whenever the boy was asked by strangers as to the teaching of the master he would lift his finger. Learning of this, the master one day called the boy in and cut off his finger. The boy in fright and pain tried to run away, but was called back, when the master held up his finger. The boy tried to imitate the master, as was his wont, but the finger was no more there, and then suddenly the significance of it all dawned upon him. Copying is slavery. The letter must never be followed, only the spirit is to be grasped. Higher affirmations live in the spirit. And where is the spirit? Seek it in your everyday experience, and therein lies abundance of proof for all you need.

We read in a sutra: "There was an old woman on the east side of the town who was born when the Buddha was born, and they lived in the same place throughout all their lives. The old

[1] A disciple of T'ien-lung, of the ninth century.

woman did not wish to see the Buddha; if he ever approached she tried in every way to avoid him, running up and down, hiding herself hither and thither. But one day, finding it impossible to flee from him, she covered her face with her hands, and lo, the Buddha appeared between each of her ten fingers. Let me ask, 'Who is this old lady?' "

Absolute affirmation is the Buddha; you cannot fly away from it, for it confronts you at every turn; but somehow you do not recognize it until you, like Gutei's little boy, lose a finger. It is strange, but the fact remains that we are like "those who die of hunger while sitting beside the rice bag", or rather like "those who die of thirst while standing thoroughly drenched in the midst of the river". One master goes a step further and says that "We are the rice itself and the water itself." If so we cannot truthfully say that we are hungry or thirsty, for from the very beginning nothing has been wanting in us. A monk came to Sozan (T'sao-shan, 840–901) asking him to be charitable, as he was quite destitute. Sozan called out, "O my venerable sir!" to which the monk immediately responded. Then said Sozan, "You have already had three big bowlfuls of rich home-made *chu* (liquor), and yet you insist that it has never yet wetted your lips!" Perhaps we are all like this poor opulent monk; when we are already quite filled up, we never realize the fact.

To conclude, here is another of the innumerable statements that abound in Zen literature, absolutely affirming the truth of Zen. Seihei (Tsing-ping, 845–919) asked Suibi (T'sui-wei):[1]

"What is the fundamental principle of Buddhism?"

"Wait," said Suibi; "when there is no one around I will tell you."

After a while Seihei repeated the request, saying, "There is no one here now; pray enlighten me."

Coming down from his chair, Suibi took the anxious inquirer into the bamboo grove, but said nothing. When the latter pressed for a reply, Suibi whispered: "How high these bamboos are! And how short those over there!"

[1] *The Transmission of the Lamp* (*Chuan-teng Lu*), Vol. XV.

anything that interferes with or disturbs the ordinary course of living. The idea of Zen is to catch life as it flows. There is nothing extraordinary or mysterious about Zen. I raise my hand; I take a book from the other side of this desk; I hear the boys playing ball outside my window; I see the clouds blown away beyond the neighbouring woods:—in all these I am practising Zen, I am living Zen. No wordy discussion is necessary, nor any explanation. I do not know why—and there is no need of explaining, but when the sun rises the whole world dances with joy and everybody's heart is filled with bliss. If Zen is at all conceivable, it must be taken hold of here.

Therefore, when Bodhidharma (Daruma in J.; Ta-mo in C.) was asked who he was, he said, "I do not know." This was not because he could not explain himself, nor was it because he wanted to avoid any verbal controversy, but just because he did not know what or who he was, save that he was what he was and could not be anything else. The reason was simple enough. When Nangaku (Nan-yueh, 677–744) was approaching the Sixth Patriarch, and was questioned, "What is it that thus walks toward me?" he did not know what to answer. For eight long years he pondered the question, when one day it dawned upon him, and he exclaimed, "Even to say it is something does not hit the mark." This is the same as saying, "I do not know."

Sekito once asked his disciple, Yakusan (Yueh-shan), "What are you doing here?" "I am not doing anything," answered the latter. "If so you are idling your time away." "Is not idling away the time doing something?" was Yakusan's response. Sekito still pursued him. "You say you are not doing anything; who then is this one who is doing nothing?" Yakusan's reply was the same as that of Bodhidharma, "Even the wisest know it not." There is no agnosticism in it, nor mysticism either, if this is understood in the sense of mystification. A plain fact is stated here in plain language. If it does not seem so to the reader, it is because he has not attained to this state of mind which enabled Bodhidharma or Sekito to make the statement.

The Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty requested Fu Daishi (Fu-ta-shih, 497–569) to discourse on a Buddhist sutra. The Daishi taking the chair sat solemnly in it but uttered not a word. The Emperor said, "I asked you to give a discourse, and why do

you not begin to speak?" Shih, one of the Emperor's attendants, said, "The Daishi has finished discoursing." What kind of a sermon did this silent Buddhist philosopher deliver? Later on, a Zen master commenting on the above says, "What an eloquent sermon it was!" Vimalakirti, the hero of the sutra bearing his name, had the same way of answering the question, "What is the absolute doctrine of non-duality?" Someone remarked, "Thundering, indeed, is this silence of Vimalakirti." Was this keeping the mouth closed really so deafening? If so, I hold my tongue now, and the whole universe, with all its hullabaloo and hurly-burly, is at once absorbed in this absolute silence. But mimicry does not turn a frog into a green leaf. Where there is no creative originality there is no Zen. I must say: "Too late, too late! The arrow has gone off the string."

A monk asked Yeno (Hui-neng), the Sixth Patriarch, "Who has inherited the spirit of the Fifth Patriarch (Hung-jen)?"

Answered Yeno, "One who understands Buddhism."

"Have you then inherited it?"

"No," replied Yeno, "I have not."

"Why have you not?" was naturally the next question of the monk.

"Because I do not understand Buddhism," Yeno reasoned.

How hard, then, and yet how easy it is to understand the truth of Zen! Hard because to understand it is not to understand it; easy because not to understand it is to understand it. A master declares that even Buddha Sakyamuni and Bodhisattva Maitreya do not understand it, where simple-minded knaves do understand it.

We can now see why Zen shuns abstractions, representations, and figures of speech. No real value is attached to such words as God, Buddha, the soul, the Infinite, the One, and suchlike words. They are, after all, only words and ideas, and as such are not conducive to the real understanding of Zen. On the contrary, they often falsify and play at cross purposes. We are thus compelled always to be on our guard. Said a Zen master, "Cleanse the mouth thoroughly when you utter the word Buddha." Or, "There is one word I do not like to hear; that is, Buddha." Or, "Pass quickly on where there is no Buddha, nor stay where he is." Why are the followers of Zen so antagonistic toward Buddha?

ninth) century, when Zen had begun to flourish in all its brilliance and with all its uniqueness. A monk asked Daiju:

"Q. Are words the Mind?

"A. No, words are external conditions (*yen* in J.; *yuan* in C.); they are not the Mind.

"Q. Apart from external conditions, where is the Mind to be sought?

"A. There is no Mind independent of words. [That is to say, the Mind is in words, but is not to be identified with them.]

"Q. If there is no Mind independent of words, what is the Mind?

"A. The Mind is formless and imageless. The truth is, it is neither independent of nor dependent upon words. It is eternally serene and free in its activity. Says the Patriarch, 'When you realize that the Mind is no Mind, you understand the Mind and its workings.' "

Daiju further writes: "That which produces all things is called Dharma-nature, or Dharmakaya. By the so-called Dharma is meant the Mind of all beings. When this Mind is stirred up, all things are stirred up. When the Mind is not stirred up, there is nothing stirring and there is no name. The confused do not understand that the Dharmakaya, in itself formless, assumes individual forms according to conditions. The confused take the green bamboo for Dharmakaya itself, the yellow blooming tree for Prajna itself. But if the tree were Prajna, Prajna would be identical with the non-sentient. If the bamboo were Dharmakaya, Dharmakaya would be identical with a plant. But Dharmakaya exists, Prajna exists, even when there is no blooming tree, no green bamboo. Otherwise, when one eats a bamboo-shoot, this would be eating up Dharmakaya itself. Such views as this are really not worth talking about."

II

Those who have only read the foregoing treatment of Zen as illogical, or of Zen as a higher affirmation, may conclude that Zen is something unapproachable, something far apart from our ordinary everyday life, something very alluring but very elusive;

Another time he was asked, "Why does this holy place attract dust?" To which his reply was, "There, another particle of dust!"

There was a famous stone bridge at Joshu's monastery, which was one of the sights there. A stranger monk inquired of him, "I have for some time heard of your famous stone bridge, but I see no such thing here, only a plank."

Said Joshu, "You see a plank and don't see a stone bridge."

"Where then is the stone bridge?"

"You have just crossed it," was the prompt reply.

At another time when Joshu was asked about this same stone bridge, his answer was, "Horses pass it, people pass it, everybody passes it."

In these dialogues do we only see trivial talks about ordinary things of life and nature? Is there nothing spiritual, conducive to the enlightenment of the religious soul? Is Zen, then, too practical, too commonplace? Is it too abrupt a descent from the height of transcendentalism to everyday things? Well, it all depends on how you look at it. A stick of incense is burning on my desk. Is this a trivial affair? An earthquake shakes the earth and Mt. Fuji topples over. Is this a great event? Yes, so long as the conception of space remains. But are we really living confined within an enclosure called space? Zen would answer at once: "With the burning of an incense-stick the whole *triloka* burns. Within Joshu's cup of tea the mermaids are dancing." So long as one is conscious of space and time, Zen will keep a respectable distance from you; your holiday is ill-spent, your sleep is disturbed, and your whole life is a failure.

Read the following dialogue between Yisan (Kuei-shan) and Kyozan (Yang-shan). At the end of his summer's sojourn Kyozan paid a visit to Yisan, who said, "I have not seen you this whole summer coming up this way; what have you been doing down there?"

Replied Kyozan, "Down there I have been tilling a piece of ground and finished sowing millet seeds."

Yisan said, "Then you have not wasted your summer."

It was now Kyozan's turn to ask Yisan as to his doings during the past summer, and he asked, "How did you pass your summer?"

"One meal a day and a good sleep at night."

This brought out Kyozan's comment, "Then you have not wasted your summer."

A Confucian scholar writes, "They seek the truth too far away from themselves, while it is right near them." The same thing may be said of Zen. We look for its secrets where they are most unlikely to be found, that is, in verbal abstractions and metaphysical subtleties, whereas the truth of Zen really lies in the concrete things of our daily life. A monk asked the master: "It is some time since I came to you to be instructed in the holy path of the Buddha, but you have never given me even an inkling of it. I pray you to be more sympathetic." To this the following answer was given: "What do you mean, my son? Every morning you salute me, and do I not return it? When you bring me a cup of tea, do I not accept it and enjoy drinking it? Besides this, what more instructions do you desire from me?"

Is this Zen? Is this the kind of life-experience Zen wants us to have? A Zen poet sings:

> How wondrously strange, and how miraculous this!
> I draw water, I carry fuel.

When Zen is said to be illogical and irrational, timid readers are frightened and may wish to have nothing to do with it, but I am confident that the present chapter devoted to practical Zen will mitigate whatever harshness and uncouthness there may have been in it when it was intellectually treated. In so far as the truth of Zen is on its practical side and not in its irrationality, we must not put too much emphasis on its irrationality. This may tend only to make Zen more inaccessible to ordinary intellects, but in order to show further what a simple and matter-of-fact business Zen is, and at the same time to emphasize the practical side of Zen, I will cite some more of the so-called "cases" in which appeal is made to the most naïve experience one may have in life. Naïve they are, indeed, in the sense of being free from conceptual demonstration or from intellectual analysis. You see a stick raised, or you are asked to pass a piece of household furniture, or are simply addressed by your name. Such as these are the simplest incidents of life occurring every day and being passed without any particular notice, and yet Zen is there—the

one's natural bent without questioning its origin and value. There is a great difference between human action and that of the animals, which are lacking in moral intuition and religious consciousness. The animals do not know anything about exerting themselves in order to improve their conditions or to progress in the way to higher virtues. Sekkyo was one day working in the kitchen when Baso, his Zen teacher, came in and asked what he was doing. "I am herding the cow," said the pupil. "How do you attend her?" "If she goes out of the path even once, I pull her back straightway by the nose; not a moment's delay is allowed." Said the master, "You truly know how to take care of her." This is not naturalism. Here is an effort to do the right thing.

A distinguished teacher was once asked, "Do you ever make any effort to get disciplined in the truth?"

"Yes, I do."

"How do you exercise yourself?"

"When I am hungry I eat; when tired I sleep."

"This is what everybody does; can they be said to be exercising themselves in the same way as you do?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because when they eat they do not eat, but are thinking of various other things, thereby allowing themselves to be di turbed; when they sleep they do not sleep, but dream of a thousand and one things. This is why they are not like myself."

If Zen is to be called a form of naturalism, then it is so with a rigorous discipline at the back of it. It is in that sense, and not as it is understood by libertines, that Zen may be designated naturalism. The libertines have no freedom of will, they are bound hands and feet by external agencies before which they are utterly helpless. Zen, on the contrary, enjoys perfect freedom; that is, it is master of itself. Zen has no "abiding place", to use a favourite expression in the *Prajnaparamita Sutras*. When a thing has its fixed abode, it is fettered, it is no more absolute. The following dialogue will very clearly explain this point.

A monk asked, "Where is the abiding place for the mind?"

"The mind," answered the master, "abides where there is no abiding."

"What is meant by 'there is no abiding'?"

"When the mind is not abiding in any particular object, we say that it abides where there is no abiding."

"What is meant by not abiding in any particular object?"

"It means not to be abiding in the dualism of good and evil, being and non-being, thought and matter; it means not to be abiding in emptiness or in non-emptiness, neither in tranquillity nor in non-tranquillity. Where there is no abiding place, this is truly the abiding place for the mind."

Seppo (Hsueh-feng, 822–908) was one of the most earnest truth-seekers in the history of Zen during the T'ang dynasty. He is said to have carried a ladle throughout the long years of his disciplinary Zen peregrinations. His idea was to serve in one of the most despised and most difficult positions in the monastery life—that is, as cook—and the ladle was his symbol. When he finally succeeded Tokusan (Teh-shan) as Zen master a monk approached him and asked: "What is that you have attained under Tokusan? How serene and self-contained you are!" "Empty-handed I went away from home, and empty-handed I returned." Is not this a practical explanation of the doctrine of "no abiding place"? The monks wanted their master Hyakujo (Pai-chang) to give a lecture on Zen. He said, "You attend to the farming and later on I will tell you all about Zen." After they had finished the work the master was requested to fulfil his promise, whereupon he opened out both his arms, but said not a word. This was his great sermon.

VII

SATORI, *OR ACQUIRING A NEW VIEWPOINT*[1]

THE object of Zen discipline consists in acquiring a new viewpoint for looking into the essence of things. If you have been in the habit of thinking logically according to the rules of dualism, rid yourself of it and you may come around somewhat to the viewpoint of Zen. You and I are supposedly living in the same world, but who can tell that the thing we popularly call a stone that is lying before my window is the same to both of us? You and I sip a cup of tea. That act is apparently alike to us both, but who can tell what a wide gap there is subjectively between your drinking and my drinking? In your drinking there may be no Zen, while mine is brim-full of it. The reason for it is: you move in a logical circle and I am out of it. Though there is in fact nothing new in the so-called new viewpoint of Zen, the term "new" is convenient to express the Zen way of viewing the world, but its use here is a condescension on the part of Zen.

This acquiring of a new viewpoint in Zen is called *satori* (*wu* in C.) and its verb form is *satoru*. Without it there is no Zen, for the life of Zen begins with the "opening of *satori*". *Satori* may be defined as intuitive looking-into, in contradistinction to intellectual and logical understanding. Whatever the definition, *satori* means the unfolding of a new world hitherto unperceived in the confusion of a dualistic mind. With this preliminary remark I wish the reader to ponder the following *mondo* (literally, "asking and answering"), which I hope will illustrate my statement.

A young monk asked Joshu to be instructed in the faith of Zen. Said the master:

"Have you had your breakfast, or not?"

"Yes, master, I have," answered the monk.

[1] This subject is more fully treated in my *Zen Essays*, I, pp. 215–50, and also in II, pp. 4 ff.

"Go and get your bowls washed," was the immediate response. And this suggestion at once opened the monk's mind to the truth of Zen.

Later on Ummon commented on the response, saying: "Was there any special instruction in this remark by Joshu, or was there not? If there was, what was it? If there was not, what *satori* was it which the monk attained?" Still later Suigan had the following retort on Ummon: "The great master Ummon does not know what is what; hence this comment of his. It is altogether unnecessary; it is like painting legs to a snake, or painting a beard to the eunuch. My view differs from his. That monk who seems to have attained a sort of *satori* goes to hell as straight as an arrow!"

What does all this mean—Joshu's remark about washing the bowls, the monk's attainment of *satori*, Ummon's alternatives, and Suigan's assurance? Are they speaking against one another, or is it much ado about nothing? To my mind, they are all pointing one way and the monk may go anywhere, but his *satori* is not to no purpose.

Tokusan was a great scholar of the *Diamond Sutra*. Learning that there was such a thing as Zen, ignoring all the written scriptures and directly laying hands on one's soul, he went to Ryutan to be instructed in the teaching. One day Tokusan was sitting outside trying to look into the mystery of Zen. Ryutan said, "Why don't you come in?" Replied Tokusan, "It is pitch dark." A candle was lighted and held out to Tokusan. When he was at the point of taking it Ryutan suddenly blew out the light, whereupon the mind of Tokusan was opened.

Hyakujo (Pai-chang) went out one day attending his master Baso (Ma-tsu), when they saw a flock of wild geese flying. Baso asked:

"What are they?"

"They are wild geese, sir."

"Whither are they flying?"

"They have flown away."

Baso, abruptly taking hold of Hyakujo's nose, gave it a twist. Overcome with pain, Hyakujo cried out: "Oh! Oh!"

Said Baso, "You say they have flown away, but all the same they have been here from the very first."

This made Hyakujo's back wet with perspiration; he had *satori.*

Is there any possible connection between the washing of the bowls and the blowing out of the candle and the twisting of the nose? We must say with Ummon: If there is none, how could they have all come to a realization of the truth of Zen? If there is, what is the inner relationship? What is this *satori*? What new point of view of looking at things is this?

Under Daiye (Ta-hui),[1] the great Zen master of the Sung dynasty, there was a monk named Doken (Tao-ch'ien), who had spent many years in the study of Zen, but who had not as yet uncovered its secrets, if there were any. He was quite discouraged when he was sent on an errand to a distant city. A trip requiring half a year to finish would be a hindrance rather than a help to his study. Sogen (Tsung-yuan), one of his fellow-students, was most sympathetic and said, "I will accompany you on this trip and do all I can for you; there is no reason why you cannot go on with your meditation even while travelling." One evening Doken despairingly implored his friend to assist him in the solution of the mystery of life. The friend said, "I am willing to help you in every way I can, but there are some things in which I cannot be of any help to you; these you must look after for yourself." Doken expressed the desire to know what these things were. Said his friend: "For instance, when you are hungry or thirsty, my eating of food or drinking will not fill your stomach; you must eat and drink for yourself. When you want to respond to the calls of nature you must take care of yourself, for I cannot be of any use to you. And then it will be nobody else but yourself that will carry your body along this highway." This friendly counsel at once opened the mind of the truth-seeking monk, who was so transported with his discovery that he did not know how to express his joy. Sogen said that his work was now done and that his further companionship would have no meaning after this; so he left Doken to continue his journey all by himself. After a half year Doken returned to his own monastery. Daiye, on his way down the mountains, happened to meet Doken and at once made the following remark, "This time he knows it all." What was it, let me ask, that flashed

[1] 1089–1163. A disciple of Yengo. See p. 116.

text with which you are perfectly familiar which fitly describes the teaching of Zen. Did not Confucius declare: 'Do you think I am hiding things from you, O my disciples? Indeed, I have nothing to hide from you.'" Kozankoku tried to answer, but Kwaido immediately checked him by saying, "No, no!" The Confucian scholar felt troubled in mind but did not know how to express himself. Some time later they were having a walk in the mountains; the wild laurel was in full bloom and the air was redolent with its scent. Asked the Zen master, "Do you smell it?" When the Confucian answered affirmatively, Kwaido said, "There, I have nothing to hide from you." This reminder at once led Kozankoku's mind to the opening of a *satori*.

These examples will suffice to show what *satori* is and how it unfolds itself. The reader may ask, however: "After the perusal of all your explanations or indications, we are not a whit wiser. Can you not definitely describe the content of *satori*, if there is any? Your examples and statements are tentative enough, but we simply know how the wind blows; where is the port the boat finally makes for?" To this the Zen devotee may answer: As far as content goes, there is none in either *satori* or Zen that can be described or presented or demonstrated for your intellectual appreciation. For Zen has no business with ideas, and *satori* is a sort of inner perception—not the perception, indeed, of a single individual object but the perception of Reality itself, so to speak. The ultimate destination of *satori* is towards the Self; it has no other end but to be back within oneself. Therefore, said Joshu, "Have a cup of tea." Therefore, said Nansen, "This is such a good sickle, it cuts so well." This is the way the Self functions, and it must be caught, if at all catchable, in the midst of its functioning.

As *satori* strikes at the primary root of existence, its attainment generally marks a turning point in one's life. The attainment, however, must be thoroughgoing and clear-cut; a lukewarm *satori*, if there is such a thing, is worse than no *satori*. See the following examples:

When Rinzai (Lin-chi) was meekly submitting to the thirty blows of Obaku (Huang-po), he presented a pitiable sight, but as soon as he had attained *satori* he was quite a different per-

had failed to produce the desired effect, and their disciples thereby had been farther and farther led astray. Especially was this the case when Buddhism was first introduced into China, with all its Indian heritage of highly metaphysical abstractions and most complicated systems of Yoga discipline, which left the more practical Chinese at a loss as to how to grasp the central point of the doctrine of Sakyamuni. Bodhidharma, the Sixth Patriarch, Baso, and other Chinese masters noticed this fact, and the proclamation and development of Zen was the natural outcome. By them *satori* was placed above sutra-learning and scholarly discussions of the sastras and was identified with Zen itself. Zen, therefore, without *satori* is like pepper without its pungency. But there is also such a thing as too much attachment to the experience of *satori*, which is to be detested.

4. This emphasizing of *satori* in Zen makes the fact quite significant that Zen is not a system of Dhyana as practised in India and by other Buddhist schools in China. By Dhyana is generally understood a kind of meditation or contemplation directed toward some fixed thought; in Hinayana Buddhism it was the thought of transiency, while in the Mahayana it was more often the doctrine of emptiness. When the mind has been so trained as to be able to realize a state of perfect void in which there is not a trace of consciousness left, even the sense of being unconscious having departed; in other words, when all forms of mental activity are swept away clean from the field of consciousness, leaving the mind like the sky devoid of every speck of cloud, a mere broad expanse of blue, Dhyana is said to have reached its perfection. This may be called ecstasy or trance, but it is not Zen. In Zen there must be *satori*; there must be a general mental upheaval which destroys the old accumulations of intellection and lays down the foundation for a new life; there must be the awakening of a new sense which will review the old things from a hitherto undreamed-of angle of observation. In Dhyana there are none of these things, for it is merely a quieting exercise of mind. As such Dhyana doubtless has its own merit, but Zen must not be identified with it.

5. *Satori* is not seeing God as he is, as might be contended

by some Christian mystics. Zen has from the beginning made clear and insisted upon the main thesis, which is to see into the work of creation; the creator may be found busy moulding his universe, or he may be absent from his workshop, but Zen goes on with its own work. It is not dependent upon the support of a creator; when it grasps the reason for living a life, it is satisfied. Hoyen (Fa-yen, died 1104) of Go-so-san used to produce his own hand and ask his disciples why it was called a hand. When we know the reason, there is *satori* and we have Zen. Whereas with the God of mysticism there is the grasping of a definite object; when you have God, what is no-God is excluded. This is self-limiting. Zen wants absolute freedom, even from God. "No abiding place" means that very thing; "Cleanse your mouth when you utter the word Buddha" amounts to the same thing. It is not that Zen wants to be morbidly unholy and godless, but that it recognizes the incompleteness of a mere name. Therefore, when Yakusan (Yueh-shan, 751–834) was asked to give a lecture, he did not say a word, but instead came down from the pulpit and went off to his own room. Hyakujo merely walked forward a few steps, stood still, and then opened out his arms, which was his exposition of the great principle.

6. *Satori* is not a morbid state of mind, a fit subject for the study of abnormal psychology. If anything, it is a perfectly normal state of mind. When I speak of a mental upheaval, some may be led to consider Zen as something to be shunned by ordinary people. This is a most mistaken view of Zen, but one unfortunately often held by prejudiced critics. As Joshu declared, "Zen is your everyday thought"; it all depends on the adjustment of the hinge whether the door opens in or opens out. Even in the twinkling of an eye the whole affair is changed and you have Zen, and you are as perfect and as normal as ever. More than that, you have acquired in the meantime something altogether new. All your mental activities will now be working to a different key, which will be more satisfying, more peaceful, and fuller of joy than anything you ever experienced before. The tone of life will be altered. There is something rejuvenating in the possession of Zen. The spring flowers look prettier, and the mountain stream runs cooler and more trans-