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"One Hundred Zen Topics"

SUZUKI DAISETZ

PART II

The sheer fact of Zen mondo

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

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

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

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

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

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

Living and learning

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³ ZDNM, p. 95.

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The knowing of non-knowing

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

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

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

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

Knowing and working—Playing with the lion

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

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

Yün-yen: "Yes, you are right."

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

Yün-yen: "Six."

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

Yün-yen: "How many?"

Yüeh-shan: "Just one."

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

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

⁴ A quotation from the I Ching.

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

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

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

Yün-yen: "That is right."

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

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

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

Yün-yen: "At rest, at rest."⁶

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

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

Yün-yen: "At rest, at rest."

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

⁶ SZ, *ibid.*

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The monkey who reached in from the window

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ ZDNM, p. 87.

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The master of garden sweeping

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

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

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

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

⁹ SZ, pp. 190-191.

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Standing there with arms crossed

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

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

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

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

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

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