

Zen hyakudai

“One Hundred Zen Topics”

PART I

SUZUKI DAISETZ

Foreword

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

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

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

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

Daisetz

Yafūryū Hermitage, 1951

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

Zen and everyday life

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

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

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

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

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

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

ZEN HYAKUDAI

Muscular work and thought

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

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

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

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

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

SUZUKI DAISSETZ

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

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

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

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

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

⁴ Here the author uses Chinese idioms from classical literature.

ZEN HYAKUDAI

Mechanized culture and Zen

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

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

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

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

The great earth and Zen

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

SUZUKI DAISETZ

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

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

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

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

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

Zazen

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

ZEN HYAKUDAI

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

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

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

Body and mind

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

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

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

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

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

"Hey!" and "Yessir!"

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

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

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

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

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

⁷ See EZB I, p. 304.

⁸ That is, empirical knowledge.

SUZUKI DAISETZ

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

A hundred bones and one thing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ZEN HYAKUDAI

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

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

Are a hundred bones one thing?

Is one thing a hundred bones?

One thing of a hundred bones,

A hundred bones of one thing.

When the hundred bones are one thing,

One thing is the hundred bones.

In a hundred bones there is one thing.

In one thing there are a hundred bones.

The hundred bones of one thing is

One thing of a hundred bones.

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

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

SUZUKI DAISETZ

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

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

Translated by Satō Taira and
Wayne Shigeto Yokoyama