

## NOTES

REGINALD HORACE BLYTH  
(1898–1964)

With the death of Dr. Reginald Horace Blyth on October 28, 1964, the world lost one of the most eminent exponents of Japanese culture of recent years. His studies on *haiku* and the Japanese sense of humor as well as Zen were unique contributions towards East-West understanding.

Dr. Blyth was born in London, in 1898. His earliest contact with the Orient took place in India. However, disapproving of the way some of his countrymen were treating Indian subjects, he moved on to Seoul, Korea, where he taught English at one of the colleges under the Japanese administration in 1924. It was while in Korea that he became interested in Zen Buddhism and studied it under Kayama Taigi Roshi. Ever since, his thoughts were closely connected with Zen, though not always in the orthodox tradition.

He arrived in Japan in 1940, wishing to understand the people and their culture. He settled in Kanazawa, once more as a teacher of English at the Fourth Koto Gakko. But with the outbreak of World War II he was soon interned as an enemy national, and lived in an internment camp near Kobe for about four years. It was during this period of confinement that he devoted himself to writing, finishing his first book, *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics* (1942), and parts of the four volumes on *Haiku* (1949).

While in Tokyo he taught at several colleges and universities, including Gakushu-in University and the former Peers' School, and became tutor of English to the Crown Prince.

Dr. Blyth, in the meantime, never ceased writing assiduously, as his bibliography will show. There appeared more than a dozen titles within the course of ten years: *Senryu* (1950), *Japanese Humour* (1957), *Oriental Humour* (1959), *Zen and Zen Classics*, Vols. I, II, VII (1960–4), *Japanese Life and Character in Senryu* (1961), *Edo Satirical Verse Anthologies* (1961), *A History of Haiku*, Vols. I, II (1963–4), and many more. *Zen and Zen Classics* were to have been in eight volumes and promised to be the most complete work on Zen so far to be presented to the English-reading public. The *Hekigan* is among the classics he had contemplated to deal with. It is regrettable, indeed, that only three volumes could see the light while he

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lived. Dr. Blyth's own words on his understanding of Zen are reproduced below as it appeared in his last work written while he was still unaware of his coming karma.

Perhaps to those of us who knew him, he was first and foremost a poet with a wonderfully keen and sensitive perception.

What follows is an estimate of Dr. Blyth as teacher by a former pupil of his, Mr. Shojun Bando, now on the Editorial Staff of the *Eastern Buddhist*.

D. T. SUZUKI

### *In Memory of Professor Blyth*

Some ten years ago, as a student, I used to attend the lectures on English Literature given by Professor Blyth at Tokyo University. Once or twice a week, the grim-faced, sturdy, foreign lecturer could be seen cycling through the campus. The class-room was always full of eager students, in spite of the fact that it was the earliest lecture hour. The references he made to Zen and Haiku while dealing with his main subject left a strong impression in the minds of us young students; for they helped in turning our attention inwards rather than outwards, to things Oriental or traditionally Japanese, to which we had become completely insensitive. All those attending his classes were kept amused and delighted from the beginning to the end by his refreshing sense of humor. At that time the only thing we knew about him personally was that he was the tutor of English to the Crown Prince.

Some years later, when an English Summer Seminar was held at a Zen temple in Odawara, I found his name among the lecturers. The title of his talk was, "Why I dislike Buddhism." Most of the audience, however, were Buddhist students and he was, of course, well aware of this fact. "If you were Christians," he started, glaring at us, "I would speak on *this* subject." So saying, he turned to the blackboard, erased the word "Buddhism," changed it to "Christianity," and continued, "Because it is '-ism.' I dislike anything with the suffixes, '-ism,' '-ianity,' and the like; because they all exclude something from themselves, because they shut themselves up in a narrow shell."

After the lecture, I had an opportunity to introduce myself. During a pleasant chat over tea, I casually referred to what I believed to be misrepresentation he had made of one of Rennyo Shōnin's sayings which I had noticed in the *Young East*, a Buddhist English quarterly to which he was a regular contributor. It was about Rennyo's famous admonition: "*Honzon wa kake-yabure, Shōgyō wa yomi-yabure!*" Prof. Blyth had interpreted

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this phrase to be an expression of Rennyo's iconoclastic thought. The interpretation I offered to him was that Rennyo meant here the necessity on the part of the devotees rigorously to continue their devotion to Amida by way of hanging his "Name-scroll" in their home shrines and by reading the scriptures until they became ragged through frequent use. After intently listening to what I had to say, Prof. Blyth said to me, "Thank you, Mr. Bando. Now I see what you mean. My interpretation was surely insufficient and misleading. I may have made similar mistakes elsewhere as to the sayings of various Shōnins. If you happen to see my errors, don't hesitate to drop me a line and let me know." His words sounded warm and sincere, after so many sharp and scathing remarks in his lecture. There I found in him a humble and modest seeker of truth.

Still some years later I found out a curious fact about Prof. Blyth. He was a quick producer of books, no doubt. But every book he published was dedicated to no one but Dr. Daisetz T. Suzuki, whom he described as "the only man who can write about Zen without making me loathe it," or "Who can read what I can't write." What sort of relationship was there between Dr. Suzuki and Prof. Blyth? This question remained with me for some time until I came across a most moving description Prof. Blyth himself made about their first real meeting. In the article entitled, "In Praise of Suzuki Daisetsu and Zen," he says :

"The second anecdote relates to after the War when he was living in Enkakujū Temple. I often went to see him there. I had now published several volumes of translations and commentaries of haiku, and one day an old man from—I have forgotten where—wrote a long letter to me saying that I did not understand haiku at all, neither the particular haiku nor the spirit of haiku in general. I have never been so angry before or since. I continued to be angry for three days, and then went down to Kamakura. I told Dr. Suzuki all about this, and said that whatever I knew about haiku, at least I had no understanding of Zen at all. I finished my story and sat back to hear his reproof, teaching and advice. He said, "Mr. Blyth, people with poetic minds are more sensitive to things than others are, and they take longer to forget them." I burst into tears. To praise instead of blaming, —this is Zen."<sup>1</sup>

Ever since I met Prof. Blyth, I have been under the impression that he was, with his unique sense of humor, more of a poet than a scholar. His talks and writings themselves were poems with boundless imagination; nay,

<sup>1</sup> 鈴木大拙選集 (*Suzuki Daisetsu Senshū*) (追巻第三卷春秋社 1957) 解説 pp. 4-5.

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they were the embodiment of humor and wit with a hint of paradox and bitter irony. His remarks always gave the impression that he was a relentless iconoclast. He once made mention of "a vegetarian whose shoes were made of animal skin." He was skilled in making us perceive the truth (Zen) even amidst laughter and smiles. His constant attitude for perceiving a flash of truth in poetical expressions may be seen in the following words:

"What is the standard by which we judge all things, judge Zen itself, which is the essence of Christianity, the essence of Buddhism? It is not morality, or aesthetics, or science: it is "poetry," a faculty by which we know the living truth, the value of a thing or person or action, or manner. All real Zen is poetry, but not all poetry is Zen. It is poetry by which we live, more or less, by which we endure the love of others, and enjoy the malice of the universe. Poetry transmutes everything into itself, but poetry is a kind of pain, whose depth reconciles us to it."<sup>1</sup>

We cannot but be amazed at the freedom with which he speaks and writes his own language. The rich resources of his knowledge of English literature, Japanese *haiku*, the immortal words of the sages of both East and West, and antiquity and modern times, were all transformed into his "own" words, so to speak.

What impresses me most is his deep realization of what it is to be an imperfect, ordinary mortal beset with evil passions. He says:

"When we reject folly, regret, shame, hesitation, sin, egoism, vanity, sentiment, hypocrisy, ambition, dichotomy,—we reject our humanity."<sup>2</sup>

On "humour" Prof. Blyth writes:

"Christianity and Buddhism both tell us to love what we hate, to love our enemies, to be compassionate to the things or creatures or human beings that annoy and destroy us. Humour, on the other hand, makes us laugh at our enemies, and at our friends. Still more; laugh at God and the Devil; laugh at ourselves. To laugh is really to love.—If we take, as I do, humour to be the nature of the universe, the origin of life and its object, the antagonism of Christianity and Buddhism to humour shows their irreligiousness.—It is not possible to threaten, to frighten, to cajole, to shame people into Heaven. Can they be laughed or smiled into it? This is to some extent possible, humour being such a widely-spread thing, but the object must be, not Heaven, but laughter itself."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Defects of Zen" in *Zen and Zen Classics*, Volume Two (Tokyo, Hokuseido Press, 1964) pp. 198–199.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> "Zen and Humour" in *Zen and Zen Classics*, Volume Seven (Tokyo, Hokuseido Press, 1962) pp. 30–31.

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His familiar voice is no more to be heard, but the Zen spirit he crystallized in his numerous writings will continue to remind us of the enthusiastic exponent of Zen in terms of poetry and humor, the late Professor R. H. Blyth.

SHOJUN BANDO

### *R. H. Blyth's View on Zen*<sup>1</sup>

When we think over the episodes in which the Zen master and his pupils play their parts, we can see that there are various types of minds, in both teacher and disciples, and the resolution of the doubts and difficulties fall into several patterns. It would be quite wrong and un-Zen-like for us to assume, as is invariably done that there is one "truth," one enlightenment, one true state of mind, "one light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world," one Zen, one Buddha nature,

One far-off divine event

To which the whole creation moves.

Freedom from oneness is more important, in the long run, than the freedom from diversity which is the aim of all religion and science. It is here that poetry and existentialism come to our aid. Even animism, without which no man can be saved, is in danger of becoming *anima mundi*. Thus each anecdote, each question, each answer must be re-lived in its own way and in our own way. No system, no symbolisation, no tricks, no perpetual paradox or desire to astonish are to be allowed. Every blow has a different meaning, just as every shower of rain is different from every other. Praising or blaming, laughing or weeping, each case has its own unique meaning. "But at the back of all of them ...." As Goethe said to Eckermann, "Do not, I beg you, look *behind* phenomena."

There are, however, two ways in which we can prevent people from going behind phenomena, that is, separating (in life) the abstract from the concrete and thus spoiling both. According to Zen theory, A is A, and A is not A; further, A is A because it is not A (but surely A is not A also because A is A?). Thus the two ways are to show that A is A, and that A is not A.

A stick is what you see it to be, of a certain colour, shape, length, weight, resilience, and so on. It is also a conglomeration of atoms or electric particles. It may also be God himself, or a non-stick, or an ornamental appendage. The important thing is to see the undivided, unabstracted,

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<sup>1</sup> This is the "Epilogue" taken from *Zen and Zen Classics*, Volume Two, published just three months before Dr. Blyth's death.

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material-spiritual stick, at one and the same moment the Long Body of God, and something for Fitzgerald to poke into the spokes of the wheel of the bicycle of a boy who is impudent enough to ride on the pavement. How can this be done? By attending to each thing with all our mind and heart and soul and senses. How exhausting! But this is what we do when we eat, or sneeze, or fall in love, or sleep. After all, what wearies us is doing what we don't want to do. When my mother told me to tidy up my toys, I really felt a deadly exhaustion; I said I was tired, but she would remark, somewhat acidly, "You weren't tired until I told you to clear up your things!"

We have to see and hear and smell and taste and have sexual relations with A as A; A as not A; and as both together, that is to say, alternately and simultaneously. This sort of thing can be illustrated by the sentences of the *Zenrinkushū*, which indeed consists mainly of the three kinds. For the first, A is A, from the *Hekiganroku*:

一 二 三 四 五 六。

One, two, three, four, five, six.

雲 冉 冉 水 漫 漫。

Clouds are moving,  
Waters are swelling.

A is not A:

兔 馬 有 角 牛 羊 無 角。

Rabbits and horses have horns;  
Cows and sheep have none.

陸 地 行 舟 虛 空 馳 馬。

Navigating a ship on dry ground,  
Riding a horse through the empty air.

A is not A, and at the same time A is A:

細 雨 濕 衣 看 不 見

閑 花 落 地 聽 無 聲。

Fine rain wets the garments, but though we  
gaze it cannot be seen;  
The flowers quietly fall to the ground, but  
though we listen, we cannot hear it.

The first is fact, the second paradox, the third poetry. This poetry, which is also Zen, is the poetry of Wordsworth and Thoreau. It is the highest possible form of life, and somehow must be carried over, as in Shakespeare, to the world of human beings, who live it in so far as they really live at all.

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Whether this good life can be lived without any reference to nature, without a deep and constant love of it, is a question. The Chinese Zen monks, and the Japanese after them, unlike the Christian, preserved themselves from ego-centricity by a constant reference to natural phenomena as justifying both their (apparently) excessive materiality, and spirituality.

What is Zen? Zen is the unsymbolisation of the world and all the thing in it. Of course, the Zen masters use metaphors and similes, they even use symbols, but these are not to be taken seriously. One thing does not mean another. Above all, as was said before, we are not to look behind things for their meaning. When the hand is raised, all things are raised with it, but the hand does not signify all things. When tea is drunk, the universe is swallowed; the tea is the universe; it does not stand for it. In this sense, animism is the *sine qua non* for Zen, but we must also say that a man is a tree walking. A human being is as subject to cause and effect as the lowliest existence. A stone is as free as a seraph. When it rains, Christ's blood falls from the firmament. Zen means the freedom to be bound; we are bound by all within and without us. We cannot escape from a thing as Plato tried to, on the wings of an abstraction, a Form, a function. One thing contains everything within it, and nothing can be withdrawn from it without injury to itself and to the withdrawer. What matters therefore about any thing is its allness. This is perhaps at the back of the modern dislike of adjectives, especially the wonderful adjectives beloved of Keats and Tennyson. Adjectives soon become abstract nouns (as in "allness" above) and the world is impoverished to cram the human brain with non-existences, leaving meaningless matter to be examined for a meaning. God is not love. God is not loving. God is someone loving something, or something loving someone. In the beginning was no word, neither was there, as Faust asserts, any act. In the beginning was a speaker, an actor. In this matter Christianity and even Mohammedanism is right, and Buddhism and Zen are wrong. God is a person, and Heaven is a place. Contrary to the Book of Revelation, without time nothing can exist, especially the timeless, and "Eternity is in love with the productions of time."

JOHN RONALD BRINKLEY

(1887-1964)

John Ronald Brinkley, widely known in Japan as a Buddhist and an educator, passed away at his home in Zushi, near Kamakura, on August 21, 1964. For his lifetime contribution to the cause of Buddhism, he was awarded the honorary Buddhist title of "Sojo" by the Lord Abbot of the

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Tendai sect, who also officiated at Mr. Brinkley's funeral at Tsukiji Hongan-ji in Tokyo.

Born in Japan in 1887 of a British father and a Japanese mother, Professor Brinkley was educated successively in Japan, England, Germany and France. His father, Frank Brinkley, was a Military Attaché at the British Legation who later became the President and Editor of the *Japan Mail*, first English language newspaper in Japan. He is also well known as the author of a book on the history of Japan.

After graduating London University in 1910, Professor Brinkley joined the staff of the *Japan Mail*, and succeeded to the presidency of the *Japan Mail* upon his father's death. During World War I, he served in the British Army. In 1920, he worked for the League of Nations in Geneva. In 1929, he returned to Japan, and from 1930 to 1942 taught English and English Literature at various universities in Tokyo. During this period he devoted himself mainly to the study of Japanese culture, especially Buddhism. In August, 1940, he married Miss Mume Ito, and, in the same year, on his way to England, was again ordered by the British Army to serve in India, this time as a major.

From 1946 to 1949 he served at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East as chief of the translation section.

Very active in Buddhist circles, he was awarded the honorary Buddhist title of *Gon-sōjō* on April 28th, 1948, by the authorities of the Tendai sect. Discharged from the military service in July, 1949, he became president of the Eihosha Publishing Co. Between 1950 and 1964, he returned to teaching English at various Buddhist universities. In September, 1952, he was appointed a trustee of the Buddhist Laymen's Association.

He always maintained a generous and tolerant attitude toward the various Buddhist sects. This is illustrated by the fact that the variety of students who gathered around his warm and humane personality included adherents of all Buddhist denominations. As an advisor to the Buddhist English Study Group, he devoted himself to the task of educating promising students. He was a strict vegetarian and an active member of the Japan Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Throughout his life, he held a keen interest in sports, such as judo, kendo, tennis, and rugby.

Like B. L. Suzuki, and Anagarika Dharmapala, he started as a theosophist and then turned to Buddhism; and thereafter, throughout his whole life, theosophy and Buddhism were coexistent in him without conflict. Like the late Dr. Bruno Petzold, a German scholar on Tendai philosophy, his main interest lay especially in the Tendai philosophy. He loved Japan, her



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people, her way of life, and Buddhism. His daily life gave ample evidence of this. His home manifested a subdued, aesthetic taste and was always filled with the fragrance of burning incense. As a man of the Meiji era, Prof. Brinkley told his students not to abandon things traditional to Japan, no matter how much the present society might become mechanized and dehumanized.

Mr. Brinkley had no children, but his memory will long survive among the younger generation whom he fostered with his truly Buddhistic personality.

SHOJUN BANDO

### RYUSAKU TSUNODA

(1877-1964)

Ryusaku Tsunoda, founder of the "Japanese Cultural Center" in New York, passed away at the age of 87 in Hawaii on November 28th, 1964, while on his way back to Japan. He published his first book, *Ihara Saikaku*, novelist of the Edo Period, in 1897, at the age of 20. This was followed by the publication of a *History of Ethics* (in Japanese) in 1904.

In 1909, as Principal of the Hawaii Middle School, his life abroad was started. In 1917 he went from Hawaii to the American mainland.

Dr. Takeshi Saito, a former student of Dr. Tsunoda and later a President of Tokyo Women's University, remarked in one of his essays: "The way in which Tsunoda Sensei translated English for us into Japanese was most accurate and to the point. Besides English, he had many other things to teach us; for example, we were instructed by him in the reading of Kobo Daishi's *Bunkyo Hifu Ron* 文鏡秘府論.

Under the sponsorship of philanthropist Koyata Iwasaki, the Imperial Library, various universities and presses, and the Eastern and Western Honganji, Dr. Tsunoda purchased thousands of books on Japanese culture and sent them to America. He founded the Japan Cultural Institute in New York in 1926 and later donated it to Columbia University Library. He was appointed the Chief Librarian of Japanese section. At Columbia University he also lectured in 1941. He continued his lectures until very recently as an honorary lecturer.

At Columbia he helped in the development of many young American students in the field of Asiatic studies, such as Donald Keene, Theodore de Bary, and others. A significant monument to his years at Columbia was the publication of the *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (1958) which he compiled in collaboration with his former students.

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In 1960 he was decorated by the Japanese Government with the Third Order of Merit for his contributions to Japan-American relationships. On October 6th, 1962, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters by Columbia for his long and distinguished service.

Dr. Tsunoda resided in Hawaii from April, 1962 to March, 1963, as a senior-scholar of the East-West Center, engaged in the translation of Dogen's *Shobo Genzo*, primarily those chapters dealing with the subject, "flower."

He was very fond of composing *waka* poems. The last *waka* reads: "Ware danimo mazu Gokuraku ni umarenaba, shiru mo shiranu mo mina mukae ten." (If this unworthy I/ Should by chance be born in the Pure Land/ Friends and strangers alike/ I shall receive them all.)

SHOJUN BANDO