

## ZEN BUDDHISM AS PURIFIER AND LIBERATOR OF LIFE\*

ZEN in its essence is the art of seeing into the nature of one's own being, and it points the way from bondage to freedom. By making us drink right from the fountain of life, it liberates us from all the yokes under which we finite beings are usually suffering in this world. We can say that Zen liberates all the energies properly and naturally stored in each of us, which are in ordinary circumstances cramped and distorted so that they find no adequate channel for activity. This body of ours is something like an electric battery in which a mysterious power latently lies. When this power is not properly brought into operation, it either grows mouldy and withers away or is warped and expresses itself abnormally. It is the object of Zen, therefore, to save us from going crazy or being crippled. This is what I mean by freedom, giving free play to all the creative and benevolent impulses inherently lying in our minds. Generally, we are blind to this fact, that we are in possession of all the necessary faculties that will make us happy and loving towards one another. All the struggles that we see around us come from this ignorance. Zen, therefore, wants us to open a "third eye" as Buddhists call it, to the hitherto undreamed-of region shut away from us through our own ignorance. When the cloud of ignorance disappears, the infinity of the heavens is manifested where we see for the first time into the nature of our own being. We now know the signification of life, we know that it is not

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\* This paper was prepared by the author to be read before a certain group of students, who are interested in the study of religion and Buddhism specially.

blind striving, nor is it a mere display of brutal forces, but that while we know not definitely what the ultimate purport of life is, there is something in it that makes us feel infinitely blessed in the living of it and remain quite contented with it in all its evolution, without raising questions or entertaining pessimistic doubts.

When we are full of vitality and not yet awakened to the knowledge of life, we cannot comprehend the seriousness of all the conflicts involved in it. But sooner or later the time will come when we have to face life squarely and solve its most perplexing and most pressing riddles. Says Confucius, "At fifteen my mind was directed to study, and at thirty I knew where to stand." This is one of the wisest sayings of the Chinese sage. Psychologists will all agree to this statement of his; for generally speaking fifteen is about the age youth begins to look around seriously and inquire into the meaning of life. All the spiritual powers until now securely hidden in the subconscious part of the mind break out almost simultaneously. And when this breaking out is too precipitous and violent, the mind may lose its balance more or less permanently; in fact, so many cases of nervous prostration reported during adolescence are chiefly due to this loss of the mental equilibrium. In most cases the effect is not very grave and the crisis may pass without leaving deep marks. But in some characters, either through their inherent tendencies or on account of the influence of environment upon their plastic constitution, the spiritual awakening stirs them up to the very depths of their personality. This is the time you will be asked to choose between the "Everlasting No" and the "Everlasting Yea." This choosing is what Confucius means by "study," it is not studying the classics, but deeply delving into the mysteries of life.

Normally, the outcome of the struggle is the "Everlasting Yea," or "Let thy will be done"; for life is after all a form

of affirmation however negatively it might be conceived by the pessimists. But we cannot deny the fact that there are many things in this world which will turn our too sensitive minds towards the other direction and make us exclaim with Andreyev in "The Life of Man"; "I curse everything that you have given. I curse the day on which I was born. I curse the day on which I shall die. I curse the whole of my life. I fling everything back at your cruel face, senseless Fate! Be accursed, be forever accursed! With my curses I conquer you. What else can you do to me? . . . With my last thought I will shout into your asinine ears: Be accursed, be accursed!" This is a terrible indictment of life, it is a complete negation of life, it is a most dismal picture of the destiny of man on earth. "Leaving no trace" is quite true, for we know nothing of our future except that we all pass away including the very earth from which we have come. There are certainly things justifying pessimism.

Life, as most of us live it, is suffering. There is no denying the fact. As long as life is a form of struggle, it cannot be anything but pain. Does not a struggle mean the impact of two conflicting forces, each trying to get the upperhand of the other? If the battle is lost, the outcome is death, and death is the fearsomest thing in the world. Even when death is conquered, one is left alone, and the loneliness is sometimes more unbearable than the struggle itself. One may not be conscious of all this, and may go on indulging in those momentary pleasures that are afforded by the senses. But this being unconscious does not in the least alter the facts of life. However insistently the blind may deny the existence of the sun, they cannot annihilate it. The tropical heat will mercilessly scorch them, and if they do not take proper care, they will all be wiped away from the surface of the earth. Buddha was perfectly right when he propounded his "Four Noble Truths" the first of which is that life is

pain. Did not everyone of us come to this world screaming and in a way protesting? To come out into cold and prohibitive surroundings after a soft, warm motherly womb was surely a painful incident to say the least. Growth is always attended with pain. Teething is more or less a painful process. Puberty is usually accompanied with a mental as well as a physical disturbance. The growth of the organism called society is also marked with painful cataclysms, and we are at present witnessing one of its birth-throes. We may calmly reason and say that this is all inevitable, that inasmuch as every reconstruction means the destruction of the old regime, we cannot help going through a painful operation. But this cold intellectual analysis does not alleviate whatever harrowing feelings we have to go under. The pain heartlessly inflicted on our nerves is ineradicable. Life is, after all arguing, a painful struggle.

This however is providential. For the more you suffer the deeper grows your character, and with the deepening of your character you read the more penetratingly into the secrets of life. All great artists, all great religious leaders, and all great social reformers have come out of the intensest struggles which they fought bravely, quite frequently in tears and with bleeding hearts. Unless you eat your bread in sorrow, you cannot taste of real life. Mencius is right when he says that when Heaven wants to perfect a great man it tries him in every possible way until he comes out triumphantly from all his painful experiences. To me Oscar Wilde seems always posing or striving for an effect; he may be a great artist, but there is something in him that turns me away from him. Yet he exclaims in his *De Profundis*: "During the last few months I have, after terrible difficulties and struggles, been able to comprehend some of the lessons hidden in the heart of pain. Clergymen and people who use phrases without wisdom sometimes talk of suffering as a mystery. It is really

a revelation. One discerns things one never discerned before. One approaches the whole of history from a different standpoint." You will observe here what sanctifying effects his prison life produced on his character. If he had to go through a similar trial in the beginning of his career, he might have been able to produce far greater works than those we have of him at present.

We are too ego-centred. The ego-shell in which we live is the hardest thing to outgrow. We seem to carry it all the time from childhood up to the time we finally pass away. We are however given many chances to break through this shell, and the first and greatest of them is when we reach adolescence. This is the first time the ego really comes to recognise the "alter." I mean the awakening of sexual love. An ego, entire and undivided, now begins to feel a sort of split in itself. Love hitherto dormant deep in his heart lifts its head and causes a great commotion in it. For the love now stirred demands at once the assertion of the ego and its annihilation. Love makes the ego lose itself in the object it loves, and yet at the same time it wants to have the object as its own. This is a contradiction, and a great tragedy of life. This elemental feeling must be one of the divine agencies whereby man is urged to advance on his upward walk. God gives tragedies to perfect man. The greatest bulk of literature ever produced in this world is but the harping on the same string of love, and we never seem to grow weary of it. But this is not the topic we are concerned here. What I want to emphasise in this connection is this, that through the awakening of love we get a glimpse into the infinity of things, and that this glimpse urges youth to Romanticism or to Rationalism according to his temperament and environment and education.

When the ego-shell is broken and the "alter" is taken into its own body, we can say that the ego has denied itself or that the ego has taken its first steps towards the infinite.

Religiously, here ensues an intense struggle between the finite and the infinite, between the intellect and a higher power, or more plainly between the flesh and the spirit. This is the problem of problems that has driven many a youth into the hands of Satan. When a grown-up man looks back to these youthful days, he cannot but feel a sort of shudder going through his entire frame. The struggle to be fought in sincerity may go on up to the age of thirty when Confucius states that he knew where to stand. The religious consciousness is now fully awakened, and all the possible ways of escaping from the struggle or bringing it to an end are most earnestly sought in every direction. Books are read, lectures are attended, sermons are greedily taken in, and various religious exercises or disciplines are tried. And naturally Zen too comes to be inquired into.

How does Zen then solve the problem of problems?

In the first place, Zen proposes its solution by directly appealing to the facts of personal experience and not to book-knowledge. The nature of one's own being where apparently rages the struggle between the finite and the infinite is to be grasped by a higher faculty than the intellect. For Zen says it is the latter that first made us raise the question which it could not answer by itself, and that therefore it is to be put aside to make room for something higher and more enlightening. For the intellect has a peculiarly disquieting quality in it. Though it raises questions enough to disturb the serenity of the mind, it is too frequently unable to give satisfactory answers to them. It upsets the blissful peace of ignorance and yet it does not restore the former state of things by offering something else. Because it points out ignorance, it is often considered illuminating, whereas the fact is that it disturbs, not necessarily always bringing light on its path. It is not final, it waits for something higher than itself for the solution of all the questions it will raise regardless of con-

sequences. If it were able to bring a new order into the disturbance and settle it once for all, there would have been no need for philosophy after it had been first systematised by a great thinker, by an Aristotle, or by a Hegel. But the history of thought proves that each new structure raised by a man of extraordinary intellect is sure to be pulled down by the succeeding ones. This constant pulling down and building up is all right as far as philosophy itself is concerned; for the inherent nature of the intellect, as I take it, demands it and we cannot put a stop to the progress of philosophical inquiries any more than to our breathing. But when it comes to the question of life itself we cannot wait for the ultimate solution to be offered by the intellect even if it could do so. We cannot suspend even for a moment our life-activity for philosophy to unravel its mysteries. Let the mysteries remain as they are, but live we must. The hungry cannot wait until a complete analysis of food is obtained and the nourishing value of each element is determined. For the dead the scientific knowledge of food will be of no use whatever. Zen therefore does not rely on the intellect for the solution of its deepest problems.

By personal experience it is meant to get at the fact at first hand and not through any intermediary whatever this may be. Its favorite analogy is: to point at the moon a finger is needed, but woe to those who take the finger for the moon; a basket is welcome to carry our fish home, but when the fish are safely on the table why should we eternally bother ourselves with the basket? Here stands the fact, and let us grasp with the naked hands lest it should slip away—this is what Zen proposes to do. As nature abhors a vacuum, Zen abhors anything coming between the fact and ourselves. According to Zen, there is no struggle in the fact itself such as between the finite and the infinite, between the flesh and the spirit. These are idle distinctions fictitiously designed by

the intellect for its own interest. Those who take them too seriously or those who try to read them into the very fact of life are those who take the finger for the moon. When we are hungry we eat; when we are sleepy we lay ourselves down; and where does the infinite or the finite come in here? Are not we complete in ourselves and each in himself? Life as it is lived suffices. It is only when the disquieting intellect steps in and tries to murder it that we stop to live and imagine ourselves to be short of or in something. Let the intellect alone, it has its usefulness in its proper sphere, but let it not interfere with the flowing of the life-stream. If you are at all tempted to look into it, do so while letting it flow. The fact of flowing must under no circumstances be arrested or meddled with; for the moment your hands are dipped into it, its transparency is disturbed, it ceases to reflect your image which you have had from the very beginning and will continue to have to the end of time.

Almost corresponding to the "Four Maxims" of the Nichiren Sect, Zen has its own four phrases:

"A special transmission outside the Scriptures;  
 No dependence upon words and letters;  
 Direct pointing to the soul of man;  
 Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of Buddhahood."

This sums up all that is claimed by Zen as religion. Of course this has a historical background. At the time of the introduction of Zen into China, most of the Buddhists were addicted to the discussion of highly metaphysical questions, or satisfied with the merely observing of the ethical precepts laid down by the Buddha or with the leading of a lethargic life entirely absorbed in the contemplation of the evanescence of things worldly. They all missed apprehending the great



fact of life itself which flows altogether outside of these vain exercises of the intellect or of the imagination. Bodhi-Dharma and his successors recognised this pitiful state of affairs. Hence their proclamation of "The Four Great Statements" of Zen as above cited. In a word they mean that Zen has its own way of pointing to the nature of one's own being and that when this is done, one attains to Buddhahood in whom all the contradictions and disturbances caused by the intellect are entirely harmonised in a unity of higher order.

For this reason Zen never explains but indicates, it does not appeal to circumlocution, nor does it generalise. It always deals with facts, concrete and tangible. Logically considered, Zen may be full of contradictions and repetitions. But as it stands above all these things, it goes serenely on its own way. As a Zen master aptly puts it, "carrying his home-made cane on the shoulder, he goes right on among the mountains one rising above another." It does not challenge logic, it simply walks its path of facts, leaving all the rest to their own fates. It is only when logic neglecting its proper functions tries to step into the track of Zen that it loudly proclaims its principles and forcibly drives out the intruder. Zen is not an enemy of anything. There is no reason why it should antagonise the intellect which may sometimes be utilised for the cause of Zen itself. To show some examples of Zen's direct dealing with the fundamental facts of existence, the following are selected :

A monk called Jo (定上座) came to Rinzai (臨濟) and asked him, "What is the fundamental principle of Buddhism?" Coming right down from his straw-seated chair, the master took hold of the monk, gave him a slap, and pushed him away. The monk Jo who was completely taken aback stood almost stupefied. An attending monk near by remarked, "Why don't you make bows to the master?" When Jo was about to do so, his mental eye was opened.

Rinzai was noted for his "rough" and direct treatment of his disciples. He never liked those roundabout dealings which generally characterised the methods of a lukewarm master. He must have got this directness from his own teacher Obaku (黃蘗), by whom he was struck three times by asking what the fundamental principle of Buddhism was. It goes without saying that Zen has nothing to do with mere striking or roughly shaking the questioner. If you took this as constituting the essentials of Zen, you would commit the same gross error as one who took the finger for the moon. As in everything else, but most particularly in Zen, all its outward manifestations or demonstrations must never be regarded as final. They just indicate the way where to look for the facts. In this respect, they are important, we cannot do well without them. But once caught in these entangling meshes we are doomed; for Zen can never be comprehended. Some may think Zen is always trying to catch you in the net of logic or by the snare of words. If you once slip your steps, you are bound for eternal damnation, you will never get to freedom for which your hearts are so burning. Therefore, Rinzai grasps with his naked hands what is directly presented to us all. If a third eye of ours is opened undimmed, we shall know in a most unmistakable manner where Rinzai is driving us. We have first of all to get into the very spirit of the master and interview the inner man right there. No amount of wordy explanations will ever lead us into the nature of our own selves. The more you explain, the further it runs away from you. It is like trying to get hold of your own shadow. When you run after it, it runs with you at the identical rate of speed. When you read deep into the spirit of Rinzai you will appreciate his real kind-heartedness.

Ummon (雲門) was another great master of Zen during the T'ang dynasty. He had to lose one of his legs in order

to get an insight into the life-principle from which the whole universe takes rise, including his own humble existence. He had to visit his teacher Bokuju (睦州) three times before he was admitted to see him. The master asked, "Who are you?" "I am Bun-yen (文偃)," answered the monk. (Bun-yen was his name, while Ummon was the title of the monastery where he got settled later on.) When the truth-seeking monk was allowed to go inside the gate, the master took hold of him by the chest and demanded, "Speak! speak!" Ummon hesitated, whereupon the master pushed him out of the gate, saying, "Oh, you good-for-nothing fellow!"\* While the gate was hastily shut, one of Ummon's legs was caught and broken. The intense pain resulting from this apparently awakened the poor fellow to the greatest fact of life. He was no more a solicitous, pity-begging monk, the realisation now gained paid more than enough for the loss of his leg. He was not however a solitary instance in this respect, there were many such in the history of Zen who were willing to sacrifice a part of the body for the truth. Says Confucius: "If a man understands the Tao in the morning, it is well for him even when he dies in the evening." Some would feel indeed that truth is of more value than mere living, mere vegetative or animal living. But in the world, alas, there are so many living corpses wallowing in the mud of ignorance and sensuality.

This is where Zen is most difficult to understand. Why this sarcastic vituperation? Why this seeming heartlessness? What fault had Ummon to deserve the loss of his leg? He was a poor truth-seeking monk, earnestly anxious to get enlightenment from the master. Was it really necessary for the latter from his way of understanding Zen to shut him off three times, and when the gate was half opened to close it again so violently, so inhumanly? Was this the truth of

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\*Literally, an old clumsy gimlet of the Ts'in dynasty.

Buddhism Ummon was so eager to get? But the outcome of all this singularly was what was desired by both of them. As to the master, he was satisfied to see the disciple attain an insight into the secrets of his being; and as regards the disciple he was most grateful for all that was done to him. Evidently, Zen is the most irrational, inconceivable thing in the world. And this is why I told you Zen was not subject to logical analysis or to intellectual treatment. It must be directly and personally experienced by each of us in his inner spirit. Just as two stainless mirrors reflect each other, the fact and our own spirits must stand facing each other with no intervening agents. When this is done, we are able to seize upon the living, pulsating fact itself.

Freedom is an empty word until then. The first object was to escape the bondage in which all finite beings find themselves, but if we do not cut asunder the very chain of ignorance with which we are bound hands and feet, where shall we look for deliverance? And this chain of ignorance is wrought of nothing else but the intellect and sensuous infatuation, which cling tightly to every thought we may have, to every feeling we may entertain. They are hard to get rid of, they are like wet clothes as is aptly expressed by the Zen masters. "We are born free and equal." Whatever this may mean socially or politically, Zen maintains that it is absolutely true in the spiritual domain, and that all the fetters and manacles we seem to be carrying about ourselves are put on later through ignorance of the true condition of existence. All the treatment, sometimes literary and sometimes physical, which is most liberally and kindheartedly given by the masters to inquiring souls, are intended to get them back to the original state of freedom. And this is never really realised until we once personally experience it through our own efforts, independent of any ideational representation. The ultimate standpoint of Zen, therefore, is that we have been led astray

through ignorance to find a split in our own being, that there was from the very beginning no need for a struggle between the finite and the infinite, that the peace we are seeking so eagerly after has been there all the time. Sotoba (蘇東坡) the noted Chinese poet and statesman, expresses the idea in the following verse :

“Misty rain on Mount Lu,  
 And waves surging in Che-chiang ;  
 When you have not yet been there,  
 Many a regret surely you have ;  
 But once there and homeward you wend,  
 And how matter-of-fact things look !  
 Misty rain on Mount Lu,  
 And waves surging in Che-chiang.”

A Chinese Zen master, Bokuju (睦州), was once asked, “We have to dress and eat everyday, and how can we escape from all that?” The master replied, “We dress, we eat.” “I do not understand you,” said the questioner. “If you don’t understand, put your dress on and eat your food.”

Zen always deals in concrete facts and does not indulge in generalisation. And I do not wish to add unnecessary legs to the painted snake, but if I try to waste my philosophical comments on Bokuju, I may say this. We are all finite, we cannot live out of time and space ; inasmuch as we are earth-created, there is no way to grasp the infinite ; how can we deliver ourselves from the limitations of existence ? This is perhaps the idea put in the first question of the monk, to which the master replies : Salvation must be sought in the finite itself, there is nothing infinite apart from finite things ; if you seek something transcendental, that will cut you off from this world of relativity, which is the same thing as the annihilation of yourself. You do not want salvation at the

cost of your own existence. If so, drink and eat, and find your way of freedom in this drinking and eating. This was too much for the questioner who therefore confessed himself as not understanding the meaning of the master. Therefore, the latter continued: Whether you understand or not, just the same go on living in the finite, with the finite; for you die if you stop eating and keeping yourself warm on account of your aspiration for the infinite. No matter how you struggle, Nirvana is to be sought in the midst of samsāra (birth-and-death). Whether an enlightened Zen master or an ignoramus of the first degree, neither can escape the so-called laws of nature. When the stomach is empty, both are hungry; when it snows, both have to put on an extra flannel. I do not however mean that they are both material existences, but they are what they are, regardless of their conditions of spiritual development. As the Buddhist scriptures have it, the darkness of the cave itself turns into enlightenment when a torch of spiritual insight burns. It is not that a thing called darkness is first taken out and another thing known by the name of enlightenment is carried in later, but that enlightenment and darkness are substantially one and the same thing from the very beginning, the change from the one to the other has taken place only inwardly or subjectively. Therefore, the finite is the infinite, and vice versa. These are not two separate things, though we are compelled to conceive them so, intellectually. This is the idea, logically interpreted, perhaps contained in Bokuju's answer given to the monk. The mistake consists in our splitting into two what is really and absolutely one. Is not life one as we live it, which we cut to pieces by recklessly applying the murderous knife of intellectual surgery?

On being requested by the monks to deliver a sermon, Hyakujo Nehan (百丈涅槃) told them to work on the farm, after which he would give them a talk on the great subject

of Buddhism. They did as they were told, and came to the master for a sermon, when the latter without saying a word, merely extended his open arms towards the monks. Perhaps there is after all nothing mysterious in Zen. Everything is open to your full view. If you eat your food and keep yourself cleanly dressed and work on the farm to raise your rice or vegetables, you are doing all that is required of you on this earth, and the infinite is realised in you. How realised? When Bokuju was asked what Zen was, he recited a Sanskrit phrase from a sutra, "Mahāprajñāpāramitāya!" (in Japanese, Makahannyaharamii!). The inquirer acknowledged his inability to understand the purport of the strange phrase, and the master put a comment on it, saying,

"My robe is all worn out after so many years' usage,  
And parts of it in shreds loosely hanging have been  
blown away to the clouds."

Is the infinite after all such a poverty-stricken mendicant?

Whatever this is, there is one thing in this connection which we can never afford to lose sight of, that is, the peace or poverty (for peace is only possible in poverty) is obtained after a fierce battle fought with the entire strength of your personality. A contentment gleaned from idleness or from a *laissez-faire* attitude of mind is a thing most to be abhorred. There is no Zen in this, but sloth and mere vegetation. The battle must rage in its full vigor and masculinity. Without it, whatever peace that obtains is a simulacrum, and it has no deep foundations, the first storm it may encounter will crush it to the ground. Zen is quite emphatic in this. Certainly, the moral virility to be found in Zen, apart from its mystic flight, comes from the fighting of a battle of life courageously and undauntedly.

From the ethical point of view, therefore, Zen may be

considered a discipline aiming at the reconstruction of character. Our ordinary life only touches the fringe of personality, it does not cause a commotion in the deepest parts of the soul. Even when the religious consciousness is awakened, most of us lightly pass over it so as to leave no marks of a bitter fighting on the soul. We are thus made to live on the superficiality of things. We may be clever, bright, and all that, but what we produce lacks depth, sincerity, and does not appeal to the inmost feelings. Some are utterly unable to create anything except makeshifts or imitations betraying their shallowness of character and want of spiritual experience. While Zen is primarily religious, it also moulds our moral character. It may be better to say that a deep spiritual experience is bound to effect a change in the moral structure of one's personality.

How is this so?

The truth of Zen is such that when we want to comprehend it penetratingly we have to go through a great struggle, sometimes very long and exacting a constant vigilance. To be disciplined in Zen is no easy task. A Zen master once remarked that the life of a monk can be attained only by a man of great moral strength, and that even a minister of the state cannot expect to become a successful monk. (Let us remark here that in China to be a minister of the state was considered to be the greatest achievement a man could ever hope for in this world.) Not that a monkish life requires the austere practice of asceticism, but that it implies the elevation of one's spiritual powers to their highest notch. All the utterances or activities of the great Zen masters have come from this elevation. They are not intended to be enigmatic or driving us to confusion. They are the overflowing of a soul filled with deep experiences. Therefore, unless we are ourselves elevated to the same height as the masters, we cannot gain the same commanding views of life.



Says Ruskin: "And be sure also, if the author is worth anything, that you will not get at his meaning all at once, —nay, that at his whole meaning you will not for a long time arrive in any wise. Not that he does not say what he means, and in strong words too; but he cannot say it all and what is more strange, *will* not, but in a hidden way and in parable, in order that he may be sure you want it. I cannot quite see the reason of this, nor analyse that cruel reticence in the breasts of wise men which makes them always hide their deeper thought. They do not give it you by way of help, but of *reward*, and will make themselves sure that you deserve it before they allow you to reach it." And this key to the royal treasury of wisdom is given us only after a patient and painful moral struggle.

The mind is ordinarily chock-full with all kinds of intellectual nonsense and passional rubbish. They are of course useful in their own ways in our daily life. There is no denying that. But it is chiefly because of these accumulations that we are made miserable and groan under the feeling of bondage. Each time we want to make a movement, they fetter us, they choke us, and cast a heavy veil over our spiritual horizon. We feel as if we are constantly living under restraint. We long for naturalness and freedom, yet we do not seem to attain them. The Zen masters know this, for they have gone through the same experiences once. They want to have us get rid of all these wearisome burdens which we really do not have to carry in order to live a life of truth and enlightenment. Thus they utter a few words or demonstrate with action that, when rightly comprehended, will deliver us from the oppression and tyranny of these intellectual accumulations. But the comprehension does not come to us so easily. Being so long accustomed to the oppression, the mental inertia becomes hard to remove. In fact it has gone down deep into the roots of our own being, and the

whole structure of personality is to be overturned. The process of reconstruction is stained with tears and blood. But the height the great masters have climbed cannot otherwise be reached; the truth of Zen can never be attained unless it is attacked with the full force of personality. The passage is strewn with thistles and brambles, and the climb is slippery in the extreme. It is no pastime but the most serious task in life, no idlers will ever dare attempt it. It is indeed a moral anvil on which your character is hammered and hammered. To the question, "What is Zen?" a master gave this answer, "Boiling oil over a blazing fire." This scorching experience we have to go through before Zen smiles on us and say, "Here is your home."

One of those utterances by the Zen masters that will stir a revolution in our minds is this: "All things return to the One, but where does the One return?" to which Joshu (趙州) answered, "When I was in Seiju, I had a monkish garment made which weighed seven *chin*." What an irrelevant reply to the most serious question one can ever raise in the history of thought! It sounds almost sacrilegious when we know how many souls there are who go down under the weight of this question. But Joshu's earnestness leaves no room for doubt as is quite well known to all the students of Zen. Joshu's itinerary is said to have lasted until his eightieth year, and the above was one of those exclamations that dropped from the lips of such a veteran Zen master. However easy and even careless it may appear, there is hidden in it a most precious gem in the literature of Zen. We do not know how many students of Zen were made to sweat and cry in tears because of the inscrutability of this statement of Joshu's.

To give another instance: a monk asked the master Shin of Chosa (長沙岑), "Where is Nansen (南遷) gone after his death?" Replied the master, "When Sekito (石頭)

was a young novice, he saw the Sixth Patriarch." "I am not asking about the young novice. What I wish to know is, where is Nansen gone after his death." "As to that," said the master, "it makes one think." The immortality of the soul is another big question. The history of religion is built upon this one question, one may almost say. Everybody wants to know about life after death. Where do we go when we pass away from this earth? Is there really another life? or is the end of this the end of all? While there may be many who do not worry themselves as to the ultimate significance of the One, there are none perhaps who have not once at least in their lives asked themselves concerning their destiny after death. Whether Sekito when young saw the Sixth Patriarch or not, does not seem to have any inherent connection with the departure of Nansen. The latter was the teacher of Chosa, and naturally the monk asked him whither the teacher finally passed. Chosa's answer is no answer, judged by the ordinary rules of logic. Hence the second question, but still a sort of equivocation from the lips of the master. What does this "making one think" explain? From this it is apparent that Zen is one thing and logic another. When we fail to make this distinction and expect of Zen to give us something logically consistent and intellectually illuminating, we altogether misinterpret the signification of Zen. Did I not state in the beginning that Zen deals with facts and not with generalisations? And this is the very point where Zen goes straight down to the foundations of personality. The intellect ordinarily does not lead us there, for we do not live in the intellect, but in the will. Truly says Brother Lawrence in his "The Practice of the Presence of God," "That we ought to make a great difference between the acts of the understanding and those of the will: that the first were comparatively of little value, and the others, all."

Zen literature is all brimful of such statements, which

seem to have been uttered so casually, so innocently, but those who actually know what Zen is will testify to the fact that all these utterances dropped so naturally from the lips of the masters are like deadly poisons, that when they are once taken in they cause such a violent pain as to make one's intestines wriggle nine times and more, as the Chinese would express it. But it is only after such pain and turbulence that all the internal impurities are purged and one is born with quite a new outlook on life. It is strange that Zen grows intelligible when these mental struggles are gone through. But the fact is that Zen is an experience actual and personal, and not a knowledge to be gained by analysis or comparison. "Do not talk poetry except to a poet; only the sick know how to sympathise with the sick." This explains the whole situation. Our minds are to be so matured as to be in tune with those of the masters. Let this be accomplished, and when one string is struck, the other will inevitably respond. Harmonious notes always result from the sympathetic resonance of two or more cords. And what Zen does for us is to prepare our minds to be yielding and appreciative recipients of the old masters. In other words, psychologically Zen releases whatever energies we may have in store of which we are not conscious in ordinary circumstances.

Some say that Zen is self-suggestion. But this does not explain anything. When the word "Yamato-damashi" is mentioned, it seems to awaken in most Japanese a fervent patriotic passion. The children are taught to respect the flag of the rising sun, and when the soldiers come in front of the regimental colours they involuntarily salute. When a boy is reproached for not acting like a little samurai and disgracing the name of his ancestor, he at once musters his courage and will resist temptations. All these ideas are energy-releasing ideas for the Japanese, and this release, according to some

psychologists, is self-suggestion. Social conventions and imitative instincts may also be regarded as self-suggestions. So is moral discipline. An example is given to the students to follow or imitate it. The idea gradually takes root in them through suggestion, and they finally come to act as if it were their own. Self-suggestion is a barren theory, it does not explain anything. When they say that Zen is self-suggestion, do we get any clearer idea of Zen? Some think it scientific to call certain phenomena by a term newly come into fashion, and rest satisfied with it as if they disposed of them in an illuminating way. The study of Zen must be taken up by the profounder psychologists.

My theory is that there is still an unknown region in our consciousness which has not yet been thoroughly and systematically explored. It is sometimes called the Unconscious or the Subconscious. This is a territory filled with dark images, and naturally most scientists are afraid of treading upon it. But this must not be taken as denying the fact of its existence. Just as our ordinary field of consciousness is filled with all possible kinds of images, beneficial and harmful, systematic and confusing, clear and obscure, forcefully assertive and weakly fading; so is the Subconscious a storehouse of every form of occultism or mysticism, understood by the term all that is known as latent or abnormal or psychic or spiritualistic. The power to see into the nature of one's own being lies also hidden here. Zen awakens it. The awakening is known as *Satori*, or the opening of a third eye.

How is this to be effected?

By meditating on those utterances or actions that are directly poured out from the inner region undimmed by the intellect or the imagination, and that are calculated successfully to exterminate all the turmoils arising from ignorance and confusion.

(As to meditation, Zen has its own way of practising it,

and it is to be distinguished from what is popularly understood by the term. Zen has nothing to do with mere quietism or losing oneself in a trance. I may have an occasion to write on the subject later.)

In concluding this paper, let me cite some of the methods resorted to by the masters in order to open the spiritual eye of the disciple. It is natural that they frequently make use of the various religious insignia which they carry when going out to the Hall of the Dharma. Such are generally the "hossu" (拂子), "shippe" (竹篋), "nyoi" (如意), or "shu-*jiyō*" (拄杖 or a staff). The last-mentioned seems to have been the most favorite instrument used in the demonstration of the truth of Zen. Let me cite some examples of it.

According to Ye-ryo (慧稜), of Choikei (長慶), "when one knows what that staff is, one's life study of Zen comes to an end." This reminds us of Tennyson's flower in the crannied wall. For when we understand the reason of the staff, we know "what God and man is," that is to say, we get an insight into the nature of our own being and finally puts a stop to all the doubts and hankerings that have upset our mental tranquillity. The significance of the staff in Zen can thus readily be comprehended.

Ye-sei (慧清), of Basho (芭蕉), once made the following declaration: "When you have the staff, I will give you one; when you have none, I will take it away from you." This is one of the most characteristic statements of Zen, but later Bokitsu (慕詰), of Daiyi (大滙), was bold enough to challenge this by saying what directly contradicts it, viz., "As to myself, I differ from him. When you have the staff, I will take it away from you; and when you have none, I will give you one. This is my statement. Can you make use of the staff? or can you not? If you can, Tokusan (德山) will be your vanguard and Rinzai (臨濟) your rearguard. But if you cannot, let it be restored to its original master."

A monk approached Bokuju (睦州) and said, "What is the statement surpassing [the wisdom of] all Buddhas and Patriarchs?" The master instantly held forth his staff before the congregation, and said, "I call this a staff, and what do you call it?" The monk who asked the question uttered not a word. The master holding it out again, said, "A statement surpassing [the wisdom of] all Buddhas and Patriarchs,—was that not your question, O monk?"

To those who carelessly go over such remarks as Bokuju's may regard them as quite nonsensical. Whether the stick is called a staff or not, it does not seem to matter very much as far as the divine wisdom surpassing the limits of our knowledge is concerned. But the one made by Ummon (雲門), another great master of Zen, is perhaps more accessible. He also once lifted his staff before a congregation and remarked; "In the scriptures we read that the ignorant take this for a real thing, the Hinayanists resolve it into a nonentity, the Pratyekabuddhas regard it as a hallucination, while the Bodhisattvas admit its apparent reality which is however essentially empty." "But," continued the master, "monks, you simply call it a staff when you see one. Walk or sit as you will, but do not stand irresolute."

The same old insignificant staff and yet more mystical statements from Ummon. One day his announcement was: "Herein lies the whole universe annihilated! herein lies the whole universe sustained!" Asked a monk, "How annihilated!" "Reeling and staggering!" "How sustained!" "Be the chef." "How is it when it is neither annihilated nor sustained?" The master stood up from his seat, and said, "Mahāprajñāpāramitā!" On another occasion, Ummon will produce the staff, saying, "My staff has turned into a dragon, and it has swallowed up the whole universe; where would the great earth with its mountains and rivers be?" On still another occasion, Ummon, quoting an ancient Bud-

dhist philosopher who said that "Knock at the emptiness of space and you hear a voice; strike a piece of wood and there is no sound," Ummon took out his staff, and striking space, he cried, "Oh, how it hurts!" Then tapping at the board, he asked, "Any noise?" A monk responded, "Yes, there is a noise."\* Thereupon exclaimed the master, "O you ignoramus!"

If I go on like this, there will be no end. So I stop, but expect some of you asking me the following questions: "Have these utterances anything to do with one's seeing into the nature of one's own being? Is there any relationship possible between those apparently nonsensical talks about the staff and the all-important problem of the reality of life?"

In answer I append these two passages, one from Jimyo (慈明) and the other from Yengo (圓悟): In one of his sermons, Jimyo said: "As soon as one particle of dust is raised, the great earth manifests itself there in its entirety. In one lion are revealed millions of lions, and in millions of lions is revealed one lion. Thousands and thousands of them there are indeed, but know ye just one, one only." So saying he lifted up his staff, and continued, "Here is my own staff, and where is that one lion?" Bursting out into a "Kwats (喝)," he set the staff down, and left the pulpit.

In the *Hekigan* (碧巖錄), Yengo expresses the same idea in his introductory remark to the "one finger Zen" of Gutei (俱胝一指禪):

"One particle of dust is raised and the great earth lies therein; one flower blooms and the universe rises with it. But where should our eye be fixed when the dust is not yet stirred and the flower has not yet bloomed? Therefore, it is said that, like cutting a bundle of thread, one cut cuts all

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\* This reminds one of the remark made by the master Ten (展), of Hofuku (保福), who took up his staff and struck a monk approaching. When the monk naturally cried with pain, said the master, "How is it that this does not get hurt?"



asunder ; again, like dyeing a bundle of thread, one dyeing dyes all in the same colour. Now get out all your entangling relations and rip them up to pieces, but do not lose track of your own inner treasure ; for it is through this that the high and the low universally responding and the advanced and the backward making no distinction, each manifests itself in full perfection."

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