

Zen and Buddhism

ABE MASAO

1. Introduction

“Is Zen a form of Buddhism?” The answer to this question would have to be in both the affirmative and the negative at the same time. In the affirmative because, historically speaking, Zen is conceived as a form of Buddhism founded by Bodhidharma in China in the sixth century. As it developed in China, Korea and Japan, it acquired the trappings of a religious order, with its own temples, rituals, and robes. In this sense, Zen can be called a particular form of Buddhism standing alongside other forms of Buddhism, such as the T’ien-t’ai (Tendai), the Hua-yen (Kegon), the Chen-yen (Shingon) and the Ching-t’u (Jōdo) sects. Further, in terms of its teaching and practice, Zen, in the course of its long history, has come to generate its own particular doctrines and methods comparable to those of the other schools. We may call this form of Zen “traditional Zen.”

At the same time, the question, “Is Zen a form of Buddhism?” must be answered in the negative, for Zen, we would assert, is not merely one particular form of Buddhism, but rather, in a fundamental sense, the basic source of all forms of Buddhism. This idea is well expressed in the Zen statement, “Zen is the integrating storehouse of the Buddha-dharma.” Alluded to here is the all-encompassing dimension of “Zen itself,” that is, Zen that is at once Buddhism itself. The Zen claim to be the root-source of all forms of Buddhism can be seen in the following classic formulations:

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Furyū-mōji 不立文字 Not relying on words or letters;
Kyōge-betsuden 教外別伝 An independent transmission
 apart from the scriptural doctrine;
Jikishi-ninshin 直指人心 Directly pointing to the human
 Mind; and
Kenshō-jōbutsu 見性成佛 Awakening to one's Original
 Nature, thereby actualizing one's own Buddhahood.

Since these formulations clarify the Zen position as distinguished from other forms of Buddhism, it is important to elucidate their meaning. However, before we can do so and, most important, before we can consider why Zen is called the very root-source of all forms of Buddhism, a review of the nature and development of Buddhism is in order.

2. The Nature and Development of Buddhism

To review the nature of Buddhism it would be helpful to clarify the similarity and difference between the terms "Buddha" and "Christ."

A. The Affinity between "Buddha" and "Christ"

What we today call Buddhism has its origins in the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, who lived in northeastern India between 560 and 480 B.C. "Shakyamuni" means "the sage from the Shakya tribe." His family name was Gautama, his given name, Siddhartha, meaning "He whose aim will be accomplished." After his Enlightenment, Siddhartha Gautama came to be called the Buddha by his disciples, meaning "Enlightened One" or "Awakened One." What was it to which he became awakened? To Dharma—to the law of the universe, that is, the law of dependent co-origination. The Buddha realized that everything in the universe is co-arising and co-ceasing, that everything is interdependent with each other; that nothing exists independently, that nothing has its own enduring, fixed being. In other words, the term "Buddha" indicates one who has awakened to this Law. Unlike the proper nouns "Gautama" and "Siddhartha," the term "Buddha" is a generic term or title, which applies not only to Siddhartha Gautama, but to anyone who has awakened to the Dharma, the law of dependent co-origination.

In this sense, the term "Buddha" shares an affinity to the term

“Christ.” In Christianity, one speaks of “Jesus Christ.” “Jesus” is the given name of the carpenter’s son born to Mary at Nazareth at the beginning of the Christian era. It is the Latinized form of the Hebrew word for “Joshua,” meaning “God will save.” “Christ,” however, is a common noun meaning “the Anointed One,” referring to the Messiah whose appearance is prophesied in the Old Testament. The term being such, “Christ” is applicable not only to Jesus of Nazareth, but also to anyone deemed qualified to be called “the Anointed One.” The Jews, for instance, do not call Jesus of Nazareth “Christ,” simply because they do not regard him as *the* Messiah—although many of them regard him as a prophet. Only those who admit Jesus *as* the Christ are properly to be called Christians. Later, “Christ” gradually came to be applied as a proper noun, that is, as part of the name of “Jesus Christ.” Originally, though, the term “Christ,” like the term “Buddha,” was not a proper noun, but a generic name or title.

I understand that Paul Tillich has coined the phrase “Jesus *as* the Christ” to express the essential relationship between Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ as the long-awaited Messiah. Buddhists might well follow Tillich’s example to refer to Siddhartha Gautama *as* the Buddha. At any rate, we can detect here a certain parallel between Gautama as the Buddha and Jesus as the Christ.

B. The Disparity between “Buddha” and “Christ”

A great disparity exists, however, between the terms “Buddha” and “Christ.” In Christianity, the title “Christ” properly applies only to Jesus of Nazareth. In Buddhism, on the other hand, the title “Buddha” can legitimately be applied not only to Siddhartha Gautama, but to anyone who attains enlightenment to the Dharma. Thus, in Buddhism, there are many Buddhas—indeed, too many to count. This difference arises for the following reasons: first, in Christianity, “Christ” is the Messiah, a figure endowed with a divine character, hence it would necessarily be the case that the term is an exclusive one and cannot be ascribed to just anyone. In Buddhism, however, the “Buddha” refers to one who awakens to the Dharma, an awakening that lies within the realm of possibility of all human beings. Second, in Christianity, Jesus as the Christ is the Son of God, the *only* incarnation of God in the history of the world; consequently, his historical existence is essential as the final revelation of God. Again, Tillich

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employs the term *final* revelation to refer specifically to Jesus Christ. He recognizes the possibility of preliminary revelation or partial revelation outside of Jesus Christ, but insists that Jesus Christ is the *final* revelation, indicating that he is the *last, genuine and decisive* revelation. In Buddhism, by contrast, Siddhartha Gautama does not hold the exclusive role of being the only Enlightened One to appear in human history. In a sense, Siddhartha's historical existence could be said to be far less essential to the Buddhist religion as the Dharma he realized.

A comparison of relevant Buddhist and Christian sayings may serve to underscore the similarities and differences between the Buddha and Christ. The first set shows their similarities; the second set sets forth their essential difference. The first set is as follows:

GAUTAMA BUDDHA: "Who sees Dharma, sees me. Who sees me, sees Dharma. Because it is by seeing Dharma that one sees me, it is by seeing me that one sees Dharma." (*Samyutta-nikāya*, 22.87; this is not Gautama's own saying, but a passage from one of the oldest Buddhist scriptures.)

JESUS CHRIST: "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him." (John 14:7); and "He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, "Show us the Father?" (John 14:9)

In this set of sayings we can see a striking affinity between Gautama and Jesus in identifying themselves with the Dharma and God the Father, respectively. Both of them strongly emphasize their identity with Dharma or Father. In the second set of quotations, however, we realize a remarkably different aspect of these identities. The second set reads as follows:

GAUTAMA BUDDHA: "Regardless of the appearance or non-appearance of the Tathāgata (Shakyamuni Buddha) in this world, the Dharma is always present." (*Samyutta-nikāya*, vol. 12)

JESUS CHRIST: "I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, but by me." (John 14:7)

As this quotation indicates, the identity of Jesus Christ with God the

Father is unique to him, realized only by him and not by anyone else. He is the *sole* incarnation of God and the mediator between God and human beings. On the other hand, Gautama Buddha's identity with Dharma is not unique to him, not realized by him alone, but can be realized by anyone. He is not the sole mediator between Dharma and his fellow beings. In marked contrast to the Christian understanding of Jesus Christ who is *the* center of history as well as *the* final revelation of God, Gautama Buddha is neither *the* center of history, nor *the* final revelation, nor *the* final awakening.

C. The Position of the Historical Buddha in Buddhism

What position, then, does Siddhartha as the Buddha hold in Buddhism? He may be said to be the *first* person to awaken to the Dharma and thereby become a Buddha, the first to realize *what* the Dharma is, the first to realize with his total existence the way to realize the Dharma. For these reasons he is called the founder of Buddhism. Essentially, though, anyone can become a Buddha, just as Siddhartha did, if one follows the same path, and in fact, it is incumbent that one do so insofar as one is a Buddhist. In this sense, Buddhism is not only comprised of the teachings of the Buddha, but can rightly be characterized as the "teaching of becoming a Buddha." On the other hand, though Christianity contains the teachings of Christ, it can never be called the "teaching of becoming a Christ."

This disparity is seen also in the medieval Christian spirituality of *imitatio Christi*, and especially the doctrines of baptism and Eucharist. A Christian becomes one with Christ as Christ is one with the Father through the sacramental union with Christ in baptism and in the Eucharist. The Christ with whom the Christian becomes one represents the only genuine and decisive revelation and stands at the center of history. To become one with the Christ means to *participate* in Him, not to become Christ. Therefore, one does not become one with Christ in the same way that one becomes a Buddha.

The Buddha's disciples clearly assumed they could never stand on a spiritual par with their teacher Shakyamuni. For them it seemed unconscionable to even entertain the notion they would ever experience the complete enlightenment Shakyamuni had. No matter how far they progressed in their ascetic practices, they thought the highest goal attainable was the stage of the Arhat, literally, "the Worthy." Though

becoming an Arhat was short of becoming a "Buddha," this, for them, especially in with Theravada Buddhist tradition, represented the final stage of spiritual progress. Mahayana Buddhism, however, took the Buddha's teaching to heart and developed various ways for one to become a Buddha.

The fact that Siddhartha as the Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, is neither the only Buddha, the center of history, nor the final Awakening to the Dharma, was clearly and impressively expressed by Shakyamuni himself. Shortly before his death, seeing the anxious look of those surrounding him on his deathbed, Shakyamuni addressed Ananda, one of his ten great disciples, as follows:

O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves and do not rely on external help. Live the Dharma as a lamp. Seek salvation alone in the Dharma. Look not for assistance to anyone besides yourselves.

Obviously, when he said to his disciples, "Do not rely on external help," and "Look not for assistance to anyone besides yourselves" he was including himself among those he referred to as "external help" and "anyone besides yourselves"—this despite the fact that he had been their teacher for many years. Less apparent is the significance of this statement in the context of the other passages—"Rely on yourselves. . . . Seek salvation alone in the Dharma" and "Be ye lamps unto yourselves. . . . Live the Dharma as a lamp." In this address Shakyamuni did not claim exclusive identity with the Dharma, identifying it instead with each individual disciple. This would indicate that the identity with the Dharma is not unique to Gautama Buddha, but is common to all people. Further, in the concrete situation of his death, he emphasizes each person's direct identity with the Dharma, characterizing it as an identity that is without external help or mediator.

Jesus not only emphasizes his identity with the Father, but also the possibility of his disciples doing even greater works than he had accomplished. At the same time, he clearly states: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I say with you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works" (John 14:10). This means that the possibility of the disciples' doing the same work as Jesus had done is dependent entirely on their

belief in Jesus. Our identity with the Father is exclusively based on the belief in Jesus' identity with the Father. Thus we see a significant difference between Buddhism and Christianity in terms of our identity with the Dharma or the Father. In other words, in Buddhism we have a direct identification with the Dharma without Shakyamuni's mediation, but in Christianity our identity with the Father is mediated by the belief in Jesus' identity with the Father.

Now the next point is this: in Buddhism, despite the identity of a particular individual with the Dharma and despite the identity of even Shakyamuni himself with the Dharma, the Dharma can be said to exist beyond all particular existences. The Dharma exists universally, apart from all human existence. Even Gautama Buddha is not the creator of the Dharma, but only its discoverer. This point he clearly states himself, saying, "I only found an old path in the woods." And this is the reason why he says, as quoted before, that "regardless of the appearance or non-appearance of the Tathāgata (Shakyamuni Buddha) in this world, the Dharma is always present."

Although the Dharma transcends all individual existences, that of Shakyamuni Buddha included, and is present universally, there is no Dharma without someone to realize it. In other words, the Dharma is realized as the Dharma in its absolute universality only through a particular realizer. Without such a person no one would know of the existence of the universal Dharma functioning throughout the world. Yet who is qualified to discourse on the Dharma in its absolute universality? Certainly not those who have never realized it. Those who fail to attain their own realization come away with an understanding of the Dharma that is lifeless and empty. Only those who have realized the Dharma with their entire being can truly speak of its absolute universality. Thus, as its first realizer, Shakyamuni was cognizant with *his entire being* of his being a realizer of the Dharma for his own sake as well as for all posterity. This he clearly points to, saying, "He who sees me, sees the Dharma."

While Shakyamuni Buddha may be the *first* realizer of Dharma in our era, he is not its *sole* realizer. As a realizer of the Dharma in its total universality, Shakyamuni becomes *a* center, not *the* center, of the Buddhist religion since anyone who realizes the Dharma in effect become one of its centers as a realizer of the Dharma, that is, a Buddha. Hence, the significance of Shakyamuni's historical existence

stands on a par with that of all others who realize the Dharma, except that he was the first to do so.

D. The Self-Awakening of the Dharma

How can we maintain these two apparently contradictory aspects of the Dharma: that is, its total universality on the one hand, and its dependency upon a particular realizer on the other? The answer lies in the fact that the realization of the Dharma is nothing but *the self-awakening of the Dharma itself*. Your Awakening is, of course, *your own*; it is *your* awakening to the Dharma in its complete universality. But this awakening is possible only by overcoming our self-centeredness, i.e., only through the total negation of ego-self. Our self-centeredness is the fundamental hindrance for the manifestation of the Dharma. Originally, the Dharma is present universally, but due to our self-centeredness it does not manifest itself to us. Therefore, when our self-centeredness is overcome and selflessness is achieved, i.e., *anātman*, or “no-self, is realized, the Dharma naturally awakens to itself. Accordingly, the self-awakening of the Dharma has the following double sense. First, it is *your* self-awakening of the Dharma in your egoless true Self. Secondly, it is the self-awakening of the *Dharma itself* in and through your whole existence. In other words, a particular individual’s self-awakening to the Dharma and the Dharma’s self-awakening are not two, but one.

E. Newton, Christ and the Buddha

In order to elucidate the true meaning of the self-awakening of the Dharma, let us to compare it with Newton’s discovery of the universal law of gravity and with the idea of Jesus Christ as the final revelation of God. The universal law of gravity was discovered by Newton in the seventeenth century. Before Newton’s discovery, no one knew of the existence of such a law. This fact, however, does not mean no law of gravity existed prior to its discovery. On the contrary, it had been functioning from the beginning of the universe and will function until the end. In other words, the law of gravity exists and functions by itself apart from Newton’s discovery. Newton did not create the law but simply discovered that which had always existed universally, by itself. It is, however, also true that apart from Newton’s discovery, no one would ever have known of this law. Thus, as in the case of Buddhist Dharma,

we encounter two apparently contradictory aspects of the law of gravity, that is, its total universality and self-existence on the one hand, and its dependency upon Newton's discovery on the other. But these two aspects do not result in a contradiction. Instead, they consist of one single reality, that is, the "discovery of the law of gravity." For with Newton's discovery, the law of gravity manifested itself in its entirety, hence his discovery and the manifestation of that law are not two but one.

This, however, does not mean that Newton's *entire being* is identical with the law of gravity. Of course, his *physical body* is subject to, and thereby is constantly affected by the law of gravity, but his mind, heart, consciousness, spirituality and personality are free from that law. In short, Newton's *personal existence* as an individual human self is not identical with the law of gravity, while his physical body is subject to the law. Consequently, unlike Gautama Buddha, *only* by pointing to *his physical body* can Newton say, "Those who see me see the law of gravity." This is because the law he discovered is one governing the physical world, the objective world of nature. It is not a universal law governing both the objective and subjective world, as in the case of Buddhist's law of dependent co-origination. In Newton's case, his discovery did not require the *total* negation of his ego-self, that is, the realization of no-self, although it required the negation of the mere subjective view of the world.

In this regard, the self-awakening of the Dharma in Buddhism is more akin to the divine revelation of Jesus as the Christ in Christianity. In some interpretations of Christianity, God exists as a universal Godself, without dependence upon anything else. Yet, without Jesus Christ as the revelation of God and as the incarnation of the Son of God, we cannot see God. This is precisely the reason Jesus says, "Those who see me see God." Jesus' flesh manifests itself as the Son of God who has emptied himself without counting himself as God's equal. This means that Jesus' *entire being* is nothing but the revelation of the Will of God. Jesus' historical existence and the revelation of the divine will are not two but one. Unlike Newton's discovery of the law of gravity, this oneness refers not to the law of the objective world but to a deeply subjective religious truth. Again, unlike Newton, the revelation of Jesus as the Christ requires the death of the ego-self to reveal the Will of God. In this regard, there is a great affinity between

Gautama's self-awakening of the Dharma and Jesus as the revelation of God. In both cases the total identity between the person and the universal principle is fully realized through the death of ego-self.

As Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to God but by me." Jesus is the only person in whom that total identity is realized. Furthermore, the universal principle with which he is totally identical is the personal God whom he calls "Father." Gautama Buddha, on the other hand, is not the only person in whom that total identity is realized, but one of many. The universal principle with which he is totally identical is not a personal deity, but an impersonal law, applicable equally to human beings and nature alike. In this respect, Gautama's case is more akin to Newton's discovery than to that of Jesus, although in the former, Gautama as the Buddha is identical subjectively or existentially with the universal law of dependent co-origination through his self-awakening, whereas in the latter, Newton is identical objectively with the universal law of gravity through his scientific discovery.

F. The Two Aspects of Self-Awakening

As I have stated above, in Buddhism the self-awakening of the Dharma has two aspects. First, it is *your* self-awakening of the Dharma in your ego-less true Self. You are the subject of awakening and the Dharma is the object of awakening. Second, it is the self-awakening of the *Dharma itself* in and through your entire being, with the Dharma as the subject of awakening and you as the object through which Dharma awakens to itself.

This explanation, however, tends to be overly analytical and by shifting out these two aspects, does not convey the true character of the self-awakening of the Dharma. In reality, these two aspects are completely inseparable from one another and are fused into one single reality of the self-awakening of the Dharma. Strictly speaking, though, even this explanation falls short. In reality, it is *not* that *on the one hand* there is an aspect in which you as the subject awaken to the Dharma as the object and *on the other hand* there is another aspect in which the Dharma as the subject awakens to itself through you as the object, *and that then* these two aspects are united and fused into one single reality of the self-awakening of the Dharma. This type of explanation is an objectification of the self-awakening of the Dharma from outside

and thus conceptualizes it. The self-awakening of the Dharma, however, can be properly understood only through a nonobjective existential approach. If the self-awakening of the Dharma is grasped from within, that is, existentially, you will realize that this living reality known as the self-awakening of the Dharma is originally and fundamentally single and undifferentiated, completely free from any form of subject-object duality, exists prior to any separation of subject and object. Herein, the whole universe is the stage of the Dharma's self-awakening. It is not that we exist outside of this single reality of the Dharma's self-awakening: we are identical with it. Only when we analyze it from the outside do we resort to such explanations as its having such and such an aspect on the one hand, such and such an aspect on the other, only to conclude that, further, they are inseparably united. We must, however, clearly realize that fundamentally there is one single non-dual reality of self-awakening of the Dharma. "Your awakening to Dharma" and "Dharma's self-awakening in and through you" are just two different ways of expressing one and the same dynamic reality.

Accordingly the two aspects of self-awakening of the Dharma are not to be divvied up fifty-fifty. The aspect of *your* self awakening of *Dharma* is one hundred percent complete, just as the aspect of the self-awakening of the Dharma is one hundred percent complete. These two aspects in their fullness are dynamically united without contradiction, because the self as the subject of your awakening of the Dharma is not your ego-centered self but your true Self realized through the realization of no-self, the complete negation of the ego-centered self. Without the realization of no-self as our true Self, it is impossible for us to realize the dynamic reality of the self-awakening of the Dharma.

It was on the basis of this self-awakening of the Dharma that Shakyamuni said without any sense of contradiction, "Rely on yourselves," and "Seek salvation alone in the Dharma." The statements, "Be ye lamps unto yourselves" and "Live the Dharma as a lamp" are complimentary and not contradictions. Your self as the ultimate reliance is not the ego-self, but rather, the true Self as the realizer of the Dharma. Just as Shakyamuni's awakening was the self-awakening of the Dharma in the double sense mentioned above, so too is anyone's awakening the selfsame self-awakening of the Dharma.

G. Schisms in the Development of Buddhism

This is the basic standpoint of Buddhism, which after his Awakening was clarified by Shakyamuni himself throughout his life and particularly, as mentioned before, as he stood on the threshold of death. His death, however, sent shock waves through all his disciples and followers, for not only had they lost their revered teacher but also had to face the undeniable fact that even Shakyamuni Buddha, the Awakened One, was subject to decay and death just like they themselves. As they pondered the meaning of his death, they gradually began to idealize his existence and personality. This led to the development of elaborate Buddhological systems, with their various doctrinal interpretations of the meaning of Shakyamuni Buddha's historical existence.

In its historical development Buddhism has experienced various schisms, one of the most basic of which is that between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. Theravada means "those who hold to the Doctrine of the Elders," indicating the Theravada's origin in the elder monks of the Buddha's following. Conservative in the orientation of its teaching and practice, it respects the Buddha as the supreme Enlightened One, and strives to maintain the original form of the Buddha's teaching and practice. The goal of the monastic life they lead is Arhatship, which they pursue in their search for Nirvana for their own emancipation.

The Mahayana, on the other hand, originated in the Mahasamghika, or "Great Assembly." More liberal and progressive than the Elders, it included monks and nuns of lesser attainment and even lay practitioners. They insisted that Gautama Buddha's teachings and practice reflected the historical and social situation in which he lived and that he might teach differently in a different historical and social situation. What is important is not necessarily the formal teaching and practice of the Buddha, but the intent with which the Buddha advocated these received forms. Accordingly, among the main concerns for the Mahayanist were the questions, "What is the sole purpose of the appearance of Gautama Buddha in this world? What is Shakyamuni Buddha's originally cherished intention for his appearance in this world?" As Edward Conze states, "A free and unfettered development of the doctrine was thus assured, and innovations, even if intractable in the

existing body of scriptures, could be justified as revelations of the real principle of Buddhahood" (*Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*, 1951, p. 121). Through a free interpretation of what they perceived to be Gautama Buddha's inner intent, Mahayanists tried to deepen the Buddha's original teachings, to explore their religious depths. One of the developments of the Mahayana doctrine was the emphasis of the Bodhisattva ideal. Unlike the Arhat, the Bodhisattva is one who attempts to lead all sentient beings to attain Nirvana, believing that one's own awakening can only be ultimately consummated by first helping others to attain awakening. This ideal of Bodhisattva is a fitting model for the Mahayana, or "the Great Vehicle," with its goal of universal salvation.

In the centuries after the Buddha's demise, Theravada Buddhism spread to Sri Lanka and other Southeast Asian countries such as Burma, Thailand and Cambodia, where it has maintained considerable conformity. Mahayana Buddhism, on the other hand, developed in northern India, and was disseminated to China, Tibet, Korea and Japan. In the course of its centuries-long development it produced many sutras, or holy scriptures. Basing themselves in a particular sutra as their authoritative text, various Mahayana schools arose such as the Madhyamika, Yogacara, T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen, Chen-yen, Ch'an (Zen), Pure Land and Nichiren sects. Christianity has also experienced various schisms, resulting in the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Protestant Church, the latter further divided into the Church of England, Lutheran, Calvinist, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Church. The diversity within Mahayana Buddhism, however, is greater than that in Christianity, because there is no single authoritative canon like the Christian Bible, and, instead of talking about one absolute God, takes *sūnyatā*, or "emptiness," as its ultimate Reality.

3. *Kyōsō-hanjaku*

When a new sect was established, particularly in China and to some extent in Japan, there arose the practice of *kyōsō-hanjaku* 教相判釈, the judgment and interpretation of the various facets of Buddhist teachings. In my own view, *kyōsō-hanjaku* was needed for two reasons, one, historical, and the other, theological. The historical

reason stems from the fact that the so-called Mahayana sutras came into existence intermittently over a period of nearly a thousand years. They grew out of different situations calling for different systems of thought, over a broad geographic area. Thus, the Mahayana sutras, which are many in number, do not necessarily have an ideological consistency, and in fact show a great deal of variation in their teaching. These Mahayana sutras were over time translated into Chinese by various groups of people without any overall agenda. Perplexed by the influx of sutras maintaining divergent positions all under the name of Buddhism, Chinese Buddhists felt a need to judge and classify them in some way, hence the historical rise of the *kyōsō-hanjaku* systems.

The idea of *kyōsō-hanjaku*, however, is also based more essentially on a theological principle. Certain of the great Buddhists and Buddhist scholars who later became founders of new sects had serious religious concerns as to what was the genuine spirit of Buddhism and which sutra most clearly embodied that spirit. From out of such theological concerns developed the *kyōsō-hanjaku*, which importantly applied new standards for evaluating and grading the various sutras. Thus, the *kyōsō-hanjaku* was not merely the systematic classification of the Mahayana sutras, but was rather a critical new device to determine what sutra contained the true spirit of Buddhism, the selected work being then used to found a new Buddhist system. In this practice the other facets of Buddha's teaching were not excluded, but were integrated as different stages on the way to the ultimate truth represented by the new school.

The establishment of a new sect of Buddhism in China and in Japan would have been well nigh impossible without some sort of *kyōsō-hanjaku* system. The most typical examples of *kyōsō-hanjaku* in China are the "Five Periods and Eight Doctrines" (*gojihakkyō* 五時八教) of the T'ien-t'ai sect and the "Five Doctrines and Ten Tenets" (*gokyō jusshū* 五教十宗) of the Hua-yen sect. In Japan, we may cite the arguments of Kōbō Daishi, the Great Teacher, on the *kenmitsu-nikyō* 顯密二教 (Two Teachings, Exoteric and Esoteric) and the *jūjūshin* 十住心 (Ten Stages of the Mind), and Shinran's *nisō-shijū* 二隻四重 system as other examples. Also, in the early history of Buddhism in India, a distinction was made between so-called Hinayana ("Smaller Vehicle") and Mahayana which, though it cannot be called *kyōsō-hanjaku* proper, may be said to be an anticipation of it.

What is interesting to note in this connection is that, in some instances, when a new *kyōsō-hanjaku* classification was declared, while it may have opened new theological dimensions by its new interpretation of certain sutras, it resulted in almost all other extant forms of Buddhism being discarded or being regarded as secondary. Notable examples of this sort of *kyōsō-hanjaku* are *Kenkyō* 顯教 (Exoteric Buddhism) versus *Mikkyō* 密教 (Esoteric Buddhism), *Shōdō-mon* 聖道門 (Holy Way teaching) versus *Jōdo-mon* 淨土門 (Pure Land teaching), and, with reservations which have to be explained, but in a sense the clearest and most unique example, *Kyō* 教 (Teaching) versus *Zen* 禪 (Meditation).

In these cases, the whole of Buddhism was divided in half, not by simply classifying the extant forms of Buddhism into two groups, but by taking a stance beyond all existing forms of Buddhism and by disclosing a new religious dimension lying at the heart of Buddhism. This newly discovered aspect of the faith may have only faintly appeared on the surface of Buddhism prior to this. These new paradigms introduced a revolutionary development, creating a new antithesis over against the established forms of Buddhism by radically critiquing their existing foundations. The new positions were of course criticized in turn as heretical by the established Buddhist schools. Nevertheless, the newly forged Buddhism usually insisted that it was the real source of Buddhism, while all other forms were secondary and contrived.

The Chen-yen, or Shingon, sect established the distinction between Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism, insisting that while Exoteric Buddhism focused on the written teachings of the historical Buddha, Esoteric Buddhism contained the secret and much more profound teaching of Mahavairocana Buddha, the manifestation of the formless Dharmakāya, which is Truth itself. According to the Chen-yen sect, all other forms of Buddhism were nothing but Exoteric Buddhism, and that Exoteric Buddhism was but an offshoot of the genuine Buddhism of Esoteric Buddhism represented by the Chen-yen sect itself.

Similarly, Pure Land Buddhism set up the contrast between the Holy Way teaching and the Pure Land teaching. This distinction is often referred to as *jiriki-mon* 自力門 (Self-Power Gate) versus *tariki-mon* 他力門 (Other-Power Gate). Pure Land Buddhism insists that while all Buddhist schools up to now have emphasized Awakening through one's "self-power," the present is the age of the Latter Dharma

(*mappō*), for which the practice of the Holy Way is no longer suited. Only the Other-Power teaching of Pure Land Buddhism is the proper way for an essentially powerless humankind. It also maintains that the Pure Land teaching was provided from the very beginning by Amida Buddha who foresaw the suffering of people during this age of the Latter Dharma and thus fulfilled his vow of universal salvation in light of this predicament.

Zen also makes a sharp distinction between what they call *Kyō* and Zen. *Kyō*, meaning "the teaching," in the present case refers to "doctrines" and "scriptures." Strictly speaking, this distinction made by Zen is not *kyōsō-hanjaku* per se, for rather than "judging and interpreting various aspects of the Buddha's teachings," Zen resolves to take a stand over against any form of "teaching" as such.

At any rate, *kyōsō-hanjaku* as practiced by each newly established form of Buddhism critically evaluated the Buddhist scriptures and tended to belittle all the other forms of Buddhism. To be exact, the distinction between Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism was made by Esoteric Buddhism, that between the Holy Way teaching and the Pure Land teaching was established by the Pure Land school, while the contrast between *Kyō* and Zen was set up by Zen. This means that the characterization of Exoteric Buddhism, the Holy Way Gate, or *Kyō* was put forth not by these groups themselves, but by the newer forms of Buddhism. In other words, the various forms of Buddhism classified by Esoteric Buddhism as Exoteric Buddhism do not necessarily call themselves "Exoteric Buddhism." The same is true of those classified as the Holy Way Gate or *Kyō*. In exactly the same way, the earlier distinction between so-called Hinayana and Mahayana was made by Mahayana Buddhism.

Further, as I have noted above, these newly established Buddhist positions respectively constituted an antithesis over against the hitherto existing forms of Buddhism by severe criticism of their spiritual foundations. They usually insisted that their own positions were the real root-source of Buddhism from which all other existing forms of Buddhism came and to which they may be reduced. This sort of revolutionary development was the way in which an entirely new form of Buddhism was established by means of *kyōsō-hanjaku*. One reason why it has been possible for this revolution to occur time and again in the course of Buddhist history is because the ultimate truth of Buddhism, the

Dharma, does not represent an all-controlling principle such as the Will of God, but is predicated, rather, by the principle of self-emptying, as expressed by *anātman* (non-ego) or *śūnyatā* (nonsubstantial emptiness, void).

In summary, Buddhism, particularly Mahayana Buddhism, was able to flourish according to the spiritual climate of the time and place into which it was introduced due to its theological basis in the notions of *anātman* and *śūnyatā*. Thus, throughout its long history in India, China, and Japan, Buddhism produced many divergent forms that differed radically from the original form of Buddhism preached by Shakyamuni. Nevertheless, these novel forms were not purged from the Buddhist world, and instead became the spiritual fountainheads from which new energy entered the Buddhist world. One Buddhist scholar has even suggested in this connection that the history of Buddhism may be regarded as a history of heresy, meaning by this that Buddhism has developed itself by constantly daring to embrace paradigms that may border on the heretical, but which ultimately serve to open new spiritual horizons of the Buddhist world.

In the West, where up until recent times the Mahayana Buddhism of China and Japan was relatively unknown, people are apt to judge the whole of Buddhism by taking the so-called original form of Buddhism preached by Shakyamuni as the standard. Such a static view fails to appreciate the dynamic development of Buddhism. The history of Buddhism, especially of Mahayana, is no less rich and profound than the that of Western philosophy and religion, its various developments issuing from the inexhaustible wellsprings of *anātman* or *śūnyatā*. Yet, this "history of heresy" Buddhism manifests has evolved without serious bloody inquisitions, religious wars or crusades. In this respect I would like to suggest that it was the application of *kyōsō-hanjaku*, backed up by the notions of *anātman* and *śūnyatā*, that may have made the decisive difference.

4. *Kyō* and Zen

To return to the distinction between *Kyō* and Zen, all forms of Buddhism, according to Zen, are ultimately based upon the "Teaching" delivered by Shakyamuni, that is, the spoken teaching recorded as sutras. Traditionally, the Buddhist sutras were believed to be the

records of Shakyamuni's sermons and were considered the source and norm of Buddhism. Nowadays, however, as a result of historical and text-critical studies of the scriptures, it is known that the so-called sutras do not necessarily record the *ipsissima verba* (the precise words) of Shakyamuni. Many of them, particularly those of the Mahayana, were composed much later. Until this became known, however, the sutras were generally regarded by Buddhists as the ultimate foundation and authority of Buddhism. Thus, according to the traditional Buddhist view, the final norm of truth was contained in the sutras, and that which had no basis in the sutras could not be called Buddhist truth.

Each Buddhist school has its own particular sutra (or sutras) as the ultimate authority for its teaching: the Hua-yen had the Avatamsaka; the T'ien-t'ai and Nichiren, the Saddharma-pundarika Sutra; and the Pure Land, the Three Pure Land sutras. To show they are Buddhist and to demonstrate the truth of their teaching, each school makes recourse to the respective sutras. Zen, however, takes exception: it has no such authoritative scripture upon which it is based. This does not mean that it is arbitrary and ignores scriptures, but it dares, rather, to be independent of scripture. In other words, Zen seeks to return to the source of the sutras—that is, to that which is prior to the sutras. "Prior to the sutras" here does not mean prior in a temporal or historical sense. It refers, rather, to the spiritual source "prior to" what is expressed in the sutras. This source is the self-awakening of Shakyamuni which, in Zen, is often expressed by the term "Mind." Being independent of the sutras or scriptures, Zen tries to transmit this Mind of self-awakening from person to person, from generation to generation. This is the meaning of the first two Zen phrases mentioned earlier, "Not relying on words or letters," and "An independent transmission apart from the scriptural doctrine."

When Zen was founded, it distinguished itself from all other forms of Buddhism based on sutras by calling them *Butsugoshū* 仏語宗, or "Buddha-word schools," while calling itself *Butsushinshū* 仏心宗, the "Buddha-mind school." Zen also called other forms of Buddhism "*Kyō*" or "Buddhism standing within *Kyō*, or Teaching." Accordingly, the whole of Buddhism was divided by Zen into either *Kyō* or Zen, the former being "Buddhism within the scriptural teaching" and the latter "Buddhism outside the (scriptural) teaching." Through its criticism of the existing forms of Buddhism, and by taking an

antithetical stance towards them, Zen disclosed a "new" religious foundation lying at the depths of Buddhism, a foundation which had been obscured by the dogmatism and philosophical speculation rampant in the religion up until that time.

Hence, while Zen describes itself an independent transmission outside the scriptural teaching, "outside the teaching" does not mean outside Buddhism; rather, it refers to an *inner* source of that which is "within the teaching." Seen from the point of view of the sutras, Zen is "outside the teaching," but looked at from the religious realization expressed in the sutras, Zen is even more "inner" than what is ordinarily called "Buddhism." Thus, from a Zen perspective, what is usually thought to be "inside the Teaching" is, in fact, "outside." In this way Zen manifests its main concern over entering directly into the inner source or Mind.

Let us now turn to the meaning of "Mind" as it is understood in Zen Buddhism. The "Mind" with which Zen is concerned is neither mind in a psychological sense nor consciousness in its ordinary sense. It is, as I have said before, the self-awakening of the Dharma through which one becomes an Awakened One. It is this Mind, lying at the very source of the scriptures, that is being referred to in the citations, "Directly pointing to the human Mind" and "Awakening to one's Original Nature, thereby actualizing one's own Buddhahood." The word "Nature" in the latter refers to the *true way of human being*. In Buddhism, this is generally called Buddha-nature or Mind-nature, which are simply other terms for Dharma. Zen, however, speaks of it in terms such as "Self-nature" or "One's Original Face," expressions which have far more intimate connotations. This is because, in Zen, Buddha-nature or Dharma is by no means something foreign to one's true Self-nature. For Zen, it is precisely the original nature of human being which is the Buddha-nature; it is precisely this "human Mind" which is the "Buddha-mind." Apart from this "human Mind" there is nothing which can be truly called "Buddha" or "Dharma," nor do we seek for Buddha or Dharma outside of this "Mind."

In spite of Shakyamuni's exhorting his disciples to rely on themselves as a lamp, most of them idealized Shakyamuni as an object of worship or took the teaching of the sutras as the authoritative basis for Buddhism. Yet, in so doing, they relied on something in the past, i.e., on the historical Shakyamuni or the sutras as the record of his

reputed teachings. On the basis of past teachings, they searched for ultimate salvation as a future ideal not to be actualized in the present. In contrast to this attitude, Zen emphasizes, “*Directly* pointing to the human Mind,” and “Awakening to one’s Original Nature and thereby actualizing one’s Buddhahood.” “*Directly*” in this phrase does not necessarily mean “immediately” in a temporal sense, but “right now” in the absolute present which is beyond past, present and future. Hence Zen insists on entering directly into the source “prior to the sutras.” Radically criticizing every other form of Buddhism, Zen faithfully returns to the realization of Shakyamuni, that is, to the self-awakening of the Dharma.

Christianity, needless to say, is not comprised merely of the writings in the Bible. What is important for a Christian is the divine Revelation of the living Christ ever present and effective. The Christ experience, which a Christian reenacts in himself or herself, is the foundation of his or her faith. In this sense, Christianity too is based on something beyond the Bible, something prior to the Bible. However, the Bible is the necessary canon through which a Christian must approach that what is beyond the Bible. In general, Christianity would be classified among the religions Zen calls *Kyō*.

5. Zen Beyond the Scriptures

The Zen position of transcending the scriptures is seen in the following accounts. Chung-feng Ming-pen (J. Chūhō Minpō, 1263–1323), a Chinese Zen master of the Yuan dynasty, said, “With the words of Mahayana scriptures and discourses, memories exist in the mind. This is what is called gaining understanding by something other than myself. It hinders the way of self-awakening.”

One day the Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty, a devoted Buddhist follower, requested Fu Ta-shih (497–569), an outstanding lay Zen Buddhist of that day, to discourse on the Diamond Sutra. Fu sat solemnly in the teaching chair, but uttered not a word. The Emperor said, “I asked you to give a discourse. Why do you not begin to speak?” One of the Emperor’s attendants explained, saying, “Your Majesty, Master Fu has finished discoursing.” What kind of a sermon did this silent Buddhist philosopher deliver? One Zen master, commenting on this story later on, said: “What an eloquent sermon it was!”

The following story may help underscore the difference between Zen and *Kyō*.

A monk once asked Lin-chi (d. 866), the famous Chinese Zen master of the T'ang dynasty, "The twelve divisions of the Three Vehicles of the Buddha's teaching reveal the Buddha-nature, do they not?" Lin-chi retorted, "This weed-patch has never been spaded!" This puzzled the monk who was a lecture-master and who made his living by discoursing on the various scriptures. The twelve divisions of the Three Vehicles of the Buddha's teaching are, in fact, the foundation of the sort of Buddhism Zen calls *Kyō*. Wondering why Zen intentionally took its stance outside the scriptures, the monk had raised a question which was quite understandable to ordinary Buddhists in those days. Elsewhere, Lin-chi even goes so far as to say, "The twelve divisions of the Three Vehicles of the Buddha's teaching are all toilet paper." Lin-chi was telling the monk two things: first, that the monk had not yet begun to "spade the weed patch" of his own mind; and secondly, that he, Lin-chi, had never bothered, since his own awakening, to seek the Buddha-nature in the "weed patch" of scriptural verbiage. With this implication in his answer, Lin-chi broke through the monk's bondage to the scriptures, to point directly to the "human Mind." Studying the scriptures, religious literature and massive commentaries, students of religion are apt to be caught up by the words, only to miss the living truth religion would have us understand. Lin-chi's answer—"This weed-patch has never been spaded"—was a sharp criticism of the monk's superficial understanding of merely the words, which also served to liberate the monk from his bondage to the scriptures. To Lin-chi's answer, the monk then replied, "How could the Buddha deceive us?" For the monk, the twelve divisions were the true and authoritative words of Buddha himself. To call them a "weed patch," or worse, "toilet paper," was unpardonable. The sacred words preached by the Buddha could not have been in error, hence the monk's retort. Lin-chi then said, "Where is the Buddha?" The monk, known for his eloquence on scriptural matters, fell silent. Lin-chi, of course, would have rejected the answer that the Buddha lived in India in the sixth century B.C.

In a somewhat similar vein, you may recall that Søren Kierkegaard emphasized "contemporaneity" (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) with Jesus Christ as the necessary condition for faith. In *Philosophical Fragments* he

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wrote, "One can be a contemporary (in time) without being contemporary (in spirit)" if one has no faith. The real contemporary is not contemporary by virtue of an external, immediate contemporaneity, but by virtue of an internal, religious contemporaneity through faith. For Kierkegaard, to encounter Christ one must see him not with the eyes of the body, but through the eyes of faith. As the First Epistle of Peter puts it, "Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy" (I.8). "The real contemporary," wrote Kierkegaard, "is not an eyewitness in the immediate sense of the word; he is a contemporary as a believer. Through the eyes of faith every non-contemporary (in the immediate sense) becomes a contemporary."

Zen, likewise, emphasizes contemporaneity with the Buddha, not by virtue of an immediate contemporaneity, but by virtue of an internal contemporaneity. In Christianity, however, the subject of contemporaneity is the Christ, as we see in his words, "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). In Zen, on the other hand, the subject of the contemporaneity is none other than the person concerned. Not faith in the Buddha, but the self-awakening of the Dharma is essential to Zen. Wu-men Hui-k'ai, a Chinese Zen master of the Sung dynasty, said, "If you pass through the gateless barrier of Zen you will not only immediately see Chao-chou (the great Zen master of the past); you will also walk hand in hand with the successive Patriarchs, mingling your eyebrows with theirs, seeing with the same eyes, and hearing with the same ears." In Zen, to become a contemporary of the Buddha means that one becomes an Awakened One oneself by awakening to the selfsame Dharma to which Gautama Buddha and the Patriarchs awakened. For Zen and for original Buddhism, there is no Buddha apart from one's own self-awakening.

When asked by Lin-chi "Where is Buddha?" the monk, had he really understood the meaning of "Buddha," should have pointed to the Buddha-nature actualized in himself, and said, "Here is Buddha." As it was, he was struck dumb. But how different was his speechlessness from the silence of Fu Ta-shih before Emperor Wu! While Fu's silence eloquently revealed the Buddha-nature, the monk's speechlessness only exposed the powerlessness of his brand of Buddhism which had relied so heavily on the scriptures.

In his discourses, Lin-chi addressed each person in the audience as

“the one who is, at this moment, right in front of me, solitary, being illuminated, in full awareness, listening to my discourse on the Dharma.” “If you wish to transcend birth-and-death, going-and-coming, and to be freely unattached, you should recognize the *person* who is listening at this moment to this discourse on the Dharma. *He* is the one who has neither shape nor form, neither root nor trunk, and who, having no abiding place, is full of activity. He responds to all kinds of situations and manifests his activity, and yet comes out of nowhere. Therefore, as soon as you try to search for him he is far away; the nearer you try to approach, the farther he turns away from you. ‘Mysterious’ is his name.”

We should not miss the point that it is our “True Self” that Lin-chi called “Person” and “Mysterious.” To awaken to “Man” or to the “True Self” who “is, at this moment, in full awareness, listening to this discourse on the Dharma,” is nothing but self-awakening through which one becomes an Awakened One, a Buddha. Huang-po, Lin-chi’s teacher and an outstanding Zen master of T’ang China, once said, “Your Mind is Buddha; Buddha is this Mind. Mind and Buddha are not separate or different.” Buddha is not separate even for one instant from our Mind.

Let me quote one more story. The Chinese Zen master Nan-chüan (748–834) was once asked by Pai-chang (720–814), one of his fellow monks, if there was a truth that the sages of old had not preached to people. “There is,” said Nan-chüan. “What is this truth?” asked Pai-chang. “It is not mind,” answered Nan-chüan, “it is not Buddha; it is not a thing.” To this, Pai-chang replied, “If so, you have already talked about it.” “I cannot do any better,” was Nan-chüan’s answer. “What would you say?” “I am not a great enlightened one. So how do I know what either talking or non-talking is?” answered Pai-chang. “I don’t understand,” said Nan-chüan. “Alas,” said Pai-chang, “I have already said too much for you.”

No matter how many words we use when we talk about Zen, we can never reach it. On the contrary, the more we attempt to explain Zen, the further we go astray. Since Zen does not rely on words, we ought to be silent. Yet, even if we remained silent, we would be severely beaten by Te-shan (782–865), another Zen master of T’ang China, who said, “Though you *can* speak, thirty blows! Though you *can’t* speak, thirty blows!” This is to say, mere speechlessness is an empty or dead silence.

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Zen, however, finds itself in league neither with speech nor with silence, neither with affirmation nor with negation. We can reach Zen only by transcending speech and silence, affirmation and negation. But what is beyond speech and silence, beyond affirmation and negation?—*that* is the question.