

Religious-Philosophical Existence in Buddhism

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I

THE VERY SAME difficulty pervades the history of all higher forms of religion. It is a difficulty that crops up in the traditional problem of "faith and knowledge," "revelation and reason" or, expressed more generally, "religion and science." Today this difficulty looms before us like a wall, accompanied by the growing dangers, both obvious and hidden, of materialism and nihilism.

It appears that all attempts to separate religion and science from each other or to harmonize differences between religious dogmas and teachings on the one hand and scientific views and discoveries on the other have been unsuccessful. What is needed here is a foundation in which both religion and science can take root.

Up to now, the concept of God has been understood as providing such a foundation. And yet it cannot be denied that it is precisely the concept of God, in the form it has heretofore been presented, that constitutes one of the main sources of the difficulty just mentioned. I am convinced that Buddhism has already possessed for a long time a basis for overcoming this difficulty and I would like to briefly develop my ideas about this matter from one particular perspective. It is well known that the concept of *anatman* (roughly, "no-self") is central to Buddhism. This concept implies the negation of the reality of an existent thing, such as *atman*—that is, it denies that there is anything which, permanent and indivisible, grants identity to each being. In

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Mahayana Buddhism, the concept of *anatman* is used in the same way in two different areas: things in general and man in particular. Perhaps we could say that the concept of *atman* ("the self") corresponds more or less to the concept of physical "substance" from the standpoint of things in general and to the concept of the "subject" (roughly in the Cartesian sense of the "ego" [*res cogitans*]) from the standpoint of man. The concept of *atman*, which includes both these meanings, would therefore correspond approximately to the earlier European concept of "*subjectum*," that is, the basis for each individual existence, each thing and each person. However, the Buddhist idea of *anatman*—and this is very important—denies the reality of any such *subjectum*.

Nevertheless, the question immediately arises: what type of existence does Buddhism want to indicate with the concept of *anatman* or non-*subjectum*? In order to answer this question, it might be helpful to compare this concept with some basic concepts found in the history of Western spirituality.

In that history we encounter, for example, among the ideas of the great ancient philosopher Plotinus the concept of the One. According to Plotinus, the One is beyond the world, both the intelligible and the sensory world, that is, beyond all places where being and thinking hold sway. In order to come to the One, the human soul must go beyond itself, become the same as the One and, in a state of "ecstasy," lose itself (in the sense of an egotistical self-centered subject) in the One. The philosophical system of Plotinus takes up Matter as the extreme limit—Matter which, bereft of all form, lies *beyond* (or more accurately, *on this side of*) all particular substances and which is supposed to be a non-being, $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon$. Although the idealist Plotinus saw the One as the basic principle, modern materialism sees the "One" or single principle in matter (although, of course, in a transformed sense).

In view of what has just been said about Plotinus, it would appear that both concepts, the One and Matter, are two types of non-*subjectum*, although types that oppose each other. Both lie beyond the *subjectum*: the one beyond the subject and the other beyond physical substance.

Nevertheless, we cannot help noticing that both the One and Matter have the character of a *subjectum*. Both possess a certain ground in themselves, so that we are forced to conceive of them as a *subjectum*. We cannot imagine either other than as something that is identical with

itself and that contains its own identity in itself. How is this possible? Simply because both, in spite of their claim (or rather precisely because of their claim) to be the original principle, must appear in opposition to each other. Neither of the two is the other; the One is not Matter and Matter is not the One. Each must therefore be identical with itself. And it is precisely this difference that creates their *subjectum* character—although, according to Plotinus, they are supposed to lie beyond subject and substance.

What happens when something intended to be a non-*subjectum* nevertheless allows itself the character of a *subjectum*? First of all, each non-*subjectum* of this sort offers us a foundation upon which we can ground ourselves. We are always striving zealously to identify ourselves with this foundation. Not only the division mentioned above between idealism and materialism, which holds sway in the history of philosophy, but also the just-mentioned zeal of the representatives of any given age originates in the opposition between original principles. And this antithesis for its part is rooted in the *subjectum* character of these original principles.

Second, it is precisely such a non-*subjectum*, apparently offering man a firm foundation, that actually hinders him from penetrating himself and coming to an essential understanding of himself. It is exactly that which people consider to be the original principle which blocks the way. That which provides them with solid ground for this very reason actually prevents them from continuing along the way to the self. One can see this process at work in the case of all "isms." Christian theology recognizes the concept of God as the *ens realissimum* and posits the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*. The concept of God appears to transcend all opposites: there is nothing that stands in opposition to God. And yet, God Himself is not nothingness. Nothingness (in opposition to God) and the creatures that emerge from nothingness are not God. God and nothingness are therefore always identical only with themselves. Each is actually a non-*subjectum* and thus beyond all subjects and substances, although nevertheless possessing the character of a *subjectum*. God is presented as the essence of all beings or as the absolute subject, before whom all human subjects as such are nothing. Nothingness, for its part, is presented as if it were something. Much later, nothingness even succeeded in becoming an original principle in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. In Nietzsche's

active nihilism, nothingness advanced forward to God's throne and as a result became something profound and unfathomable. That which lacks any ground to stand on now offers itself as something fundamental in the duel with God. The gap between these two original principles became wider than that between idealism and materialism. And all this happened because the concepts of God and nothingness still have the characteristics of a *subjectum* and because they must always appear as opposites. This prevents people from fundamentally penetrating through to their selves in an essential way. Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* says, "If there were gods, how could I bear not being a god? Therefore there are no gods!" We cannot take these well-known words of Nietzsche seriously enough. For they embrace the length and breadth of the difficulty that concerns us here.

This tendency to imagine the non-*subjectum* as something— that is, to think of it once again as having the nature of a *subjectum*—is so deep-rooted that it is already present at the emergence of the basic concepts mentioned above. That is why these fundamental concepts necessarily contain an element of ambiguity. What is to be explained by them by its very nature actually lies beyond the scope of subject and the scope of substance, outside the "sensed" and "intelligible" world. At the same time, however, these basic concepts can account for God and nothingness only by granting them the character of subject or substance. I believe this essential discord clearly shows that the thinking from which they originate is itself already influenced by the tendency mentioned above. It is precisely considerations of this sort that impelled, it seems to me, the ancient Indian thinkers to arrive at the concept of *anatman*.

II

In order to prevail over the above difficulties, we must find an original principle which, on the one hand, does not stand in opposition to anything else and, on the other hand, creates no barrier on the way to an experience of the essential self. This means that the original principle must not have any trace of *subjectum*; it must be a true non-*subjectum*. Can the concept of *anatman* satisfy these conditions?

The non-*subjectum* has often been compared in Buddhism with the universe. The universe contains all things gathered together. All things

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move freely in it. The universe never hinders them in their moving and acting and likewise is itself unhindered by the things moving around in it. All heavens and earths or, expressed in more modern terms, all galactic and extra-galactic nebulae appear and exist in this universe. It is, so to speak, an absolutely open place for everything. The universe stands above all opposites.

Nevertheless, this comparison is misleading in several ways. Although the universe spreads out, the Buddhist non-*subjectum* does not spread. Instead, it wants to be precisely the "place" for the widespread universe itself as well as for everything physical, psychic and spiritual. The non-*subjectum* in this sense is nothing less than the absolutely open which truly transcends all opposites. Moreover, the non-*subjectum* is the "place" for everything in the sense that everything, material and spiritual, is founded essentially in it and has its ultimate truth in it. The same of course cannot be said about the universe.

The Buddhist non-*subjectum* is the original essence of all things material and spiritual, although it is neither material nor spiritual in itself. Finally: it is precisely the "place" in which man can penetrate to his essential self, come to himself and recognize himself.

An example from the history of Chinese Zen Buddhism will help to clarify this:

A monk once asked a great Zen master, "What is the original truth of Buddhism?" The master gave the monk a violent shove with his foot. Falling to the ground, the monk experienced an inner breakthrough, jumped up laughing loudly and cried out, "Oh wonder of wonders! I have realized immediately by a hair-tip the original source of the countless wonderful truths, the original ground of all things."¹

What the monk means by the expression "hair-tip" is, first of all, the specific natural event of his fall. But it also refers to the monk himself who fell to the ground as well as the experience of his own fall. Nevertheless, we should not understand these as separate from each other. The whole is a single event. And that event was at that moment

¹ I have deliberately avoided using Buddhist terms because they require detailed explanation, which is not possible here.

nothing other than the being of the monk himself. If we attempt to imagine things as separate from each other, everything is lost.

What is the meaning, then, of the expressions "the source of the countless wonderful truths" and "the original ground of all things?" These refer to none other than the non-*subjectum*, the absolutely open, which includes everything that exists in all external and internal world-spaces and world-times. Moreover, it is particularly important to notice that this source was realized in the event recounted in the story.

What about the person who realizes? What is the person as the one realizing this source and how does he realize that source? Here again, he is no other than the source, the absolutely open itself. A person becomes one who realizes in this sense when the absolutely open place from which realization originates is revealed in him and through him. Then the one realizing is himself the place of realization. Both are the same: that is, the non-*subjectum*. The realizer realizes in himself—in himself as the non-*subjectum*—the origin of all truth.

This sameness (namely the identity of the one realizing and the place of realization), this non-*subjectum*—is it any different from the man in the story who fell to the ground and laughed loudly? If it were different, the non-*subjectum* would be presented once again as having the nature of a *subjectum* like the One of Plotinus, or the "substance" of Spinoza, or the "absolute" in which man ecstatically loses himself, attains mystical union with or contemplates in an intellectual way. But in such cases he himself is not there as the non-*subjectum*. As for the threefold aspect of the being of the man in the above-mentioned story, of "the source of all truths" or "the original ground of all things" and of the one realizing himself—these are three aspects of the same fact and should not be considered separate entities. Only in the sameness of these three can there appear the "there-ness" (*Da*) of the being (*Da-sein*) of the one who realized at the moment of falling. This "there-ness" is that of the non-*subjectum* within which lies the source of the countless wonderful truths, the original ground of all things. It was in this and as this "there-ness" of the non-*subjectum* that the "original truth of Buddhism" in the monk's question was revealed. It was revealed in the corporal-spiritual man and indeed in that corporal-spiritual man as he is with all his limitations. It occurred in his breakthrough to the non-*subjectum*; it happened because the man, without stepping out of his corporal-mental constitution, opened himself to

the absolutely open which exists beyond everything—beyond body and soul, beyond matter and spirit, even beyond the world and gods.

Here is the simplest and most fundamental revelation of original truth. But how does a person act who is corporal-mental while at the same time beyond everything? His way is often compared to that of a tiger or a lion. His way, in its totally unified non-subjective existence, is like the entire body of a lion or like the living, pouncing lion itself. Each individual truth or each individual thing is like a hair in the lion's pelt. How is it then, when we are challenged to realize the lion itself on a single hair-tip? How and when is that possible? Only when the one realizing is himself that lion. This occurred, for example, at that moment when the monk fell to the ground and experienced pain.

However, for a truly accurate understanding of this simile, we should be aware of its context in Buddhist tradition. The image of the lion upon each of whose individual hair-tips a lion appears was very popular and often referred to in Mahayana Buddhist tradition. In order to indicate what lies behind this image, it is helpful to introduce a legend that expresses the Indian world-view in mythical guise:²

After his conquest of the dragon Vṛta, Indra decided to remodel and decorate the residence of the gods. Viśvakarman, the divine master-builder, worked on the residence for a year and succeeded in erecting a splendid edifice. But Indra was not satisfied. He wanted it to be larger and even more splendid, a structure without equal in the world.

Exhausted from his labors, Viśvakarman complained to Brahma the god of creation. Brahma promised to help him and to intervene with the help of Viṣṇu, the highest being of whom Brahma himself was nothing but a tool. Viṣṇu prepared to bring Indra to his senses.

One fine day, Indra received a visit in his palace from a boy in tattered rags. It was Viṣṇu himself, who had taken this form in order to humiliate the king of the gods. Without revealing his identity, he called Indra "my child" and began to tell him about the countless Indras who had occupied the innumerable universes prior to that time:

² I became acquainted with this legend through a lecture delivered by Mircea Eliade last year [1957] at Kyoto University. I reproduce a section of it here.

“The life and reign of an Indra lasts eighty-one eons (one cycle, known as a mahāyuga, is composed of 12,000 divine years, that is, 4,320,000 ordinary years). But in the time that it takes for twenty-eight Indras to pass away, only a day and a night have gone by for a Brahma. And though the existence of a Brahma, measured in such days and nights, lasts only 108 years, whenever a Brahma passes away, another one arises. This endless line is incalculable. There is no end to the number of these Brahmas, let alone the number of Indras.

But what about the countless universes existing side by side at any given moment, each containing a Brahma and an Indra—who could calculate their number? Arising and passing away beyond the limits of sight and occupying outer space, these universes are an uncountable multitude. They skim along like fragile barks upon unfathomable and pure waters, together constituting the body of Viṣṇu. On each pore of this body, a universe bubbles and bursts. Would you dare to calculate them? Would you count the gods in all these worlds, present and past?”

A similar world-view made its way into Buddhism. However, when Buddhism was assimilated by the Chinese, who are an extremely practical people, this world-view had to put aside its mythical garb and assume a new form more in keeping with reality. In this new view, deep metaphysical speculation with its own logic, ontology, theory of cognition and so forth as well as existential religiosity constantly interpenetrate each other. However, fundamental here is the fact that, in spite of this transformation, the essential core of that mythical world outlook (*Weltanschauung*), that is, the original world vision or world-view within it, remained unchanged. The fantastic, dream-like world outlook was transformed into a realistic, awakened world-view, a type of world vision that at the same time means an awakening. An ancient Zen didactic poem expresses this very succinctly:

“The thousand-fold great world is like foam on the sea; the line of saints and sages like a flash of lightning.”

III

From this perspective, two points in the legend above assume special meaning. First, there is the idea of the "body" of Viṣṇu, which is compared to a shoreless sea and on whose every pore a universe "bubbles and bursts"; second, there is the idea that this same limitless Viṣṇu takes the form of a ragamuffin boy. As for the first idea, we could say that a similar view provides the context for the image of the lion mentioned earlier. Indeed, the true meaning of that image can be clarified from this perspective. The image of the lion's body signifies essentially the same thing as that of Viṣṇu's body in the Indian legend. Thus we can understand why the image speaks of a lion out of whose individual hair-tips a lion appears; the story is about a living lion in whose every hair that lion itself lives. This clearly expresses the similarity between these world-views as well as the essential differences between them that led to a transformation of the same world-view from a mythical, dream-like view to an awakened, realist view. The legend speaks about the bubbles on the pores of Viṣṇu's body. Could we also say that a Viṣṇu appears on each of these pores? Are we permitted by such an interpretation to see a Viṣṇu in each of the fleeting bubbles? It is, to be sure, an essential aspect of truth that the myriad universes are actually so many bubbles. Indeed, that is the meaning of the didactic poem quoted above. But if we view things merely from this standpoint, we see only an expression of the transitory nature of all entities, a view that tends toward escapism and withdrawal from real life. Going hand-in-hand with this is the tendency to conceive of Viṣṇu as a *subjectum*, as the highest and all-embracing essence, for example. And with this tendency comes the tug toward the dream-like.

The transformation toward a realistic sense is expressed in the image of the lion. Even world bubbles are, to be sure, just bubbles; and yet every bubble, as such, is always one and the same ocean, a manifestation of the Absolute itself. Nevertheless (and I emphasize this repeatedly to avoid any total misunderstanding of what I mean), we must by no means consider the "absolute" to be a subject or substance. We actually cannot speak here about an appearance of the absolute (in the sense of an absolute something). The "Absolute" is a non-subject, which is also known as "nothingness" or "emptiness" in Buddhism. All

things, indeed all universes, exist on the original ground (actually non-ground) of "emptiness." For that which acts as the foundation of all things and universes cannot be something that is. Of course, this "nothingness" is not null any more than this "emptiness" is simply void. A Buddhist phrase that has become almost a truism says that "true emptiness is no other than wondrous being." True emptiness, true nothingness, is a "sea of being" whose bubbles, which are the universes, together with those universes' bubbles, which are things, are there because each of these is one and the same sea of being.

Mahayana Buddhist philosophical circles tend to make the same point with a different image, that of water and waves. The waves and the water, it is said, are absolutely inseparable: there are no waves apart from the water and no water apart from the waves. And yet, we can neither call the waves "water" nor call the water "waves." Water is not waves and waves are not water—although there is only "a single One" (*ein einzic ein*) to use an expression of Meister Eckhart. Both of them, the waves and the water, are simultaneously two-and-one and one-and-two. This is equally true about the relation between the lion on the one hand and all lions and each individual lion of the hair-tips on the other hand. It is only in this "simultaneously one-and-two" that the being of "wondrous being" is present, which is at the same time the being of the entity, both in the totality as well as in the particular. Conversely, the being of the entity is at the same time the being of "wondrous being."

A flower, for example, which is an entity, is there in its total reality, regardless of how transitory and fleeting its existence may be. Its being is essential, for it is nothing other than "wondrous being." Otherwise we cannot avoid falling into that way of thinking which imagines there are waves apart from the water and water apart from the waves. If that were the case, all things would in the long run be an illusion or appearance of an "absolute," which, at any rate, is constantly conceived in a *subjectum* character. Nevertheless, there is "nothing" outside the various entities in their unending diversity and total reality at any given moment, just as they are there. They are truly and "in truth" there, precisely because there is "nothing" other than these things themselves. This "there is nothing other than" is the ground (actually non-ground) that allows all entities to exist as they are—but not as a

subjectum-type "something" like, for example, an absolute subject (in the personal sense) or an absolute substratum.

Buddhism speaks therefore about "true emptiness." This "emptiness" is the original ground or non-ground which allows all things to be as they exist and to exist as they are. "Emptiness" is nowhere and nevertheless there is "emptiness" everywhere that an entity exists both in the whole and in the particular. The water, too, is nowhere and nevertheless there is water everywhere that there are ocean waves. The water is neither the *subjectum* which unites all the waves nor the *subjectum* that is the ground of all waves.

Nevertheless, the water embraces and assembles the endless waves of the boundless sea. The same is true about "emptiness." Similar to the universe mentioned earlier, emptiness embraces and gathers together everything by allowing all things to be as they are in their unending variety and total reality. This is the true meaning of the word that I used above in connection with waves and water: only "a single One" (*ein einzic ein*) is there. That is to say, the One limitless sea is there. It is "wondrous being" which, as mentioned above, is at the same time the being of the entity in both the whole and the particular, while conversely the being of the entity is at the same time the being of "wondrous being."

Is this a kind of *pantheism* or, so to speak, *pan-nihilism*? If so, then we would again be understanding "being" and "emptiness" as having the nature of a *subjectum* whose veil (*maya*) is all things. But a flower is really and in truth there, just as a lion on the hair-tip in the simile above is completely a lion. The "divinity" of pantheism and the "nothingness" of nihilism can be easily imagined and understood. Indeed, they reveal themselves, if at all, already and only as something imaginable and graspable in concepts. This pertains to the essence of pantheism and nihilism.

Can we, however, also realize that living lion whose body is like an unfathomable ocean in which all universes and all things swim and on whose every hair the same lion is alive? Can we grasp him while, as it were, standing outside of him and observing him "objectively" as an object? Can we imagine and conceive of him as if he were a *subjectum*? We can only realize in this way by becoming a hair ourselves, which in truth we are. We can only realize, that is to say, by becoming ourselves.

But that also means the person becomes the lion itself. For, as was already stated, a hair of the lion and the lion itself are "a single One" (*ein einzic ein*); in other words, the lion on the hair-tip and the lion itself are simultaneously two-and-one and also one-and-two. A person can realize "true emptiness" or "wondrous being" only in such a way that he simultaneously realizes himself: as *anatman*, as the self-less, as the non-*subjectum*. I will return to this point later.

In this "simultaneously one-and-two" is also "nothingness" and "emptiness," that is, the non-ground. In the raging foam of the world-ocean, an unfathomable silence! The moment that we look at an entity, such as a flower, and look at it truly and "in truth," it is "empty" seeing that sees the flower itself as "empty." We see it then as it is, from its non-ground. We really see it as it truly is. At the same time, however, we see how that flower is there both groundless and unfathomable and how the flower itself is as it really and truly is.

This "emptiness" also signifies the Pure. The legend of Vispu spoke of the "unfathomable and pure waters." The unfathomable silence of the foaming water, that is, the "water-being" of the rising and falling water, is the Pure. We see a flower as it truly is only when we see it "purely" as the Pure. It is only with pure eyes that we can see something as the Pure. Unfortunately there is not enough space here to discuss further what this means in relation to religious existence. But there is another question that is more important in connection with this. I have just mentioned that we see a flower as it truly is from its non-ground and that we see it with "pure eyes." Both of these are expressions of the same thing. But then, one could ask, is it at all possible to see something from its non-ground? Does it make any sense to say such a thing? This so-called non-ground, if in fact there is such a thing, must be outside the world. How could we, who are always in the world, arrive at it? And even if we could, what would become of us in this non-ground? Would we still remain "we"? Wouldn't we be lost in the non-ground? Wouldn't we disappear? This talk about "seeing from the non-ground" or "seeing with pure eyes"—isn't it just nonsense? We could never see with pure eyes in nothingness where there is neither "we" nor eyes!

In all such doubts we encounter again and again the tendency mentioned above to think of the non-*subjectum* as having the nature of a *subjectum*. However, in order to clarify a little more the *anatman*

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character of "true emptiness," that is, of "wondrous being," let us now turn to the second point mentioned above in the Indian legend.

IV

The form of a ragamuffin boy that Viṣṇu takes is not his own form but a temporary one. The existence of the boy as such is just an appearance and not real. There is still a difference between the "in itself" (*An-sich*) and the appearance. How was it for the monk, however, as he experienced a breakthrough to the original ground of all things? In this breakthrough, the original ground (or non-ground) was opened to him and through him; he himself became totally the original ground (or non-ground) and precisely in this way came to a realization of it. At the same time, he awakened fundamentally—although actually without any foundation—to himself and came in the genuine sense to self-realization.

What does all this signify for our topic of religious-philosophical existence in Buddhism? As religious existence—if we can still speak here in terms of "religion"—it signifies the Great Death and Great Rebirth which are an inseparable unity. As philosophical existence—if we can still speak here in terms of "philosophy"—it signifies great realization and "wondrous being" which are an inseparable unity. The monk became, as it were, a lion which is totally a lion on each of its own hair-tips and which recognizes a lion on each of those hair-tips. We can say the same thing in reverse: the monk became a lion by the hair-tip of the lion, a lion, that is, which recognizes in itself the lion and which is the lion—and indeed the lion whose body, like the body of Viṣṇu in the legend, is the "unfathomable, pure water" and on whose pores the universes bubble and burst. The monk became "true emptiness," that is, "wondrous being" which is simultaneously the being of the entity both in the whole and in the particular. In other words, it is also the being of his existence as a patchrobed Chinese monk of the T'ang Dynasty. Both of these, "wondrous being" and the being of the monk, are simultaneously two-and-one as well as one-and-two. As was mentioned above, the monk opened himself to the Absolutely Open without abandoning his own corporal-mental constitution.

The monk's breakthrough occurred one fine day long ago in China, at the moment that he fell to the ground and experienced pain. But that

moment is also the moment mentioned in the Indian legend: "the countless universes existing side by side in any given moment, each containing a Brahma and an Indra—who could calculate their number?" In the midst of his fall and pain, the monk experienced and realized "true emptiness" and "wondrous being." An ancient Buddhist thinker, speaking of this experience, compared it to a man stroking and pinching his own body, to an elephant spraying itself with water through its trunk, to a child sticking his fingers in his mouth. All these expressions are talking about nothing other than that "true emptiness is no other than wondrous being." They are speaking about "being" *there*; about "there is nothing other than . . ." as the absolutely open, as the non-ground which lets all entities be as they are in their endless variety. All our experiences are essentially of this sort. When we see a flower, hear a clap of thunder or look up in wonder at the star-filled sky, becoming attentive to the moral law within us—in experiencing all these we are basically like the child who sticks his fingers in his mouth.

"For a person who has eliminated the ends of the passions,³ even fire is cool," says a famous poem by a Japanese Zen monk of the 16th century who composed it at the very moment he was being burned in a fire lit by attacking warriors. Of course, the poem does not mean that fire ceases to be hot or that the monk feels no pain when burned. On the contrary, coolness here is precisely where the pain hurts and the heat is hot, in the sense that was described above about the unfathomable silence in the raging foam of the ocean. Where can this coolness be found? It is found in the fact that the experience of heat and pain occurs as though a man were stroking and pinching his own body.

We should be aware that such an "event" is always possible, even for us inhabitants of the atomic age. It is not surprising that it proves especially difficult for a Westerner to understand what has been hinted here and which sounds so strange.

Nevertheless, I believe the day will come when Westerners will understand this. For the West counts among its children people like St. Francis of Assisi. It is well known that this saint called all things "brother" or "sister"—not only people, but also the sun, moon,

³ Perhaps the Latin expression "*intentio animae*" (in a very general sense) comes closest to the original Japanese expression which, although in common use, is difficult to translate.

wind, water, fire, earth, birds and animals. Once, when St. Francis had to undergo an operation with a white-hot iron for his eyes which had gone blind, he called out, while blessing the iron: "Brother Fire, I have always loved you because you are the mightiest and most beautiful of all God's creatures. Please have mercy on me, burn me gently so I can bear it!" The biographer goes on to say: "The doctor took the bright iron, dazzling like the sun, and when he touched the skin it sizzled to the touch. He guided the iron from ear to brow. The holy one smiled faintly like a child under the caressing hand of his mother. And as the other brothers started to flee from the sight and return to their cells, the saint said to them with the same faint smile, 'Oh, you cowards! What are you afraid of? I didn't feel any pain whatsoever.' 'It's a miracle!' the doctor cried out, for he had never seen anything like it before." What does it mean when St. Francis blesses the glowing iron, calling it "Brother Fire," and when he is able to maintain a faint smile while being burned? Isn't there a crucial question here, something great which has never before been imagined? Call it what you will, such a miracle can also occur in our most ordinary daily experiences, for example, in seeing a flower. Indeed, all experience is essentially a miracle, a "wondrous" wave of "wondrous being." The "fool of God," as St. Francis called himself, must have understood well what the Zen monk wanted to express in his verse composed in the fire.

V

We are now able to clarify the true meaning of the words that burst from the monk's lips as he experienced a breakthrough to his Self: "Oh wonder of wonders! I have realized immediately by a hair-tip the original source of the countless wonderful truths, the original ground of all things." It is only by means of such a breakthrough that we are liberated from any prejudice in favor of the world as well as from any tendency to run away from it. We stand now in the place of absolute "world affirmation." We can travel there happily in the foaming world-sea. The monk became a non-*subjectum*, the original ground (or non-ground) of all things and freed himself for the two aspects of "beyond all things" and "on this side of all things." But the "beyond" meant here is used in a sense that is stronger than its usual meaning; the same is true for the expression "this side." True emp-

teness embraces and gathers together in itself both all entities "beyond" and all entities "on this side." It lets them be as they are. It is, so to speak, beyond all possible "beyonds" and at the same time on this side of all possible "this sides." It is the place where the true "beyond" and the true "this side" are one and the same. It is in this place that the original truth was revealed to the Chinese monk.

And when this happened, he could also see that his master, through his rough actions, had revealed to him the original truth that he had inquired about. What does this mean? The following three situations are contained within it:

1. The monk could only recognize the original truth in himself by recognizing it in his master. But he could only realize it in his master by realizing it in himself. There is no difference between "in himself" and "in the other." We cannot say which realization occurs first and which follows. There are not two realizations; instead there is only one and the same realization of the pure original truth which shines as a light in the student beyond the differences between the two persons.

2. Through this "enlightenment" the student could realize the same original truth both in himself as the original truth most proper to himself and at the same time in his teacher as the original truth most proper to his teacher.

3. Through this realization he was able to essentially realize himself and just as essentially realize his teacher. These three conditions are three essential aspects of the same experience. The student gained all these realizations as a single one at the same time. What does this show? Each of the two people is absolute at any given time to the extent that the original truth itself is revealed to him. Each existence is always a totality in itself, in the same way that the universe is a totality.

Each stands, as it is often said in Zen, "between heaven and earth as the only one." Between the two men is absolute difference, absolute duality because each is absolute. But it is precisely here that we encounter the absolute identity of both, because each is absolute, that is, because the same absolute openness reigns in both men. Absolute difference and absolute identity are the same here. That means there is direct communication between the two men. And yet it is actually no communication because, in the case of either, everything springs from the individual source; there is no "*communicativum*" (content of communication) and no "communication." Nevertheless, the one person,

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in his realization of self, essentially realizes the other and realizes at the same time that the other realizes him essentially. Something of this sort can happen only on the ground of the non-*subjectum*. Our usual ways of communicating with gestures, words and expressions of feeling are always halfway and incomplete. In order for communication to become complete, it must always go beyond itself and return to that type of communication which is actually no longer communication.

What I have attempted to delineate here may be taken as an indication of religious-philosophical existence on the ground of *anatman*.

TRANSLATED BY PAUL SHEPHERD