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Emptiness and Fullness

Śūnyatā in Mahāyāna Buddhism

UEDA SHIZUTERU

THE FORMULA "emptiness and fullness" may be said to represent a Buddhist version of the general question of "unity and diversity." On the one hand, the category of unity is based on the concept of "one," which Buddhism as it were steps over and back to "zero." The word *śūnya*, which as a Buddhist term means "void," is also used in the realm of mathematics to signify "zero." Though it is of course not a quantity, zero has several crucial functions to play in the workings of mathematics. The same is true of the concept of "emptiness" in the realm of existence. On the other hand, the category of diversity is made concrete through the Buddhist notion of "fullness." That is to say, fullness not only concerns the diversity among things, but goes on to include the specific completeness of each and every thing and the concrete fullness of the whole. These two, the radical negation to zero and the concretization to fullness, belong together as correlatives. In Buddhism as well, this correlatedness forms the basis on which the problem of "unity and diversity" has been explored in various ways.

This correlatedness of zero or emptiness—or in its other, philosophical term, absolute nothingness—on the one hand, and fullness on the other, represents the fundamental relationship in Buddhist thought. It is, in its authentic, original sense, an existential category that refers to the self-awareness of the self, not a self that has its existence in itself but a self that exists precisely within this correlatedness. In the long history of Buddhism, this correlatedness was developed in manifold speculative directions. It is Zen that brought it back to its original, living sphere of

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existence. Accordingly, I would like to begin by attempting a treatment of "emptiness and fullness" in its original, existential context. To do so, I shall rely principally on examples from Zen Buddhism, drawing on Mahāyāna philosophy and modern Japanese philosophy for clarification.

What is our self? What is there to say about it? To shed some light on these questions, I would like to take as an illustration a short classical Chinese text of the Zen school, a kind of picture book, which will I hope bring us somewhat nearer the matter at hand without letting us slip off at some point unawares into conceptualization on an abstract level. Conceptualization is supposed to lead to clarity, of course, but at times it ends up misleading if the requisite preliminary understanding is lacking. This is especially so when one has to do with things from another culture, as is the case here. What we are dealing with relates originally to the self-understanding of East Asian peoples whose world of ideas was expressed in classical Chinese and Japanese and is here being presented in English. The gap between the East Asian subject matter being presented and the Western language that presents it recommends that particular care be taken both on the part of the author of this essay as well as on the part of his readers. In such circumstances having a kind of picture book to refer to as a basic text may help.

I

The text, which dates originally from the 12th century, has appeared in German under the title *Der Ochs und sein Hirte: eine altchinesische Zen-Geschichte*, in the translation of K. Tsujimura and H. Buchner (Pfullingen, 1975). An English translation of this edition was prepared by M. H. Trevor and published in Japan as *The Ox and His Herdsman* (Tokyo, 1969). It is this translation that will be cited in the following pages. Another English version was made by D. T. Suzuki and included in his *Manual of Zen Buddhism* (New York, 1960), there called simply "The Ten Oxherding Pictures."

Even today the text is widely used in Japanese Zen circles. It portrays graphically the process of human self-realization in ten stages, each stage including a brief introductory remark, an ink drawing in a circular frame, and a concise explanation in the form of a poem. Each drawing depicts a distinct mode and dimension of existence on the way to the true self. The

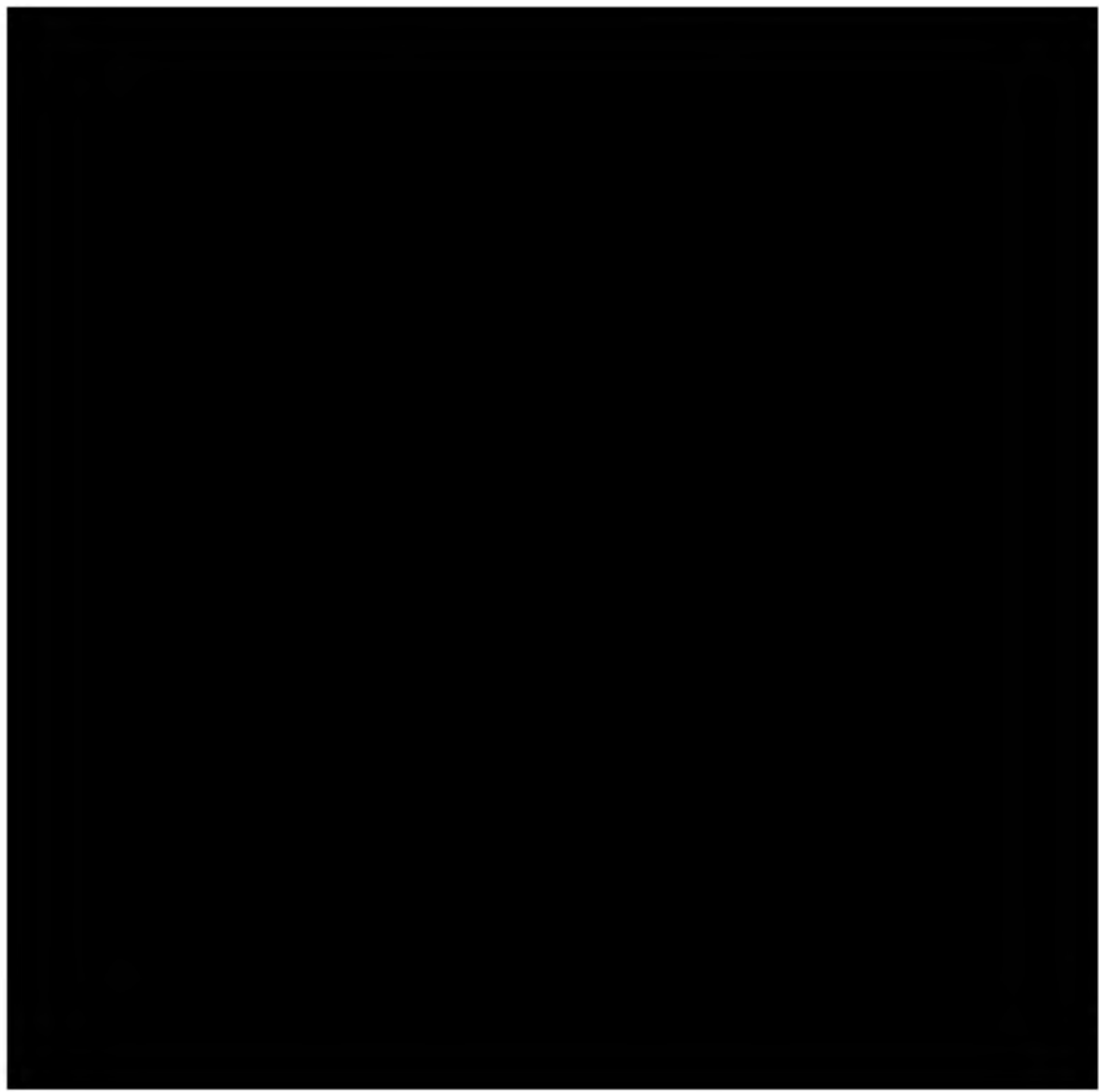
ox serves as a provisional symbol for the true self that is being sought, and the *herdsman* represents the individual on the quest for the true self. It should be pointed out here that despite the title, the figure of the ox does not appear in all ten drawings, only in four of them. This point is of decisive importance for the Zen Buddhist understanding of the self, and I shall return to it later.

The first six stages are entitled as follows: (1) The Search for the Ox, (2) Finding the Traces of the Ox, (3) Finding the Ox, (4) Catching the Ox, (5) Taming the Ox, and (6) Returning Home on the Back of the Ox. Already from this much we can see that the relationship of the herdsman to the ox gets continually closer and more intimate, up until the 7th stage where a unification is achieved wherein the man no longer conceives of the ox as an object to be united with. The self, in the manner and to the extent that it has been symbolized by the ox, is there realized and the ox, as a symbol for the self, is eliminated. The 7th stage is thus entitled "The Ox is Forgotten, the Herdsman Remains." In the accompanying drawing the ox is absent and the man is left seated alone, "quiet and at leisure. . . . Between the sky and the earth he has become his own master," as the text has it. The course from the 1st to the 7th stage portrays in step by step progression the successive phases of Buddhist instruction: training in meditation, difficulty and strenuous discipline, unification in bliss, and so forth. With the attainment of the 7th stage, however, the true self as Zen understands it has not yet been realized. We are still in transit on the way to the self. The decisive leap that breaks through to the 8th stage, where the characteristic features of the true self as Zen understands it are to become manifest, still remains to be made.

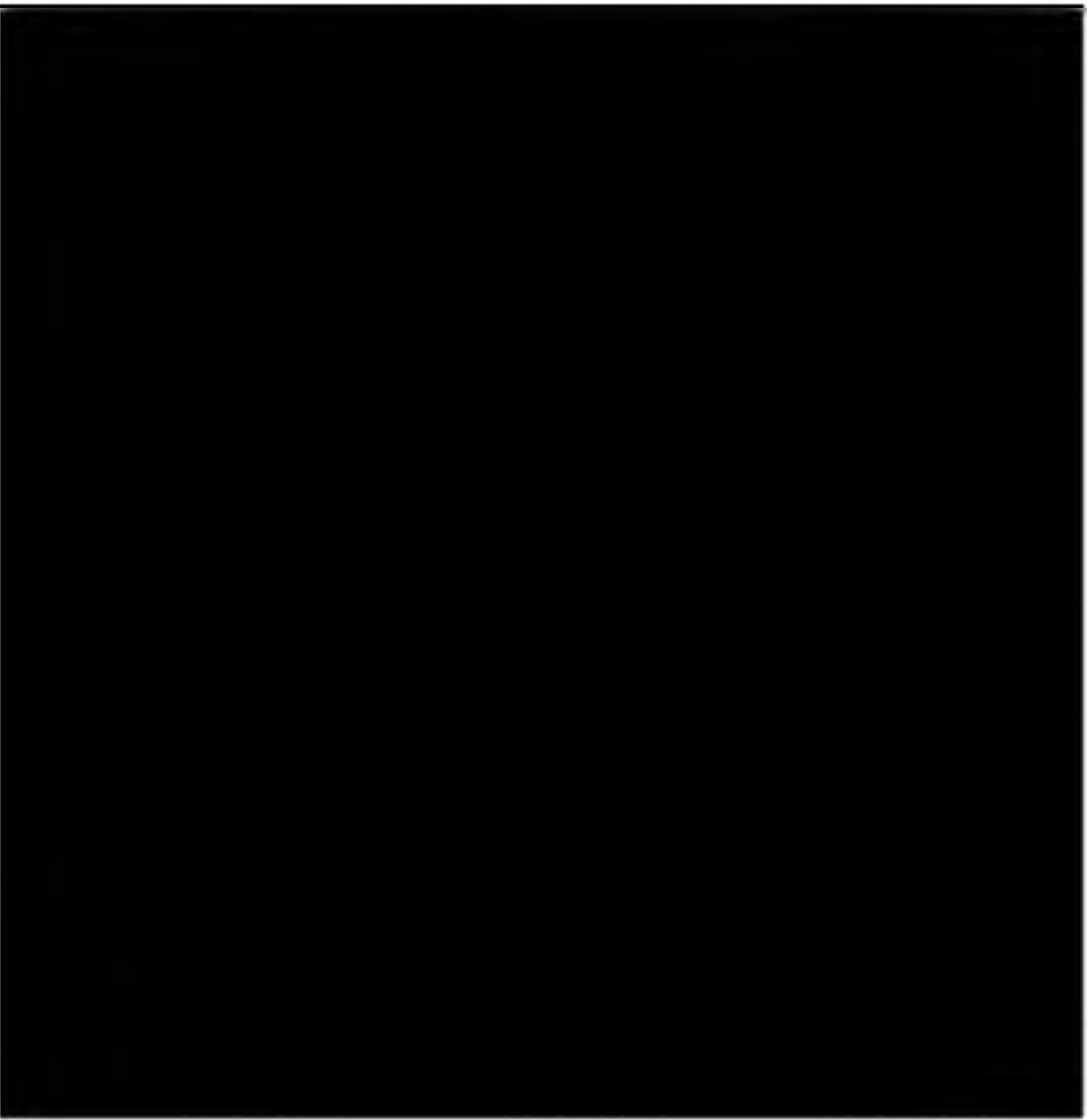
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The 8th stage, entitled "Complete Oblivion of Ox and Herdsman" or "Double Oblivion," is depicted by a curious drawing—an "empty circle" with nothing at all in it, neither ox nor man. This emptiness with nothing drawn in it needs to be emphasized in the present context. Absolute nothingness signifies in the first place, in passing beyond the 7th stage, an absolute negation.

In Buddhism, absolute nothingness does not mean that nothing at all exists. It is rather supposed to free one from substantializing thinking and from a substantializing apprehension of the self. For Buddhism, sub-



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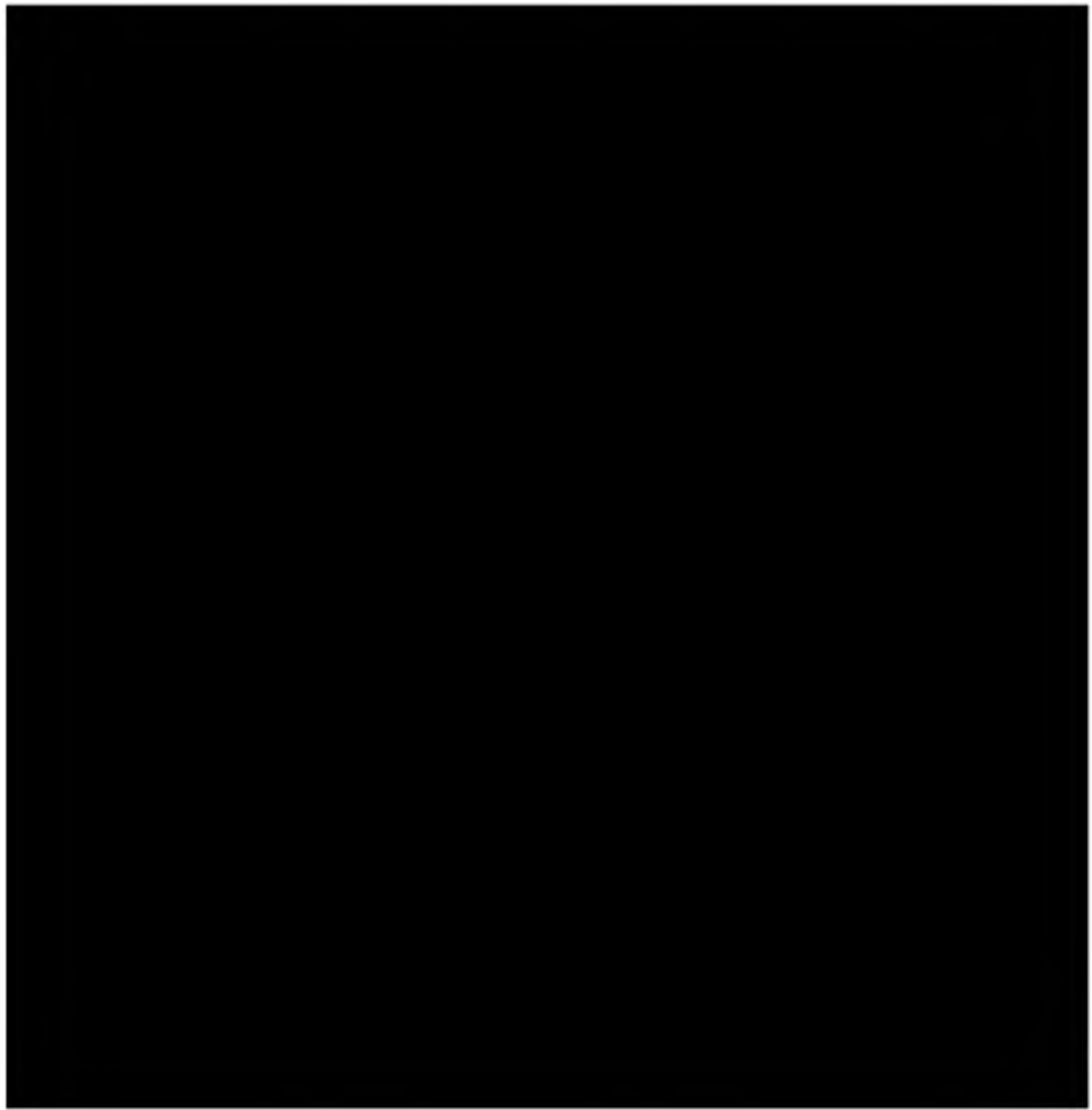


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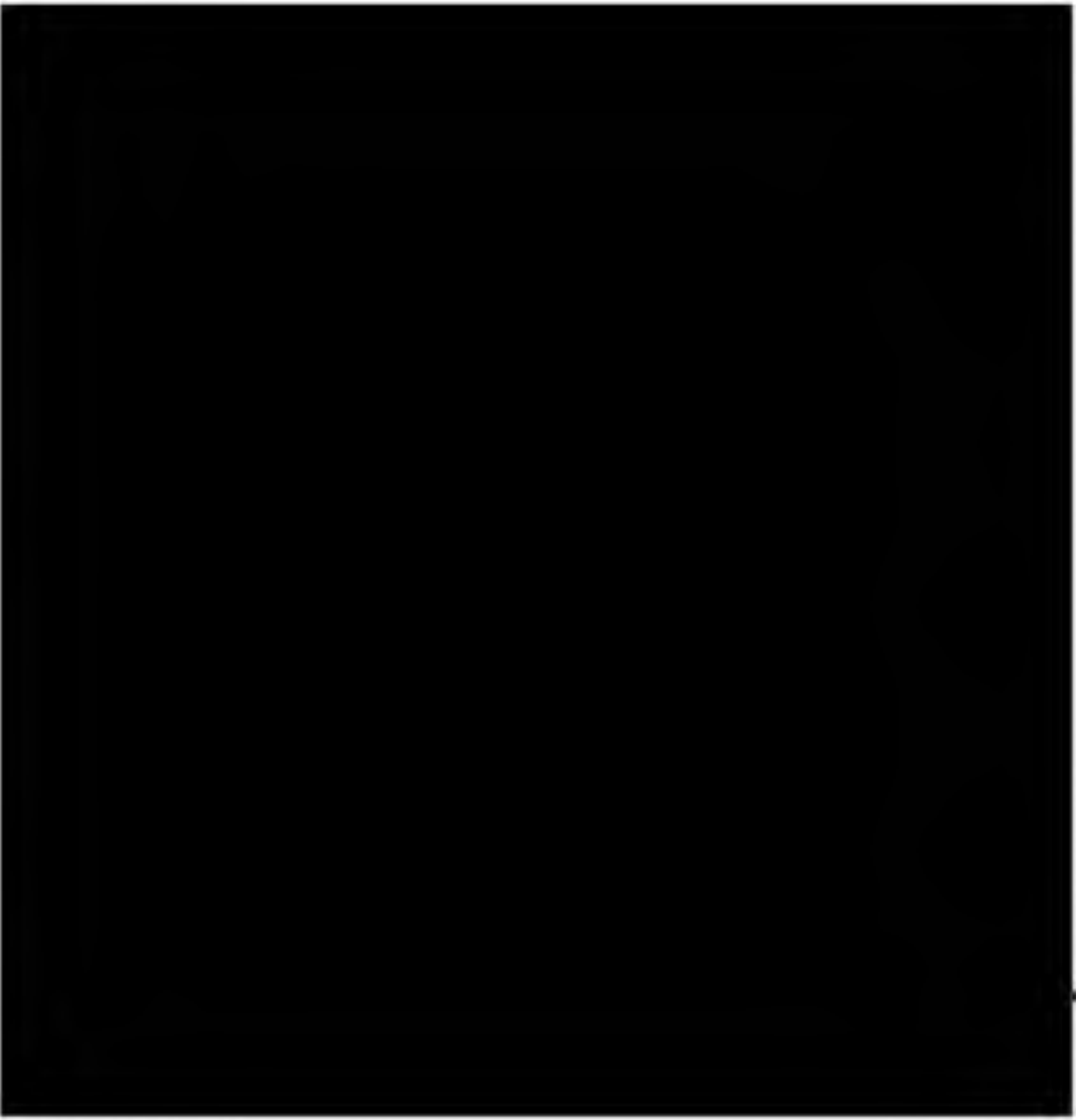
stantializing thought is grounded in the individual's substantializing of the self. This substantializing of the self in turn has its roots concealed in the ego as such, or in ego-captivity. Ego is understood in Buddhist teaching as ego-consciousness whose most rudimentary expression is: "I am I," and that in the sense that "I am I because I am I." This "I am I" that has its ground in another "I am I" so as to be closed up and locked away in itself, together with the so-called threefold poisoning of the self—hatred toward others, fundamental blindness toward oneself, and avarice—is deemed the fundamental human perversion and the cause of human misery. In contrast, the true self, or what Buddhism understands as the "selfless" self, would say of itself: "I am I and likewise I am not I" (according to the formulation of Professor Nishitani), or "I am I because I am not I" (D. T. Suzuki). Everything depends on the complete disengagement of the "I am I" from its self-containment and self-confinement, on finally breaking free of the shackles of ego. The ego-individual has to die for the sake of the true, selfless self. The way from the 1st stage to the 7th stage is at the same time the process of deliverance from the "I am I." If one stops at the 7th stage, however, in the self-sufficiency and self-confidence of being oneself (that is, of still being oneself), one falls back into a covert "I am I" with a self-consciousness that reckons "I am now what I should be"—which is but a sublimer form of religious egoism, so to speak. One's ultimate religious concern here is to abandon even one's own religion. Hence the 8th stage leads to a once-and-for-all, decisive, resolute leap into absolute nothingness where there is neither herdsman who is seeking nor ox that is being sought, neither oneself nor Buddha, neither duality nor unity. (In this connection we may allude to the thought of Meister Eckhart: forgetting God, abandoning God, away from union with God and on to the nothingness of godhead which is at the same time the ground of the soul.)

In order to arrive at the breakthrough to the true self, which is the equivalent of an unconditional selflessness, one must therefore abandon all religious insight and experience accumulated so far. One must rid oneself of oneself and of the Buddha, and leap once and for all into pure nothingness. One must, as the Zen expression goes, die the Great Death. The text accompanying the drawing of the empty circle puts it this way:

All worldly desires have fallen away, and at the same time the meaning of holiness has become completely empty. Do not linger



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4

EMPTINESS AND FULLNESS

where the Buddha dwells. Go quickly past the place where no Buddha dwells. . . .

With one blow the vast sky suddenly breaks into pieces.

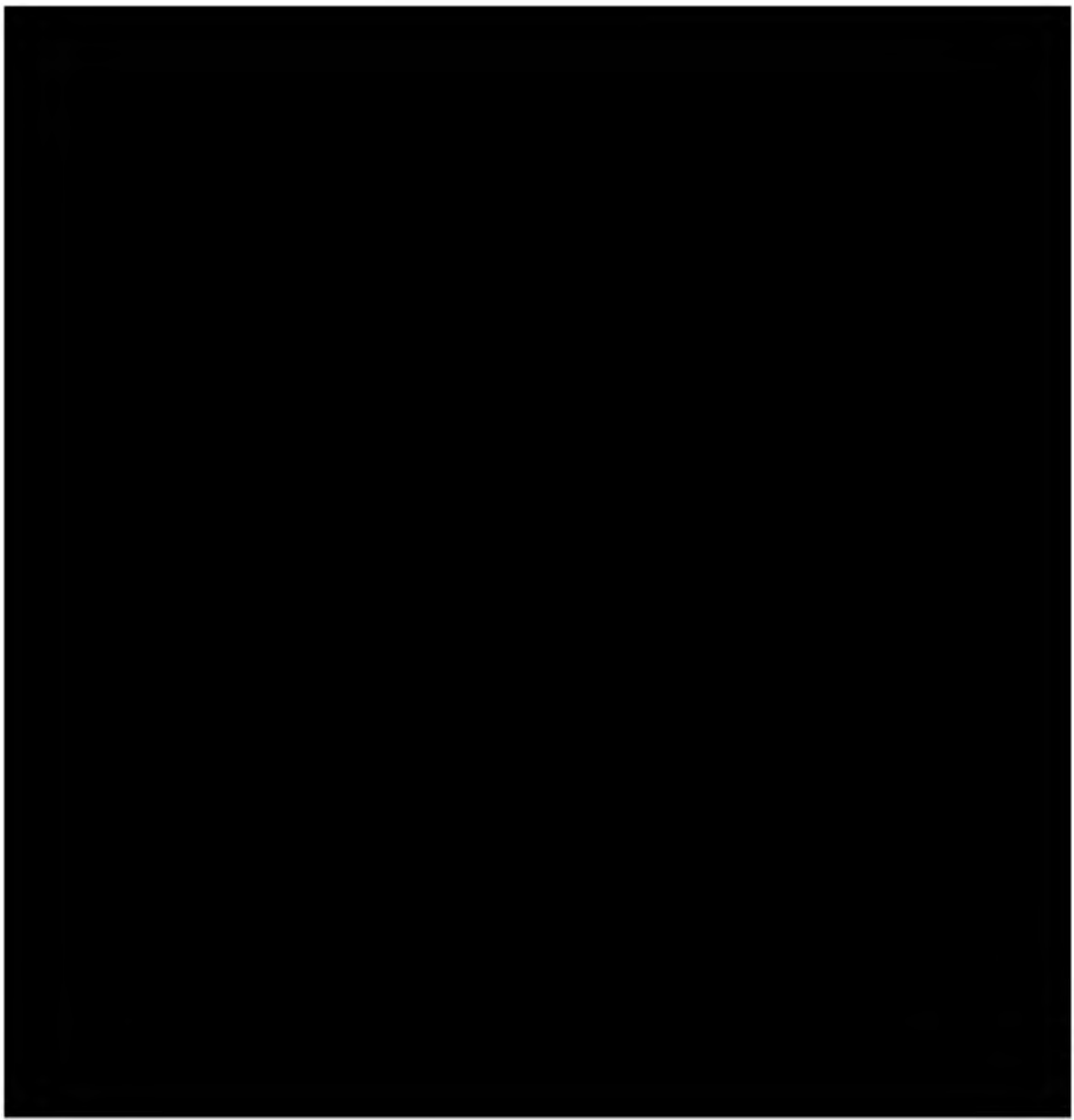
Holy, worldly, both vanished without a trace.

This is what is expressed in the 8th drawing.

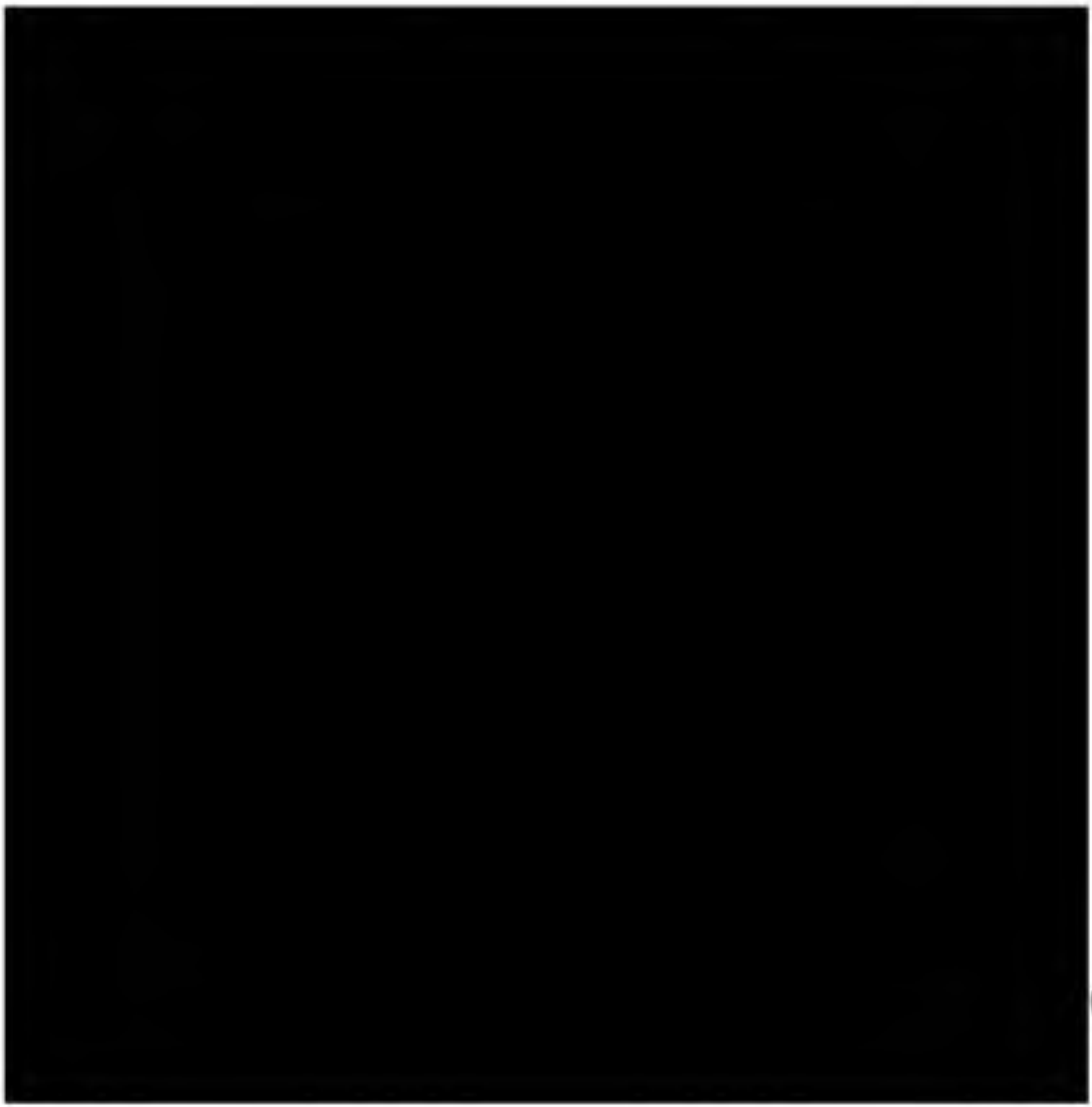
This Buddhist nothingness that dissolves substance-thinking must not be adhered to as a nothingness however; it must not be taken as a kind of substance or “minus-substance” (a nihilum). It has to do with the desubstantializing dynamic of absolute nothingness, with the nothingness of nothingness, or in philosophical terms, with the negation of negation. That is to say, it is a question of a pure movement of nothingness in two interrelated directions: (1) as the negation of negation in the sense of a further denial of negation that does not revert back to affirmation but continues on toward infinitely open nothingness; and (2) as the negation of negation in the sense of a reversal to affirmation without any trace of mediation. Absolute nothingness confirms itself as this dynamic correlatedness of endless negation and immediate, straightforward affirmation, and this correlatedness is the only thing that counts. Absolute nothingness moves as the nothingness of nothingness. The absolute nothingness that from the 7th stage onward functions as the absolute negation of that stage is nothing other than this dynamic correlatedness of negation and affirmation. Thus a fundamental transformation and a complete reversal takes place in this nothingness as the nothingness of nothingness—as in Goethe’s cry, “Die and be born!” or as in a “death and resurrection.”

* * *

The drawing accompanying the next and 9th stage shows a tree in bloom alongside a river, and nothing else. The text reads: “Boundlessly flows the river, just as it flows. Red blooms the flower, just as it blooms.” Here we have to do with the human individual in his or her true self. Why suddenly a tree in bloom alongside a river? Since we are on the way to the true self, it is not a question here of an outer, objective landscape that surrounds us, nor of a metaphorical landscape that portrays an inner human state or projects an inner, spiritual landscape of the soul. It is rather a question of an altogether new reality as a re-presentation of the selfless self. It has to



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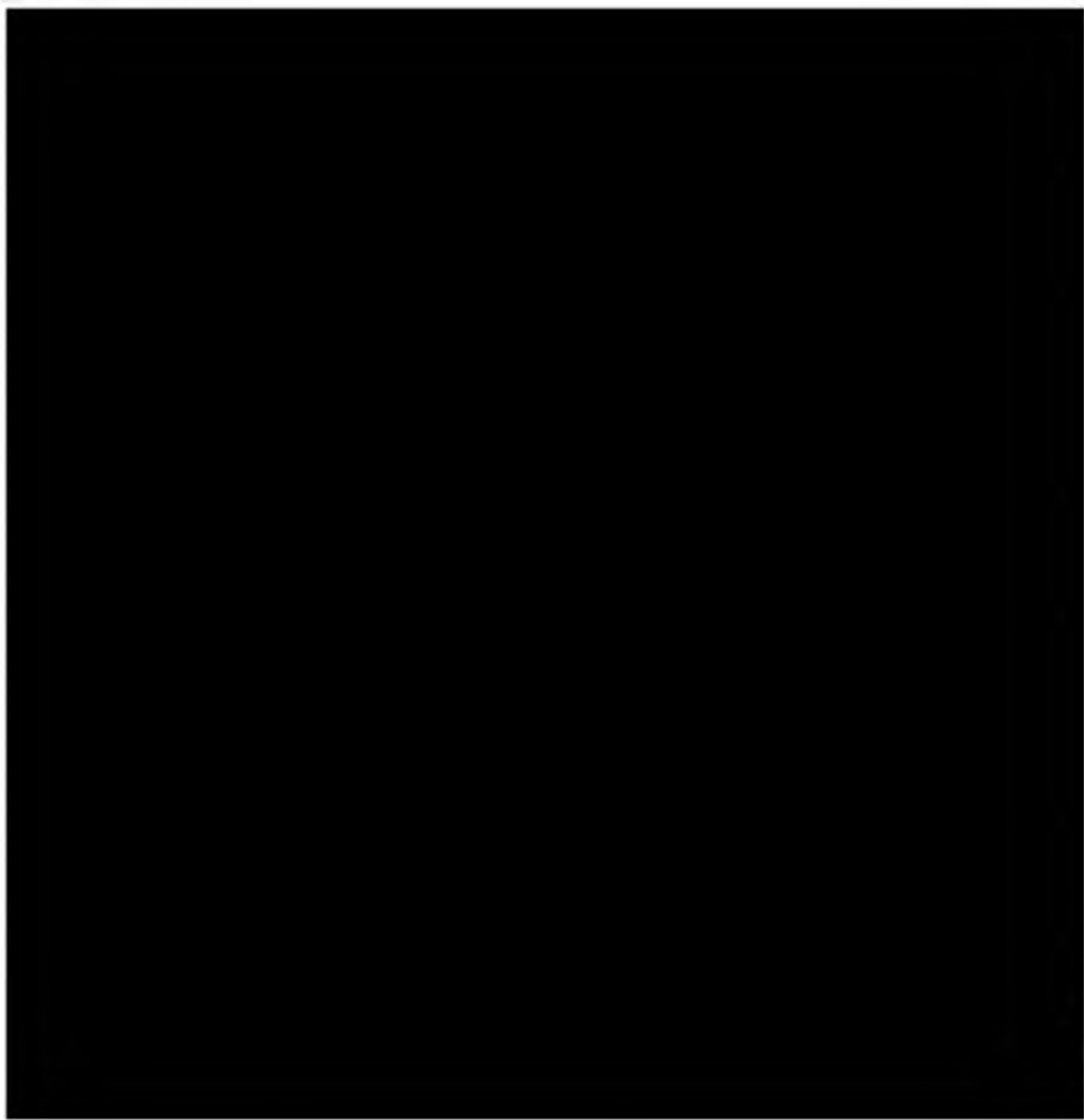
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do with resurrection out of nothingness, with radical transformation from absolute negation to a great Yes. Yes, this is it! Since the subject-object dichotomy in all its forms was restored at the 8th stage to a state of pre-dichotomy in nothingness, at this stage, in resurrection out of nothingness, a tree blooming by a river is simply the self, not in the sense of a substantial identity of nature and human being, but rather in the sense that a tree in bloom, just as it blooms, embodies in a non-objective way the selflessness of human being. Thus the blooming of the flowers and the flowing of the water here are, just as they happen, at the same time the play of the selfless freedom of the self. Nature, as the flowers blooming and the river flowing, is the first resurrection body of the selfless self out of nothingness.

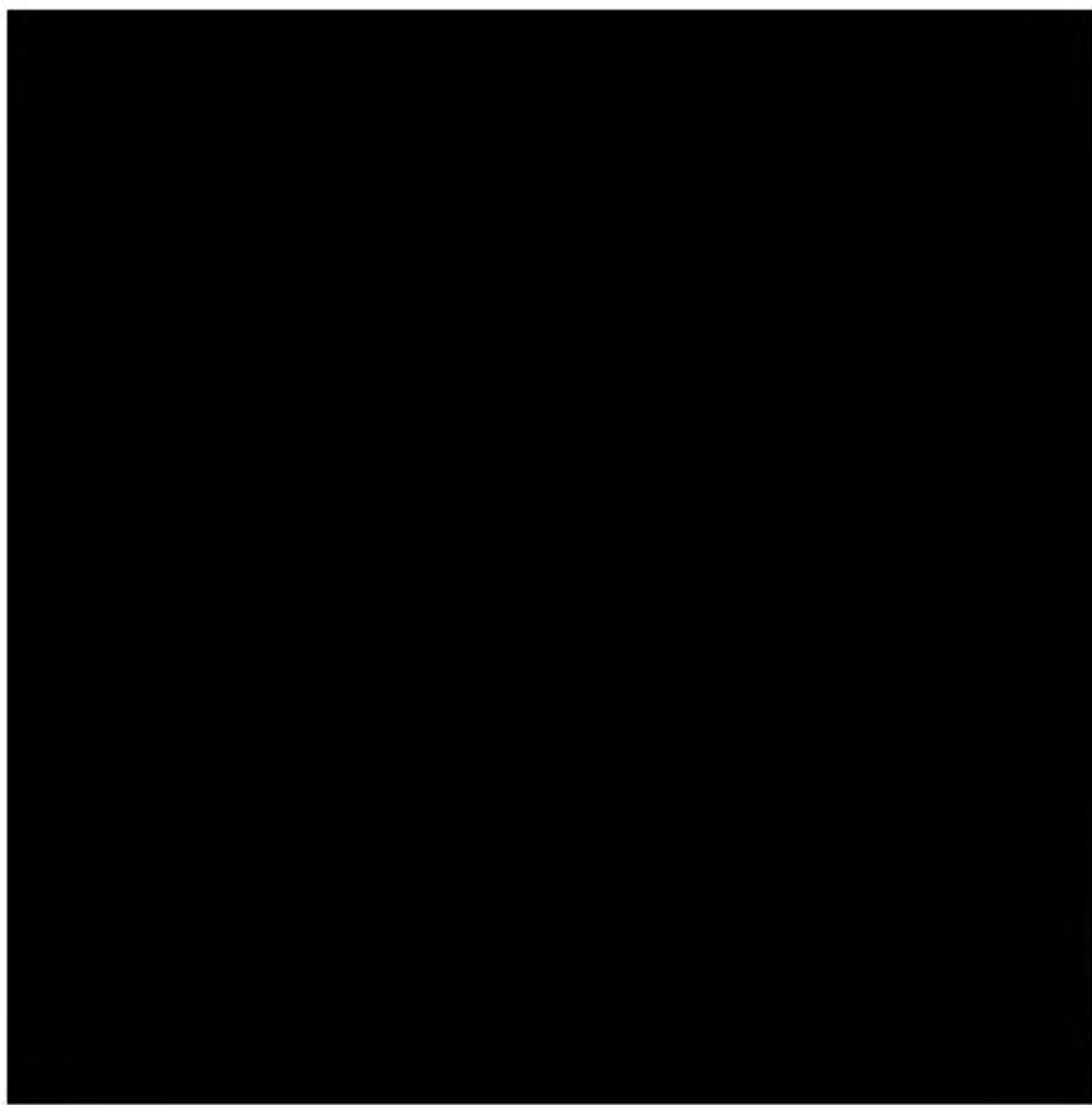
We cannot speak here of a nature-mysticism or a pantheism. "Red blooms the flower, just as it blooms." There is nothing mystical about this. It is simply and immediately "a tree in bloom alongside a river," and nothing else. It is a simplicity to which nothing stands in opposition, to which nothing is added. This simplicity unfolds itself without losing the simpleness of its reality. As we have already said, "Red blooms the flower, just as it blooms;" or to cite another example of a Zen saying, "Distant mountains, without limit, green upon green."

But where is the locus at which such simplicity unfolds, just as it is, by itself and without any supposedly higher, human agency? It is, to use a classical Sino-Japanese term, in *mushin*, in the nothingness of the mind, or more literally in the no-mind. There the mind, having passed away into nothingness on the 8th stage and now resurrected out of nothingness, is nothing other than these blooming flowers. It is in no-mind, and not in the ego-individual, that blooming flowers reveal themselves and offer themselves totally, just as they bloom by themselves. There, in virtue of nothingness, a special connection obtains between the existentiality of the self and the objectivity of existing things. According to a traditional phrase, existence becomes "thing." Or in the Zen saying, "The inexhaustible fullness of nothingness; flowers bloom, the moon shines." This provides us with a first model of "emptiness and fullness."

The Chinese characters for the word "nature," pronounced *shizen* in Japanese (or *jinen*, in its Buddhist reading), actually mean something like "to be as it is by itself." It does not signify nature in the sense of a determined realm of beings *in toto*, but points to the truth of the being of all beings. If one, for example, experiences flowers as they bloom by themselves in one's nothingness, that is to say, *not* from out of one's ego;



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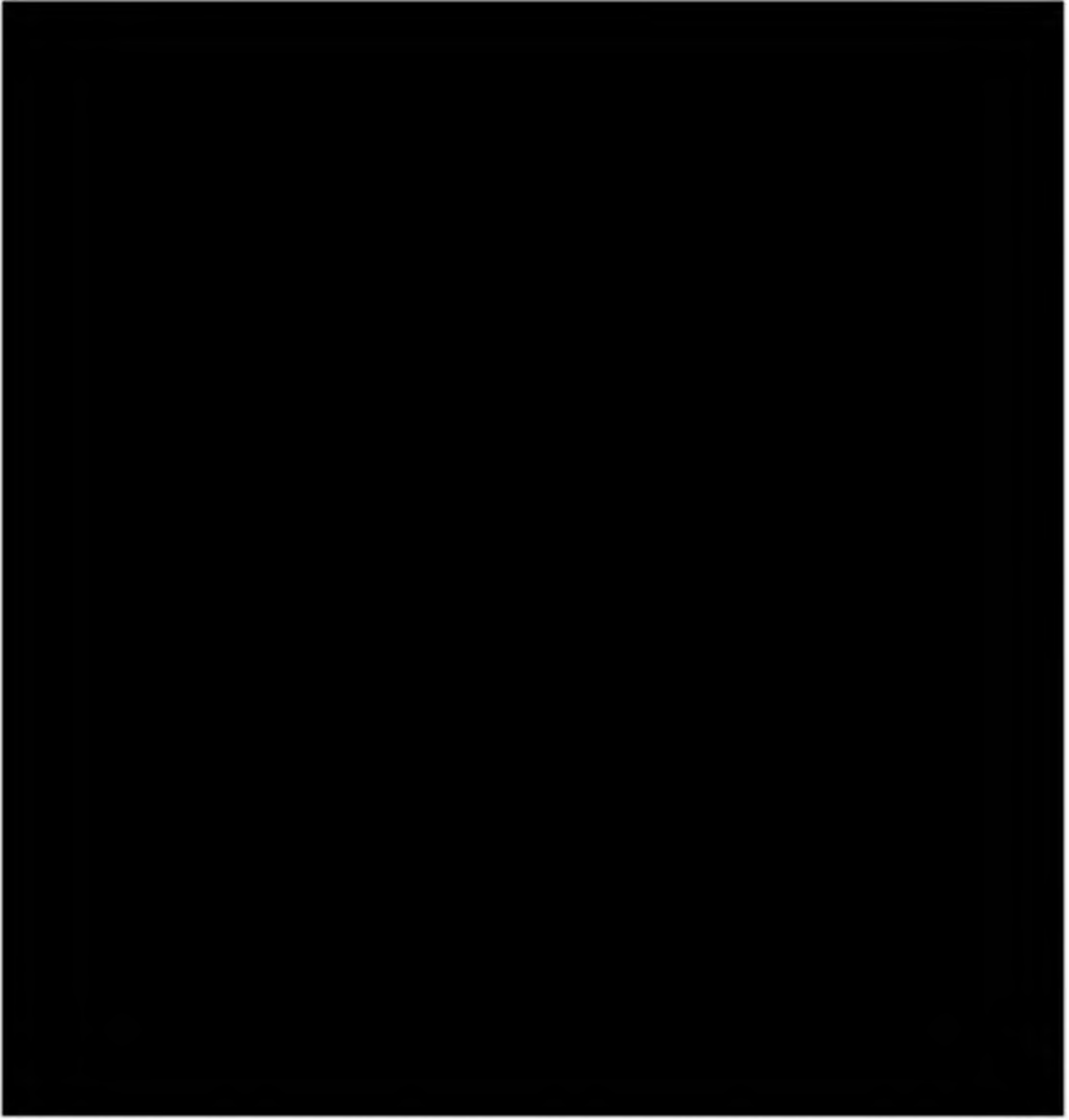


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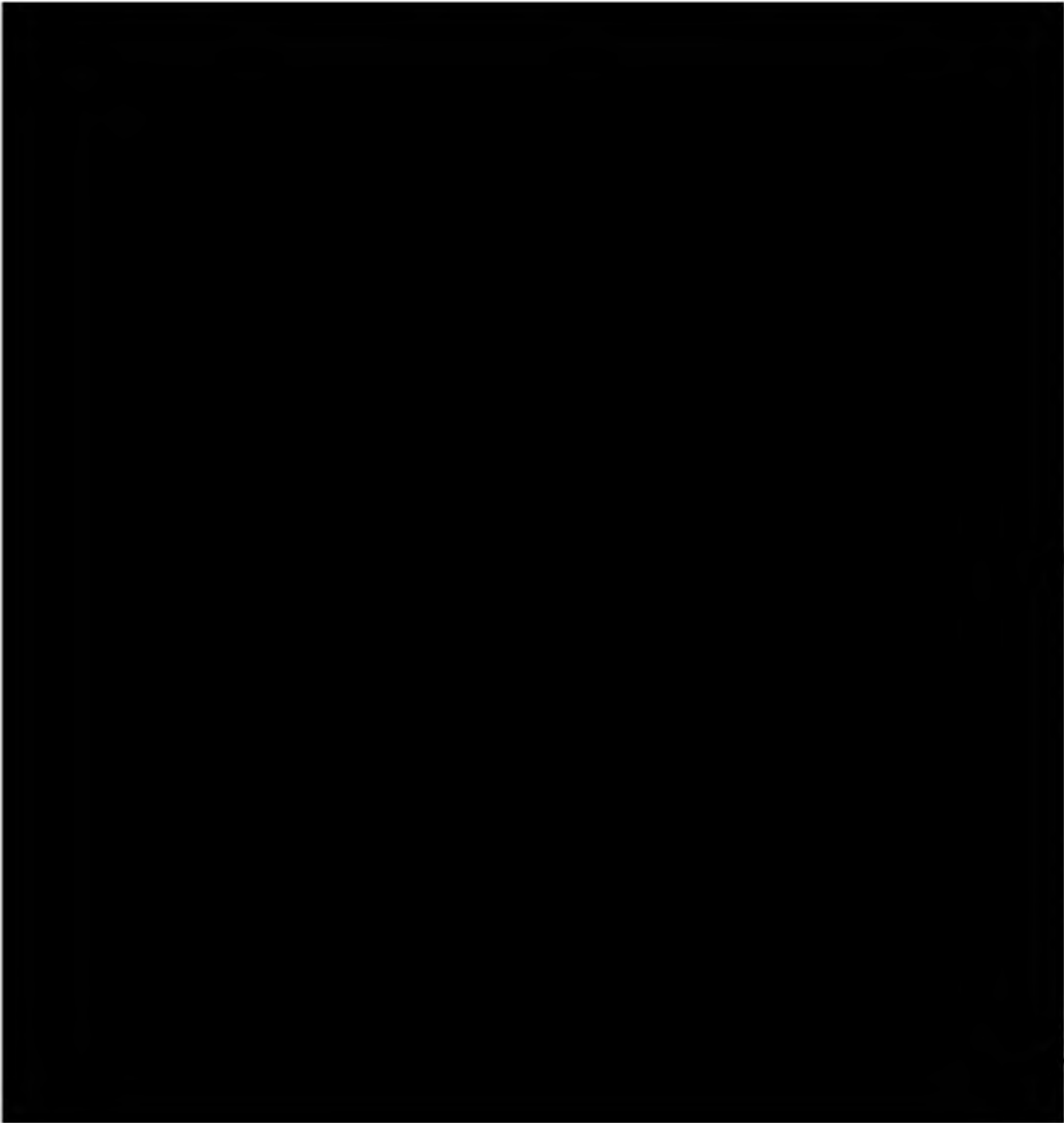
or put in more immediate terms, if flowers actually bloom in the nothingness of the individual as they bloom by themselves, then one is at one with them in the truth of one's own being. Nature in this sense of as-it-is-by-itself is directly synonymous in Buddhism with true-ness (Skt., *tathatā*; Jap., *shinnyo*, literally "thus-ness"). One awakened to the truth is called *Tathāgata* (Jap., *nyorai*), that is, one who comes and goes in the thus-ness as which nature "natures."

In the movement from the 8th stage to the 9th it is no longer, as in the preceding stages, a matter of a gradual progression but of a correlated-ness, or an oscillating back and forth. Nothingness in the 8th stage and simplicity in the 9th belong together, metaphorically speaking, like two sides of a single sheet of paper, a paper without thickness. The two sides are neither two nor one. It is rather a matter of a correlated double perspective each of which penetrates the other. In other words, the direction from the 8th stage to the 9th is "at one with" the opposite direction from the 9th stage to the 8th, permitting the whole to be described in reversible terms: "The blooming flowers are nothingness, nothingness is the blooming flowers." The classical formula for this in Buddhism reads: "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form" (Skt., *rūpam śūnyatā, śūnyatā rūpam*; Jap., *shiki soku ze kū, kū soku ze shiki*). It is thus a question of an absolute coincidence of nothingness and form where the stress falls not on the identity of the two, which would be a further form of mistaken substantializing, but on an interrelated double perspective which relates then to "death and resurrection" in the existentiell sphere. The direction of seeing through form as nothingness is designated Great Understanding, while the direction of seeing nothingness immediately concretized as form is designated Great Compassion.

The matter treated expressly in the 10th and final stage concerns the encounter between human individuals. Here the true self resurrected from nothingness is at work between individuals, or comes into play there, as a selfless dynamic of the "between." This "between" is here the self's own domain, its inner playground. In other words, the self, cut open by absolute nothingness and laid bare, unfolds as this "between." The drawing for this 10th stage depicts an old man meeting a young man on the road of the world. It is not a question here of two different individuals running into one another by chance. "An old man and a young man" represents the selfless manifestation of the self of the old man himself. The concerns of the other are now the concerns of the self in its selflessness. What



9



10

matters for the youth as such comes to matter for the old man, and the old man in turn keeps no matter of his own to himself. This communion in a common life is the second resurrection body of the selfless self. I am "I and thou," "I and thou" is I. The self is seen as a double self in virtue of selflessness. This is the second model of "emptiness and fullness."

The introductory text remarks:

The brushwood gate is firmly closed and even the wisest holy man cannot see him [that is, the old man comes from unknown stock, namely from absolute nothingness]. He has buried his illuminated nature deep. . . . He sometimes enters the marketplace with a hollowed-out gourd or returns to his hut with a staff. He visits the drinking place and fish stalls as he pleases, to awaken the drunkards there to themselves.

To encounter others, the true self does not dwell off in "*nirvāna*" but keeps to the well-travelled and frequented roads of the world, without forsaking absolute nothingness. Here again we come to the dynamic with a double perspective: on the roads of the world as in nothingness, in nothingness *as* on the roads of the world. Untiring and serious efforts made on behalf of another is thus at the same time, in virtue of nothingness, play for oneself, though not in the sense of a play that entails the loss of effort and compassion. This is what Zen has in mind with those double statements that look contradictory if only viewed logically. On the one hand it is said, "Living beings are countless, we vow to save them all." And on the other, "There is no living being that we should save or have saved, nor is there any salvation." Or again, "Alas, up until now I have wanted to save all the world. Surprise! There is no more world to save." The self-consciousness of having saved others would by itself already be enough to corrupt salvation.

One's own awakening to the true self is confirmed in bringing others to awakening in such a way that it is their own awakening. In virtue of formless and modeless nothingness, the type and mode of meeting seen here is once again very distinctive. Had the meeting taken place somewhere en route from the 1st to the 7th stage, the two would have talked about things religious with one another. But not here. The old man neither preaches nor instructs, but from the moment they meet and during their time together he simply asks questions: "Where do you come from?" "What is your name?" "How are you?" "Have you already eaten?"

“Do you see the flowers?”—to cite a few examples from the history of Zen. At first all of them seem like ordinary, everyday questions. But does the other in truth know at all where he comes from? Does he really see the flowers as they bloom by themselves? The old man asks, and in so doing *the* question—the question about oneself, the true self—is awakened in the other: “Who am I really?” The other begins to “search for the ox” himself. This brings us back again to the first stage. The 10th stage is therefore not a conclusion but a new beginning at Stage 1 for another, namely for the young man whom the old man encounters in the open “between” and in whom the question about the true self has been awakened. What we have here is the transmission of the self, from self to self.

* * *

To review what we have said so far: while stages 1 to 7 are basically concerned with a step by step process of advancing along the way to the self, the last three stages no longer mark any progress as such, but rather portray a threefold manifestation, in each aspect of which the same thing is totally present in a unique way even as it undergoes transformation. This same thing, the selfless self, is for its part only fully real insofar as it is able to realize itself in a totally different way in each aspect of this threefold transformation: as absolute nothingness, as the simplicity of nature, and as the double self of communication. The final three stages portray as it were the three-in-one character of the true self. This means that the self is never “there” but always in process of transformation, always fitted to its circumstances and likewise always proceeding from out of itself, at one moment passing away into nothingness unhindered and without a trace, at another, blooming in the flowers as the selfless self, and at a third, in the encounter with the other, converting that very encounter into its own self. The free interchange of the aspects treated in the 8th, 9th, and 10th stages attests to the nonsubstantiality of the self. It is not an identity remaining with itself and in itself that constitutes the true selfless self, but an *ek-static* dynamic drawing an invisible circle of nothing-nature-person, as it were, with *ex-sistence* itself. To be sure, these three aspects, each of which is capable of endless variations, can also be objectified and depicted in imagery, as in the drawings that illustrate the final three stages. But the dynamic as such, the one single thing that matters, can never be fixed ob-

jectively or pictorially. It cannot even be symbolized by a circle, because a circle is unmoving and static. It is rather a question of the circular movement, of the movement that enables a circle to be drawn. But the movement that enables the drawing of a circle as such must also enable the circle that has been drawn to be erased. Otherwise the movement would be bound by the drawing. In order to get at the selfless self as this dynamic movement of ex-sistence, we need to turn to secondary pointers for help. We may liken it, for instance, to *fū-kaku*, "wind-character," and say that this movement is like the blowing of the wind. By *fū-kaku* we are given to understand something other than personality, for which Japanese has another word, *jin-kaku*, human-character. *Jin-kaku* is something that each human individual as such possesses. Human-character is for each individual person completely identical with that of every other individual and beyond dispute. In contrast, wind-character is completely individual, in each instance different and possessed of a character all its own, always blowing at a different velocity and varying according to which of its faces it is showing. If one is bound by the "I am I," one lacks this *fū-kaku*: the dynamic of the selfless self is absent. "How is it blowing with you?" "How is the wind in your house?" In the history of Zen, masters were often asked about the "how" of their self with questions such as these.

The 8th, 9th, and 10th stages, therefore, do not represent a step by step advance but rather three aspects of the true, selfless self. Still the sequence of stages here does have a practical significance. The absolutely decisive element in the Zen way to the true self is the nothingness-event that breaks through the "I am I" definitively, including also the subtler forms it assumes in the realm of religion. In this absolute nothingness all form fades away, and this means likewise that the self, free of form, discloses itself initially as formlessness pure and simple, as formlessness itself. This takes place at the 8th stage, represented by an *empty* circle. There the circle "circles" itself, and nothingness, as a desubstantializing dynamic, proceeds to the nothingness of nothingness. In this way the self resurrects from nothingness and into the selfless self. But why then does "a tree in bloom alongside a river" appear in the 9th stage that follows and not a human being? It is a resurrection from nothingness to the selfless self; and the selflessness that constitutes the fundamental condition of the true self is first of all embodied, for the sake of that selflessness itself, in a reality where the human is not to the fore, for instance in a blooming tree. This is what the 9th stage shows us: a tree in bloom by a river and nothing else.

The human does not appear. Here we have instead the very selflessness itself of the human being. Only then, in virtue of the reality of this embodiment which confirms and sustains selflessness and which guards us against falling back into the "I am I," does the selfless *self* make its appearance and because of its selflessness transform the "between" of the I-Thou into its own ex-sisting inner space. This is the meaning of the 10th stage. This relationship of mobility among the 8th, 9th, and 10th stages provides us with our third model for "emptiness and fullness."

The selfless self in its dynamic movement, as seen above with the aid of a Zen text, may seem implausible, even fantastic, when compared with the concept of the person as characterized by the modern understanding of ego. Strangely enough, it seems to me that the nonsubstantializing concept of the self treated here bears a structural relation to the concept of the person characteristic of the medieval Christian doctrine of the Trinity. This of course should not be taken to mean that the Buddhist self is the equivalent of the Christian deity. There is no question of a real similarity between "self" and "God," but only of a similarity in the conceptual structure of the way each finds its way into human understanding.

II

In this second part we turn to a more precise understanding of our topic. To do so, we may take up separately three different problems that arise in connection with what has been discussed above, and view them from a wider perspective.

The first problem has to do with *śūnyatā* (or emptiness, in the Buddhist sense of the term). It is the problem of nothingness and oneness. At the level of fundamental principle, Buddhist (both primitive Buddhism with its doctrine of *anattā* as well as Mahāyāna Buddhism with its doctrine of *śūnyatā*) denies the notion of being as such, and with it the category of "substance" in the sense of some entity identical with itself and having its ground of being in itself. Buddhism sees at work in substantializing the covert self-substantializing of the ego-captivated human subject. In contrast to the concept of substantial being, Buddhism recognizes only the category of "relation." According to Buddhist thought nothing at all is in itself and through itself. Everything that is, only is in relation to other things, in a relationship of mutual conditioning among beings. "To be"

means "to be nothing in oneself and to stand in relation." Of fundamental importance here is the category of "relation," for everything that stands in relation comes to be what it is in relation and passes out of being what it is again in relation. Even relationship itself is not an enduring state but a dynamic event that happens toward another, with another, for another, through another, by another, and so forth. In this relational dynamic each and every thing is in itself a nothingness, which is precisely why it is boundlessly open to universal relationships, all of which are then centered on the nothingness of each thing in a once-and-for-all and unique manner. This is what constitutes the individuality of each thing. As the Zen text has it, "Up comes a flower and a world is born."

This correlative, dynamic situation is treated in Buddhist thought from a double perspective. The doctrine of *śūnyatā*, according to which each thing in its own being is empty, views the entire situation from the perspective of "nothingness"; while the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda*, the origination of each thing in mutual dependency with everything about it, views the same situation from the perspective of the universal dynamic of relationship. But the truth lies in that inseparable correlatedness of nothingness and the relational dynamic whereby correlatedness as such is devoid of being and of nothingness. Corresponding to this correlatedness is the distinctive formula widely used in Buddhist thought:

It is, and $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{likewise} \\ \text{nevertheless} \end{array} \right\}$ it is not.
 It is not, and $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{likewise} \\ \text{nevertheless} \end{array} \right\}$ it is.

In this double perspective of the *and nevertheless* or *and likewise* of A and not-A Buddhism sees the truth of both being and nothingness. Being alone would be onesided; nothingness alone would be onesided, too. The insight into this *and likewise* of A and not-A is called *prajñā*-understanding, the absolute wisdom beyond every duality. The *and likewise* as such is neither A nor not-A. It cannot be determined by affixing any image or concept or idea to it, and is thus sometimes referred to in modern Japanese philosophy as "absolute nothingness," of which the human subject in its "nothingness" can only become aware in a non-objective way. Our question here is: What can we say about oneness on the basis of this correlatedness of nothingness and the relational dynamic?

The forty-fifth case of the *Hekiganroku* (trans. by K. Sekida in *Two*

Zen Classics, New York: Weatherhill, 1977, p. 271) reads:

A monk asked Jōshū, "All the Dharmas are reduced to oneness, but what is oneness reduced to?" Jōshū said, "When I was in Seishū I made a hempen shirt. It weighed seven pounds."

"All beings are reduced to One." But to this Zen Buddhism adds the question, "To what is the One reduced?" That all beings with their differences and oppositions return to the original One is the doctrine of "All is One." But this does not yet make it clear what is meant by the One. In certain circumstances the One could signify an ontological cul-de-sac for the many. Therefore Zen Buddhism goes on to the further question, "What is the One reduced to?" There is no stopping short, even at the One itself: "All things indeed are reduced to One. Even that one is not to be clung to." To do so would mean getting trapped in oneness. Even that One must be broken through since it cannot be the truth. Insofar as oneness is understood as a unity and hence as distinct from difference and opposition, it is being substantialized into a One which as such must then be apprehended by a definite conception or in a definite form. Thus the One would no longer be understood as a unifier but on the contrary as a cause of dichotomy and opposition. For once conceived in a definite form, it must exclude other things that do not fit this form, and what has been excluded then finds its own One as a principle in another form. Then comes the struggle over fundamental principle which leads to the deepest of dichotomies. In such fundamental opposition idealism must evoke materialism, theism must evoke atheism or nihilism, and vice versa. If everything is "in truth" One, then the true oneness of being must be exempt from substantialist prehension through specific forms of the One. This is what the question, "What is the one reduced to?" is aiming at. The question leads to the realization that the One must become nothingness or that one must abandon the One. This entails two dynamically correlative movements: toward nothingness, and then toward (or back to) multiplicity. Thus the truth of the One is nothingness *and likewise* multiplicity. In Buddhism the complete formula reads: "Neither the One nor the Many; the One and likewise the Many, the Many and likewise the One." Once the One has become nothingness, it then returns as the relationship of "the One *and likewise* the Many, the Many *and likewise* the One." At the ground of this relationship, let it be emphasized yet again, lies ungrounded nothingness, which hereafter carries out its negation at the level of the

relationship "Neither the One nor the Many." Nothingness dissolves the Many into the One, and likewise disperses the One into the Many. In so doing, nothingness eliminates from the Many its contradictoriness (but not its differentiation) and eliminates from the One its security of being closed up and locked away in itself (but not its unity). Thus the relationship of "the One *and likewise* the Many, the Many *and likewise* the One" has its ground of possibility in nothingness, which in turn has its reality confirmed in this relationship. In this sort of relational dynamic the true overcoming of multiplicity signals nothing other than a return to multiplicity as a process leading away from the One and toward nothingness. As the Zen saying has it, "In the spring wind, constant and invisible, the long boughs are long with blossoms and the short are short, each from itself." "The long, long and the short, short" or "Red, red and green, green." This is where Buddhism locates unity free of form, a unity that maintains each being and each happening in its uniqueness and so displays a motley symphony of being in the openness of nothingness. This is what is intended by the Buddhist phrase, "Differentiation means unity, unity means differentiation." In this connection two standard terms should be mentioned at least in passing. Buddhism speaks of *ichinyo* and *funi*. *Ichi* means "one" and *nyo* means "as" or "such as" (thus echoing "thusness," the Buddhist notion of reality). *Ichinyo* can be roughly translated as "as one," thus giving us: (The two, or the many, are) as one. The two, as they are two, are one. In other words, the two are "not two"—which is what the word *funi* expresses. *Fu* means "not" and *ni* means "two." Thus Buddhism speaks less directly of oneness than it does of "as-one-ness" or "not-two-ness."

Let us listen once again to the example from the *Hekiganroku*:

A monk asked Jōshū, "All the Dharmas are reduced to oneness, but what is oneness reduced to?" Jōshū said, "When I was in Seishū I made a hempen shirt. It weighed seven pounds."

The style and manner of reply of the Zen master is completely different from the sort of argument attempted above. Instead of talking *about* the situation, the Zen master is able to express the situation *as such* in a wholly concrete and living way.

* * *

The second problem concerns the non-objective, ek-static experience of nature found in the correlation between the 8th and 9th stages of the Oxherding Pictures. In the explanation we saw that a tree in flower alongside a river was nothing other than the selfless self. This situation, which does not yield to the subject-object scheme, may now be clarified from another point of view, one drawn chiefly from the philosophy of "pure experience" found in Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), a representative of modern philosophy in Japan.

To cite from the opening chapter of Nishida's *A Study of Good* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1960):

In the moment of seeing or hearing, where reflection ("I see flowers") and judgment ("The flowers are red") are not yet present, in that moment of actual seeing or hearing, there is neither subject nor object. This directly experiencing experience, this "pure experience" not yet elaborated by reflecting and judging thought, is the ground of being of the most real of all realities and the ground of being of the true self, since prior to the dichotomy of subject and object a non-differentiation, which is the original fullness of totality, is present.

A direct bond between the empirical and the metaphysical shows up here in a peculiar manner. In speaking of seeing and hearing, Nishida stands firmly within the realm of experience. But insofar as he draws nearer to experience than does empiricism, which from the outset overlays a variety of thought constructs on experience, such as the hypothesis of atoms of perception as the foundation of experience, or the idea of verifiability through experimentation, with Nishida experience leads immediately to the metaphysical. Thus for Nishida the metaphysical does not lie *beyond* experience, as is usually the case in metaphysics, but rather *on its other side*, that is to say on the *near side* of experienced experience, within the experiencing experience." In the moment of seeing or hearing, there is neither subject nor object," for they are not yet able to be determined. In this sense it is "nothingness" and yet at the same time it is simply a pure presence "without anyone seeing or anything being seen."

Usually we are not aware of this "moment." In our seeing and hearing we leap over the "moment prior to the dichotomy." We forget the "moment" and lump a vague stretch of time together to announce something like, "I see flowers," taking it as self-evident that this "I see flowers" is

immediate, fundamental experience. For Nishida this is already a reconstruction of what has been experienced into a subject-object framework, and thus is no longer present but belongs to the past. It is no longer an *experiencing* experience but an *experienced* experience that has been reconstructed from a reflecting ego and a re-presentation of flowers as something that has been seen. It is not that Nishida wanted to deny reflection and re-presentation altogether. What he wanted to deny was rather setting up as self-evident from the start a duality that assumed forms like mind and nature, consciousness and thing, or formally expressed, subject and object. For Nishida it was a question of where to posit the immediacy of experience, that original immediacy that is the basis of reality and that offers the final guarantee for the unity of experience. He shifted this immediacy back to a point prior to the dichotomy and traced it back through experiencing experience itself. This point of pre-dichotomy is not to be grasped through reflection. Nor can we apprehend it objectively—for every objectification it must remain an empty nothingness. We become aware of it only in an egoless, immediate, non-objective fashion. But how does this take place? Since we usually find ourselves already in experienced experience, that is, since the original and pre-dichotomy immediacy has already been skipped over and forgotten, in order to get to the bottom of experience we need to find our way back to the origin (*Ursprung*) by taking a leap (*Sprung*) backwards. And we must do this in such a way that even the retrieval itself is subsumed into the immediacy of experience. But how is such a leap backwards to be accomplished? Not through any voluntary or reflective activity of our own. We cannot simply retreat at will from the subject-object frame of reference. As Nishida says, "In the moment of seeing or hearing there is neither subject nor object." Struck by the "moment" of a presence, unfettered by the subject-object framework, and thus also egoless, we are carried back in a leap to the nothingness of the "pre-". The readiness to be struck by the "moment" requires as an indispensable condition that we practice concentrating egolessly on the "moment" of seeing or hearing, even though we must be struck in such a way that our practicing itself is absorbed into the presence without remainder. In this breaking through of the enclosed I-am-I in and through the "moment," Nishida sees the empirical-metaphysical and the existentielle as a unity realized by the self on an original ground prior to dichotomy. In the pre-dichotomy state of actual seeing and hearing Nishida sees the original interlacing of the empirical, the metaphysical, and the existentielle,

all three of which normally occur separately and at odds with one another—which then faces human Dasein with a fatal difficulty.

In this way, at the “moment” of seeing and hearing we are struck by the “moment” and broken through by it. We are carried back in a leap to the nothingness of the “pre-” where we retrieve the origin that had been skipped over and forgotten. But this does not mean that we end up fading away into nothingness with the “pre-” alone remaining as the whole truth. Nishida speaks of a “pre-dichotomy” and thus means to accord the dichotomy itself a validity as well. But a dichotomy of what? This is a critical question for Nishida. He takes it upon himself to ask from where and as what this dichotomy is experienced and in so doing presents us with a circular movement: back to the nothingness of the “pre-” and from there on to an experience of the subject-object dichotomy as a split within the original self in its pre-dichotomy state, an experience that now signals the self-unfolding of pure experience. The subject-object frame then becomes the authentic domain of the self that, once *de*become into nothingness, now comes to be out of nothingness. The self now sees everything, as the Zen expression goes, “as if held in the palm of its inner hand” or “as its own countenance.” Nishida speaks here of the subject-side and the object-side of one and the same experiences that has unfolded. It is a question of a double perspective, not of a duality of subject and object. For Nishida this unfolding of experience belongs to pure experience.

It remains to ask whether pure experience, as Nishida treats it, can be considered real experience. As an example to illustrate “pure experience” we may cite, without entering into an interpretation, the well-known epitaph of Rainer-Maria Rilke:

Rose, oh pure contradiction, delight
to be the sleep of no one under so many
lids

Our present concern turns us to the “oh” to ask, “What really is this *oh*?” Focusing on the *oh* might not be the most important from the point of view of German poetics, but by turning the poem inside out as it were so that the once unobtrusive little *oh* becomes a great *Oh!*, it becomes possible to look at it afresh as a primordial occurrence of the word. “Rose, Oh! Pure contradiction. . . .” What then is this *Oh!*? As a written word it can be classed grammatically as an interjection. But what is really going on in the *Oh!* with its actual outcry? What happens when *Oh!* is cried out

in reality and in truth? Simply put, we may speak of an "Oh-event."

If we listen to the poem not as a finished written or printed product but as an occurrence of the word in the actual act of poeticizing, we can apprehend in the *Oh!* the origin of the poem from which the remaining words of the verse unfold as an articulation. "Rose, Oh! . . ." Struck by pure presence, the cry goes out, "Oh!" What is occurring in this actual *Oh!* ?

On the one hand, pure presence robs us of speech. "Oh!" What is going on here in actuality is no longer that which "people" depict in their trusty but overused word "rose." It is no longer that which people encounter in the linguistic precognitive world. There is, so to speak, a flash of rose—no, of SOMETHING, something unspeakable. The rose becomes an *Oh!*. Or more properly put, it *debecomes* an *Oh!*. Here the linguistic precognitive world is broken through, rent asunder. The *Oh!* is a primordial sound of presence at one with that original, primitive sound wherein the world of language is broken back into. "Oh!" Language is gathered back into the inarticulate in order to *debecome* in absolute quiet. "Oh!"—and quiet. At the same time this signifies the essential death of the human subject as an essence endowed with language. The *Oh!* is not a word that one has at one's disposal. The *Oh!* is spoken and language is taken away. The *Oh!* is rather the sound of the last breath issuing forth from the human subject endowed with language before it dies. The human has, in its essence, ceased to be. It has become, *debecome* an *Oh!*. There remains now only the *Oh!* wherein both rose and human subject have *debecome* what they once were. "Oh!"—and quiet.

On the other hand, this *Oh!* is also and at the same time the prefatory, starting point for the words of the verse that follow after it: "Oh pure contradiction. . . ." It is the very first, primordial sound that reverberates in absolute stillness. It is as this sound that the unspeakable presence itself, which takes away language, becomes word in general. As the presence of the unspeakable, this *Oh!* is the very first of all words. It does not really belong yet to language, but is a nonverbal, fore-word to language through which the way to language in general is re-disclosed. Similarly, it signals the re-surrection of the human to its essential linguisticity. "Oh!" is the first and the earliest sound of the human as it is born again into the linguisticity that characterizes its essence and sets it off. "Oh!"—everything is said at once, albeit still inarticulately; and thus spoken, everything is understood in an original, albeit still unreflective, sense.

To sum up: the Oh-event is a single *and likewise* a double event. In the single *Oh!*, rose and human subject alike have *debecome* the *Oh!* which is, as such, "neither subject nor object." And likewise, that same *Oh!* is the proper origin from which the structured totality unfolds. It is nothingness and everything in one, and that in a fully concrete way: "Oh!" If the *Oh!* actually occurs in this way, the Oh-event would constitute what Nishida understands as a pure experience, or in this case is in fact pure experience itself.

Pure experience, as just illustrated in the example of the *Oh!*, is neither experience linguistically apprehended nor is it simply nonlinguistic experience. It is the experience of the word being taken away and at the same time the experience of the word being born. There presence robs one outright of language and in so doing likewise becomes the first of all words. It tears itself away from language and pushes itself into language. Hence through the *Oh!* and as the *Oh!* there takes place a circular movement from one extreme to the other—away from the word and toward the word. And this movement likewise signals a "death and resurrection" of *homo loquens*, the human subject endowed with language. It is a matter of a radical freedom *from* language and likewise the most primordial freedom *for* language. As this freedom, the *Oh!* is something that occurs at the ground of the essence of the human, and at the same time is something that concerns all beings as a whole.

The *Oh!*, as the very first word proceeding forth from absolute silence, as the nonverbal fore-word to language, could be described as an *Urwort*, an original, primordial word. But this does not mean that every *oh* that is interjected into human speech from time to time would thereby qualify as a primordial word. Without the event described above there can be no talk of primordial word. Conversely, that event is not bound to any one particular word. It could as well happen in a pre-linguistic form like laughing or crying, even in the drawing of a breath or in physical movement that we might refer to as body-language. In coming to linguistic articulation, the primordial word itself quite often disappears "between the lines" where it works unseen to shape the style of a composition as a whole and even to determine the choice of words. (Thus, in Rilke's epitaph, we have only an inconspicuous little "oh" that, according to the meter, receives a weak accent. The *Oh!* has been articulated into the words of the verse which are the only thing that counts in a poem, leaving only a faint trace of itself behind in the "oh".

A few further remarks on the *Oh*-event might aid at the same time to explain what is meant by "pure experience."

1. In the *Oh!* silence and language are one. In this *Oh!* and as this *Oh!*, language is silent, and silence utters itself from out of silence. In the *Oh!* language frees itself from talk.

2. In this *Oh!* reality and language are not yet distinguished from one another. "Oh!"—speaking a primordial word, as a primary event in absolute quiet, is a primary reality in the direct sense of the term. Primordial word signifies primordial matter or affair. There is as yet no rift between experience and its linguistic expression, no duality of the real and the unreal. This absolute non-differentiation of primordial word and primordial affair in one and the same *Oh!* provides various areas where reality and language are already divided with an original and final groundwork for binding reality and language back together, as in the case of the accord between knowing and the object of knowing, in the formation of reality through the word, and perhaps also in activity that "keeps its word."

3. Who is it really that speaks that *Oh!* as primordial word? In the outcry "Oh!" there is no "I say, 'Oh!'" being spoken. The I is instead completely forgotten there. It is not the I that cries out "Oh!" but an ek-stasis from the I. The *Oh!* occurs as an ek-static unity of person, language, and reality (or affair).

4. A single *Oh!*, and yet two movements in opposite directions. Rose becomes *Oh!* and likewise human subject becomes *Oh!*. We have here both primordial appeal and primordial response in one. "Oh!"—a primordial dialogue in an original accord. The dialogical essence of language goes back to the *Oh!*.

As an occurrence of "pure experience," the *Oh!* is also a circular movement from language through absolute silence and back again to language. The initial movement to language is as such the primordial word, the non-verbal fore-word to language. Through it the way to language is disclosed. Then language comes into the picture, that is to say, the primordial word is articulated through language in words. In this regard Rilke's epitaph in its entirety can be seen as an articulation of the *Oh!*, of an *Oh!* that the poet, struck by a presence, has cried out ek-statically. Insofar as it has come to articulation, and in fact *only* to that extent, we are able to look back to the source and recognize such a thing as primordial word. Of itself the *Oh* would be nothing. In articulation the *Oh* becomes a nothingness that says

everything at once and is then articulated as such. This articulation of the primordial word is the equivalent of what we mentioned above as the unfolding of pure experience passing judgment on itself. Thus the words cited above in commenting on the 9th station, "The flowers bloom, just as they bloom by themselves," also serve as an articulation of pure experience. The problem of articulation though, merits treatment all on its own, and we shall have to pass over it lightly here with only a hint of an explanation. In the articulation of a primordial word such as the *Oh!*, we need to draw distinctions with regard to mode and with regard to dimension:

Modally speaking we have (a) the *logos*-articulation of the *Oh!* as a non-differentiation pure and simple, an absolute indifference; (b) the *pathos*-articulation of the *Oh!* as a primordial sound; and (c) the *performance*-articulation of the *Oh!* as a primordial force.

Dimensionally speaking we need to distinguish between a first and a second articulation. The Zen saying, "The flowers bloom just as they bloom by themselves," belongs to the first articulation, while "the philosophy of pure experience" belongs to the second. In this connection two questions arise: (1) What kind of an event is the "articulation" of the primordial word in general, and in which kind of relation does the linguistic articulation of the primordial word stand to the use of language? And (2) What characterizes the articulated (for example, what is characteristic of a statement as a *logos*-articulation of a primordial word, particularly where "logic" is concerned)?

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The third problem concerns the interhuman relationship in the most general sense of the term. The question here is: What is characteristic of the interhuman relationship grounded in nothingness toward which the human subject *debecomes* and from which it resurrects?

In the 10th station of the Oxherding Pictures we saw two men meeting on a road. In the context of self-becoming as understood by Zen and as the accompanying text explains, it is an image of the true self in its aspect of a double self grounded on selflessness in nothingness. Split open by absolute nothingness the self spreads out and unfolds itself selflessly into the *between* where the other in its otherness belongs to the selflessness of the self. As such this situation contains more than what is given immediately and expressly in the text. It is able to present what is charac-

teristic with regard to the problem of "I and Thou." Indeed, the I-Thou relationship is contained in this situation as an essential moment, but the situation in its entirety is something other, something more than the I-Thou relationship. The example of the common form of Japanese greeting may help to clarify things.

Two Japanese meet on a road. First they bow to one another, sometimes so deeply as to suggest a bow to the groundlessness of nothingness where there is neither I nor Thou. Only then do they straighten up and turn to greet one another. "Nice day, isn't it?" "Yes, it is." The scene is inconspicuous and everyday enough, hardly more than a customary form of meeting and salutation. But a form is from the very start more than something merely formal, though it can deteriorate to the level of pure form. A form of greeting is originally an elemental expression and a way of exercising human self-understanding in interhuman encounters where the essence of the human is being expressed. This leads us to inquire into what kind of human self-understanding through encounter it is that underlies such a form of everyday greeting.

At first the two partners bow deeply to one another from opposite sides, out of courtesy as it is commonly said. But the deep bow is something on the order of being and carries more in it than mere "courtesy." It is a matter of making oneself a nothingness before the other, so that the other, too, then ceases to be present—and vice versa. Instead of stepping right into the midst of an I-Thou relationship, the bow signals an initial plunge into the depths of groundlessness, breaking the "ego" as it were in the depths of nothingness and allowing it to *debecome* to a point where there is no longer neither "I" nor "Thou." It is a sort of submersion into the groundlessness of nothingness.

Only then do the two partners straighten up again—resurrect from nothingness—and turn toward one another to take a position in a mutual I-Thou relationship. This means that their I-Thou relationship is at the same time permeated with the neither-I-nor-Thou in nothingness. A dynamic correlatedness of the I-Thou relationship and the neither-I-nor-Thou in nothingness takes place here. How does this function within the I-Thou relationship itself? An infinite openness permeated with nothingness is disclosed from within the *between*, at the point where the two stand vis-à-vis each other. Each of the two partners in the I-Thou relationship has now experienced absolute non-differentiation as a neither -I-nor-Thou in nothingness. In this open *between*, each can on the one hand live out

the entire I-Thou relationship as its own self (absolute self-sufficiency and exclusivity), and on the other abandon the entire I-Thou relationship to the Thou into which it is absorbed without remainder (absolute dependency). Thus on the ground of non-differentiation which each of the two partners has experienced in the neither-I-nor-Thou, each can both live out the entire relationship on the I-side (I am "I and Thou" in absolute self-sufficiency) as well as abandon this same relationship entirely to the Thou-side (I am in my absolute dependency "I and Thou," and Thou art master). In other words, as Zen Buddhism says, we are dealing here with a reciprocal exchange of the role of master. This correlatedness of absolute self-sufficiency and absolute dependency (again reciprocal) characterizes the I-Thou relationship grounded on nothingness. Only in this way do both partners find themselves in a relationship where both are at once absolutely free and completely the equal of one another.

They bow to one another in the groundlessness of nothingness and straighten up again from nothingness to turn toward one another. This entire movement comprises the following phases and moments:

1. The neither "I" nor "Thou" in nothingness.
2. The I-Thou relationship which of itself contains (a) a mutual opposition of I and Thou on the plane of relationship, and (b) a correlatedness of absolute self-sufficiency and absolute dependency grounded in the I-Thou relationship permeated with nothingness (that is, a reciprocal exchange between the two partners of the role of master).

This entire movement, which may appear complicated in its particular phases and moments though in reality, as an activity, it is quite simple, constitutes the selfless self in the interhuman relationship. Put the other way around, in the interhuman relationship the selfless self has to be able freely to traverse these various phases and moments.

Two Japanese meet on the road. They bow to one another in the depths of nothingness where there is neither I nor Thou (the 8th station of the Oxherding Pictures), and then straighten up, turn to one another (the 10th station), and exchange greetings. "Nice day, isn't it?" "Yes, it is" (the 9th station). Taken at bottom, the whole movement of the greeting is nothing other than the circular dynamic of the 8th, 9th, and 10th stations of the Oxherding Pictures, where the Buddhist concern of the non-differentiation of the religious and the everyday is given expression. This is how everyday life, in all its details, gets filled up with meaning. It is therefore of critical importance for both of the partners whether they are able, in

reality and in truth, so to greet their counterpart.

In the relational dynamic grounded in nothingness, the human subject does not understand itself as a subject in itself substantially identical with itself that only later somehow comes to take up relations with an other. Rather it understands itself at any given moment from the relationship in which it finds itself involved from the beginning. It understands itself as already "a partner of a partner." It belongs to the inner structure of the self to step out of itself and to be permanently already in relationship to an other against whom it stands in mutual confrontation. If we describe this structure of "stepping outside of oneself" with the term *ex-sistence*, the other, in its opposition to the self is not an other, but precisely in virtue of its otherness, the embodiment of the *ex* of *ex-sistence*. It is the out-of-itselfness of the selfless self. Self vis-à-vis other: each, cut open by nothingness and spread out, combines its being with the being of the other so that in this combination with one another they are "neither two nor one." I and Thou then become two perspectives at opposite poles. I am "I and Thou," and the same can be said vice versa for the Thou. The self is the relationship of "the partner of a partner." This does not, however, signal a onesided dissolution of self in the relationship. The entire relationship is self. I am "I and Thou." And this situation is not a state of rest but an event happening at each and every moment. It can only be practiced and confirmed at any given moment concretely, in encounter and communication.

On the ethical plane the emphasis, obviously, falls on the moment of self-negation when the role of master is surrendered to the other. But this does not mean a onesided sacrifice of self. At bottom it is a question of reciprocal exchange in "giving priority to the other," of a mutual exchange of "Please, after you," so to speak. This is not, however, a conscious, intentional exchange; that would relegate it to the level of commerce between egos. "Giving priority to the other" (or "according the other the priority of being") shows us the greatness of the selfless self which in so doing is in a position to liberate the other from its ego-emprisonment so that the relationship of *ex-sistence* described above can function reciprocally.

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