

Emptiness and History

PART 2

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VI

WHAT I HAVE been saying about the standpoint of "karma" bears on the fundamental image of man's life in what is called the world of history. All our activity belongs to this world, and as I have indicated, there is discernible an essential feature in common between the standpoint of "karmic" activity and man's life in the modern secularized world. The anthropocentric mode of being that appears in modern secularized man contains above all an essential element I have called infinite impulsiveness or "self-will." The essential nature of man as it has evolved since the beginning of modern times demands to be seen under the aspect of infinity. There, the idea of karma is seen to contain elements which may be interpreted as a clarification of man's "secular" mode of being.

The standpoint of karma, however, has to be cast aside for the standpoint of emptiness, a disengagement which marks a turnabout from the standpoint of *nihilum* to the standpoint of emptiness. It is a turnabout from the field of samsara to the field of nirvana, and, further, to the field of samsara-*side*-nirvana. In previous chapters I ventured some observations regarding the standpoint within that turnabout of Dōgen's well-known "dropping off of body and mind, dropped-off body and mind," in the course of which I pointed out how the activity of our everyday life, all the karma of our deed, word, and thought, can become a manifestation of absolute truth (truth as *Alētheia*).¹

* "Emptiness and History" is the sixth chapter of *Shūkyō to wa nanika* ("What is Religion?"), published by Sōbunsha in 1961. The first installment appeared in *EB* XII, 1 (May 1979), pp. 49-82.

¹ *EB* IX, 1, pp. 60-71; X, II, p. 8.

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All that has been said about the standpoint of karma can, on the standpoint of emptiness, be turned about, go through an absolute negation, and then be given a new life. In any case, the Buddhist and especially the Mahayanist standpoint of emptiness may be said to possess its own distinguishing characteristics which place it, unaffiliated, somewhere between the religions centered in a cyclical world-view, where according to Toynbee history disappears (he places Buddhism in this group), and the Judeo-Christian religious tradition characterized by a strong historical sense but not fully devoid of self-centeredness.

As expressions such as "non-ego" and "body and mind dropping off" indicate, the standpoint of emptiness is the standpoint of radical deliverance from self-centeredness. It does not even recognize religious self-consciousness's higher forms of self-centeredness, the idea of being chosen or predestined by God for salvation, for example.

More fundamentally, the standpoint of emptiness in its essence implies an absolute negativity toward the "will" which lies at the bottom of all forms of self-centeredness: a direction directly opposite that of will is in fact involved. As I said before, we can find the concept of will at the bottom of all the most important Western conceptions of time and history. This goes without saying for the Will of God in Christianity and the Will to Power of Nietzsche's atheism, but a human "self-will," which can be called a kind of demonic infinite impulse, lies hidden even behind the anthropocentric reason of modern secularism. I have pointed out that in the East this infinite impulse rose to awareness at a very early date in the idea of karma.

However, the standpoint of emptiness comes into being only within a bottomless field where these standpoints of will, and in fact all standpoints of any kind related to will, are transcended in absolute negation. It is in such a bottomlessness that the standpoint of emptiness is the standpoint of the ec-sistence of non-ego.

In egoless existence, non-ego does not simply mean the self is without ego; it has to mean at the same time that non-ego is the self. It has to come to self-awareness as an emergence from the self's absolute negation of itself. It is not that self is merely not-self. It has to be that the self is the self because it is not the self. Otherwise, it would still be possible to conceive, as Nietzsche did, the Will to Power as the true self, or self-in-itself. It would be possible, like Schopenhauer, to regard the Will to Life or the Eastern concept of karma as the self-in-itself. The real self might also

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be sought in the union with an absolute being, God or the One, as in Western mysticism; or, in the oneness of Brahman and self (*tat tvam asi*; That art thou) of Eastern mysticism.

In all these conceptions the standpoint of true non-ego does not yet emerge in its perfect form. Only by going one step further does the turnabout to true non-ego, where "self is not-self and therefore is self," appear. This turnabout is no less than an ec-sistential self-awareness whereby the self is realized (comes into its own: is grasped) as an occurrence of suchness from non-ego. It is existence as "body and mind dropping off, dropping off body and mind."

In such an egoless existence, activity arises, as I said before, moment-to-moment from the beginning of "time." It is a manifestation of the "beginning" of time itself and, in that sense, it is an occurrence of eternity appearing in time.

Here also our life comes to exist in ceaselessly doing something. Our "being" takes the form of ceaseless "becoming" in ceaseless "doing." This being, as "being-doing" (*samskṛta*), is becoming that arises and vanishes at every moment. But here our activity no longer arises as an endless redemption and generation of debt, and our existence does not become an endless burden to us. Our activity, our karma of deed, word, and thought, does not arise out of "basic ignorance" (the root of self-centeredness) which is the homeground of the infinite impulse, and does not return to that homeground. Our every action is no longer something that produces being within a beginningless and endless time. No longer is it karma on the field of *nihilum*, which makes being be but at the same time nihilizes it.

As egoless ec-sistence, being, doing, and becoming in time all arise on the field of emptiness which is their absolute negation. And on this field ceaseless doing is ceaseless non-doing; continuous generation and extinction is continuous non-generation and non-extinction; incessant "doing" is, as such, not doing a single thing; being which is incessant "becoming," incessant arising and turning in the cycle of transmigration, is in itself not leaving the natal unborn home.

Borrowing the words of Dōgen quoted previously, we could say: the everyday life of body and mind with eyes horizontal and nose vertical is, as such, returning home with empty hands, just passing the time and taking things as they come.²

² *EB IX*, 1, pp. 64-5.

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On the field of emptiness, then, all our activity takes on the character of play. When our "being," "doing," and "becoming," in other words, our existence, behavior, and life, each arise from their own opposite pole, that is, when they arise from the point where non-self is self, they have shed any character whereby they can be said to have any reason or purpose. They cease to have aims or reasons outside themselves and become truly their own ends, groundless and causeless—the so-called *Leben ohne Warum*.

Our existence, activity, and life are basically, at their place of origin, not a means for anything else. Rather, each and every thing exists for them, and each gets its meaning from its relatedness to them, while they themselves are their own ends. So long as they essentially come to realization from that ur-source, our existence, activity, and life assume the character of play.

As that source or origin, however, is the place where non-self alone is truly self, even the mode of "being its own end" is still impure, not quite true. There must be no attachment to any such mode of being. It cannot be a standpoint where consciousness of being its own end still exists. Where our existence, doing, and life are authentically ends in themselves, being their own end must also be transcended. This is what obtains in samadhi.

This place of origin is the place of the "King-of-samadhis Samadhi" spoken of previously.³ Although samadhi contains no meaning of being its own end, precisely for that reason it truly is its own end—that is why it is called "no-mind." What I have termed play must have such a meaning. (Later on, I shall have occasion to comment on the ethical significance of what I have just said about the self's being its own end.)

That play in this sense is not even its own end, is what sets it fundamentally apart from what is commonly called play. In the ordinary sense "play" would include sports and other recreations, pastimes which originate in an opposition to all in everyday life that is deemed "work," and refers essentially to various temporary diversions or modes of relaxation. In contrast to work, which is toil or labor invariably done for some end, play occurs for its own sake, is its own end, and is thus a release from toil.

In the above sense of the word play, however, all that we do, including without distinction what is called "work" and what is called "play," comes to manifest the character of play. Both work as toil for the sake of something else, and play as divertissement for its own sake, are play in the sense they are each activities we engage in.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

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Here "work" and "play" while turning back prior to their differentiation to the "doing" which belongs to "this shore," at the same time come to appear as events arising in their suchness from the "yonder shore" which transcends such distinctions. Both work and play realize themselves originally and fundamentally as "doing" in its suchness, in what Buddhism calls a "sportive" samadhi (*yuge sammai*).

On the standpoint of emptiness, to which man "returns empty-handed," all "doing" presents that character of play at every instant within the constant movement of beginningless and endless time. In other words, all "being-doing" (*samskrta*) as the dynamic relationship of "being"- "doing"- "becoming" presents the aspect of "non-doing." This is the aspect in which we take things as they come in a life of complete freedom.

To repeat then, "being" has the character of a burden or debt imposed on us, and "doing" is its ceaseless redemption. We are, so to speak, paying our debt off in installments. Also our ceaseless "doing" is generating new debt in that very act of redemption. As activity implying at once the termination and creation of debt, our "doing" comes to have the meaning of "karma."

Here, freedom from being is at once creation of being, the creation of being that is undergoing nihilization. Moreover, the escape from "nothingness" in that nihilization is at the same time the self-presentation of Nothingness, of Nothingness in the process of being made being that is burdened by debt. As such, our actual existence presents an image of endless becoming and transmigratory change.

However, what I said before about all activity on the standpoint of emptiness revealing a character of play and all "being-doing" (*samskrta*) coming straightway to show an aspect of non-doing, means precisely that our "doing" which is producing the debt is, as such, not producing it. "Doing" thus comes to be rid of its essential burdensomeness, resulting in a true absolution of debt and settlement of all outstanding accounts.

Nonetheless, so long as it is "doing," the point is never reached where there is no longer anything to be shouldered. Only here what is shouldered is taken from a point where the debt is absolutely paid and cleared. So it is not that there is no burden; the burden is assumed from the point where it has once been completely unburdened. There, carrying the burden is "play," and the standpoint emerges where we go forward "spontaneously," accepting the burden of our own free will. The imposed labor, without ceasing to be such, is transformed into play by arising spontaneously from

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its own source. This original spontaneity is none other than the standpoint of samadhi and its concomitant state of no-mind, or the standpoint of non-doing, both of which I mentioned above.

True spontaneity, arising from its own elemental source, appears at the place where non-self is self: the self emerging from non-self is true spontaneity. Freedom and spontaneity of "will" as ordinarily conceived still belong to the standpoint of karma and its accompanying toil. That is, they are unable to break free of the self-confining activities (or basic ignorance) of self-centeredness. They do not constitute a standpoint where labor as such is truly play.

It is only where the burden-bearing is transformed into play that the burden is truly (spontaneously) borne. Debt is truly created, and true debt appears, only where debt has first been perfectly cleared. At that point "doing" becomes something that truly (spontaneously) takes debt upon itself.

Then, the debt comes to mean authentic responsibility taken on by the self; and the burden with the character of impressed labor becomes truly one's own task, with a meaning of a self-imposed duty or vocation. (As I shall explain later, a debt which acquires the nature of personal responsibility from the point where the debt has once been completely cancelled, is a debt toward one's "neighbors," toward all "others," a debt which is, so to speak, not a debt. And although a "debtless debt," it is still a debt the self takes as its own responsibility.)

In sum, in the turnabout from the standpoint of karma to the standpoint of emptiness, from the standpoint of the self-centered "will" to the standpoint of selfless samadhi, all that we do is at once a true redemption and a true shouldering of debt. As a result, our "doing" truly realizes itself as "doing."

In the spontaneity issuing from our original source that emerges in such a turnabout, our "doing" becomes doing in its elemental suchness, perfectly unencumbered and authentic. This "doing" implies responsibility toward all "neighbors" and "others" whomever and whatever, and, moreover, as I shall mention later, it is something which has taken upon it an infinite task. It is doing on the standpoint of non-ego, which is the standpoint of the nonduality of self and other.

At the point where it becomes play, our activity thus at the same time takes on an aboriginal seriousness (*Ernst*). In reality, there is no more unrestricted, take-things-as-they-come play than that which occurs where

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the self emerges from non-self; and, at the same time, there is nothing more deeply and sternly in earnest. In the state of "Dharmic naturalness" (*hōni jinen*), natural and spontaneous accordance with the Dharma, all things are of such a nature.⁴ This is why from long in the past the image of the child has so often been evoked in attempting to characterize such a primary mode of being. In fact, in the child the most mindless play is as such the most earnest activity.

VII

An attempt was made above to explain that our existence, our doing, and our life all come into being within the limitless "world"-connexus not only temporally but also spatially. On the standpoint of karma too the dynamic relationship of "being"-*"doing"*-*"becoming"* which constitutes our present existence comes into being within beginningless and endless time while opening up an infinite openness as *nihilum* directly beneath the present. But inasmuch as this dynamic relationship appears only as an unceasing involvement with other things, our actual existence in being determined by that world-relationship becomes "fatally" united with it.

Present existence is always an occasion realizing itself as a wave of the world-connexus rising to focus in the total undulating movement "since the beginningless beginning." Our "doing" in that context is free with the freedom of "attachment" determined by causal necessity within the total connexus, and at the same time is also free with the arbitrary freedom that concentrates the total connexus into a center which is the self.

That is why our "doing" is karmic activity on the basis of *nihilum*. In that "doing," *nihilum*, while coming to appear from the ground where the self and the world are one, nihilizes the being of the self, makes the self arise and turn in transmigration, and turns the self and all other things into a *samskṛta* ("being-doing") existence.

I said before that being determined in the world-connexus and self-determination are one. But on the standpoint of karma this self-determination makes the infinite impulse which arises from its source in self-centeredness its essence, and comes to realization taking the "will-ful" form of attachment and domination. And being determined means being conditioned "fatally" by causal necessity in that total connexus.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

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I said, furthermore, that the free movement of the will, consisting of attachment and domination in its relations with things, is in its very freedom a "fatally" determined posture. In this karmic mode of being, *nihilum* presents itself from the ground where the self and the world are one. And the reason for this, I explained, is that basic ignorance (*avidyā*) which is a mode of self-enclosure constituting the source of karma, comes to self-awareness only at one with *nihilum*, since it is in it that it has its ground.

In karma we can only "be" in a mode of ceaseless doing, that is, in order to be we are compelled ceaselessly to enter into relation with something. This means our "being" is burdensome to itself, and our "doing" as redemption of that burden is equivalent to creation of a new burden.

This fact on the one hand means that our "being" vanishes and arises at every instant, and that the *nihilum* which is ceaselessly nihilizing our being is therein presenting itself. On the other hand, at that same point, where the continuous cancellation of debt is its continuous creation, there appears something that urges us infinitely on from within. In that infinite impulse, our actual existence is never able to break free from its own homeground, and our self within that dynamic relationship of "being"- "doing"- "becoming" is always itself, even as it infinitely becomes and revolves in transmigration.

Avidyā comes to awareness as the self's homeground which the self as it arises and revolves in transmigration is unable to get free of; that is, as the extreme point of self-centeredness. As a result, in *avidyā*, the self's being forever itself and emerging as a self-centered "being," and *nihilum*'s manifesting itself in *avidyā* while ceaselessly nihilizing the "being" of the self, always come into being as a simultaneous whole.

The inability of the self to detach itself from the ground of its own arising and transmigratory change—or, conversely, the self's being perpetually itself while its "being" is nonetheless perpetual change—has its basis in what I have just said. That is what karma means. Our present existence in the dynamic relationship of "being"- "doing"- "becoming" is none other than the being of our self establishing itself directly beneath the present as an emergence from *nihilum* to *avidyā*.

On the standpoint of emptiness as well, which appears as a turnabout from that standpoint of karma, "doing" still comes into being within the world-connexus in the form of a relation with other things. Only here this relation is no longer dependent on attachment and arbitrary will; now, it becomes a relation arising on the "yonder shore" beyond all standpoints

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of will and the self-centeredness they imply; in other words, it is a relation on the field of emptiness. It is moreover a "self"-determination as play in the original sense explained before, which is the emergence of the self from a point over and beyond the self-enclosing confines of *avidyā*. Consequently it marks a point broken free of the resultant infinite impulse; that is, it signals the emergence of the self from non-self.

Here, the related interaction of "being," "doing," and "becoming" making up our actual existence has a "non-doing" character. Here "being" is without any nature of its own. Having no "self-nature," being neither substance as logos-being nor subject as will, it is, as explained before, "in-itself." In other words, it is a self that occurs at the place where each and every thing is existing in itself at its own ground, yet is occurring in a "*soku-hi*" (one-is-all all-is-one) manner together with and at one with all other things.⁵ It is a self that occurs there, for example, where fire is fire because it does not burn itself, where the willow is green because it is not green, where time is time because it is not time.

This self that is not a self, the self emerging from non-self, is the truly original self. Doings taking place in "non-doing" are those which we may characterize as "doing all day long and not doing a single thing." In non-doing, becoming becomes the utterly free and spontaneous activity I spoke of earlier as "just passing the time and taking things as they come." It is true "doing" and true "becoming."

The dynamic relationship emerging on that field of emptiness is beyond all particular times and places, and while it is beyond all causality as well, it nonetheless comes into being at one with all other things, as an all-in-one one-in-all emergence. Our present existence, then, as this dynamic network of relationships, is and at the same time is-not one with the world-connexus.

Or, in the context of the circuminsessional interpenetration,⁶ it is where our actual existence is in the homeground of all things, giving itself to all things and making each of them exist in-itself, but, at the same time, where it gathers all things to its own homeground, becoming their absolute center and master wherever it is.

⁵ D. T. Suzuki formulated the logic of *prajñā*-intuition as "A is not A and therefore A is A. A is A because it is not-A." This he called the "logic of *soku-hi*" (*EB* ix, 1, pp. 66-8).

⁶ *EB* vi, ii, p. 65.

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Such is the self on the field of emptiness, where it appears from non-self and exists as aboriginally emerging "play." In Western thought, when Heraclitus or Nietzsche conceived the world as cyclical and saw it as a kind of play, they too can be said to be pointing in this direction. As I have explained, for the world to be regarded as cyclical meant it was intuitively seen gathered into a single totality, and that intuition brought it back right beneath the present instant to the homeground of our actual existence. To return the world this way to the homeground of our present existence, returns our present existence to its own homeground while opening up that ground. This is no doubt the reason men like Heraclitus and Nietzsche experienced the life "leaping forth" from beneath the bottom of the world and its myriad beings via the ground of their actual existence as if it was fire springing up from the bowels of the earth. The life of the universe had from its depths permeated their actual existence. And that was, I think, connected essentially in the sense explained above with their intuition of the world's circularity. May we not say that such an intuition and experience lies behind such concepts as Heraclitus' "archaic" Fire (fire as *arche*) and Nietzsche's Will to Power?

In any case, these philosophers likened the course of worlds describing their circles to children's play, signifying by this a movement of pure activity beyond the measure of any teleological yardsticks—Nietzsche's undefiled and innocent becoming (*Unschuld des Werdens*), for example. This takes as the highest mode of human existence the standpoint of the *homo ludens* ("playing man"), where man is returned to the homeground of self-existence by turning the world process into spontaneous play. At the aboriginal source where the self emerges as self, the self's actual existence is play in unison with the whole world.

But again, play in its ur-sense is at the same time seriousness in its ur-sense. Seen this way, "play" as a divertissement from or suspension of "work" is not true play, nor is the seriousness of "work" differentiated from play authentic seriousness. Again, only when the burdensomeness essential to our actual existence is lifted on the standpoint of emptiness does our true debt appear. This debt-burden does not mean simply that our existence, in being compelled ceaselessly to do something, experiences itself as a burden; it is a debt that we assume of our own choosing in true spontaneity on the standpoint of original play, a debt which comes into being in the samadhi of no-mind emerging from non-self. It is what may be called a debtless debt, in which the burden as imposed labor (present

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existence itself) becomes a task and a vocation for actual existence. Or it can be said that actual existence changes from something imposed on itself "fatally" to something accepted "vocationally."

Here seriousness is none other than the being of present existence itself. In the turnabout from the standpoint of karma to the standpoint of emptiness, this existence achieves true and original spontaneity, but the spontaneity is at once seriousness in its aboriginal sense and play in its aboriginal sense. Compared with that seriousness, the seriousness of any "work" on the standpoint of will prior to that turnabout is mere time-passing divertissement. However deep the concentration is with which one performs such work, inasmuch as it is not performed in samadhi, the mind engaged in the doing is essentially distracted or "scattered."

Actual existence, and all the actions that go with it, becomes its own burden and its own vocation on the standpoint of non-self and non-doing. This standpoint itself, then, lies beyond the fundamental self-centeredness of *avidyā*, at a point where the infinite impulse (desire) is shed and the karmic debt has been repaid. That is the reason the debt of actual existence which emerges on that field of emptiness is a debtless one.

It is thus a debt coming at a point free of self-centeredness and the infinite impulse which accompanies it. It is a debt to one's "neighbor," a debt to all "other" things. For our actual existence—involving all our being, all our doing, and all our becoming—to become a self-assumed task and a mission, means precisely that it emerges as a debt toward our "neighbors" and all "other" things.

When our actual existence returns to its own homeground on the field of emptiness to become itself as it really is, in its true mode of suchness, our "being" then establishes itself as something which makes the debt toward others its own essence, and it does this moreover as something which is originally and essentially so. The task-like character of that existence is originally and essentially directed to and centered in others.

In its mode of being in-itself actual existence originally makes all things its masters, follows them, and gives them their being. This is inherent in the very essence of the in-itself being which materializes in such a circuminsessional interpenetration. The task-like character of the debt toward others inheres in the very essence of the mode of actual existence on the field of emptiness.

If actual existence on the field of emptiness is an emergence in suchness from non-ego, what I have just explained follows as a matter of natural

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course. Here "as it is" and "as it ought to be" are one; the burdensomeness of the "ought" is the other-directedness of the "is." And if indeed this "being" exists in a ceaseless "doing"—"doing" as "non-doing"—and if, again, on the field of emptiness "doing" realizes itself in its unbarred form as true "doing," then it follows that in us the "doing" in its fundamental and original form exists as something that is directed toward all others and makes all other things its masters.

Let us remember, however, that this others-directed or others-centered character is an aspect of the in-itself mode of being in the interpenetrating circuminsessional relationship. As such, it can exist concretely only at one with its other aspect, in which our actual existence takes all things to its own homeground and becomes master wherever it is as the absolute center of all things. In other words, to repeat what was explained in the last chapter, it places all things under the sway of its universal Dharmic sovereignty.

Such is the self-directed aspect, the self-centeredness of actual existence. Though we speak of self-centeredness, however, it is the self-centeredness of non-ego, of the "self that is not self"—the true self-centeredness.

From this point of view, the burdensomeness of actual existence always connotes that that existence is realizing (actualizing = understanding) itself as itself; it means that the self is "becoming" itself radically and originally. It is to realize existence in emergence from non-ego, making the "meaning" of such an existence manifest, and in so doing, grasping and comprehending that existence. In the light of what was set forth in the last chapter, we may say that this burdensomeness is "understood" (in Japanese, *kokoro-eru*: "obtained in the mind")⁷ by uniting our own existence with its origins.

What I have just said about the realization of actual existence as an emergence in suchness from non-ego (a realization of the in-itself existence of the self) is no different from what I said before about "understanding" (*kokoro-eru*: obtaining in the mind) that "birth-and-death is as such the Life of Buddha" in the authentic existence of body and mind dropping off, dropping off body and mind. It is not different from the actualizing (understanding) of the "mind of the Tathagata" or the "Buddha-mind."

As for the self radically "becoming" itself, this is not a matter of the self's "will" alone; it is a matter rather of the "natural" mode of the self

⁷ *EB* IX, 1, p. 54.

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in its true emergence from non-self, a matter of our actual existence being originally and essentially a burden to itself.

Dōgen, when he says that body and mind dropping off is the practice of Zen, is probably suggesting the same thing. The practice of the Buddha Way implies that the self of the practitioner is actually existing on the field of emptiness, where "doing" invariably takes the character of religious practice (Japanese, *gyō*). Here being oneself is no different from becoming oneself or from making oneself be oneself. For the task-like or vocational character of our actual existence to be the shouldering of a debtless debt, means existence as such is religious practice. On the field of emptiness, the dynamic relationship of "being"- "doing"- "becoming" is essentially the idea that one is a burden to oneself.

Although I speak of "practicing Zen" and "practicing the Buddha Way," that is not to suggest that manifesting the true face of existence in religious practice obtains only in Buddhism. It is implied of course in all true religious life. There are different interpretations of "religious practice" just as there are different ways of understanding karma. The nature of karma is grasped differently, for example, by the Self-power teaching (the so-called "Path of the Saints," exemplified by Zen) and the Other-power teaching of the Pure Land Buddhist schools. Here, however, no basis is sought or taken in any particular religious or philosophic view. My aim is rather to inquire into the original character of Reality and of "man" who is a part of that Reality, including as well the anti-religious and anti-philosophical standpoints of which Nietzsche's nihilism and the scientism found in "secularization" are examples.

If I have frequently had occasion to deal with the standpoints of Buddhism, and particularly Zen Buddhism, the fundamental reason for that is, the original shape of reality seems to me to appear there most plainly and unmistakably. Some pages back, I located the original nature of Reality and man in Dōgen's words, "To understand birth-and-death is the Life of the Buddha." I explained this is as the realization (actualizing = understanding) of the "Tathagata's mind," and said that the self's radically "becoming" itself in this way is the "nature" of the self as an occurrence in suchness from non-ego.

We find the same view, however, in a Nembutsu advocate of the school of absolute Other-power, Kiyozawa Manshi (1863-1903). In a well-known passage in his essay "My Faith," he describes the self as "this being which, fallen into the circumstance that it finds itself in at present,

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accepts and entrusts itself to the absolute and infinite One's wonderful working, taking things as they come and living in accordance with the Dharma."

We find echoes here, back farther in history, of Shinran, for example his "One who lives in the joy of true faith is said to be similar to the Tathagata." The implication here is that Nembutsu practice, while it is man's activity taking place on the Buddha Way, has nothing to do with the practitioner's own calculating discriminations. It is a playful, unhindered "wandering." Such "practice" is no different from "the mind at play in the Pure Land" Shinran mentions in his Buddhist hymns. Do we not see in this that same pointing to the original form of man and Reality?

In any case, in this essay I am involved with the investigation of that reality, independent for the moment of the verdicts of religious standpoints such as those of the "Other-power" and "Self-power," independent, for that matter, of any particular religious or philosophical view. That was also my concern as I pursued the discussion of emptiness and karma. I was not interested in them as doctrines confined to a merely Buddhist context. I have been treating the question of the burdensomeness of actual existence within that same perspective.

But to repeat, on the field of emptiness there is no difference between the self-centeredness of our actual existence which is self-directed and the others-centered aspect. They are one and same task or vocation. That this takes place quite naturally, as a matter of course, is evident if we recollect that the actual existence unfolding on the field of emptiness is distinguished by non-ego and non-duality of self and other.

From the viewpoint of others-centeredness, a statement such as Dōgen's, "Before crossing to the other shore himself, he first takes all others across," is natural and indeed obligatory. For only by all others returning to the "other-shore," to *samsara-sive-nirvana*, where they are free of birth-and-death and thus are each in their own homegrounds, does the self really return to its homeground. Salvation for oneself is found only in the universal salvation of others.

On the other hand, from the self-centered aspect, a declaration such as Rinzai's, "If you meet a Buddha, kill him; if you meet a patriarch, kill him; if you meet a sage, kill him; if you meet your father or mother, kill them; if you meet your relatives, kill them. Only then will you obtain liberation and dwell in complete emancipated freedom, without getting emotionally caught up in things," is natural and matter-of-course. Here,

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in the self's becoming truly itself, the path whereby all others can return to their own homegrounds is revealed in the context of actual existence itself. That means the path of the Buddha which exists for the sake of the salvation of other beings is grasped and sustained as actual existence itself.

The place where all others have to find salvation (rather, the place where, unknowingly, they are originally saved but do not know it and where their salvation is actualized when they do come to know it) is one that opens up in actual existence. Their coming to know it is another way of saying their self comes to trust in itself. And that means for it to trust itself to the mode of being in and as that place. This is Rinzai's "self-trust" (*jishin* 自信), which is in its original character of "self-benefiting" (*jiri* 自利) at the same time essentially directed to the benefit of others (*rita* 利他). Rinzai's utterance appears from a basic ground of profound natural compassion.

True self-centeredness means that through the absolute negation of the self which occurs in the turnabout from the field of *nihilum* to the field of emptiness, and the field of karma to the field of non-ego, the self becomes an absolute center. I have described the field of emptiness, however, as a place with its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere. On the field of emptiness, all things are originally each an absolute center.

Moreover, in order to return to our own homeground we have to pass through a turnabout away from our ordinary abode on the field of karma and *nihilum*. We have to kill the self absolutely. Now to do that is also to kill the Buddha, the patriarchs, and everything else, penetrating through the region of the discrimination and relativity of self and other. The self can return to its own homeground only by killing all "others," and, consequently, killing itself.

This could be called the self-centeredness of the "formless self," or the selfless self that has cast off all "self-centeredness." And the practice (and its actual existence) that sustains the "flesh and blood" of that formless self in realizing such a path and field, is none other than the opening up of the Right Path for all "others" to follow back to their own homegrounds by killing all "others" and, thereby, themselves.

Lying within this circuminsessional relationship is a primordial struggle, in Heraclitus' sense of struggle or war as the father and king of all. For each thing to be an absolute center portends a struggle deeper and more basic than any other struggle imaginable. Yet insofar as each thing comes into being only on the field of emptiness and non-ego, this struggle is as

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such absolute harmony and fundamental peace. All tranquillity which does not proceed until that point is not true tranquillity but is still tainted with elements of strife.

On the field of emptiness, primordial struggle and primordial harmony are essentially one. There the struggle is absolutely struggleless, a struggle that is struggle because it is absolutely not struggle; and thus, a struggle that is, as such, harmony. The field of circuminsessional interpenetration is the field of such a harmony. And when all things present themselves originally on this field in their primordial and fundamental shapes, and actual existence is emergence from non-ego, the realization of this field is an actuality. That is why here self-centeredness only obtains at one with other-centeredness, and other-centeredness only with self-centeredness. And this is as it ought to be and, therefore, it is also natural, that is, "dharmically naturally."

In this sense, the words of Dōgen cited above must also be said to express this self-centeredness which is as such others-centeredness. Referring to the "King-of-samadhis Samadhi," he tells us to "pluck out the pupil of the Buddhas' and Patriarchs' eye and then sit there and do zazen in the hollow"; referring to the "Samadhi of Self-enjoyment," he says that "Playfully disporting oneself in that samadhi, sitting upright and practicing zazen, is the right Dharma-gate."⁸ Play is here the practice of Zen and the practice of Zen is play; this original, primordial play is original, primordial earnestness, and vice versa. This is the standpoint where non-self is self, where the true self is emerging from non-self, where the "body-mind drops away, dropping away body-mind"; but it is also the standpoint where one takes others across before crossing over oneself.

That is the source of statements like the following by Dōgen: "The zazen of the Buddhas and patriarchs, from the first arising of their religious mind, vows to gather in the Dharmas of all the Buddhas. Therefore, in the midst of zazen, they do not forget sentient beings. . . but vow to save them all and turn over to them all the merit they possess. That is why all Buddhas always dwell in the world of desire and practice the Way in zazen."⁹

In the so-called "King-of-samadhis Samadhi," the vow to deliver others to the yonder-shore is, as such, the play of the "Samadhi of Self-enjoyment"; Zen practice is as such the standpoint of the debtless debt toward

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

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all other beings. All is a self-benefiting *qua* others-benefiting practice, what I have called the burdensomeness of actual existence. For this reason as well, the most deadly serious practice for the benefit of others is as such a playful samadhi; and the totally free, emancipated play that does not get caught up in anything else is, in itself, the most basic and original earnestness.

I have mentioned briefly the idea of "original play" found in Heraclitus and Nietzsche, but from the fundamental vantage point just explained, neither of their standpoints can be said to reach the region of true play. They do not contain the others-centeredness by which they become "empty" and make all others their masters; and in the self-centeredness of their play is not contained the significance that it is at the same time a radical and persistently Dharmic "practice." It does not possess the character of practice on the standpoint of the "King Samadhi" which sustains all things in accordance with the Dharma (or Logos).

It cannot be said that they have arrived at the authentic self-centeredness of absolute emptiness which grasps and sustains the Dharma of all things, which, "master wherever it is, makes wherever it is true." However one looks at it, theirs remains a standpoint of "will," not the standpoint of emptiness.

(To be continued)

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