

Emptiness and Time

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I

IN PREVIOUS chapters I touched on the problem of nihilism in connection with the ideas of *nihilum* and emptiness. In fact, the awareness of an abyssal *nihilum* we find in nihilism has made its appearance not only in the West; in the East, especially in India, it was brought to consciousness and became a constant and fundamental issue from very ancient times. The central role the problem of birth-and-death has played in Eastern religion and philosophy is an illustration of this.

But when nihilism came to awareness as an event of deep significance in Europe, particularly in modern times, it did so *historico*-existentially; it was perceived from within the depths of the history of Europe as a "European nihilism," and the problems introduced by that event are now haunting modern life, seen by a few gifted thinkers as a portent foreshadowing the cataclysmic collapse of European culture as a whole. Not only in Nietzsche, in the more contemporary Heidegger, for instance, nihilism is dealt with on the perspective of the so-called "*history* of Being." This kind of historical consciousness, however, has not been found in the East.¹

This being the case, given the turn-about from the standpoint of *nihilum* to the standpoint of Emptiness that took place in the East,² for man in the

* "Emptiness and Time" is the fifth chapter of *Shukyō to wa nanika* ("What is Religion?"), published by Sōbunsha in 1961. The second half of this chapter will appear in the next issue of the *Eastern Buddhist*. For this translation Professor Nishitani has made some additions to the text when he thought it necessary for making the meaning clearer.

¹ I treated these problems in my book "Nihilism" (1949, in Japanese).

modern world there arise quite naturally questions concerning the relation of the standpoint of Emptiness to historicity—the form in which the problem of time and temporality of existence has been interpreted traditionally in the position of Emptiness, and the form in which historicity, today, ought to appear there. These are the problems I shall take up in the present chapter.

The Sanskrit term *samsara* has been rendered as “birth-and-death” and also as “transmigration.” The various fundamental modes of life of all living beings (the various forms of being of all “sentient beings” including man) and also the fields of existence inherent in each of the forms of being, were divided into six “ways,” and a sentient being was thought to transmigrate in his births and deaths from one way to another like an endlessly rotating wheel. Samsara refers to this interminable repetition of birth and death. It signifies the being-in-the-world that manifests itself in all sentient beings. In Buddhism, this being-in-the-world as samsara was sharply and existentially called into question. Buddhism speaks of an “ocean of samsaric suffering,” in which the world as a whole with its six ways is the unfathomable, ocean-like field where the endless transmigration from one form of existence to another occurs, and the essential form of those beings endlessly revolving through the sequences of birth-and-death in that ocean is the very nature of what is called “suffering.”

Similarly, when the abyss of *nihilum* came in the nihilism of modern Europe to invade man’s self-awareness existentially, that existence which was suspended out over that abyss could not help realizing itself as something pervaded by suffering (*Leiden*). But Buddhism went a step further, through the awareness of existence in suffering, to a new perspective, which speaks of a universal suffering (“All is suffering”) and recognizes in suffering one of the basic truths. Buddhism’s perception of suffering as one of its Four Noble Truths may in a sense be regarded as an advance from the awareness of existence in suffering to an “existential interpretation” (in Heidegger’s sense) of the being-in-the-world.

Be that as it may, involved in the awareness of “being” tossed in the seas of samsaric suffering is the existential awareness of an unfathomable *nihilum* and nihilization. Transmutation in the sequence of birth-and-death which

² See “Nihilism and Śūnyatā,” *Eastern Buddhist* IV, 2; V, 1 & 2.

means an endless becoming as the essence of our being, occurs as a result of our own acts—the three karmas of behavior, word, and thought; our voluntary actions of body and mind—and from our “worldly passions.” Since our actual existence, determined by the karma of the limitless past, in its turn determines the karma of the limitless future, the essence of our present voluntary actions is revealed on a background of endlessly fated causality.

Here “fate,” seen from the viewpoint of endless transmigration in the world of birth-and-death, means that everyone without exception basically reaps only the fruits of his own actions. Existence as suffering can be clarified in its real aspect only when it is understood as the appropriation to one’s self of the consequences of one’s own acts. It can be said, I think, that in the view of birth-and-death within the perspective of samsara lies a deep existential understanding of being.

Here, the finitude of man’s being-in-the-world is understood as interminable and boundless in essence. The finitude of the human being is essentially an infinite finitude.

Now, to be infinitely finite, or in other words for the finitude to continue on infinitely, is “bad infinity” (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*, as Hegel called it), a concept usually treated in logic as a step-child. On the one hand, in the logic of discursive thinking which is destined to grasp nothing but finite things, to be infinitely finite is a sheer contradiction. If we try to imagine it, we are bound to fall into antinomies. On the other hand, in the logic relying on intuitive thinking which grasps the whole at a stroke, the representation of infinity in the form of interminable finitude cannot yield true infinity. In any case, no valid concepts can be derived from an “infinitely finite” or from an “interminable finitude.” Expressions such as these, in whatever form, would be meaningless.

But when man placing himself on the standpoint of existence became aware of the real nature of his own finitude as “infinitely finite,” there was implied something which could not be dismissed simply by calling it logically meaningless. Here the logical contradiction of “being infinitely finite” rather shows that the finitude was radically revealed as a thoroughgoing finitude. It means the manifestation of the essence of finitude as finitude. This manifestation cannot be rendered through any conceptual way of thinking about finitude, but only by existential self-awareness confronting its own finitude.

In existential self-awareness, the essence of finitude is not finite. Although the finitude of the finite is a self-evident tautology in conceptual thinking, in existential self-awareness, for the finite to grasp itself simply as finite is for it to grasp its own finitude non-existentially, either representatively as an idea or at best as a rational concept.

In that way of thinking, one's own finitude is conceived as finite, as something which will one day come to an end. This is the same as our ordinary conception of death: when I die in the years to come, death will thereby vanish with me. This representation of death is totally different from the view of death mentioned before, in which someone still in the midst of being alive bodily experiences the essence of death together with that of life. Under the sway of the non-existential view of self and death all access to where man can take himself beyond birth-and-death is barred. Not that a path that leads beyond birth-and-death does not exist; man bars it himself and buries it away into oblivion. This is the real face behind the mask of man's indifference to religion. In brief, the statement legitimate as conceptual thought that the finite is finite is false as existential self-knowledge. It is mistaken as to the real meaning of existential finitude and because it is grasped on a standpoint which does not face up to existential finitude existentially, it fails to disclose the true aspect of that finitude. From the standpoint of existence, we must say the logic not only of discursive understanding but also of speculative reason contains, fundamentally, such an omission. In fact, it was just such an insight that stimulated Kierkegaard into his confrontation with Hegel.

Rather, on the field of existence, which is entirely different from those of discursive understanding and speculative reason, the only truly meaningful statement is that the "essence" of finitude is not finite; and the statement has meaningfulness there, in that field, according to the *ti* (or logos) with its own intrinsic characteristic. This perspective appears in the contemporary world also, in the development of the phenomenological position, for instance. It took its departure from Husserl's "intuition of essence" and was further developed in the "existential interpretation" of Heidegger's existential phenomenology. We can also say that in this purview a sort of logos completely different in character from that of logic is made explicit.

Now, what sort of logos in what sort of existence is meant when it is said that finitude is construed as infinitely finite in its essence and that this is a

radical disclosure of finitude? It means man grasps his own finitude on a level of transcendence—of “trans-descendence,” so to speak—that breaks through the standpoints of understanding and reason to the depths of his own existence. It is the awareness that the finitude of existence as well as finite existence itself, precisely on that level of transcendence, has come into its own and reveals its reality as it is. It is, in other words, the “ecstatic” self-awareness of existence.

In comparison with this “transcendence” as self-detachment (*ekstasis*), even the absoluteness of Hegel’s speculative reason remains “immanent.” In his standpoint of absolute Reason, which can be said to offer the process of the most profound inner continuity between God and man ever disclosed, all things whatsoever are absorbed within the self-development of the rational logos of Reason, the process whereby the thinking of Reason returns back to itself.

The level of transcendence as the field of self-detachment (or the level of “trans-descendence”) against which even this self-returning circular process of absolute reason still remains immanent, is just the field where the *real nature* of finitude is realized: it is the field where birth-and-death comes to manifest itself as an endless “wheel of becoming” (*κύκλος γενέσεως* or *samsara*), as the self-returning circular process of finite existence itself. To confront finitude existentially is to confirm the essence of actual existence on the field of self-detachment directly underneath the actual existence itself, the field of trans-descendence. In other words, for actual finite existence to be seen directly in its appearing from a field even beyond the level of reason is none other than the disclosure of the essence of finitude. The essence disclosed in this way is entirely different in character from the so-called “essence” which is conceptually apprehended on the level of reason. It can only be investigated existentially.

But if generally the distinguishing characteristic of man lies in his possession of reason, the aforesaid existential investigation of his being and its existential interpretation should naturally lie beyond the horizon of the “human,” as something occupying the dimension of a detached transcendence. Although the essence of man’s finitude or birth-and-death reveals itself in his attempt to clarify his own being existentially, on the field of self-detachment wherein the essence of man’s finitude is brought to his awareness as inter-

minable finitude, as an endless cycle of finitude or as finitude's own cyclical process, a perspective beyond that of the merely "human" is required for the manifestation of that essence. To effect a fundamental explication of man's being, the anthropocentric point of view, the kind of perspective in which man places himself at the center, has to be broken through.

We can say, therefore, when Buddhism from a vantage point commanding all possible species and forms of "sentient being" in the world sees man's birth-and-death (the finitude manifested in the "species" called "man") as a revolving in the "six ways," in reality that rather reveals a true grasp of the nature of man's own birth-and-death. It represents a radical insight into birth-and-death, one which has penetrated even until the field of self-detachment. Here birth-and-death is truly grasped as birth-and-death.

Thus, in the existential insight into birth-and-death the two ways of perceiving it—the one in its sequential endlessness as a perpetual sequence, and the other, in its all-inclusive scope holding man and all other species—combine into one. While interminable finitude constitutes the temporal side of the nature of birth-and-death in being in the world, the all-inclusive horizon of being is its spatial side. Finitude's endless round, the cyclical process characterizing finitude, is an infinite pilgrimage of finite existence on a vast horizon including the forms of being of "man" together with other various species. The same correlation between temporality and spatiality can also be seen in the way man grasps the samsaric suffering of his being in the world, against a background of "rebirth in the six ways," as "universal suffering." We can say that an investigation and existential interpretation of man's existence are expressed in this Buddhist teaching.

Needless to say, from the content represented in it the notion of transmigration is "mythical." The content of its representation can easily be criticized as unscientific illusion. And so far as that content as such is concerned, this criticism is legitimate. But this sort of criticism alone does not dispose of the matter.

Generally speaking, scientific criticism against what is mythical, while right in pointing out the limits of pre-logical thinking involved in the represented content of myths, is wrong in overlooking their existential core, which we see embodied in the mythico-religious aspect of man's existence in pre-scientific societies and which consists in man's attitude of confronting his

own being in the world and the peculiar logos thereby disclosed. Here, too, the intellect is prone to throw out the baby with the bathwater—intellect by nature has no eye for the baby in the tub. The field which has broken through the dimension of intellectual knowledge lies beyond the ken of the intellect.

Of course, the matter of the "intellect" is not an easy one itself, implying as it does the standpoint of science and of philosophy as well. At the time philosophy, taking the form of "science" in the general sense (though opinion is divided on this question), first appeared on the scene in ancient Greece, this philosophy, while rooted in a mythological world-view, was established as an attempt to de-mythologize this world-view and to transform it into a logos-system. But we may perhaps also say that the underlying root of the mythos hidden deep beneath it was kept intact all through the whole development of Greek philosophy, and that this accounts in part for the depth and richness of its logos. Greek philosophy may be said to have been a de-mythologization of the mythological through logos, but it was not a flat negation of the mythological. That kind of negation began with the establishment of the standpoint of science, especially that of scientism. Science tackles the mythological on the dimension constituting its outer shell of imaginative representations, and rejects it as unscientific. Philosophy tends to recognize in the same representations a symbolic form of logos and transform it into pure logos.

But in any case, neither the negation of the myth by the scientific intellect nor the philosophical intellect's attempt to transform myth into logos can exhaust the mythic essence. The mythological has to be reduced to the existential that is the source of its emergence and the core of its truly meaningful content, and be given a new interpretation on the level of existence. The positive significance implied in the mythological will truly be brought to light only through an existential de-mythologization in Bultman's sense. This also, I think, applies to the notion of transmigration.

The driving force of this sort of de-mythologization has been at work all through the history of Buddhism. Rather, Buddhism can be said to have emerged as a bursting out of that force. It was contained within its very origins as a religion. Here lies as well, it may be said, the unique character of Buddhism distinguishing it from other religions.

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The idea of transmigration which flowed into Buddhism has during its long history been brought back continually to the problem of the essence of existence. The "meaning" of transmigration has been understood in an existential interpretation of man's being as his being infinitely finite; as the true aspect of the finitude of man's existence. This signifies, however, that a *nibilum* is opened up existentially at the bottom of man's self-awareness; that a *nibilum* so abysmal as to pull all beings of the world (the "three worlds" in Buddhist terminology) into voidness comes to realize itself in his existence, thus nihilizing his own beingness. It also signifies that with that realization of *nibilum* man really understands what birth-and-death is, that is, he grasps the true essence of existence, his own and, simultaneously, the existence of all things in the world.

It is in short an existential encounter with *nibilum*. *Nibilum* can be known only existentially. If we deviate a step from the way of existence, *nibilum* can only be considered as an utterly meaningless notion, devoid of reality. In fact, even a great many philosophers have from various points of view come to think of it in this way. It is like a radio not tuned in properly that picks up only meaningless noise and cannot catch the real sound of a broadcast. But only upon an existential encounter with this *nibilum* could there occur a striving in all earnestness for the transcendence of birth-and-death, for escape from the inexorable causality of karma and attainment of the "other shore" of the fathomless ocean of suffering, in other words, nirvana.

II

As said before, it is only in breaking through to the field of ecstatic transcendence (or trans-descendence) that the self-awareness of birth-and-death as "transmigration" is realized. This trans-descendence becomes manifest in the endlessness of finite life and in the wholeness of dimension that embraces man's mode of being as well as that of other species. *Nibilum* is opened up only in this transcendence. It is encountered in the nihilization of being as a whole, and as such it constitutes the existential meaning also contained in the notion of "transmigration." In its universality including all forms of being of being-in-the-world (that is, comprising the "six ways") and in the

infiniteness of birth-and-death revolving through all forms of being, it forms the ultimate base of being-in-the-world. It is where the "limit-situation" of man's existence is pushed beyond the region in which it is usually considered. *Nibilum* is the limit-situation radically driven to the extreme region of ecstatic trans-descendence.

Here becomes manifest a limit-situation on a horizon of "worldliness" which transcends the perspective of the merely "human" and which lies beyond the limited mode of self-being qualified as the "human" ego and lying within the time-span from birth to death. On the plane beyond the anthropocentric circle of vision, the plane laid open when we pass through our subjective mode of self-being or so-called "subjectivity" in the sense of ego, the true character of our being here in this world, or the essence of the actual existence, or again, the meaning of "being-in-the-world," is fundamentally revealed for the first time.

The ultimate limit-situation that encounters us on that all-inclusive *nibilum*-field of transcendence as infinite finitude is the place where man's self-awareness is realized ultimately, as transpiercing into this deepest ground of his own "human being." Here, directly under man's actual existence the real image of his existence is brought to self-awareness at one with the real image of all other things in the world. Here the essence of man's existence is revealed as being-in-the-world in such a universality and infiniteness (infinite finitude) and as being-in-the-world in its suchness. For this reason, at the extremity of human existence the essence of human being is no longer merely "human." It rather shows the character of "sentient being" in the sense that it includes in itself all other forms of existence. It is, so to say, the naked "being-in-the-world" as such, essentially emancipated from being determined as human. It is the self-sameness of simply "being in the world" which is, existentially, more essential than being in the world as man. What was just said in regard to our existence as "human" being is also true with regard to our self-awareness as "man." Our self-awareness as man can truly be essential only when it reaches out to the simple and naked "being-in-the-world" in the above sense, only when it becomes a self-awareness of the "human" existence having been realized from that ultimate plane.

This is precisely what I meant when I said before that existential self-awareness can only be emancipated on the field of ecstatic transcendence,

where the confines of the "human" self are broken through and abyssal *nihilum* comes to appear to nihilize man's being and the being of all things. "Abyssal *nihilum*" is a place where being-in-the-world is encountered as simply sheer being-in-the-world divested of all possible determinations. It is a place where all beings, stripped of all forms of being, as deity, man, animal, and the like (as found in the "six ways"), are pushed to an extremity and radicalized into sheer being in the world.

But the ecstatic trans-descendence we have so far spoken of means, after all, that being-in-the-world is striking against its own bottom. So far, it is still thoroughly inner-worldly. The sheer being-in-the-world which is here spoken of and which is disengaged from all determinations is still not transcendence from the "world" or a departure from the "three worlds." It is rather the radicalized aspect of being in the world and the revelation of the most essential image of all existent things in the world.

This essential image is, as I said before, boundless finitude, birth-and-death as "transmigration." It means that on the field of sheer being in the world which transcends the qualification "man," man reaches the ultimate limit-situation. It means that he strikes against the essential barrier of his own existence.

This is the so-called situation of despair, which is, nevertheless, the ultimate and real image of man's being in the world. Despair is the really real image of being, presenting itself as something beyond all doubt. Whereas doubt is something on the level of reason, despair is something on the level of transcendence. It is the image of beingness itself in the opening up of *nihilum*. This is what I meant when I spoke before of the self-presence of the "Great Doubt," which may be called a doubtless doubt that emerges as man's existence itself on the level of transcendence. In Buddhism, the genuine transcendence, the detachment from the "world" of samsara, has been called nirvana. If being in the world subsists essentially in *nihilum* and is at all times about to be nihilated, and if a life subjected to the samsaric sequence can be taken in its essence as death, then nirvana, which means dying to this "life" of birth-and-death and hence dying to death in its essential sense, is none other than life in its essential sense. If the essence of being in the world is "being unto death" (a term of Heidegger's), nirvana is a breaking through this being-unto-death and an essential turn-about from it. It is the essential turning away from true

finitude to true infinity, that is, away from finitude as "bad infinity" in existence to infinity in existence (as "ek-sistence"). Nirvana, transcendence from the endless repetitions of birth-and-death, is a rebirth to genuine life, a new life wherein true infinity for the first time appears.

"Infinity" as reality is beyond the reach of reason. As soon as we try to grasp it on the level of reason it is immediately idealized and turns into something conceptual. True infinity as reality comes to be encountered only on the path of existence. The infinite is realized only in such a way that it manifests itself at the core of every existing man, making his being turn-about basically. For infinity to be understood means that it becomes reality as life and is *really* lived.

Nirvana is none other than the existence which denotes such a new life. And this true infinity is what is called Emptiness. In the emergence from birth-and-death into nirvana occurs a turn-about from *nibilum* to Emptiness. It is a fundamental conversion from "death" in its basic sense to "life" in its basic sense, or from true "finitude" to true "infinity."

III

Although the passage from the "samsaric" world to the other shore means an essential turn-about in man's existence, in Buddhism the existential inquiry of self-being and self-awareness did not stop there. In the course of existence penetrating to its own home-ground, of self in quest of the true self as it primarily is, the possibility of a final great turn-about still remained to be found. The openness attained in the existential transcendence had to develop another plane of even deeper openness. Above, I said that the true aspect of birth-and-death was *nibilum*, also that *nibilum* was true finitude, and further, I also spoke of nirvana as the true life, and of true infinity as nirvana or "Emptiness." But is that all so—really true to reality?

Even if these conclusions hold true for the process of existential inquiry into being which has its inception in man's actual life in the world, can the same be said even after the conversion from the world of birth-and-death to its yonder side? I have stated in previous chapters that on the standpoint of Emptiness an about-face must occur in which the absolute "yonder side"

becomes absolute "this side." What happens, then, on that standpoint of Emptiness itself? Even in this case, is true finitude, the true aspect of birth-and-death, none other than *nihilum*? Does true infinity, true life, consist only in nirvana?

As is well known, with the development of the Mahayana teaching in the history of Buddhism there appeared on the scene an entirely new standpoint: "non-abiding in nirvana" or "samsara-*siye*-nirvana." This standpoint is clearly and simply expressed, for instance, in Dōgen's well-known words from *Sbōbōgenzō Sbōji*: "Just understand that birth-and-death itself is nirvana, only then can you be free of birth-and-death"; or, "This present birth-and-death itself is the Life of Buddha."³ This is existence on the standpoint of "birth itself is non-birth; extinction itself is non-extinction" (*Sbōji*).

The term "understanding" used in Dōgen's directive that we should understand that birth-and-death is, as such, nirvana, denotes existence as "realization" in its previously expounded sense, namely, as the self-manifestation of reality, in which reality comes to itself and self-comprehension. Reality right there where birth-and-death is nirvana and nirvana is birth-and-death and where therefore reality reveals itself as being in itself, can only be expressed, as above, by means of a paradox: birth-and-death is, as such, nirvana, or nirvana is, as such, birth-and-death, or again, samsara-*siye*-nirvana. Here, the words "as such" or "*siye*" are burdened with the role of announcing the presence of reality itself. And, in short, the realization of the reality described in terms of *siye* in samsara-*siye*-nirvana is precisely what Dōgen means by the word "understanding" in the quotation above.

There, understanding in the sense of realization signifies that the real essence of reality manifesting and coming to itself as it really is—or in Buddhist terminology the "mind" of the Tathāgata (the Thus Coming), the "Buddha-mind"—reflects itself in, and thus passes into, the essence of man's existence or his "mind," causing a radical turn-about and self-transcendence in him, and at the same time letting his mind reflect within itself.⁴ To use a

³ This and other quotations cited below from *Sbōbōgenzō Sbōji* ("Birth and Death") are taken from the translation which appeared in the *Eastern Buddhist*, V, 1.

⁴ The Japanese word *miruru* means "to pass from...to" (as in moving from one place to another), as well as "to be reflected in something" (as in a mirror or photograph).

Buddhist metaphor, just as two mirrors reflect each other without any intervening image, so the Tathāgata's mind and man's reflect each other so that the very same light (the so-called light of the Mind) passes from one mind into the other and vice versa. The above realization as understanding (in Japanese, *kokoro-eru*; lit. "obtain the mind") is similar to this.

In the Japanese language, the "meaning" of a certain *koto* (a word signifying matter, subject, affair, as well as word) can also be called its *kokoro*, its "mind." (In solving a riddle, for instance, we say we obtain its "mind," that is, we understand what it means.⁵) To understand the "mind"-meaning of a certain affair, to grasp its essential *ri* or logos, is a matter of reality presenting itself as that *koto* (signifying at once affair and word) passing really and essentially as it is into the man who understands it and the man who understands it passing into that reality. In other words, the mind-meaning of the subject-matter, that is, the reality presenting itself in and as the *koto*, reflects into man's mind, and man's mind reflects itself into the mind of the *koto*. Thus, a living communication of one mind reflecting as it is upon the other, or the mutual transference of mind thus brought about, makes up the fundamental structure of what is called the "understanding of meaning." Therefore, it is not that the "meaning" of a certain thing first exists somewhere and then we come to grasp it. Rather the comprehension as realization is primordial, that is, a *koto* takes possession of us, passes into us, and thus we pass into the *koto* and our mind becomes and works as the *koto*.

"Meaning" as spoken of ordinarily is none other than something that has been taken from within this dynamic intercommunication between thing and mind; an abstraction in which thing and mind stand in some conceptually "ideal" correlation. At the ground of the dimension where intellectual cognition can occur and the meaning conceived of in such a cognition is called forth, there lies the level of the primal encounter with *koto*, in which the so-called meaning and its intellectual grasp in actuality originate. Intellectualism, in the face of a *koto*, tries to decide whether it is meaningful or not, yet insofar

⁵ In another example, suppose you ask a friend to do something for you, explaining to him the affair in question and what you want. If he answers "*kokoro-eta*" ("I understand"), the word expresses his consent ("You can rely on me"). Literally it signifies that he has understood your mind, the point of the matter requested and also the meaning of your spoken words, all these being implied in the one word *kokoro* ("mind-meaning").

as it assumes this kind of "meaning" as its criterion, there is a blind spot at its very base. It forgets to ask first of all the meaning of the "meaning" that it sets up as its criterion. A *koto* as something seen objectively or as the spoken word and its rational meaning is thereby already divorced from reality. It is merely an image of reality projected on the plane of the intellect.

With respect to the *koto* of *samsara-sive-nirvana*, I said that its meaning is realized existentially such that the Tathāgata's mind passes into man's mind and man's mind passes into the Tathāgata's. And I also said that this mutual intercommunion is the realization of the reality that finds its expression in the *sive*. But what does all this mean for us, after all? We saw Dōgen declare that it is only in this way of understanding that we become qualified to free ourselves from birth-and-death. Only in the existence where birth-and-death is self-identical with nirvana is there true liberation and transcendence from birth-and-death. We say "true." What this word means has been the subject of our discussion here.

Before, I said that in man's striving in the direction of "ecstatic" transcendence he is compelled to seek "true" transcendence beyond transcendence into *nihilum*, in transcendence into nirvana or Emptiness. Again, I also spoke of "true" infinity in nirvana in contra-distinction to the "bad" infinity of existence in *nihilum*. But now, it is stated that the "true" referred to is not yet truly "true." It is not nirvana as it is usually considered but rather non-abiding in nirvana or birth-and-death as nirvana that is truly to be called true transcendence, true infinity and, in this sense, true nirvana.

Here once again we encounter a situation in which it should be said that nirvana is nirvana only when it is not nirvana. When we persist in an inquiry, from what is accepted as true on to what is "truly" true, this truth comes to appear in the form of paradox or absurdity, conditions ordinarily regarded as altogether contradictory to truth. Where *ri* (or *logos*) is pushed truly to an extreme, anti-*ri* or paradox appears. Meaninglessness appears where meaning is stretched to its very consummation. What in this way appears in the form of paradox, absurdity, or meaninglessness, however, is absolute reality in the true sense. It is the very life of life itself. If here it is said that life in itself is meaningless, this utterance only indicates life truly living itself; it is, in other words, a finger pointing to the proper intuitional horizon where life transcends all meaning, but a horizon which all intellectual function must presup-

pose in its finding or giving a "meaning" in reference to something. (I will try to explain this more fully later.) Anyway, that is what Meister Eckhart called the *Leben ohne Warum* (the "life without a reason why"). The same argument can apply to a paradox being truly true and absurdity being truly reasonable. Thus, the field of true nirvana can be seen to appear only there where one does not attach to nirvana, and at the point of the turn-about where nirvana is not nirvana.

I said before that nirvana is essentially "life" because it is a dying to samsaric life which is essentially death. But when we pursue the *essentiality* of this "essential" life to the very end, non-"essential" life appears at the place where essential life arrives at its consummation (where it is about to be totally consumed, so to speak), as samsara-*siṃh*-nirvana. Here life is sheer life and yet flatly paradoxical. For instance, the essentiality in its true essence is here non-essentiality. If this cannot be said, then life is not truly and essentially life; not life which is at once truly eternal and truly temporal.

For this reason, it is not enough to say that birth-and-death is essentially "death." It is essentially life while remaining essentially death. As Dōgen says, "Birth-and-death is itself the Life of Buddha." Samsara is truly samsara as samsara-*siṃh*-nirvana. "Samsara is not samsara, therefore it is samsara"—this is its true *ri* or logos, its real truth. This true *ri* in samsara and the true *ri* in nirvana (mentioned before as nirvana-*siṃh*-samsara) join into one, and there samsara-*siṃh*-nirvana is true samsara, true nirvana, true "time," and true "eternity." Our life, basically consisting of a chain of births and deaths, at every instant newly arising and newly vanishing—each "instant" being itself merely an ephemeral knot of "no more" and "not yet"—that life must be, just as it is, the very place where nirvana presents itself. What is brought to self-awareness as the essence of human reality in this samsaric world, the infinite finitude of sheer "being" in the field of the world that includes in itself all possible forms and "species" of sentient being, the history of the causality of "karma" extending into boundless past and future, in which, as expressed in a Zen saying, one "leaves a donkey's womb only to enter a horse's abdomen"—these things, as they really are, are the Life of Buddha. In Dōgen's words, "birth itself is non-birth; extinction itself is non-extinction."

I said that endless finitude in birth-and-death is true finitude, but, in fact, this still falls short of truly true finitude. Truly true finitude is the finitude

of birth-and-death on the level of *samsara-sive-nirvana*. Here nirvana as the negation-affirmation of birth-and-death becomes what makes birth-and-death true birth-and-death. Nirvana turns into the real suchness of birth-death, its Reality, its bottomlessness. Thus, the birth-and-death which becomes bottomless in birth-and-death *sive* nirvana, its finitude which there becomes bottomlessly finite, is true finitude.

Here each and every moment that emerges to appear as what is bottomless, man's life in birth-and-death in all its occasions, is, with that, *realized* (in this above sense of both self-manifestation and self-comprehension) as the life of Buddha. In such an existence, we are in each moment bottomlessly "in time" and, embracing the boundless past and future, bring each "time" to its fullness at every moment. On the field of the "absolute this-side," where transiency as such is nirvana, time comes at all times to ripeness; for us, every moment is a "good" one—"Every day is a good day," Ummon says. We can also regard Dōgen's well-known "Body and mind dropping off, dropped-off body and mind" as referring to this way of existence.

I said before that "understanding" as realization in which the reality coming to present itself is understood just as it really is or in its true "nature," signifies that the "mind" of the Tathāgata (the Thus-Coming) is reflected into man's "mind" and at the same time man's mind passes into the Tathāgata's. (Of course, we can substitute the term "life" for "mind" in these expressions.) The mind here at issue, however, is not the mind we ordinarily envisage as consciousness or intellect, at least not consciousness on the field wherein it grasps itself or rather is captured by itself. It is not the discriminating mind that grasps itself only discriminatively, for that was already broken through in the detached transcendence to the field of *nihilum*. And the mind inherent in the existential self-awareness on the field of true Emptiness, of true nirvana as *samsara-sive-nirvana*, is certainly not such a discriminating mind.

The mind here at issue is the non-discriminating mind, an absolute negation of any differentiation through consciousness or intellect. This is non-discrimination; the mind, for instance, of "Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take the thought for the things of itself," or, "Tomorrow, tomorrow's wind will blow." I said above that true life is beyond all meaning and yet that all meaning is determined relative to it. This "mean-

ing"-less character of true "life" is in correlation to the character of this "non-discrimination" of "mind" I am talking about.

But this meaninglessness and non-discrimination are not the same as those on the standpoint of nihilism. Here non-discrimination is none other than our discriminations on every actual occasion, yet discriminations in their bottomlessness, their reality, their true Thusness. It is what makes every differentiation differentiation in its true sense, differentiation of non-differentiation. As is said in *Matthew*, "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? . . . Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." All the worrisome and trivial "evil" in daily life (ἡ κακία) suffices itself for the day. The karma stemming from man's behavior, speech, and thought in the birth-and-death world is also complete in itself for every occasion. This is the discrimination of non-discrimination as an essential aspect of true life and true mind. Here, in the discrimination inhering in man's anxiety over the trivial matters of daily life, lies the bottomlessness of non-discrimination. In Christianity, this bottomlessness seems to lie open to "the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (*Matt.* 6.33). In Buddhism, it can be said to lie in the openness of the absolute situation of Enlightenment, as in for instance, "Every day is a good day."

In any case, the non-discriminating mind at issue here is not something subjective in the manner of what is ordinarily called mind. It is a field that lets the being of all things be, where all things are as themselves in their own home-ground; the field of "Emptiness" which I called the field of the fundamental possibility of being of all things. It is in this Emptiness that it is said, "Form (or "thing" as being in a determinately definite form) is, as such, *śūnyatā* (Emptiness) and *śūnyatā* is, as such, form," and the same can be said of the other skandhas, perception, imagination, volition, and recognition.

This Emptiness is the mind of non-discrimination. This mind is more objective than anything determined as "objective," more subjective than anything determined as "subjective." While itself transcending such determinations, it nevertheless bestows objectivity upon whatever is said to be objective and subjectivity upon whatever is said to be subjective. It is not an object of any "contemplation." It is only realized existentially, in the sense of manifestation-comprehension. Here, even contemplation is transformed into an existence.

When in the *Heart Sutra* it is said that "At the time Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva engaged in the practice of deep Prajñāpāramitā, he saw with illuminating insight that the five aggregates (*skandha*) were all empty and delivered sentient beings from all their suffering," the "practice" and the "time" are here matters concerning the depths of existence. For this reason, the illuminating insight does not remain mere contemplation. It is integrated with the deliverance of all beings in Time from the world's universal suffering. When this mind is realized, it is realized as the reality through which alone all things real are rendered real, as "True Emptiness that is Marvelous Being," a phrase usually acknowledged to express the gist of Mahayana Buddhism. The "mind" here at issue is more real than anything "real." When it is called "mind," that does not mean it is conceived from a merely subjective consciousness by means of analogy. Quite the contrary, each activity of our subjective consciousness and intellect originates, in fact, in the mind I have just mentioned, the mind as "True Emptiness that is Marvelous Being." Every "mental" activity is, in truth, a discrimination as non-discrimination.

In general, our true self, as we said before, is a self only as the "self-that-is-not-self." The self-conscious, self-centered self we ordinarily assume to be our self—self in the form of "ego"—this ego is not self-grounded; it is not something that has the ground of its being within itself. The true self, which is the home-ground of the ego-self, reveals its original face on the yonder side of the ego-self. It is essentially "ecstatic." The real "nature" of the ego-self manifests itself in and as the ego-self even as it hides behind it. The real nature of ego is non-"ego"-istic, the self as non-self. The reason the emergence of the ego-self can occur can only lie in the essential nature of ego itself, but in its emergence that same ego always comes to appear as something that blurs its own ground of being and its own true nature.

As I said before, our true "self" reveals itself where we "die the Great Death and the whole universe is new"; where the world "worlds." This authentic self is always present in each particular activity of the ego-self, though in a mode of presence such as "the eye does not see the eye." Contrarily, the ego can never appear within the presence of the authentic self. Insofar as the ego is an ego, the authentic self's constant presence in the ego is forever hidden from the ego. So much for the "mind" as the discrimination of non-discrimination.

The "life" at issue here must be seen in a similar way. As we have seen, birth-and-death is, as such, the Life of Buddha. This must not be understood on the basis of "life" as we ordinarily conceive of it in its mere aspect of birth-and-death, as if Dōgen's saying expressed an idea of life grasped on that ordinary basis by means of a conceptual (at best "metaphysical") analysis. Such an understanding puts the cart before the horse. It is a discrimination rendered from without, aloof from actual existence. In that way of thinking, the saying that birth-and-death is the Life of Buddha immediately becomes a lie and an illusion, turning upside down the views of birth-and-death and the Life of Buddha, so they are no longer true understanding in Dōgen's sense of the word. It is only on the dimension of *samsara-sive-nirvana* and only on the field of being "released from birth-and-death" that it becomes possible to say that the life of body-and-mind entangled in the cycle of birth-and-death is, as it really is, the Life of Buddha.

Therefore, "mind" and "life" here spoken of are mind and life on the field in which body-and-mind "drops off," and the dropped off body-and-mind is there in full awareness and openness to the vitality of life. This "body-and-mind" does not merely refer to "things" or "consciousness" in their usual sense. Here they are immune to becoming the research object of physics, physiology, or psychology. Thus Dōgen says "the dropping off of body-and-mind is neither form (i.e., thing) nor consciousness."

IV

The phrase "body-and-mind dropping off" expresses the characteristic quality of Dōgen's Zen that was imparted to him by his Chinese master Ju-ching (1163-1268). It also affords us a glimpse of a consummate form of religious existence in Buddhism in general.

We ordinarily regard our own body-mind as our "self." We fix it as the primary point in us, and all our seeing and doing emanates from this central point. But, as was said before, the real aspect of the authentic self only becomes manifest when this structure is broken through and we disengage ourselves from our fixation to our body-and-mind. Dōgen tells us that when he was studying and practicing Zen under Ju-ching, he attained Enlightenment upon hearing Ju-ching say, "*Sanzen* is the dropping off of body-and-mind"

(*Hōkyō-ki*).⁶ We can also find in Dōgen such statements as: “*Sanzen* is the dropping off of body-and-mind, and is *just sitting*,” or “Dropping off of body-and-mind means *zazen*. When we are *just sitting*, we free ourselves from the five desires and rid ourselves of the five hindrances” (*ibid.*). Here, the dropping off of body-and-mind and *just sitting* (*shikan taza*) indicate the same thing. This emancipates us from the five desires which by our attachment to the sense-objects of our five sense organs tie us to the external world, and from the five hindrances or illusions, which, knotting up our minds, fetter us to ourselves and cover and conceal our authentic mind. The dropping off of body-and-mind frees us from those ties and fetters, and, hence, from the world of suffering and birth-and-death as well as from ourselves. It means that our authentic mind, stripped of its covering hindrances, becomes bared in an “ecstatic” disclosure that opens it to the yonder side of the world. Or, it means the existence which stands unbared upon the opened plane of “transcendence.” And all this again is nothing other than “to commit ourselves to Zen” (*sanzen*).

Sanzen is said to be the dropping off of body and mind, and the dropped off body and mind to be *zazen*. But Ju-ching tells us to get free from the fundamental ignorance (*avidyā*) which constitutes the source of the five hindrances through *just sitting*. He says,

Descendents of the Buddhas and patriarchs first rid themselves of the five hindrances, and then rid themselves of the six hindrances. The six hindrances consist of the five hindrances plus the hindrance of ignorance. If we only eliminate the hindrance of ignorance, we thereby eliminate the five hindrances as well. Although we get free of the five hindrances, if we do not get free of the hindrance of ignorance, we cannot attain to the practice and realization of the Buddhas and patriarchs. (*ibid.*)

The hindrance of ignorance in question, which is the so-called basic illusion, is, I think, equivalent to the naked being-in-the-world which I spoke about before as the basic mode of being in the samsaric world. It is said here that

⁶ The *Hōkyō-ki* is a notebook kept by Dōgen during his study in China under Ju-ching, containing a record of his interviews with that master.

we are freed from this ignorance only through *shikan taza*, "just sitting." Elsewhere, Ju-ching is reported as giving Dōgen the following words of instruction: "What you have been striving for until now is none other than the way of getting free of the six hindrances. . . . Through working out a resolution in *just sitting*, body-and-mind comes to drop off. So it is the method of freeing yourself from the five desires, five hindrances, and so on. Besides this, there is nothing at all" (*ibid.*).

Therefore, where man is freed from basic ignorance is also where the authentic mind opens up. It is the place where, as Dōgen says, "body-and-mind drops away naturally, and the original face is immediately manifest."⁷ This original face Ju-ching calls the "supple mind": "To discern and affirm the dropping off of body-and-mind of the Buddhas and patriarchs—that is the supple mind. This we call the Buddhas' and patriarchs' mind-seal" (*Hōkyō-ki*). The "supple" or "flexible" mind which can rightly discern the dropping off of body-and-mind in the Buddhas and patriarchs and can affirm it naturally, is itself dropping off of body-and-mind and the attestation of a new life animated by the "Life of Buddha." This Life of Buddha, however, cannot exist apart from birth-and-death. It is only through obtaining the mind of *samsara-sive-nirvana* that we can partake of freedom from *samsara*. In an old commentary to the *Shōji* ("Birth-and-Death") book of *Shōbōgenzō*, this is described as "The solitary one unbarred alone in the myriad phenomena."⁸

At any rate, existence on the plane of *samsara-sive-nirvana* is dropping off body-and-mind, the original face, the "supple mind." And just as Ju-ching speaks of "the dropping off of body-and-mind, the dropped off body-and-mind," the plane apart from birth-and-death has to be discerned directly under the body-and-mind of birth-and-death. For this reason, quoting Ju-ching's words that *sanzen* is dropping off body-and-mind attainable only in *just sitting*, Dōgen says that the body-mind sitting in meditation is as such the King-of-samadhis Samadhi, "plucking the pupil out of the Buddhas' and patriarchs' eye and sitting there in its place."⁹ We can from this see the implication

⁷ *Fukan zazengi* ("General Promotion of the Principles of Zazen").

⁸ About this phrase see my article "Science and Zen," *Eastern Buddhist*, 1, 1.

⁹ *Shōbōgenzō Sammai-ō-sammai* ("The King-of-samadhis Samadhi"), translation from the *Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. VII, 1.

of "just sitting," in which the term "just" expresses the single-mindedness or self-concentration (samadhi) of zazen practice.

The character of "just sitting" is further delineated in this passage:

Sitting crosslegged is in itself the King-of-samadhis Samadhi. It is penetration in realization. All samadhis belong to the house of this King Samadhi. Crosslegged sitting is the very body as such, the very mind as such, the very body-mind in suchness, the very Buddha-patriarchs in suchness, practice-realization in suchness, the crown of the head as such, and the very pulse of life as such. Crosslegging this human skin-flesh-bone-and-marrow body, we now crossleg the King-of-samadhis Samadhi.

Elsewhere, Dōgen calls "just-sitting" the self-joyous "samadhi." His *Sbōbō-genzō Bendōwa* begins with the following well-known words:

Buddha-tathāgatas all have a wonderful means, which is unexcelled and free from human agency, for transmitting the wondrous Dharma from one to another without alteration and realizing supreme and complete awakening. That it is only transmitted without deviation from Buddha to Buddha is due to the self-joyous samadhi, which is its touchstone.

To disport oneself freely in this samadhi, the right entrance is commitment to proper sitting in zazen. This Dharma is amply present in every person, but unless one practices, it is not manifested, unless there is realization, it is not attained. It is not a question of one or many; let loose of it and it fills your hands. It is not bounded vertically or horizontally; speak it and it fills your mouth.... Buddhas and patriarchs, who have maintained the Buddhist Dharma, all have held that practice based on proper sitting in self-joyous samadhi was the right path through which their Enlightenment opened.¹⁰

Birth-and-death *nirvāṇa*, or birth-and-death being at once the Life of Buddha, comes after all to the existence of dropping off body-and-mind, or,

¹⁰ Translation from the *Eastern Buddhist*, VI, 1.

what is the same thing, existence in the King-of-samadhis Samadhi, or the self-joyous samadhi. Again, in the same sense, it was said: "Dropped off body-and-mind is not form or consciousness. Do not say it is Enlightenment or illusion. How can it be any thing or Buddha?"¹¹ This assertion that the dropped off body-and-mind does not belong to the field of illusion or the field of Enlightenment, is not a thing or a Buddha, is noteworthy because in it the culmination point in Zen is brought to expression.

In this case, however, notice must be taken that the "supple mind" as body-and-mind dropping off also contains an aspect such as Ju-ching sets forth in these words:

The zazen of the Buddhas and patriarchs, from the first raising of their religious mind, is a vow to gather in the Dharmas of all Buddhas. Therefore, in their zazen they do not forget any sentient being, they do not forsake any, even down to the smallest insect. They give compassionate regard at all times, vowing to save them all and turning over to them every merit they acquire. That is the reason Buddhas and patriarchs always dwell in the world of desire and negotiate the Way in zazen. (*Hōkyō-ki*)

After Dōgen returned home from China, the first lecture he is said to have given his students in the meditation hall of his monastery went as follows:¹²

I had not gone around to very many Zen monasteries. I only happened by chance to encounter my late master T'ien-t'ung Ju-ching, and readily apprehended that eyes are horizontal and nose vertical. Totally free from any deception by others, I returned home with empty hands. Therefore, I don't have a single strand of the Buddha's Dharma. I now while away my time, accepting whatever may come.

Every morning the sun ascends in the east,
Every night the moon descends in the west.
Clouds retreat, the mountain bones are bared,
Rain passes, the surrounding hills are low.

¹¹ *Eihei kōroku* (Dōgen's comprehensive records), book 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, book 1.

EMPTINESS AND TIME

How is it, after all? (Pausing a while, he says,)

We meet a leap-year one in four.

Cocks crow at four in the morning.

These words can also be said to express “dropping off of body-and-mind—dropped off body-and-mind.” “Eyes horizontal, nose vertical” refers to body-and-mind on the plane of the King-of-samadhis Samadhi, where one is said to “pluck the pupil out of the Buddhas’ eye and sit there in its place.” Or, again, the plane of “penetration in realization.” Or, the dropping off of body-and-mind that, as was said before, is not form or consciousness, not a thing or a Buddha. It is our original countenance.

It is also called *sanzen*, in terms of the above-mentioned “right entrance to free and unrestricted activity in the self-joyous samadhi.” Eyes horizontal, nose vertical is the existence on the plane beyond birth-and-death, where birth-and-death as such is the Life of Buddha; and the existence of the “solitary one, alone and unbarred in the myriad things.” Insofar as it is existence in the self-joyous samadhi, the self can be absolutely itself alone, and all things, the infinitely great as well as the infinitely small, to speak in Pascal’s terms, can be truly the “treasures” of one’s own “household.” There, in the vast territory of one’s own home-ground, one’s existence as the dropping off of body-and-mind is not under anyone else’s sway, does not accept the agency of even Buddhas and patriarchs. Only in such an existence, which is absolutely independent and immune even to the guiles of Buddhas and patriarchs, is birth-and-death as such the Life of Buddha; because the essence of the Life of Buddha does not manifest itself except as existence in the openness described above in terms of the self-joyous King Samadhi.

The openness in that King Samadhi is absolutely unobjectifiable. It is where the eye does not see the eye, fire does not burn fire, water does not wash water, or again, willows are not green and flowers are not red, and yet for this very reason, the eye sees things, the fire burns things, willows are green, flowers are red.¹³ It is a place that transcends all reason and its objectifying logicalization and can only be opened up in the existence of body-and-mind dropping off. Where fire, in its *not* burning itself, *is* in itself as fire,

¹³ See *Eastern Buddhist* III, 2, p. 88; V, 2; VI, 1.

and where the green of a willow is just in its being green *not* green—this “where” is the place of what I called before “samadhi-being” or *position*¹⁴; a fire in its samadhi-being signifying here its being in itself in some unobjectifiable way. The samadhi-being is, after all, none other than a self-manifestation of the King Samadhi, and therefore, as such, a self-realization of the existence in the dropping off of body-and-mind, or, of the existence of the absolutely independent solitary one revealing itself alone in the myriad things of the world. Every mode of samadhi-being is a so-called “Dust Samadhi,”¹⁵ which is, after all, a self-manifestation of the “King-of-samadhis Samadhi.” Such alone is the place where the intrinsic nature of the Life of Buddha can become manifest.

Dōgen’s “eyes horizontal, nose vertical,” and “coming back home with empty hands” bespeak this intrinsic nature. Coming back home refers of course to his return home from China. At the same time, utterances such as “being born is being unborn, dying is not-dying,” “in the Buddha Dharma birth is said to be at once non-birth,” suggest his return back home is also a return to the birthplace of “non-birth,” a return to his native place, and that a return to the place of the unborn is identical with his coming back home with empty hands. There is a familiar Zen saying, “Bodhidharma did not come to China, the Second Patriarch did not go to India.” Originally Dōgen did not go to China and did not return to Japan either, and on that same plane, he did go to China and did return to Japan. Here, birth-*is*-non-birth comes into existence at each instant of every actual occasion of time, which may be called, after Kierkegaard, an “atom of eternity” in temporality. It is the life of the dropping off of body-and-mind that is not form or consciousness, thing or Buddha. Here each “time” is time only because it is not time, only because it is an atom of “eternity” in temporality.

The words in Dōgen’s lecture, “I now while away my time, accepting whatever may come,” refer to just such a “time.” Because there the dropped off body-and-mind is “neither mind nor thing nor Buddha,”¹⁶ but emerges

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, VI, 1.

¹⁵ The *jinjin sammai*: the “dusts” (*jinjin*) signify what is contrary to purity, clarity, etc., the trivial experiences and phenomena of everyday life. See *Hekigan-roku* (“Blue Cliff Records”), Case 50.

¹⁶ A well-known phrase associated with the Zen master Nansen (Chin. Nan-ch’üan).

as "this human skin-flesh-bone-marrow body now crosslegging the King Samadhi," one passes one's time, with no teachings of the Buddha, just taking things as they come—as they are destined to come—consigning oneself to the destiny of circumstances. This is none other than daily life with the sun rising every morning, the moon setting every night—daily life in its true, original state of the King Samadhi, which is totally different from fatalism or resignation of whatever kind.

A noted Japanese priest of the Tokugawa era named Genkō Dokuan (1630–1698), who belonged to Dōgen's line of Sōtō Zen, wrote that " 'eyes horizontal, nose vertical' is Master Dōgen's realization of confirmation in the Dharma. His testimony to the Dharma is a non-testimony. It lays to waste heaven and earth right on the spot, and hurdles an infinity of time in the flick of a finger."¹⁷ He is saying that in the daily life that is lived beyond all cares and worries is directly manifested existence in the King Samadhi which instantly sweeps away boundless space and strides over endless kalpas of time. This existence is in authentic "time," in time that is time because it is not time. Rather, this existence is identical with the ripening of that time.

This also is the reason the body subject to birth-and-death is said to be like diamond, for its hardness, brilliancy, and sharpness able to cut through all things. Once the question was put to a Zen master, "Though the material body (*rupa-kāya*) is destroyed and broken down, what is the Dharma body (*Dharma-kāya*), which is supposed to be wholly indestructible?" He answered, "The mountain flowers bloom like rich brocade; the valley stream deepens to an indigo-like pool."¹⁸ Here again, we must not accept the literal meaning of the words, reading them conceptually and projecting them onto the plane of logos, so that the mountain flowers and valley stream become, ephemeral as they are, appearances or symbols of some kind of the unchanging, enduring Dharma body. We must not turn the so-called "logic of *soku-bi*" into a conceptual logic.¹⁹ The logic of *soku-bi* is the logic of existence, or the existence of

¹⁷ *Dokugakō* ("Notes of Monologues").

¹⁸ *Hekigan-roku*, Case 82.

¹⁹ 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 non-A." This he called the "logic of soku-hi" (*soku-bi no ronri*); "*soku*" means here the essential inseparableness of two entities, and "*bi*" expresses negativity. See his *Studies in Zen*, p. 119.

"logic" in the sense of existence as "logos."

In the case of such a matter (or *koto*, matter-word) as that in question here, in order to truly understand what that matter means (what the matter "matters") we need first to go back to the field wherein and the spot whereat it originates and then listen to what it is speaking of, consider its words, and confirm its mind (or its *kokoro*, mind-meaning). On its home-ground, the *koto* of the brocade-like mountain flowers and indigo-like water is imbued with a peculiar, inexhaustible meaning precisely there where it is logically meaningless. And the inexhaustible flavor of that *koto's* beauty should be understood from its mind-meaning (*kokoro*), of which the *koto*, stemming from the same home-ground, is the expression.

At any rate, existence as the dropping off of body-and-mind, also called the King-of-samadhis Samadhi, which, in this case, is shown in the master's answer, is, as was said before, existence as true "time" brought to full ripeness. What is called "historical body" in Nishida's philosophy must in the last analysis be existence of this sort.

Dōgen asked at the end of his initial lecture, "How is it, after all?" and the answer he himself gave was, "We meet a leap year one in four, Cocks crow at four in the morning." In these two phenomena appears the "law" or Dharma that holds sway over a world of relentless change and becoming. Today scientists will probably see, further beyond that "law," the laws of science, at once more abstract and universal but also more exact and inexorable. For all that, so far as the being and becoming of things is concerned, they are as they ought to be and they become as they ought to become, in accordance with some definite "law." In other words, all things are in the "ontological" order and under the sway of logos; they are "naturalness in accord with the Dharma."²⁰ Even what is seen as irrational or lawless from the view of human interests is, so far as its being or becoming is concerned, never apart from the "law." In this sense, all things just as they are are inevitably "in accordance with law." But then, what on earth does it mean

²⁰ "*Hōm-jinen*," or sometimes (in Shinran, for instance) "*Jinen-Hōm*." A term commonly used in the philosophic systems of Buddhism in China and Japan, denoting the ultimate form of "naturalness" which makes its appearance where assimilation with Dharma comes to develop the character of "naturalness."

that such a plane of lawfulness constitutes the place where a man finally finds himself "after all," coming back home with empty hands perfectly carefree and free of all matters?

I have said that existence characterized as "returning empty-handed" is only possible on the dimension where at every new instant being born is, as such, being unborn, that it is the life of the dropped off body-and-mind which is not mind or consciousness, thing or Buddha, and also that it is none other than daily life in the King of Samadhis. It is, in a word, the standpoint of Emptiness, as birth-and-death *sive* nirvana. But now this standpoint is said to be finally the plane where all things are in accordance with the Dharma. Here, to say that the law rules over the being of all things, or rather, over the mode of "being in accordance with Dharma" in which all things are just as they are, refers to the fact that Emptiness lets all things be just as they are and as they ought to be; both here amounting to the same thing. In the fundamental mode of being of all things in Emptiness or in the mode of being-in-itself of things where they are in their own home-ground, being as they are is identical with being as they ought to be. This is exactly the same as saying they are in accordance with Dharma. Since I have dealt with this in a previous chapter from the point of view of the circumincessional relation,²¹ here I shall forgo a discussion of the constitution of this "lawful" character.

The existence characterized as "returning home empty-handed," where being born is being unborn, is existence on the field of Emptiness as *samsara-sive*-nirvana, the field of the birthplace that is self-identical with the non-birth-place. And that field embraces all things on the plane of their origination, where they present themselves as they are in themselves. If the term "embrace" be thought to incline too much toward a spatial sense of unity, we may avoid it and say that the very aspect of all things being each in and by itself alone is basically, that is, in Emptiness, identical with the aspect of their being "gathered together." Such a thing being possible constitutes the characteristic of the field of Emptiness. Existence in King Samadhi, returning home empty-handed, is inseparably connected in its essence with the field of Emptiness. It may be likened to the mode of existence of the king, whose position of

²¹ See "The Standpoint of *Sūnyatā*" in the *Eastern Buddhist* VI, 1; VI, 2 (especially the latter).

sovereignty is inconceivable without a land to rule over, his land being, politically, the scope of his governing power, a realm that has originally been opened up and is kept open by virtue of his power, of which his position as monarch is a sort of self-realization. A similar relation holds between the existence in King Samadhi and the field of Emptiness. On the field of Emptiness each thing is given a position where it is in-itself, i.e., in the essentially unobjectifiable mode of suchness I called above the mode of samadhi-being. This field of Emptiness belongs intrinsically to the essence of existence-in-Emptiness, participating in its basic structure. Only the existence in King Samadhi lets open the field of Emptiness existentially while at the same time establishing itself in that field as the dropping off of body-and-mind.

Existence distinguished as "the dropping off of body-and-mind—the dropped off body-and-mind" maintains the boundless openness of the field where each thing is in itself, and by virtue of that is gathered together with every other thing to form one and the same "world." The field of Emptiness is right where all things are made to "be in the world." That is where Dōgen saw the standpoint of the King-of-samadhis Samadhi. It is a standpoint where, as Rinzai says, "Being master wherever you are, wherever you are is all true." Each and every thing, in being in itself on its own home-ground and in accordance with Dharma, is essentially maintained and preserved by this master in his existence of dropped off body-and-mind, a master standing self-aware in his own realm of boundless Emptiness.

Above, it was stated that on their own home-ground "things" settle down in their own *position* by means of being-in-samadhi. That all things are as they really are, means that each of them occupies its own "Dharma-position" of suchness and that they are therefore under the supreme Dharma of the King Samadhi realized in the dropped off body-and-mind. Or, we can also say that they are subject to the law promulgated by him who becomes master wherever he is. All things, through the essential Dharma inherent in their actual being and becoming, and hence also through their actuality in accordance with Dharma, are gathered into a "world" and maintained together there by the lordly existence of the King Samadhi, an empty-handed, home-ward bound existence. All things, inclusive of men and other sentient beings, so far as they are seen basically in their sheer "being in the world," constitute a "world"-unity in Emptiness; a unity of basic irreducible freedom and

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equally basic and irreducible regulation; it is free in the sense that there each being *is* in its own position as being-in-itself, and regulated in the sense that each being in it is as it *ought* to be in the position determined in the nexus of being-in-the-world. And the reality which makes all this possible realizes itself in the existence on the field of Emptiness and actualizes itself through the lordly existence of dwelling in the King Samadhi. While realizing itself as the "lawful" character of all things and phenomena and as all lawful things and phenomena, this existence is in itself the lord of universal being. That is why I said the dropping off of body-and-mind is the solitary one alone and unbared in the myriad phenomena of the world, that presents, however, the open field where leap-year comes one year in four and every morning the cocks crow at dawn.

(To be continued)

Translated by Rev. Jan van Bragt