

# Zen Buddhism and a Commonsense World

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WHEN Zen is judged by formal logic, which holds good in this world of relativity, it seems to have no sense whatever. We must abandon in fact, if we are to see into the truth of Zen, all that we cherish as important and highly valuable in the dualistic realm of subject and object, of the one and the many, of mind and matter. Let this be done, and we are qualified to criticize the claim of Zen as revealing the secrets of life.

Some may ask, what is the use of going beyond our ordinary experiences. Zen is not, after all, what we want. Let us have something more sensible, that is, appealing to our commonsense. This is quite a reasonable objection to Zen and its vaunted claims. But strangely the time comes upon every one of us sometime in our lives when we feel quite dissatisfied with this world and its ways of doing things, thinking things, etc. In truth, Zen developed to meet this dissatisfaction, which is at bottom logical and metaphysical. It rises in us because of our being ignorant of the foundation of a strange structure called the world. The structure rests upon something which cannot be measured by anything belonging to it, but which at the same time must be connected with it in some way reasonable or unreasonable. If it is altogether transcendental, we shall have nothing to do with it; it must be somehow immanent in us, that is, in this world. And it is for this reason that logic avails not to deal with the claims of Zen. To be at once immanent and transcendental, to be at once in time and beyond time, to be at once in space and out of space, is not meant

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for the ordinary human intellect to comprehend. When the claim of the intellect is held supreme, the claim of Zen finds no room in it. But Zen has no desire to contradict intellectualism; indeed, it wishes to supply a foundation for it so that we can feel at rest with ourselves and with the world.

As Zen abides in a transcendental realm, our everyday logical formulas cannot subsume it. But as Zen is also immanent in us and with us, our earthly vocabulary can be utilized to express its truth. We must be reconciled to this dual aspect of Zen, for this is the only way to understand it, and when it is understood, we realize where we are, whither we are bound, and that life is not in vain. The Western mind—for that matter the Eastern mind too—has been accustomed to measure all things of this world by logical categories since the early days of Greek thought; the people of the West have been trained to judge, to value, to appreciate things according to rules of logic or by means of the so-called scientific methodology; they have found them altogether satisfactory because of their being perfectly applicable to objects about us. But, to tell the truth, not so perfectly, not so altogether satisfactory, because we are for one reason or another compelled to look for something beyond our commonsense or scientific experiences. We thus have come to have religious faith which in various ways contradicts logic and rationalism. The theologian would thus make this bold declaration: *credo quia impossibile* or *absurdum*. It is not human reason but something deeper and more primordial that compels us to accept this theological dictum, at least as pointing to Reality. This being the case, let the Zen masters have their own unique ways of making us acquainted with a world full of “absurdities.”

If there is anything in the East contributing largely to the enrichment of human experience and also to the deepening of human thought, it cannot be other than Zen. Zen achieves a Copernican revolution in our outlook of life, and acquaints us with an unusually rich treasure of expressions. I will cite cases from the *Hekiganshū* to illustrate the significance of my contention above alluded to, that Zen gives us tidings of a world which we do not usually experience. But we must remember that this does not mean that Zen is an occult art delving into the dark recesses of mystery and irrationalism. If necessary, we can designate Zen as radical empiricism. It takes this “phenomenal” world in its face value and refuses to regard it as a kind of manifestation of something not belonging to it or of something which cannot be given expression in terms

of the things we see about us. That is to say, Zen has nothing to do with mystery-mongering occultism, mysticism, or any cognate school of thought.

The *Hekiganbū* cases LXX, LXXI, and LXXII are significant as giving in a most characteristic fashion what may be called the Zen pattern of thought. The cases develop around the question of the Absolute, though they have no reference whatever, either expressly or implicitly, to it. So far as the topic of their dialogues goes the parties concerned seem to be talking of quite a trivial or even a nonsensical subject; as we observe this discussion proceeds about whether they can speak or utter anything with the throat throttled and the lips closed up. The discussion, if it is, is childish and has nothing to do with the Absolute, we may conclude. But this is the point in which Zen is seen in one of its most characteristic features. Being radically realistic, Zen refuses to commit itself to abstract conceptualism. Nor does it intend to symbolize by the closed mouth the abysmal depths of silence which is thought by some philosophers to be at the bottom of all particular existences. When Zen talks of the mouth, the mouth is the subject, and Zen has no intention to extend the idea beyond itself, making it cover something else. The mouth is here the Absolute, so to speak. It is for the benefit of those who are not acquainted with Zen that Zen masters occasionally go away from the pattern and speak of abstract concepts and also of symbolization. But we shall grievously be misled by blindly following them; we must strictly keep to the pattern if we wish to understand Zen in its unadulterated form. The masters are therefore always careful not to overstep the limits they have set up for themselves; they are ever ready to retrace their steps when they see any sign of the danger in which their pupils are sometimes too apt to find themselves.

Thus prepared, we may remark that Zen's secret is to express itself in words even when the mouth is quite shut, that Zen is demanded to speak out where no speech is possible, that Zen thinks what is unthinkable, that with Zen contradiction is assertion and assertion is contradiction, and finally that according to Zen the Absolute does not manifest itself in particulars, but particulars, each one in itself, are the Absolute.

With this in mind we will now proceed to examine the three cases in question as illustrating three ways of responding to Hyakujo's request. The cases are prefaced thus:

“One word is enough for a quick man, one crack of a whip is enough for a quick horse. Ten thousand years are one thought, and one thought is ten thousand years. Nothing is more directly to the point than when nothing is yet astir. But tell me how a man can take hold of anything if nothing is yet astir. Let us see.”

With this Engo, the author of the *Hekiganshū*, proceeds to recite the *mondō* taking place between Hyakujō (720–814) and his three disciples.

When Isan, Gohō and Ungan were in attendance on Hyakujō, the latter asked Isan: “Can you say a word when your mouth is closed?” Said Isan: “But you say a word yourself, O Master!” Hyakujō remarked: “I don’t mind telling you about it, but if I do, it may mean losing my descendants.”

Hyakujō asked Gohō about the same question, and Gohō replied. “It is up to you yourself, O Master, to close the mouth.” Hyakujō remarked, “In the wilderness deserted by all, I would look for you shading my eyes with my hands.”

When the same question was given to Ungan, he replied: “Is the Master still in possession of such a thing as a mouth or not?”<sup>1</sup> Hyakujō remarked, “My descendants are lost.”

“To say a word with your mouth closed” is, ordinarily speaking, an impossibility. It is altogether illogical and irrational. But this is where Zen has its life, for Zen is not where logic holds good. Logic must be superseded if we want to understand Zen. As long as we cling to the logicalness of things, we can never hope to enter into the transcendental realm of Zen. The significance of Zen lies in making us abandon all that we have learned to hold precious since the awakening of consciousness and in discovering an altogether new point of view hitherto undreamed of. Zen’s whole merit is here. Hence Hyakujō’s demand to say a word with the lips closed.

It is interesting to see the diversity of responses given by his three disciples. Each one of the three had his own way of saying “a word” with the mouth closed. In fact, there are hundreds of thousands of ways of saying “a word”

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<sup>1</sup> Another reading of Ungan is: “O Master, is there anything yet to say or not?” The laconic Chinese permits different renderings. Either rendering, however, comes to the same thing, that is, betrays a certain opaqueness still obstructing Ungan’s sight.

even with the tongue all securely tied up, and the most astonishing truth is that we are actually performing this impossible feat at every moment of our lives whether wakeful or asleep. Only we do not know it, and this is the reason why Hyakujō gives us his puzzle which is a warning. The three disciples knew well what was in the mind of the master. The answers vary, but they all point to the same direction; the difference is in the depth of penetration or in the clarity of insight or one may say, in the degree of appreciation. As far as the understanding is concerned, they all understand Hyakujō.

Hyakujō's question may also take a variety of forms. The same idea is variously given expression by various masters. Let me give you two examples.

Kyōgen Chikan<sup>2</sup> gave this "puzzle" for his disciples to solve: It is like a man climbing up a tree: he supports himself with a branch between his teeth while both his hands and feet are freely suspended in the air taking hold of nothing. Now appears another man under the tree and asks the man up in the tree, "Please be kind enough to answer me about Daruma's idea of coming from the West to this land of ours." If the man up in the tree refused to answer, he would be ignoring the questioner; if he tried to utter a word, he would straightway fall to the ground to his own destruction. What would be, then, the most proper thing for him to do?

This is a more dramatic way of expressing the same idea which was in the mind of Hyakujō: "Say a word with a closed mouth." Hyakujō is a plain-speaking master, but Kyōgen has more of a schema in his wording. And naturally any answer to be given to Kyōgen will have to be differently phrased. A monk called Kotō<sup>3</sup> came forward and said, "We need not trouble ourselves about the climbing up, but I would like to know what you have to say even before the tree is climbed." To this the master gave a hearty laugh. Kotō here reminds us of Isan who demanded of Hyakujō, "You say a word yourself."

A monk came to Baso and asked, "Please, Master, give me your straightforward answer as to the meaning of Daruma's coming from the West and this without making use of the fourfold statement and also without resorting to

<sup>2</sup> C., Hsiang-yen Chih-hsien, late T'ang dynasty. Eds.

<sup>3</sup> 虎頭上座.

a series of negations." Baso said, "I am overworked today and unable to tell you about it. You go to Chizō and ask him."

The monk came to Chizō and proposed the same question. Chizō said, "Why don't you ask the Master about it?"

The monk said, "It is the Master himself who made me come to you."

Chizō's reply was: "I have a headache today and am unable to tell you about it. You'd better go to Brother [E] kai and ask him."

The monk now came to Kai with the question, whereupon Kai said, "As regards that, my understanding fails."

The monk finally came back to the master and reported all about his adventures. The master remarked, "[Chi] zō has a white head while Kai has a black one."

This kōan has its own features but the main purport is to make an ultimate statement concerning that which goes beyond both negations and affirmations, that is, "to say a word with the mouth closed." But to the ordinary reader the whole performance as enacted by Baso and his two disciples, who evidently treat the serious-minded monk as if he were a mere child, is utterly nonsensical. And as to Baso's final remark about the heads of Chizō and Ekai, it is to all appearance the height of triviality. If a sober Christian inquiring about the immensity of Divine Intelligence came to Baso and were sent off with similar excuses, what would he say about Zen Buddhism? What is worse is a "commentary" Engo gives here, for he says in the *Hekiganshū*: "If it were I, I would give him a few sound whacks on his back and chase him out and see if he would wake up to the truth."

The question, "What is the idea of Daruma's coming from the West, that is, from India to China?" has no special reference to the historical fact and its significance. Originally it may have meant this: According to the Mahayana, all beings are endowed with the Buddha-nature and sooner or later destined to be Buddhas. If so, what is the use of Daruma's coming from India with the deliberate purpose of teaching the Chinese in the doctrine? Is he not wasting his energy to undertake such a risky journey over the ocean? What was really in the mind of Daruma?

The question is now tantamount to asking simply about the ultimate truth

of things or the fundamental teaching of Buddhism, for not only Daruma's coming to China but Buddha's appearance on earth—not to say anything about our own daily doings—all issue from one source, and when this source is understood, life reveals its secrets, and we are no more troubled with such annoying questions as the immortality of the soul, the existence of God, etc.

For this reason, "Daruma's coming from the West" has constantly been made a topic of *Zen mondō*, and the masters have given a bewildering variety of answers. Kōrin's<sup>4</sup> was, "A long sitting makes one fatigued." Does it refer to Daruma's having sat for nine long years at the Shao-lin monastery to get a competent successor in the person of Eka (Hui-ke)? "Decidedly not!" says Engo. For Kōrin is a thoroughly qualified Zen master: his understanding comes from actual experiences and not from intellectual elaborations. His Zen has nothing to do with subtleties of Buddhist dialectic, nor with historical anecdotes. He simply remarks, free from any references intellectual or otherwise, that a long sitting causes fatigue. The remark comes forth from the Infinite itself like a cloud drifting in the sky with no nails or screws to fix it anywhere.

We now touch the heart of Zen teaching. As has repeatedly been stated elsewhere, Zen is not to be understood along the ordinary logical or rational line of thought. It is an experience which reverses the course of consciousness, setting one's mental plane at an angle hitherto altogether unknown to him. It is therefore inevitable for the Zen masters to express themselves in a most untoward manner which completely defies a challenge of logic or commonsense. They have no idea of hiding themselves behind the veil of mysticism or obscurantism. They simply cannot help it. It is for us, on the other hand, to wheel ourselves about and try according to the masters' directions to see if there is not an experience behind all our thinkings, doings, and feelings. We cannot just laugh at them as a kind of Oriental lunatic. As to logic or dialectic, it is to be newly and suitably constructed to explain the new experience, and not the other way round. That is to say, we ought not to attempt to interpret Zen by the old standard which has been in use since the days of Greek philosophy and which is available only for a world of relativities. It was Hegel who tried to cope with the intellectual difficulties by a new method of reason-

<sup>4</sup> Or, J., Kyōrin Chōon 香林澄遠 C., Hsiang-lin Ch'eng-yüan, 10th century.

ing known as dialectics, and ever since the philosophers have been exerting themselves to improve on the Hegelian logic or to remedy whatever defects in it so that Reality can be more satisfactorily explained away.

All reasoning is based on experience, for reasoning is the human effort to understand experience. Everywhere experience comes first and reasoning follows. When reasoning is not satisfactory, that is, when it fails to explain experience, it is not the latter but the former that has somehow to adjust itself to the situation by remodelling or reconstruction. Zen so far has been presented to us as experience with its own technique and phraseology. Its masters are not qualified to analyze their experiences so that they can demonstrate them constructively and adequately enough for the more intellectually equipped minds. However, they have bequeathed to us a most wonderful wealth of literature inexhaustibly rich in meaning and unfathomably deep in wisdom. It is up to us, therefore, to study Zen in all sincerity according to the directions, however enigmatic and, even occasionally, highly fantastic they may appear at first sight, if we really wish to enrich the contents of our consciousness and invent a new method of reasoning whereby they are intellectually grasped. Indeed, the time will surely come one day to every seriously-minded truth-seeker to make up a thoroughly balanced sheet of spiritual and intellectual accounts, which means reviewing, overhauling, and if necessary entirely reconstructing their experiences. Then the desire may be awakened in their hearts to examine the claims of Zen Buddhism. They will then make up their minds to see if they cannot like the old masters utter a word with the mouth shut, with lips tightly closed, with the air passage blocked up.

Let us now see what comments Engo and Setchō have for the three statements made in answer to Hyakujō's challenge. It is naturally to be expected that the comments are not at all explanatory, nor do they attempt to give any rational clue to the understanding of the utterances by the three disciples. They may sometimes appear as if Engo were just making playful remarks about them. But the truth is that the Zen masters, whose eyes are fixed on the transcendental plane of thought as it were, could not speak in terms ordinarily used by us. To us therefore they appear to be abnormally mystical and talking in ciphers. This is not intentional on their parts; being specialists, like professional philosophers, scientist, or medical students, they are apt to make free



use of technical terms which are understood among professionals of the same ilk only. It is only when we are able to stand on the same platform where they do and share their experiences that we begin to enter into their lives.

Engo gives this remark about Hyakujō's statement, "I don't mind speaking to you about it, but I am afraid of losing my descendants": "Hyakujō is all right as far as he goes but his own pot<sup>5</sup> has already been carried away by Isan . . ." Those who are only used to our commonsense view of things, taking words in this superficial lifeless sense, may say this: When the mouth is closed up, no utterances are possible. But he who knows how to face about is able to turn the course of the current and walk quietly out of the maze contrived by the master. He is unhurt and fully alive, and without an instant's hesitation demands back of the master: "Please, sir, you say a word yourself." Hyakujō reads his disciple's mind perfectly well and concludes: "I won't mind telling you about it, but I am afraid of losing my descendants."

Setchō's poetical comment is:

"Please Master you say a word":

[The remark inspires a terror like] the horned  
tiger raising his head out of his lurking-hole.  
The spring has departed from the ten fairy isles and  
the flowers are all withered,  
Only the coral forests vie in splendour with the  
sun brilliantly shining.

Engo comments on Gohō's saying: "O Master, you too should close up your mouth!" While Isan consolidates a kingdom permitting no trespassers, Gohō rends in twain a concurrence of streams even before one has time for deliberation. While Isan is like a vast sheet of water in leisurely motion, Gohō stands like a sharply defined precipice forbidding anyone to approach. The latter unflinchingly enters the lists and carries off the enemy's flag. He is too high, too all-sweeping, hence Hyakujō remarks: "In the wilderness deserted by all, it is difficult to descry one living being. I shall have to look for you with my eyes well shaded."

Setchō's poetical comment runs in the same vein:

<sup>5</sup> 罌子, i.e., an indispensable item in one's daily life. Eds.

O Master, you too should close up your mouth!  
 He is like an audacious tactician  
     commanding a well-disposed army,  
 And makes one think of the ancient General Li,  
 Whose arrow unmistakably hit a solitary hawk  
     vanishing across the sky.

The third contestant Ungan does not fare so well with Engo or with Setchō; he is criticized for still being in a halfway house between village and town; he has not yet reached the goal, something is still wanting in him. His answer is not yet thoroughly liberated from the shackles of rationalism. He finds himself badly entangled among briars and brambles. Engo gives one instance showing how immature yet his understanding of Zen was. Ungan stayed with Hyakujō for twenty years as his attendant. Later he went with Dogō to Yakusan. The latter asked, "While with Hyakujō, what have you been doing?" Answered Ungan, "Trying to solve the question of birth-and-death, Sir." "Have you succeeded in solving it?" "There is no birth-and-death, Sir," was Ungan's triumphant conclusion. But Yakusan declared, "After twenty years' study with Hyakujō, you are not yet quite free from the taint (*vāsanā*) [which has sullied you] since beginningless time." The scale from Ungan's eye was not entirely removed until he came back to Yakusan again after seeing Nansen. No wonder that Ungan's reply to Hyakujō as here cited was not at all favourably received by Hyakujō, whose judgement was "I lose my descendants." As long as Ungan's understanding did not go further than the intellectualism which is glaringly manifest in his counter-questioning, "Are you still in possession of those things?" he is not a fully qualified Zen master. Hence Setchō's comment:

O Master, are you still in possession of those things?  
 The golden-haired lion knows not how to make ready  
     for a spring.  
 Two by two, three by three—they all walk on the  
     old highway,  
 And at the foot of the Daiyū the master vainly snaps  
     his fingers.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> A kindly warning is wasted.

As Zen does not appeal to reasoning but to experience, it resorts more to poetic expressions as more appropriate to reveal its truth. Reason always tends to be detached from personality; indeed reason has its value because of its being impersonal and above concrete particularity. Zen is rooted in personal experience and expresses itself in terms of character, attitude, or personal psychology. See how characteristically differently those three disciples of Hyakujō react to the master's challenge: What word would you utter with your mouth closed?<sup>7</sup>

Isan's response is broad and expanding like the ocean, Gohō's is steep and sharp and cuts in twain anything it touches, while Ungan's is not quite free from intellectualism and is thus sticky, clinging, and does not cut well through. Ungan reasons, trying by this to get the better of Hyakujō. The master makes reference to the throat and lips as if they are realities and demands people to speak with them all thoroughly closed up, but are there really such things as throat, lips, or the body itself? Are they not one and all unrealities, this being the Mahayana teaching? Ungan's reasoning here runs along the same line as his answer to Yakusan when he declared, "No birth-and-death." From the point of view of Zen experience this utterance is tainted with conceptualism and, as the masters would say, "sticky."

It is thus to be noted that Zen scrupulously avoids being entangled in meshes of logical difficulties, to unravel which is the business of philosophy. We cannot blame Zen if it slips through them. Some may remark that as long as Zen is concerned with human affairs and uses the same language all of us use in our daily intercourse, it ought to meet squarely whatever dangers or pitfalls it may thereby create, and try to convince us with the same weapons and not turn away into a domain of "absurdities" or "impossibilities." The objection will hold good if Zen has no experiences of its own and professes not to walk off the logical beaten track. But Zen avowedly lies on the plane not shared by most people, or it may be better to say that Zen lives on two planes at the same time, the one of which is the plane shared universally by every one of us, while the other is the plane realized only in the self-consciousness of the Zen students. In fact, these two planes are one and the same. There is

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Suzuki's manuscript gives an alternative translation: What utterance would you make with your mouth closed? Eds.

no special plane belonging to Zen, only the latter one ordinarily escapes the cognition of the relativity-bound mind. Zen has broken through the one and discovered the other, but simultaneously and miraculously enough this "other" was no other than the first, the two were after all one, not indeed in the sense of the one being merged in the other, or in the sense of the two being united as one, but in the sense that the two are just one as they are. This is where Zen encounters the logical dilemma, for in logic the one must always remain one and cannot become something else at the same time and in the same place. A new system of logic will be needed to establish the claim of Zen, which overflows the brim of the cup of formal logic. Zen, however, is not at present ambitious enough to undertake this, but is content with presenting all its experiences, individual and historical, including the various forms of expression necessarily following or going along with them. And modern Zen wishes to do this in a way it considers most intelligible to modern minds. A vast mass of Zen literature lies still unexplored, at least it is not yet made accessible to Western people. As East and West are going to be united more and more closely in every possible way, the study of Zen cannot be ignored. Besides, the Western mind must help the East to construct a new system of thought based upon Zen experience.

In conclusion, let me quote another instance from the *Hekigansbū*, Case LXXV, the subject of which is concerned with "the sermons of Tathāgata."

Chōkei had once a talk with his brother-monk Hofuku on the sermon of the Tathāgata, in which he said, "We may pronounce the Arhats to be still in possession of the three poisonous passions, but we can never in any event refer to the Tathāgata as giving a sermon capable of being dualistically interpreted. I do not say that the Tathāgata never gave a sermon in his life, but that his sermon was never subject to a dual interpretation."

Asked Hofuku, "What then is the Tathāgata's sermon?"

"How can the deaf hear it?"

"Sure enough, you are down on the second level," Hofuku retorted.

"What then, Brother-monk, is the Tathāgata's sermon?" Chōkei now demanded of Hofuku.

"Have a cup of tea." This was Hofuku's interpretation of the Tathāgata's sermon.

In this *mondō*, Chōkei's "How can the deaf hear it?" is not so very unintelligible and illogical, although it may appear not quite appropriate and to the point as referring to the unequivocalness of the Tathāgata's words. But Hofuku's "Have a cup of tea" is altogether beyond the possibilities of commonsense interpretation. In the *Diamond Sutra* we have: "The Tathāgata is the one whose words are true, real, such as they are, undecieving, and free from duplicity." While Chōkei's announcement is far from being appurtenant to the definition here given, Hofuku's is, to say the least, unedifying. In what possible relationship can it stand to the unequivocalness of the Tathāgata's words?

As to the absolute sincerity of these masters, no room is left for doubt. Ever since the coming of Bodhidharma to China about 520, Zen Buddhism has engaged and is still engaging the attention of the best minds of the Far East, and those who are even superficially acquainted with its history will readily testify to its wonderful achievements in the culture of the Oriental peoples. Zen cannot be mere playing with words, just making clever witty remarks, or lightheartedly trifling with things which seriously concern our spiritual welfare. But what shall we make of Hofuku's suggestion to "have a cup of tea" in reference to the Tathāgata's morally most enhancing discourse which permits no equivocation, no slighting treatment? "Have a cup of tea" cannot then be a mere social, friendly, entertaining proposal made to a good neighbor. It must mean, indeed, something very much more than that; it must be understood in connection with the highest conception we can have in regard to Tathāgatahood; it must bear in it in some mysterious way the deepest significance attached to ultimate Reality. If this be the case, it would be incumbent on us to investigate the matter more intimately.

Jōshū's story of "Have a cup of tea" is a well-known one, and I have quoted it in full in one of my works on Zen. I reproduce it here for the benefit of those readers who have not read much in Zen.

A newly arrived monk was asked by Jōshū, "Have you ever been here before?" The monk answered, "No, Master." Thereupon the master said, "Have a cup of tea."

When another monk came to Jōshū, he asked him, "Have you ever been here before?" "Yes, Master." Thereupon the master told him to have a cup of tea.

Now entered the elder monk who looked after the monastery and said to

Jōshū, "How is it, O Master, that you tell the monks to have a cup of tea regardless of their former experience here with you?" The master now called out, "O my Elder Monk!" The latter responded, "Yes, Master." Thereupon, Jōshū said, "Have a cup of tea."

This tea-incident did not end with Jōshū and his monks, for it was taken up by another master called Bokujū. When a monk came to Bokujū, the latter asked as usual, "Whence do you come?"

"I come from Hopei."

"Jōshū the old master lives there. Have you ever come across his path?"

"Yes, that is just where I come from this time."

"How does he teach his pupils in Zen?"

The monk told Bokujū all about the "Have a cup of tea" incident.

"Is that so?" said the master, "but how do you understand it?"

Answered the monk, "Oh! that is no more than a timely remark on the part of Jōshū."

"What a pity! You don't realize that you have been baptised with a dipperful of most filthy water!" The master then struck him.

Bokujū now turned toward the young attendant and asked, "What do you understand of it?"

The young monk made a profound bow to the master, who struck him, too.

Later, the first monk visited the younger one and asked, "What did the Master mean by striking you?" Returned the latter, "If not for the Master, I should not be struck."

To cite another example on tea. When Gi of Junei came to Bashō, the latter asked, "Have you been going about seeing sights? or are you trying to study Buddhism? or are you come to pay respect to this old man?" The monk answered, "Please question me on something else." Whereupon the master said, "Have a cup of tea," and this is said to have led the monk to the realization of the truth of Zen.

Most commonplace things and events, which we pass on without giving much thought, in fact, no thought to, are pregnant with spiritual meaning when they are inspected from within as it were, and a most trivial remark turns out to be an opportunity for divine revelation. No doubt, the Tathāgata whose words are never equivocal but always true appears in every cup of tea

one sips, and talks to us in his genuine way through all the conversation we exchange with one another.

I thought I would close this paper with “a cup of tea,” but I happened to think of the interview between Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti which makes up the subject-matter of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*. The interview centers around the impossibility of the Absolute being expressed in words, reminding us of the *mondō* which took place between Chōkei and Hofuku as cited above. According to Chōkei, the Tathāgata could not be heard by the deaf, which is quite natural in whatever sense the word “deaf” may be understood, while Hofuku, going one step ahead of his brother-monk, perceived the Tathāgata in a cup of tea. Now it is up to Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti, and also to Setchō, for Setchō refers to the interview in the *Hekigan* and comments on it in his usual style in verse. The following is quoted from the *Hekigan*, and in this, incidentally, we shall notice how Zen differs from the Indian way of presenting the same truth, and also where lies the uniqueness of the Zen method of handling the highest spiritual truth.

Vimalakīrti asked Mañjuśrī, “What is the truth of non-duality?”

“As I understand it, the Bodhisattvas look upon all things as being beyond the reach of words, expressions, indications, recognitions, and also beyond all forms of discussion—which is the way the Bodhisattvas enter the truth of non-duality.”

It was now Mañjuśrī’s turn to ask the same question of Vimalakīrti: “Each of us has in turn expressed his view according to his understanding as to what the truth of non-duality means, and we now request of you to give your view on the subject.”

According to the Sūtra, Vimalakīrti here keeps silence and does not utter a word, and Mañjuśrī praises him highly for his truly giving expression to the truth of non-duality. But in the *Hekigan* Vimalakīrti is not quoted and instead Setchō gives here his own comment, saying, “What did Vimalakīrti say?” He has another comment: “All the secrets are bared!” (“All is seen through and through!”)

Engo’s remarks in gist are: Mañjuśrī’s idea is to put away words by means of no-words (that is, by silence), whereas the other talkers attempt to put aside words by means of words. Thus Mañjuśrī clears away every possible

trace of wordy discussion or logical reasoning whereby to reveal the truth of absolute non-duality. He negates everything in order to reveal absolute affirmation. But it is like a sacred tortoise leaving the mark of its own tail: Mañjuśrī sweeps the ground clean, but the broom leaves its own streaks. Now he turns toward Vimalakīrti wishing to have his view of the truth. The latter remains silent. But a man truly alive to the truth of Zen will not sink into a pool of silence and death. He is very much more active and creative; he will not be, however, just running like a mad dog after a thrown clod. Therefore, Setchō does not recommend merely sitting quiet or remaining silent and motionless. He is quick as a flash of lightning and demands, "What did he say?" Or again declares he, "All the secrets are bared!" Setchō knows perfectly well where those two saintly philosophers are and what they are discussing all to the edification of those who follow them—and therefore he seems to be talking slightingly of Mañjuśrī as well as Vimalakīrti, but this is generally the way of the Zen masters. For the latter fully realize that the ultimate truth stands rigidly before us like an unscalable precipice beyond the reach of mere intellectual surveying or discursive calculation, and it can only be taken hold of by one throwing oneself over it or by making a leap into the dark bottomless abyss which lies at the edge of the cliff. Otherwise, Engo continues, one is like a goat whose horns are inextricably caught in the fence, there is no possibility for one to move freely, unhampered by words, i.e., by logical reasoning.

Setchō's remark, "What did Vimalakīrti say?" in place of Vimalakīrti's silence as recorded in the Sūtra is characteristically the Zen way of dealing with such a situation as created by Mañjuśrī's demand: "It is now your turn to tell us about the truth of non-duality." When thus asked, to Vimalakīrti, who was an Indian philosopher-saint, nothing was left but to remain silent. This was all he could do. Mañjuśrī was wordy enough to explain the truth of non-duality that was truly beyond words, that is, beyond logical treatment. And from the Indian point of view, this truth meant silence, as was once demonstrated in the days of the Upanishads. Vimalakīrti followed this example. He could not do anything else, and was naturally highly praised by Mañjuśrī. They, Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti, cooperated in revealing the truth of non-duality. Mere silence will never do from the human point of view, for the human mind demands something more than that, the truth is to be articulated if it belongs to humankind. Hence Mañjuśrī's discourse on the unexpres-



sibleness in words of the truth. But he had to contradict himself to do this by appealing to words, and was delivered from this dilemma by Vimalakīrti's silence. The one helped the other in order to give voice to what in its nature was altogether outside the ken of human speech. Now Setchō the Zen master steps in and asks: "What says Vimalakīrti?" In fact, Vimalakīrti did not utter a word, and Setchō's statement in the form of a query or demand is his way of presenting the truth of non-duality. Herein we observe how differently a Zen master handles problems of this nature. Setchō has here another remark, "All the secrets are bared!" However close-mouthed the old Indian philosopher-Bodhisattva may be, Setchō reads without much difficulty what is going on in his mind. All the three—Setchō, Mañjuśri, and Vimalakīrti—walk on the same highway, and their minds are in perfect communion, like three mirrors facing one another. But the Chinese Zen master wants to have his own methodology, which is to certain minds far more effective and full of vital significance than the Indian verbosity, circumlocution, or even taciturnity.

In Zen the plane of formal logic and relativity is replaced by that of mutual contradiction where a statement takes a form of negation-affirmation or of affirmation-negation, that is to say, where negations are affirmations and affirmations are negations. Therefore, in the silence of Vimalakīrti Setchō hears an avalanche of roaring utterance and also reads all the riddles securely concealed in its depths; whereas Engo is determined not to be outdone by Setchō and gives this comment on the latter:

"Not only in those days of Vimalakīrti but even now all the secrets stand before all beings fully bared. Setchō may say what he likes, but he is merely stretching his bow after the enemy is gone. Yes, Setchō is exerting his strength for the benefit of others, but he cannot help creating his own troubles. Do you think he has really all the secrets with him as he claims? Far from it! Don't be dreaming! Vimalakīrti's silence is full of pitfalls. Beware! The golden-haired lion challenges all our efforts to corner him!"

As Engo is not in the realm of formal logic, his negations and affirmations are translated into disapproving, sarcastic or ironical remarks, which should not be taken superficially just as they are. This being so, we finally come inevitably to Jōshū's "Have a cup of tea" if we are to be free from all forms of entanglements, intellectual, moral, or for that matter, spiritual. "Have a cup of tea" is then really the culmination of all philosophical or theological or dialectic-

tical discourses on the truth of non-duality, on the unequivocalness of the Tathāgata's words, or on the impossibility of uttering a word with one's mouth closed, which is tantamount to Vimalakīrti's roaring silence. When any one of these "cases" is understood, the rest will be solved by themselves.

What I intended to demonstrate in this paper was that this world of relative existences is not all there is for us to know; that although there is no outside world separately in existence, we are unable to understand this sense-world thoroughly unless we once go out of it; that the deeper understanding we thus have of it is best expressed after the manner of the Zen masters; that the Zen masters have found the most effective way, though probably a very difficult one indeed, to reach the goal of the Buddhist life; and finally that it now remains for us modern minds to construct a new system of thought whereby we can present the truth of Zen along the lines already prepared but not fully developed by Western thinkers.