

What is the "I"?

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WHAT is known as Zen these days is no other than the name of a school of Buddhism which originated in China about one thousand and three hundred years ago.

The Buddhist teachings of whatever school, Southern or Northern or Eastern, Theravada or Mahayana, Tibetan or Japanese, Indian or Chinese, or South-Asian, all center around the question, what is "I"? What is the true self, apart from the self we ordinarily understand by it, that is, what we may designate "psychological or empirical ego"?

To answer this most significant question Zen has developed its own methodology, which has proved quite effective in convincing its questioners of the truth of Buddhism. The method is known as *mondō*, "question and answer". It is the simplest form of dialogue, though dialogues generally develop into quite lengthy dimension, even to book-length, as we see in the Platonic dialogues.

The Zen *mondō*, however, is epigrammatic and may often seem cryptic or enigmatic. This is because Zen does not want to explain anything intellectually or conceptually, but rather strives to the fullest extent of human mentality to extract the answer from within the mind of the questioner himself, because the answer lies potentially as it were in the question itself. Only when a man asks, "what is the 'I'?" does the answer which is completely satisfactory to him come out of himself. Any answer that may come from the teacher is the teacher's own and not the questioner's. What is not one's own is something borrowed, and does not at all belong to the questioner. You cannot use it freely or creatively as you wish. You cannot go about with the plumage you get from another bird.

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However superficially beautiful, it carries the stamp declaring its origin, and you do not feel at home with it. We cannot go around, if we are at all sincere to ourselves, with such a mark on. Zen wants us all to be real and genuine and thus utterly free and uninhibited and creative.

A few historical examples will be found in the book called *The Transmission of the Lamp*, in which are recorded the Zen masters' answers given to such questions as "What is 'I'?" "What is the essence of Buddhist teaching?" "What is transmitted from one master to another as embodying the ultimate truth?" "What is the Mind?" "What is the meaning of birth and death?" "What constitutes Buddhahood?" The *mondō* which follow these questions illustrate in a practical way what Zen is and what Zen proposes to give us. The examples that follow are given in a more or less historical order.

Nangaku Ejō (d. 744) first went to E-an of Sūzan (582-709) in order to learn what it was that brought Bodhidharma to China from India. The idea was to find out what was the special message of Zen, which proposes to point directly to the Mind or Self which is at the basis of all Buddhist teachings. So his question started, "What was in the mind of Bodhidharma when he came from India to China?" E-an answered, "Why not ask about your own Mind?" The idea is: what is the use of asking about another's mind? The main thing is to know what your own mind is, for when you know it, you know everything. When the subject comes out, subject and object stand against each other. When this is understood, all comes along with it. Hence the master's counter-question.

Ejō asked, "What is my own Mind?" This is really a stupid question. What profits you to ask others about yourself? But in fact we are all groping for ourselves, like the man who dreamt he had no head of his own and spent all night searching for it outside himself. The master gave him a very subtle answer: "Look within, there is something inscrutable functioning." "What is that, Master?" The master gave him no further verbal tentatives. He simply opened his eyes and then closed them. Ejō thought he understood what the master meant by this.

Later when Ejō went to Enō to get further enlightened on the matter, Enō asked first, "Where do you come from?" "I come from Sūzan." Enō's counter-question followed immediately: "Who is it that thus comes here?"

It is said that it took Ejō eight years to answer this question satisfactorily for

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himself. His answer was, "If it is declared to be a something, one misses it altogether." Enō asked further, "Does it require any specific discipline?" "As to disciplining, we cannot say it unnecessary, but as to its being defined (when not disciplined) I say it remains absolutely free." This means that the something inscrutable, absolutely beyond any form of verbal description or conceptual discrimination, which remains always pure and free, unconditioned by anything, is the Zen object of discipline. To see it in its original state of suchness, of being-so-ness, is what the Zen masters strive for. In fact we all have it but, since awaking from the "innocence" of our primary naivety, we strangely feel that we have lost it altogether. We somehow fail to recognize it, having buried it deep in the unconscious.

Now that Ejō has come to the realization of this fact, he fearlessly asserts that the thing buried in the unconscious is absolutely free from contamination of any sort. Enō confirms it and tells Ejō to guard himself well against committing the fault of seeking it outside himself.

I have to caution the reader in this connection not to fall into a grave error, which is to take this "something inscrutable" for a concrete entity that lies secretly and securely hidden deep down in the mind.

It is in the nature of the intellect to butt in when statements like the above are made and criticize them as absurd and irrational and impossible. But we must know that the intellect has its limitations and that things or facts belonging to our innermost experiences are altogether beyond its domain. The intellect wants to see everything physical or psychological analysed, determined, and defined so that it can place its fingers right on things thus defined and pick them up for demonstration. But it utterly fails when it tries to follow this way of disposing experiences taking place in our inmost. "What is it that thus comes here?" To answer this question to the full satisfaction of the questioner whose insight has penetrated to the deepest recess of Being, one must shed all the superficialities that have been piled up on one's Mind. The answer coming out of the depths of Being or Self or Mind inevitably lacks logical precision because this is where logic must throw down its probing instrument and confess its inability to go any further. Ejō's answer "When it is declared to be a something it never hits the mark," is negative and can mean many things. But from the point of view of one who has gone through the same experiences, it would be known at once that the answer is genuine and hits the mark. The experience

permits many other ways of answering the question, "What is it that thus comes here?" But one who knows recognizes at once the right one from the wrong or the spurious. A "Self" knows another "Self" with no difficulty.

When Daishu Ekai came to Baso Doichi (709-788), Baso asked, "Where do you come from?" This is one of the most usual questions a master could ask a newcomer. The question is as ordinary a form of salutation as "How do you do?" or "How are you?" but it is also a great metaphysical question. When one knows "whence" one knows also "whither" and thus everything about one's Self, and there is no need of knowing anything further. The pilgrim's progress comes to an end, the objective is attained, and "the mind is pacified". Generally, however, the newcomer to the Zen monastery gives a worldly answer on the plane of relativity, that is, from the geographical standpoint and would say, "From London" or "From New York", or anywhere on the globe. In a way this answer is all right, most straight-forwardly given. But I would not touch on this point here.

Daishu answered in the ordinary worldly way, "I come from the Daiun-ji Temple in the district of Esshū." Baso followed, "What are you here for?" "I wish to take hold of the Buddha-Dharma."¹

Baso answered, "[How stupid you are!] You leave your own precious treasure behind and go around asking for things not belonging to you. What profits you—all this! I have here not a thing I can give. What Buddha-Dharma is it then that you are after?"

Daishu then made a profound bow and asked, "Pray, O Master, what is my precious treasure?" Baso said, "It is no other than what makes you ask this question this very moment. Everything is stored in this precious treasure-house of yours. It is there at your disposal, you can use it as you wish, nothing

¹ "The Buddha-Dharma" or simply "the Dharma" means the ultimate reality, the absolute truth, the Self pure and simple, the Person, the Godhead, the One Mind, Suchness, Emptiness, Being (*sat*), the Pure Reason (*prajñā*), the Nature, the Uncreated, etc. It is variously designated in Buddhism. Briefly, it is the most primary thing and at the same time the last real thing which the human mind can grasp "immediately" "directly" "from within" and "totalistically". And when the experience takes place, a man feels at last at home with himself as well as with the whole world, and asks no more questions because he is the Life.

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is wanting. You are the master of everything. Why do you run away from yourself and seek for things outside?"

This remark at once opened up Daishu's mind to its primary state which is altogether beyond the reach of mere intellection. He was overjoyed and expressed his deepest gratitude to the master. He stayed six years with Baso until he had to go back to his native province.

One of the sermons Daishu Ekai later gave runs thus:

"You are fortunate that you are all men of no-business [that is, you have from the very first nothing to worry yourselves about]. Just because you are unnecessarily afraid of death, you run about and put your own cangues around your own necks, imprisoning yourselves. What does it profit you? Everyday you tire yourselves out by exerting your minds and bodies fortuitously and claim that you are being disciplined hard in Zen in order to understand the Buddha-Dharma. All this is much ado for nothing. As long as you keep on pursuing objects of the senses, there will be no time for you to rest.

"Since being told by the master in the West of the River that I am in full possession of all the precious treasure belonging to me, ready for my use at any moment, and that there is no need for me to go anywhere outside myself, I began to feel at once restful in mind. I am now using my own treasure as I will and how refreshingly delighted I am!

"There is no Dharma that is to be apprehended, there is no Dharma that is to be abandoned, there is no Dharma that goes through the process of birth and death, there is no Dharma that undergoes the phases of coming and going. [The Mind] pervades all over the world filling the ten quarters, and there is not a particle of dust that is not included in my treasure. Only let us carefully contemplate our own Mind, which being one in substance manifests itself in a triple mode without being urged by any outside agency. The manifestations are present all the time before us, there is no room here for doubt. Therefore, be assured of the fact and you need not deliberate about it, nor need you search for it. The Mind is primarily pure.

"Thus we read in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* that all dharmas (i.e., all things) neither are born nor pass away. When your understanding rises to this stage, you are always in the presence of Buddhas. Again, we read in the *Vimalakirti Sutra* that seeing the substantiality of your person is like seeing Buddhas.

“When you are not affected by objects of the senses in your comprehension [of the Reality], when you are not pursuing appearances in your understanding [of the Truth], you will be naturally enjoying a life of no-business, [that is, a life of peace and freedom].

“Do not tire yourselves out by standing so long. I take leave of you now. Fare you well.”

A “life of” or a “man of no-business” or “one who has experienced the emptiness” or “a man of *satori* (that is, the enlightened, the Buddha)” —we come across such terms throughout Zen literature. And those who confront them for the first time often wonder what they actually mean. Especially the idea of emptiness staggers them, they are afraid of nihilism or the abstraction of the highest degree. But this “fear” or “anxiety” is an idle one, which is however the plague of modern men, making them go out of their minds, turning them into schizophrenic cases. Some say we all are nowadays sufferers of this form of mental malady.

But, really, what Zen teaches is not nihilism, nor its opposite, positivism or radicalism or virulent materialism. To understand Zen, what we call satori-experience is to be highly appreciated. Satori is enlightenment. It is, as I said before, seeing immediately into the reality or suchness of things. This suchness is no other than emptiness which is after all no-emptiness. The reality is beyond intellection and—what thus lies beyond the intellectualization—is emptiness. “Look into it profoundly,” Daishu would thus often tell us, for this reveals for us the transcendental field of suchness, of being-so-ness.

Satori is the “looking into” or “seeing into”, whereby the veil of finitude or relativity is penetrated thoroughly and we are ushered into a world where we have never yet been before. A disciple asks Daishu, “We are often told of the ultimate truth, but, pray, who is such a seer?” The master answers, “One who is endowed with the *prajñā*-eye [a transcendental vision] sees into all this.” *Prajñā* is a Sanskrit term, very extensively used by Buddhist philosophers. It is sometimes translated as “transcendental wisdom” but here I suggest “transcendental vision”. In the Chinese versions of the Sanskrit texts the original *prajñā* is frequently given in Chinese reading as *pan-jo*. It is evident that the Chinese scholars of these early days could not find an appropriate character for it, though we have generally *bui* or *chib-bui*. When they find it inadequate

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they even go as far as to combine the Sanskrit and the Chinese together as *pan-jo sbib chib-bui* 般若之智慧, thus showing that *prajñā* is an activity or a function the human mind exercises when it has to go beyond the ordinary domain of relative or logical analytical knowledge. *Prajñā* is not something specifically to be categorized as will, affect, or intellect; it is something absolutely fundamental and altogether undifferentiated, or better, altogether "unattainable", "ungraspable", "inscrutable".

The terminology we have inevitably to resort to in this case has nothing to do with the subject itself which is unattainable or ungraspable or incomprehensible. The subject is just as real as the stone or the mountain I see before me now, indeed, the reality of the unattainable is more real, more essential than any of the objects of our sense-intellect, because the entire system of galaxies may some day collapse but the unattainable remains for ever as such. All Buddhist teachings are built upon this rock of unattainability which they designate as suchness or emptiness or Mind (*bsin*) or Dharma (*fu*) or Essence (*bsing*). Satori is the term given to the experience we have when this unattainable is attained as such, as unattainable, ungraspable, and so on. Thus *satori* is very much talked about in Zen. It is *prajñā* in action.

The questioner goes on to ask Daishu the Master, "How do we then proceed to study the Mahayana?" (The Mahayana is the Buddhist teaching dealing extensively with the subject we have been discoursing about. The Mahayana in this case may be identified with Zen. The question amounts to this, "What is Zen?")

Daishu: When you have satori you have it; without satori, no understanding at all of Zen.

Disciple: How do we gain satori?

Daishu: Have a clear look inside.

Disciple: What does it look like?

Daishu: No resemblance at all to anything.

Disciple: Then all is ultimately emptiness?

Daishu: Emptiness has nothing to do with ultimacy.

Disciple: Is it then just "is"?

Daishu: It "is", but it has no tangible form.

Disciple: What about it when one has no "satori"?

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Daishu: You may have no satori yourself, but nobody hinders your having one.

The most difficult thing we as finite beings have to experience is that whenever a name is given to something we take this something to be in possession of a form, and as the result we make puppets of ourselves by means of the instrument we ourselves have created. We fear, we are anxious, and finally we all turn into schizophrenics. Not only as individuals but as members of a group-body, modern men are not normally minded. We are trembling before the symbolic phantoms of our own imagination.

The ancient masters were fastidious in this respect, though they did not appeal to the use of highly abstract concepts. A monk asked, "Is speech the Mind or not?" By this the monk meant that the Mind is no more, no less than a word, an empty concept. Daishu the Master answered "Speech is symbolic and not the Mind itself".

Monk: Outside the symbolic, what is the Mind?

Daishu: Outside the symbolic, there is no Mind.

Monk: If there is no Mind outside the symbolic, what can it be?

Daishu: Being formless, the Mind is neither separated from speech nor is it not separated from speech. The Mind remains always serene and acts autonomously without being controlled by any outside agency. Says the patriarch, "When it is understood that Mind is no Mind, one for the first time understands what is designated as Mind".

The Emperor, Shuku So of the T'ang, asked Chū the National Teacher:

Emperor: What is the Dharma you attained?

Teacher: Your Majesty, do you see a floating cloud in the sky?

Emperor: Yes, I see.

Teacher: Is it nailed to the sky? Or just hung there?

Emperor: What is the great Buddha endowed with all the marks of superman?

Chu the National Teacher stood up. He then said, "Do you understand?"

Emperor: No, Sir, I do not.

Teacher: Please be good enough to bring up that water pitcher over here.

Emperor: What is meant by the samadhi of absolute affirmation?

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Teacher: Your Majesty, walk over the head of Vairocana Buddha.

Emperor: What is the meaning of it?

Teacher: Commit no mistake of regarding yourself as the Dharma-Body of absolute purity.

The Emperor proceeded to ask some more questions, but the Teacher appeared not to pay any attention to him. Then the Emperor protested, "I am the supreme one governing this empire of the T'ang. Why do you refuse to pay me due respect?"

Teacher: Do you see the emptiness of the great Void (space)?

Emperor: Yes, I see.

Teacher: Does it face Your Majesty with its eyes down?

Shi, abbot-scholar of Kegon philosophy, asked Daishu: "Why do you not agree with the statement that the green bamboos are of the Dharmakaya and the luxuriantly blooming yellow-flowers are of *prajñā*?" This kind of pantheistic interpretation of Kegon philosophy is held by some Buddhist scholars even now. The idea is that if the Dharmakaya (Ultimate Being) pervades all over the world, everything partakes of it. So with *prajñā*. *Prajñā* is an epistemological term, we might say, but when it is understood psychologically it corresponds to the Mind. This being so, if all things have their origins in the Mind (a sort of Cittamātra philosophy), is it not true to declare all things to be of the Mind? This is the contention of the Kegon abbot-scholar, Shi.

Daishu: The Dharmakaya is formless whereas the green bamboos have form; *prajñā* is non-sentient whereas the yellow flowers are manifested. *Prajñā* and the Dharmakaya remain existent though the yellow flowers and green bamboos may vanish. So we have in the Sutra: The true Dharmakaya of Buddha is like the Void and manifests itself in form according to the varying conditions as the moon reflects itself in water. If the yellow flowers are of *prajñā*, *prajñā* is non-sentient; if the green bamboos are of the Dharmakaya the green bamboos must be able to function in accordance with the conditions. Do you understand, O Abbot?

Shi the Abbot: No, I fail to comprehend.

Daishu: [It all depends on whether or not a man has experienced what is known

as *kensbō*. *Kensbō* (見性), literally means "to see into the Nature", i.e. the ultimate Reality.] An enlightened man (*kensbō no bito*) may respond to the question either affirmatively or negatively. Whichever statement he makes is in the right. He acts according to which he makes his statement regardless of contradiction. In the case of the unenlightened man, when he makes an affirmative statement in regard to the green bamboos he is attached to it. So with the yellow flowers, he attaches himself to what he affirms. He knows neither the Dharmakaya nor *prajñā*, and therefore anything he can say about them is all wrong. The result is, he is caught in the meshes of vain argumentation.

Kensbō (in Japanese; *chien-hsing* in Chinese) is an important term much in use in Zen nowadays, especially in Japan. It requires a thorough understanding as far as its literal significance is concerned. When this is done, what Zen purports to accomplish will be clearly brought to light.

Ken (*chien*) is "to see", "to sight", "to open one's eye to", "to have a direct view of", etc. *Sbō* (*hsing*) is "nature", "essence", "that which makes a thing what it is", "the suchness of a thing". *Sbō* thus is often indiscriminately identified, psychologically, with Mind, and ontologically with Reality, or Being.

Kensbō thus is seeing into what makes man a man, his essence, what is behind the mind, supporting it, moving it, making it respond to the outside world. And this seeing is not analytically coming to the knowledge of the Mind, but to have a direct im-mediate view of it as when the eye perceives an object before it. But the most important thing here which we have to remember is that the seeing in the experience of *kensbō* is not dualistic or dichotomic, because there is no separation here between the object of sight and the seeing subject, because the seer is the seen and the seen is the seer, and there is a complete identity of the two. In fact, the notion of the dualistic interpretation of the experience is human origination. It is our logic or intellection which dichotomizes the *kensbō*, because we have been used to this way of talking about our ordinary experiences in the domain of sense and intellect. When, however, we come to the realm that lies beyond limited and finite experiences, or rather envelops and permeates them, we have to abandon everything we have hitherto considered most useful, most valuable, and most necessary. For as long as we are attached to it we can never come to the solution of the problems, which

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are not only most annoyingly upsetting to our intellection, but fundamentally threatening to our existence itself. Hence the Zen-men's appeal to an altogether novel experience, and the use of terms and expressions whose signification cannot be subsumed under logical categories.

It is for this reason that Zen is full of contradiction and irrationalities. To the Zen-man who has experienced *kenshō* or *satori*, right is wrong, wrong is right, true is false and vice versa. When this is interpreted as we generally do according to excluded middle, we must say that the realm of Zen is absolutely chaotic, and as the values we so prize in our ordinary life are utterly ignored, we cannot live in such a world. But we must remember that the Zen-man's eyes are fixed upon things "before the foundation of the world" or before God uttered his fiat "Let there be light". And we must never forget that this realm of transcendence is not one to be physically or literally separated from the one where we are living our everyday life. The greatest error we commit in this connection is that there are two worlds, one within the limits and the other beyond them. If the latter is separated from the one within the limits, it limits itself by this fact of separation and cannot be the one transcending them. The Zen-man's world is at once beyond the limit and within the limit. When this logical contradiction ceases to be so in our practical everyday life as we live it, we really and truly understand what Zen is.

We can talk of limits because there is something not limited, that is, beyond them and at the same time limiting itself within them. This something is thus really not something as we understand it on the level of ratiocination. It is therefore to be called "nothing" that is. It is a strange, irrational kind of nothing—nothing that is not a nothing. The seeing therefore in the experience of *kenshō* is not the ordinary kind of seeing. The latter takes place when we confront an object, and when there is no object, no seeing can take place. But in *kenshō*, *ken* is *shō* and *shō* is *ken*. Seeing is always there, no matter whether there is an object or not. The *shō* which transcends all limits is attained only when this kind of seeing is made possible. In this seeing there is thus no bifurcation of subject and object. As long as this bifurcation is maintained no *kenshō* is possible. Subject and object must be done away with, the limits or the between must be wiped away. Logicians may think that is impossible because they stay within the limits and imagine that when we go beyond we confront nothing, or, afraid of stepping out of the limits, they dearly hold onto the bet-

ween. To such people the experience of *kenshō* will never come. *Kenshō* is an experience, an event that actually comes upon one and not something to be argued about according to rules of dialectics. When you have it, you have it, no argument will undo it. It is something final.

The seeing in the experience of *kenshō* therefore is not to be classified under sense-categories; it is not seeing any object before the eye. *Kenshō* is the *shō*'s seeing itself. There is no dualism here. Daishu explains it in this way: "The Essence in itself is from the beginning pure and undefiled, it is serene and altogether empty, and in this body of absolute emptiness, the seeing takes place".

The questioner asks, "The body of absolute purity is in itself something unattainable, and could any kind of seeing take place here?" Answers Daishu, "It is like a brightly polished mirror; it has no image itself, but all kinds of image appear on it. Why? Because the mirror itself is no-minded. When your mind is free from taints, and there is no rising in it of any form of illusive thought, and all ideas based on the ego-consciousness are cleared off, the Mind will be naturally pure and undefiled. And because of its being pure and undefiled, there takes place the seeing as specified above. In the *Dharmapada* (Chinese version) we read, 'In the midst of Ultimate Emptiness there arises [the seeing] in the fashion of a flame, which characterises a good wise man!'"

Question: In the *Nirvana Sutra*, Chapter on "The Vajra Body", we come across such phrases as "Impossible to see", "Most clearly seen", "No knower", "Yet nothing unknown". What do they mean? [They are apparently related to the experience of seeing in *kenshō*.]

Daishu: "Impossible to see" means that the Essence in itself is formless and altogether impossible to grasp, and therefore that it is impossible to see. "It's seen but not graspable" and because of it "the seeing is in the highest degree of clarity"—this means that the Essence is absolutely tranquil and serene, showing no signs of becoming and yet always going along with the current of worldly events, though the current is unable to carry it away. Calm yet freely moving—this is seeing in the highest degree of clarity. "No knower" means that because of its being formless the Essence-in-itself is not at all discriminating. And "Yet nothing unknown" means that the Essence-in-itself, in which there is no discriminating agency residing, functions in every

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possible mode and is able to discriminate everything; there is nothing it does not know. This is the meaning of "Nothing unknown". The "Gatha on *Prajñā*" reads: *Prajñā* is not the knower, and yet there is no event it does not know. *Prajñā* is not the seer, and yet there is no event it does not see.

That is to say, *prajñā* does not discriminate between "to be" and "not to be", it is above relative knowledge. Just because of this "ignorance" it knows everything, meaning that *prajñā*'s knowledge is not to be subsumed under logic categories. The knowledge ascribable to *prajñā* is absolute, an omniscience that underlies all our knowledge of particulars. The knowledge of this kind is the seeing in the experience of *kenshō*.

Daishu now quotes from the *Surangama Sutra*: "To recognize knowing in the [experience of] the knowing-seeing is the origin of ignorance (*avidyā*); when there is no seeing in it, it is nirvāna—which is called emancipation (*mokṣa*)."

This may require a few words of explanation. In satori there is the experience of seeing corresponding somewhat to a sense-perception, that is, to the extent that both are im-mediate with nothing between the seer and the seen. But in the case of a sense-perception the seer is conscious of the object, there is the knowledge of "I" and "not-I". In the satori kind of seeing there is no such knowing, nor is there any seeing that generally takes place in the domain of our ordinary life. Because in the satori seeing there is neither subject nor object, it is a nothing seeing itself as such.

Question: When we confront objects of all kinds we see them; when we have nothing before us, can that be called seeing?

Daishu: Yes.

Question: The confronting is the seeing. How can we say "we see" when there is nothing before us?

Daishu: Our seeing takes place regardless of whether we confront something or nothing. Why? Because *kenshō* is constant in its nature. The seeing is not a momentary phenomenon. The objects may come and go, but the seeing nature of *kenshō* is not subject to such changes. So with the rest of the sense-activities.

Question: When the *kenshō* seeing takes place does it see anything?

Daishu: No, there is no-thing in the seeing.

If there is a "no-thing" confronting the seeing experience of *kenshō*, this will

be a momentary psychological event. In the *kenshō* there is not even a "no-thing". This can be said of "hearing" too. The Essence-in-itself (*sbō*) hears without hearing just as it goes without seeing. It is in this sense that when the Zen-man talks of the Mind or no-mind or Emptiness or Suchness.

When Tokusan was challenged by the old lady of the tea house by the roadside where he stopped to have refreshments (*tien-bsin*, literally "punctuating the mind"), he failed to answer her and had to go without anything at her house. The famous challenge was: "According to the Sutra, the past mind is unattainable, the future mind is unattainable, and the present mind is unattainable." Which mind do you wish to 'punctuate' here?" Thus Daishu continues:

"Let the mind reside in emptiness but do not let it have the thought of residing in emptiness. If it does, it attaches itself to the thought and it is no more 'empty' or 'pure'.

"If you wish to attain to this state of mind where it is free from all forms of attachment, even to the thought of emptiness, that is, if you wish to keep the mind in the state of no-residence, you should practise the right meditation, keep the mind free from thoughts, and not let it dwell on any definite object, good or evil. Let not things of the past possess your mind. The past is past, do not pursue it, and the past mind ceases by itself. This is said to be cutting off all past affairs. The things of the future are not yet here. Have no anticipation of whatever nature for them, and the future mind ceases by itself and you are shut out from affairs of the future. As to the present, it is already here, and you are it, have no attachments whatever. When you have no attachment you are free from hate and love. And the present mind ceases by itself, and affairs of the present are non-existent.

"When thus the past, future and present are not taken hold of, they are non-existent. [You are in the absolute present. You are the Here-Now.]

"When the mind rises and passes away, do not follow it up, and no thought will bind you. The same with the abiding mind, do not cherish the thought of abiding. When the mind is not following it, it is in the state of no-abiding. When there is the self-knowing in the highest stage of clarity, the mind abides; when it is abiding, it just abides, is just at rest, not at all cognizant of where it is abiding or where it is not abiding. When one realizes this state of mind which is thus altogether free from any forms of attachment, it is said that one

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sees one's own mind to the highest degree of clarity. It is also said that the seeing experience of *kenshō* has here reached the highest point of clarity.”

All is possible when the Essence-in-itself is liberated from all attachments, incumbrances, delusive thought and affects and abides in suchness or emptiness or no-mind-ness. In *kenshō* the seeing is the Essence-in-itself and the Essence-in-itself is the seeing. They are not two separate events. To understand all this, the Zen-man tells you that you are once to go through the experience and be a man of *kenshō*. When you have it all, you say “yes” or “no” according to the situation you are in, and you are always in the right. Then you may see the green bamboos or the yellow flowers and assert that they are yellow or green, or neither green nor yellow, and you will not be contradicting your experience.

Question: Is *prajñā* large?

Daishu: Yes, it is.

Question: How large?

Daishu: It's of infinite magnitude.

Question: Is *prajñā* small?

Daishu: Yes, it is.

Question: How small?

Daishu: It is invisible.

Question: Which is right? Large or small?

Daishu: Is there anything wrong in my statements?

This kind of *mondō* is characteristic of Zen. Daishu is great in this kind of repartee and he insists that it can never be understood by those who have not experienced satori or *kenshō* (seeing the Essence-in-itself). In his *mondō* with the scholar of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, Daishu is more explicatory and tries to make his point clear for the questioner.