ZEN: ITS MEANING FOR MODERN CIVILIZATION

SHIN'ICHI HISAMATSU

1. Zen and the Buddhist Sutras

As to the question, "What is Zen?" if one is to be brief, it may perhaps suffice to utter just one word or, indeed, to utter no word at all. If, however, one is to elaborate, it may be said that no amount of elaboration can ever prove to be exhaustive. The intention here, however, is to be as simple and as plain as possible.

In the common view, Zen is a school of Buddhism which was founded by Bodhidharma in the sixth century in China. Speaking from the side of Zen, however, Zen is not one particular school within Buddhism; it is, rather, the root-source of Buddhism. There is a good reason for this.

Each of the various schools of Buddhism has a basic expression to characterize its fundamental teaching. Zen's basic expression, dating from the early period of Zen's introduction into China and attributed to Bodhidharma, is:

> Not relying on words or letters,
> An independent Self-transmitting apart from any teaching;
> Directly pointing to man's Mind,
> Awakening his (Original-) Nature, thereby actualizing his Buddhahood.

This expression attempted at once to do several things: to criticize and to break through radically the kind of Buddhism prevalent in China at the time of the rise of Zen; to express verbally the true nature of Buddhism; to return to the true source of Buddhism and to produce anew, therefrom, a genuine Buddhist creation.

This mode of creative criticism raised by Zen Buddhism fifteen centuries ago may provide a suggestive precedent not only for

present-day Buddhism but also for present-day religion in general. For it is an authentic and appropriate way to revive and make fully alive again religions which have succumbed to formalization and conventionalization.

As regards the first part of Zen's basic expression, "Not relying on words," this is not to be taken simply literally. "Not relying on words" does not mean the complete negation (as ordinarily understood) of words. Rather, it is to be taken to mean "prior to words" in the sense of not depending on words, not being bound or caught by words. It must be explained that as here used the term "words" refers to the Buddhist sutras, which are all expressed in words. Ordinarily, the Buddhist sutras are treated as records of the oral expositions of Śākyamuni and are considered to be the source of and the authority for Buddhism. Today, however, modern research into the historical actualities of the compilation of the scriptures has made clear that what is spoken of as the sutras are not all the direct discourses of Śākyamuni, but also include sutras which were composed many centuries after Śākyamuni. Until this realization, however, the sutras were generally regarded by Buddhists as the ultimate foundation and authority of Buddhism. When each of the various schools of Buddhism was about to be founded, the founder always sought in the sutras the final authority for the truth to be embodied in the new Buddhist form. In the traditional Buddhist view, the final norm of truth was contained in the sutras; that which had no basis in the sutras could not be called truth.

Accordingly, each Buddhist school has its own particular sutra (or sutras) as the ultimate authorization of its teaching. For example, the *Avataṁsaka* School has for its authoritative scripture the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra*;[1] the T'ien-t'ai and the Nichiren Schools, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*;[2] and the Pure Land School, the "three Pure Land Sutras." To prove that they are Buddhist and that their teaching is true, the various schools have recourse to their authoritative scriptures. In this regard, the same is true of Christi-

[1] 華厳経. J. *Kegon-gyō*.
[2] 法華経. J. *Hoke-kyō*.

anity. For Christianity, the Bible is the exact counterpart of the Buddhist sutras; it constitutes for Christianity the final criterion of truth and is itself absolute truth.

Zen, however, has no such authoritative sutra upon which it is based. This does not mean that it arbitrarily ignores the sutras, but rather that it dares to be independent of the sutras. Zen severely condemns that Buddhist sutra-dogmatism or sutra-magic which makes the sutras the final norm of truth. Zen rather casts off such dogmatism and magic and seeks to return to the source of the sutras —that is, to that which is "prior to" the sutras. In this, Bodhidharma's response of "No-Merit!"[1] was a great criticism of the Buddhism of his time; indeed, it was revolutionary.

When I say here "prior to" the sutras, this "prior to" is liable to be taken temporally or historically. But, of course, I do not mean historically "prior to." I mean, rather, the source which is "prior to" the sutra expressions. In Zen, this source is expressed by the term "Mind," which is, however, radically different from what we today commonly call mind. It is, for Zen, this "Mind" which is the root-source of the sutras, and, thus "prior to" the sutras.

It is this Mind, the "Mind" as the source of the scriptures, which is meant in the previously mentioned, "Directly pointing to man's Mind, Awakening his (Original-) Nature and thereby actualizing his Buddhahood." By the word Nature in "Awakening his (Original-) Nature" is meant man's original nature, that is, his true way of being. This is generally called, in Buddhism, Buddha-Nature or Mind-Nature. In Zen, however, it is called Self-Nature or "one's Original-Face," expressions which are far more intimate to us humans. Self-Nature is our own original human nature, which original nature is no other than "man's Mind." For Zen, it is precisely this original nature of man which is the Buddha-Nature; it is precisely "man's Mind" which is the "Buddha-Mind." Apart from this "Mind of man," there is nothing which is truly to be called "Buddha." Again, Buddha is not to be sought outside of this "Mind."

[1] See p. 18ff.

Consequently, "Awakening his (Original-) Nature" means, finally, that we human beings "see" that original nature of man himself. This does not mean "objectively" to see, to contemplate, to cognize, nor, of course, to believe in the nature of some Buddha which is wholly other to man. That is, though we say "to see one's original nature," this does not mean to see with the eyes. Nor does it mean to contemplate, as in the case of "contemplating the dharma." As Ta-chu[1] (a Chinese Zen master of the 9th century) said, "the Awakening or Seeing is itself the (Original-) Nature." This "seeing" is man's awakening to his own original nature. In Zen, apart from the one who has awakened to his original nature, there is no Buddha to be called Buddha. It is the awakening of man's original nature which is the actualization or attainment of Buddhahood; hence, "Awakening his Original-Nature, thereby actualizing his Buddhahood."

As is well known, the term "Buddha" means, in Sanskrit, "the Awakened-One." This "Awakening" means, again, man's awakening to his own original nature, that is, to his Buddha-Nature. Śākyamuni is called "Buddha" only because of his awakening to this original nature.

Returning to the matter of the Buddhist sutras, there are written within those sutras many things which are no longer acceptable today, however much one may try to make them acceptable by forced interpretations. Especially today when the influence of Western religion, philosophy, and science has entered into Buddhist countries, if one is taken up with the words of the sutras, then one is caught and bound by words expounded in the past; this, then, becomes an obstacle to an understanding of the original meaning and, consequently, it becomes impossible to give that original meaning a new and free contemporary expression. Rather than rely on what has been expressed in the past, that is, rather than rely on the sutras, it is far better to enter directly into the source "prior to" what is expressed, that is, into what is "before" the sutras. Then, equipped with the

[1] 大珠. J., Daiju (-831)

living "eye with which to read the sutras," one can then interpret them freely and, according to the particular situation or occasion, give a new and truly spontaneous expression of their "source." So it is said, in Kumārajīva's translation of the *Mahāprajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, "To use words to expound the dharma which is without words."

Zen, thus, does not rely on the sutras but rather makes its main concern the direct entering into the Mind which is "prior to" the sutras. To repeat, Zen does not stand on any authoritative sutras. This, after all, is what is meant by the phrase "apart from the teaching" in the expression, "An independent Self-transmitting apart from any teaching." This phrase, "apart from the teaching," stands in contrast to "standing within the teaching." "Teaching" here means, again, that teaching which has been established with the written sutras as its basis. In contrast to that Buddhism which relies on the sutras and is therefore said to "stand within the teaching," Zen, not relying on the sutras but entering directly into the Mind which is the source of sutras, is said to be "apart from or outside the teaching." "Apart from or outside the teaching" thus does not mean apart from or outside Buddhism; rather, it means the inner source of that which is "within the teaching." In other words, considered from the side of the sutra-expressions, Zen is "apart from" or "outside"; considered from the source of what is expressed in the sutras, Zen is rather even more "inner" than what is ordinarily called "within or inside the teaching." Thus, in contrast to that which is ordinarily considered to be "within the teaching," that which is within this ordinary "within" therefore becomes "apart from or outside the teaching." If we think in terms of base or foundation, it may therefore be said that Zen's base or foundation is that root-source which is even more "inner" than the sutras.

2. *The Zen Understanding of Buddha*

In fact, however, Zen does not only not rely on the sutras; it does not rely on anything. In an expression of Lin-chi, a famous

Chinese Zen master of the 9th century, Zen is "Self-sustaining In-dependence." This derives from the basic nature of "Mind" itself. If there were "that which relies" and "that which is relied upon," or, again, if it were just a matter of not relying on the sutras, then it would not be ultimately not relying on anything. In Zen, however, the true authority is that Self which is itself the authority and does not rely on anything. Zen's authority consists in the non-duality of "that which relies" and "that which is relied upon." True authority is where there is no distinction between that which relies and that which is relied upon. Accordingly, since there is no distinction between that which relies and that which is relied upon, there is, in fact, no relying. Thus, true-relying is "not-relying." It is as Huang-po[1] has said: "During the twelve divisions of the day, not relying on anything."

In this respect, Zen greatly differs from Christianity and even from the Shin or Jōdo Shin school of Buddhism. Christianity and the Shin school are religions which rely absolutely either on God or on Amida Buddha. In these religions, that which relies is always that which relies, and that which is relied upon is always that which is relied upon. Their duality is never removed. It is for this reason that Christianity is called a religion of absolute dependence and the Shin school a religion of the absolute "other power." Consequently, the understanding of man in these religions is that of a being absolutely dependent upon and supported by God (in Christianity) or Amida (in the Shin school). This is not the Zen view of man Lin-chi[2] has described to be "Self-sustaining and In-dependent." Lin-chi has further characterized such a man as the "In-dependent Man of bodhi" and also as the "True-man." He has, moreover, asserted that other than such a man there is no Buddha to be properly so called. And in a very severe statement he has declared:

"Encountering a Buddha, killing the Buddha; encountering a Patriarch, killing the Patriarch; encountering an Arhat, killing the Arhat; en-

[1] 黃檗. J., Ōbaku (–850).
[2] 臨濟. J., Rinzai (–867).

countering mother or father, killing mother or father; encountering a relative, killing the relative: only thus does one attain liberation and disentanglement from all things, thereby becoming completely unfettered and free."

In a later period, Wu-mên[1] similarly pronounced, at the beginning of his "*Gateless Gate*"[2]:

"Encountering a Buddha, killing the Buddha; encountering a Patriarch, killing the Patriarch: therein does one attain the Great-Freedom at the brink of life-and-death and actualize the *samādhi* of sportive-play in the midst of the four modes of birth in the six realms of existence."

These expressions emphasize that the Zen true-man is emancipated even from Buddhas and Patriarchs; he is a man of absolute non-dependence—of absolute in-dependence, beyond the Buddhas and the Patriarchs.

In the *Discourse on the Direct-Lineage of the Dharma*,[3] attributed to Bodhidharma, we read:

"Topsy-turvy beings do not know that the Self-Buddha is the True-Buddha. They spend the whole day in running to and fro, searching outwardly, contemplating Buddhas, honoring Patriarchs, and looking for the Buddha somewhere outside of themselves. They are misdirected. Just know the Self-Mind! Outside of this Mind there is no other Buddha."

The Sixth Patriarch of Zen, Hui-nêng,[4] also says, in his *Dharma-Treasure-Platform Sutra*[5]:

"The Self-Buddha is the True-Buddha. Your Self-Mind is the Buddha."

Ma-tsu[6] likewise declares:

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[1] 無門. J., Mumon. (1185–1260).
[2] 無門關. C. *Wu-mên-kuan.* J. *Mumon-kan.*
[3] 血脈論. C. *Hsüeh-mo-lun.* J. *Kechimyaku-ron.*
[4] 慧能. J., Enō (638–713).
[5] 法寶壇經. C. [*Lin-tsu-ta-shih-*]*fa-pao-t'an-ching.* J. *Hōbōdan-kyō.*
[6] 馬祖. J., Baso (707–786).

"Outside of the Mind, no other Buddha;
Outside of the Buddha, no other Mind."

Huang-po, in his *The Pivotal Point of Mind-to-Mind Transmission*,[1] asserts:

"Your Mind is the Buddha; the Buddha is this Mind.
Mind and Buddha are not separate or different."

Yung-chia,[2] in his *Song of Actualizing Bodhi*,[3] says:

"In clearly seeing, there is not one single thing;
There is neither man nor Buddha."

To talk in this way may appear at first glance to be negating Buddha and to be extremely anti-religious. From the standpoint of Zen, however, the self which is still dependent on Buddha or dharma is not the truly emancipated, free, self-supporting, independent Self.

The fundamental aim of Buddhism is to attain freedom from every bondage arising from the dualities of life-and-death, right-and-wrong, good-and-evil, etc. This is the meaning of ultimate emancipation as understood in Buddhism. Thoroughgoing emancipation is thus not being bound by anything, not depending on anything, not "having" anything—that is, being in unhindered freedom from everything. The expression in the *Prajñā-pāramitā Hṛidaya Sūtra*,[4] "The Mind has no obstruction," has no other meaning than this.

Zen emphasizes, further, that this ultimate emancipation is not to be sought only as a future ideal which can not be actualized in the present. On the contrary, Zen insists upon its actualization in the present. The self which is dependent on Buddha is not yet the true Buddhist-Self, that is, is not yet the Mind spoken of in Zen. The Mind spoken of in Zen is not dependent on any Buddha or dharma

1 傳心法要. C. *Ch'uan-hsin-fa-yao*. J. *Denshinhōyō*.
2 永嘉. J., Yōka (665–713).
3 證道歌. C. *Chêng-tao-ko*. J. *Shōdōka*.
4 般若心經. J. *Hannya-shin-gyō*.

outside of itself; rather, this Mind is the Buddha Itself which is the root-source of all.

In Buddhism, Buddha is considered the most honorable. But even that which is most honorable, if it is outside of us, would bind and obstruct us. When we are bound by something which is insignificant, we easily become aware of it. When we are bound by something very important and honorable, however, we tend to be blinded by it and fail to notice our bondage.

In Buddhism, however, the ultimate is for us to awaken on the Self which, not being bound by anything—not even by its "not being bound"—works freely. Indeed, it will be even more correct to say that just because it is not bound by—or to—anything it can work freely.

Ordinarily, the above quoted Zen phrase, "Killing the Buddha, killing the Patriarch," would be an expression of the most extreme anti-religiousness. To draw even one drop of blood from the body of a Buddha is considered by Buddhists to be one of the five deadly sins. Thus, to kill a Buddha or a Patriarch is, from the viewpoint of Buddhist faith, absolutely inadmissible. From the standpoint of Zen, however, this utterance most thoroughly expresses Zen's being "outside the teaching," which means being free even from Buddha-bondage or dharma-bondage. Indeed, this phrase is rather to be regarded as expressing the ultimate position of true faith. The third Zen Patriarch, Sêng-ts'an,[1] meant this when he said, in his *Shinjinmei*[2] ("Verses on the Faith-Mind"), that:

> "Faith and Mind are not two;
> Not two are Faith and Mind."

In Buddhism, there are, ordinarily, innumerable forms of Buddha. In Zen, however, the true Buddha, as stated above, is the Mind which is emancipated from every kind of bondage and is completely free of all forms. Zen denies to be the true Buddha not only Buddha figures depicted on paper, in earthenware, in wood, or in metal, but even those most sublime Buddhas possessing the so-called thirty-

[1] 僧璨. J., Sōsan (–606).
[2] 信心銘. C. *Hsing-hsing-ming*.

two major and eighty minor marks of excellence. For Zen, indeed not such Buddhas as the Buddhas of the recompense body, the response body, or the transformation body are to be called the true Buddha.

In the Shin School which has as its central religious concern the Buddha-with-form called Amida Buddha, it is likewise recognized that the source of Amida is the *Dharmakāya*, which is without form. Shinran (1173–1262), the founder of the Shin School writes in his *Yuishinshō-mon'i*[1]:

"The *Dharmakāya* is without shape, without form, and, accordingly, beyond the reach of the mind, beyond description in words. That which takes form and comes forth from this Formless-Suchness is called the *Upāya-dharmakāya*."

Again, in his *Jinen-hōni-shō*,[2] which he wrote at the age of eighty-six, Shinran says:

"The Supreme Buddha is without form. Because it is without form, it is called Self-effected. When we represent it with form, it can not then be spoken of as the Supreme *Nirvana*. It is to make known this Ultimate Formlessness that we speak of Amida-Buddha."

Here it is made clear that the *Upāya-dharmakāya* expressed in form, that is, Amida-Buddha, is not the Supreme Buddha or Supreme *Nirvana*. Again, in the fifth book, "The True Buddha and His World," of his main work, *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*,[3] Shinran, quoting from the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life*,[4] says that attaining rebirth in the Pure Land is "enjoying the Self-effected, Unlimited Dharma Body of Emptiness." This is quite reasonable if, in the Shin School, rebirth is considered, as it should be, equivalent to attaining *Nirvana*. They call the attainment of *Nirvana* the "going aspect." Since, however, *Nirvana* is the Self-Nature, the Original Way of life of all beings,

[1] 唯信鈔文意.
[2] 自然法爾章.
[3] 教行信證.
[4] 大無量壽經.

the attainment of *Nirvana* is also spoken of by Shinran (in his *Yuishinshō-mon'i*) as "the returning to the capital of Dharma-Nature."

From this we can see clearly that a Buddha which has form is not the ultimate or true Buddha, that the true Buddha is without form. It is in this sense that for Zen the Buddha without form is the true Buddha; and it is just the true Buddha which is the true Self, the true Man. Therefore, Zen has nothing to do with idols—and this in a most thoroughgoing fashion. Accordingly, Zen Buddhism does not worship, pray to, or believe in any Buddha with an objective form, whether material or ideational. Rather, for Zen, Buddhism is awakening to the True, Formless Mind; that is, awakening to the True-Buddha. It is this awakening to the True-Buddha that Zen calls Seeing One's Nature or awakening to One's Original Face. According to Zen, it is precisely the Original Face of man—of any one of us human beings—which is the True-Buddha. The True-Buddha is no other than the Original Way of human life, or, in other words, the True-Self. Awakening to one's Original Face is "Seeing man's Nature and becoming Buddha." By the Seeing of one's Nature we do not mean any objective contemplation, objective awareness, or objective cognition of Self-Nature or Buddha-Nature; we mean the awakening *of* the Self-Nature itself. Since there is no Buddha apart from this awakening, to "become Buddha" means to come to the true Self-Awakening. Thus it is that the term "Buddha" literally means "the Awakened one." Since, for Zen, there is no true Buddha outside of the man who is awakened to his True Self, Lin-chi calls this awakened one the "True Man." All Buddha-forms, like the so-called recompense body, response body, or transformation body, are but different modes of expression of this "True Man" and have meaning only as such.

It is in this sense that we can say that Zen is neither a theism which sets up a transcendent god, nor a humanism centered on man in the ordinary sense, but that it is rather "'True-Man'-ism," centered around the True Man awakened to his Original True Self.

3. *The Method of Zen*

As has already been made clear, Zen does not rely on any authority. If we are to speak of any authority in Zen, its basic authority is the True Self, that is, the True Man. This authority, however, is to be called the authority of no-authority. Accordingly, the method of Zen is to get oneself—and to get others—to awaken to the True Self, which all men are in their primal nature. This is what is meant by "Directly pointing to man's Mind." Zen takes its occasions or opportunities to come to this awakening not simply from within the teaching but freely and directly from life itself in its every aspect and action, such as walking, abiding, sitting, lying, hearing, seeing, raising the eye-brows, or blinking the eyes. If one looks into the Zen occasions and Zen opportunities which appear according to the different places and different times in Zen history, this becomes clear at a glance. Such occasions and opportunities are simply too numerous to be counted. A few well known examples are: Nan-chüan's[1] "Killing the cat"; Chao-chou's[2] "Have a cup of tea" and his "Cypress tree in the garden"; Lung-t'an's[3] "Blowing out of the lantern"; Yün-mên's[4] "What is the meaning of wearing a clerical gown at the bell-signal?" and his "Dried dung stick"; and Shoushan's[5] "Bamboo spatula." Thus, according to the time and place, Zen makes use of any of the innumerable phenomena of life as the occasion to awaken oneself or to awaken others to man's true Self-Nature.

To seek for the Buddha externally is wrong in its very direction. Nan-chüan, in his Zen teaching-expression, "The ordinary mind is the Tao-awakened," goes so far as to say to Chao-chou, "Even to set upon the quest for awakening is to go contrariwise." Lin-chi, often using the example of Yajñadatta (who once went about search-

[1] 南泉. J., Nansen (748–834)
[2] 趙州. J., Jōshū (778–897)
[3] 龍潭. J., Ryōtan.
[4] 雲門. J., Ummon (–966)
[5] 首山. J., Shuzan (926–993)

ing for his face), also admonishes that in searching externally for the Buddha one only goes far and far away from the Buddha. The *Discourse on the Direct-Lineage of the Dharma* cited above, states that so long as one searches externally, not knowing that the Self-Mind is the Buddha, even if one is busy the whole day contemplating the Buddha and making obeisance to the Patriarchs, one misses the True-Buddha.

For Zen, that Śākyamuni is a Buddha is only because he is awakened to his True Self-Nature. And not only Śākyamuni, but anyone without exception, who is awakened to his true Self-Nature is, for Zen, a Buddha. Here lies the sameness quality of being a Buddha. In the Buddha-Nature every man is completely equal. The Buddha who is the mode of being only of some particular person or who is transcendent does not represent the true mode of being of the True Buddha. Conversely, the man who is not a Buddha does not represent the true mode of being of a True Man. Thus it is even said that man as he truly is is Buddha, and that not being a Buddha is to be in *māyā* or "illusion." The same is meant by the Sixth Patriarch when he says in his well-known verse:

"Originally not-a-single-thing,
Where can dust collect?"

When historians say that Śākyamuni lived in India two thousand five hundred years ago, they are referring to the Śākyamuni with form. Śākyamuni as Buddha is not the Śākyamuni who existed temporally and spatially 2500 years ago in India, but is the Formless True Man who is not delimited by time or space. In this sense Śākyamuni is the eternal "right-now," the infinite "right-here." Śākyamuni as Buddha can not be understood by those historians who would negate the Self-Buddha through their use of the categories of time and space. Śākyamuni as Buddha can be known never as an object but only as Self-Awakened Existence, as the Awakening awakened to Itself.

This means that wherever and whenever any man is awakened to his True Self-Nature, the Buddha is there and then, Śākyamuni as Buddha is there and then. This "there and then" is the root-

origin of Buddhism which is "prior to the sutras." From this root-origin there can be created newly and freely, appropriate to the time and place, dharma-expressions which are not bound to the already established dharma-expressions of the past, such as the Buddhist sutras and Buddha-images. Zen's "not relying on words" means freedom not only from the already established forms but, indeed, from every form; further, it means that while continually creating forms in Self-expression, one is not captured by those forms or by their creation. It is just in this meaning that the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* speaks of "Giving rise to every dharma from the root of the non-abiding," and that the Sixth Patriarch says, "Just with 'no dharma to be attained' to give rise to all dharmas."

Zen thus may be said to have two aspects: one is the aspect of the true emptiness of the True-Self which, unbound by any form, is completely free from all forms; the other is the aspect of the wondrous working of the Self which, unbound by any form, actualizes all forms. These two aspects constitute the "substance" and "function" of the True Self. True emptiness is the "abstraction" of all forms; the wondrous working is the free formation of every form. This is the Self-expression of the absolutely Formless Self. It is here that we have the ground for the non-dualistic oneness of thoroughgoing abstraction and thoroughgoing expression. Ordinary abstraction is not completely free from form, since it is still only a stage in the process going toward the liberation from all forms. Ordinary expression is not yet a free expression which is not bound by anything, since it is still an expression deriving from some kind of form. Herein lies the Zen basis for a thoroughgoing abstract art and a thoroughgoing expressionism.

When Zen arose in the sixth century, much had been going on in Chinese Buddhism in the way of translations into Chinese of the sutras, the construction of Buddha images, of the building of monasteries, and the giving of offerings to the monks. Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty had achieved so much in the line of these Buddhist works that he was called the Buddhist-minded Son-of-Heaven. It was just during this Emperor Wu's reign that Bodhidharma came to

China from India. Bodhidharma was asked by the Emperor what kind of merit he could expect from the innumerable good works which he had sponsored since his enthronement, such as the construction of monasteries, the copying of sutras, and the ordination of monks. Bodhidharma replied that all these accomplishments were of "No-Merit!" This single phrase of "No-Merit!" may be said to be a basic and thoroughgoing criticism of the mode of Buddhism of those days. For Bodhidharma, these works were trivial fruits attained within the birth-and-death bound cycle of samsara, and were still causes producing defilement. They were not to be regarded as ultimate realities. Upon being asked further by Emperor Wu what, then, was the true merit, Bodhidharma answered, "The Wisdom of Purity being perfect in its functioning, the Functioning Self is empty and calm." What this means is that this Empty-Calm-ness is the root of all merits, the merit at the heart of all merits; that if this is neglected, however devotedly one undertakes the construction of monasteries, the reproduction of sutras, and the ordination of monks, these achievements must be said to lack the essential point. The Empty-Calm-ness of the Functioning Self, spoken of by Bodhidharma, is nothing but the Original Face of the truly Empty-Self mentioned previously. Awakening to this Self is, for Bodhidharma, the highest merit, the essential meaning of Buddhism. This radical criticism by Bodhidharma together with the later spread of Zen brought about a great change in Chinese Buddhism, redirecting it from its diversion toward accidentals back to its basic source.

This direction toward the root-source, however, does not mean the *process* of going toward the root-source, but rather means, as is expressed in the Zen phrase "Directly pointing to man's Mind," directly *entering into* the root-source, that is, directly awakening to the Original Face of the Self. That is why direct and straightforward ways to open up this awakening came to be so greatly emphasized. The innumerable occasions of *satori*, that is, of Seeing one's True Nature, which appear in the history of Zen are so many instances both of this unique method and of its actual fruition in Self-Awakening.

The examples of the so-called *kosoku* (ancient case)-*koan*[1] which are recorded in and make up many of the Zen texts such as the *Pi-yen-chi* ("Blue-Cliff-Records"),[2] the *Wu-men-kuan* ("Gateless Gate") etc., constitute no more than a very small portion of these Zen occasions. These occasions, it is to be emphasized, all involve the concrete things of the ordinary world of man, including such extremely common things of the natural world as the sky, the earth, mountains and rivers, various trees such as the bamboo, the peach, the pine, the cypress, various animals such as the dog, the cat, the wild duck, the ox, and the tiger, or the daily activities of the monks —travelling about to different monasteries, begging alms, drinking tea, taking meals, taking a bath, talking, keeping silent, raising the hands, or stretching out the legs. This concreteness of the occasions, however, is no mere concreteness. As the sutra-expression "Concrete matter is itself empty" indicates, it is only the occasion according to the time and place for the direct entering into True-Emptiness; that is, this concreteness is no more than the moment for the direct awakening to the true Emptiness-Formlessness, which is the "abstraction" which emancipates concreteness. This abstractness, in turn, as indicated by another sutra-expression "Emptiness is itself concrete matter," is not simply the negation of concreteness. It is, rather, the very basis of the turning away from the concreteness which is to be negated (that is, the false being) to the concreteness which is to be affirmed (that is, the true being).

We have said that natural things and human affairs serve as the occasions and the opportunities for Zen. There are, however, not a few instances in which phrases from the various Buddhist scriptures, such as the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*,[3] the *Vajracchedikā Sūtra*,[4] the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra*, and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, also serve. For example, Zen makes use of the following Sutra sayings:

"The Original Being is consummate and fulfilled in Itself, Why the

[1] 古則公案.
[2] 碧巌錄. J. *Hekigan-roku.*
[3] 維摩經. J. *Yuima-kyō.*
[4] 金剛經. J. *Kongo-kyō.*

going astray and being unawakened?" (*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*);
"To enter the Dharma-gate of Non-Duality" (*Ibid.*);
"The fourfold Dharma-World" (*Avataṁsaka Sūtra*);
"Originally all pure! Why comes there to be mountains, rivers, and the great earth?";
"Not to abide anywhere and yet to activate that Mind," (*Vajracchedikā Sūtra*);
"If one sees Me with form or seeks Me identifying Me with sound or voice, that one practices the wrong way and can never see the *Tathāgata*." (*Ibid.*);
"No eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no consciousness." (*Prajñāpāramitā Hṛdaya Sūtra*).

These phrases, which are so-called "*koan* from inside-the-teaching," are not quoted, however, out of respect for what is written in the sutras or for the purpose of indulging in verbal comments or textual exposition. Zen rather takes over these phrases and makes them its own, using them as its own occasions and opportunities according to the requirements of the time and place. In this usage, these scriptural phrases are given a treatment completely different from the close, logical reasoning they receive in Indian Buddhism and the textual exegesis and commentaries they receive in Chinese Buddhism. The Indian and Chinese treatments are "inside-the-teaching"; the Zen treatment is a living usage "outside-the-teaching." That is, in Zen even the scriptural phrases are used as Zen's own unique and direct moments to bring about the Seeing of one's Nature and the attainment of Buddhahood through the direct pointing to man's Mind, which is at once separate from and the source of all the sutra-expressions.

Often, the occasions for the functioning of Zen take the form of mondo question-and-answer exchanges. A mondo question-and-answer exchange is not a dialectical or theoretical dialogue or discussion; nor is it of the question-and-answer mode of daily conversation. It is a kind of question-and-answer exchange wholly unique to Zen, developed for the purpose of bringing about Self-

[1] 楞嚴經. J. *Ryōgon-kyō*.

Awakening in the unawakened or, when used by the already awakened, for the purpose of taking the measure of each other's awakening. This kind of question-and-answer exchange is the total Self-hurling, so to speak, of true Emptiness-at-Work. It is the free play of Zen functioning, which takes everything and anything for its occasion depending on the time and place. It includes all the functions of man and is not, as is generally the case with ordinary questions and answers, based merely upon words. For example, there are many instances in which the mondo-exchange involves the blinking of the eyes, the raising of the eye-brows, the cupping of the ears, the raising of a fist, a blow with a stick, the shouting of a *katsu*, eating a meal, drinking tea, bowing in homage, lifting up a mosquito-driver, and the like. What must be emphasized is that in this kind of mondo question-and-answer there is the vivid, dynamic Self-presentation of true Emptiness-at-Work. In short, what is being unfolded in the mondo-exchange is the direct, vigorous Zen action of "directly pointing to man's Mind, and seeing into his Nature," thereby to attain oneself and to have others attain Buddhahood. The uniqueness and marvelousness of the Zen mondo lies in its never being mere talk or silence, sitting or lying, drinking tea or taking a meal, using a stick or shouting; it is always the Wondrous-Working of True-Emptiness. If it were not for this—and if this is not understood—the Zen mondo would be nothing but a falsehood, a boast, a madness, or, at best, a kind of wit or riddle.

4. The Zen Understanding of Man

It is a characteristic of man that the more he becomes involved in complexity, the more he longs for simplicity; the simpler his life becomes, the more he longs for complexity; the busier he becomes, the stronger is his desire for leisure; the more leisure he has, the more boredom he feels; the more his concerns, the more he feels the allure of unconcern; the more his unconcern, the more he suffers from vacuousness; the more tumultuous his life, the more he seeks quietude; the more placid his life, the lonelier he becomes and the

more he quests for liveliness.

It is a characteristic feature of modern civilization that everything is becoming more and more complicated, that the degree of busyness increases day by day, and that the mind becomes too overburdened with concerns. Consequently, there is an increasingly strong desire on the part of people to seek simplicity, leisure, freedom from concern, and quietude in order to offset the common trend of modern life.

Recently, in the United States, which has assumed the lead in modern civilization, not only ordinary buildings but even churches have changed their architectural style from a heavy, complex, and intricate style to a straightlined, simple, smart, modern style. That this tendency toward modernization in architecture is sweeping over not only America but also the older cities of Western Europe and, indeed, even Japan, is not simply because of practical utility, but also undoubtedly because it responds to a natural desire of modern man, who finds himself further and further enmeshed in the extreme complexities of modern life. More specifically, the fact that houses in America are gradually becoming one-storied, simple, and clean-cut, influenced by Japanese architecture, is probably because of the desire to escape complexity and to find serenity. Further, that intricate and involved painting and sculpture have given way to forms which are unconventionally informal, de-formed, or abstract may also be considered to signify a liberation from troublesome complexity, elaborateness, and formality. So, too, the change from overly heavy colors to monotone colors in the manner of monochrome *sumi-e* paintings, thus making for a beauty of simplicity, one of the special characteristics of modern art, may also be considered another aspect of this same liberation.

In the same vein, it is inevitable that modern man, thrown more and more into a whirl of pressing concerns, should seek and in fact, greedily demand leisure time, a phenomenon which has found its expression in the current term, "leisure-boom." Indeed, all of the following recent phenomena—the deep interest in the extremely primitive art of uncivilized people, the popularity of folk songs and

of children's songs, the appeal generated by the rustic colloquialisms of the local dialects in contradistinction to the standard language of the cities, the attraction of the free and open world of nature (the mountains, the fields, the oceans) as opposed to the uncomfortably close and crowded urban centers, the marked tendency in recent art toward naïve artlessness, simplicity, and rustic beauty—can probably be similarly attributed to a longing for artlessness by modern men, who are suffering from the excessive contrivances and artificiality of modern civilization.

Oneness and manyness—or, unity and diversity—are mutually indispensable moments within the basic structure of man. They must necessarily be one with each other and not two. Oneness without manyness is mere vacuity without content; manyness without oneness is mere segmentation without unity. Here lies the great blind spot in the mode of modern civilization. The so-called diseases of civilization—uprootedness, confusion, prostration, instability, bewilderment, skepticism, neurosis, weariness of life, etc.—are largely due to this blind spot. The greater the multiplicity, the stronger in direct proportion must be the oneness or unity. When, on the contrary, the actual situation is a relation of an inverse proportion, then man has no other alternative than to seek to escape into a oneness or simplicity alienated from manyness, whether by turning to the primitive or by simply negatively withdrawing from manyness. This, however, is no more than a superficial solution of the problem of segmented dissociation. Herein may also be found one reason that today, although anachronistic to our time, premodern, non-civilized cults and superstitions still command a following. A drowning man will grasp even at a straw, although objectively considered it is clearly untrustworthy. The attempts by contemporary man to escape from civilization or to return to the primitive, to the non-civilized, and the non-modern, may be viewed as natural but superficial countermeasures to try to compensate for the lack of unity in modern civilization. To turn from such superficial countermeasures to a genuine solution, there is no other way than by establishing within the multiplicity that oneness or unity which is appropriate to

the multiplicity.

If the direction of the development of civilization is toward more and more multiplicity, more and more specialization, then no fixed, static oneness or unity will ever do. The oneness or unity must be sufficiently alive and flexible to respond freely and appropriately to the growing multiplicity. It is not enough that the oneness, while not being alienated from multiplicity, merely serve as the static basis within multiplicity. It must be a dynamic and creative oneness or unity which, as the root-origin of multiplicity, produces multiplicity from itself without limit; a oneness that can eternally produce multiplicity out of itself freely and yet remain unbound by what is produced; a unity which while producing multiplicity yet remains within multiplicity and can accord with that multiplicity appropriate to the particular time and place. Only then can the multiplicity, while unlimitedly taking its rise from such a oneness, never lose that oneness, and does the oneness, while producing the multiplicity, ever remain within and unalienated from the multiplicity which it produces.

Multiplicity, in such a case, continuing to contain within itself, even as multiplicity, a oneness or unity, will thus not become disjointedly fragmented. Accordingly, there will be no need to escape from multiplicity to a hollow unity which is alienated from multiplicity. On the other hand, since the oneness even as oneness is the inexhaustible source of, and is never separated from, multiplicity, there will be no need, because of any feeling of ennui or because of having fallen into a mood of emptiness or loneliness, to seek for a liveliness within a manyness alienated from oneness. The true oneness is a oneness in manyness; the true manyness is a manyness in oneness. There is a Zen expression, "Within Nothingness (there is contained) an inexhaustible storehouse." Only when such a relation obtains between oneness and manyness, the two elements of the basic structure of man, will man, however much he may diversify toward multiplicity, be free from disjointed fragmentation and, at the same time, in his oneness never suffer from emptiness or loneliness. Then can he be at once a unity and a multiplicity without hindrance, free from all pressure and self-contented, the true Subject

eternally giving rise to civilization. Man as such a Subject is Man in his True mode of being. Precisely this Man is the human image which is the inner demand, whether or not he is conscious of it, of modern man, standing as he does right in the midst of a civilization which continues to diversify more and more as it develops. Such a human image is the Original-Subject which, even as it freely and unlimitedly creates civilization and is ever present appropriate to the time and place within the civilization which has been created, is always completely emancipated and never bound by the civilization.

This Original-Subject, which must awaken to itself and form itself right in the midst of modern civilization, is no other than the Zen image of man. It is this Man that the author in his previous writings has called "Oriental Nothingness," "Active Nothingness," and "Formless-Self." It is the Man which Hui-nêng, the Sixth Patriarch, already very early in the history of Chinese Zen, spoke of as "The Self-Nature which, unmoved in its base, is able to produce all things," and, again, as, "Not a single thing to be obtained and, precisely thereby, able to give rise to all things." It is the same image of Man which is referred to when Yung-chia, a contemporary of Hui-nêng, says that:

> "Walking is also Zen, sitting is also Zen. Whether talking or silent, whether in motion or rest, the Subject is composed."

The same Man is meant by Huang-po when, in his *The Pivotal Point of Mind-to-Mind Transmission*, he declared:

> "Just the one who the whole day, though not apart from things, does not suffer from the world of things, is called the Free Man."

In that it infinitely creates civilization and forms history, this human image may be said to be humanistic. In that—even while it is immanent in, and the root-origin of, what is created or formed —it is not attached to or bound by, but is always free from, the created, it may be said to have the religiousness of Lin-chi's "Self-

awakened and Self-sustaining (Man)," that is, the religiousness of being the truly Emancipated-Subject. Only when they come to be this Emancipated-Subject can the subjects spoken of in the *Avataṁsaka* teaching as the subject which "returns to and takes rise from Itself" and in the Pure Land teaching as the subject which in its "going aspect" actualizes *Nirvana* and in its "returning aspect" "plays freely amid the thick woods of what formerly constituted self-agonizing illusions," lend themselves to a modern application. Of course, by modern here I do not mean anything temporal, i. e. of any particular generation or period of history. Rather, I mean a modern Self-formation-actualization of the Eternal-Subject which is the root-origin of, and beyond all, historical periods. In the *Vimalakirtinirdeśa*, this is expressed as "taking form in response to the thing confronted." Here there can be established a newer and higher humanistic religion which, on the one hand, does not degenerate into the modern type of anthropocentric, autonomous humanism which has forgotten self-criticism and, on the other, does not retrogress back toward a pre-modern, theocentric theonomy completely unawakened to human autonomy.

The realization of such a new, yet basic and ultimate, human image will enable us to do two things. First, it will enable us to turn away from the superficial attempt to cure the disease of modern civilization through an anachronistic, simple-minded, world-renouncing mode of escape to a naive, pre-modern oneness which is in estrangement from civilization. Secondly, it will enable us to make a more proper attempt at a radical cure of the modern predicament through the Self-awakening of that oneness which, contrary to being in estrangement from civilization, accords with, and is the source and base of, civilization. Such an image of man entertained by Zen will also sweep away every internal and external criticism or misunderstanding of Buddhism which takes it to be world-weary, world-renouncing, and removed from reality, longing for some ideal world in a sphere other than the historical world of time and space. It will, at the same time, be worthy of being presented to the Occident as a new Oriental prescription for the disease of modern civilization. For

the recent surging of Zen interest in the West in such areas as psychology, the arts, the handicrafts, invention, philosophy, religion, etc., is not accidental but derives from an inner necessity of modern civilization.

5. *Formless Beauty*

Zen is, thus, the awakening to the above described human image which is beyond time and space, but which works freely and without hindrance according to each particular time and place. For Zen, therefore, this awakening-working is the ultimate active truth, active good, and active beauty, which transcends all limitation; it is the root-origin of every particular—and therefore limited—instance of truth, good, and beauty. Although we shall confine our remarks here to beauty, what is said in this regard applies as well to truth and goodness.

Supreme or ultimate beauty is not a particular beauty belonging to the realm of art in the narrow sense, but is, rather, the beauty of the awakened, working human Self. It is a formless beauty which never becomes an "object"—either of vision, of any of the other senses, or indeed of any mode of consciousness. It is Active-Subject-Beauty, that is, the beauty which is the free functioning itself of that which is emancipated from all forms; it is, neither merely the concept of beauty nor the idea of beauty. That is, it is the beauty of our being the human Self which is actually awakened and is at work; it is not any objective beauty which arises from seeing or otherwise sensing that Self as an object. It is the beauty which becomes aware of itself only when it becomes the awakened Self itself. In other words, it is the beauty of the Formless Self.

In Buddhism, the so-called thirty-two major and eighty minor physical marks of the Buddha are ordinarily regarded as the perfect features of Buddha. But perfect as the features may be, any Buddha with form is not the true Buddha. As Lin-chi has said, the true Buddha is formless; being without form is the true form. Formlessness is the genuine mark of the true Buddha, and is true beauty.

The Buddha beauty which is sought in objects of perception by the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or consciousness, that is, through shape, voice, smell, taste, touch, or idea, is not the true Buddha beauty. In the *Vajracchedikā Sūtra* it is written, as already noted, that "If one sees Me with form or seeks Me identifying Me with sound or voice, that one practices the wrong way and can never see the *Tathāgata*." The true beauty of *Tathāgata* cannot be sought for through the above-mentioned sixfold mode of sense perception (or consciousness) or their objective referents.

It must never be forgotten that in Buddhism there is an ultimate beauty of formlessness which goes beyond the beauty of form to be found in such things as Buddha images, Buddhist music, incense-burning, ceremonial meals, worshiping, verses, the various *mudrā* expressions of the fingers and so forth. It is precisely this beauty of formlessness which is the beauty truly unique to Buddhism, the beauty of the true human Self. Buddhist aesthetics or the true beauty of form in Buddhism must be a formless beauty expressing itself in form, which is then known through the six modes of sense-perception or consciousness—that is, must be the Self-expression of formless beauty which freely takes on form in any of the objective realms of sense-perception or consciousness. Formless beauty, because it is formless, not only is not conditioned by any already established form but is never conditioned by any form whatsoever. Therefore, it can freely take on any form in Self-actualization. True Buddhist aesthetics is to be found in this beauty of formlessness which freely actualizes itself within form while never being bound by any form.

Accordingly, true Buddhist aesthetics, from the side of the active creation, is formless beauty expressing itself in form; from the side of appreciation, it is the apprehension within form of the formlessness which transcends form—that is, the apprehension of the form as the expression of formlessness. In short, true Buddhist beauty is none other than the beauty of the human Self awake and at work. Awakened formless beauty, through its working, expresses itself in, so to speak, "a subtle form-beauty," the beauty of mere form returning, thereby, to the beauty of formlessness. True Buddhist

art is the beauty not of mere form but of "subtle form." It is this latter beauty alone which enables Buddhist art to be directly connected with the true human Self and to have a necessary intrinsic relation with the awakening of this Self; it is this beauty alone which can enable Buddhism to become the backbone for a healthy development of contemporary civilization and to become the eternal source for the creation of future civilization.

(Translated by Richard DeMartino and Gishin Tokiwa)