7EN notes

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SOKEI-AN SAYS

THE OUTER HOUSE AND THE INNER HOUSE

The objective world of appearance and the subjective world

of mind--these are the outer and inner houses wherein our soul resides. As thinking men and women we must thoroughly acquaint ourselves with our two kinds of houses.

We know quite well that this outer house is not really an existence. This red stick on my lecture table, for instance, is a part of the outer house; you say its color is vermillion. This cushion is also a part of the furnishings of the outer house; you say its color is green. But this red, or green, or black, or blue, or white, have their existence on the retina of your eye. Color does not exist either in the cushion or the stick. The sound of this gong is created on the drum of your ear; there is no sound in the gong itself. Taste is produced on your tongue. It does not exist in food. I do not need to explain more carefully, for science proves this.

Then what is the reality of outer existence? A philosopher may say, "It is noumenon." But what is noumenon? The philosopher explains it as existence which has no relation to the five senses. You question him: "Then how can we know that it exists?" He answers: "By our intellect we know that noumenon exists, but with our five senses we perceive it as phenomenal existence." The blue sky, the green water, the pink flowers--these are only phenomena; they are the appearances of Reality, not Reality by itself. When I was young I studied Western philosophy at school. I was amazed. I thought: "Western philosophers are thinking with our Buddhism."

Since we are living in this strange outside house, which is not a real existence at all, and since we cannot do anything about it, we have to accept it as it appears to be. We heap up fragments of phenomena, giving them names such as iron, tile, stone, concrete; and we fashion these into shelters for our physical bodies to live in. Living in them we harbor fear for their loss; we bewail their changeable nature, and hope against hope for their eternal existence. We clutch at those appearances which are our cherished possessions and weep bitterly when they vanish. The outside house is truly a very unreliable existence.

The physical body, which in old-style thinking consists of earth, water, fire, and air, is also merely an appearance. As the Buddha said, it is born, remains a while, decays, and disappears. This physical house, the human body, is more fragile than the house created out of iron and stone, tile and concrete. But it is my own dear house! I have only this one; I have no other. I guard it as a treasure--this body which seems to be mine

yet really is not.

By thus carefully observing the outside house we naturally come to realize that we live also in an inner house. What is this inner house? Of what is it composed? Your soul lives in the inner house, just as your body lives in the outer house. This inner house is made up of thoughts, dreams, and mental images. Mental images are its bony structure, thoughts its flesh, emotions its nervous system, intellect its arteries, and consciousness its heart. This inner house, like the outer house, is also phenomena. And this inner house is as shaky as is the outer house. If you close your eyes to the outside house and turn your attention within, you can see what kind of dwelling is this inner house you live in. From morning to evening the dreams and notions of which it is composed pass before your inner eye like silhouettes of a procession of demons. Do you realize this?

Every one of you lives in such an inner house. Some inner houses are constructed according to systems; you call them by the names Christianity, Ruddhism, Transcendentalism, School of Immanuel Kant, Greek Philosophy. Many people, to be sure, do not live in inner houses constructed according to system; they live in houses made of weeds and straw and bushbamboo, houses without pillars or roofs. Those who live in magnificent outer houses, costing millions of dollars to build, may have only a hovel as an inner house, like some forgotten little Indian hut on a faraway Western reservation. But there are others who have beautiful inner houses decorated with gems garnered through the ages, from antiquity to today-the ideas of Plato, Schopenhauer and Hegel, for instance; such men have cut out lines from Emerson and Longfellow and Whitman and hung them on the walls of their inner houses to keep their minds in order. Some live in modern houses—Socialism, Communism, Fascism. Others live in foreign houses, in Sufism, Bahaism, Buddhism, Vedanta, Zen. Just as you Americans build foreign houses to live in, so you live in foreign thoughts. If you find them a little awkward to live in, you make a slight alteration and adapt them to your needs, calling them Buddho-Christology, or some other such name. In such a way we create our inner house and live in it.

In the Orient there are wonderful inside houses. In Buddhism, for instance, there is the Avatamsaka-sutra, the Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra, and

In the Orient there are wonderful inside houses. In Ruddhism, for instance, there is the Avatamsaka-sūtra, the Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra, and the Mahavibhasa-sāstra. This last is so magnificent and so beautiful! To go through it from corner to corner one must spend one's entire lifetime. These are really pyramids of human thought; they are wonderful houses in which any human being can reside without ever growing weary of their beauty and dignity. They give us a system of thought by which we can

live and within which we can find rest.

But, after all, even these are nothing but houses, temporary existences. Today we see the pyramids of Fgypt. These were the outer houses of the Egyptians. In what inner houses they were abiding is not very clear to us now. But they had their own wonderful religions, their own strange faiths, such as the worship of Isis and Osiris, and of the sun in the Temple of Memnon. Would that we could realize these again! But these inner houses are also phenomena, fragile, mutable, ephemeral existences, passing before our soul like wreaths of smoke, continually changing their phases like clouds and sunshine. If you try to keep them, you will realize their nature. They appear, they remain, they decay and they disappear. Sakyamuni Buddha told us that everything that exists passes through these four phases-growing, remaining, decaying, and passing away. To watch the changing phases of our mind-houses brings us agony, brings us tears, and we cry "Don't go! Pon't go!" Nevertheless they go.

We cannot keep our outside house forever, nor can we keep our inside house forever. Therefore we must know with our intellect when the change takes place; we must realize the impossibility of escape from the agony

which arises when one thing changes its form and becomes another. The thoughts of the eighteenth century do not exist now; the thoughts we have today will not exist in our great-grandchildren's day. The conceptions of life become different. Therefore we must break our attachment to both the outer and the inner houses. You say, "Well, it is fun to live in them. When I was young I enjoyed my young body; now I am old I cherish In them. When I was young I enjoyed my young body; now I am old I cherish my old body. Yesterday I enjoyed my young notions; today I am very glad to have my mature ideas. I don't mind accepting this agony. Though I am tortured by these transitions and though I fall into hell keeping these ideas, I shall cling to them, I shall keep this decision. Well, it is your decision. No one can say you mustn't.

But do not take this as just my lecture. You must really think carefully about the kind of house you live in, Do you know the entrance to it? Do you know the exit from it? Do you know how many windows it has? Perhaps you have lost yourself in it. You have to know exactly where you are in your inside house; it is important to your entire life.

are in your inside house; it is important to your entire life.

Like those who don't build an outside house, if we don't build this inside house, we are like the foxes and badgers that live in caves, behind mounds, or under rocks. We are no different from cats and dogs, or from the cavemen, who had no special house, either inside or outside, to live in. We don't call them human beings. We must have an outside house. And, just as we must have a physical body to exist, we must build a solid inside house also. Even in order for an outside house to exist two hundred years, we must build a solid foundation of strong materials. We can keep this body for just a hundred years at the longest. When I was young I would have said fifty; now that I am sixty, I shall have to add a few

But the inside house is not so fragile as the outside house. Buddhism has existed 2500 years; Christianity is a 2000-year-old house; the wonderful thoughts and philosophies of the past still exist today. Perhaps you are living in the house in which your grandmother lived. Thoughts often endure three generations. In my country there was no individuality in olden times: we denied individual existence; the original incividualism of man was forgotten. Everyone lived as a member of a family; no child could have a personal existence. No subject could claim his freedom as an individual; all lived under a strict feudal regime. But today the individual man has come into his own. My money is mine; I have the right to use it according to my own wish. My country choked on this new idea. The young men of my grandfather's generation were always arguing: "No person has a right to use his money according to his own wish; it is not his possession." What kind of argument was that? Now everyone knows that my money is mine, but then no one knew to whom money belonged. Of course today, to examine very carefully, no one possesses his own property. But this is an economic analysis; from the common sense standpoint you do have your possessions. In that day, however, even in common sense no one had anything in his own hand.

Well, we have to accept the changes to the outside house and we have

to adapt ourselves to them. We also have to adapt ourselves to the changes to our inside house. We have to undergo the agony that comes from the birth of new thoughts and from the remaining of present thoughts; we have to shriek when old thoughts are decaying and sleep when our thoughts decline. It is so-called human life, you know. We enjoy living in a city house with an elevator; we also enjoy going to the country where there is no sidewalk, staying in a house of stone and clay, and hav-

ing to walk barefoot.

As long as we are living in this body which has five senses, we cannot refuse sound, we cannot refuse color; we must accept agony and joy both. But, as a Buddhist monk, only one thing I say to you: You must not attach to them. You must have freedom of soul. You must not make a suicide pact with your inside house. The soul is alone. It lives and sleeps in these two houses. We must realize that these are not ourselves, but merely the houses in which our soul dwells. What, then, is myself? is the soul? I am sorry I cannot explain to you tonight what soul is. An Informal Talk November 22,1941 Someday, however, I shall do so.

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ZENRIN KUSHU

Hyō nanzan no kiri ni kakure. Hō wa hokkai no kaze ni utsu.

The leopard lurks in the mist of the southern mountains.

The roc seizes the wind of the northern sea.

NOTES A stern letter from Kyoto (airmail) calls to our attention that we neglected to supply our readers with information needed to identify persons and places mentioned in May ZEN NOTES. Furthermore, and far worse, as the particular notes, taken in longhand, used for the reconstruction of this lecture, though those of a distinguished author, were written without benefit of study of Japanese or Chinese, or indeed, of China, and the press of April events inhibited our taking the usual precaution of checking with events inhibited our taking the usual precaution of checking with Mrs. Sasaki, which takes at least two weeks, several corrective notes are in order. These follow. Please do excuse us. PERSONS The full name of the protagonist of the story is Kyōgen Chikan (Kan for short is used later) Zenji (J.), in Chinese Hsiangyen Chih-hsien Ch'an-shih. See ZN Vol.I, No. 7, for the characters for Zenji, (Ch.) Ch'an-shih, a title meaning "Zen Master."

Yū is the last part of the full name of Isan Reiyū (J.), Weishan Ling-yu (Ch.). Osho (J.), Ho-shang (Ch.) is a title, something like Boshi often more familiarly used

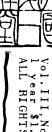
like Boshi, often more familiarly used. i, often more im... Ching-chou (Ch.) Wei-shan (Ch.) place name PLACES Seishū (J.) a province (J.) a mountain place name

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T'an-chou (Ch.) place name Tanshū (J.) a province Kyōgen-ji (J.), Hsiang-yen-ssu (Ch.) is not in T'an-chou. It is in Teng-chou (Ch.), Tōshu (J.). Hangchow is near Shanghai in middle China to the far east. T'an-chou is right in the middle of China. Wei-shan (the mountain and temple) is in T'an-chou, but not on the shore of the lake whose name is not T'an-chou, but T'ung-t'ing, (J. Dōtei). Events described took place in the 9th, not the 7th century.

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