

ZEN notes



THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT, AS TAUGHT BY THE BUDDHA
By SHAKU SOYEN, at the World's Parliament of Religions, 1893

If we open our eyes and look at the universe, we observe the sun and moon, and the stars in the sky; mountains, rivers, plants, animals, fishes and birds on the earth. Cold and warmth come alternately; shine and rain change from time to time without ever reaching an end. Again, let us close our eyes and calmly reflect upon ourselves. From morning to evening, we are agitated by the feelings of pleasure and pain, love and hate; sometimes full of ambition and desire, sometimes called to the utmost excitement of reason and will. Thus the action of mind is like an endless issue of a spring of water. As the phenomena of the external world are various and marvelous, so is the internal attitude of human mind. Shall we ask for the explanation of these marvelous phenomena? Why is the universe in a constant flux? Why do things change? Why is the mind subjected to constant agitation? For these Buddhism offers only one explanation, namely, the laws of cause and effect.

Now let us proceed to understand the nature of this law,

as taught by Buddha himself:

1. The complex nature of cause.
2. An endless progression of the causal law.
3. The causal law, in terms of the three worlds.
4. Self-formation of cause and effect.
5. Cause and effect as the law of nature.

First, the complex nature of cause.

A certain phenomenon cannot arise from a single cause, but it must have several conditions; in other words, no effect can arise unless several causes combine together. Take for example the case of a fire. You may say its cause is oil or fuel; but neither oil nor fuel alone can give rise to a flame. Atmosphere, space and several other conditions, physical or mechanical, are necessary for the rise of a flame. All these necessary conditions combined together can be called the cause of a flame. This is only an example for the explanation of the complex nature of cause; but the rest may be inferred.

Secondly, an endless progression of the causal law. A cause must be preceded by another cause, and an effect must be followed by another effect. Thus if we investigate the cause of a cause, the past of a past, by tracing back even to an eternity we shall never reach the first cause. The assertion that there is a first cause, is contrary to the fundamental principle of nature, since a certain cause must have an origin in some preceding cause of causes, and there is no cause which is not an effect. From the assumption that a cause is an effect of a preceding cause which is also preceded

by another, thus, *ad infinitum*, we infer that there is no beginning in the universe. As the waters of rivers evaporate and form clouds, and the latter changes its form into rain, thus returning once more into the original form of waters, the causal law is in a logical circle changing from cause to effect, effect to cause.

Thirdly, the causal law, in terms of three worlds, namely, past, present and future.

All the religions apply, more or less, the causal law in the sphere of human conduct, and remark that the pleasure and happiness of one's future life depend upon the purity of his present life. But what is peculiar to Buddhism is, it applies the law not only to the relation of present and future, but also past and present. As the facial expressions of each individual are different from those of others, men are graded by the different degrees of wisdom, talent, wealth and birth. It is not education, nor experience alone, that can make a man wise, intelligent and wealthy, but it depends upon one's past life. What are the causes or conditions which produce such a difference? To explain it in a few words, I say, it owes its origin to the different quality of actions which we have done in our past life, namely, we are here enjoying or suffering the effect of what we have done in our past life. If you closely observe the conduct of your fellow-beings, you will notice that each individual acts different from the others. From this we can infer that in future life each one will also enjoy or suffer the result of his own actions done in this existence. As the pleasure and pain of one's present actions, so

the happiness or misery of our future world, will be the result of our present action.

Fourthly, self-formation of cause and effect.

We enjoy happiness and suffer misery, our own actions being causes; in other words there is no other cause than our own actions which make us happy or unhappy.

Now let us observe the different attitudes of human life; one is happy and others feel unhappy. Indeed, even among the members of the same family we often notice a great diversity in wealth and fortune. Thus various attitudes of human life can be explained by the self-formation of cause and effect. There is no one in the universe but one's self who rewards or punishes him. The diversity in future stages will be explained by the same doctrine. This is termed in Buddhism the "self-deed and self-gain" or "self-make and self-receive." Heaven and hell are self-made. God did not provide you with a hell, but you yourself. The glorious happiness of future life will be the effect of present virtuous actions.

Fifthly, cause and effect as the law of nature.

According to the different sects of Buddhism more or less different views are entertained in regard to the law of causality, but so far they agree in regarding it as the law of nature, independent of the will of Buddha, and still more of the will of human beings. The law exists for an eternity, without beginning, without end. Things grow and decay, and this is caused not by an external power but by an internal force which is in things themselves as an innate atti-

tude. This internal law acts in accordance with the law of cause and effect, and thus appear immense phenomena of the universe. Just as the clock moves by itself without any intervention of any external force, so is the progress of the universe.

We are born in the world of variety; some are poor and unfortunate, others are wealthy and happy. The state of variety will be repeated again and again in our future lives. But to whom shall we complain of our misery? To none but ourselves! We reward ourselves; so shall we do in our future life. If you ask me who determined the length of our life, I say, the law of causality. Who made him happy and made me miserable? The law of causality. Bodily health, material wealth, wonderful genius, unnatural suffering are the infallible expressions of the law of causality which governs every particle of the universe, every portion of human conduct. Would you ask me about the Buddhist morality? I reply, in Buddhism the source of moral authority is the causal law. Be kind, be just, be human, be honest, if you desire to crown your future! Dishonesty, cruelty, inhumanity, will condemn you to a miserable fall!

As I have already explained to you, our sacred Buddha is not the creator of this law of nature, but he is the first discoverer of the law who led thus his followers to the height of moral perfection. Who shall utter a word against him who discovered the first truth of the universe, who has saved and will save by his noble teaching, the millions and millions of the falling human beings? Indeed, too much approbation could not be uttered to honor his sacred name!

Rinzai Reed

Why, students of today, are you unable to attain Real Understanding? What infirmity renders you unable to attain it? It is because you lack self-reliance. Unless you have self-reliance, you will never know what to rely upon. Involved with your surroundings and perverted by circumstances, you are not free to avail yourselves of your innate ability. When your mind ceases to wander about, you differ in no wise from Dharma and from Buddha. Do you desire to become acquainted with Dharma and Buddha? They are none other than he who in your presence is listening to my sermon.

SOKEI-AN SAYS What sickness prevents you from having confidence that you are able to attain Buddhahood?

Truth is not to be sought outside yourself, though, of course, if you deny the outside, you have to deny the inside also, for it is relative to the outside. Truth is neither the one nor the other. Where, at this instant, is it? There's no time for hesitation!

Faith is important in any religion. The Buddha said that faith is the mother who brings you to earth (the existence of Reality). If you wish to reach the highest point of Buddhism, your task is like that of an Alpine climber struggling from the foot of the mountain to its peak.

If you decide to attain the truth of the world or beyond the world, see Reality in both phenomenon and noumenon, you must seek IT in yourself, until IT manifests its power in the mirror of your shrine.

If you cannot have confidence in the power you have intrinsically, you have no ground to stand upon, you are at a loss, you do not know what to do.

A teacher does not teach you Zen. If you plant a seed and it sprouts, all Nature has answered you. When you dig into the ground of your soul, all phenomena answer and tell you that the

thing that you manifest in your mind is true (84,000 Buddhas and Bodhi-sattvas acknowledge your attainment).

Involved with your surroundings and perverted by circumstances, you are not free. This is the Buddha's favorite theory. The man who inverts his observation of the world sees mutable things as eternal, and feels agony as joy.

There is an allegory: the crow hangs food on a branch and memorizes the clouds above the tree. When he becomes hungry and wishes to return to his food, he looks for the cloud to guide him. He does not know that the cloud is constantly changing. It is just so with human beings. They do not look behind mutable pleasure. Does it make it good because human beings have applied this method for hundreds of years? No! Attachment to the mutable is like slipping into quicksand.

If you discontinue the bustle of the mind, running around and pursuing your mind-stuff, immediately you will prove that you are a Buddha.

He who realizes the Buddha in himself, who in your presence is listening to the sermon, lives in self-confidence.

When you have heard the sound of the single hand, you have proved the microcosm in yourself; there is nothing to talk about.

The Zen

RAHULA

Thus have I heard: Once the Buddha was sojourning in Karandavenuvana in Rajagriha. There was a vihara, a temple, there. One of the Buddha's giant disciples, Shariputra, was always stationed in the temple. It was one of the five famous temples of India in the Buddha's time.

*One day Sthavira Rahula: Sthavira is in English "Reverend," in Pali *thera*. In Japan, Buddhist temples have their name *tera* from this. Sthavira Rahula was the real son of the Buddha. When the Buddha had attained the highest enlightenment and commenced to promulgate his religion, his son, Rahula, joined his father's religious group. He was taken into the Sangha and treated just as any other novice. After the Buddha's death Rahula became the leader of one of the Buddha's forty groups. There were nineteen groups of Sthaviras and twenty-one groups of Mahasanghikas. These two main groups, consisting of subdivided small groups, arose immediately after the Buddha's death. Rahula was one of the leaders. He was head of the so-called "Calf" school of Buddhism. It means "child of the ox."*

Came to pay homage to the Buddha: They were not all always together in the same place, but were living in different places in India. Through one hundred miles, or two hundred miles, casually they came to pay homage to the Buddha. The Buddha himself never stayed long in one place. The longest stay was three months in any one place. Usually he was with many monks, traveling from one place to another.

Bowing low at the Buddha's feet: As

I bow to the Buddha's image. And withdrawing to one side he said to him: It was the custom of ancient India.

*"O Lokanatha, how can I know, and what view should I take of this conscious body of mine and of this exterior state of the world?" Rahula asked the Buddha: "How can I know what view I should take?" I have translated this "what view," but in Sanskrit it is *darshana*, not exactly to see something, but to see something and contemplate upon it. To see and to contemplate on objective and subjective existence is called *darshana*. The Chinese translate this always just "to see." "How can I know": "know" is translated from *bodhi*, "to know." "To see" and "to know" and "to take a view of" a thing are usual Buddhist terms.*

"To see" is just to see, but this "to see" is very particularly explained in Buddhism. When you see this bowl as just seeing it, it is not a thing that is existing objectively. Looking at this object a baby thinks it is nothing, and not only a baby thinks this is nothing but a Buddhist also thinks that this is nothing by just looking at it. When we look at a bowl, for instance, this bowl is not color, not form, not sound, and not a thing that appears to our sense of smell. Western philosophers call it noumenon. When it is called phenomenon it has all attributes: color, form, sound, taste, smell, aspect. It does not appear as phenomenon from the beginning; it appears as noumenon. But certainly there was a thing there--in Western philosophy "the-thing-existing-in-itself"--and making first contact with our five senses it is called representation. It appears first as

representation. In such a case, we have seen it. Then the next moment this representation is accepted by our wisdom. It is different from knowledge or intellect. It is the power of knowing, in Sanskrit *jnana*. Then this appears as an existence which has form, color, sound, and so forth. But it does not make a clear concept. Then you see it all over, and feel it, and touch it with your finger, and smell it, and you will form it as a concept. This is called *darshana*--after it has been known by the various senses. So I have translated this *darshana* as "view."

"What view should I take of this conscious body of mine?" "Conscious body of mine" (Sanskrit *viijnana-kaya*) here means my own conscious body. The Chinese translate this *shiki-shin*. Body itself is consciousness. Western people think consciousness and body are different. Western people separate body and soul. They think consciousness is a soul and body is matter. Sometimes I wonder how they can think something with such an awkward way of taking it. Many Western people think that there can be consciousness without a body. How? Consciousness where without a body? They think consciousness is in the air. How? Consciousness in the air is a queer notion. Air itself is a body. If consciousness were in the air it would be air consciousness. "No," Western people say, "I don't mean consciousness in the air. I mean consciousness in the

ether." Then it must be ether consciousness. Of course there is consciousness in *akasha*. Consciousness is in every state of existence. Consciousness is in ether, in air, in fire, in water, in earth. They are not matter, they are all states of conscious-

ness in different degrees. In Buddhism they are called *amala-vijnana*, pure consciousness. *Amala* means pure. In the whole universe there is nothing else but consciousness, the power of knowing. It is called *bodhi*. When this power of knowing is personified we call it Buddha. Therefore this is the body of consciousness, a conscious body.

And of this exterior state of the world--color, sound, odor, taste, touch, and so forth. To our mind there are mountains and rivers and oceans, sky and earth, trees, weeds, and moon--the exterior forms that exist as though they are existing. Really they are not existing, but it appears to our sense organs as though they are existing. Whether you believe it or not, they are not existing. They are the production of our sense activity. They are illusory.

When I went to Boston Mr. Payne asked me: "You Oriental people think all these things are not really existing?" I said, "I cannot understand your question. These things are not really existing." "Of course," Mr. Payne said, "we can prove philosophically that these things are illusory, but we cannot believe it." "Well, whether you believe it or not," I said, "these things are really not existing. They are just the production of our sense activity. They are illusory."

Your scientists will prove analytically that all existence is fundamentally electrons and protons. Eddington said, when he was supporting his chin on his hand and his elbow on the table, that he realized this wasn't a table but an agglomeration of electrons and protons. But at the same time we

can take another view: it is a table. In another view, nothing exists. You are not existing there, I am not existing here, nothing is existing in this world. We can take these two views at the same time. We do not, therefore, divide one thing into two existences.

One thing appears not only in two forms of existence but in many forms of existence--as the five senses. And not only five. When I observe this with closed eyes in meditation it appears in an entirely different state. So one thing appears in six different forms. It means forms here--"this conscious body of mine and this state of the exterior world."

Without reasoning about any of the forms of the appearances how can I annihilate all leakages between my consciousness and the exterior existences?" Certainly Rahula asked a very complicated question of the Buddha. We enter Buddhism from here always--doubt about eye, doubt about ear--what is this rupa? What is this appearance is the first question. When we ask our mother, in our infantile state, "Mother, why is it red?" she says, "Because it is red." "Why is this green?" and she says, "Hush! Because it is green." The child is not contented with the mother's answer. Then he studies the science of optics, the science of light, and he finds why red is red and why green is green. Color is the vibration of waves of light. When light vibrates in long waves it appears as red, in short waves as blue. In very quick waves it appears dark, not to the retina of the eye, but through another light it appears very dark-blue purple light. You call it x-ray. So really color is not existing outside but appears on the retina of your eye.

It is in your eye. The sky is neither white nor blue.

The human being takes this world entirely upside down, therefore his mind is also entirely upside down. Upside down minds thinking upside down things make upside down solutions. How can they reach anywhere without reasoning about the outside?

"Without reasoning"--now I have explained to you by reasoning that things are not existing. But *without reasoning*, without going through reasoning, without going through such philosophical contemplation "about any of the forms of appearance, how can I annihilate all leakages between my consciousness and the exterior existences?" This *leakage* is a word I must explain clearly. Leakage--in Sanskrit *ashrava*--the true meaning is that our imagination or dreams or sufferings leak out from the deep state of consciousness. *Ashrava* means something that oozes out from the deeper consciousness. When you meditate to keep your mind calm and pure, all of a sudden something comes out of it like an air bubble or as a mouse comes into the kitchen, and then your meditation is all broken. This is *ashrava*. When you meditate on the shore of a great calm lake, in the beginning, of course, you are attacked by a kind of demon, so to say. But by practice your mind becomes quiet, becomes transformed, and then something leaks out like an air bubble or as perspiration leaks out from the skin. Western scholars, European scholars, translate this *ashrava* as annihilating impurities. They take it entirely physically or morally. How can they understand Buddhism?

Between my consciousness and the exterior existences: I must explain

this very carefully if I have time. Subconscious state is filthy with debris, like ashes in water. But our consciousness is pure, like water. Originally there is nothing in it. It is pure soul activity. And then all the debris comes in from outside and you call it subconscious, and you go to a psychoanalyst and he will analyze you. I do not go to any psychoanalyst. I will analyze myself. How can he know? Analyze yourself in meditation. Consciousness is a pure thunderbolt which penetrates through the whole universe.

Rahula questioned the Buddha, "How can I know, and what view can I take?" Rahula is not a child to ask this question, surely Rahula knows the answer, but he asked it deliberately in order to have the answer to give to posterity. To transmit it to the disciples Rahula put this question to the Buddha.

The Buddha answered Sthavira Rahula: There are six places to enter. What are the six entrances? Entrance, in Sanskrit, *ayatana*, to the Buddha is quite different from your idea. You think of this entrance as something that is entered from the outside to the inside. You say the image entered my eye, the voice of the bird my ear, that everything enters the inside from the outside--as a materialist. But we don't think in such a way. We think we enter the outside from the inside. Universal consciousness enters many subdivided states of consciousness. Each consciousness has different magnitude. You call this "soul." You say, "The soul enters the body." This soul enters my eye, my ear, nose, tongue. So it enters from inside to outside, as a tree, a vegetable, sucks water from the root and this water enters

the trunk, the branches, the leaves and the flowers.

The *Pundarika-sutra* made an allegory about a wonderful rain. The rain falls on the ground. The same sweet rain that enters the ground, the ground gives to all different existences--weeds, trees, flowers, vegetables--and they appear in all different forms and colors. But all are nourished by only this one same rain.

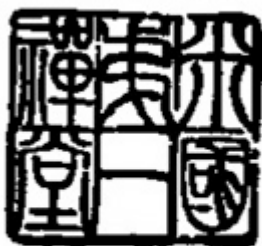
They are termed the eye entrance, the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind entrances. When you have contemplated upon these dharmas with your true wisdom and have annihilated all leakages you will have attained true emancipation in the state of wisdom and in the state of mind. There are two kinds of emancipation (Sanskrit *vimukti*). First you attain emancipation intellectually. Well, it is that! I was born in a poor house. I am poor and I must accept it, I will not make any attempt to escape from it. I will accept it bravely. And from the next day you will go and labor, and work like mad. This is Buddhistic emancipation. He does not run from earth and jump into heaven, for there is no earth, no heaven! Earth and heaven are the same.

If you don't find emancipation here, where you are standing, where do you attain emancipation? Where will you go to find it? You will never find it. Accept the agony and the agony ceases. It is easy to attain emancipation in your mind--to save yourself intellectually is easy--but it is hard to attain it emotionally. Your mind and body must go with the karma, so it is not so easy.

He who has annihilated all leakages thus is called Arhat.

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Sokei-an Sasaki



First Zen Institute of America
113 E30 Street
New York, New York 10016
(212)-686-2520
www.firstzen.org

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