

ZEN NOTES



Soen Roshi by Beecher Lake

"The Last Teisho of Soen Roshi," which follows, is reprinted with the permission of Eido Shimano Roshi, from an interesting and attractive new quarterly (untitled) published by The Zen Studies Society. Permission to reprint the photo of Soen Roshi was also granted, with the reservation that Soen Roshi did not like it. We do not know who made it.

Eido Roshi has also kindly proffered some biographical notes, which follow.

"For your information, I would like to give you the accurate biography of Soen Roshi, as it has already been misrepresented. To sustain the dignity of Zen Notes, I hope that this will be of some help.

"Nakagawa Soen Roshi was born on March 19th, 1907, as the first son of an army doctor. In 1930, he graduated from the University of Tokyo, where he studied Japanese literature, especially Basho.

"That year, on his birthday, he was ordained by Katsube Keigaku Roshi of Kogaku-ji. Later, he met Yamamoto Gempo Roshi and Harada Sogaku Roshi. He became the Dharma heir of Gempo Roshi, and was installed as an abbot of Ryutaku-ji in 1951.

"Because of his karmic connection with Nyogen Senzaki, he first came to the United States in 1948, and returned many times.

"On March 11, 1984, at 4 o'clock in the morning, he passed away at Ryutaku-ji. He left five Dharma heirs--all Japanese.

"He is considered as the founder of Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji."

The first issue also includes an intimate memoir of Soen Roshi by Eido Roshi. Genro Lee Milton, the editor, says it is their intention "to introduce Zen Masters of the past hundred years whose lives and thought are little known or not known at all in the West." For more information and copies, write N.Y. Zendo, 223 E. 67th St., NY 10021.

THE LAST TEISHO OF SOEN ROSHI
July 4th, 1982 at Dai Bosatsu Zendo

This is our last teisho meeting, our everlasting last meeting. Not only this teisho, but everyday is everlasting. Not only day or night. Every minute is everlasting lasting. This talk, Eido Roshi's talk, everything is a teisho, mountain, running water, sound of wind, everything, especially your lovely babies and children, and each of you. When your mind is clear like the sky this wonderful morning--everything becomes THIS. THIS is very easy to understand, too easy, too clear. Today, TODAY, always TODAY!

Please stop your thinking! Even about my teisho. Indeed, this is a difficult teisho, to speak about This Matter, but this is my miserable Karma! I must give you this teisho and disturb you There are so many Sutras and Shastras, and many religions, so many books, but really there's only One Thing. You are all living Bodhisattvas, all Buddhas. Each of you is a wonderful Bodhisattva, except myself. I cannot see my own face.

Today's drama is from the *Rinzai Roku*: in the first act, Rinzai and Obaku are on stage. In the second act, Rinzai and the head monk and Obaku. Please act this drama for yourself. It is said that there are eighteen hundred koans, and they are all Dharma dramas. But at the same time, they have only one point. The many, many koans are at the same time One; the one koan is at the same time Many. Everything is like this! Let us understand This! Realize and actualize This, in everyday life, and every year life, in our ordinary life. Rinzai repeatedly said this, not only Rinzai but all the Patriarchs, the past, present, and future Patriarchs. Katsu! No need to hear some Patriarchs, you yourself can realize this, okay? And you think, so difficult, so difficult, and say, "later, later." No need to wait!

Today's drama, Rinzai was sitting in the front part of the monk's hall or zendo. Seeing that his teacher, Obaku, was coming, Rinzai suddenly closed his eyes. Giving the appearance of being frightened,

Obaku returned to his quarters. Rinzai followed him there and bowed low. In another translation it is written that Rinzai "apologized." This was not an apology, of course, but an expression of thanks. Not need to say "thank you" or "danke schon" JUST ...At this time the head monk observed what had happened, and was curious. Obaku said to him, "Though he is a youngster, he knows about This Matter."

"Venerable Dai Osho," the head monk said to Obaku, "Your old feet are not touching the ground." Do you understand? The head monk was telling the great Obaku, "Your feet are not touching the ground, why are you giving recognition to this youngster?" Obaku hit--slapped himself on the mouth.

In this drama, it appears that Obaku is beaten, but in hitting himself he testifies to his greatness as a teacher. And the head monk said, "It's all right, as long as you know it."

After purification, after we have purified ourselves, the Dharma opens. From the beginning this Dharma is open, always.

Lost in the darkness of ignorance--

When are we able to be free from birth and death?

I am talking humbly, out of ignorance; indeed, I am the most ignorant, proud monk. Today, we are appearing now in this world, this present human world. So wonderful, this drama! Seeing each other, hating each other, loving each other, this is the world we are making by our own ignorance. This is the present. So we say, "I now confess and purify them all." Yet from the beginning the Dharma is always open.

This Dharma, incomparably profound and minutely subtle, is hardly met with even in hundreds of thousands of millions of eons. We now can see this, listen to this, accept and hold this. May we completely understand and actualize this Ta-thagata's true teaching.

My talking is foolish, so be careful. One act is finished. Now the curtain falls, and I too should disappear!

In the second act, yesterday or today or tomorrow, Rinzai is sleeping in the zendo. Obaku came from his quarters and of course every monk pretended

to be wide awake. Obaku, seeing Rinzai asleep, struck the platform once. Rinzai lifted his head and seeing it was Obaku, closed his eyes again. Obaku again struck the platform and went to the upper part of the zendo and seeing the head monk sitting straight said, "That youngster down in the lower part of the zendo is sitting sincerely--what are you doing here, cooking up wild fancies?" And the head monk thought, "What is the old man up to?" This ends the second act. Close your eyes and imagine this drama. No need to see Kabuki! But Kabuki is wonderful too of course. And Noh. And I admire the wonderful actors in New York very much.

There are so many pleasures in life! Cooking, eating, sleeping, every deed of everyday life is nothing else but This great Matter. Realize this! So we extend tender care with a worshipping heart even to such beings as beasts and birds--but not only to beasts, not only to birds, but to insects too, okay? Even to grass, to one blade of grass, even to dust, to one speck of dust. Sometimes I bow to the dust.

"When I pick up one particle of dust, all nations are united."

Soen Roshi's teisho was transcribed and edited by
Jiro Andy Afable of Kashin Zendo

SOGEN ASAHINA ROSHI SAID at the FZI June 2, 1954

The world you will see in the state of enlightenment is totally different from what you were accustomed to seeing before. Even a blade of grass, a tree, becomes different from what you have previously seen. They then express vividly the real value of existence, and you come to know that after all the world is not a world independent from your real self, but that your real self is the world, and the world is your real self. The whole world, the beautiful streams and the wandering clouds, these are you yourself.

Note from the Editor

This is used to stand for the word bhutatahata left untranslated in the text. In Chinese, it is translated by two characters. The first of the two characters means "true"; the second is variously rendered suchness, reality or thusness. For more information on mu nen ("mindlessness") see ZN XXXI/3,4.

THE GREAT SIXTH PATRIARCH'S TEACHING
Chapter IV, 9

Virtuous friends, "mu" means that there is no matter whatsoever in the world. "Nen" means the (mind-)stuff that constitutes the substance of thoughts. "Mu" means that two different entities do not exist in the world; hence these afflictions of mind have no essential existence. "Nen" means that one bears in mind the essential nature of This (bhutatahata). This is the substance (body) of mind (nen). Nen is the activity of This. The original ability of This manifests mind activities. Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, are incapable of thinking. This, however, innately possesses the faculty of animating the mind. If This possessed no eyes and ears, color and sound would not have existed from the beginning.

SOKEI-AN SAYS

This is the famous part in which the Sixth Patriarch explains the relation between *This* (Reality) and its activity. Many people ask this question of a Buddhist: "How can the two aspects, *This* and the human being's activity, be combined? One is transcendental existence and the other is secular and profane. How can they meet? It is as if God and man would shake hands."

To a Buddhist, the answer is very plain. The Shastra written by Asvaghosha on "The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana" explains it very carefully. This was translated long ago by Dr. Suzuki, but it is now out of print.*

The Sixth Patriarch explains it here in a few words spoken to his students from the platform made

of earth. *Mindlessness* combines *This* and the activities of alaya consciousness. Buddhist theory always has these two aspects: nirvana (absolute existence) and samsara (transmigrating existence). The alaya consciousness transmigrates through many phases of consciousness, but *This* never changes its face throughout time and space.

How then does the changeless *This* become the changing alaya consciousness? This has been a very great question since ancient days. Many Zen students experience it but have difficulty in expressing their understanding. There is a koan that makes it clear how absolute entity becomes phenomenal activity.

A sutra describes a bell tower in the Jetavana Vihara. At the four corners of the eaves are hung silver bells that murmur with the breeze. If there is no breeze, they are silent. But there is a crystal bell in the center which always murmurs, with or without a breeze. How? Why? That is the question. When you grasp the point of this koan, you will understand how *This* becomes alaya consciousness, how the absolute changes into the relative.

It is like zero. Zero is always zero; it never becomes one because you cannot add anything to zero. However, in the Chinese *I Ching*, to make zero into one is quite easy: when you recognize zero and point it out "This is zero," at that point, zero becomes one. Then, there must be something existing before zero (now one). So they postulate an absolute zero. Now we have the absolute zero, the relative zero, and one, making three. But the zero and the three are the same in their way of thinking.

Mu-nen (asmrti) I translate as "mindlessness."

"*Mu*" means that there is no matter whatsoever in the world. Not only in the world, but in the whole universe. There is just *mu* (absolute nothingness). But if you conceive of "nothingness," it is not true nothingness. You must destroy that conception, and then the real *mu*, real nothingness, will appear to you. So this "no matter whatsoever in the world" means absolute nothingness.

"*Nen*" means the stuffs that constitute the substance of thoughts. Without *nen*, without "stuff,"

the substance of thoughts would not be constituted. Your mind is always flowing like a stream, changing phase from moment to moment. Thoughts are a very important indicator of your condition, the circumstances of your being. If your mind is not quite free, if you attach to any one thing, conceive an idea or a superstition, the indicator does not indicate the circumstances of your being with any clarity. Accordingly, as you think this and that, your thoughts, flowing from morning to evening, encounter and register circumstances in your mind. When your circumstances become narrow and bound, your stress of thought becomes rapid and the waves are high. When your circumstances broaden, your thoughts become more broad and plain, the stream of thought moves more freely, easily and more quietly. So, from morning to evening, from moment to moment, your thoughts change. Following your different feelings and emotions, you think this and that. This changing feeling is the barometer of your condition. The flowing thoughts are an indicator of your changing feelings and emotions; your reaction to circumstances is translated into thoughts. For instance, the end of the month is coming and you know you have to pay the rent. Your heart is ringing an alarm bell, but you pay no attention, for your thoughts are not natural. So when the "circumstances" of the first of the month come, you are in trouble. To the deluded one, thoughts are demons--merely irritations. To an enlightened one, thoughts are important.

"Mu" means that two different entities (good and bad, duality) do not exist in the world; hence these afflictions of mind have no essential existence. Observed from the essential standpoint, there is no duality, no two different existences. So there is no reason to feel agony. But those who cannot transcend the idea of these two opposites will suffer.

"Nen" means that one bears in mind the essential nature of This. In your essential nature, you feel every moment as an indicator of your condition. In such a way we are created.

This is the substance of nen, and nen is the activity of This. The original ability of This

manifests mind activities. Nen (acting mind) must have substance, just as the waves of the ocean have substance. As the substance of the waves is water, so the substance of the waves of mind is *This*; and Nen is the activity of *This* as waves are the activity of water. So the original ability of *This* and its activity, our daily lives, are one--not two. *This* is quietude and Nen is activity. Why should it be difficult to make clear that these are not two different things, but aspects that are one and inseparable? They are one in your own experience.

Eyes, ears, nose and tongue are incapable of thinking. Each has its function.

This, however, innately possesses the faculty of animating the mind. If This possessed no eyes and ears, color and sound would not have existed from the beginning. "Animating the mind" means thinking. But this thinking doesn't come from the eyes, nose, ears or tongue. From morning to evening, this thinking that goes on is not your activity; it is the activity of *This*. So you are, in reality, a wonderful being.

When you come to this conclusion, your universe suddenly expands, your circumstances broaden, and your mind shines in a limitless universe. Your mind activities are no longer afflictions and you will have a clear and shining face. This is my prediction.

* Dr. Suzuki's translation of Ashvaghosha's *Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana* was made in 1900, from the later Chinese translation attributed to Sikshananda. It was out of print at the time Sokei-an's talk was given in 1936.

Another translation, by the Rev. T. Richard, 1907, attempted to read Christianity into the text.

The somewhat free rendering made by Dwight Goddard and Bhikshu Wai-tao in 1937 is available in the 1952 edition of *A Buddhist Bible*.

In 1967, Yoshito Hakeda's translation, from a text attributed to Paramartha, attempted to make the work accessible to the general reader at the same time taking into consideration the results of modern critical scholarship on the text and the history of Buddhist thought in general.

IV WISDOM AND COMPASSION WITHIN THE FREUDIAN AND BUDDHIST CONTEXT

By H.Pashenz,PH.D.

Two major goals of Buddhist study and practice are the development of wisdom and compassion. Actually they are related in the sense that true understanding of the human condition (wisdom) reveals that we all share the same essence (Buddha Nature) and are aspects of one universal mind. To have feelings of love and compassion for others is having love and compassion for oneself; momentarily appearing as an external object. What I have described is the familiar transcendental resolution of the dualistic approach which divides experience into a fixed subject (I) experiencing something external to itself (the object).

Psychoanalytic treatment also requires both compassion and wisdom as the analyst offers a balanced combination of insight and emotional support. The insight proffered is knowledge concerning the interplay of unconscious inner impulses, beginning early in childhood, that shape present adult behavior.

The purpose of "making the unconscious conscious" is to permit conscious choice to replace the repetitive, compulsive reenactment of earlier childhood patterns that "worked" within the limitations of the neurotic aspects of the parents' personalities but prove maladaptive in later adulthood.

Presenting elements of the unconscious starkly and directly only lead to anxiety and rejection by the analysand. The analyst must be deeply sensitive to the pain accompanying the patient's recognition of negative aspects of the self and memories of childhood that are of a frightening, traumatic nature. At those times in the analysis, the analyst must offer a great deal of emotional support, warmth, empathy and understanding. The analyst must be compassionate, just as the analysand must become less critical and more compassionate towards himself.

The analyst's compassion stems from another source, the wisdom that if it were not for an accident of fate, the present roles of patient and analyst would be reversed. Had

the analyst been born into the patient's family while the patient developed with the guidance and love the analyst received, it is quite likely that the present patient would be helping the analyst work through his personality problems.

Compassion can be viewed as the logical outgrowth of the wisdom that, in mental illness, the abnormal is only an exaggeration of the normal. In even the most severe psychotic states, a therapist can easily see exaggerated aspects of elements of his own personality which he has the good fortune to be able to control.

CORRECTION

Mary Reinhart writes: re-reading my comments in ZN XXX/11, I discovered a line had been omitted. Page 6, line 15--"the analyst's empathic experience of himself and his therapist." Should read"--the analyst's empathic experience of what is going on in the analysis and, as well as the patient's experience of himself and his therapist."

Sorry about that. Ed.

UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIAL TO THE EFFICACY OF BANKEI ZEN (cf. ZN XXVI/11, XXVII/2,3,4,5

The father of a friend I was visiting is a very interesting man. He owns a small company which consists of transportation, telegram delivery, food processing, etc. He doesn't have higher education beyond high school, but is witty, warm, and straightforward. He doesn't look like a business man at all...he hates wearing a tie despite his advisors' efforts to put one round his neck--rather he looks like a gang boss. It seems to me that it is this bossy tendency that made him successful. People trust him and find it comfortable to work for him. His only drawback I heard is that he is short-tempered. His wife told me that he often "barked" at her and it was so bothering. Since he likes me to tell him all sorts of stories related to Buddhism I told him one day what Bankei zenji said about short-tempered people and how useless and even harmful it is to get

gan-ri-ka

angry. You instantly change your Buddha-nature with those of asuras and hell-dwellers, etc.) He was excited to hear this story, and thereafter (according to my friend and her mother) "his illness" was cured. Even the people from the company noticed this change in him.

Too many students in America come to the teacher asking what should I do. If the teacher doesn't teach them, the students criticize him, say he's no good. Therefore the professor ends up teaching and authority decreases because when this relationship evolves, students become idle and their searching power is very low.

JOSHU SASAKI ROSHI SAYS

Q When sitting, what method should we use to work on our koan? What should we do while sitting?

A In Japan we do not teach, we just strike university students who ask how koans can be solved and say go on and experience it for yourself. I suppose it's because American teachers are so kind that the question what should I do comes out.

What is this "What should I do?" Can't you just solve your own problem? Why don't you just face the wall and sit there until you awaken?

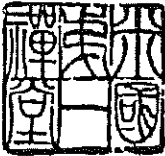
In America maybe one or two out of a hundred are really excellent. I think American Zen teachers teach too much. I think even in the West a hundred years ago they didn't teach that way so they produced great men. Who was Edison's teacher? He was self-taught. That's why he was great. He learned by himself. So all Americans must become Edisons.

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Mary Farkas, Editor

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