

ZEN notes



THE GREAT SIXTH PATRIARCH'S TEACHINGS

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

Chapter X, No. 21

"If after my passing, you practice this, it will be just as if I were alive. But if you violate my teaching, you will receive no benefit at all, even if I go on living."

The Master then recited the following gatha:

*"At ease, practicing virtue
Carefree, without doing evil
At peace, delivered from the world of seeing and hearing
Freely drifting, the mind without attachment"*

Having finished reciting the gatha, the Master remained seated in meditation posture until midnight. Then he suddenly said to his disciples, "I am going" and immediately passed away. At that moment, the room was permeated with a strange fragrance, a white rainbow formed an arch over the earth, the trees in the forest turned white, and birds and beasts cried in despair.

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

These are the last words of the Sixth Patriarch that were given to his disciples. There are perhaps two more weeks on which to give brief commentaries. I have spent almost four years in translating *The Sixth Patriarch's Record*. Now it is coming to an end.

"If after my passing, you practice this, it will be just as if I were alive. But if you violate my teaching, you will receive no benefit at all, even if I go on living." "My teaching" means the teaching of sudden enlightenment. We are the distant followers of the Sixth Patriarch. Our school of Zen is the school of sudden enlightenment.

The Sixth Patriarch died in the eighth century, and we are living in the twentieth. One thousand two hundred years have passed since his death. But in conformity with his teaching, we still practice his Zen. And we are very proud of the way we have followed his teaching.

In the Orient, everyone who begins some new thing is always

blamed. Everyone objects and wishes to follow the old traditional teaching. But now, everyone is proud that their faith is twenty-five hundred years old. It certainly has some value; it has existed such a long, long time on earth. This is contrary to your attitude. You have old things and like new things. You throw away old teachings and try to invent something new. Your people are like tree branches that individually spread out in all directions. But our idea is always like a tree root. Every branch must return to the root.

I came to this country to speak about this one-thousand-year-old teaching, while you are inventing new teachings every day. But the old teaching of the Sixth Patriarch, somehow, gives you a new idea.

I believe the period has come when all of you in this Western hemisphere must return to your own living axiomatic truth, which is the truth within yourself, in your own nature. From your own mind, you will discover many treasures, and from your own feeling, you will discover humanity. To return to yourself is the teaching of the Sixth Patriarch. He said that if you practice Zen in conformity with this teaching, it will be as though you were living with him, at that very time.

The Master then recited the following gatha:

*"At ease, practicing virtue"
Carefree, without doing evil
At peace, delivered from the world of seeing and hearing
Freely drifting, the mind without attachment"*

To the dilettante's ear, I think this sounds very strange. But from the Sixth Patriarch's standpoint, evil and virtue are secondary things. In this ideology, evil and virtue give an Oriental man an entirely different conception from yours. There is a fundamental difference in how these words are handled in the East and in the West.

Our statesmen, our diplomats, our nations blindly argue with Western people about everything because our concepts of evil and virtue are so different. Your statesmen, your diplomats, and your churchmen, without knowing how Orientals think, merely attack and blame. Their attitude is to blindly promulgate the Western idea of evil and virtue. When this is rejected by the Oriental man, you send your army to attack him.

From our standpoint, as men who deal with thoughts, we harbor many questions. By understanding this fundamental difference in ideology, we must prevent useless quarrels and fighting in the shower of blood and the rain of iron fire. But

before we understand this fundamental difference in the concept of evil and virtue, we cannot find peace without fighting each other.

To you, virtue is the first thing. "Good" is the first attribute of God, and there is no evil in Him. God is Good, Truth, and Beauty. The Hindu god always has two sides: the creative side and the destructive side - good and bad. Perhaps this gives you a strange feeling. Why must God be bad?

Buddhists have their own way of understanding God. We do not call IT by any name. Our God is the universe, not a person and not a self. So man's nature is universal as well. If man has a nature as a person or as one separated from another person, he is not an ideal man. The characteristics of the Oriental man are derived from universal nature. You think that this man on earth is imperfect, but that behind this man there must be a perfect man, and that this perfect man appeared on earth as Christ. He is an agency of the perfect attributes of God in the form of a person.

When I studied Christianity with a Canadian missionary at the age of eighteen or nineteen, he explained what I have told you just now. I clearly remember his words. Now I understand that his ideas of God were influenced by Greek philosophy and Greek idealism. So, naturally, your God is good and cannot be bad. But the missionary's word, "Good," in our conception, cannot be translated as good. I think your idea of good is some virtue which is beyond evil, which has a nature beyond the evil and virtue on earth. There is no particular word for that in your usage, so you just call it "Good." If I were to make a diagram of this, I would draw a circle with good and bad in it. Then this attribute of your God could be explained. God is Good, but good and bad are included in it. When God judges the actions of human beings, he judges them as good and bad, so God admits that there must be bad. God himself is Good. Good and bad exist on earth; but in heaven, there is only Good. If you explain it in such a way, we understand. The Oriental man can understand your idea of God.

When you never practice any virtue or any evil, you are beyond earthly evil because you are living in the state that transcends earthly virtue and evil. Of course, in Buddhism, this denotes the state of dharmakaya. Virtue and evil exists only in the state of nirmanakaya, only in the state of the third law. If you follow the traffic law of New York, you are good; if you violate the law, you are bad. If you drive your car through seventieth street from Central Park West to Columbus Avenue, you are bad; but if you drive through seventieth street from Columbus Avenue to Central Park West, you are good. If, however, you are in the Arabian desert, you can drive your car anywhere you like, and no

policeman will arrest you. So, driving a car in the Arabian Desert cannot be termed good or bad. You must understand this fundamental difference.

The Sixth Patriarch spoke from this standpoint. He was a man who never practiced any virtue or practiced any evil. He came from this standpoint into the world. When I think now of what that Christian teacher taught me in my youth, I believe that, perhaps, he did not understand the true meaning of "Good." His words were from the orthodox book. It was not the fault of the theology but of the teacher. The attribute of God that is good must not be the good that exists on earth, but a heavenly virtue. Now we can agree. But God's attribute of good, in terms of human nature, we do not accept in religion. There is a fundamental difference.

No fundamental difference exists between the East and the West, but our understanding is not mutually penetrating. We are quarreling and fighting because we are ignorant, especially the statesmen and politicians, who handle the thoughts of men in their ignorant way.

You have been sending missionaries to the Orient for many years, and some of us were educated by them. Now we must explain to you how we accepted your Christianity. Your churchmen do not know anything about it. Speaking such big words on this small corner of seventieth street is not worthwhile but my words are true. When the time comes, perhaps two hundred years from now, someone else will speak the same words I am speaking now, and you will listen. Your statesmen and also your clergymen will listen.

I do not want to speak about any national problems in my lecture, but I will say two or three more words about the relations between America and Japan in regard to the Chinese situation. America does not disagree with Japan economically about the Sino-Japanese question, but America is taking, morally, a side opposite to that of Japan. Neither understands the other. The Japanese do not understand anything about the American idea of virtue. So the two sides are just splashing each other with water for nothing. How stupid!

Having finished reciting the gatha, the Master remained seated in meditation posture until midnight. Then he suddenly said to his disciples, "I am going" and immediately passed away." Thus the Sixth Patriarch died.

At that moment, the room was permeated with a strange fragrance": In this country, no one would notice any strange fragrance, but those who go to Japan or China, after a sudden

shower on a summer evening, will realize that the hot, wet earth has a strange fragrance. This fragrance in the air will give you a tranquil feeling. In Japan, we are living very near to the earth, while in New York, we are living on concrete. When I returned to Japan, I said, "Japan's cities seem to be in bare feet, while New York wears concrete shoes."

The strange fragrance described here evokes the wet, cold air of morning. The Sixth Patriarch died at midnight, and the cold air of the morning penetrated the room.

"A white rainbow formed an arch over the earth, the trees in the forest turned white": The white rainbow appears many times in Chinese descriptions. In heroic novels and histories, before an important incident or birth of some great hero, a white rainbow is said to cover the mountains. So in any description where this white rainbow appears, you must understand that it signifies an important occasion. Therefore, when the Sixth Patriarch died, this white ribbon arched over the earth.

"And birds and beasts cried in despair." In the pictures of the Buddha's nirvana, many insects, birds and beasts, felt the great loss and cried in sadness.

It seems to me that I have spoken unnecessary words here tonight, but my father was a Shinto priest. Then I followed a Christian teacher who's name was Reverend Bates of Canada. Later, I studied with a Japanese, eminent in the Japanese Christianity of that period, and then I came to Buddhism.

At my present age, I cross my arms, sit down on my cushion and think about it. I now understand the fundamental difference between the Western and Eastern teachings. This variance can be understood. There is a key to open the mystic box of two very different religions, and this key is Zen.



THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

SEVENTEENTH LECTURE

Saturday, October 29th, 1938

Whereupon Bodhisattva Samantanetra arose from his seat among the multitude and worshipped the Buddha, reverently lifting the Buddha's feet to his brow and going around him three times to the right. Then kneeling down and crossing his hands upon his breast, he said to the Buddha:

"O Lokanatha Mahakaruna (Most Compassionate One)! I entreat you to permit the Bodhisattvas in this assemblage and the sentient beings of the future world to hear your sermon on how to contemplate and how actually to live and remain in that marvelous state of awakening by means of gradual practice. Sentient beings do not know this awakened state. By what device can I make them attain enlightenment? O Buddha! They do not know the proper device and the proper method of consideration by which awakening is attained. Having heard the Tathagata Buddha expounding this samadhi of Perfect Awakening, they harbor doubt and are perplexed, They are unable to attain the enlightened state in this Perfect Awakening."

In the previous lecture, the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra asked the Buddha how to "maintain the practice in this deluded and mirage-like world when the mind itself is also deluded and illusory?"

The Buddha answered: "By knowing that your mind is illusory, all sentient beings can attain enlightenment and become emancipated from this illusory world. It is as one who dreams intensely and wakes up because his dream is unbearable.

"There is no device to attain enlightenment, for there is no gradual practice to attain enlightenment; but every one must prepare himself to realize his own awakened mind which is intrinsic to himself. The intrinsic mind is awake always, but your deluded view of the outside covers your original mind as the cloud

covers the bright sun or the moon. On the fifteenth of September, the bright moon is always in the sky. Though you cannot see it when it is raining-- the moon is there behind the cloud."

Samantanetra asked the next question of the Buddha-- how to make preparation to discover this original mind which is intrinsic to all beings. This question is described here.

"Whereupon Bodhisattva Samantanetra" - In original Indian Buddhism, "Bodhisattva" meant "enlightened gentleman." In the adulterated Buddhism of today, it means "sage", demi-god" or "angel". But this Samantanetra was neither demi-god nor enlightened gentleman. He is a personified doctrine of Buddhism - an invented Bodhisattva and not a historical one.

Samantanetra means "uniform consciousness". All sentient beings have different appearances but the same consciousness, a uniform consciousness.

Buddha means here, "omnipresent wisdom". It is the ocean of wisdom. This wisdom is subdivided into many different utensils -- but the quality of wisdom in each is uniform, is the same nature.

So this subdivided, uniform consciousness asked a question of omnipresent consciousness, or wisdom. From this viewpoint you should observe this sutra.

This is not understood in America or Europe. Some scholars say, "Oh, some other demi-god!" It is no demi-god; it has a profound meaning in its name. These dramatized scriptures are a very ancient way of teaching.

"arose from his seat among the multitude" - In ancient days, when the Buddha was preaching, all took seats surrounding the Buddha and each group had its own leader. Samantanetra was the leader of a group.

"and worshipped the Buddha, reverently lifting the Buddha's feet to his brow"- As the Oriental monk uses this bow in the ritual; as I always perform the ritual -- kneeling down and holding the Buddha's feet in my palm and pressing his feet to my brow. It is the ancient style of paying the utmost respect to the teacher.

"and going around him three times to the right. Then kneeling down and crossing his hands upon his breast," - As I do when I come out from the Zen room. This is one style of salutation to the Buddha -- the hand upon the breast. To express gratitude, join the hands -- but to ask of the Buddha, "I embody you; you embody me" -- this way. Christians cross their breasts with their fingers

but in ancient Indian sculpture they cross their hands differently, deep to the shoulders. Later, this was abbreviated -- and today, this!

"*he said: Lokanatha Mahakaruna*" - "Lokanatha" means, "the most revered one in the world." "Maha" means "great", and "Karuna" means "compassion".

"*I entreat you to permit the Bodhisattvas in this assemblage*" - The Bodhisattvas are the uniform mind and Buddha is the omnipresent mind. So this is a description, not of the outside world but of the world within your mind -- your mental world which is bigger than the physical world. We think the mental world is so small that it is contained in our skull! Well, if you take this limited view, it is within your own skull!

The mind is liquid, flowing, it permeates. We are living in the waves of the mind!

In this world of mind the Buddha is still living! The mind is not in this skeleton! (My cat thinks the song comes from this box [the radio] but the song is not kept in the box.)

"*and the sentient beings of the future world to hear your sermon on how to contemplate and how actually to live and remain in that marvelous state of awakening by means of gradual practice.*" -- In the previous lecture, you may remember that the Buddha said there was no gradual attainment of awakening. Of course, to one who attains awakening, there is not a gradual awakening; this is for one who is still dreaming.

There is a story about a monk who was visiting an old temple in an unknown country. He had failed to realize how he came into that country. The monks were very kind, bringing buckets of water for the washing of his feet, and inviting him to the temple for tea.

All of a sudden he awakened -- and he was a little ant, working very hard in the hive -- and the queen was his bride -- "I am happy and married to the queen!"

Then someone kicked him; he awoke -- and really he was a little novice of the temple. He had dreamed within the dream -- two or three times -- "I must be awake!"

So Samantabhadra asked how, by gradual practice, to contemplate and actually to live and remain in that state.

Everyone thinks about Buddhism -- but very few can remain in Buddhism! It is because you do not have true Buddhism.

You are a vegetarian and you go to Delmonico's and see a sizzling beefsteak. "No, I am a vegetarian -- give me a carrot." And then you smell the beefsteak, and lean over -- and perhaps you will have a little! but you will swallow your saliva -- and eat bread with the carrot.

You are near to Buddhism -- but it is very hard to be a true Buddhist! While you do not think properly -- you cannot live and remain in that marvelous state of awakening.

"Sentient beings do not know this awakened state." - You may think that by meditating on the sky for ten-fifteen years, eating once a day -- on some day you will open a big hole in your back and find a beautiful world! This is not awakening -- it is dreaming. You will never attain the true state while you keep your two eyes open and do not use your pure mind!

When I was young, thirty years old, I realized that I knew all the principles of Buddhism, had passed many koans, had really attained understanding of unwritten Buddhism. But I had some doubt about transcendental wisdom! I did not know what to do to attain some better wisdom.

Then one day, it rained and I stepped into the water, getting my feet wet. In the hurry to go home, I had no time to think of anything, all of a sudden I understood this transcendental wisdom! My way of finding it was not doing, but undoing!

Then I had to find out if this was true or false. I checked by the sutra and I went to my teacher to be tested. "Nonsense -- it is not to find things on the outside -- but on the bottom of the mind!"

"By what device can I make them attain enlightenment? O Buddha! They do not know the proper device and the proper method of consideration by which awakening is attained." -- There are three devices from ancient days:

1. Think of the awakened state within your own wisdom.

2. Beside thinking, practice to attain. When you are thinking of meditation, try to meditate. If you practice for ten years -- what would happen? The one who practices must know the real state of attainment; the one who does not practice will talk about it but he will never know it.

3. Hear from the Buddha the state of enlightenment. Hear it with your wisdom -- that is, think of enlightenment and practice to attain that state!

These are the only devices to attain enlightenment; they are explained later.

"Having heard the Tathagata Buddha expounding this samadhi of Perfect Awakening," -- "Samadhi" is usually translated by European scholars as "absorption," or "intense meditation." Samadhi is no such thing!

There is a moment in which one does not think of anything but the thing he is doing. I observe this in sports -- for instance, the horse rider. The horse and the rider are one. When you ride a horse thus -- you are in samadhi! Of course, you are always in samadhi if you realize it!

There is a story: The Emperor went into a Chinese village to shoot white monkeys. The expert archers were having trouble -- for at each shot, the monkey would grab the arrow! The Emperor said, "Is there anyone here who can shoot the monkey?" Some one said, "Yes, one of our farmers can shoot the monkey." He came, joined the arrow to the bow, and aimed at the monkey. The monkey hid himself -- went around the tree. The farmer let fly the arrow from the bow. The monkey went round the tree -- and so did the arrow! This is a story of samadhi. It is not such a strange story; I have seen something like it in baseball!

"they harbor doubts and are perplexed. They are unable to attain the enlightened state in this Perfect Awakening." -- Everyone who harbors doubts is perplexed! That is why one must cast away all doubts to know the real state of samadhi.



RECORD OF THE MARVELOUS POWER OF IMMOVABLE WISDOM

(Fudô Shinmyôroku by Takuan Sôhō [1573-1645])

Composed for Yagyû Munenori, the Shogun's fencing master)

(Part 1)

Delusion as the Abiding Ground of Ignorance.

The term "ignorance" (mumyô) is made up of the characters for no (mu) and light (myô)--that is to say, delusion. The term "abiding ground" (jûji) is made up of characters meaning stopping and stage. In the practice of Buddhism, there are the fifty-two stages.¹ Among these, abiding ground indicates the way in which the mind stops at things. Jû means to abide; to abide refers to attaching the mind to things, of whatever sort. Applied to your Lordship's art of combat, [this means that] the moment your attention is drawn to the slashing blade of your opponent, you rush to meet his attack at that place, with the result that your mind becomes attached there to your opponent's blade, so that you lose your concentration on your own movement and can be slain. This is what is meant by attachment.

When you see the [opponent's] blade strike, just see it and don't attach your mind there, parrying the attacking blade without any thought or calculation. The instant you see your opponent's sword raised, without attaching to it for even a moment, move right in and capture his blade, seizing the sword that was about to kill you so that it becomes instead the sword that kills your opponent. In the Zen school we call this "seizing your opponent's lance and turning it against him." What's meant here is the idea of snatching away the sword wielded by your opponent and using it instead to kill him. This is what your Lordship refers to as No-Sword.²

If you stop your mind for even a second, a moment, an instant--whether it's at [the thought of] being attacked by an opponent or of attacking [an opponent], of the person who is attacking or the sword that is being wielded--your concentration on your own movement will be completely lost and you can be killed by your adversary. If you become fixed on your opponent, your mind is captured by your opponent, so you should not even fix your mind on yourself. To fix your mind on yourself may be [appropriate] when you are a beginner and just learning, [but],

¹ The fifty-two stages of the bodhisattva's path enunciated by the Tendai school based on the Yôrakukyô....

² Jap mutô. Yagyû's school of fencing was commonly referred to as the mutô, or No-Sword, school.

your mind will [then] be captured by your sword. [In the same way,] when you fix your mind on meeting your [opponent's] attack, your mind is captured by the meeting of that attack; when you fix your mind on your sword, it is captured by your sword. In all these instances the mind attaches to things and you become preoccupied. I am sure your Lordship is well-acquainted with [such matters]. And [they] apply to Buddhism [as well]. In Buddhism, this stopping mind is called delusion. That's why we speak of "delusion as the abiding ground of ignorance."

We speak of the immovable wisdom of the buddhas.

The term immovable (fudô) consists of the characters for not (fu) and moving (dô). The term wisdom (chi) signifies the wisdom of prajna. But even though we speak of not moving, that doesn't mean insentient like stone or wood! Immovable wisdom means the mind moving as it wants to move--forward, left, right, in all directions, without ever being attached.

Fudô Myôô³ clutches a sword in his right hand and a snare in his left, gnashing his teeth, eyes glaring, [feet] planted firmly, ready to subdue evil spirits who would obstruct the Buddhadharma. Yet however [terrifying] Fudô's appearance, he is not hiding in some [other] world. Outwardly, he manifests the form of a defender of Buddhadharma; but his substance he reveals to sentient beings as this immovable wisdom. Terrified [by this], ordinary unenlightened people resolve never to harm the Buddhadharma. But those whose minds are near to enlightenment realize [Fudô's] manifestation of immovable wisdom, dispelling all delusions. In other words, when you illumine immovable wisdom, this very body is none other than Fudô Myôô. Those who thoroughly carry out this practice of mind are [actually] Fudô Myôô [manifesting himself] in order to lead [sentient beings] to realize that even evil spirits cannot disturb them.

Thus, Fudô Myôô signifies the mind's not moving. It also signifies remaining steadfast. Remaining steadfast means not being disturbed by things. Immovable means that when you notice something, your mind doesn't attach to it. The reason is that when your mind attaches to something, all sorts of

³ SKT Acala. One of the "kings of radiance" (myôô), wrathful deities who protect the Buddhadharma. The most frequently represented of the kings, Fudô ("the Immovable") is especially prominent in Shingon iconography. In one hand he grasps a sword, symbolizing intrinsic wisdom, and in the other a snare of barbed rope, to bind ignorance. He is often shown glaring fiercely, standing (or sitting) on a rock, with flames emerging from his body.

discriminations appear in your breast, where they move about in all sorts of ways. When the mind attaches to something, that attaching mind moves, but it doesn't function freely.¹

As an example, let's say you're attacked by ten swordsmen, one after the other. If you parry each attack without your mind remaining fixed to it, leaving it behind and going on to the next, then you won't lose your free functioning, even while fighting ten different opponents. Confronting the ten different opponents, your mind responds ten different times, but if you never attach your mind to any one of the attackers, [simply] confronting them one after another, your free functioning will never waver. On the other hand, if your mind is fixed on one of the swordsmen, even if you're able to parry his attack, when it comes to the next one, you're sure to lose your concentration.

Consider the Thousand-Armed Kannon:² It has a thousand arms, [but] if its mind becomes fixed on the one arm that holds the bow, the other nine hundred ninety-nine arms won't work. It's just because its mind doesn't become fixed at any one place that all its arms do work. How can Kannon have a thousand arms on a single body? It manifests this form in order to demonstrate to people that when immovable wisdom is revealed, even if one's body has a thousand arms all of them will function.

Let's suppose you're looking at a [maple] tree [in autumn]: If your eye becomes fixed on one particular red leaf, you miss all the rest. When you don't fix on any one leaf, but look at the tree without any intention, you see all the myriad leaves. If your attention is captured by a particular leaf, you miss all the others. If your mind isn't attached to any one leaf, you see all the hundreds and thousands of leaves.

One who realizes this is himself a Kannon with a thousand arms and eyes. Yet ordinary, unenlightened persons believe blindly that it's a marvel having a thousand arms and eyes in a single body; while those who are know-it-alls deride the whole idea, saying, "How can there be a thousand eyes in one body?"

¹ The text here appears corrupt. On Professor Abe's advice, I have taken the final verb *ugoku* (to move) to be a copyist's error for the very similar character *hataraku* (here, to act or function freely).

² Senju Kannon. A popular form of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, characterized by multiple arms. Each hand holds various ritual and symbolic objects, a bow, an arrow, a rope, and so forth, indicating the bodhisattva's infinite means of saving sentient beings. An eye on the palm of each hand symbolizes the bodhisattva's all-seeing compassionate activity. "One thousand" here is a general number, signifying "many," and actual images of this deity in Japan often have forty-or-so arms.

What nonsense!"

When you come to understand things better, neither the unenlightened person's belief nor denial is the point. Those who revere the principle behind [the image of Kannon] manifest this principle as the single, underlying truth of Buddhadharma.³ This is the case in all the religions. You see it particularly in Shinto. One who takes [the image of Kannon] literally is an unenlightened being. One who derides it is worse still! Within this [image] there is a principle. This or that religion may assume various different forms, but ultimately all arrive at the selfsame truth.

After starting as a beginner and through practice attaining the stage of immovable wisdom, one needs to come back and stay in the beginner's stage of abiding. I can describe this using your Lordship's art of combat. The beginner, since he knows nothing about how to hold the sword, also doesn't have any concerns about adopting a particular stance. When someone attacks him he just spontaneously meets the attack without even thinking about it. However, you [eventually] learn all kinds of details--how to hold the sword, where to focus your attention--and having been taught all sorts of things, you acquire all sorts of notions; then when you go to attack someone, you find yourself debating this or that approach and completely lose your freedom to respond. As you practice over the days, years, and months, you finally arrive at the point where you cease to be conscious of either your stance or your manner of holding the sword, so that you become just like you were when you started out and didn't know anything at all--completely unschooled.

This is a state of mind in which beginning and end become seemingly identical. It's like when you count over and over from one to ten, so that one and ten both end up side by side. Or like the musical scale,⁴ where you progress from the lowest tone to the highest, [but when you begin the next octave] the lowest and the highest are side by side. The very high and very low end up alike.

With Buddhadharma, too, when you gain real mastery, you become like someone who knows nothing at all about either Buddha or Dharma, someone without any outward signs of accomplishment that could be noticed by others. That is why the initial stage of ignorance and evil passions becomes one with the

³ The teaching of the Buddha.

⁴ Takuan is referring to the classical twelve-tone scale traditionally used in China as well as in Japan, where five- or eight-tone scales also were employed. In a note inserted into the text, Takuan lists the tones, ranging from the the lowest (ichikotsu) to the highest (kamimu).

final [stage of] immovable wisdom, so that all sense of your own cleverness and skill disappears and you abide serenely in the realm of no-mind and no-thought.

When you arrive at the ultimate, you reach the stage where arms, legs, and body know of themselves, and the mind becomes completely unnecessary. A poem by National Master Bukkoku¹ says:

*Even though it has no thought
of protecting the fields
The scarecrow
doesn't fail in its task*

Everything [I have been saying] is like this poem. A scarecrow is made in the shape of a person, and a bow and arrow is placed in its hands. Birds and beasts flee at the sight of it. This mannequin has no mind whatsoever; and yet deer are scared by it and run away, so that it accomplishes its purpose and doesn't fail in its task. This is a metaphor for the naturalness of someone who attains perfection in all the various Ways. One who, in all the movements of his hands, legs, and body, never allows his mind to become attached, remaining unaware even of where his mind is, abides in no-thought and no-mind and attains the rank of a scarecrow in the field.

The usual run of ordinary ignorant person has never possessed any wisdom, so there's little chance of wisdom manifesting itself. The same with one whose wisdom is far advanced: because it's already deeply ingrained, it never manifests itself [in him, either]. By contrast, those who are know-it-alls can't help making a show of their wisdom, which is ludicrous. Your lordship must find the practice of monks nowadays to be just such a ludicrous business. What an embarrassment!

There is the practice of principle and there is the practice of action.² As for principle, as I've stated above, when you have real

¹ Bukkoku kokushi (Kôhō Ken'ichi, 1256-1316). Son of Emperor Go Saga, and teacher of the celebrated Zen Master Musô Sôseki.

² These terms, *ri* and *ji*, have a long history in both china and Japan, and have been employed at one time or another in Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Generally speaking, *ri* is used to indicated the absolute, the underlying basis of reality, and *ji*, phenomena, the world of existence and multiplicity in which principle is manifested. Rather than dualities, *ri* and *ji* are generally regarded as mutually interpenetrating aspects of a single totality--its substance and its manifestation. Here, Takuan's meaning is somewhat more practical and specific, referring to the mind that is fundamental to expert swordsmanship and the swordsman's actual movements; hence my translation of *ri* and *ji* as "principle" and "action."

attainment, you don't attach to anything, as if you were simply discarding the mind. This is as I've described at length above. But if you fail to practice action, you'll only have principle in your mind, and then neither body nor hands will function.

In discussing the practice of action in terms of your lordship's art of combat, the five kinds of fighting stance [all come down to] one truth, which is learned as various techniques.¹ Even if you understand principle, you still have to [be able to] function freely in the realm of action. [By the same token], even if you can expertly wield your sword, so long as you remain in the dark about the ultimate meaning of principle, you'll be unable to achieve perfection. Action and principle must become like the two wheels of a cart.

There is an expression: "Not even space to insert a hair."

I can describe this using as an example your Lordship's art of combat. Space, here, means that two things are placed [so closely] together that not even a hair can be inserted between them. For instance, when you suddenly clap your hands, at that moment a sharp sound is produced. There isn't so much as a hairsbreadth between the hands coming together and the sound being produced. It's not that the sound is produced after clapping your hands [because] you deliberately leave an interval for it. The instant you clap, right then and there, the noise is produced. When your mind attaches to an attacker's sword, an interval appears. And in that interval you lose your freedom to respond. But if there isn't even a hairsbreadth between the opponent's attacking sword and your own response, then your opponent's weapon will become your weapon.

This same mind is to be found in Zen dialogues.² In Buddhism we have no use for this stopping mind that mires itself in things. That's why we say that stopping is delusion. What we value is the never-stopping mind, flowing like a raging torrent on which even a ball hurled in [with all one's might] is simply swept along by the rushing waters.

(Translated and copyrighted by Peter Haskel)

On Sunday May 13 we will be leaving the FZI between 10-11 AM for our annual visit to Mary and Sokei-an at Woodlawn Cemetery. You are welcome to join us if you can. Call FZI for more info.

¹ I have been unable to identify the five kinds of fighting stance to which Takuan refers. The text at this point is somewhat unclear, and the translation is tentative.

² : Zen no mondō. Takuan refers to the lightning give-and-take of Zen "question and answer" (mondō)-type dialogues, of which he offers several illustrations below.

From the Editor

My apologies for this very late issue but certain winter-long health concerns kept my focus in ponderous chains. Now spring is sprung while winter, having lost its way among blossoms that blanket the ground like fragrant snow, was found napping under fluffy peach buds and now makes its way to you, reluctant, but happy, accompanied by an old worthy with a frog on his head...



Gama Sennin by Soga Shôhaku,

*Clouds, without mind,
emerge from the mountain's caverns
Water fills the hollow places, flowing along*

(translated from Zenrin Kushu by Peter Haskell)

If this is winter...
then Spring is for the birds



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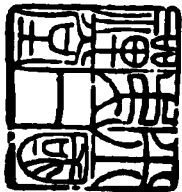
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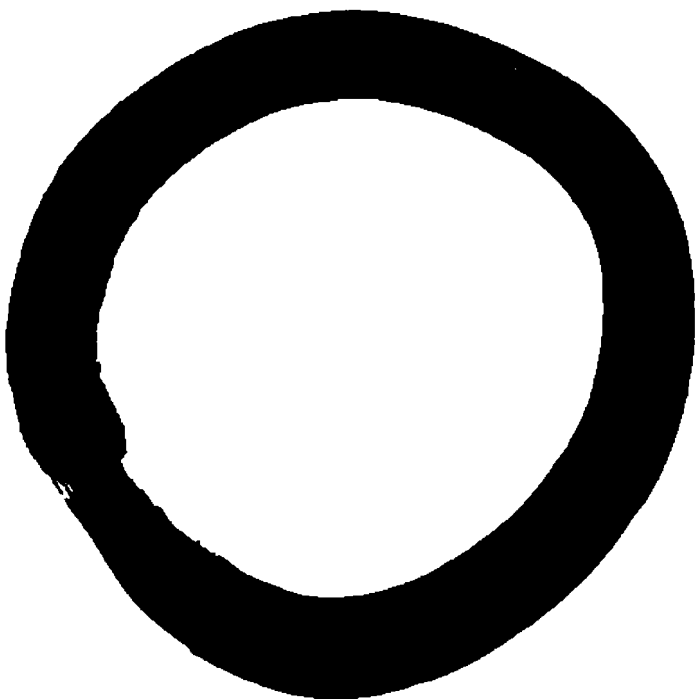
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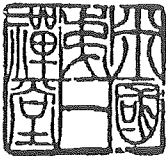


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