

Toshihiko Izutsu

Toward a Philosophy of  
**Zen**  
**Buddhism**



Iranian Institute of Philosophy

*"The ordinary way - that precisely is the way"; "The willow is green and flower is red."*

It is not without reason that Zen tends to entertain a violent aversion toward philosophization and talking about Zen experience in rational terms. For the world of Zen is a world of silence. It is a world of an extraordinary experience which defies thinking and linguistic description. It is a world where all words are ultimately reduced to silence.

But Zen "silence" is a silence pregnant with words. It naturally expresses itself - it cannot but express itself - in language. Out of the depths of the silence there emerges language: the self-articulating activity of the non-articulated. The only justifiable philosophy from the Zen point of view must be a result of philosophizing out of the very midst of Zen awareness: Zen reflecting upon its own self. The present work is an attempt at letting Zen experience philosophize itself.

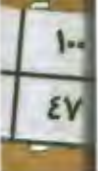
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Toshihiko Izutsu was brought up in the world of Zen. He was also a master of innumerable language, philosophies and systems of mysticism. He published books on Far Eastern, Islamic and Western thought, and for years was the regular speaker on Zen at the Eranos Conferences, where some of the chapters of this book were originally read as lectures. In one of his most important works, *Sufism and Taoism*, he compared the Sufi mystic Ibn 'Arabi with the Chinese sage Chuang Tzu. In fact, his major contribution was towards what he called a "World Philosophy", in which varying strands of wisdom are woven into a single brilliant pattern. He taught at Keio University in Japan, McGill University in Canada, and the Iranian Academy of Philosophy in Tehran, where he lectured on subjects as diverse as the *Ching* and the *Fuṣūṣ al-hikam* of Ibn 'Arabi.

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Toshihiko Izutsu

Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism



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**Toward a Philosophy of**  
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## Preface

I have entitled this book 'Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism' on the conviction that Zen is possessed of innate philosophical possibilities. This conviction of mine is based on the view that at the original point of all *Philosophiren* in any form whatsoever, there is, and there must be, a peculiar reality-experience. The empiricist philosophy, for instance, is based on, and originates from, an 'empirical' experience of reality. The empiricist type of thinking begins by observing reality just at the level at which man encounters the external world through what is regarded as the 'normal' exercise of his cognitive faculties, sensation and perception being considered the most fundamental forms of cognition. The empiricist philosophy takes form when one starts to reflect upon one's own perceptual experience in a rational and analytical way.

Zen also has its own peculiar experience of reality, which is remarkably different from the 'empirical' one. Not that Zen 'transcends' at one stroke – as is often said – the empirical dimension of reality. Quite the contrary; the world of Zen at its ultimate stage is also a world of sensation and perception which is no less 'empirical' than the world as seen by the empiricist. 'The ordinary way – that precisely *is* the Way', or 'the willow is green and the flower is red'. The point is rather that sensation and perception as activated in Zen experience assume quite a different significance as they function quite differently from the same faculties of sensation and perception as they are activated on the level of the so-called 'normal' cognitive experience. Hence the peculiarity of the Zen experience of reality. And naturally the peculiar noetic experience produces, or is capable of producing, a unique type of ontology. What, then, is the nature of the noetic

experience peculiar to Zen? This is one of the main problems I am going to deal with in this book.

It will have become clear that by the phrase 'philosophy of Zen' I mean the philosophization or philosophical elaboration of the Zen experience. By no means do I want to assert that there is some such thing as the 'philosophy of Zen' already established as a definite type of philosophical thinking and its result, and that I am going to expound it in an objective and descriptive way. What I intend to talk about in this book is the philosophical *potential* hidden in the Zen experience of reality.

Zen does not like to be associated with philosophy in the ordinary sense of the word, for 'philosophy' implies rational, discursive thinking and conceptualization. In this sense Zen is not merely non-philosophical; it is, more positively, anti-philosophical. To many of those who are already familiar with Zen, the expression 'philosophy of Zen' will simply sound like a straightforward contradiction in terms. In fact, the Zen student is always rigorously admonished not to fall into the pitfall of conceptualization and ratiocination. He is to grasp the 'truth' directly through an act of spiritual realization, away from all entanglements of thought. The intricacies of conceptual thinking about the 'truth' are of such a nature that they inevitably induce the Zen student to deviate from the right path, thereby closing the door to the 'real' – as Zen understands it – experience of reality. And, as a matter of fact, there have occurred in the past not a few cases of philosophical distortion of Zen, i.e., the rational or intellectual manipulation of Zen ideas by those 'philosophers' who have no experiential grasp of them.

Thus it is not without reason that Zen tends to entertain a violent aversion toward philosophization and talking about Zen experience in rational terms. For the world of Zen is a world of silence. It is a world of an extraordinary experience which defies thinking and linguistic description. It is a world where all words are ultimately reduced to Silence. The reason why it is so will be fully explained in the following pages.

Philosophically, the Silence is the metaphysical Oneness of absolute non-articulation, the reality before it is articulated into myriads of forms – 'your own Face which you had prior to

the birth of your father and mother', as Zen often says. But the non-articulated does not remain eternally non-articulated.

Zen 'silence' is a silence pregnant with words. It naturally expresses itself – it cannot but express itself – in language. Out of the depths of the Silence there emerges language. The emergence of language out of the Zen awareness of reality may ontologically be described as an event of the self-articulation of the non-articulation. Thus Silence turns into language. The primordial oneness of non-articulation articulates itself 'out' and comes into the dimension of words. It is language viewed in this light that really matters and alone counts in the eyes of Zen – I mean, the special kind of language which emerges directly out of the Zen experience of reality as the self-articulating activity of the non-articulated. But such a language may very well be subjected to an intellectual analysis and elaborated into a peculiar form or forms of philosophy. A philosophy of this kind – the only justifiable one from the Zen point of view – must be a result of philosophizing out of the very midst of Zen awareness. It must be actualized as the self-philosophization of Zen, i.e., Zen reflecting upon its own self. And as such, Zen has, as I said at the outset, remarkable potentials for creating philosophical thought.

It will have been understood that the problem of 'articulation', whether metaphysical or linguistic, is of supreme importance for Zen philosophy. Articulation is the very center and crux of the whole matter. And the present work turns round this central problem. The problem of the metaphysical or ontological articulation of reality is dealt with in Essay IV, while its linguistic or semantic aspect is thematically discussed in Essay III. Essay IV deals specifically with the problem of how and in what sense the Zen language – the language which emerges directly out of Silence – yields 'meaning' in such a way that it may allow itself to be developed into a philosophy.

The articulation of reality, however, is realized to be a philosophical problem of such a serious nature only when one has had a glimpse into the nature and structure of the Zen experience of reality itself, on the understanding of which alone can the true meaning of 'articulation' become under-

standable. This and the other related problems are discussed in Essays I and II.

It must be observed further that Zen Silence, when it expresses itself, does not necessarily express itself in a verbal form. That is to say, the Zen language is not necessarily verbal; it can assume divergent forms. Pictorial language, for example, is one of the most remarkable forms of Zen language. This aspect of Zen is elucidated in Essays VI and VII.

It will be clear that the present work is not a systematic and objective presentation of the philosophical ideas of Zen. It is rather a modest attempt at letting Zen experience philosophize itself. To what extent I have succeeded in doing so, however, is not for me to judge. I only hope that this attempt of mine has not resulted after all in adding one more 'useless entanglement' to the mass of already existing conceptual entanglements.

This book consists of seven Essays, all of which were originally independent papers or lectures which I prepared on different occasions. Sincere thanks are due to the editors of the books and journals who have given me permission to republish these papers in the present form. I would also express here my deep gratitude to Peter L. Wilson for his excellent editorial work.

T. Izutsu  
Tehran  
10 March 1977

## Essay I

# THE TRUE MAN WITHOUT ANY RANK

— The Problem of Field Awareness in Zen —

Note: This Essay was originally an Eranos lecture delivered at Ascona, Switzerland, in 1969, and published in *Eranos-Jahrbuch XXXVIII*, 1971, Zürich under the title: 'The Structure of Selfhood in Zen Buddhism'.





## I Zen and the Problem of Man

Buddhism may properly be said to have been concerned from its very historical beginning with the problem of Man, and that exclusively. The starting-point of Buddha's search after the Truth was provided by the disquieting miseries of human existence as he observed them around himself. And the doctrines which he developed after his attainment to enlightenment were through and through human, humane and humanitarian. Buddhist philosophy which began to develop shortly after his death was also 'human' in the sense that it was seriously concerned with the concept of 'non-ego' as one of its most fundamental problems. Here again we observe Man being made an object of philosophical consideration in the particular form of the problematic of 'ego'.

This anthropo-centric tendency of Buddhism was greatly fortified by the rise and development of the Zen sect. By making the actual experience of enlightenment the pivotal point of the world-view, Zen raised, or reformulated, the traditional problem of Man as the problem of the absolute selfhood. We must observe in this connection, however, that Zen raises the question in a very characteristic way. Instead of posing his question concerning Man in an Aristotelian form: 'What is man?', the Zen Buddhist directly begins by asking: 'Who am I?'<sup>1</sup> What is at issue is not the classical problem of the nature of Man in general, but an infinitely more personal and intimate one of *who* is this very human subject who, existing as he does here and now in a time-space system, raises the question about his own self. It is only natural that the image of Man obtained on the basis of such an attitude should be something totally different from an image of Man which forms itself in the mind of an objective observer who would approach the problem by first asking: 'What is man?'

Every one of us, as a human being, has self-consciousness and is conscious of other human beings surrounding him. Hence it naturally comes about that at the level of ordinary existence all of us possess a more or less definite idea as to what kind of a thing man is. The classical Western philosophy going back to Aristotle elaborates and defines this common-sense image of man as a 'rational animal'.

The image of Man peculiar to Zen Buddhism emerges exactly when such a common-sense image of man, be it pre-philosophical or philosophical, is smashed to pieces. The ordinary image of man on which our daily life is based, and on which our social life is carried out, does not, according to the typically Zen conception, represent the true reality of Man. For man, as pictured in such a way, is but a 'thing' in the sense that it is nothing but an objectified man, i.e. man as an object. Such cannot be a true picture, because according to Zen, Man in his true reality is, and must be, an absolute selfhood.

Without tarrying on the plane of common-sense or empirical thinking, where the primary experience of Reality, including even the absolute ego, in its pure 'is-ness'<sup>2</sup> is necessarily broken up into objectified pieces, Zen proposes to grasp Man directly as an absolute selfhood prior to his being objectified into a 'thing'. Only then, it maintains, can we hope to obtain a true image of Man representing him as he really is, that is, in his real, immediate 'is-ness'.

The image of Man peculiar to Zen is thus derived from a dimension which absolutely transcends the bifurcation, so characteristic of the human intellect, of the subject and object. As will be easy to see, such an image of Man can never be obtained as long as we pursue the question in the form of 'what is man?' The question must necessarily and inevitably take on the form of 'who am I?' Otherwise expressed, Man must be intuited in his most intimate subjectivity. For, no matter how far we may go searching after our own 'self' on the plane of intellectual analysis, the 'self' goes on being objectified. However far we may go in this direction, we always end up by obtaining the image of our 'self' seen as an object. The 'self' itself, the real subjective subject which goes on searching after itself, remains always beyond our reach, eluding forever our grasp. The pure subjectivity is reached only when

man steps beyond the ken of the dichotomizing activity of intellect, ceases to look at his own 'self' from the outside as an object, and *becomes* immediately his own 'self'. The *Zazen*, 'sitting cross-legged in meditation', is a way specifically devised in order that the subject might delve ever deeper into its own interior so that the bifurcated 'self' – the 'self' as dichotomized into the 'self' as subject and the 'self' as object – might regain its own original unity. When, at the extremity of such a unity, man becomes truly himself and turns into a pure and absolute selfhood, when, in other words, there remains absolutely no distinction any longer between the 'self' *qua* subject and the 'self' *qua* object, an epistemological stage is reached where the 'self' has become so perfectly identified with itself and has so completely become one with itself that it has transcended even being a 'self'. The precise point at which the 'self' becomes one with it-'self' in such an absolute manner has come to be known, in accordance with the technical terminology of Dōgen,<sup>3</sup> as 'the-mind-and-body-dropping-off' (*shin jin datsu raku*). This is immediately followed by the next stage – to be more strictly exact, it is a stage which is actualized at the very same moment as the actualization of the first one – that of 'the-dropped-off-mind-and-body' (*datsu raku shin jin*). This second stage refers to the experiential fact that the moment the mind-and-body, i.e. the 'self', falls off into Nothingness, there is resuscitated out of the Nothingness the same mind-and-body, i.e. the same old 'self' itself, but this time completely transformed into an absolute Self. The 'self' thus resuscitated from its death to itself carries outwardly the same mind-and-body, but the latter is the mind-and-body that has 'dropped off', that is, transcended itself once for all. The image of Man in Zen Buddhism is an image of Man who has already passed through such an absolute transformation of himself, the 'True Man without any ranks' as Lin Chi<sup>4</sup> calls him.

It is evident that such an image of Man as has just been sketched implicitly occupied in Zen Buddhism a place of cardinal importance throughout its entire history. This is evident because from the very beginning Zen centered around the radical and drastic transformation of Man from the relative into the absolute selfhood. The peculiar image of

Man was but a natural product of the special emphasis which Zen laid on the experience of enlightenment.

Explicitly, however, and in terms of the history of *thought*, the concept or image of Man did not occupy a key-position in Zen Buddhism prior to the appearance of Lin Chi. Before him, Man had always remained in the background. The image had always been there implicitly, but not explicitly. 'Man' had never played the role of a key-term in the history of Zen thought before Lin Chi. Rather, the real key-terms had been words like Mind, Nature, (Transcendental) Wisdom, Reality (or Absolute – *dharma*) and the like, all of which were directly or indirectly of an Indian origin and which, therefore, inevitably had a strong flavor of Indian metaphysics.

With the appearance of Lin Chi, however, the whole picture begins to assume an entirely different, unprecedented aspect. For Lin Chi sets out to put Man at the very center of Zen thought, and to build up around this center an extremely vigorous and dynamic world-view. The image of Man as absolute selfhood which, as we have seen, had always been there implicitly – hidden, so to speak, behind the scenes – was suddenly brought out by Lin Chi into the dazzlingly bright light of the main stage. At the same time we witness here the birth of a *thought*<sup>5</sup> which is truly original and indigenous to the Chinese soil.

Lin Chi's thought is characteristically Chinese in that it puts Man at the very center of a whole world-view, and that, further, his conception of Man is extremely realistic to the extent of being almost pragmatic. It is pragmatic in the sense that it always pictures Man as the most concrete individual who exists at this very place and at this very moment, eating, drinking, sitting and walking around, or even 'attending to his natural wants'. 'O Brethren in the Way', he says in one of his discourses, 'you must know that there is in the reality of Buddhism nothing extraordinary for you to perform. You just live as usual without ever trying to do anything particular, attending to your natural wants, putting on clothes, eating meals, and lying down if you feel tired. Let the ignorant people laugh at me. The wise men know what I mean to say'.<sup>6</sup>

The pragmatic Man, however, is not at all an ordinary 'man' as we represent him at the level of common-sense thinking, for he is a Man who has come back to this world of

phenomena from the dimension of absolute Reality. His is a two-dimensional personality. He, as a most concrete individual, living among the concretely existent things, does embody something supra-individual. He is an individual who is a supra-individual – two persons fused into a perfect unity of one single person. 'Do you want to know who is our (spiritual) ancestor, Buddha (i.e. the Absolute)? He is no other than yourself who are here and now listening to my discourse!' (Lin Chi)' The world-view presented by Lin Chi is a very peculiar view of the world as seen through the eyes of such a two-dimensional person. But in order to have a real understanding of the nature of this kind of world-view, we must go back to our starting-point and try to analyze the whole problem in a more theoretical way. In so doing, our emphasis will be laid on two cardinal points: (1) the epistemological structure of the process by which such a double-natured person comes into being, and (2) the metaphysical structure of the world as it appears to his eyes.

## II The Functional Relationship between Subject and Object

The most fundamental philosophical assertion made by Zen at the outset is that there is a functional relationship between the subject and the object, the knower and the known. Zen begins by recognizing a very close correlation between the state of consciousness of the subject and the state of the objective world which the subject perceives. This correlation between subject and object is of an extremely subtle, delicate, and dynamic nature, so much so that the slightest move on the part of the subject necessarily induces a change on the part of the object, however slight it might be.

The observation of this point, trivial though it may appear at first glance, is in reality of paramount importance for a right understanding of Zen Buddhism, whether practical or philosophical. For both the practice of Zen in its entirety and its philosophical elaboration hinge upon such a relationship between subject and object. It is no less important to observe that in this correlation between subject and object, or the ego and the world, Zen – and, for that matter, Buddhism in general – always recognizes the former, i.e. the subject or the ego, to be the determining factor. The particular state in which the perceiving subject happens to be, determines the state or nature of the object perceived. A particular existential mode of the subject actualizes the whole world in a particular form corresponding to it. The phenomenal world rises before the eyes of an observer in accordance with the latter's inner mode of being. In brief, the structure of the subject determines the structure of the world of objective things.

Consequently, if we feel, vaguely or definitely, that the world as we actually observe it is not the real world, that the phenomenal things which we see are not being seen in their

true reality, then we will have to do something about the very structure of our own consciousness. And that exactly is what Zen Buddhism proposes that we should do.

A famous Zen master of the T'ang dynasty, Nan Ch'üan<sup>8</sup> (J.: Nan Sen), is said to have remarked, pointing with his finger to a flower blooming in the courtyard: 'The ordinary people see this flower as if they were in a dream'. If the flower as we actually see it in the garden is to be likened to a flower seen in a dream, we have only to wake up from the dream in order to see the flower as it *really* is. And this simply means that a total personal transformation is required on the part of the subject, if the latter wants to see the reality of things. But what kind of transformation? And what will be the reality of things seen by us after such transformation?

What Nan Ch'üan himself wants to convey by his statement is quite clear. He means to say that a flower as seen by the ordinary people under normal conditions is an *object* standing before the perceiving *subject*. This precisely is what Nan Ch'üan indicates by his expression: 'a flower seen in a dream'. Here the flower is represented as something different from the man who is looking at it. The flower in its true reality, however, is, according to Nan Ch'üan, a flower which is not distinguished, which is not distinguishable, from the man who sees it, the subject. What is at issue here is a state which is neither subjective nor objective, but which is, at the same time both subjective and objective – a state in which the subject and object, the man and the flower, become fused in an indescribably subtle way into an absolute unity.

In order, however, to go a step further towards the core of the problem with which we are dealing here, we must replace Nan Ch'üan's words into their original context. It is found in a celebrated textbook of Zen Buddhism, *Pi Yen Lu*.<sup>9</sup> It reads as follows:

Once the high official Lu Kêng (J.: Riku Kô)<sup>10</sup> was holding a conversation with Nan Ch'üan, when Lu remarked: 'Sêng Chao<sup>11</sup> once said: "The heaven and earth (i.e. the whole universe) is of one and the same root as my own self, and all things are one with me". This I find pretty difficult to understand'. Thereupon Nan Ch'üan, pointing with his finger at a flower blooming in the courtyard, and calling Lu's attention



to it, remarked: 'Ordinary people see this flower as if they were in a dream!'

The whole context clarifies Nan Ch'üan's intention. It is as though he said, 'Look at that flower blooming in the courtyard. The flower itself is expressing with its very existence the fact that all things are completely one with our own selves in the fundamental unity of ultimate Reality. The Truth stands there naked, wholly apparent. It is, at every moment and in every single thing, disclosing itself so clearly and so straightforwardly. Yet, alas, ordinary people do not possess the eye to see naked Reality. They see every thing only through veils'.

Since, in this way, ordinary people see everything through the veils of their own relative and determined ego, whatever they see is seen in a dreamlike fashion. But they themselves are firmly convinced that the flower as they actually see it as an 'object' in the external world *is* reality. In order to be able to say that such a vision of the flower is so far away from the true reality that it is almost a dream, they must have their empirical ego transformed into something else. Only then will they be able to assert with full confidence with the monk Chao that the object is no other than the subject itself and that the object and the subject become fused in an indescribably subtle and delicate way into one, and ultimately become reduced to the original ground of Nothingness.

The mysterious fusion of subject and object which the monk Chao talks about requires a great deal of further elucidation before it will disclose to us its real meaning. This will be done in detail presently. For the time being let us be content with simply pointing out that even a flower in the garden will appear differently in accordance with different stages in which the mind of the observer happens to be. In order to see in a single flower a manifestation of the metaphysical unity of all things, not only of all the so-called objects but including even the observing subject, the empirical ego must have undergone a total transformation, a complete nullification of itself – death to its own 'self', and rebirth on a totally different dimension of consciousness. For as long as there remains a self-subsistent 'subject' which observes the 'object' from outside, the realization of such a metaphysical unity is utterly inconceivable. Otherwise, how is it possible that a flower,

*The Functional Relationship between Subject and Object* 11

remaining always a concrete individual flower here and now, be your own self, or, for that matter, be the same as anything else? Thus, to come back to our earlier simple statement, the world discloses itself to our eyes in exact accordance with the actual state of our consciousness.

Even without going to the utmost degree of spiritual experience such as has been mentioned in connection with Nan Ch'üan's remark on a flower in the courtyard, the same type of correlation between subject and object is easily observable at the level of our daily life. For that purpose let us begin by making a very commonplace observation. It is a matter of ordinary experience that the world, or anything in the world, appears differently to different persons in accordance with different points of view or different interests they happen to have with regard to the things. The fact is not without some philosophical significance.

Bertrand Russell, for instance, has actually made an observation of this sort the starting-point for an exposition of his philosophical ideas in his *The Problems of Philosophy*.<sup>12</sup> In ordinary life, we often speak of *the* color of a table, assuming that it is of one definite color everywhere and for everybody. On a closer scrutiny, however, we find that such is not the case. There is, he argues, no definite color which is *the* color of the table. For it evidently appears to be of different colors from different points of view. And no two persons can see it from exactly the same point of view. Moreover, 'even from a given point of view the color will seem different by artificial light, or to a color-blind man, or to a man wearing blue spectacles, while in the dark there will be no color at all'.

What Zen Buddhism tries to bring home to us at the very first stage would seem structurally no different from this kind of daily experience. However, there is in fact a fundamental difference between the two positions. The Zen Buddhist is not interested in the shifting viewpoints from which an object may be looked at, while the 'subject' remains always on one and the same level of daily experience. Rather, he is thinking of two totally different dimensions of consciousness; that is, he is interested in a sudden, abrupt shift on the part of the perceiving subject from the dimension of daily consciousness to that of supra-consciousness.

The fact that one and the same thing seems different in accordance with different points of view at the level of daily consciousness is of no vital concern to the Zen Buddhist. His problem lies elsewhere, or is of a different order. For he is concerned with the validity or invalidity of the law of identity, 'A is A', which constitutes the primary basis of human life at the empirical level of existence. The Zen Buddhist questions the very validity of the proposition: 'an apple is an apple'.

In the view of a Zen Buddhist, personal and individual differences and discrepancies in the sensory-experience of things, are but events occurring all in one and the same epistemological dimension, that of daily or just normal mental activity. And this dimension is the one in which our intellect or reason exercises at ease its natural functions: identification, differentiation and combination. The ultimate principle governing our entire mental activity in this dimension is 'discrimination'. Buddhism calls this basic function of the human mind *vikalpa*, the 'discriminating cognition', in contradistinction to *prajñā*, 'transcendental or non-discriminating cognition'.

One and the same apple for example may very well appear differently to different persons. But, after all, the apple remains an apple. An apple is an apple, in accordance with the law of identity ('A is A'). And it cannot be something other than an apple, i.e. a non-apple, in accordance with the law of non-contradiction, ('A is not non-A'). However great the individual differences may be in the sensory experience of a thing, the thing is not supposed to step out of its own limited region. If, in the presence of an object, one person obtains the visual image of an apple while another sees a cat, for instance, one of them must be in a state of hallucination.

The very first step taken by the *vikalpa* in the exercise of its natural function is to identify or recognize a thing as itself (the recognition of A as A) by discriminating or distinguishing it from all other things (all non-A's). An apple must be recognized and established as an apple. This identification based on discrimination is the basis and starting-point for all subsequent stages of mental activity. Without this basis, the whole world of our normal empirical experience would crumble to pieces and things would irremediably fall into utter disorder.

But, as we have remarked above, Zen Buddhism begins

exactly by pointing out the questionability of the law of identity. To look at an apple as an apple is to see that thing from the very outset in the state of a particular delimitation. To see *A* as *A* is to delimit it to *A*-ness and put it into a fixed, unchangeable state of identity in such a way that it cannot be anything other than *A*. Thus the normal empirical approach to the world is, scholastically, nothing other than outspoken 'essentialism' in that it recognizes as the most basic and self-evident fact that *A* is *A* because of its *A*-ness, i.e. its 'essence' of being *A*.

The *A*-ness, or so-called 'essence' of *A* is understood in this sense, that is, in the sense of the solidly fixed ontological core which unalterably determines the essential limits of a thing, was known in Buddhism in general as *svabhāva*, 'self-essence' or 'self-nature'. All schools in Buddhism, from the earliest periods of its philosophical development, consistently fought against this type of approach to the world, and denounced it as *lokavyavahāra*, 'worldly habit'.<sup>13</sup> A dictum which was recognized already in primitive Buddhism to be one of the three basic tenets of Buddha's teaching, runs (in Pali): *Sabbe dhammā anattā*, i.e. 'All things are ego-less', meaning that nothing of all existent things has a *svabhāva*, i.e. self-subsistent and permanently fixed essence.

But here again Zen Buddhism recognizes the primacy of the state of the mind, and sees the determining factor in the particular structure of the perceiving subject. Each one of the things of the world, whether internal or external, is seen to have its own solidly fixed essence because the mind so sees it, because the mind 'essentializes'. Essences are perceived everywhere by the mind, not because they are objectively there, but simply because the mind is by nature productive of essences. It is the mind that furnishes a thing with this or that particular essence. Even in the domain of daily experience, we sometimes become aware of the fact that we are actually giving various 'essences' to one and the same thing. An apple, for example, is not necessarily always seen as an 'apple'. In fact, it is sometimes seen as a 'fruit'; sometimes as a special 'form', or 'mass of color'. Sometimes we do treat an apple simply as a 'thing'.

The Zen viewpoint, however, insists on going still further. For no matter how many essences a thing may assume in our

view, it will always remain in the domain of essentialist cognition. According to Zen, it is not enough that an apple should not be seen *as* an apple; it should not be seen *as* anything whatsoever. Positively stated, an apple should be seen without any delimitation. It must be seen in its indetermination. But in order that the apple be seen in such a way, we as the subjects of cognition must see the apple with *wu hsin* (a Chinese technical term meaning literally 'no-mind'). Only when we approach anything with the 'no-mind' does the thing reveal to our eyes its original reality. At the ultimate limit of all negations, that is, the negation of all the essences conceivable of the apple, all of a sudden the extraordinary reality of the apple flashes into our mind. This is what is known in Buddhism as the emergenc of *prajñā*, transcendental or non-discriminating consciousness. And in and through this experience, the apple again manifests itself *as* an apple in the fullest density of existence, in the 'original freshness of the first creation of the heaven and earth'.

All this is actualized only through our actualizing the state of 'no-mind'. The actualization of the 'no-mind' itself is the pivotal point of the whole system. In the following section we shall take up this problem as our special topic.

### III Consciousness and Supra-Consciousness

At the end of the preceding section mention was made of the 'no-mind' as the subjective source or basis for the non-essentialist type of world view. The 'no-mind', *wu hsin* (J.: *mu-shin*), which may be translated in a more explanatory manner as a 'mind which is no mind', 'mind which exists as a non-existent mind', or 'mind which is in the state of Nothingness', is not to be understood in a purely negative sense as the mind in the state of torpidity and inertness or sheer ecstasy.<sup>14</sup> Quite the contrary, the 'no-mind' is a psychological state in which the mind finds itself at the highest point of tension, a state in which the mind works with utmost intensity and lucidity. As an oft-used Zen expression goes: the consciousness illumines itself in the full glare of its own light. In this state, the mind knows its object so perfectly that there is no longer any consciousness left of the object; the mind is not even conscious of its knowing the object.

The 'no-mind' has in fact played an exceedingly important formative role in the cultural history both of China and Japan. In Japan the main forms of fine art, like poetry, painting, calligraphy, etc., have developed their original types more or less under the influence of the spirit of the 'no-mind'. Many an anecdote, real and fictitious, has been handed down to us: for example, of black-and-white painters whose brush moves on the surface of the paper as if of its own accord, without the artist's being conscious of the movement the brush makes; or of master musicians who, when they play the harp, feel that it is not they themselves who play the music, but that it is as though music played itself.

The example of a master musician absorbed in playing his harp will be good enough to give at least some idea as to what kind of a thing Zen Buddhism is thinking of when it talks

about the 'no-mind'. The musician is so completely absorbed in his act of playing, he is so completely one with the harp and music itself, that he is no longer conscious of the individual movements of his fingers, of the instrument which he is playing, nor even of the very fact that he is engaged in playing. In reference to such a situation, no one would say, except figuratively or in a loose sense, that the musician is 'unconscious'. For he is conscious. Rather, his consciousness is at the utmost limit of self-illumination. The aesthetic tension of his mind runs so high throughout his whole being that he himself is the music he is playing. Paradoxical as it may sound, he is so fully conscious of himself as identified with music that he is not 'conscious' of his act of playing in any ordinary sense of the word. In order to distinguish such a state of consciousness from both 'consciousness' and 'unconsciousness' as ordinarily understood, we will use the word 'supra-consciousness'.

These and similar cases of 'creative' activity that are known not only in the Far East but in almost every culture in the world are instances of the actualization of the 'no-mind' at the level of ordinary life. But at this level, the actualization of the 'no-mind' is but a sporadic and rather unusual phenomenon. What Zen purports to do is to make man cultivate in himself the state of 'no-mind' in such a systematic way that it might become his *normal* state of consciousness, that he might begin to see everything, the whole world of Being, from the vantage point of such a state of consciousness.

It is to the supra-consciousness thus understood – not in its limited application to aesthetic experience, but as developed into the normal state of an absolute Selfhood – that the famous words of the Diamond Sutra refer:<sup>15</sup>

*Evam apraṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam  
Yanna kvacit praṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam*

(One should never let an abiding mind emerge;  
A mind thus non-abiding one should let emerge.)

The *praṣṭhitam cittam* 'abiding mind' means a mind abiding by something, i.e. sticking to 'objects'. Instead of letting, the Sutra says, such an 'essentializing' consciousness emerge, one should raise a mind that does not adhere to any 'object' in its essential delimitation. This is tantamount to saying that it is

not enough for us to suppress the rise of, or nullify, the object-making consciousness; we should more positively let a particular kind of mind emerge which, though fully conscious of itself as well as of external things, does not recognize any self-subsistent essences in them. This is what we would call supra-consciousness. And this is no other than the 'no-mind' with which we started our discussion in the present section.

The preceding explanation may have succeeded in at least giving a vague general idea regarding the nature of the supra-consciousness. But it has certainly clarified neither its philosophical structure nor the psychological process by which one reaches such a state of the mind. So let us go back once again to the daily level of ontological experience and begin by analyzing the structure of cognition that is typical of that level, with a view to understanding on the basis of that analysis the fundamental metaphysico-epistemological make-up of the supra-consciousness.



## IV The Structure of the Empirical Ego

From the point of view of Zen Buddhism, the 'essentialist' tendency of the empirical ego is not admissible not only because it posits everywhere 'objects' as permanent substantial entities, but also, and particularly, because it posits itself, the empirical ego, as an ego-substance. It not only sticks or adheres to the external 'objects' as so many irreducible realities, but it clings to its own self as an even more irreducible, self-subsistent reality. This is what we have come to know as the 'abiding mind' (*praṣṭhitam cittam*). And a whole world-view is built up upon the sharp opposition between the 'abiding mind', i.e. the 'subject' and its 'objects'. This dichotomy of reality into subject and object, man and the external world, is the foundation of all our empirical experiences. Of course even common-sense is ready to admit that the phenomenal world, including both external things and the personal ego, is in a state of constant flux. But it tends to see within or behind this transiency of all things some elements which remain permanently unchangeable and substantial. Thus is created an image of the world of Being as a realm of self-identical objects, even the so-called 'subject' being strictly speaking in such a view nothing but one of the 'objects'. It is precisely this kind of ontological view that Zen Buddhism is firmly determined to destroy once for all in order to replace it by another ontology based upon an entirely different sort of epistemology.

For a better understanding of the world-view which is peculiar to the supra-consciousness, let us, first, take up the normal type of world-view which is most natural and congenial to the human mind, and analyze its inner structure at a philosophical level.

Two stages or forms may conveniently be distinguished within the confines of such a world-view. The first is typically represented by Cartesian dualism standing on the fundamental dichotomy of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. As a philosophy, it may be described as an ontological system based on the dualistic tension between two 'substances' that are irreducible to one another. As a world-view, it may appropriately be described as one in which man, i.e. the ego, is looking at things from the outside, he himself being in the position of a spectator. He is not subjectively involved in the events that take place among various things before his own eyes. Man is here a detached onlooker confronting a world of *external* objects. A whole ontological scenery is spread out before him, and he, as an independent personal 'subject', is merely enjoying the colorful view on the stage of the world. This is a view which is the farthest removed from the reality of the things as they reveal themselves to the eyes of the supra-consciousness.

The second stage may conveniently be represented by the Heideggerian idea of the 'being-within-the-world', particularly in the state of the ontological *Verfallenheit*. Unlike the situation we have just observed in the first stage of the dichotomous world-view, man is here subjectively, vitally involved in the destiny of the things surrounding him. Instead of remaining an objective spectator looking from the outside at the world as something independent of him, man, the ego, finds himself in the very midst of the world, directly affecting them and being directly affected by them. He is no longer an outsider enjoying with self-complacency what is going on on the stage of the theatre. He himself *is* on the stage, he *exists* in the world, actively participating in the play, undergoing an undefinable existential anxiety which is the natural outcome of such a position.

The common-sense world-view at this second stage is far closer to Zen than the first stage. Yet, the empirical world-view, whether of the first or the second stage, is strictly speaking totally different from the Zen world-view with regard to its basic structure. For the empirical world-view is a world-view worked out by the intellect that can properly exercise its function only where there is a distinction made between *ego* and *alter*. The whole mechanism stands on the conviction, whether explicit or implicit, of the independent

existence of the ego-substance which stands opposed to external substantial objects. Whether the subject be represented as being outside the world of objects or inside, this very basic Cartesian opposition is, from the standpoint of Zen, something to be demolished before man begins to see the reality of himself and of so-called external objects.

In truth, however, even in the midst of this empirical view of the things there is hidden something like a metaphysical principle which is, though invisible, constantly at work, ready to be realized at any moment through the human mind to transform the normal view of the world into something entirely different. This hidden principle of the metaphysico-epistemological transformation of reality is called in Buddhism *tathâgata-garbha*, the 'Womb of the absolute Reality'. But in order to see the whole structure from this particular point of view, we shall have to submit it to a more detailed and more theoretical analysis.<sup>16</sup>

The epistemological relation of the ego to the object in the ordinary empirical world-view may be represented by the formula:  $s \rightarrow o$ , which may be read as: *i see this*.<sup>17</sup>

Thus the grammatical subject, *s*, represents the ego-consciousness of man at the level of empirical experience. It refers to the awareness of selfhood as *Da-sein* in the literal sense of 'being-there' as a subject in front of, or in the midst of, the objective world. The *i* is here an independently subsistent ego-substance. As long as the empirical ego remains on the empirical dimension, it is conscious of itself only as being there as an independent center of its own perception, thinking and bodily actions. It has no awareness at all of its being something more than that.

However, from the viewpoint of Zen which intuitively everywhere and in everything the act of the *tathâgata-garbha*, the 'Womb of the absolute Reality', there is perceivable, behind each individual *i*, Something whose activity may be expressed by the formula ( $S \rightarrow$ ) or (*I SEE*) the brackets indicating that this activity is still hidden at the empirical level of self-consciousness. Thus the structure of the empirical ego, *s*, in reality, that is, seen with the eye of Zen, must properly be represented by the formula:

( $S \rightarrow$ )  $s$   
or: ( $I \text{ SEE}$ ) *myself*.

As we shall see later in more detail, the empirical ego,  $s$ , can be the real center of all its activities simply because that hidden Principle, ( $S \rightarrow$ ), is constantly functioning through  $s$ . The empirical ego can be selfhood only because every subjective movement it makes is in truth the actualization here and now of that Something which *is* the real Selfhood. The nature of the activity of ( $I \text{ SEE}$ ) may best be understood when it is put side by side with its Islamic parallel presented by the *irfān* type of philosophy which finds an explicit reference to the same kind of situation in the words of God in the Qur'ān: 'It was not you who threw when you did throw: it was (in reality) God who threw'.<sup>18</sup> The important point, however, is that this state of affairs is at this level still completely hidden to, and remains unnoticed by, the empirical ego. The latter sees itself alone; it is totally unaware of the part between the brackets: ( $S \rightarrow$ ).

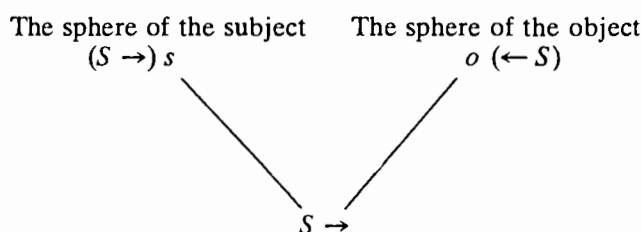
Exactly the same applies to the 'objective' side of the epistemological relation (represented in the above-given formula by the small  $o$ ). Here again the empirical ego has the awareness only of the presence of 'things'. The latter appear to the ego as self-subsistent entities that exist independently of itself. They appear as substances qualified by various properties, and as such they stand opposed to the perceiving subject which sees them from outside. Viewed from the standpoint of the above-mentioned *prajñā*, the 'transcendental cognition', however, a thing rises as this or that thing before the eyes of the empirical ego simply by virtue of the activity of that very same Something, ( $S \rightarrow$ ), which, as we have seen, establishes the ego as an ego. A thing,  $o$ , comes to be established as the thing,  $o$ , itself as a concrete actualization of that Something. It is properly to be understood as a self-manifesting form of the same *tathāgata-garbha*, the 'Womb of the absolute Reality' which is eternally and permanently active through all the phenomenal forms of the things.<sup>19</sup>

Thus the formula representing the inner structure of  $o$  must assume a more analytic form:

( $S \rightarrow$ )  $o$   
or: ( $I \text{ SEE}$ ) *this*.

This new formula is so designed as to indicate that here, too,  $o$  is the only thing which is externally manifested, but that behind this phenomenal form there lies hidden the activity of  $(S \rightarrow)$ , of which the empirical ego is still unaware.

In this way, the so-called subject-object relationship or the whole epistemological process by which a (seemingly) self-subsistent ego-substance perceives a (seemingly) self-subsistent object-substance, and which we have initially represented by the formula  $s \rightarrow o$ , must, if given in its fully developed form, be somewhat like this:



In this last formulation, the  $s$  or the empirical ego, which is but a particular actualization of  $(S \rightarrow)$ , is put into a special active-passive relation with the 'object' or  $o$ , which is also a particular actualization of the same  $(S \rightarrow)$ . And the whole process is to be understood as a concrete actualization of  $I SEE$ , or  $S \rightarrow$  without brackets. But even in the  $I SEE$  there is still noticeable a faint lingering trace of ego-consciousness. Zen emphatically requires that even such an amount of ego-consciousness should be erased from the mind, so that the whole thing be ultimately reduced to the simple act of  $SEE$  pure and simple. The word 'no-mind' to which reference has been made refers precisely to the pure act of  $SEE$  in the state of an immediate and direct actualization, that is, the eternal Verb  $SEE$  without brackets.

We now begin to notice that the reality of what has been expressed by the formula: *i see this*, is of an extremely complicated structure at least when described analytically from the viewpoint of the empirical ego. The real metaphysico-epistemological situation which is covertly and implicitly indicated by the formula  $s \rightarrow o$ , turns out to be something entirely different from what we usually understand from the outward grammatical structure of the sentence. And the

primary or most elementary aim of Zen Buddhism with regard to those who, being locked up in the magic circle of ontological dichotomy, cannot see beyond the surface meaning of  $s \rightarrow o$  or *i see this* as suggested by its syntactic structure ('subject'  $\rightarrow$  'act'  $\rightarrow$  'object'), consists in attempting to break the spell of dualism and remove it from their minds, so that they might stand immediately face to face with what we have symbolically designated by the Verb *SEE*.

We may do well to recall at this point that Buddhism in general stands philosophically on the concept of *prafityasamutpāda* (J.: *engi*) i.e. the idea that everything comes into being and exists as what it is by virtue of the infinite number of relations it bears to other things, each one of these 'other things' owing again its seemingly self-subsistent existence to other things. Buddhism in this respect is ontologically a system based upon the category of *relatio*, in contrast to, say, the Platonic-Aristotelian system which is based on the category of *substantia*.

A philosophical system which stands upon the category of *substantia* and which recognizes in substances the most basic ontological elements, almost inevitably tends to assume the form of essentialism.

What is meant by essentialism has roughly been outlined in an earlier context. Just to recapitulate the gist of the essentialist argument for the purpose of elucidating, by contrast, the nature of the position taken by Zen Buddhism, we might remark that the essentialist position sees on both the 'subjective' and 'objective' sides of the  $s \rightarrow o$  type of situation self-subsistent substances, the boundaries of each of which are inalterably fixed and determined by its 'essence'. Here *o*, say, an apple, is a self-subsistent substance with a more or less strictly delimited ontological sphere, the delimitation being supplied by its own 'essence', i.e. apple-ness. In the same manner, the ego which, as the subject, perceives the apple is an equally self-subsistent substance furnished with an 'essence' which, in this case, happens to be its 'I-ness'. Zen Buddhism summarizes the essentialist view through the succinct dictum: 'Mountain is mountain, and river is river'.

The position of *prafityasamutpāda* stands definitely against this view. Such a view, Buddhism asserts, does nothing other than reflect the phenomenal surface of reality. According to

the Buddhist view, it is not the case that there does exist in the external world a substance with a certain number of qualities, called 'apple'. The truth is rather that Something phenomenally appears to the subject as an 'apple'. The phenomenal appearance of the 'apple' as an 'apple' depends upon a certain positive attitude on the part of the subject. Conversely, however, the very fact that 'apple' phenomenally appears as such to his eyes, establishes man as the perceiving ego, the subject of cognition. Zen describes this reciprocal relationship or determination between the subject and the object by saying: 'Man sees the mountain; the mountain sees man'.

The reality in the true sense of the word, therefore, is Something lying behind both the subject and object and making each of them emerge in its particular form, this as the subject and that as the object. The ultimate principle governing the whole structure is Something which runs through the subject-object relationship, and which makes possible the very relationship to be actualized. It is this all-pervading, active principle that we want to indicate by the formula  $S \rightarrow$ , or rather in its ultimate form, the Verb *SEE*.

But again, the word 'something' or 'ultimate principle' must not mislead one into thinking that behind the veils of phenomena some metaphysical, supra-sensible Substance is governing the mechanism of the phenomenal world. For there is, according to Zen, in reality nothing beyond, or other than, the phenomenal world. Zen does not admit the existence of a transcendental, supra-sensible order of things, which would subsist apart from the sensible world.<sup>20</sup> The only point Zen Buddhism makes about this problem is that the phenomenal world is not just the sensible order of things as it appears to the ordinary empirical ego; rather, the phenomenal world as it discloses itself to the Zen consciousness is charged with a peculiar kind of dynamic power which may conveniently be indicated by the Verb *SEE*.

Thus what is meant by *SEE* is not an absolute, transcendental Entity which itself might be something keeping itself beyond, and completely aloof from the phenomenal things. Rather, what is really meant thereby in Zen Buddhism is a dynamic field of power in its entirety and wholeness, an entire field which is neither exclusively subjective nor exclusively objective, but comprehending both the subject and the object

in a peculiar state prior to its being bifurcated into these two terms. The verbal form itself of *SEE* may, at least vaguely, be suggestive of the fact that, instead of being a thing, be it an 'absolute' thing or be it a 'transcendental' substance, it is an *actus* charging an entire field with its dynamic energy. In terms of the previously introduced basic formula we might say that the whole process of *i see this* is itself the field of the Act of *SEE*. The real meaning of this statement, however, will be made clear only by our analyzing in more detail the basic inner structure of this dynamic field. That will be our task in the following pages.



## V. 'The Whole World is One Single Mind'

We have observed in the foregoing that the basic formula  $s \rightarrow o$ , or *i see this*, which is designed to describe schematically the epistemological relation between the perceiving subject and the object perceived, conceals in reality a far more complex mechanism than appears at first sight. For, according to the typically Buddhist analysis, at the back of  $s$  there is concealed  $(S \rightarrow)$ ; at the back of  $o$  there is also  $(S \rightarrow)$ . And the whole thing, as we have observed, is ultimately to be reduced to the very simple, all-pervading and all-comprehensive act of *SEE*.

It often happens that this *SEE*, which is in Zen understanding nothing other than the absolute or ultimate Reality, makes itself felt in the mind of a man living in the empirical dimension of existence. The first symptom of the ultimate Reality breaking into the empirical dimension is observable in the fact that the man in such a situation begins to feel uneasy about the nature of the reality as he actually sees it. Although he is still completely locked up in the dichotomous world-view, he somehow begins to entertain a vague feeling that the true reality, both of himself and of the external things, must be something of an entirely different nature. He vaguely notices at the same time that he is actually undergoing all the tribulations and miseries of human existence simply because he cannot see the reality as he should. This phenomenon, of decisive importance both religiously and philosophically, is called in Chinese Buddhism *fa hsin* (J.: *hosh-shin*), meaning literally the raising of the mind, i.e. the raising of a deep and strong aspiration toward the enlightenment of Buddha. Philosophically, it is to be understood as the very first self-manifestation of the metaphysical  $S \rightarrow$ .

Once this beginning stage is actualized, the *Dasein* as it is naturally given loses, subjectively as well as objectively, its

seeming solidity. It is felt that the *Dasein* in its empirical form is not the real form of Being, that it is but a pseudo-reality. Urged by an irresistible drive pushing him from the pseudo-reality towards what he thinks to be the real reality, whatever and wherever it might be, man betakes himself to this or that way of possible salvation. Here Zen Buddhism proposes 'sitting cross-legged in meditation' as the most authentic way for cultivating a special eye to see reality as it really is in its original such-ness.

The 'sitting cross-legged in meditation' is a somato-psychological posture by which the naturally centrifugal tendency of the mind might be curbed, and turned toward the opposite, i.e. centripetal, direction until finally the pseudo-ego loses itself in the realization of the true Selfhood which we have indicated by the formula  $S \rightarrow$ .

Zen asserts that this kind of somato-psychological posture is an absolute necessity for the realization of the true Selfhood, i.e. the state of absolute subjectivity, because the real 'self' is never attainable through a purely mental process, be it representation, imagination, or thinking. For it is not a mere matter of cognition. The question is not 'knowing' one's own true self, but rather 'becoming' it. Unless one 'becomes' one's own self, however far one may proceed along the successive stages of self-cognition, the self will not turn into an absolute Selfhood. For the real self will go on receding ever further; it will forever remain an 'object', an object known or to be known. The self as a known object, at no matter how high a stage the cognition may happen to be, cannot by nature be pure subjectivity. In order to realize the self in a state of pure and absolute subjectivity, one has to 'become' it, instead of merely 'knowing' it. But in order to achieve this, the whole unity of 'mind-body' – as suggested by the above-mentioned expression of Dōgen – must 'drop off'. The 'sitting cross-legged in meditation' is, as Zen sees it, the best possible, if not the only possible, way of achieving, first, the unity of 'mind-body', and then the unity itself 'dropping off'.

The expression: 'the mind-body dropping off' means, in the more traditional Buddhist terminology, one's experiencing with his total being the epistemological-metaphysical state of Nothingness (Sanskrit: *śūnyatā*, Ch.: *k'ung*, J.: *kū*).

But the word 'Nothingness' as used in Zen Buddhism must be understood in a very peculiar sense.

'Nothingness' in this context, to begin with, refers to the last and ultimate stage in the actualization of Zen consciousness, at which the self, ceasing to set itself up as an 'object' for itself, 'becomes' the self itself, and that so thoroughly that it is no longer even its own self. It is in fact one of the most fundamental philosophical tenets of Zen Buddhism that when a thing – anything whatsoever – becomes its own self thoroughly and completely, to the utmost extent of possibility, it ends by breaking through its own limit and going beyond its determinations. At this stage, *A* is no longer *A*; *A* is non-*A*. Or, to use a terminology which is peculiar to Zen, 'mountain is not mountain'. However, to this statement Zen adds – and this is the most crucial point – that when a thing, by becoming its own self so thoroughly, breaks through its limitations and determinations, then paradoxically it is found to be its own Self in the most real and absolute sense.

This process may conveniently be described in terms of the traditional logical language in the following way.<sup>21</sup> One may note that, thus described, the logic of Zen discloses a remarkable originality which would clarify to a great extent the most characteristic form of thinking in Zen. As in the case of the traditional Aristotelian logic, the starting-point is furnished by the law of identity, '*A* is *A*', which, as we have seen above, constitutes the logical basis of metaphysical essentialism. The law of identity signifies for Zen Buddhism too that a thing, whatever it be, is identical with itself. To express this empirical truth, Zen says: 'Mountain is mountain'.

Thus outwardly at least, there is no difference noticeable here between the Aristotelian logical system and Zen logic. Implicitly, however, already at this initial stage Zen takes a view which considerably differs from the Aristotelian position. For in the law of identity (*A* is *A*) Zen recognizes a characteristic sign of the self-complacency of normal *bon sens*. From the point of view of Zen, the formula: '*A* is *A*', instead of being a description of a well-grounded observation of the structure of reality, is but a logical presentation of the illusory view of reality seen through the veil of *Māyā*, which is the natural outcome of man's casting upon each of the things

of the world the narrow spotlight of the discriminating intellect.

The basic difference, however, between the ordinary type of logic and Zen logic comes out with an undeniable clarity at the next stage. For the former naturally develops the law of identity into the law of non-contradiction (*A* is not non-*A*), while the latter develops it into a glaring contradiction, asserting: '*A* is non-*A*'. Zen refers to this contradictory stage by the dictum: 'Mountain is not mountain'. It must be borne in mind, however, that when Zen makes an assertion of this kind, it does not do so in the same epistemological dimension as that of '*A* is *A*'. As long as one remains at the level of '*A* is *A*', i.e. the level of empirical experience, one would never be able to say at the same time, '*A* is non-*A*', unless one goes out of one's mind. This fact will become evident beyond any doubt when one encounters a more strange-looking expression like: 'The bridge flows on; the river does not flow'.<sup>22</sup> Otherwise expressed, the making of an assertion of this sort presupposes on the part of the person the actualization of a total transformation of consciousness in such a way that he is thereby enabled to witness *A* as it 'becomes' *A* itself to such an extent that it breaks through its own *A*-ness, and begins to disclose to him its formless, essenceless, and 'aspect'-less aspect.

Thus understood, the formula: '*A* is non-*A*' will have to be more analytically paraphrased as: '*A* is so thoroughly *A* itself that it is no longer *A*'. Metaphysically, this is the stage of *chên k'ung* (J.: *shin kū*), the 'real Nothingness'. Here *A* is not *A* in the positive sense that it is absolutely beyond the determinations and delimitations of *A*-ness, that it is something infinitely more than mere *A*.

The third stage which immediately follows – or rather we should say: which establishes itself at the same time as – the stage of '*A* is non-*A*' is again '*A* is *A*'. That is to say, at the final stage, we apparently come back to the initial stage. 'Mountain is (again) mountain'. Or, as a more popular Zen adage goes: 'The flower is red, and the willow is green'. In spite of the formal identity, however, the inner structure of '*A* is *A*' is completely different in the two cases. For at the last stage '*A* is *A*' is but an abbreviated expression standing for '*A* is non-*A*'; therefore it is *A*'. The Diamond Sutra, to which reference has already been made, describes this situation by saying: 'The

world is not a world; therefore it deserves to be called *world*', or 'A thing – anything whatsoever – is not a thing; therefore it deserves to be called *thing*'. This stage is technically known in Mahayana Buddhism as *miao yu* (J.: *myō u*), 'extraordinary Being'. The Chinese word *miao*, meaning literally 'subtle', 'extraordinary', 'miraculously good', is intended to suggest that reality is being seen or experienced here in an unusually elevated dimension, that it is not the world of Being as it is grasped by the discriminating activity of our relative intellect, although outwardly, that is, seen through the eyes of an ordinary man locked up in the limited sphere of empirical experience, it is still the same old world of ours which has nothing extraordinary about it. For it is the common ordinary world which has once lost itself in the abyss of Nothingness and which, then, has taken rise again in its phenomenal form.

What actually happens in the human consciousness between the stage of 'A is non-A' and the next stage, that of 'A is (again) A', crucially determines the nature of Zen Buddhism. The whole thing centers around the total nullification of all individual things in Nothingness and their rebirth from the very bottom of Nothingness again into the domain of empirical reality as concrete individuals, but completely transformed in their inner structure. And the rise of this kind of consciousness in a concrete individual human mind is what is known in Buddhism as *prajñā* which might be translated as 'transcendental cognition', 'non-discriminating cognition' or Supreme Knowledge. We now see that translation, in whatever way it may be made, is, in a case like this, merely a make-shift. For 'non-discriminating' is but an aspect of this type of cognition; nor does 'transcendental' do justice to its reality, because the latter in its ultimate form is, as we have just seen, a matter of the most concrete and empirical experience which is actualized in the dimension of daily life.

The most important point to note about the rise of the *prajñā* is that it consists in a complete, total transformation occurring in the ego-structure of the subject. Formulated as: ['A is A' → 'A is non-A' → 'A is A'], the whole process might look as if it referred purely to the objective structure of the world. But in truth it concerns, primarily and directly at least, the subjective aspect of reality. The three logical stages reflect the three

basic stages in the process of the birth and establishment of the *prajñā*-type of cognition, although, to be sure, each of these subjective stages does imply the presence of a corresponding ontological dimension.

Thus the key-word Nothingness in this context refers first and foremost to the nullification of the selfhood, the ego, conceived and represented as a self-subsistent entity. The core of the ego which has hitherto been distinguishing itself from all others, is now broken down and becomes nullified. But the nullification of the empirical ego as conceived by Zen Buddhism cannot be achieved by a total annihilation of consciousness. The epistemological Nothingness about which Zen talks is not to be confused with the state of sheer unconsciousness.

True, the awareness of *myself* as appears in the above-introduced formula (*I SEE*) *myself* is no longer there. In this sense, and in this sense only, the epistemological Nothingness is a region of unconsciousness. However, in place of the awareness of the empirical ego, there is actualized here the absolute Awareness itself, which we have expressed above by the formula:  $S \rightarrow$  or *SEE*, and which has not been activated in the domain of the empirical ego. Zen often calls it an 'ever-lucid Awareness' – *liao liao ch'ang chih*, a phrase attributed to the second Patriarch of Zen Buddhism, Hui K'o (J.: E Ka, 487-593). Strictly speaking, there is in this absolute Awareness no trace even of *I*, so that the formula  $S \rightarrow$ , or *I SEE* must, as we have observed earlier, ultimately be reduced to *SEE* alone. Far from being 'Nothingness' in the negative sense of the term, it is an extremely intense consciousness, so intense indeed that it goes beyond being 'consciousness'.<sup>23</sup>

In exact correspondence to the total transformation of the subject, there occurs on the side of the 'objects' also a drastic change, so much so that they cease to subsist as 'objects'. It is but natural, because where there is no 'subject' confronting 'object', there can be no 'object' remaining. All things at this stage lose their essential delimitations. And being no longer obstructed by their own ontological limits, all things flow into one another, reflecting each other and being reflected by each other in the limitlessly vast field of Nothingness.<sup>24</sup> The mountain is here no longer a mountain, the river is no longer a river, for on the corresponding subjective side, 'I' am no longer 'I'.

There is here no ego that sees and recognizes a thing as 'something'; nor is there any thing to be seen or recognized as such. For the 'object', whatever it may be, is no longer an object, because it has been deprived of all delimitations. The whole Being at this stage has turned into a vast, limitless space of Void in which nothing may be grasped as something definite. Man directly experiences in such a situation the whole world of Being as Nothingness.

But this very description of Nothingness clearly tells us that the Nothingness which is experienced in this way is by no means 'nothing' in the purely negative sense as the word is liable to be understood. On the 'subjective' side – if we still want to hold fast to the subject-object distinction – the experiencing of Nothingness does not mean our consciousness becoming completely vacant and empty. Quite the contrary; consciousness here is its own self in its pristine purity, a pure Light or sheer Illumination, being illuminated by itself and illuminating itself. It is the *SEE* of which mention has often been made.

But this Illumination, through illuminating itself, illumines at the same time the entire world of Being. This means that on the 'objective' side too, things are not simply reduced to 'nothing' in the negative sense of the term. True, at this stage none of the individual existents exists self-subsistently. But this is not the same as saying that they are simply nil. On the contrary, they are there as concrete individuals, while being at the same time so many actualizations of the limitless, 'aspect'-less aspect of an ever-active, ever-creative Act. But this Act, for the Zen consciousness, is no other than the Illumination of the *SEE* itself which we have just established as the 'subjective' side of the experience of Nothingness.

Instead of describing the *SEE* as Light or Illumination, Zen often refers to this simple Verb *SEE* by the term *hsin*, the Mind. And it often speaks of all things being the products of the Mind. It will have been understood by now that this and other similar assertions are not made on the basis of an idealist view which would reduce everything to 'thought' or 'ideas'. For the Mind as understood by Zen is not the minds of individual persons. What is meant by the word Mind is Reality before it is broken up into the so-called 'mind' and 'thing';

it is a state prior to the basic dichotomy of 'subject' and 'object'. Curiously enough, be it remarked, the word *hsin* ('mind') in this context is exactly synonymous with the word *wu-hsin* ('no-mind') which we encountered in an earlier context. The Mind understood in this sense is often called the *hsin fa* (J.: *shin hô*), the Mind-Reality.

As will be explained fully later, the 'mind' as understood in the ordinary sense is, in the view of Zen, but an abstraction, that is, the 'subjective' aspect of the Mind-Reality grasped as an independent factor and posited as an individual, self-subsistent psychological principle. When, therefore, Zen asserts that 'all things are but one mind', it does not mean that the mind as ordinarily understood produces or creates all things out of itself. It simply wants to indicate how out of the Mind-Reality there emerges what we ordinarily recognize as subject and object. The 'mind' as understood in the ordinary sense is in this view only an element indistinguishably fused with its 'objective' counterpart into the unity of the Mind-Reality as a totality.

It often happened, however, in the course of the history of Buddhism that the Mind-Reality was confused with the 'mind'. As a concrete example of this confusion, let us examine the famous anecdote concerning the great Zen master Fa Yen Wên I (J.: Hô Gen Mon Eki, 885-958), the founder of the Fa Yen school, a remarkably philosophical mind, who had been famous before his experience of enlightenment for upholding the idealist position generally known as the 'Mind-Only' - Theory. The theory, put in a nutshell, holds that the whole world of Being is nothing but a grand manifestation of one single 'mind', and that all that exist are nothing but so many products of one single act of 'cognition'.<sup>25</sup>

Once Fa Yen was travelling with two companions in search of the Truth, when they happened to take shelter from rain in a hermitage belonging to a great Zen master of the age, Ti Tsang Kuei Ch'ên (J.: Ji Zô Kei Jin, 867-928). They did not know, however, who he was.

Against the background of the drizzling rain, the three young men discussed with enthusiasm, self-conceit and self-satisfaction, the problems raised by the famous dictum of the



monk Chao: 'The heaven and earth (i.e. the whole universe) is of one and the same root as my own self, and all things are one with me',<sup>26</sup> while Ti Tsang listened to them silently. Then suddenly he asked, 'Are the mountains, rivers, and the earth one and the same thing as the self, or different?' 'One and the same', Fa Yen replied. Thereupon, the aged Zen master, without saying anything, put up two fingers, gazed intently at them, then retired to his own room.

As the rain stopped, the three young men were about to leave, when all of a sudden the master Ti Tsang, pointing at a stone in the courtyard said to Fa Yen, 'I understand that you hold the doctrine of the whole world being one single mind. Is, then, this stone inside the mind or outside?' 'Of course it is in the mind', replied Fa Yen. Thereupon Ti Tsang remarked, 'What a cumbersome burden you have in your mind! Due to what kind of network of causes do you have to carry about in the mind such a heavy stone?'

Fa Yen, who did not know what to say, decided to stay there to put himself under the spiritual guidance of Ti Tsang. There Fa Yen learnt that all the philosophical ideas and theories that he had studied were absolutely of no avail if he wanted to obtain the final ultimate answer to the most ultimate existential question. A month or so had passed when one day, having been driven by Ti Tsang into a logical *impasse* and having finally confessed, 'O Master, I am now in a situation in which language is reduced to silence and thinking has no way to follow!', he heard his master remark, 'If you still are to talk about the ultimate Reality, see how it is nakedly apparent in everything and every event!' Fa Yen is thereupon said to have attained enlightenment.

This final remark of Ti Tsang discloses the Zen understanding of the thesis that 'the entire world of Being is but one single mind'. The thesis in this understanding means first and foremost that the self – which at this stage will more properly be written Self – directly and immediately sees its own self reflected on all things as 'two mirrors facing each other without there being between them even a shadow of a thing'.

Thus for a Zen master like Ti Tsang, the dictum: 'all things are but one mind' simply refers to a peculiar state of awareness in which the so-called 'object', a mountain for instance,

and the so-called 'subject', i.e. a man, stand face to face with each other like two mirrors reflecting one another, there being absolutely nothing between the two. Since both are like lucid mirrors facing each other, one never can tell which is active and which is passive. In fact each of the two is both active and passive, reflecting and being reflected. There is no distinction to be made here between the 'subject' and the 'object' – 'the man sees the mountain, the mountain sees the man', as the above-mentioned Zen saying puts it. Note that there is no place even for the word 'and' between 'the man sees the mountain' and 'the mountain sees the man'. The man, i.e. the 'mind', immediately sees its own reality being reflected – or more strictly we should say: being actualized – in the mountain. But by this very act of the mind, the mountain, on its part, recognizes its own reality as it is actualized in the mind. And throughout the entire process, not a single thing, neither the mind nor the mountain, is objectified. For the whole thing, including the mind and the mountain, the 'subject' and the 'object', is a single act of *SEE*, one single act of the Mind-Reality. This, however, is not to assert that the act of *SEE* is pure 'subjectivity' because where there is absolutely no objectification of anything, there can be no subjectification of anything either.

But such a situation is not certainly anything which one could expect to actualize in the dimension of ordinary empirical experience. It actualizes, if at all, only in an extraordinary – so it appears to common sense – dimension of consciousness. Thus Fa Yen himself later developed his own idea about this point in his celebrated poem entitled 'The Whole World is One Single Mind' as follows:

The whole world is but one single Mind. And all that exist are but one single Cognition. Since there is nothing but Cognition, and since all are but one Mind, the eye is able to recognize sounds and the ear colors. If colors do not enter into the ear, how could sounds touch the eye?

And yet the field of the Mind is so limitlessly vast and infinitely flexible that it may, and does, happen that the eye responds specifically to colors, and the ear to sounds. Then it is that the empirical world takes its rise out of the depths of the Mind. He goes on to say:

But when the eye is adjusted to colors, and when the ear responds to sounds, all existent things are discriminated and recognized. If all things were not thus distinguishable from one another, how could one see their dream-like existences? But of all these mountains, rivers and the great earth, what is there to change?, what is there not to change?

It is of utmost importance to note that the two different dimensions, i.e. that of the empirical world and that of Nothingness, are actualized at one and the same time in this single act of *SEE*. It is not the case that one witnesses this at one time and experiences that at another. Rather, one sees the Apparent in the Real, and the Real in the Apparent, there being no discrepancy between them. This is why many of the famous Zen sayings, poems and paintings look as if they were simply objective descriptions of Nature. Thus the Zen master Chia Shan Shan Hui (J.: Kas-san Zen-ne, 805-881) – ‘Shan Hui of the mountain Chia’ –, when asked ‘How is the landscape of the mountain Chia (Chia Shan)?’, replied:

Monkeys have already gone home behind the blue peaks  
Embracing their young to their breasts.  
A bird has alighted before the deep-green rocks,  
Carrying a flower-petal in its beak.

Our Fa Yen is related to have remarked once on this poem: ‘For thirty years I have mistakenly regarded this as a description of the external landscape!’

Does this remark of Fa Yen mean that the poem in truth is to be taken as a symbolic presentation of an inner landscape? Definitely not. He is trying to say something entirely different. In fact, the things of Nature like the monkeys, bird, blue peaks, green rock, flower-petal etc., are not symbols for ‘something-beyond’. They *are* so many concretely real things. And the poem in this sense *is* a concrete description of external Nature. The important thing here to remark is that the natural landscape is seen with the eyes of the *SEE*. All the events that are described – the monkeys going home and the bird alighting, holding a flower in its beak – are regarded as the Eternal-Present evolving itself on the empirical axis of time and space. ‘What is there to change?, what is there not to change?’

The relation between the Eternal-Present and the Time-Space dimension of existence in Zen consciousness is a very subtle and mobile one. It is mobile in the sense that the delicate equilibrium of the mutual interaction of the two dimensions one upon the other is ready to tilt at any moment to either direction. Thus it is now the Eternal-Present that is more prominently in view; the very next moment the Time-Space axis may protrude itself and hide the Eternal-Present behind it. In order to make this particular situation understandable, Zen sometimes has recourse to expressions that may be regarded as approaching symbolism. Then, instead of just throwing out upon the canvas of language bits of external Nature – as was the case with the description of the mountain landscape by Chia Shan – Zen describes certain things of Nature which are put into particular relations with one another in such a way that the description of Nature itself might graphically reproduce the aforementioned subtle and mobile relation between the two dimensions of Reality. The following verses are but one example:

The shadows of the bamboos are sweeping the staircase,  
But there is no stirring of even a mote of dust.  
The moonlight is piercing to the bottom of the deep river,  
But there is not even a scar left in the waters.

The shadows of the bamboos are actually sweeping the staircase. That is, there is motion and commotion in the empirical dimension of the world. But no dust is stirred up by this phenomenal movement. That is, the supra-phenomenal dimension of Reality is eternally calm and quiet. It must be remarked that the commotion of the Apparent and the non-commotion of the Real are not actually separable one from the other. They actualize themselves simultaneously. That is to say, the non-commotion of the absolute dimension of Reality is actualized precisely through the commotion of the phenomenal dimension of the same Reality. The phenomenal commotion and the absolute tranquility are but two aspects of one single Reality. The act of *SEE* is of such a nature.

This delicate relation between the Apparent and the Real, Multiplicity and Unity in the act of *SEE* comes out still more clearly in some Zen sayings which have specifically been devised to visualize it. The Zen master Yung An Shan Ching

(J.: Ei An Zen Shō), for example, when asked, 'What is the one single color?', replied, 'Easy to recognize are the white particles in the snow; difficult to distinguish are the black (molecules) of soot in the ink'.<sup>27</sup> By this he wanted to indicate that the snow which from afar appears as one single mass of white color is found to contain, if examined closely, an infinite number of white particles each one of which is an individual, self-sufficient entity. In the same manner, in a cake of Chinese ink which appears to be a solid piece of black material, there are an infinity of individual molecules of soot.

Likewise Shao Shan Huan P'u (J.: Shō Zan Kan Fu), when asked, 'What is the aspect of the absolute Unity?', replied, 'A snowy heron flies away into the white sky; the mountain is far away and deep blue is its color'.<sup>28</sup>

More celebrated is the saying of Tung Shan Liang Chieh (J.: Tōzan Ryōkai, 807-869), the founder of the Ts'ao Tung (J.: Sō Tō) sect: 'Snow heaped up in a silver bowl, and a white heron hidden in the light of the full moon'.

The picture of a white thing, or an infinite number of white things, in the very midst of a broad white field, visualizes the subtle and mobile relation between the sensible and the supra-sensible. Metaphysically it refers to the *coincidentia oppositorum* that subsists between Multiplicity and Unity – Multiplicity being in itself Unity, and Unity in itself Multiplicity. *Rūpaṃ śūnyatā, śūnyatāiva rūpaṃ. Rūpān na prthag śūnyatā, śūnyatāyā na prthag rūpaṃ*: 'The sensible is Nothingness, Nothingness is the sensible. The sensible is no other than Nothingness; Nothingness is no other than the sensible'.<sup>29</sup>

The word 'Nothing' in this passage refers to the same thing as what is meant by the word *Mind* or *SEE* about which we have been talking. Since the reality itself which is at issue is of a contradictory – so it seems from the viewpoint of our common sense – nature, we are forced, in trying to describe it, to have recourse to a contradictory use of words, saying for instance, that the Mind is sensible and not sensible, transcendental and not transcendental at one and the same time.

The Mind-Reality can by no means be said to be purely sensible; it is transcendental in the sense that it transcends the limits of the empirical ego. For the Mind in the sense of *SEE* is the self-actualizing activity of the Cosmic Ego. But, again, it

cannot be said to be purely transcendental, because the activity of this Cosmic Ego is actualized only through the consciousness of a concrete individual person. We must go further and say that the activity of the concrete individual 'mind' is itself the *actus* of the transcendental Mind. There is thus, properly speaking, absolutely no distance between the sensible and the transcendental. And yet there is a certain respect in which they *are* distinguishable from one another; that is, the individual 'mind' is most concretely individual, while the Cosmic Mind is really (i.e. non-metaphorically) absolute and transcendental. And the Mind-Reality in its real sense is a contradictory unity of these two aspects.

This peculiar structure of the Mind-Reality is indicated by Lin Chi in the following way:-

What do you think is Reality? Reality is nothing other than the Mind-Reality. The Mind-Reality has no definite form. It permeates and runs through the whole universe. It is, at this very moment, in this very place, so vividly present. But the minds of the ordinary people are not mature enough to see this. Thus they establish everywhere names and concepts (like the 'Absolute', the 'Holy', 'enlightenment', etc.), and vainly search after Reality in these names and letters.<sup>30</sup>

The sentence: 'It is, at this very moment, in this very place, so vividly present', refers to the individual and sensible aspect of the Mind-Reality. The Mind-Reality, cosmic and all-pervading as it is, necessarily and invariably actualizes itself in the individual minds of individual persons. This point is made clear by the following words of Lin Chi:

O Brethren, the Mind-Reality has no definite form. It permeates and runs through the whole universe. In the eye it acts as sight; in the ear it acts as hearing; in the nose it acts as the sense of smell; in the mouth it speaks; in the hand it grasps; in the foot it walks. All these activities are originally nothing but one single Spiritual Illumination, which diversifies itself into harmonious correspondences.<sup>31</sup> It is because the Mind has in this way no definite form of its own that it can so freely act in every form.<sup>32</sup>

The contradictory unity of the most concretely individual-present and the most transcendently absolute-eternal in the *actus* of the Mind or *SEE* is given by Lin Chi a very original description in the following passage:

O venerable Friends, (instead of being caught in the net of phenomenal things), you should grasp directly the Man who is pulling the wires of these shadowy phenomena behind the scenes. If you but realize that the Man<sup>33</sup> is the ultimate Source of all Buddhas, (you will immediately see that) any place in which you actually are at the present moment is the ultimate and absolute place for you, o Brethren!

(You are now listening to my discourse.) It is not your material bodies that understand the discourse. Do your spleen, stomach and liver understand the discourse? No! Does the empty space understand the discourse? No! What, then, is the one that is actually understanding my discourse? It is no other than you yourself who are thus undeniably standing before me. I mean by 'you' that fellow who, without having any definite visible form, is luminous by himself, illuminating himself. It is this very fellow who is actually listening to this discourse of mine and understands it. If you but realize this point, you are on the spot the same as our spiritual ancestor Buddha. Then, everything you do, in all time without interruption, will be in perfect conformity with Reality.<sup>34</sup>

The inner structure of the Mind is thus extremely elusive, at least to the discriminating intellect. Consequently the word 'mind' as used in Zen texts could be very misleading. There is in any case always noticeable in the actual usage of the word a subtle interplay of the sensible and the supra-sensible orders of things. As a telling example of this point we shall mention a celebrated anecdote concerning the debut of the sixth Patriarch Hui Nêng (J.: E Nô) into the world of Zen Buddhism in southern China.

At that time Hui Nêng was still concealing his identity for some political reasons – so we are told. One day he sat in a corner of a temple in Kuang Chou listening to a lecture being given on a Buddhist Sutra. All of a sudden the wind rose, and the flag at the gate of the temple began to flutter. This immediately induced some of the monks in the audience into a hot debate. It started by one of them remarking, 'Look! The flag is fluttering!' 'No', another objected, 'it is not the flag that is moving. It is the wind that is moving!' An endless discussion ensued as to what was *really* moving, the flag or the wind. At last Hui Nêng could not restrain himself any longer. He said, 'It is not that the wind moves. Nor is it the case that the flag moves. O honorable Brethren, it is in reality your minds that are fluttering!'

This remark of Hui Nêng about the 'fluttering' of the 'mind', as it stands, is liable to lead one into thinking that he was speaking of the individual mind or the individual consciousness of a concrete person. Furthermore, this interpretation seems in fact to suit the situation very well. It does give a certain amount of insight into an important aspect of the Zen world-view. One might find this kind of explanation interesting or curious, and being satisfied, go no further. But that will be fatal to the real understanding of the Zen world-view.

The truly delicate point about this is that such an interpretation of the situation here in question is not entirely wrong either. For it is partially true, though not totally. In order to obtain a total understanding of the matter, we have to begin by taking the word 'mind' as it was used by Hui Nêng in the sense of the Mind or *SEE* having reference to both the empirical and transcendental dimensions of the Zen awareness. It is the Mind taken in this sense that *really* moves.

This last statement implies first of all that in the empirical dimension, the mind of the individual person is set in motion. And the movement or 'fluttering' of the concrete and individual mind on the empirical level of experience becomes actualized in the fluttering motion of the flag in the wind. Here again, be it remarked, there is properly speaking absolutely no room for the word *and* to be inserted between the three factors of the movement. The utmost we can say by way of description is this: By the very movement of the mind, the flag-wind is set in motion. The movement of these three things is in fact one single movement.

This, however, is still but a partial description of the Reality. For, according to the typical Zen understanding which we have explained earlier, there can be no fluttering of the individual 'mind' unless there be at the same time the fluttering of the Mind. A simultaneous fluttering motion occurs in the two dimensions, sensible and supra-sensible. And since there is no connecting *and* between these two dimensions except in rational analysis, the fluttering of the Mind in reality is the fluttering of the individual consciousness. And the fluttering of the Mind of this nature is actualized in the phenomenal world as a total phenomenon of 'a man being conscious of a flag fluttering in the wind'.

As the flag flutters, the whole universe flutters. And this



fluttering is an *actus* of the Mind. But here again we find ourselves faced with a paradoxical situation – ‘paradoxical’ from the viewpoint of common sense. For the ‘whole universe’ in this understanding is nothing other than the Mind. Since the Mind is in this manner an absolute whole for which there is no distinction of the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’, and beyond which or apart from which there can be nothing ‘else’ conceivable, the fluttering of the Mind is no fluttering at all. There is in reality absolutely no movement here. As we have observed before, the Eternal-Present is eternally calm and tranquil in spite of all the motions of the Mind on another dimension.

This ‘paradoxical’ structure of Reality is beautifully and concisely pictured in the famous saying of P’ang Yün (J.: Hō On):<sup>35</sup>

Lovely snow flakes! They are falling on no other place.

It is snowing hard. It is snowing in big beautiful white flakes. Each one of these flakes, considered individually and as a phenomenon pertaining to external Nature, is certainly falling from the sky to the earth. However, at a metaphysical-epistemological stage at which both the snow and the ego-spectator are fused into the original unity of the Mind so that the whole universe has turned into the snow, the snow flakes have no place upon which to fall. As an external landscape, the snow flakes are falling. But as an inner landscape of the Mind, there is no falling, no movement, for the whole universe cannot fall toward any other place. Motion can take place only in a ‘relative’ world. It is meaningless to speak of the motion of a thing in a dimension where there is conceivable no ‘outside’ system of reference which the thing may be referred to. If, even then, we are to use the ‘image’ of falling, we would probably have to say that the snow flakes, i.e. the Mind, is falling toward their own place, i.e. the Mind. But evidently such a falling is no falling at all.

Exactly the same idea is expressed by Huang Lung Hui Nan (J.: Ō Ryū E Nan, 1001-1069)<sup>36</sup> through a similar imagery:

‘The drizzling spring rain! It has been falling from last evening, through the whole night until dawn. Drop after drop, it falls. But it is

falling on no other place. Tell me, if you can! To what place does it fall?' Then, without waiting for an answer, he himself replied: 'It drops upon your eyes! It is penetrating into your nose!'

It is highly significant that Huang Lung combines here two contradictory statements. On the one hand, he says, the rain is falling on no other place, and, on the other, he states that it is falling upon the nose and eyes.

The rain does not fall anywhere, to begin with, because in the cosmic landscape of the Mind, the whole universe is nothing other than Rain. If the *whole* universe is Rain, it will be but natural that the latter should find no 'other' place upon which to fall. The entire universe which is no other than the Mind (i.e. *SEE*), is Raining. And since the universe in its entirety is Raining, the Rain, if it falls at all anywhere, cannot but fall to its own self. That is to say, Raining in this particular situation is the same as non-Raining. Yet, on the other hand, it is also true that the rain is actually falling upon the bodily eyes and penetrating into the bodily nose of an individual person. Otherwise there would be no awareness of the 'falling and not-falling' of the Rain in the cosmic dimension of the Mind. The bodily eyes and nose of an individual concrete person are the only *loci* where the Mind-Rain can actualize itself here and now.

What precedes is to be considered a lengthy paraphrase of the Zen interpretation of the 'Mind-Only'-Theory as represented by the extremely terse dictum: *I chieh hsin* (J.: *Issai shin*), 'all things are Mind'. It will have been understood by now that a dictum of this sort does not mean that the whole universe comes into, or is contained in, the 'mind'. It simply means that the whole universe *is* in itself and by itself the Mind.

A monk once asked the famous Zen master Chang Sha Ching Ch'ên (J.: Chōsha Keishin, Ninth century): 'How is it possible to transform the mountains, rivers, and the great earth (i.e. the whole universe) and reduce them to my own mind?' The master answered: 'How is it possible, indeed, to transform the mountains, rivers and the great earth and reduce them to my own mind?' The question and the answer are exactly identical with each other, word for word. But they arise from two entirely different dimensions of awareness. The monk who asks the question understands the 'all things

are Mind' at the empirical level, however philosophically elaborated it may be, wondering how it is at all possible for the whole universe to be reduced to one single mind. Note that the word 'mind' itself is taken in the sense of the empirical ego. Chang Sha's answer is a rhetorical question. He means to say: It is absolutely impossible to reduce the whole universe to one single mind, because the whole universe *is* from the beginning the Mind, there being no discrepancy between them. There is, in this understanding, no opposition between the mountains, rivers and the great earth as 'external' Nature and the mind as the 'internal' domain. There is no 'mind' to assimilate the external Nature into its own 'inner' unity.

## VI The Field Structure of Ultimate Reality

We are now in a position to analyze more theoretically the basic structure of Zen epistemology. For that purpose we propose to introduce the concept of 'Field' into our exposition. In fact, what we have been discussing in the foregoing under the key-term 'Mind' may philosophically be represented as a peculiar kind of dynamic Field, from which one could obtain *through abstraction* the perceiving 'subject' and, again *through abstraction*, the object perceived. The 'Field' thus understood will refer to the original, unbroken unity of the whole, functioning as the epistemological *prius* of our experience of the phenomenal world.

We must remember in this connection that the philosophical thinking of Zen – and of Buddhism in general – is based on, and centers around, the category of *relatio* instead of *substantia*. Everything, the whole world of Being, is looked at from a relational point of view. Nothing is to be regarded as self-subsistent and self-sufficient. The 'subject' is 'subject' because it is relative to 'object'. The 'object' is 'object' because it is relative to 'subject'. In this system there is no such thing as *Ding an sich*. The *an sich* is most emphatically denied. For a *Ding* can be established as a *Ding* only when it is permeated by the light of the 'subject'. Likewise there is no 'mind' or 'subject' which has no reference to the sphere of *Dinge*. And since the 'subject' which is thus essentially relative to the 'object', is, as we have seen earlier, both the individual 'mind' and the universal Mind, the whole thing, i.e. the Field itself, must necessarily be also of a relational nature. It is in fact a Relation itself between the sensible and the supra-sensible.

Viewed in the light of this consideration, what we ordinarily call and regard as 'mind' (or 'subject', 'consciousness',

etc.) is nothing more than an abstraction. It is a concept or image which is obtained when we articulate, whether consciously or unconsciously, the originally non-articulated Field into an active and a passive sphere, and establish the former as an independently subsistent entity. Likewise the 'object' or 'thing' is an abstraction taken out of the whole non-articulated Field by a kind of abstractive inflection of the latter towards the 'passive' sphere.

Zen, however, does not want to remain content with this observation. It goes further and insists that we should attain to a stage at which we could witness the originally non-articulated Field articulating itself freely, of its own accord, and not through the dichotomizing activity of our intellect, into either the 'subject' or the 'object'. It is important to note that in this self-articulation of the Field, the whole Field is involved, not this or that particular sphere of it. Instead of being an abstraction, the 'subject' or the 'object' in such a case is a total concretization or actualization of the entire Field. Thus – to go back to the particular system of formulation which we used in the earlier part of this paper – if the total Field in its original state of non-articulation is to be represented by the formula: *SEE*, the same total Field in its articulated state may be formulated as: *I SEE THIS* (all words being in capital letters). This last formula must remain the same, whether the whole Field actualizes itself as the Subject or as the Object. Thus in this particular context, the Subject or *I* means *I* (= *I SEE THIS*). Likewise, the Object or *THIS* means (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*.

At this stage, when I say, for example, 'I', I do not thereby mean my empirical ego. What is meant is rather the 'I' as a concrete actualization of the entire Field. The 'I' at this stage is actually 'I', but it is an infinitely dynamic and mobile kind of 'I' in the sense that it is an 'I' that can at any moment be freely turned into 'THIS' and reveal itself in the latter form. In the same way, 'THIS' is not fixedly 'THIS'. It is a 'THIS' that is ready at any moment to change into 'I' and begin to function as an aspect of, or in the form of, 'I'. All this is possible simply because each 'I' and 'THIS' is in itself a total actualization of the same entire Field.

This dynamic relation between the Subject and Object is admirably described in the following anecdote which in the course of history has come to count among the most important of all Zen *kōans*. The story brings onto the stage two prominent figures in the Golden Age of Zen Buddhism. One is Ma Tsu Tao I (J.: Ba So Dō Itsu, 709-788) and Pai Chang Huai Hai (J.: Hyakujō Ekai, 720-814). Pai Chang, who is destined to become later one of the greatest Zen masters, is in this story still a young disciple of Ma Tsu. The anecdote as it is recorded in the *Pi Yen Lu*<sup>37</sup> reads:

Listen! Once, Ma Tsu was on his way to some place, accompanied by Pai Chang, when all of a sudden they saw a wild duck flying away above their heads. Ma asked, 'What is it?' Pai answered, 'A wild duck'. Ma, 'Where is it flying to?' Pai, 'It has already flown away!' Thereupon the Master grabbed the nose of Pai Chang and twisted it violently. Pai cried out in pain, 'Ouch!' The Master remarked on the spot, 'How can you say that the wild duck has flown away?'

The young Pai Chang is here looking up at the wild duck as it flies away. The wild duck exists as an object independently of Pai Chang who is looking at it. In his eyes, it is as though the bird were subsistent by itself, and it is as though the self-subsistent bird flew away and disappeared beyond the horizon. It is only when he has his nose grabbed and twisted that it dawns upon his mind like a flash that the wild duck is not an 'object' existing independently of the activity of his mind, and that the bird is still there with him, or rather, as his own self. The entire Field comprising both himself and the bird, becomes alive and reveals itself nakedly to his eyes. Pai Chang is said to have attained enlightenment on that occasion.

The anecdote presents an interesting example of the emphasis turning from the 'objective' aspect of the Field (represented by the wild duck) towards its 'subjective' aspect (represented by Pai Chang himself) in such a way that, as a result, the dynamics of the Field in its entirety is realized on the spot.

In the next anecdote, on the contrary, which is as a Zen *kōan* probably even more famous than the preceding one, the emphasis is concentrated upon the 'objective' sphere of the

Field. Otherwise expressed, we witness here the whole Field of *I SEE THIS* becoming reduced to the single point of *THIS*, and standing as such before our own eyes. The kōan is known as the cypress-tree-in-the-courtyard of Chao Chou (J.: Jō Shū),<sup>38</sup> and is recorded in the famous kōan-collection *Wu Môn Kuan* (J.: *Mu Mon Kan*).<sup>39</sup> It reads:

Listen! Once a monk asked Chao Chou, 'Tell me, what is the significance of the First Patriarch's coming from the West?' Chao Chou replied, 'The cypress tree in the courtyard!'

The monk asked about the significance of the historical event of Bodhidharma coming all the way from India to China. His intention apparently was to grasp from the inside the significance of this event so that he might participate existentially in the living world of Zen. The answer given by Chao Chou took a very abrupt and unexpected turn to disconcert the monk: 'The cypress tree in the courtyard!'

The inner mechanism of this statement is just the same as that shown in the anecdote of the wild duck and Pai Chang. Only the energy of the Field is this time inflected towards the opposite direction. Chao Chou abruptly puts under the monk's nose the whole Field of Reality in the most vividly real and concrete form of a cypress tree. In other terms, instead of presenting the Field as *I* (*I SEE THIS*) – as Ma Tsu did with Pai Chang – Chao Chou presents it as (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*. This indicates that the 'cypress tree' as presented by Chao Chou is not *simply* or *only* a cypress tree. For it carries here the whole weight of the Field. The cypress tree, a real and concrete cypress tree as it is, stands before our eyes as something growing out of the very depths of Nothingness – the Eternal-Present being actualized at this present moment in this particular place in the dimension of the temporal and phenomenal. In a single cypress tree in the courtyard there is concentrated the whole energy of the Field of Reality.

As Niu T'ou Fa Jung (J.: Go Zu Hō Yū 594-657) remarks:<sup>40</sup>

'A mote of dust flies, and the entire sky is clouded. A particle of rubbish falls, and the whole earth is covered'.

And Hung Chih Chêng Chüeh (J.: Wanshi Shōgaku, 1091-1157):<sup>41</sup>

'The Reality (i.e. the Field) has no definite aspect of its own; it reveals itself in accordance with things. The Wisdom (i.e. *I SEE*) has no definite knowledge of its own; it illumines in response to situations. Look! the green bamboo is so serenely green; the yellow flower so profusely yellow! Just pick up anything you like, and see! In every single thing *IT* is so nakedly manifested'.

In the philosophical view of Zen a 'concrete' or 'real' thing in the true sense of the term is of such a nature. What we usually regard as a concrete thing – the 'primary substance' of Aristotle – is, from the point of view of Zen, nothing but an abstract entity, not 'reality'. A really concrete individual must be, for Zen, an individual-concrete which is permeated and penetrated by the absolute-universal, or rather which *is* the absolute-universal. A cypress tree is an individual particular; it is *THIS*. But through being *THIS*, it cannot but be an actualization of *I SEE THIS*. The cypress tree is here the focus-point of the Field of Reality. We now understand what is really meant by Lin Chi when, as we have earlier observed, he states that 'the Mind-Reality permeates and runs through the whole universe', but that it is actualized in 'the concrete person who is actually listening to his discourse'. Lin Chi presents the whole thing in the form of Man, the 'subject' in the sense of the master of the whole Field of Reality, the absolute Selfhood. Chao Chou presents it in the form of the Cypress Tree, the 'object' in the sense of the absolute center of the selfsame Field. From whichever direction one may approach, one invariably ends by encountering the Field itself.

What is most important to remark about this problem is that seeing the cypress tree in the courtyard as an actualization of the Field does not mean seeing 'something', say, the transcendental Absolute, beyond the concrete thing. Following Hua Yen (J.: Kegon) philosophy which reached its perfection in China, Zen emphatically denies Something Metaphysical lying at the back of the Phenomenal.

Quite the contrary, Zen 'absolutizes' the Phenomenal itself. The cypress tree in its concrete reality *is* the Absolute at this very moment in this very place. It is not even a 'self-manifestation' of the Absolute. For the Absolute has no space 'other' than itself for manifesting itself. And such is the structure of the 'objective' aspect of the Field.



## VII The Zen Image of Man

The foregoing section will have made it clear that the Reality as Zen conceives it may best be represented as a Field saturated with energy, a particular state of tension constituted by two major sources of force, the Subject and the Object, the word Subject being understood in the sense of *I* (= *I SEE THIS*), i.e. as an actualization of the whole Field, and the word Object in the sense of (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*, i.e. again as an actualization of the same Field. We have also observed how the balance of forces is delicately maintained. The Field itself never loses itself, toward whichever of its two spheres its inner energy be inflected. But the actual – i.e. conscious – point at which the balance is maintained is found to be constantly moving through the entire Field, from the point of pure subjectivity to the point of pure objectivity.

Four major forms are clearly distinguishable in this structure.

1. Sometimes it is as though the Field maintains perfect stability, without there being any particular salient point in the entire Field as the center of the stability. Then the whole Field maintains itself in a state of extreme tension, a state of absolute and universal Illumination, an Awareness where there is nothing whatsoever for man to be aware of. There is in this state neither the 'subject' nor the 'object'. Both *I* and *THIS* disappear from the surface of the Field. This is a state about which Zen often says: 'In the original state of Reality there is absolutely nothing whatsoever'. It is also often referred to as *Oriental Nothingness* in the philosophies of the East.

2. But, sometimes, out of this eternal Stillness, there suddenly arises a glaring consciousness of the Subject. The

energy that has been evenly saturating the entire Field is now aroused from the state of quietude, gushes forth toward the 'subjective' sphere of the Field, and ends by being crystallized into the Subject. Then, the Field in its entirety is actualized in the luminous point of *I*. Nothing else is visible. The whole world is nothing other than *I*. In such a state, the Zen master would say: 'I alone sit on top of the highest mountain', I alone; nothing else, nobody else. The important point here, however, is that the 'I' is not an empirical ego. The 'I' is a subjective crystallization of the entire Field. Thus the dictum: 'I alone sit on top of the highest mountain' implies that the whole universe is sitting on top of the mountain with the man, or in the form of an individual man.

3. Sometimes, again, the energy aroused from its stability flows toward the 'objective' sphere of the Field. Then it is the Object that is alone visible – the stately Cypress Tree towering up in the midst of the limitless Void – although the same amount of energy that could at any moment be crystallized into the Subject is also being mobilized in the appearance of the Object.

4. Finally the Field may go back again to its original state of Stillness, with the difference that this time both the Subject and the Object are given their proper places in the Field. Superficially we are now back to our old familiar world of empirical experience, where 'the flower is naturally red and the willow is naturally green'. With regard to its inner structure, however, this old familiar world of ours is infinitely different from the same world as seen through the eyes of the purely empirical ego. For our old familiar world, this time, reveals itself in its pristine purity and innocence. The empirical world which has once lost itself into the abyss of Nothingness, now returns to life again in an unusual freshness. 'Here we realize', Dōgen<sup>42</sup> observes, 'that the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth in their original purity and serenity should never be confused with the mountains, rivers, and the great earth (as seen through the eyes of the ordinary people)'. The same idea is expressed in a more poetic way as:

Though the wind has fallen off, flower-petals are falling still,  
As a bird sings, the mountain deepens its silence and stillness.

'The wind has fallen off', that is, the entire world of Being has fallen into the eternal quietude of Nothingness; and yet 'flower petals are falling still', that is, all things are still vividly and concretely maintaining themselves in their original empirical commotion. 'As a bird sings', that is, precisely because of this colorful presence of things in the empirical dimension, 'the mountain deepens its silence and stillness', that is, Nothingness makes itself felt in its unfathomable depth.

Someone asked the great Zen master of the Lin Chi school in the Sung dynasty, Hsü T'ang Chih Yü (J.: Ki Dō Chi Gu, 1185-1269), 'Tell me, what is the significance of the First Patriarch's coming from the West?'<sup>43</sup> He answered:

Deep is the mountain, no guest is coming.  
All day long I hear the monkeys chattering.

The dynamic structure of the Field which is thus constituted by the very peculiar tension between the *I* (= *I SEE THIS*) and the (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*, and which is actualizable, as we have just explained, in four principal forms was most clearly recognized by Lin Chi who formulated them into what is now usually known as the Four Standards of Lin Chi.

The expression 'Four Standards' means four basic standards by which a Zen master might measure the degrees of the spiritual perfection of his disciples. It is noteworthy, however, that this particular expression, or this particular understanding of the matter, did not originate from Lin Chi himself. It does not necessarily represent his own understanding of the issue. The expression has its origin rather in the historical fact that in the course of the development of the Lin Chi school, the four states as described by Lin Chi came to be used very often by the masters in measuring the depth of the Zen consciousness of the disciples. Lin Chi's intention was, I believe, primarily to establish theoretically the four principal forms which the same Field of Reality can assume, and thereby to indicate the dynamic structure of the Field.

Let us give in translation the relevant passage from the *Lin Chi Lu*.<sup>44</sup>

Once at the time of the evening lesson, the Master told the monks under his guidance the following:

'Sometimes the man (i.e. the 'subject') is snatched away (i.e. totally negated) while the environment (i.e. the 'object') is left intact. Sometimes the environment is snatched away, while the man is left intact. Sometimes the man and the environment are both snatched away. Sometimes the man and the environment are both left intact'.

Thereupon one of the monks came forward and asked, 'What kind of a thing is the-man-being-snatched-away and the-environment-being-left-intact?'

The Master answered, 'As the mild sunshine of the springtime covers the entire earth, the earth weaves out a variegated brocade. The new-born baby has long-trailing hair; the hair is as white as a bundle of yarns'.<sup>45</sup>

The monk asked, 'What kind of a thing is the-environment-being-snatched-away and the-man-being-left-intact?'

The Master answered, 'The royal command pervades the whole world;<sup>46</sup> the generals stationed on the frontiers do not raise the tumult of war'.

The monk asked, 'What kind of a thing is the-man-and-the-environment-being-both-snatched-away?'

The Master answered, 'The two remote provinces have lost contact with the central Government'.

The monk asked, 'What kind of a thing is the-man-and-the-environment-being-both-left-intact?'

The Master answered, 'As the King looks down from the top of his palace, he sees the people in the field enjoying their peaceful life'.

It is commonly held that of those four states, the last, i.e. the state in which both the man and the environment are left intact, represents the highest degree of the Zen consciousness. Ontologically it corresponds to what Hua Yen (J.: Kegon) philosophy calls the 'metaphysical dimension of the unobstructed mutual interpenetration among all things and events' (J.: *ji-ji muge hokkai*), a metaphysical dimension in which the world of Being appears as an infinitely huge network of gems, each one of which illumines and reflects all the others. And in the Hua Yen school, too, this 'dimension' is considered to be the object of the highest and ultimate vision of Reality. But from the standpoint of a Zen master like Lin Chi, each one of the four states that have just been described is in itself a form of the total actualization of the Field. The Field, in other words, is of such a mobile and delicately

flexible nature that if emphasis is laid on the 'subjective' side, the whole thing turns into the Subject, while if on the contrary emphasis is laid on the 'objective' side, the whole thing turns into the Object. Similarly, if nothing is seen, there is neither Subject nor Object. But if the emphasis is evenly diffused all over the Field, there is the Subject, there is the Object, and the world is seen as a vast, limitless Unity of a multiplicity of separate things. And whichever of these outer forms it may assume, the Field always remains in its original state, that of *I SEE THIS*.

Thus the Field is not to be confused with the purely 'objective' aspect of the world of Being, i.e. Nature conceived as something existing outside the 'mind'. Nor is it to be confused with the purely 'subjective' consciousness of man. That which establishes the 'subject' as the 'subject' (or consciousness as consciousness) and the 'object' as the 'object' (or Nature as Nature) is something that transcends – in a certain sense – this very distinction between 'subject' and 'object' and manifests itself, by self-determination, now as the Subject and now as the Object.

It is on such an understanding of the Field of Reality that Lin Chi finds his characteristic image of Man. For him, Man *is* the Field. Man, in his view, is a personal, human actualization of the Field. And in fact there is absolutely no other type of actualization for the Field. The dynamics of the Field of Reality which we have analyzed is realizable only through the individual man, through the inner transformation of his consciousness. Man, in this sense, is *the* locus of the actualization of the whole universe. And when the actualization really takes place in this locus, the 'man' is transformed into what is called by Lin Chi the 'True Man without any ranks'. As a total actualization of the Field, the True Man embodies the dynamics of the Field. Now he may realize himself as the *I* (= *I SEE THIS*); now he may be the (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*; again, he can be Nothingness, that is, sheer (*I SEE THIS*); and he can also be the nakedly apparent *I SEE THIS*. He is completely free. Lin Chi refers to this kind of freedom which characterizes Man as the direct actualization of the Field when he speaks of 'Man's becoming the absolute Master of the place, in whatever place he may happen to be'.<sup>47</sup>

Thus Lin Chi's image of Man, if looked at from the common-sense viewpoint proves to be something extremely difficult to grasp. It is difficult to grasp because it presents 'man' in a contradictory way. The image must necessarily take on a contradictory form, because the Field of Reality which forms its basis is itself a contradictory unity of the sensible and the supra-sensible.

The image of Man presented by Lin Chi is not primarily an image of the sensible 'man' who sees with his eyes, hears with his ears, speaks with his tongue and so on and so forth – in short 'man' as the self-conscious empirical ego. Rather it is the image of the supra-sensible Man who, existing above the level of empirical experience, activates all the sense organs and makes the intellect function as it does. And yet, on the other hand, this supra-sensible, supra-empirical Man, cannot actualize himself independently of the empirical 'man'.

Thus man, inasmuch as he is a *total* actualization of the Field of Reality, is on the one hand a Cosmic Man comprehending in himself the whole universe – 'the Mind-Reality', as Lin Chi says, which pervades and runs through the whole world of Being' – and on the other he is this very concrete individual 'man' who exists and lives here and now, as a concentration point of the entire energy of the Field. He is individual and supra-individual.

If we are to approach Man from his 'individual' aspect, we shall have to say that in the concrete individual person there lives another person. This second person in himself is beyond all limitations of time and space, because the Field, of which he is the most immediate embodiment, is the Eternal Now and the Ubiquitous Here. But always and everywhere he accompanies, or is completely unified with, the concrete individual person. In fact Lin Chi does not admit any discrepancy at all between the two persons. Whatever the individual man does is done by the universal person. When, for instance, the former walks, it is in reality the latter that walks. The universal person acts only through the limbs of the individual person. It is this double structure of personality that Lin Chi never wearies of trying to make his disciples realize by themselves and through themselves.

But in most cases his disciples get simply confused and dismayed. For, the moment they try to turn their attention to the universal person in themselves, he disappears. When they walk naturally, he is there with them; he is walking with them; or rather it is he who is walking by their feet. But the moment they become conscious of their own act of walking while they are walking, the universal man is no longer there; he has already receded to where they know not. This seemingly strange phenomenon is due to the very simple fact that paying attention to something, turning the spotlight of consciousness toward something means objectifying it. The universal man, being the absolute Selfhood, i.e. pure subjectivity, must necessarily cease to be himself as soon as he is put into the position of an 'object'.

Despite this difficulty Lin Chi with extraordinary stringency requires his disciples to grasp immediately, without ever objectifying it, this absolute unity of the two persons in themselves.

One day the Master took his seat in the lecture hall and said: 'Over the bulky mass of your reddish flesh (i.e. the physical body) there is a True Man without any rank. He is constantly coming in and going out through the gates of your face (i.e. your sense organs). If you have not yet encountered him, catch him, catch him here and now!'

At that moment a monk came out and asked, 'What kind of a fellow is this True Man?'

The Master suddenly came down from the platform, grabbed at the monk, and urged him, 'Tell me, tell me!'

The monk shrank for an instant.

The Master on the spot thrust him away saying, 'Ah, what a useless dirt-scraper this True-Man-without-any-rank of yours is!' And immediately he retired to his private quarters.

The monk 'shrank for an instant', that is, he prepared himself for giving an adequate answer. But in that very instant, the discriminating act of thinking intrudes itself; the True Man becomes objectified and is lost. The True Man, when he is represented as an 'object', is nothing more than a 'dried up dirt-scraper'. The Master grabbed at the monk with violence, urging him to witness on the spot the True Man who is no other than the monk's true self. The Master resorted to such a seemingly violent and unreasonable behaviour because he

wanted the monk to encounter the True Man in his pure subjectivity, without objectifying him. The monk, however, failed to do so. He did objectify his own True Man by attempting, if only for a fraction of an instant, to *think about* him instead of *becoming* or simply *being* the True Man. But once objectified in this way, the True Man is no longer 'without any rank'; he is qualified by all sorts of determinations and delimitations in terms of time and space. The 'now' is no longer the Eternal Now as it is actualized at this very moment. The 'here' is no longer the Ubiquitous Here as it is actualized in this very place.

The image of the True Man as given in the passage which we have just read; namely, the image of Someone coming into the fleshy body and going out of it at every moment, is in reality a rhetorical device. The truth is that it is wrong even to talk about two persons being unified into one person. The two persons whom our analytic intellect distinguishes one from the other and which the rhetorical device presents as (1) the bulky mass of reddish flesh and (2) the True Man transcending all temporal and spatial determinations, are in reality absolutely one and the same person. The True Man as understood by Lin Chi is the sensible *and* super-sensible person in an absolute unity prior even to the bifurcation into the sensible and the super-sensible.

What constitutes the most salient feature of Lin Chi's thought in terms of the history of Zen philosophy is the fact that he crystallized into such a lively image of Man what we have been discussing in the course of the present Essay, first under the traditional Buddhist key-term, 'No-Mind' or 'Mind' and then under the modern philosophical key-term 'Field'. As we have often pointed out, Lin Chi's entire thinking centers around Man, and a whole world-view is built up upon the basis of the image of the True Man. What he actually deals with under the name of Man is, objectively speaking, almost the same as what is usually referred to in Mahayana Buddhism in general by such words as Reality, Nothingness, Is-ness, Mind, etc. But his particular approach to the problem casts an illuminating light on one of the most characteristic traits of Oriental philosophy; namely, the decisive importance given to the subjective dimension of man in determining the objective dimension in which the Reality discloses



itself to him. And in particular, it brings home to us the fact that, according to Zen, the highest dimension of Reality, i.e. Reality in its pristine and unblemished originality, becomes visible to us only and exclusively at the extreme limit of our own subjectivity, that is, when we become through and through ourselves.

### Notes

1. It is highly significant in this connection that one of the leading Zen masters of the present age, Mumon Yamada, has produced a book entitled 'Who Am I?', *Watashi-wa Dare-ka?* (Tokyo, 1966). The book is a modern interpretation of the First Part of the 'Sayings and Doings of Lin Chi'. In this work the author raises and discusses the problem of Man as formulated in this personal form as one of the most pressing problems which contemporary men must face in the present-day situation of the world.

2. Or 'suchness' (*tathatā*) as the Buddhists would call it.

3. Dōgen (1200-1253) is one of the greatest Zen masters Japan has ever produced. His major work *Shōbōgenzō* is a record of his deep reflections on matters pertaining to Man and the world from the Zen point of view. Besides, it is perhaps the most philosophical of all works written by the Zen masters, whether of China or Japan.

4. Lin Chi I Hsüan (J.: Rinzai Gigen, d. 867). A disciple of the famous Huang Po (J.: Ōbaku, d. 850), and himself the founder of one of the so-called Five Houses of Zen Buddhism (the Lin Chi school), Lin Chi was one of the greatest Zen masters not only of the T'ang dynasty but of all ages. His basic teachings, practical and theoretical, are recorded in a book known under the title of 'The Sayings and Doings of Lin Chi' (*Lin Chi Lu*, J.: *Rinzai Roku*), a work compiled by his disciples after his death. In the present paper, all quotations from this book are made from the modern edition by Seizan Yanagida, Kyoto, 1961.

5. We would like to put emphasis on the word 'thought', because insofar as the personal experience of enlightenment is concerned, we cannot see any real difference among the representative Zen masters. Lin Chi's teacher, Huang Po, for instance, was evidently as great (if not greater) a master as Lin Chi himself. But the *thought* which Huang Po develops in his work, *The Transmission of the Mind*, is admittedly fairly commonplace, showing no particular originality of its own.

6. *Lin Chi Lu*, 36, p. 60.

7. *Ibid.*, 28, p. 40.

8. Nan Ch'üan P'u Yüan (J.: Nan Sen Fu Gen, 748-834).
9. J.: *Hekigan Roku* ('Blue Rock Records'), a work of the eleventh century (Sung dynasty), *Kōan* No. 40.
10. Lu Kêng (764-834) was a high official of the T'ang dynasty who occupied a very important position in the administrative machinery of the central government. In Zen Buddhism he was a lay disciple of Nan Ch'üan.
11. Sêng Chao (J.: Sō Jō, 374-414), known as 'the monk Chao'. A Taoist at first, he later turned to Mahayana Buddhism under the direction of the famous Kumārajīva (344-413) who came from Central Asia to China in 401 and who translated many of the Buddhist Sutras and theoretical works on Buddhism from Sanscrit to Chinese. The monk Chao is counted among the greatest of Kumārajīva's disciples. Chao, though he died at the age of 31, left a number of important works on Buddhist philosophy. His interpretation of the concept of Nothingness or 'Void' in particular, which was Taoistic to a considerable extent, exercised a tremendous influence on the rise and development of Zen in China. He is rightly regarded as one of the predecessors of Zen Buddhism.
12. Bertrand Russell: *The Problems of Philosophy*, Oxford, 1954, pp. 8-9.
13. A similar opposition against philosophical 'essentialism' is observable in the relation of Taoism to Confucianism. See my *Eranos* paper on *The Absolute and the Perfect Man in Taoism* (*Eranos-Jahrbuch XXXVI*, 1967) pp. 384-411 in particular.
14. This latter psychological state is called in Zen 'dwelling in the cave of devils under the mountain of darkness'. Zen never wearies of reminding us that we should avoid falling unconsciously into such a cave.
15. *Vajracchedika Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. This Sūtra, first translated from Sanscrit into Chinese by Kumārajīva cf. above, note 12), exercised a tremendous influence on the philosophical elaboration of Zen Buddhism, particularly from the time of the sixth Patriarch of Zen, Hui Nêng (J.: E Nō, 638-713). The Sūtra centers around the Nothingness and 'egolessness' of all things.
16. In the following analysis we shall utilize certain formulae – with some modifications – that have been ingeniously devised by Professor Tsūji Satō for the purpose of clarifying the basic structure of reality as it appears to the eye of enlightenment. See his *Bukkō Tetsuri* 'Philosophical Principles of Buddhism' (Tokyo, 1968).
17. In this and the following formula, the words written entirely with italicized small letters (like *i*, *see*, *this*) shall refer to things and events pertaining to the dimension of ordinary consciousness, while those written with capital letters (like *I*, *SEE*, *THIS*) shall refer to the dimension of

supra-consciousness. And the word *SEE* is supposed to be a literal translation of the Chinese word *chien* appearing in the celebrated phrase *chien hsing* 'seeing into one's nature'.

18. *Qur'ân*, VIII, 17. This passage expresses exactly the same idea as the famous Tradition which God Himself is the speaker and which runs: 'I am his ears, his eye-sight, his tongue, his hands, and his feet. Thus it is through Me that he hears; it is through Me that he sees; it is through Me that he speaks; it is through Me that he grasps; and it is through Me that he walks'. For an 'irfanic discussion of these expressions see Ibn 'Arabi: *Fuṣūṣ al Hikam* (ed. 'Aḥfi, Cairo, 1946), p. 185.

19. This statement might look at this stage quite an arbitrary one. We shall be in a position to discuss its validity only at the end of our analysis of the whole process. Here the statement must be accepted as it is as a merely phenomenological analysis of Zen psychology.

20. As the famous passage of the *Prajñāpāramitā* Sutra declares: "The sensible is Nothingness, Nothingness is precisely the sensible".

21. Cf. Hideo Masuda: *Bukkyō Shisō-no Gudō-teki Kenkyū*, 'Studies in Buddhist Thought as a Search after the Way', Tokyo, 1966, pp. 219-221. For a more elaborate philosophical treatment of this aspect of Buddhism, cf. Keiji Nishitani: *Shūkyō towa Nani-ka*, 'What is Religion?' I, Tokyo, pp. 135-187.

22. A famous saying of Fu Ta-Shih (J.: Fu Dai-shi, 497-569), the understanding of which has often been considered by Zen masters as a standard by which to judge the depth of Zen consciousness of the disciples.

23. This point deserves special notice because the word *Nirvāṇa* which denotes the same thing as what we here call the subjective Nothingness, has often been misunderstood to mean a total annihilation of consciousness.

24. The field of Nothingness thus conceived is comparable with the metaphysical *Chaos* of the Taoist Chuang Tzū (cf. my paper on Taoism, *Eranos-Jahrbuch* XXXVI, 1967, pp. 389-411).

25. Chinese: *San chieh wei hsin, wan fa wei shih*, lit. 'the three regions (of the world of Becoming) are but one single mind, and the ten thousand existents are but one single cognition'.

26. Quoted above, cf. note 11.

27. The distinction between the two phrases 'easy to recognize' and 'difficult to distinguish' is purely rhetorical, a phenomenon which is very common in Chinese prose and poetry. The sentence simply means that both the white particles in the snow and the black molecules of soot in the ink are 'easy to recognize and difficult to distinguish' at one and the same time.

28. That is to say: there is the mountain, but it is so deeply blue that it is hardly distinguishable from the blue sky.

29. From the *Prajñā Pāramitā Sutra* referred to above.

30. *Lin Chi Lu* (*op. cit.*), 33, p. 55. Concerning Lin Chi, see above, note 4.

31. 'Six harmonious correspondences' are (1) sight which is constituted by the correspondence between the eye and visible things, (2) hearing based on the correspondence between the ear and sounds, (3) smell based on the correspondence between the nose and odors, (4) taste based on the correspondence between the tongue and flavors, (5) touch based on the correspondence between the tactile sense and touchable objects, and (6) 'cognition' based on the correspondence between the intellect and concepts-images.

32. *Op. cit.*, 31, p. 48.

33. As we shall see later, the 'Man' in the thought of Lin Chi is no other than the Mind-Reality conceived in a very peculiar way.

34. *Op. cit.*, 30, p. 45.

35. P'ang Yün (the eighth century) was one of the foremost and most distinguished of all the lay-disciples of Zen. The anecdote containing this saying is found in the above-mentioned *Pi Yen Lu*, (J.: *Hekigan Roku*) No. 42.

36. Huang Lung was a great Zen Master in the school of Lin Chi, and the founder of a sub-sect known after his name as Huang Lung school.

37. *Op. cit.*, No. LIII.

38. Chao Chou Tsung Shên (J.: Jōshū Jūshin).

39. No. XXXVII.

40. Niu Tou, a famous Zen master in the Tang dynasty. He was first a Confucianist, and later turned to Buddhism. He became the founder of an independent school in Zen Buddhism.

41. An outstanding figure in the Ts'ao Tung (J.: Sō Tō) school, famous for the strong emphasis he laid on the importance of 'silent-illumination' (*mo chao*, J.: *moku shō*) as the best method for attaining enlightenment.

42. See above, note 4. The quotation is from his *Shōbōgenzō*, Book XXV, *Kei Sei San Shoku* 'The Voice of the Valley and the Color of the Mountain'.

43. We have earlier encountered the same question in the anecdote concerning Chao Chou's cypress tree in the courtyard.

44. *Op. cit.*, 25-26, pp. 34-35.

45. The new-born baby with long white hair, i.e. baby-old man, being an impossibility, symbolically indicates the seeming non-existence of the man as the 'subject'.

46. The whole energy of the Field is crystallized into One Man.

47. *Op. cit.*, 36, p. 60.

## Essay II

# TWO DIMENSIONS OF EGO CONSCIOUSNESS

Note: This is the first of three public lectures ('Ego Consciousness in Eastern Religions') delivered in New York at Hunter College Playhouse, Oct. 30 – Nov. 6, 1975, as part of the general program for the one hundredth anniversary of Jung's birth under the auspices of the C. G. Jung Foundation. It has been published in *Sophia Perennis*, Vol II, Number 1, Spring 1976, Tehran, Iran.



## I The First Person Pronoun 'I'

In dealing with the topic of the two dimensions of ego-consciousness in Zen, it might be thought more in line with Jungian psychology to use the word 'Self' instead of the word 'Ego' to designate what I am going to explain as ego-consciousness in the second or deeper dimension. But there is a reason why I prefer in this particular case to use one and the same word, 'ego', in reference to the two dimensions of consciousness which I shall deal with in this Essay. For it is precisely one of the most important points which Zen makes that the empirical I which is the very center of human existence in our ordinary, daily life and the other I which is supposed to be actualized through the experience of enlightenment are ultimately identical with one another. The two 'egos' are radically different from each other and look almost mutually exclusive in the eyes of those who are in the pre-enlightenment stage of Zen discipline. From the viewpoint of the post-enlightenment stage, however, they are just one and the same. In the eyes of the truly enlightened Zen master, there is nothing special, nothing extraordinary about what is often called by such grandiose names as Cosmic Ego, Cosmic Unconscious, Transcendental Consciousness and the like. It is no other than the existential ground of the ordinary, commonplace man who eats when he is hungry, drinks when he is thirsty, and falls asleep when he is sleepy, that is, in short, the ordinary self which we are accustomed to regard as the subject of the day-to-day existence of the plain man.

But let us start from the beginning. The starting-point is provided by our ego-consciousness as we find it in the pre-enlightenment stage. Historically as well as structurally, Zen has always been seriously concerned with our consciousness



of ourselves. Indeed, it is not going too far to say that the problem of how to deal with ego-consciousness is *the* sole and exclusive problem for Zen Buddhism. Says Dōgen,<sup>1</sup> one of the greatest Zen masters of Japan in the thirteenth century A.D.: 'To get disciplined in the way of the Buddha means nothing other than getting disciplined in properly dealing with your own I'. That is to say, an intense, unremitting self-inquiry exhausts the whole of Buddhism. It constitutes the first step into the Way of the Buddha and it constitutes the ultimate end of the same Way. There is no other problem in Zen.

Another Japanese Zen master of the 15th century, Ikkyū,<sup>2</sup> admonishes his disciples in a similar way saying: 'Who or what am I? Search for your I from the top of your head down to your bottom'. And he adds: 'No matter how hard you may search after it, you will never be able to grasp it. *That* precisely is your I'. In this last sentence there is a clear suggestion made as to how the problem of ego-consciousness is to be posed and settled in Zen Buddhism.

Our ordinary view of the world may be symbolically represented as a circle with the ego as its autonomous center. With individual differences that are clearly to be recognized, each circle delimits a certain spatial and temporal expanse within the boundaries of which alone everything knowable is knowable. Its circumference sets up a horizon beyond which things disappear in an unfathomable darkness. The center of the circle is occupied by what Karl Jaspers called *Ich als Dasein*, i.e. the empirical ego, the I as we ordinarily understand it.

The circle thus constituted is of a centrifugal nature in the sense that everything, every action, whether mental or bodily, is considered to originate from its center and move toward its periphery. It is also centripetal in the sense that whatever happens within the circle is referred back and reduced to the center as its ultimate ground.

The center of the circle comes in this way to be vaguely represented as a permanent and enduring entity carrying and synthesizing all the disparate and divergent elements to be attributed to the various aspects and functions of the mind-body complex. Thus is born an image of the personal identity

underlying all mental operations and bodily movements, remaining always the same through all the intra-organic and extra-organic processes that are observable in the mind-body complex. Linguistic usage expresses this inner vision of personal identity by the first person pronoun 'I'.

In our actual life we constantly use the first person pronoun as the grammatical subject for an infinite number of predicates. Long before the rise of Zen, Buddhism in India had subjected this usage of the first person pronoun to a thoroughgoing scrutiny in connection with the problem of the unreality of the ego, which, as is well known, was from the beginning the fundamental tenet of Buddhist philosophy and which, insofar as it was an idea distinguishing Buddhism from all other schools of Indian philosophy, was for the Buddhists of decisive importance.

We often say for instance 'I am fat' or 'I am lean' in reference to our bodily constitution. We say 'I am healthy' or 'I am ill' in accordance with whether our bodily organs are functioning normally or not. 'I walk', 'I run', etc., in reference to our bodily movements. 'I am hungry', 'I am thirsty', etc., in reference to the intra-organic physiological processes. 'I see', 'I hear', 'I smell', etc., in reference to the activity of our sense organs. The first person pronoun behaves in fact as the grammatical subject of many other types of sentences, descriptive or otherwise.

Under all those propositions with the first person pronoun as the subject there is clearly observable the most primitive, primal certainty of 'I am'. This primal certainty we have of our 'I am', that is, the consciousness of ego, derives its supreme importance from the fact that it constitutes the very center of the existential circle of each one of us. As the center sets itself into motion, a whole world of things and events spreads itself out around it in all directions, and as it quiets down the same variegated world is reduced to the original single point. The spreading-out of the empirical world in all its possible forms around the center is linguistically reflected in the sentences whose grammatical subject is 'I'.

The most serious question here for Zen is: Does the grammatical subject of all these sentences represent the real personal subject in its absolute suchness? Otherwise expressed:

Does the first person pronoun appearing in each of the sentences of this sort indicate pure subjectivity, the true Subject as understood by Zen Buddhism? The answer will definitely be in the negative.

The nature of the problem before us may be clarified in the following way. Suppose someone asks me 'Who are you?' or 'What are you?' To this question I can give an almost infinite number of answers. I can say, for example, 'I am a Japanese', 'I am a student', etc. Or I can say 'I am so-and-so', giving my name. None of these answers, however, presents the *whole* of myself in its absolute 'such-ness'. And no matter how many times I may repeat the formula 'I am *X*', changing each time the semantic referent of the *X*, I shall never be able to present directly and immediately the 'whole man' that I am. All that is presented by this formula is nothing but a partial and relative aspect of my existence, an objectified qualification of the 'whole man'. Instead of presenting the pure subjectivity that I am as the 'whole man', the formula presents myself only as a relative object. But what Zen is exclusively concerned with is precisely the 'whole man'. And herewith begins the real Zen problem concerning the ego consciousness. Zen may be said to take its start by putting a huge question mark to the word 'I' as it appears as the subject-term of all sentences of the type: 'I am *X*' or 'I do *X*'. One enters into the world of Zen only when one realizes that his own I has itself turned into an existential question mark.

In the authentic tradition of Zen Buddhism in China it was customary for a master to ask a newcomer to his monastery questions in order to probe the spiritual depth of the man. The standard question, the most commonly used for this purpose, was: 'Who are you?' This simple, innocent-looking question was in reality one which the Zen disciples were most afraid of. We shall have later occasion to see how vitally important this question is in Zen. But it will already be clear enough that the question is of such grave importance because it demands of us that we reveal immediately and on the spot the reality of the I underlying the common usage of the first person pronoun, that is, the 'whole man' in its absolute subjectivity. Without going into theoretical details. I shall give

here a classical example.<sup>3</sup> Nan Yüeh Huai Jang (J.: Nangaku Ejō, 677-744) who was later to become the successor to the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism in China, the famous Hui Nêng (J.: Enō, 637-713), came to visit the latter. Quite abruptly Hui Nêng asked him: 'What is *this thing* that has come to me in this way?'. This put the young Nan Yüeh completely at a loss for a reply. He left the master. And it took him eight years to solve the problem. In other words, the question 'What are you?' functioned for the young Nan Yüeh as a *kōan*. And, let me add, it can be or is in fact a *kōan* for anyone who wants to have an insight into the spirit of Zen. The answer, by the way, which Nan Yüeh presented to the master after eight years' struggle was a very simple one: 'Whatever I say in the form of *I am X* will miss the point. That exactly is the real I'.

Making reference to this famous anecdote, Master Musō, an outstanding Zen master of fourteenth century Japan,<sup>4</sup> makes the following remark. 'To me, too', he says, 'many men of inferior capacity come and ask various questions about the spirit of Buddhism. To these people I usually put the question: "Who is the one who is actually asking me such a question about the spirit of Buddhism?" To this there are some who answer: "I am so-and-so", or "I am such-and-such". There are some who answer: "Why is it necessary at all to ask such a question? It is too obvious." There are some who answer not by words but by gestures meant to symbolize the famous dictum: "My own Mind, that is the Buddha". There are still others who answer (by repeating or imitating like a parrot the sayings of ancient masters, like) "Looking above, there is nothing to be sought after. Looking below, there is nothing to be thrown away". All these people will never be able to attain enlightenment'.

This naturally reminds us of what is known in the history of Zen as the 'concluding words of Master Pai Chang'. Pai Chang Huai Hai (J.: Hyakujō Ekai, 720-814) was one of the greatest Zen masters of the T'ang dynasty. It is recorded that whenever he gave a public sermon to the monks of his temple, he brought it to an end by directly addressing the audience: 'You people!' And as all turned towards the master in a state of unusual spiritual tension, at that very moment he flung

down upon them like a thunderbolt the shout: 'WHAT IS THAT?' Those among the audience who were mature enough to get enlightened were supposed to attain enlightenment on the spot.

'What is that?' 'Who are you?' 'What are you?' 'Where do you come from?' These and other similar questions addressed by an enlightened master to a newcomer all directly point to the real I of the latter which ordinarily lies hidden behind the veil of his empirical I. These questions are extremely difficult to answer in a Zen context. Let us recall that Nan Yüeh had to grapple with his *kōan* for eight years before he found his own solution for it – not, of course, a verbal solution, but an existential one. The difficulty consists in that a question of this sort in the Zen context of a dialogue between master and disciple demands of the latter an immediate realization of the I as pure and unconditioned subjectivity. This is difficult almost to the extent of being utterly impossible because at the very moment that the disciple turns his attention to his own self which under ordinary conditions he is wont to express quite naïvely and unreflectingly by the first person pronoun, the self becomes objectified, or we should say, petrified, and the sought-for pure subjectivity is lost. The pure Ego can be realized only through a total transformation of the empirical ego into something entirely different, functioning in an entirely different dimension of human existence.

## II Zen Theory of Consciousness

In order to elucidate the nature of the problem, let me go back once again to the image of the circle with which I proposed to represent symbolically the world as experienced by man at the pre-enlightenment stage. The world in the view of the plain man, I said, may conveniently be represented as a vaguely illumined circle with the empirical ego at its center as the source of illumination. Around the empirical ego there spreads out a more or less narrowly limited circle of existence within which things are perceived and events take place. Such is the world-view of the plain man.

The circle of existence seen in this way would seem to have a peculiar structure. The center of the circle, the empirical ego, establishes itself as the 'subject' and, as such, cognitively opposes itself to the 'object' which is constituted by the world extending from and around it. Each of the things existing in the world and the world itself, indeed everything other than the 'subject', is regarded as an 'object'. Zen does not necessarily criticize this structure as something entirely false or baseless. Zen takes a definitely negative attitude toward such a view as a falsification of the reality only when the 'subject' becomes conscious of itself as the 'subject', that is to say, when the 'subjective' position of the center of the circle comes to produce the consciousness of the ego as an enduring individual entity. For in such a context, the 'subject' turns into an 'object'. The 'subject' may even then conceptually still remain 'subjective', but insofar as it is conscious of itself as a self-subsistent entity, it belongs to the sphere of the 'objective'. It is but another 'object' among myriads of other 'objects'. Viewed in such a light, the entire circle of the world of Being together with its center, the ego, proves to be an 'objective' order of things. That is to say, what is seemingly

the center of the circle is not the real center; the 'subject' is not the real Subject.

In fact, it is characteristic of the psychological mechanism of man that no matter how far he may go in search of his real self in its pure and absolute subjectivity, it goes on escaping his grip. For the very act of turning attention to the 'subject' immediately turns it into an 'object'.

What Zen primarily aims at may be said to be the reinstatement of the 'subject' in its proper, original position, at the very center of the circle, not as an 'object' but in its absolute subjectivity, as the real Subject or pure Ego. But the essential nature of the 'subject' being such as has just been indicated, the task of reinstating it in this sense cannot possibly be accomplished unless the illuminated circle of existence surrounding the 'subject' be also completely transformed. We may perhaps describe the situation by saying that the primary aim of Zen consists in trying to broaden the 'circle' to infinity to the extent that we might actualize an infinitely large circle with its circumference nowhere to be found, so that its center be found everywhere, always mobile and ubiquitous, fixed at no definite point. Only as the center of such a circle could the 'subject' be the pure Ego.

In ancient Indian Buddhism, the pure Ego thus actualized used to be designated by the word *prajñā* or Transcendental Wisdom. Zen, using the traditional, common terminology of Buddhism that has developed in China, often calls it the 'Buddha Nature', or simply 'Mind'. But Zen possesses also its specific vocabulary which is more colorful and more characteristically Chinese, for designating the same thing, like 'No-Mind', the 'Master', the 'True-Man-without-any-rank', 'your-original-Face-which-you-possessed-prior-to-the-birth-of-your-own-father-and-mother', or more simply, 'This Thing', 'That' or still more simply 'It'. All these and other names are designed to point to the transfigured ego functioning as the center of the transfigured 'circle'.

For a better understanding of the transfiguration of the ego here spoken of, we would do well to consider the Zen idea of the structure of consciousness. Buddhism, in conformity with the general trend of Indian philosophy and spirituality, was concerned from the earliest periods of its historical development in India, and later on in China, with a meticulous

analysis of the psychological processes ranging from sensation, perception and imagination to logical thinking, translogical thinking and transcendental intuition. As a result, many different psychological and epistemological theories have been proposed. And this has been done in terms of the structure of consciousness. Characteristic of these theories of consciousness is that consciousness is represented as something of a multilayer structure. Consciousness, in this view, consists of a number of layers or different dimensions organically related to each other but each functioning in its own way.

The most typical of all theories of consciousness that have developed in Mahayana Buddhism is that of the Yogācāra School (otherwise called the Vijñaptimātratā School, i.e., Consciousness-Only School). The philosophers of this school recognize in human consciousness three distinctively different levels. The first or 'surface' level is the ordinary psychological dimension in which the sense-organs play the preponderant role producing sensory and perceptual images of the external things. Under this uppermost layer comes the *mano-vijñāna* or Manas-Consciousness. This is the dimension of the ego-consciousness.

According to the Yogācāra School, the consciousness of ego which we ordinarily have is but an infinitesimal part of the Manas-Consciousness. It is only the tip of a huge iceberg that shows above the surface. The greater part of the iceberg is submerged beneath the water. The submerged part of the iceberg consists of the so-called 'egotistic attachments' which have been accumulated there since time immemorial and which are intensely alive and active in the invisible depths of the psyche, sustaining, as it were, from below what we are ordinarily conscious of as our 'I'.

The Manas-Consciousness itself is sustained from below by the *ālaya-vijñāna*, the Storehouse-Consciousness which constitutes the deepest layer of human consciousness. Unlike the Manas-Consciousness of which at least the smallest part is illumined in the form of the empirical ego-consciousness, the Storehouse-Consciousness lies entirely in darkness. It is a 'storehouse' or repository of all the karmic effects of our past actions, mental and bodily. They are 'stored' there under the



form of primordial Images which constantly come up to the above-mentioned surface level of consciousness arousing there the sensory and perceptual images of the phenomenal things and producing at the second level of consciousness i.e., the level of *mano-vijñāna*, the consciousness of the ego. What is remarkable about the nature of the Storehouse-Consciousness is that, in the view of the Yogācāra School, it is not confined to the individual person. It exceeds the boundaries of an individual mind extending even beyond the personal unconscious that belongs to the individual, for it is the 'storehouse' of all the karmic vestiges that have been left by the experiences of mankind since the beginning of time. As such the concept of the Storehouse-Consciousness may be said to be the closest equivalent in Buddhism to the Collective Unconscious.

However, the philosophers of the Yogācāra School speak of transcending the Storehouse-Consciousness by the force of a spiritual illumination that issues forth from the World of Purest Reality as they call it, which they say could be opened up by man's going through the arduous process of the spiritual discipline of meditation.

As a branch of Mahayana Buddhism closely connected with the Yogācāra School, Zen bases itself philosophically on a similar conception of the structure of consciousness. However, being by nature averse to all theorizing, let alone philosophizing, Zen has elaborated no special doctrine concerning this problem, at least in an explicit form. But under the innumerable anecdotes, *kōans*, poems, and popular sermons which constitute the main body of Zen literature, a group of major ideas about the structure of consciousness is clearly discernible. And it is not so hard for us to bring them out in a theoretic form and develop them into a Zen doctrine of consciousness.

It immediately becomes clear that Zen also holds a multilayer theory of consciousness. Here, however, as in all other cases, Zen greatly simplifies the matter. It regards consciousness as consisting of two entirely different, though intimately related, layers which we may distinguish as (1) the intentional and (2) the non-intentional dimension of consciousness, the word 'intentional' being used in the original sense as exem-

plified by the use of the Latin word *intentio* in Medieval philosophy.

In the intentional dimension, the I as the 'subject' is empirically given as a correlate of the 'object'. There is an essential correlation between the 'subject' and 'object'. All noetic experience in this dimension is necessarily of dualistic structure. I regard myself as 'I' only insofar as I am aware of external things and events as 'objects' of cognition. There would be no ego-consciousness if there were absolutely no 'object' to be cognized. More generally, it is characteristic of this dimension that our consciousness is always and necessarily a 'consciousness-of'. It is an awareness *intending* something i.e., directed toward something; it is an awareness with an objective reference.

It is, in other words, of the very nature of consciousness in this dimension that it cannot but objectify whatever appears before it. And paradoxically or ironically enough, this holds true even of the 'subject'. The very moment I become aware of myself, my I turns into an objectified I, an 'object' among all other 'objects'. This is the main reason, as I said earlier, why it is so difficult to realize the 'subject' in its pure subjectivity. One can never hope to actualize the pure Ego as long as one remains in the intentional dimension of consciousness.

Zen, however, recognizes – and knows through experience – another dimension of consciousness which is what I have called above the 'non-intentional' dimension, and in which consciousness functions without being divided into the subjective and objective. It is a noetic dimension which is to be cultivated through the yogic, introspective techniques of *zazen*, a special dimension in which consciousness is activated not as 'consciousness-of' but as Consciousness pure and simple. This would exactly correspond to what Vasubandhu, a representative philosopher of the Yogācāra School, once said<sup>5</sup>: 'As the mind perceives no object, it remains as pure Awareness'.

The non-intentional awareness is found to be at work, albeit usually in vague and indistinct form, even in our day-to-day experience. Already the Sautrāntika School of Hinayana Buddhism<sup>6</sup> noticed the existence of the non-

intentional aspect in the mind of the plain man. The proposition, for example, 'I feel happy' in contradistinction to a proposition like 'I see a mountain', expresses a kind of non-intentional awareness. For being-happy is an awareness of a pleasurable mode of being, an elation which is vaguely diffused in the whole of my mind-body complex, with no definite, particular 'object' of which I can say I am conscious, unless I become by *intentio secunda* conscious of my being-happy. The proposition 'I see a mountain', on the contrary, is clearly a description of a perceptual event taking place between the 'subject' and the 'object'.

What Zen is interested in, however, is not a non-intentional awareness such as is expressed by propositions of the type: 'I am happy'. Rather Zen is interested in opening up a special dimension of consciousness which is, we might say, systematically non-intentional. It is a dimension in which even a proposition like 'I see the mountain' for example will be found to signify a peculiar state of awareness of such a nature that exactly the same propositional content may be expressed interchangeably by four linguistically different sentences: (1) 'I see the mountain', (2) 'The mountain sees me', (3) 'The mountain sees the mountain', (4) 'I see myself'. The non-intentional dimension of consciousness in which Zen is interested is such that these four sentences are exactly synonymous with each other. Until these four sentences are realized to be exactly synonymous with each other, you are still in the intentional dimension of consciousness. Furthermore, in the non-intentional dimension of consciousness these four synonymous sentences can very well be reduced to a one word sentence: 'Mountain!', and this word again can freely be reduced to one single word 'I'.

Here we observe how the original sentence: 'I see the mountain' from which we started has ultimately been condensed into one single point of 'I'. The 'I' thus actualized conceals within itself all the sentential variants that have been passed through, so that it can at any moment reveal itself as the 'Mountain!' or expand into any of the four full sentences. In whichever form it may appear, it is a pure non-intentional awareness, a pure consciousness instead of 'consciousness-of'. Nothing is here objectified. What Zen considers to be the true Self or absolute Ego is precisely the I actualized in such a

dimension of consciousness as an immediate self-expression of this very dimension.

Zen has a special technical term for the non-intentional dimension of consciousness: *fei-ssü-liang* (J.: *hi-shiryō*) literally meaning 'non-thinking'. This phrase may perhaps better be translated as the 'a-thinking mode of thinking'.<sup>7</sup> For, despite its purely negative form, this expression does not mean a passive void of consciousness or absence of consciousness. Quite the contrary; in the 'a-thinking' state the consciousness is activated and heightened to the extreme limit of its power of concentration without, however, 'intending' anything.

This particular expression, *fei-ssü-liang*, 'a-thinking thinking', was first introduced into Zen at a very early period of its history, by the third Patriarch, Sêng Ts'an (J.: Sōsan, ?-606) in his famous philosophical poem *Hsin Hsin Ming* (J.: *Shinjin Mei*). Later, in the T'ang dynasty, the same word was used by one of the greatest Zen masters of the age, Yao Shan Wei Yen (J.: Yakusan Igen, 751-834) in a very significant way, as recorded in the following famous *mondo*.

Once Master Yao Shan was sitting in deep meditation when a monk came up to him and asked: 'Solidly seated as a rock, what are you thinking?'

Master answered: 'Thinking of something which is absolutely unthinkable'.

The monk: 'How can one think of anything which is absolutely unthinkable?'

Master: 'By the a-thinking thinking, *fei-ssü-liang*!'

Since then the word has become an important technical term in Zen Buddhism. The *mondo* just quoted clearly shows that the *zazen* praxis is a spiritual discipline whose primary aim is to explore the non-intentional dimension of consciousness, in which the 'subject' is active as pure Awareness without 'intending' anything, instead of acting as 'subject' as opposed to 'object'.

### III The Ego-less Ego

But how, in practical terms, could we hope to bring about such a situation? More concretely put, how could we realize the I in its pure and absolute subjectivity as the pure Ego in the sense I have just indicated?

To repeat what I have said earlier, the pure Ego is usually unrealizable because in the intentional dimension of consciousness everything is an 'object' of consciousness. Even the I, the 'subject of cognition, turns into an 'object' as soon as I turn my attention to myself by reflection or introspection. Hence the very first step in the praxis of Zen discipline is – to use the celebrated words of the aforementioned Japanese Zen master, Dōgen – one's 'forgetting one's own I'.<sup>8</sup>

'Forgetting one's own I' – this characteristic phrase carries in Zen a very important positive meaning. It must not be taken in the negative sense of simply losing consciousness, be it in a state of ecstasy, let alone blank stupefaction. Instead of being a state of 'mindlessness' in any sense, it is 'mindfulness', an extreme intensification of consciousness, except that the 'mindfulness' is to be maintained not in the dimension of ordinary noetic experience in which the ego stands as the 'subject' opposed to other things or other egos as its 'objects', but in a totally different dimension in which the very opposition of 'subject' and 'object' becomes meaningless.

To get disciplined in the Way of Buddha means getting disciplined in dealing properly with your own I. To get disciplined in dealing properly with your I means nothing other than forgetting your I. To forget your I means that you become illumined by the 'external' things. To be illumined by the things means that you obliterate the distinction between your (so-called) ego and the (so-called) egos of other things.

It will easily be seen that the discipline of 'forgetting one's I' is immediately backed by another, more positive discipline of becoming 'illuminated by the things'. Losing the consciousness of the I as the 'subject' standing in opposition to other things as its 'objects', one is to get entirely and totally absorbed into the things themselves in such a way that the things 'illuminate' or resuscitate the I that has once disappeared from the 'subject'-object dimension in another form in another dimension, the non-intentional dimension of consciousness.

This positive aspect of the Zen discipline is known in the traditional terminology of Far Eastern spirituality as 'one's *becoming* the thing'.<sup>9</sup> The idea of man's becoming things has played in the Far East an exceedingly important role in various fields of culture such as religion, philosophy, and fine arts.<sup>10</sup> It is indeed no exaggeration to say that the spirit of Far Eastern culture can never be understood without a full understanding of this principle.

A few years ago, as I well remember, participating in a conference I had a chance to read a paper on the art of black-and-white ink painting in China and Japan. In the course of the lecture, I mentioned as the highest principle of this kind of art the idea that the painter should *become* the thing which he wants to paint. The painter who is going to paint a bamboo must, before taking up his brush, sit in contemplation until he feels himself completely identified with the bamboo. So I said.

After the lecture a man came to me – it was a famous authority on mysticism – and said that in his view it was utterly impossible for a man to *become* a bamboo. It is, he said, not only scientifically absurd, but it is, as a matter of practical experience, an impossibility.

The truth is that the pros and cons of the matter depend solely upon how one understands the meaning of this peculiar expression: 'Man becomes a bamboo'. It is obvious that my critic understood it in a purely ontological sense instead of taking it in the sense in which it is customarily understood by Far Easterners.

From the point of view of a Far Eastern painter, as he understands the expression in the traditional way, it is possible for him to become a bamboo. Or rather, he *must* become a bamboo. Otherwise, the bamboo he paints would be but a

lifeless bamboo, a dead object having only a formal similarity to a real bamboo.

What is meant by this expression in the view of a Far Eastern painter may somehow become understandable to you if you imagine what actually takes place in the following way. The painter sits in quiet contemplation, intensely concentrating his mind upon the ideal image of the bamboo. He begins to feel in himself the rhythmic pulsebeat of the life-energy which keeps the bamboo alive and which makes the bamboo a bamboo, becoming gradually concordant with the pulsebeat of the life-energy which is running through his mind-body complex. And finally there comes a moment of complete unification, at which there remains no distinction whatsoever between the life-energy of the painter and the life-energy of the bamboo. Then there is no longer any trace in the consciousness of the painter of himself as an individual self-subsistent person. There is actualized only the Bamboo. Where is it actualized? Internally? Or externally? No one knows. It does not matter. For the word 'becoming' in the particular context here at issue concerns a state of contemplative awareness having in itself no ontological implication.

There is absolutely no 'consciousness of' anything whatsoever. The sole fact is that the Bamboo is there, actualized with an unusual vivacity and freshness, pulsating with a mysterious life-energy pervading the whole universe. At that very moment the painter takes up the brush. The brush moves, as it were, of its own accord, in conformity with the pulsation of the life-rhythm which is actualized in the bamboo. In terms of the traditional Far Eastern theory of the pictorial art, it is then not the man who draws the picture of the bamboo; rather, the bamboo draws its own picture on the paper. The movement of the brush is the movement of the inner life of the bamboo.

It is important to remark that according to Zen such an experience is by no means confined to the pictorial art, or, for that matter, to any particular domain of human life. From the point of view of Zen, existence itself in its entirety is to be an experience of this nature. No matter what man may hear, he *is* the thing in the sense I have just explained. He sees for instance a flowing river. He *is* the water flowing in the form of a river. A man is a man; he can never become water; he can

never *be* water, you may say. But if such a thing were absolutely impossible in any sense, Zen would be sheer nonsense.

Zen argues as follows. One cannot *become* water because one is observing it from outside, that is to say, because the ego is, as an outsider, looking at water as an 'object'. Instead of doing so, Zen continues to argue, one must first learn to 'forget one's ego-subject' and let oneself be completely absorbed into the water. One would then be flowing *as* the flowing river. No more would there be any consciousness of the ego. Nor would there be any 'consciousness of the water. Strictly speaking, it is not even the case that one *becomes* the water and flows on as the water. For in such a dimension there would be no ego existent to *become* anything. Simply: The water flows on. No more, no less.

Often when we are absorbed in listening to an enchanting piece of music, a state of artistic *samādhi* is actualized. In such a state there is Music pure and simple. The Music fills up the whole field of existence. It is only after the music has come to an end and when we 'come back' to ourselves that we realize with a feeling of surprise that we have been completely 'identified with' music. But when we actually realize it, the I and the music are already split apart into two different things.

The experience of musical *samādhi* is for most of us a particular experience occurring only from time to time, on rare occasions or intermittently. For a man of Zen, experiences of this nature must be just ordinary, day-to-day events. Thus to come back to the example of the flowing water, Zen demands that man be such that he be the flowing water from eternity to eternity. The water flows on eternally, cosmically, in the eternal Now. The water here is not an 'object' of cognition. Nor is there consciousness of the I as the noetic 'subject'. From no one knows where there emerges the flowing water. It does not involve the awareness of my 'I', nor does it involve the awareness *of* the 'water'. But it is a pure Awareness. And that Awareness *is* the flowing water.

What generally looks like an objective description of Nature in Zen poetry and Zen painting is in the majority of cases a presentation, pictorial or poetic, of such an experience. By depicting a flower, tree, or bird, the poet or painter expresses the cosmic illumination of the pure Awareness. A



flower depicted in this manner is not an objective flower. It is Something else. It is Something which at this moment is being actualized as a Flower, but which could very well be actualized as the 'I'. Such is the nature of the pure Ego as understood by Zen, the 'True-man-without-any-rank'. Dynamic, functional, and mobile it is constantly changing. Now it expresses itself verbally or visually as a Flower. At the very next moment it may express itself as 'I'. Since in either case the life-energy of the whole spiritual universe is poured into the expression, the Flower and the I are one and the same thing, for they are but two different crystallizations of exactly the same amount of the universal life-energy. And since, further, it makes absolutely no difference whether the life-energy of the whole universe expresses itself as Flower or I, or indeed, for that matter, as anything whatsoever, it could also express itself as Nothing. This is what is generally known as the 'Oriental Nothingness'.

The Oriental Nothingness is not a purely negative ontological state of there being nothing. On the contrary, it is a plenitude of Being. It is so full that it cannot as such be identified as anything determined, anything special. But it is, on the other hand, so full that it can manifest itself as anything in the empirical dimension of our experience, as a crystallization of the whole spiritual energy contained therein. The Oriental Nothingness thus understood is the true, absolute Ego as Zen Buddhism understands it.

### Notes

1. On Dōgen (1200-1253), see Essay I, Note 3.
2. Master Ikkyū (1394-1481). The quotation is from his *Mizukagami*.
3. *Wu T'eng Hui Yüan*, III.
4. The National Teacher, Musō (1275-1351), particularly famous for initiating the tradition of landscape gardening in Japanese culture. The following passage is found in his work *Muchū Mondō Shū*, II.
5. In his *Triṃshika-Vijñaptimātratā-Siddhi*.

6. See an excellent exposition of the matter by H. Guenther: *Buddhist Philosophy*, Harmondsworth-Baltimore, 1972, pp. 68-70.

7. The 'a-thinking' thinking will be dealt with in Essay V (particularly sec. III). The *kōan* which we are going to quote will also be fully explained there.

8. The phrase is found in the *Shōbōgenzō* (Chapter 'Genjō Kōan'). It will be more fully discussed in Essay V.

9. This problem will be discussed in Essays V and VI.

10. *Ibid.*



## Essay III

# SENSE AND NONSENSE IN ZEN BUDDHISM

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## I Zen Nonsense

The main topic of the present Essay is the problem of meaning and meaningfulness in Zen. This topic and the one which we discussed in the preceding Essay, namely, the basic structure of Selfhood are, as we shall see, closely and inseparably connected with each other. Or, rather we should say that the problem of language and meaning is essentially related to and ultimately reducible to the problem of Selfhood. Indeed, whichever aspect of Zen one may take up, and from whichever angle one may approach it, one is sure to be brought back ultimately to the problem of Selfhood.

With this basic understanding, I shall turn immediately to the discussion of meaningfulness about which Zen raises a number of interesting problems. As one could imagine, the problems are raised in a very peculiar context, for language in Zen tends to be used in quite an unnatural way. In the context of Zen, language usually does not remain in its natural state. It is often distorted to the degree of becoming almost meaningless and nonsensical.

The problem of meaning in Zen Buddhism is thus interesting in rather a paradoxical sense because most of the typical Zen sayings are obviously devoid of meaning and nonsensical if we observe them from the point of view of our ordinary understanding of language. Language exists for the purpose of communication between men. Where there is no need for communication, there is no need of saying anything. This basic principle applies to Zen as well. When we observe two persons engaged in talking with each other in a Zen context, we naturally get the impression that communication of some sort is taking place between them. But we observe at the same time a very strange fact, namely, that the words that are exchanged do not make sense, that they are mostly meaning-

less or nonsensical to us, outside observers. How could there be communication at all when the words used do not make sense? What kind of communication will it be, when it is made through nonsensical utterances? Such indeed is the most important question that confronts us at the outset as soon as we approach Zen from the point of view of meaningful communication.

In order to bring into focus the very core of the whole question, let us begin by giving a typical example of nonsensical communication at the pre-linguistic level of behavior, that is, communication through gesture. Let us remark that in Zen Buddhism, gesture plays practically the same role as language, except that language presents a far more complicated structure, because, as we shall see later, language involves the very important factor of articulation, i.e., the semantic articulation of reality, which is foreign to the use of gestures. But precisely because of this simplicity and non-complexity, gesture is perhaps more appropriate than language in giving us a preliminary idea as to where the central problem lies.

The example I am going to give is a very famous one. It is found in the *kōan* collection *Wu Mên Kuan* (J.: *Mu Mon Kan*), No. 3; it is also found in another celebrated *kōan* collection, *Pi Yen Lu* (J.: *Hekigan Roku*), No. 19. It is an anecdote known as the one-finger-Zen of Master Chū Chih (J.: Gu Tei).

The hero of the anecdote is Chū Chih (J.: Gu Tei), a famous Zen Master of the ninth century. This Master, whenever and whatever he was asked about Zen, used to stick up one finger. Raising one finger without saying anything was his invariable answer to any question whatsoever he was asked concerning Zen. 'What is the supreme and absolute Truth?' – answer: the silent raising of one finger. 'What is the essence of Buddhism?' – answer: again the selfsame silent raising of one finger.

It will be evident that in the normal circumstances of life, this action does not make sense, for the simple raising of one finger in no way constitutes a reasonable answer to any of the questions asked, except perhaps when the question runs: 'Where is your finger?' The answer is not understandable, and since it is not understandable, it is no answer; and being no

answer, it is nonsensical. Yet on the other hand, we feel in our perplexed mind something which persistently tells us that there must be some hidden meaning in Master Chū Chih's raising one finger, that it cannot be total nonsense. What then is this hidden meaning which Master Chū Chih supposedly wanted to convey by silently sticking up one finger? That precisely is the problem. I shall explain the meaning of Chū Chih's one-finger-Zen later on. At this stage there are many other things to be clarified in a preliminary way in order that we might grasp the core of the whole question.

The anecdote, by the way, has not come to an end. It has a very important sequel. Master Chū Chih had a young disciple, a boy apprentice, who followed the Master, serving him at home and out of doors. Having observed his Master's pattern of behavior this boy himself began to raise one finger whenever people asked him questions about Zen in the absence of the Master. At first, the Master did not notice it, and everything went well for some time. But the fatal moment came at last. The Master came to hear about what the boy had been doing behind his back.

One day, the Master hid a knife in the sleeve, summoned the boy to his presence, and said, 'I hear that you have understood the essence of Buddhism. Is it true?' The boy replied 'Yes it is'. Thereupon the Master asked, 'What is the Buddha?' The boy in answer stuck up one finger. Master Chū Chih suddenly took hold of the boy and cut off with the knife the finger which the boy had just raised. As the boy was running out of the room screaming with pain, the Master called to him. The boy turned round. At that very moment, quick as lightning came the Master's question: 'What is the Buddha?' Almost by conditioned reflex, we might say, the boy held up his hand to raise his finger. There was no finger there. The boy on the spot attained enlightenment.

The anecdote may very well be a fiction. But, fictitious or real, it is indeed a very interesting and significant anecdote. It is interesting and significant not only because the story is narrated in an atmosphere of high dramatic tension, but also, and mainly, because the whole anecdote is an admirable dramatization of what we might call Zen experience. Zen experience is embodied not solely in the last crucial stage at which the boy attains enlightenment. The whole story from



the very beginning till the end is alive with the spirit of Zen. Each single event in the story represents in a dramatic way a particular state in the evolvment of Zen consciousness. For the moment, however, we shall refrain from going further into the analytic elucidation of the actual content of this anecdote. Our immediate concern is with a more formal aspect of the story.

It is important to remark that the anecdote is interesting as a dramatization of the evolvment of Zen consciousness only in an authentically Zen context. In other words, the anecdote tells something positive, it makes sense, it is meaningful, only to those who are already familiar with Zen or something similar to it in another religious tradition. Otherwise the whole anecdote would naturally remain nonsensical in the sense that no stage in the evolvment of the story will really be understandable. To begin with, why did Master Chü Chih stick up one finger whenever he was asked any question about Buddhism? Why did he cut off the finger of the boy who imitated him? How did the boy attain enlightenment when he wanted to raise his finger which was no longer there? Nothing is understandable except to those who have an inside knowledge of the Zen theory and practice.

What is so meaningful to a Zen Buddhist may thus be completely meaningless to an outsider. Moreover, even within the narrowly limited context of this anecdote, the act of raising one finger was meaningful in the case of the Master while exactly the same act was judged to be meaningless and nonsensical when it occurred as an imitation by the disciple. Again the selfsame act of raising one finger by the disciple suddenly assumed a decisive importance and turned meaningful at the moment when it came in the form of the raising of a non-finger. All these observations would seem to lead us toward thinking that Zen must have a definite standard by which it can judge anything, whether verbal or non-verbal, to be meaningful or meaningless as the case may be, and that, further, it must be quite an original standard, totally different from the standard of meaningfulness which is normally applied in ordinary situations, so much so that a judgement passed by the Zen standard could be – and very often is – diametrically opposed to the judgement given in accordance with the ordinary standard.

Indeed I may as well have entitled this Essay 'The Problem of the Criterion for Meaningfulness in Zen Buddhism'. For such in fact is the matter which I want to discuss here. In other words, the main problem that will concern us is whether there is such a thing as the criterion for meaningfulness in Zen, and if there *is* one, whether there is any reliable means by which we can come to know the inner make-up of that criterion.

## II Meaningful or Meaningless?

Meaningfulness is evidently a matter of primary concern for contemporary intellectuals. In the field of philosophy, as the result of the development of British empiricism and American positivism with their extraordinary emphasis upon the problems of meaning, the concept of meaningfulness (and meaninglessness) of what we say has become one of the major intellectual problems.

Even in ordinary non-philosophic situations, we are often reminded of the importance of 'making sense'. We often find ourselves saying, 'It makes sense', 'It makes no sense', and the like. And the kind of judgement is always accompanied by valuation, positive or negative; or it is itself a value judgement. Not-making-sense is nothing other than talking nonsense, saying something absurd and ridiculous. Talking nonsense is felt to be something we should be ashamed of. Thus we naturally try to avoid talking nonsense.

A number of popular books have been written in recent years, which purport to teach us how we could avoid falling into the pitfalls of nonsensical talk or nonsensical thinking. Thus, to give a few examples, the general semanticist, Mr. Irving J. Lee has written a book entitled: *How to Talk with People* carrying a significant subtitle which reads: *A program for preventing troubles that come when people talk together*. Another book of a more serious nature by Professor Lionel Ruby is entitled: *The Art of Making Sense*, with the subtitle: *A guide to logical thinking*. These and other similar works analyze in great detail the pitfalls of nonsense and try to guide the reader toward what is called 'straight' thinking. Otherwise expressed, the authors of these books are concerned with how we can use language meaningfully. Making-sense is now an

art. It is a special technique considered to be indispensable in modern life.

It is very interesting to remark that, from such a point of view almost all the famous Zen sayings typify sheer nonsense. That is to say, Zen sayings do not in the majority of cases satisfy the criterion for meaningfulness that is proposed in these books. What is still more remarkable is the fact that, from the viewpoint of Zen, those ordinary words and propositions that fully satisfy the normal criterion for meaningfulness can very well be meaningless, even nonsensical. So-called 'straight' thinking and so-called 'meaningful' talk may from the Zen point of view be judged to be 'crooked' and meaningless because they tend to distort and deform what Zen regards as the reality of things. Zen says for example<sup>1</sup>:

Empty-handed, I hold a spade in my hands,  
I am walking on foot, but on the back of an ox I  
ride,  
As I pass over the bridge, lo,  
The water does not flow, it is the bridge that flows.

This saying which, as everybody sees, consists entirely of glaring contradictions does make good sense in Zen. Indeed, in a Zen context, to say: 'I am empty-handed and I have a spade in the hands; I walk on foot and I ride on the back of an ox; The water stands still while the bridge flows', makes even better sense than saying: 'I am not empty-handed because I have a spade in my hands: I am walking on foot, therefore I am not riding on the back of an ox; The river flows and the bridge stands still'. How and on what basis can this kind of nonsensical saying be said to make good sense in Zen?

Before answering this crucial question, I shall give here one more example of Zen nonsense of a somewhat different nature. It is an extremely short *kōan* recorded in the above-mentioned *Wu Môn Kuan* (J.: *Mu Mon Kan*), No. 18. It reads:

A monk asked Master Tung Shan: 'What is the  
Buddha?'  
Tung Shan replied: 'Three pounds of flax!'

Tung Shan (J.: Tō Zan, 910-990) is a disciple of the celebrated Master Yün Mên (J.: Ummon) of the tenth century (?-949), himself being also an outstanding Zen Master. One

day he was weighing flax. Just at that moment a monk came up to him and suddenly flung this question at him: 'What is the Buddha?', a question which in the Western world would be equivalent to 'What is God?' or 'What is absolute Reality?' Instantaneously came Tung Shan's answer: 'Three pounds of flax!' The Zen documents abound in examples of this type. Thus, to give one more example, Yün Mên, the teacher of Tung Shan, when asked exactly the same question by a monk, answered by simply saying: 'A dried-up dirt-scraper!'

Once a monk asked Yün Mên, 'What is the Buddha?'

Mên replied: 'A dried-up dirt-scraper!'

That is all. To an outsider, these short dialogues would be nothing more than sheer nonsense. But at least one may notice the existence of a definite pattern underlying these two instances of Zen dialogue. As an answer to the metaphysical question concerning the Absolute, both Tung Shang and Yün Mên just thrust under the interlocutor's nose a concrete object in a verbal form: 'three pounds of flax' in the case of Tung Shan, and a dried-up, i.e., useless 'dirt-scraper' in the case of Yün Mên. Tung Shan was most probably weighing the flax when he was asked the metaphysical question. He answered on the spot by the most concrete thing that happened to be there in his hands.

Zen likes the most concrete. It is one of its characteristics. Examples can be given indefinitely from the old Zen records. In terms of the problem of meaningfulness, one might naturally be reminded of the principle of verification as it has been developed by the contemporary positivist philosophers. Verifiability is for them the ultimate criterion for meaningfulness. Only what is verifiable by experience is acceptable as real; accordingly a word or proposition is meaningful if and only if there are possible sense-perceptions which verify the presence of the object or the event indicated. 'God' or the 'Absolute' is a typical example of those words that are considered meaningless because there is no possible sense-perception that would verify the existence of such an entity.

On the face of it, Zen which evinces special liking for concrete things would seem to behave in conformity with the rule of verification set up by the positivists. Zen daringly

commands its students to 'kill the Buddha', 'kill the Patriarchs', in short, to kill God! Instead of talking about God and the Absolute, Zen Masters talk about 'three pounds of flax', 'a dried-up dirt-scraper', 'the cypress tree in the courtyard of the temple', and the like. These words and phrases are perfectly meaningful by the positivist criterion for meaningfulness, because they are all verifiable, particularly because they are usually uttered in the very presence of the sensible objects.

Yet all these words turn completely meaningless and nonsensical as soon as we place them in their original contexts. That is to say, none of these expressions makes sense as a constituent part of a whole dialogue. 'What is the true significance of Bodhidharma's coming from the West (i.e., from India to China)?', a monk asks (*A*). Chao Chou (J.: Jō Shū, 778-897) answers: 'The cypress tree in the courtyard of the temple (*B*)'.<sup>2</sup> The dialogue is nonsensical because there can apparently be no communication between the monk who asks the question and the Master who answers, because there is no reasonable connection between *A* and *B*.

### III Speech and Language in a Zen Context

In the course of its historical development, Zen has produced a huge amount of documentary records. The earliest form of them is represented by what is known as the 'records of sayings' (*yü lu*, J.: *go roku*), i.e., the collections of the Sayings of great Masters, which began to enjoy remarkable popularity in the eighth and ninth centuries. Unlike the Mahayana Sutras which had been predominant up to those ages and in which all the cardinal teachings were put into the mouth of the Buddha himself, the Records of Sayings were all records of what individual Zen Masters said and how they behaved. Moreover, a Record of Saying does not purport to present a continuous and coherent description of the life of a Zen Master in the form of a biography; it consists merely of a series of fragmentary records of sayings and doings of a Master in daily circumstances.

The core of the Records of Sayings is constituted by *mondōs* each of which is a personal dialogue that takes place in a very concrete situation between the Master and a disciple or a visiting monk. It is typical of the *mondō* that it consists in most cases of one single question and one single answer. The dialogue is therefore mostly of extreme concision and brevity. It is a real verbal fight. And the fight is over almost instantaneously, just like a contest fought with real swords by two masters of Japanese swordsmanship. There is no room here for a *dialektiké*. The Zen dialogue does not last long like a Platonic dialogue which can last interminably to the utmost limit of the logical development and intellectual elaboration of a given theme.

Rather, the Zen dialogue aims at grasping the ultimate and eternal Truth in a momentary flash of words that are exchanged between two living persons at the extreme point of

spiritual tension, and in a concrete and unique situation of life. The momentary dialogue may result in producing what would strike the outsiders as sheer nonsense. No matter. For in the view of the two participants the fight has been fought. The eternal Truth may or may not have been glimpsed. No matter, the Truth has flashed for a moment.

The nature of the Zen dialogue discloses in an extraordinary, or we would perhaps say, shocking form, the typically Chinese way of thinking which consists in aiming at grasping immediately and on the spot this or that aspect of the eternal Truth in a real, concrete situation which is never to be repeated. This feature of the Chinese way of thinking is observable, albeit in a far less tense form, in the *Analects of Confucius* (*Lun Yü*; J.: *Ron Go*). It is a mode of thinking which is essentially different from those forms of thinking that are developed on the abstract and theoretical level of the intellect and reason. It is, on the contrary, a peculiar mode of thinking that evolves in the midst of concrete life prompted by some concrete event or concrete thing. This typically Chinese form of thought was once overwhelmed by the development in China of logical discursive ways of thinking under the influence of Mahayana Buddhism which had preceded the rise of Zen Buddhism. With Zen it came back again to life in the periods extending from the T'ang dynasty down to the Sung dynasty. Many of the representative dialogues that we find in the Records of Sayings were codified in the Sung dynasty between the tenth and the thirteenth century in the form of *kōans* as effective means of educating and training Zen students.

It will have been understood that the words used in a way peculiar to Zen are all words uttered, as it were in limit-situations. Hence the characteristic distortion or deformation of ordinary language as we observe it in the *mondōs*. Zen does not shun or despise language. It only requires that language be used in a very peculiar way, not indiscriminately. It requires that the words should come out of one specific source which we may call 'the primary dimension of Reality'. The structure of this dimension of Reality will be analyzed later on. For the moment let us be content with remarking that what is of decisive importance for Zen, in this respect, is the source from which words issue forth. The kind of language



that has its source and basis in the ordinary level of consciousness is for Zen meaningless. Perfect silence is far better than meaningless talk. The famous watchword of Zen: 'No use of words and letters' refers to this aspect of the Zen attitude toward language.

In a passage of his *Structural Anthropology*, M. Lévi-Strauss mentions two different attitudes toward the use of language and distinguishes between them in terms of cultural patterns. He says: 'Among us [i.e., in European culture], language is used in a rather reckless way – we talk all the time, we ask questions about many things. This is not at all a universal situation. There are cultures . . . which are rather thrifty in relation to language. They don't believe that language should be used indiscriminately but only in certain specific frames of reference and somewhat sparingly.'<sup>3</sup>

I do not know whether or not M. Lévi-Strauss was actually thinking of Oriental cultures when he wrote these lines. In any case the description he gives of the second of the two cultural patterns applies to the linguistic aspect of Zen.

The word 'Zen' naturally reminds us of the practice of *zazen*, i.e., sitting cross-legged in meditation. In the state of *zazen* language is to stop functioning, even the inner or mental speech, not to speak of external speech. Language is simply an impediment in the way of the concentration of the mind. It must be completely done away with. But once out of the state of meditation, the Zen student may at any moment be asked by the Master to 'say something, say something', to use language – not indiscriminately, of course, but in a very specific frame of reference. In fact, in a certain sense no living religion attaches greater importance to speaking and talking than Zen Buddhism. The Master constantly urges the student to open the mouth and say something. He commands him: 'Bring me a phrase!', i.e., a decisive phrase. Asking the student to say something constitutes an integral part of the educational process of Zen. For, the moment he opens the mouth and 'brings a decisive phrase', the student discloses to the eyes of the Master the exact degree of his spiritual maturity.

It is important to remark, however, that the linguistic behaviour which is asked of the student here is of an extremely specific nature. It consists neither in speaking in an

ordinary way nor in keeping silent. What is required is that words should gush out from a certain dimension of consciousness which is totally different from the dimension of speaking and not speaking.

One of the celebrated 'Three Key Phrases' (*san chuan yǔ*)<sup>4</sup> of Master Sung Yüan (J.: Shō Gen, 1132-1202) was: 'Speaking is not a matter of moving the tongue'. That is to say, in the view of Zen, it is not with the tongue that man speaks. Another famous Master, Pai Chang (J. Hyakujō, 720-814) is related to have once asked his disciples: 'How will it be possible for you to speak in a state in which your throat, lips and mouth have been snatched away?'<sup>5</sup> He is here urging his disciples to say something without using the throat, lips and mouth. This seemingly unreasonable request simply indicates that language as understood in an authentic Zen context consists in the act of speaking in which the vocal organs, though actually activated, remain inactivated as if they were not used.

In order to understand this point we must remember that as a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, Zen upholds – at least at the initial stage of theorizing<sup>6</sup> – a fundamental distinction between two levels of Reality. One is what is called the 'sacred truth' *shêng ti* (J.: *shō tai*) corresponding to the Sanscrit *paramârtha-satya*: and the other is the 'customary or worldly truth' *su ti* (J.: *zoku tai*) corresponding to the *saṃvṛtti-satya*. The former which is also called in Zen Buddhism the 'primary truth', refers to a very specific view of Reality which is disclosed to man only through the actual experience of enlightenment. The inner structure of the primary level of Reality will be elucidated in what follows. The 'customary truth' which is also called the 'secondary truth' refers, on the contrary, to the common-sense view of Reality as it appears to the eyes of ordinary people.

From the standpoint of Zen, the normal exchange of words as we usually understand it by such words as 'speech', 'speaking', 'language', and 'dialogue', belongs to the level of the 'secondary truth', while what is understood by these words in a Zen context belongs to the level of the 'primary truth'. When words are uttered or exchanged in this latter dimension of Reality, they give rise to a very strange and unusual situation.

(1) The fundamental structure of speech or *parole* as defined by Ferdinand de Saussure is no longer observable in this dimension, for there is no distinction here between the speaker and the hearer. What is actually seen is a spectacle of words flowing out from no one knows where, glittering for a moment in the air like a flash of lightning, and immediately disappearing into the eternal darkness. Speech does occur, but it is a speech that occurs in a void space where the existence of the speaker and the hearer has completely lost its significance. Since there is neither speaker nor hearer, the act of speech is no speech. It does not constitute *parole* in the proper sense of the word.

(2) Another characteristic of speech in a Zen context is that language is deprived of its most basic function, i.e., the semantic articulation of reality. Of course, as long as a word is actually used, semantic articulation is still clearly and undeniably there – particularly when viewed with the eye of a man who has no idea at all of what Zen considers the primary level of Reality. But from the Zen point of view, it is as though the semantic articulation became transparent, permeable, flexible and non-resistant to such a degree that it is almost non-existent. One of the reasons why Zen sayings look completely nonsensical to the outsider – take for example the above-cited *kōan* which asserts that the river stands still while the bridge flows – lies in the fact that the outsider does not properly understand this peculiar transformation which the function of semantic articulation undergoes when a word is uttered in a Zen context. Let me explain this point a little further.

When, for instance, we say 'table', the word naturally exercises its normal function for articulation. That is to say, the word cuts out a certain portion of reality and presents it to our mind as a specific thing called by that name, distinguishing it from all other things. The 'table' is 'table' just because it is different from all non-tables. And as uttered in a definite actual context, the word refers to a particular table which is concretely existent there. The same holds true from the Zen point of view, too. To that extent Zen is still in the secondary or worldly dimension of Reality. As I have said before, however, semantic articulation in a Zen context is infinitely flexible. The articulated picture of reality is here permeable; it offers no resistance. That is to say, a product of articulation

does not obstruct our view; it does not force our view to stop at that point. The 'table', for instance, which is a product of articulation, does not obtrude itself in a Zen context as a solid semantic mass as it does in ordinary speech. Rather, it makes itself transparent so that it allows our view to go direct to the very source from which the form of the table has emerged. Through the articulated form of the 'table' the primary level of Reality reveals itself in its original inarticulate state. This situation is what is usually referred to in Mahayana Buddhism as seeing a thing in its *tathatā* or Suchness. It is not the case, be it remarked, that the word 'table' works as a symbol indicating Something-beyond. Rather, the 'table' in its verbal form is itself the most immediate presentation of the primary level of Reality.

(3) I would point out as the third characteristic of the use of language in Zen the fact that the content of whatever is said in a Zen context in the form of a proposition does not constitute an independent semantic (or representational) entity. This is but a direct sequence of the second characteristic which has just been explained.

When we say for example, 'The table is square' or 'The sky is blue' in the secondary or customary dimension of Reality, the proposition produces in the mind of the hearer a kind of semantic entity standing out against the background of silence. In the primary dimension of Reality, on the contrary, no such independent mental unit is produced. For no sooner is the proposition uttered than it becomes totally dissolved into its original source which is nothing other than the primary dimension of Reality. We can also express the same idea from its reverse side by saying that whatever is said is in itself a total and integral presentation of the primary dimension of Reality. The proposition: 'The sky is blue' is not an objective description of Nature. Nor is it a subjective expression of the speaker's psychological state. It is a momentary self-presentation of the absolute Reality itself. And as such, the proposition does not *mean* anything: it does not indicate or point to anything other than itself.

In a far more poetic way, Master Tung Shan (Tōzan, 807-869)<sup>7</sup> in his celebrated Zen poem *Pao Ching San Mei* (J.: *Hō Kyō San Mai*) expressed this state of affairs as follows:

Snow heaped up in a silver bowl,  
 A white heron hidden in the light of the full moon,  
 The two are alike, yet not the same,  
 Interfused, yet each having its own place.

The 'silver bowl' symbolizes the primary, non-articulated Reality while 'snow' symbolizes a piece of articulated Reality. Likewise the 'light of the full moon' and the 'white heron'. 'The two are alike', i.e., the two things, being of the same color, are not clearly distinguishable from one another. Yet they are not the same, i.e., the 'snow' *is* 'snow' and the 'bird' *is* 'bird'.

The absolute Reality or the primary level of Reality as understood by Zen has no real name; it is impossible to present it verbally in its absoluteness. But when a Zen Master in a moment of extreme spiritual tension says: 'The sky is blue', the unnamable Reality becomes named and presented in this particular form. The timeless Reality glitters and flashes for a moment in a time-space dimension. In so far as it appears in the articulate form of the-sky-being-blue, it is distinguishable; it is distinguished from the original non-articulation as well as from what is expressed by all other propositions. Yet insofar as it is an immediate and naked presentation of the non-articulated Reality, it is not to be distinguished from the latter.

Following in Tō Zan's footsteps, a Zen Master of the tenth century, Pa Ling (J.: Ha Ryō, exact dates unknown), when asked: 'What kind of thing is the Deva sect?', answered: 'It is snow piled up in a silver bowl'.<sup>8</sup> 'Deva' refers to Kāna-Deva, a disciple of Nāgārjuna (J.: Ryūju, ca. 150-250). Kāna-Deva was noted for his philosophic capability. The 'Deva sect' therefore refers to the philosophy of Nothingness (*śūnyatā*) which characterizes Nāgārjuna's Middle-Path position. Thus this anecdote shows that this peculiar view of the relation between the non-articulated Reality and its articulated forms is precisely what constitutes the core of Mahayana philosophy.

## IV The Ontology of Meaning in Mahayana Buddhism

The anecdote which has just been mentioned is interesting in that it incidentally brings to our attention the fact that the Zen approach to language has a historical background in the *Mādhyamika* or Middle-Path school of Mahayana Buddhism. But it must be noted that the philosophy of language of Zen is also related with *Vijñaptimātratā* or Ideation-Only school going back to Vasubandhu (ca. 400-480).

In the history of Indian philosophy in general, the Mahayana philosophy of language stands diametrically opposed to the semantic theory upheld by the Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya schools. What characterizes the latter theory is the view that a word is a symbol for something existent in the external world. To every single word there corresponds something that really exists. Whenever there is a word, one can be sure of the existence of a corresponding object in the world; and conversely, whatever is knowable in the world is namable. This view is so predominant in the Vaiśeṣika school that in its ontology 'existent' is called *padārtha*, i.e., the meaning of a word, or what is meant by a word.

Thus in the thought of this school, the very fact that we have the word 'ox', for example, is by itself a definite proof that there *is* in the external world a particular substance designated by that name. Since, further, we predicate of this substance various properties, saying: 'The ox is white', 'The ox walks' etc., we can be sure that properties like 'whiteness', and 'walking', etc. are also existent in the real world. And since the word 'ox' applies universally to various kinds of ox (e.g., walking, running, reposing, etc.), the ox as a universal must also exist in reality. Likewise the various properties that distinguish the universal-ox from other species of animal like horse, sheep, dog, etc..<sup>9</sup>

The ontology of Vaiśeṣika is an outspoken atomism in which all existents are considered ultimately reducible to atoms (*paramāṇu* meaning 'extremely fine or small'). The atoms are the basic substances that are themselves invisible. An ox, for example, is a composite substance which is an aggregate of such atoms. A composite substance is a visible body; it is a new independent entity which is different from the atoms that are its constituent parts, just as a piece of cloth which is made of threads is in itself a different substance from the threads.

Both the Middle-Path school and the Ideation-Only school of Mahayana Buddhism take the position of radical opposition to such a view concerning the relation between language and reality. Language, Buddhism asserts, has no ontological significance. A word does not correspond to a piece of Reality. Words are merely signs established for the convenience of daily life. They have nothing to do with the structure of Reality. The Vaiśeṣika school takes the position that to a world like 'pot' or 'table' there corresponds in the external world a real object, a substance. According to Buddhism this is merely a view proper to the secondary, i.e., worldly, level of Reality. The common people always think this way and their whole scheme of life and behavior is formed on this very basis. From the point of view of the primary level of Reality, however, all this is false and even sheer nonsense. A 'table', for example, is not a substance endowed with an unchanging, eternally self-identical nature. In other words, it is in reality 'nothing', for in itself it is provided with no permanent ontological solidity. But as a phenomenal existent, the table *appears* as if it really existed, just as a phantom or the moon reflected in the water appears as if it existed. According to the doctrine upheld by the Ideation-Only school, it is language that induces such a false view of Reality.

Language is inseparably connected with conceptualization. The meaning of the word is universalized into a concept, and the seeming solidity and permanence of the concept is readily projected onto the structure of the world. Thus 'table' comes to appear as a self-subsistent entity having real solidity and permanence. The same is true of the properties of the table such as its colors and forms.

In *Triṃśikā Vijñaptimātratāsiddhih* (XX) Vasubandhu declares that all those 'things' that are produced by this natural tendency of the human mind are nothing but so many falsely imagined forms of being and that they are really non-existent. Man is accustomed, Vasubandhu argues, to imagine the existence of an external object corresponding to a word – the object-table, for example, corresponding to the word 'table'. He imagines in addition that the eye exists as the organ of perceiving the object-table. In truth what really deserves to be said to 'exist' is only the act of perception as a continuous stream of consciousness (*citta-saṃtāna*) which goes on changing its actual content from moment to moment. Both the object-table and the eye which perceives it are products of the discriminating function of the mind which takes out these subjective and objective entities by analysis from the stream of consciousness. Man simply ignores thereby the fact that the content of consciousness differs from moment to moment. Thus man falsely posits 'table' as a universal which remains the same in spite of all the differences in time and space. Strictly speaking, however, even this particular table which I am perceiving at this present moment is different from the so-called same table which I perceived one moment ago as it will be different from the table which I shall be perceiving after a moment. And as the object-table changes from moment to moment, the eye that perceives it is also different from moment to moment. Needless to say, the eye that perceives a round table is not the same as the eye that perceives a square table. Thus the eye, no less than the object, is something falsely posited by imagination under the influence of the articulating function of language. And these false entities are phenomenal forms that spring forth interminably from the deep potential powers which remain stored in the Subconscious known in this school as the *ālaya*-consciousness.

In a similar way Nāgārjuna, founder of the Middle-path school and the representative of the philosophy of Nothingness, asserts that the so-called essence is nothing but a hypostatization of word-meaning. The word, he says, is not of such a nature that it indicates a real object. Instead of being a sure guarantee of the existence of an ontological essence, every word is itself a mere baseless mental construct whose meaning



is determined by the relation in which it stands to other words. Thus the meaning of a word immediately changes as soon as the whole network of which it is but a member changes even slightly.

Ordinary people, living as they do in accordance with the 'worldly view' (*lokavyavahāra*) which is based on linguistic convention, cannot but exist in a world composed of an infinite number of different things that are nothing but hypostatized word-meanings. This linguistically articulated view of the world is superimposed upon Reality as it really is in its original pure non-articulation, in its limitless openness as Zen calls it. But ordinary people are not aware of this latter stratum of Reality.

Nāgārjuna argues that the first of these two dimensions, i.e., the linguistically articulated world, is sheer imagination. What really *is* is the dimension of Reality before it is analytically grasped through the network of articulating words. That pre-linguistic Reality is the Reality, i.e., Nothingness (*śūnyatā*). The word *śūnyatā* refers to the original metaphysical state of absolute Reality where there are no falsely posited, fixed things. The simple fact that there are absolutely no fixed essences behind the ever-changing forms of phenomena, when subjectively realized by man, constitutes the highest Truth. When man attains to this highest stage and looks back from this vantage point, he discovers that the very distinction which he initially made between the primary or 'sacred' level of Reality and the secondary or 'vulgar' level of Reality was but sheer imagination. Even the 'sacred' is an articulated piece of Reality, which distinguishes itself from what is not 'sacred'.

The *kōan* No. 1 of the *Pi Yen Lu* describes this situation in a very brisk and concise way which is typical of Zen thinking. The Emperor Wu of Liang asks Bodhidharma: 'What is the primary meaning of the sacred Truth?' To this Bodhidharma answers: 'Limitlessly open! Nothing sacred!'

A limitlessly open circle that has its center everywhere and nowhere, defying all attempts at fixation – nothing here is fixed, nothing has essential boundaries. There is nothing to be permanently fixed as the 'sacred'. In this laconic answer the semi-legendary first Patriarch of Zen Buddhism epitomizes the central teaching of Nāgārjuna.<sup>10</sup>

## V The Problem of Semantic Articulation

It would be natural that language in such a special context should raise grave semantic problems. It is, as we have remarked above, of the very nature of language to articulate Reality into fixed entities. Yet Zen demands that language be used without articulating a single thing.

Master Shou Shan (J.: Shu Zan, 926-993) held up his bamboo staff.

Showing it to his disciples he said: 'If you, monks, call this a bamboo staff, you fix it. If you don't call it a bamboo staff, you go against the fact. Tell me, you monks, right now: What will you call it?'

Against the philosophical background which has just been given, it will be easy to understand Master Shou Shan's intention. If you call a bamboo staff a 'bamboo staff', you are simply hypostatizing the meaning of the word into a separate, self-subsistent substance, falsely articulating Reality as it really is in its limitless openness. If, on the contrary, you refuse to admit that it is a bamboo staff, if you say that it is *not* a bamboo staff, then you are going against the fact that Reality here and now is appearing in the phenomenal form of a bamboo staff.

Commenting upon this anecdote Master Wu Mên (J.: Mumon, 1183-1260), author of the *Wu Mên Kuan* says:

If you call it a bamboo staff, you fix it. If you don't call it a bamboo staff, you go against the fact. Thus you can neither say something nor not say anything. (What is it then?) Tell me on the spot! Tell me on the spot!<sup>1</sup>

'Tell me on the spot!' or 'Say something at once!' is very significant in a Zen context of this nature. It means: 'Say something decisive without reflection, without thinking!' For

is determined by the relation in which it stands to other words. Thus the meaning of a word immediately changes as soon as the whole network of which it is but a member changes even slightly.

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In a far more poetic way, Master Tung Shan (Tōzan, 807-869)<sup>7</sup> in his celebrated Zen poem *Pao Ching San Mei* (J.: *Hō Kyō San Mai*) expressed this state of affairs as follows:



(1) The fundamental structure of speech or *parole* as defined by Ferdinand de Saussure is no longer observable in this dimension, for there is no distinction here between the speaker and the hearer. What is actually seen is a spectacle of words flowing out from no one knows where, glittering for a moment in the air like a flash of lightning, and immediately disappearing into the eternal darkness. Speech does occur, but it is a speech that occurs in a void space where the existence of the speaker and the hearer has completely lost its significance. Since there is neither speaker nor hearer, the act of speech is no speech. It does not constitute *parole* in the proper sense of the word.

(2) Another characteristic of speech in a Zen context is that language is deprived of its most basic function, i.e., the semantic articulation of reality. Of course, as long as a word is actually used, semantic articulation is still clearly and undeniably there – particularly when viewed with the eye of a man who has no idea at all of what Zen considers the primary level of Reality. But from the Zen point of view, it is as though the semantic articulation became transparent, permeable, flexible and non-resistant to such a degree that it is almost non-existent. One of the reasons why Zen sayings look completely nonsensical to the outsider – take for example the above-cited *kōan* which asserts that the river stands still while the bridge flows – lies in the fact that the outsider does not properly understand this peculiar transformation which the function of semantic articulation undergoes when a word is uttered in a Zen context. Let me explain this point a little further.

When, for instance, we say 'table', the word naturally exercises its normal function for articulation. That is to say, the word cuts out a certain portion of reality and presents it to our mind as a specific thing called by that name, distinguishing it from all other things. The 'table' is 'table' just because it is different from all non-tables. And as uttered in a definite actual context, the word refers to a particular table which is concretely existent there. The same holds true from the Zen point of view, too. To that extent Zen is still in the secondary or worldly dimension of Reality. As I have said before, however, semantic articulation in a Zen context is infinitely flexible. The articulated picture of reality is here permeable; it offers no resistance. That is to say, a product of articulation

ordinary way nor in keeping silent. What is required is that words should gush out from a certain dimension of consciousness which is totally different from the dimension of speaking and not speaking.

One of the celebrated 'Three Key Phrases' (*san chuan yǔ*)<sup>4</sup> of Master Sung Yüan (J.: Shō Gen, 1132-1202) was: 'Speaking is not a matter of moving the tongue'. That is to say, in the view of Zen, it is not with the tongue that man speaks. Another famous Master, Pai Chang (J. Hyakujō, 720-814) is related to have once asked his disciples: 'How will it be possible for you to speak in a state in which your throat, lips and mouth have been snatched away?'<sup>5</sup> He is here urging his disciples to say something without using the throat, lips and mouth. This seemingly unreasonable request simply indicates that language as understood in an authentic Zen context consists in the act of speaking in which the vocal organs, though actually activated, remain inactivated as if they were not used.

In order to understand this point we must remember that as a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, Zen upholds – at least at the initial stage of theorizing<sup>6</sup> – a fundamental distinction between two levels of Reality. One is what is called the 'sacred truth' *shêng ti* (J.: *shō tai*) corresponding to the Sanscrit *paramârtha-satya*; and the other is the 'customary or worldly truth' *su ti* (J.: *zoku tai*) corresponding to the *samvṛtti-satya*. The former which is also called in Zen Buddhism the 'primary truth', refers to a very specific view of Reality which is disclosed to man only through the actual experience of enlightenment. The inner structure of the primary level of Reality will be elucidated in what follows. The 'customary truth' which is also called the 'secondary truth' refers, on the contrary, to the common-sense view of Reality as it appears to the eyes of ordinary people.

From the standpoint of Zen, the normal exchange of words as we usually understand it by such words as 'speech', 'speaking', 'language', and 'dialogue', belongs to the level of the 'secondary truth', while what is understood by these words in a Zen context belongs to the level of the 'primary truth'. When words are uttered or exchanged in this latter dimension of Reality, they give rise to a very strange and unusual situation.

that has its source and basis in the ordinary level of consciousness is for Zen meaningless. Perfect silence is far better than meaningless talk. The famous watchword of Zen: 'No use of words and letters' refers to this aspect of the Zen attitude toward language.

In a passage of his *Structural Anthropology*, M. Lévi-Strauss mentions two different attitudes toward the use of language and distinguishes between them in terms of cultural patterns. He says: 'Among us [i.e., in European culture], language is used in a rather reckless way – we talk all the time, we ask questions about many things. This is not at all a universal situation. There are cultures . . . which are rather thrifty in relation to language. They don't believe that language should be used indiscriminately but only in certain specific frames of reference and somewhat sparingly.'<sup>3</sup>

I do not know whether or not M. Lévi-Strauss was actually thinking of Oriental cultures when he wrote these lines. In any case the description he gives of the second of the two cultural patterns applies to the linguistic aspect of Zen.

The word 'Zen' naturally reminds us of the practice of *zazen*, i.e., sitting cross-legged in meditation. In the state of *zazen* language is to stop functioning, even the inner or mental speech, not to speak of external speech. Language is simply an impediment in the way of the concentration of the mind. It must be completely done away with. But once out of the state of meditation, the Zen student may at any moment be asked by the Master to 'say something, say something', to use language – not indiscriminately, of course, but in a very specific frame of reference. In fact, in a certain sense no living religion attaches greater importance to speaking and talking than Zen Buddhism. The Master constantly urges the student to open the mouth and say something. He commands him: 'Bring me a phrase!', i.e., a decisive phrase. Asking the student to say something constitutes an integral part of the educational process of Zen. For, the moment he opens the mouth and 'brings a decisive phrase', the student discloses to the eyes of the Master the exact degree of his spiritual maturity.

It is important to remark, however, that the linguistic behaviour which is asked of the student here is of an extremely specific nature. It consists neither in speaking in an

spiritual tension, and in a concrete and unique situation of life. The momentary dialogue may result in producing what would strike the outsiders as sheer nonsense. No matter. For in the view of the two participants the fight has been fought. The eternal Truth may or may not have been glimpsed. No matter, the Truth has flashed for a moment.

The nature of the Zen dialogue discloses in an extraordinary, or we would perhaps say, shocking form, the typically Chinese way of thinking which consists in aiming at grasping immediately and on the spot this or that aspect of the eternal Truth in a real, concrete situation which is never to be repeated. This feature of the Chinese way of thinking is observable, albeit in a far less tense form, in the *Analects of Confucius* (*Lun Yü*; J.: *Ron Go*). It is a mode of thinking which is essentially different from those forms of thinking that are developed on the abstract and theoretical level of the intellect and reason. It is, on the contrary, a peculiar mode of thinking that evolves in the midst of concrete life prompted by some concrete event or concrete thing. This typically Chinese form of thought was once overwhelmed by the development in China of logical discursive ways of thinking under the influence of Mahayana Buddhism which had preceded the rise of Zen Buddhism. With Zen it came back again to life in the periods extending from the T'ang dynasty down to the Sung dynasty. Many of the representative dialogues that we find in the Records of Sayings were codified in the Sung dynasty between the tenth and the thirteenth century in the form of *kōans* as effective means of educating and training Zen students.

It will have been understood that the words used in a way peculiar to Zen are all words uttered, as it were in limit-situations. Hence the characteristic distortion or deformation of ordinary language as we observe it in the *mondōs*. Zen does not shun or despise language. It only requires that language be used in a very peculiar way, not indiscriminately. It requires that the words should come out of one specific source which we may call 'the primary dimension of Reality'. The structure of this dimension of Reality will be analyzed later on. For the moment let us be content with remarking that what is of decisive importance for Zen, in this respect, is the source from which words issue forth. The kind of language

### III Speech and Language in a Zen Context

In the course of its historical development, Zen has produced a huge amount of documentary records. The earliest form of them is represented by what is known as the 'records of sayings' (*yū lu*, J.: *go roku*), i.e., the collections of the Sayings of great Masters, which began to enjoy remarkable popularity in the eighth and ninth centuries. Unlike the Mahayana Sutras which had been predominant up to those ages and in which all the cardinal teachings were put into the mouth of the Buddha himself, the Records of Sayings were all records of what individual Zen Masters said and how they behaved. Moreover, a Record of Saying does not purport to present a continuous and coherent description of the life of a Zen Master in the form of a biography; it consists merely of a series of fragmentary records of sayings and doings of a Master in daily circumstances.

The core of the Records of Sayings is constituted by *mondōs* each of which is a personal dialogue that takes place in a very concrete situation between the Master and a disciple or a visiting monk. It is typical of the *mondō* that it consists in most cases of one single question and one single answer. The dialogue is therefore mostly of extreme concision and brevity. It is a real verbal fight. And the fight is over almost instantaneously, just like a contest fought with real swords by two masters of Japanese swordsmanship. There is no room here for a *dialektiké*. The Zen dialogue does not last long like a Platonic dialogue which can last interminably to the utmost limit of the logical development and intellectual elaboration of a given theme.

Rather, the Zen dialogue aims at grasping the ultimate and eternal Truth in a momentary flash of words that are exchanged between two living persons at the extreme point of

commands its students to 'kill the Buddha', 'kill the Patriarchs', in short, to kill God! Instead of talking about God and the Absolute, Zen Masters talk about 'three pounds of flax', 'a dried-up dirt-scraper', 'the cypress tree in the courtyard of the temple', and the like. These words and phrases are perfectly meaningful by the positivist criterion for meaningfulness, because they are all verifiable, particularly because they are usually uttered in the very presence of the sensible objects.

Yet all these words turn completely meaningless and nonsensical as soon as we place them in their original contexts. That is to say, none of these expressions makes sense as a constituent part of a whole dialogue. 'What is the true significance of Bodhidharma's coming from the West (i.e., from India to China)?', a monk asks (*A*). Chao Chou (J.: Jō Shū, 778-897) answers: 'The cypress tree in the courtyard of the temple (*B*)'.<sup>2</sup> The dialogue is nonsensical because there can apparently be no communication between the monk who asks the question and the Master who answers, because there is no reasonable connection between *A* and *B*.

day he was weighing flax. Just at that moment a monk came up to him and suddenly flung this question at him: 'What is the Buddha?', a question which in the Western world would be equivalent to 'What is God?' or 'What is absolute Reality?' Instantaneously came Tung Shan's answer: 'Three pounds of flax!' The Zen documents abound in examples of this type. Thus, to give one more example, Yün Mên, the teacher of Tung Shan, when asked exactly the same question by a monk, answered by simply saying: 'A dried-up dirt-scraper!'

Once a monk asked Yün Mên, 'What is the Buddha?'

Mên replied: 'A dried-up dirt-scraper!'

That is all. To an outsider, these short dialogues would be nothing more than sheer nonsense. But at least one may notice the existence of a definite pattern underlying these two instances of Zen dialogue. As an answer to the metaphysical question concerning the Absolute, both Tung Shang and Yün Mên just thrust under the interlocutor's nose a concrete object in a verbal form: 'three pounds of flax' in the case of Tung Shan, and a dried-up, i.e., useless 'dirt-scraper' in the case of Yün Mên. Tung Shan was most probably weighing the flax when he was asked the metaphysical question. He answered on the spot by the most concrete thing that happened to be there in his hands.

Zen likes the most concrete. It is one of its characteristics. Examples can be given indefinitely from the old Zen records. In terms of the problem of meaningfulness, one might naturally be reminded of the principle of verification as it has been developed by the contemporary positivist philosophers. Verifiability is for them the ultimate criterion for meaningfulness. Only what is verifiable by experience is acceptable as real; accordingly a word or proposition is meaningful if and only if there are possible sense-perceptions which verify the presence of the object or the event indicated. 'God' or the 'Absolute' is a typical example of those words that are considered meaningless because there is no possible sense-perception that would verify the existence of such an entity.

On the face of it, Zen which evinces special liking for concrete things would seem to behave in conformity with the rule of verification set up by the positivists. Zen daringly

art. It is a special technique considered to be indispensable in modern life.

It is very interesting to remark that, from such a point of view almost all the famous Zen sayings typify sheer nonsense. That is to say, Zen sayings do not in the majority of cases satisfy the criterion for meaningfulness that is proposed in these books. What is still more remarkable is the fact that, from the viewpoint of Zen, those ordinary words and propositions that fully satisfy the normal criterion for meaningfulness can very well be meaningless, even nonsensical. So-called 'straight' thinking and so-called 'meaningful' talk may from the Zen point of view be judged to be 'crooked' and meaningless because they tend to distort and deform what Zen regards as the reality of things. Zen says for example<sup>1</sup>:

Empty-handed, I hold a spade in my hands,  
I am walking on foot, but on the back of an ox I  
ride,  
As I pass over the bridge, lo,  
The water does not flow, it is the bridge that flows.

This saying which, as everybody sees, consists entirely of glaring contradictions does make good sense in Zen. Indeed, in a Zen context, to say: 'I am empty-handed and I have a spade in the hands; I walk on foot and I ride on the back of an ox; The water stands still while the bridge flows', makes even better sense than saying: 'I am not empty-handed because I have a spade in my hands; I am walking on foot, therefore I am not riding on the back of an ox; The river flows and the bridge stands still'. How and on what basis can this kind of nonsensical saying be said to make good sense in Zen?

Before answering this crucial question, I shall give here one more example of Zen nonsense of a somewhat different nature. It is an extremely short *kōan* recorded in the above-mentioned *Wu Môn Kuan* (J.: *Mu Mon Kan*), No. 18. It reads:

A monk asked Master Tung Shan: 'What is the  
Buddha?'  
Tung Shan replied: 'Three pounds of flax!'

Tung Shan (J.: Tō Zan, 910-990) is a disciple of the celebrated Master Yün Mên (J.: Ummon) of the tenth century (?-949), himself being also an outstanding Zen Master. One



## II Meaningful or Meaningless?

Meaningfulness is evidently a matter of primary concern for contemporary intellectuals. In the field of philosophy, as the result of the development of British empiricism and American positivism with their extraordinary emphasis upon the problems of meaning, the concept of meaningfulness (and meaninglessness) of what we say has become one of the major intellectual problems.

Even in ordinary non-philosophic situations, we are often reminded of the importance of 'making sense'. We often find ourselves saying, 'It makes sense', 'It makes no sense', and the like. And the kind of judgement is always accompanied by valuation, positive or negative; or it is itself a value judgement. Not-making-sense is nothing other than talking nonsense, saying something absurd and ridiculous. Talking nonsense is felt to be something we should be ashamed of. Thus we naturally try to avoid talking nonsense.

A number of popular books have been written in recent years, which purport to teach us how we could avoid falling into the pitfalls of nonsensical talk or nonsensical thinking. Thus, to give a few examples, the general semanticist, Mr. Irving J. Lee has written a book entitled: *How to Talk with People* carrying a significant subtitle which reads: *A program for preventing troubles that come when people talk together*. Another book of a more serious nature by Professor Lionel Ruby is entitled: *The Art of Making Sense*, with the subtitle: *A guide to logical thinking*. These and other similar works analyze in great detail the pitfalls of nonsense and try to guide the reader toward what is called 'straight' thinking. Otherwise expressed, the authors of these books are concerned with how we can use language meaningfully. Making-sense is now an

Indeed I may as well have entitled this Essay 'The Problem of the Criterion for Meaningfulness in Zen Buddhism'. For such in fact is the matter which I want to discuss here. In other words, the main problem that will concern us is whether there is such a thing as the criterion for meaningfulness in Zen, and if there *is* one, whether there is any reliable means by which we can come to know the inner make-up of that criterion.

the very beginning till the end is alive with the spirit of Zen. Each single event in the story represents in a dramatic way a particular state in the evolvment of Zen consciousness. For the moment, however, we shall refrain from going further into the analytic elucidation of the actual content of this anecdote. Our immediate concern is with a more formal aspect of the story.

It is important to remark that the anecdote is interesting as a dramatization of the evolvment of Zen consciousness only in an authentically Zen context. In other words, the anecdote tells something positive, it makes sense, it is meaningful, only to those who are already familiar with Zen or something similar to it in another religious tradition. Otherwise the whole anecdote would naturally remain nonsensical in the sense that no stage in the evolvment of the story will really be understandable. To begin with, why did Master Chū Chih stick up one finger whenever he was asked any question about Buddhism? Why did he cut off the finger of the boy who imitated him? How did the boy attain enlightenment when he wanted to raise his finger which was no longer there? Nothing is understandable except to those who have an inside knowledge of the Zen theory and practice.

What is so meaningful to a Zen Buddhist may thus be completely meaningless to an outsider. Moreover, even within the narrowly limited context of this anecdote, the act of raising one finger was meaningful in the case of the Master while exactly the same act was judged to be meaningless and nonsensical when it occurred as an imitation by the disciple. Again the selfsame act of raising one finger by the disciple suddenly assumed a decisive importance and turned meaningful at the moment when it came in the form of the raising of a non-finger. All these observations would seem to lead us toward thinking that Zen must have a definite standard by which it can judge anything, whether verbal or non-verbal, to be meaningful or meaningless as the case may be, and that, further, it must be quite an original standard, totally different from the standard of meaningfulness which is normally applied in ordinary situations, so much so that a judgement passed by the Zen standard could be – and very often is – diametrically opposed to the judgement given in accordance with the ordinary standard.

answer, it is nonsensical. Yet on the other hand, we feel in our perplexed mind something which persistently tells us that there must be some hidden meaning in Master Chū Chih's raising one finger, that it cannot be total nonsense. What then is this hidden meaning which Master Chū Chih supposedly wanted to convey by silently sticking up one finger? That precisely is the problem. I shall explain the meaning of Chū Chih's one-finger-Zen later on. At this stage there are many other things to be clarified in a preliminary way in order that we might grasp the core of the whole question.

The anecdote, by the way, has not come to an end. It has a very important sequel. Master Chū Chih had a young disciple, a boy apprentice, who followed the Master, serving him at home and out of doors. Having observed his Master's pattern of behavior this boy himself began to raise one finger whenever people asked him questions about Zen in the absence of the Master. At first, the Master did not notice it, and everything went well for some time. But the fatal moment came at last. The Master came to hear about what the boy had been doing behind his back.

One day, the Master hid a knife in the sleeve, summoned the boy to his presence, and said, 'I hear that you have understood the essence of Buddhism. Is it true?' The boy replied 'Yes it is'. Thereupon the Master asked, 'What is the Buddha?' The boy in answer stuck up one finger. Master Chū Chih suddenly took hold of the boy and cut off with the knife the finger which the boy had just raised. As the boy was running out of the room screaming with pain, the Master called to him. The boy turned round. At that very moment, quick as lightning came the Master's question: 'What is the Buddha?' Almost by conditioned reflex, we might say, the boy held up his hand to raise his finger. There was no finger there. The boy on the spot attained enlightenment.

The anecdote may very well be a fiction. But, fictitious or real, it is indeed a very interesting and significant anecdote. It is interesting and significant not only because the story is narrated in an atmosphere of high dramatic tension, but also, and mainly, because the whole anecdote is an admirable dramatization of what we might call Zen experience. Zen experience is embodied not solely in the last crucial stage at which the boy attains enlightenment. The whole story from

less or nonsensical to us, outside observers. How could there be communication at all when the words used do not make sense? What kind of communication will it be, when it is made through nonsensical utterances? Such indeed is the most important question that confronts us at the outset as soon as we approach Zen from the point of view of meaningful communication.

In order to bring into focus the very core of the whole question, let us begin by giving a typical example of nonsensical communication at the pre-linguistic level of behavior, that is, communication through gesture. Let us remark that in Zen Buddhism, gesture plays practically the same role as language, except that language presents a far more complicated structure, because, as we shall see later, language involves the very important factor of articulation, i.e., the semantic articulation of reality, which is foreign to the use of gestures. But precisely because of this simplicity and non-complexity, gesture is perhaps more appropriate than language in giving us a preliminary idea as to where the central problem lies.

The example I am going to give is a very famous one. It is found in the *kōan* collection *Wu Mên Kuan* (J.: *Mu Mon Kan*), No. 3; it is also found in another celebrated *kōan* collection, *Pi Yen Lu* (J.: *Hekigan Roku*), No. 19. It is an anecdote known as the one-finger-Zen of Master Chū Chih (J.: Gu Tei).

The hero of the anecdote is Chū Chih (J.: Gu Tei), a famous Zen Master of the ninth century. This Master, whenever and whatever he was asked about Zen, used to stick up one finger. Raising one finger without saying anything was his invariable answer to any question whatsoever he was asked concerning Zen. 'What is the supreme and absolute Truth?' – answer: the silent raising of one finger. 'What is the essence of Buddhism?' – answer: again the selfsame silent raising of one finger.

It will be evident that in the normal circumstances of life, this action does not make sense, for the simple raising of one finger in no way constitutes a reasonable answer to any of the questions asked, except perhaps when the question runs: 'Where is your finger?' The answer is not understandable, and since it is not understandable, it is no answer; and being no

## I Zen Nonsense

The main topic of the present Essay is the problem of meaning and meaningfulness in Zen. This topic and the one which we discussed in the preceding Essay, namely, the basic structure of Selfhood are, as we shall see, closely and inseparably connected with each other. Or, rather we should say that the problem of language and meaning is essentially related to and ultimately reducible to the problem of Selfhood. Indeed, whichever aspect of Zen one may take up, and from whichever angle one may approach it, one is sure to be brought back ultimately to the problem of Selfhood.

With this basic understanding, I shall turn immediately to the discussion of meaningfulness about which Zen raises a number of interesting problems. As one could imagine, the problems are raised in a very peculiar context, for language in Zen tends to be used in quite an unnatural way. In the context of Zen, language usually does not remain in its natural state. It is often distorted to the degree of becoming almost meaningless and nonsensical.

The problem of meaning in Zen Buddhism is thus interesting in rather a paradoxical sense because most of the typical Zen sayings are obviously devoid of meaning and nonsensical if we observe them from the point of view of our ordinary understanding of language. Language exists for the purpose of communication between men. Where there is no need for communication, there is no need of saying anything. This basic principle applies to Zen as well. When we observe two persons engaged in talking with each other in a Zen context, we naturally get the impression that communication of some sort is taking place between them. But we observe at the same time a very strange fact, namely, that the words that are exchanged do not make sense, that they are mostly meaning-



## Essay III

# SENSE AND NONSENSE IN ZEN BUDDHISM

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6. See an excellent exposition of the matter by H. Guenther: *Buddhist Philosophy*, Harmondsworth-Baltimore, 1972, pp. 68-70.

7. The 'a-thinking' thinking will be dealt with in Essay V (particularly sec. III). The *kōan* which we are going to quote will also be fully explained there.

8. The phrase is found in the *Shōbōgenzō* (Chapter 'Genjō Kōan'). It will be more fully discussed in Essay V.

9. This problem will be discussed in Essays V and VI.

10. *Ibid.*

flower depicted in this manner is not an objective flower. It is Something else. It is Something which at this moment is being actualized as a Flower, but which could very well be actualized as the 'I'. Such is the nature of the pure Ego as understood by Zen, the 'True-man-without-any-rank'. Dynamic, functional, and mobile it is constantly changing. Now it expresses itself verbally or visually as a Flower. At the very next moment it may express itself as 'I'. Since in either case the life-energy of the whole spiritual universe is poured into the expression, the Flower and the I are one and the same thing, for they are but two different crystallizations of exactly the same amount of the universal life-energy. And since, further, it makes absolutely no difference whether the life-energy of the whole universe expresses itself as Flower or I, or indeed, for that matter, as anything whatsoever, it could also express itself as Nothing. This is what is generally known as the 'Oriental Nothingness'.

The Oriental Nothingness is not a purely negative ontological state of there being nothing. On the contrary, it is a plenitude of Being. It is so full that it cannot as such be identified as anything determined, anything special. But it is, on the other hand, so full that it can manifest itself as anything in the empirical dimension of our experience, as a crystallization of the whole spiritual energy contained therein. The Oriental Nothingness thus understood is the true, absolute Ego as Zen Buddhism understands it.

### Notes

1. On Dōgen (1200-1253), see Essay I, Note 3.
2. Master Ikkyū (1394-1481). The quotation is from his *Mizukagami*.
3. *Wu T'eng Hui Yüan*, III.
4. The National Teacher, Musō (1275-1351), particularly famous for initiating the tradition of landscape gardening in Japanese culture. The following passage is found in his work *Muchū Mondō Shū*, II.
5. In his *Triṃśhika-Vijñaptimātratā-Siddhi*.

never *be* water, you may say. But if such a thing were absolutely impossible in any sense, Zen would be sheer nonsense.

Zen argues as follows. One cannot *become* water because one is observing it from outside, that is to say, because the ego is, as an outsider, looking at water as an 'object'. Instead of doing so, Zen continues to argue, one must first learn to 'forget one's ego-subject' and let oneself be completely absorbed into the water. One would then be flowing *as* the flowing river. No more would there be any consciousness of the ego. Nor would there be any 'consciousness of' the water. Strictly speaking, it is not even the case that one *becomes* the water and flows on as the water. For in such a dimension there would be no ego existent to *become* anything. Simply: The water flows on. No more, no less.

Often when we are absorbed in listening to an enchanting piece of music, a state of artistic *samādhi* is actualized. In such a state there is Music pure and simple. The Music fills up the whole field of existence. It is only after the music has come to an end and when we 'come back' to ourselves that we realize with a feeling of surprise that we have been completely 'identified with' music. But when we actually realize it, the I and the music are already split apart into two different things.

The experience of musical *samādhi* is for most of us a particular experience occurring only from time to time, on rare occasions or intermittently. For a man of Zen, experiences of this nature must be just ordinary, day-to-day events. Thus to come back to the example of the flowing water, Zen demands that man be such that he be the flowing water from eternity to eternity. The water flows on eternally, cosmically, in the eternal Now. The water here is not an 'object' of cognition. Nor is there consciousness of the I as the noetic 'subject'. From no one knows where there emerges the flowing water. It does not involve the awareness of my 'I', nor does it involve the awareness *of* the 'water'. But it is a pure Awareness. And that Awareness *is* the flowing water.

What generally looks like an objective description of Nature in Zen poetry and Zen painting is in the majority of cases a presentation, pictorial or poetic, of such an experience. By depicting a flower, tree, or bird, the poet or painter expresses the cosmic illumination of the pure Awareness. A

lifeless bamboo, a dead object having only a formal similarity to a real bamboo.

What is meant by this expression in the view of a Far Eastern painter may somehow become understandable to you if you imagine what actually takes place in the following way. The painter sits in quiet contemplation, intensely concentrating his mind upon the ideal image of the bamboo. He begins to feel in himself the rhythmic pulsebeat of the life-energy which keeps the bamboo alive and which makes the bamboo a bamboo, becoming gradually concordant with the pulsebeat of the life-energy which is running through his mind-body complex. And finally there comes a moment of complete unification, at which there remains no distinction whatsoever between the life-energy of the painter and the life-energy of the bamboo. Then there is no longer any trace in the consciousness of the painter of himself as an individual self-subsistent person. There is actualized only the Bamboo. Where is it actualized? Internally? Or externally? No one knows. It does not matter. For the word 'becoming' in the particular context here at issue concerns a state of contemplative awareness having in itself no ontological implication.

There is absolutely no 'consciousness of' anything whatsoever. The sole fact is that the Bamboo is there, actualized with an unusual vivacity and freshness, pulsating with a mysterious life-energy pervading the whole universe. At that very moment the painter takes up the brush. The brush moves, as it were, of its own accord, in conformity with the pulsation of the life-rhythm which is actualized in the bamboo. In terms of the traditional Far Eastern theory of the pictorial art, it is then not the man who draws the picture of the bamboo; rather, the bamboo draws its own picture on the paper. The movement of the brush is the movement of the inner life of the bamboo.

It is important to remark that according to Zen such an experience is by no means confined to the pictorial art, or, for that matter, to any particular domain of human life. From the point of view of Zen, existence itself in its entirety is to be an experience of this nature. No matter what man may hear, he *is* the thing in the sense I have just explained. He sees for instance a flowing river. He *is* the water flowing in the form of a river. A man is a man; he can never become water; he can

It will easily be seen that the discipline of 'forgetting one's I' is immediately backed by another, more positive discipline of becoming 'illuminated by the things'. Losing the consciousness of the I as the 'subject' standing in opposition to other things as its 'objects', one is to get entirely and totally absorbed into the things themselves in such a way that the things 'illuminate' or resuscitate the I that has once disappeared from the 'subject'-object dimension in another form in another dimension, the non-intentional dimension of consciousness.

This positive aspect of the Zen discipline is known in the traditional terminology of Far Eastern spirituality as 'one's *becoming* the thing'.<sup>9</sup> The idea of man's becoming things has played in the Far East an exceedingly important role in various fields of culture such as religion, philosophy, and fine arts.<sup>10</sup> It is indeed no exaggeration to say that the spirit of Far Eastern culture can never be understood without a full understanding of this principle.

A few years ago, as I well remember, participating in a conference I had a chance to read a paper on the art of black-and-white ink painting in China and Japan. In the course of the lecture, I mentioned as the highest principle of this kind of art the idea that the painter should *become* the thing which he wants to paint. The painter who is going to paint a bamboo must, before taking up his brush, sit in contemplation until he feels himself completely identified with the bamboo. So I said.

After the lecture a man came to me – it was a famous authority on mysticism – and said that in his view it was utterly impossible for a man to *become* a bamboo. It is, he said, not only scientifically absurd, but it is, as a matter of practical experience, an impossibility.

The truth is that the pros and cons of the matter depend solely upon how one understands the meaning of this peculiar expression: 'Man becomes a bamboo'. It is obvious that my critic understood it in a purely ontological sense instead of taking it in the sense in which it is customarily understood by Far Easterners.

From the point of view of a Far Eastern painter, as he understands the expression in the traditional way, it is possible for him to become a bamboo. Or rather, he *must* become a bamboo. Otherwise, the bamboo he paints would be but a

### III The Ego-less Ego

But how, in practical terms, could we hope to bring about such a situation? More concretely put, how could we realize the I in its pure and absolute subjectivity as the pure Ego in the sense I have just indicated?

To repeat what I have said earlier, the pure Ego is usually unrealizable because in the intentional dimension of consciousness everything is an 'object' of consciousness. Even the I, the 'subject of cognition, turns into an 'object' as soon as I turn my attention to myself by reflection or introspection. Hence the very first step in the praxis of Zen discipline is – to use the celebrated words of the aforementioned Japanese Zen master, Dōgen – one's 'forgetting one's own I'.<sup>8</sup>

'Forgetting one's own I' – this characteristic phrase carries in Zen a very important positive meaning. It must not be taken in the negative sense of simply losing consciousness, be it in a state of ecstasy, let alone blank stupefaction. Instead of being a state of 'mindlessness' in any sense, it is 'mindfulness', an extreme intensification of consciousness, except that the 'mindfulness' is to be maintained not in the dimension of ordinary noetic experience in which the ego stands as the 'subject' opposed to other things or other egos as its 'objects', but in a totally different dimension in which the very opposition of 'subject' and 'object' becomes meaningless.

To get disciplined in the Way of Buddha means getting disciplined in dealing properly with your own I. To get disciplined in dealing properly with your I means nothing other than forgetting your I. To forget your I means that you become illumined by the 'external' things. To be illumined by the things means that you obliterate the distinction between your (so-called) ego and the (so-called) egos of other things.

dimension of consciousness as an immediate self-expression of this very dimension.

Zen has a special technical term for the non-intentional dimension of consciousness: *fei-ssü-liang* (J.: *hi-shiryō*) literally meaning 'non-thinking'. This phrase may perhaps better be translated as the 'a-thinking mode of thinking'.<sup>7</sup> For, despite its purely negative form, this expression does not mean a passive void of consciousness or absence of consciousness. Quite the contrary; in the 'a-thinking' state the consciousness is activated and heightened to the extreme limit of its power of concentration without, however, 'intending' anything.

This particular expression, *fei-ssü-liang*, 'a-thinking thinking', was first introduced into Zen at a very early period of its history, by the third Patriarch, Sêng Ts'an (J.: Sōsan, ?-606) in his famous philosophical poem *Hsin Hsin Ming* (J.: *Shinjin Mei*). Later, in the Tang dynasty, the same word was used by one of the greatest Zen masters of the age, Yao Shan Wei Yen (J.: Yakusan Igen, 751-834) in a very significant way, as recorded in the following famous *mondo*.

Once Master Yao Shan was sitting in deep meditation when a monk came up to him and asked: 'Solidly seated as a rock, what are you thinking?'

Master answered: 'Thinking of something which is absolutely unthinkable'.

The monk: 'How can one think of anything which is absolutely unthinkable?'

Master: 'By the a-thinking thinking, *fei-ssü-liang*!'

Since then the word has become an important technical term in Zen Buddhism. The *mondo* just quoted clearly shows that the *zazen* praxis is a spiritual discipline whose primary aim is to explore the non-intentional dimension of consciousness, in which the 'subject' is active as pure Awareness without 'intending' anything, instead of acting as 'subject' as opposed to 'object'.



intentional aspect in the mind of the plain man. The proposition, for example, 'I feel happy' in contradistinction to a proposition like 'I see a mountain', expresses a kind of non-intentional awareness. For being-happy is an awareness of a pleasurable mode of being, an elation which is vaguely diffused in the whole of my mind-body complex, with no definite, particular 'object' of which I can say I am conscious, unless I become by *intentio secunda* conscious of my being-happy. The proposition 'I see a mountain', on the contrary, is clearly a description of a perceptual event taking place between the 'subject' and the 'object'.

What Zen is interested in, however, is not a non-intentional awareness such as is expressed by propositions of the type: 'I am happy'. Rather Zen is interested in opening up a special dimension of consciousness which is, we might say, systematically non-intentional. It is a dimension in which even a proposition like 'I see the mountain' for example will be found to signify a peculiar state of awareness of such a nature that exactly the same propositional content may be expressed interchangeably by four linguistically different sentences: (1) 'I see the mountain', (2) 'The mountain sees me', (3) 'The mountain sees the mountain', (4) 'I see myself'. The non-intentional dimension of consciousness in which Zen is interested is such that these four sentences are exactly synonymous with each other. Until these four sentences are realized to be exactly synonymous with each other, you are still in the intentional dimension of consciousness. Furthermore, in the non-intentional dimension of consciousness these four synonymous sentences can very well be reduced to a one word sentence: 'Mountain!', and this word again can freely be reduced to one single word 'I'.

Here we observe how the original sentence: 'I see the mountain' from which we started has ultimately been condensed into one single point of 'I'. The 'I' thus actualized conceals within itself all the sentential variants that have been passed through, so that it can at any moment reveal itself as the 'Mountain!' or expand into any of the four full sentences. In whichever form it may appear, it is a pure non-intentional awareness, a pure consciousness instead of 'consciousness-of'. Nothing is here objectified. What Zen considers to be the true Self or absolute Ego is precisely the I actualized in such a

plified by the use of the Latin word *intentio* in Medieval philosophy.

In the intentional dimension, the I as the 'subject' is empirically given as a correlate of the 'object'. There is an essential correlation between the 'subject' and 'object'. All noetic experience in this dimension is necessarily of dualistic structure. I regard myself as 'I' only insofar as I am aware of external things and events as 'objects' of cognition. There would be no ego-consciousness if there were absolutely no 'object' to be cognized. More generally, it is characteristic of this dimension that our consciousness is always and necessarily a 'consciousness-of'. It is an awareness *intending* something i.e., directed toward something; it is an awareness with an objective reference.

It is, in other words, of the very nature of consciousness in this dimension that it cannot but objectify whatever appears before it. And paradoxically or ironically enough, this holds true even of the 'subject'. The very moment I become aware of myself, my I turns into an objectified I, an 'object' among all other 'objects'. This is the main reason, as I said earlier, why it is so difficult to realize the 'subject' in its pure subjectivity. One can never hope to actualize the pure Ego as long as one remains in the intentional dimension of consciousness.

Zen, however, recognizes – and knows through experience – another dimension of consciousness which is what I have called above the 'non-intentional' dimension, and in which consciousness functions without being divided into the subjective and objective. It is a noetic dimension which is to be cultivated through the yogic, introspective techniques of *zazen*, a special dimension in which consciousness is activated not as 'consciousness-of' but as Consciousness pure and simple. This would exactly correspond to what Vasubandhu, a representative philosopher of the Yogācāra School, once said<sup>5</sup>: 'As the mind perceives no object, it remains as pure Awareness'.

The non-intentional awareness is found to be at work, albeit usually in vague and indistinct form, even in our day-to-day experience. Already the Sautrāntika School of Hinayana Buddhism<sup>6</sup> noticed the existence of the non-

form of primordial Images which constantly come up to the above-mentioned surface level of consciousness arousing there the sensory and perceptual images of the phenomenal things and producing at the second level of consciousness i.e., the level of *mano-vijñāna*, the consciousness of the ego. What is remarkable about the nature of the Storehouse-Consciousness is that, in the view of the Yogācāra School, it is not confined to the individual person. It exceeds the boundaries of an individual mind extending even beyond the personal unconscious that belongs to the individual, for it is the 'storehouse' of all the karmic vestiges that have been left by the experiences of mankind since the beginning of time. As such the concept of the Storehouse-Consciousness may be said to be the closest equivalent in Buddhism to the Collective Unconscious.

However, the philosophers of the Yogācāra School speak of transcending the Storehouse-Consciousness by the force of a spiritual illumination that issues forth from the World of Purest Reality as they call it, which they say could be opened up by man's going through the arduous process of the spiritual discipline of meditation.

As a branch of Mahayana Buddhism closely connected with the Yogācāra School, Zen bases itself philosophically on a similar conception of the structure of consciousness. However, being by nature averse to all theorizing, let alone philosophizing, Zen has elaborated no special doctrine concerning this problem, at least in an explicit form. But under the innumerable anecdotes, *kōans*, poems, and popular sermons which constitute the main body of Zen literature, a group of major ideas about the structure of consciousness is clearly discernible. And it is not so hard for us to bring them out in a theoretic form and develop them into a Zen doctrine of consciousness.

It immediately becomes clear that Zen also holds a multilayer theory of consciousness. Here, however, as in all other cases, Zen greatly simplifies the matter. It regards consciousness as consisting of two entirely different, though intimately related, layers which we may distinguish as (1) the intentional and (2) the non-intentional dimension of consciousness, the word 'intentional' being used in the original sense as exem-

analysis of the psychological processes ranging from sensation, perception and imagination to logical thinking, translogical thinking and transcendental intuition. As a result, many different psychological and epistemological theories have been proposed. And this has been done in terms of the structure of consciousness. Characteristic of these theories of consciousness is that consciousness is represented as something of a multilayer structure. Consciousness, in this view, consists of a number of layers or different dimensions organically related to each other but each functioning in its own way.

The most typical of all theories of consciousness that have developed in Mahayana Buddhism is that of the Yogācāra School (otherwise called the Vijñaptimātratā School, i.e., Consciousness-Only School). The philosophers of this school recognize in human consciousness three distinctively different levels. The first or 'surface' level is the ordinary psychological dimension in which the sense-organs play the preponderant role producing sensory and perceptual images of the external things. Under this uppermost layer comes the *mano-vijñāna* or Manas-Consciousness. This is the dimension of the ego-consciousness.

According to the Yogācāra School, the consciousness of ego which we ordinarily have is but an infinitesimal part of the Manas-Consciousness. It is only the tip of a huge iceberg that shows above the surface. The greater part of the iceberg is submerged beneath the water. The submerged part of the iceberg consists of the so-called 'egotistic attachments' which have been accumulated there since time immemorial and which are intensely alive and active in the invisible depths of the psyche, sustaining, as it were, from below what we are ordinarily conscious of as our 'I'.

The Manas-Consciousness itself is sustained from below by the *ālaya-vijñāna*, the Storehouse-Consciousness which constitutes the deepest layer of human consciousness. Unlike the Manas-Consciousness of which at least the smallest part is illumined in the form of the empirical ego-consciousness, the Storehouse-Consciousness lies entirely in darkness. It is a 'storehouse' or repository of all the karmic effects of our past actions, mental and bodily. They are 'stored' there under the

the center of the circle is not the real center; the 'subject' is not the real Subject.

In fact, it is characteristic of the psychological mechanism of man that no matter how far he may go in search of his real self in its pure and absolute subjectivity, it goes on escaping his grip. For the very act of turning attention to the 'subject' immediately turns it into an 'object'.

What Zen primarily aims at may be said to be the reinstatement of the 'subject' in its proper, original position, at the very center of the circle, not as an 'object' but in its absolute subjectivity, as the real Subject or pure Ego. But the essential nature of the 'subject' being such as has just been indicated, the task of reinstating it in this sense cannot possibly be accomplished unless the illuminated circle of existence surrounding the 'subject' be also completely transformed. We may perhaps describe the situation by saying that the primary aim of Zen consists in trying to broaden the 'circle' to infinity to the extent that we might actualize an infinitely large circle with its circumference nowhere to be found, so that its center be found everywhere, always mobile and ubiquitous, fixed at no definite point. Only as the center of such a circle could the 'subject' be the pure Ego.

In ancient Indian Buddhism, the pure Ego thus actualized used to be designated by the word *prajñā* or Transcendental Wisdom. Zen, using the traditional, common terminology of Buddhism that has developed in China, often calls it the 'Buddha Nature', or simply 'Mind'. But Zen possesses also its specific vocabulary which is more colorful and more characteristically Chinese, for designating the same thing, like 'No-Mind', the 'Master', the 'True-Man-without-any-rank', 'your-original-Face-which-you-possessed-prior-to-the-birth-of-your-own-father-and-mother', or more simply, 'This Thing', 'That' or still more simply 'It'. All these and other names are designed to point to the transfigured ego functioning as the center of the transfigured 'circle'.

For a better understanding of the transfiguration of the ego here spoken of, we would do well to consider the Zen idea of the structure of consciousness. Buddhism, in conformity with the general trend of Indian philosophy and spirituality, was concerned from the earliest periods of its historical development in India, and later on in China, with a meticulous

## II Zen Theory of Consciousness

In order to elucidate the nature of the problem, let me go back once again to the image of the circle with which I proposed to represent symbolically the world as experienced by man at the pre-enlightenment stage. The world in the view of the plain man, I said, may conveniently be represented as a vaguely illumined circle with the empirical ego at its center as the source of illumination. Around the empirical ego there spreads out a more or less narrowly limited circle of existence within which things are perceived and events take place. Such is the world-view of the plain man.

The circle of existence seen in this way would seem to have a peculiar structure. The center of the circle, the empirical ego, establishes itself as the 'subject' and, as such, cognitively opposes itself to the 'object' which is constituted by the world extending from and around it. Each of the things existing in the world and the world itself, indeed everything other than the 'subject', is regarded as an 'object'. Zen does not necessarily criticize this structure as something entirely false or baseless. Zen takes a definitely negative attitude toward such a view as a falsification of the reality only when the 'subject' becomes conscious of itself as the 'subject', that is to say, when the 'subjective' position of the center of the circle comes to produce the consciousness of the ego as an enduring individual entity. For in such a context, the 'subject' turns into an 'object'. The 'subject' may even then conceptually still remain 'subjective', but insofar as it is conscious of itself as a self-subsistent entity, it belongs to the sphere of the 'objective'. It is but another 'object' among myriads of other 'objects'. Viewed in such a light, the entire circle of the world of Being together with its center, the ego, proves to be an 'objective' order of things. That is to say, what is seemingly

down upon them like a thunderbolt the shout: 'WHAT IS THAT?' Those among the audience who were mature enough to get enlightened were supposed to attain enlightenment on the spot.

'What is that?' 'Who are you?' 'What are you?' 'Where do you come from?' These and other similar questions addressed by an enlightened master to a newcomer all directly point to the real I of the latter which ordinarily lies hidden behind the veil of his empirical I. These questions are extremely difficult to answer in a Zen context. Let us recall that Nan Yüeh had to grapple with his *kōan* for eight years before he found his own solution for it – not, of course, a verbal solution, but an existential one. The difficulty consists in that a question of this sort in the Zen context of a dialogue between master and disciple demands of the latter an immediate realization of the I as pure and unconditioned subjectivity. This is difficult almost to the extent of being utterly impossible because at the very moment that the disciple turns his attention to his own self which under ordinary conditions he is wont to express quite naïvely and unreflectingly by the first person pronoun, the self becomes objectified, or we should say, petrified, and the sought-for pure subjectivity is lost. The pure Ego can be realized only through a total transformation of the empirical ego into something entirely different, functioning in an entirely different dimension of human existence.

here a classical example.<sup>3</sup> Nan Yüeh Huai Jang (J.: Nangaku Ejō, 677-744) who was later to become the successor to the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism in China, the famous Hui Nêng (J.: Enō, 637-713), came to visit the latter. Quite abruptly Hui Nêng asked him: 'What is *this thing* that has come to me in this way?'. This put the young Nan Yüeh completely at a loss for a reply. He left the master. And it took him eight years to solve the problem. In other words, the question 'What are you?' functioned for the young Nan Yüeh as a *kōan*. And, let me add, it can be or is in fact a *kōan* for anyone who wants to have an insight into the spirit of Zen. The answer, by the way, which Nan Yüeh presented to the master after eight years' struggle was a very simple one: 'Whatever I say in the form of *I am X* will miss the point. That exactly is the real I'.

Making reference to this famous anecdote, Master Musō, an outstanding Zen master of fourteenth century Japan,<sup>4</sup> makes the following remark. 'To me, too', he says, 'many men of inferior capacity come and ask various questions about the spirit of Buddhism. To these people I usually put the question: "Who is the one who is actually asking me such a question about the spirit of Buddhism?" To this there are some who answer: "I am so-and-so", or "I am such-and-such". There are some who answer: "Why is it necessary at all to ask such a question? It is too obvious." There are some who answer not by words but by gestures meant to symbolize the famous dictum: "My own Mind, that is the Buddha". There are still others who answer (by repeating or imitating like a parrot the sayings of ancient masters, like) "Looking above, there is nothing to be sought after. Looking below, there is nothing to be thrown away". All these people will never be able to attain enlightenment'.

This naturally reminds us of what is known in the history of Zen as the 'concluding words of Master Pai Chang'. Pai Chang Huai Hai (J.: Hyakujō Ekai, 720-814) was one of the greatest Zen masters of the T'ang dynasty. It is recorded that whenever he gave a public sermon to the monks of his temple, he brought it to an end by directly addressing the audience: 'You people!' And as all turned towards the master in a state of unusual spiritual tension, at that very moment he flung



Does the first person pronoun appearing in each of the sentences of this sort indicate pure subjectivity, the true Subject as understood by Zen Buddhism? The answer will definitely be in the negative.

The nature of the problem before us may be clarified in the following way. Suppose someone asks me 'Who are you?' or 'What are you?' To this question I can give an almost infinite number of answers. I can say, for example, 'I am a Japanese', 'I am a student', etc. Or I can say 'I am so-and-so', giving my name. None of these answers, however, presents the *whole* of myself in its absolute 'such-ness'. And no matter how many times I may repeat the formula 'I am *X*', changing each time the semantic referent of the *X*, I shall never be able to present directly and immediately the 'whole man' that I am. All that is presented by this formula is nothing but a partial and relative aspect of my existence, an objectified qualification of the 'whole man'. Instead of presenting the pure subjectivity that I am as the 'whole man', the formula presents myself only as a relative object. But what Zen is exclusively concerned with is precisely the 'whole man'. And herewith begins the real Zen problem concerning the ego consciousness. Zen may be said to take its start by putting a huge question mark to the word 'I' as it appears as the subject-term of all sentences of the type: 'I am *X*' or 'I do *X*'. One enters into the world of Zen only when one realizes that his own I has itself turned into an existential question mark.

In the authentic tradition of Zen Buddhism in China it was customary for a master to ask a newcomer to his monastery questions in order to probe the spiritual depth of the man. The standard question, the most commonly used for this purpose, was: 'Who are you?' This simple, innocent-looking question was in reality one which the Zen disciples were most afraid of. We shall have later occasion to see how vitally important this question is in Zen. But it will already be clear enough that the question is of such grave importance because it demands of us that we reveal immediately and on the spot the reality of the I underlying the common usage of the first person pronoun, that is, the 'whole man' in its absolute subjectivity. Without going into theoretical details. I shall give

underlying all mental operations and bodily movements, remaining always the same through all the intra-organic and extra-organic processes that are observable in the mind-body complex. Linguistic usage expresses this inner vision of personal identity by the first person pronoun 'I'.

In our actual life we constantly use the first person pronoun as the grammatical subject for an infinite number of predicates. Long before the rise of Zen, Buddhism in India had subjected this usage of the first person pronoun to a thoroughgoing scrutiny in connection with the problem of the unreality of the ego, which, as is well known, was from the beginning the fundamental tenet of Buddhist philosophy and which, insofar as it was an idea distinguishing Buddhism from all other schools of Indian philosophy, was for the Buddhists of decisive importance.

We often say for instance 'I am fat' or 'I am lean' in reference to our bodily constitution. We say 'I am healthy' or 'I am ill' in accordance with whether our bodily organs are functioning normally or not. 'I walk', 'I run', etc., in reference to our bodily movements. 'I am hungry', 'I am thirsty', etc., in reference to the intra-organic physiological processes. 'I see', 'I hear', 'I smell', etc., in reference to the activity of our sense organs. The first person pronoun behaves in fact as the grammatical subject of many other types of sentences, descriptive or otherwise.

Under all those propositions with the first person pronoun as the subject there is clearly observable the most primitive, primal certainty of 'I am'. This primal certainty we have of our 'I am', that is, the consciousness of ego, derives its supreme importance from the fact that it constitutes the very center of the existential circle of each one of us. As the center sets itself into motion, a whole world of things and events spreads itself out around it in all directions, and as it quiets down the same variegated world is reduced to the original single point. The spreading-out of the empirical world in all its possible forms around the center is linguistically reflected in the sentences whose grammatical subject is 'I'.

The most serious question here for Zen is: Does the grammatical subject of all these sentences represent the real personal subject in its absolute suchness? Otherwise expressed:

of ourselves. Indeed, it is not going too far to say that the problem of how to deal with ego-consciousness is *the* sole and exclusive problem for Zen Buddhism. Says Dōgen,<sup>1</sup> one of the greatest Zen masters of Japan in the thirteenth century A.D.: 'To get disciplined in the way of the Buddha means nothing other than getting disciplined in properly dealing with your own I'. That is to say, an intense, unremitting self-inquiry exhausts the whole of Buddhism. It constitutes the first step into the Way of the Buddha and it constitutes the ultimate end of the same Way. There is no other problem in Zen.

Another Japanese Zen master of the 15th century, Ikkyū,<sup>2</sup> admonishes his disciples in a similar way saying: 'Who or what am I? Search for your I from the top of your head down to your bottom'. And he adds: 'No matter how hard you may search after it, you will never be able to grasp it. *That* precisely is your I'. In this last sentence there is a clear suggestion made as to how the problem of ego-consciousness is to be posed and settled in Zen Buddhism.

Our ordinary view of the world may be symbolically represented as a circle with the ego as its autonomous center. With individual differences that are clearly to be recognized, each circle delimits a certain spatial and temporal expanse within the boundaries of which alone everything knowable is knowable. Its circumference sets up a horizon beyond which things disappear in an unfathomable darkness. The center of the circle is occupied by what Karl Jaspers called *Ich als Dasein*, i.e. the empirical ego, the I as we ordinarily understand it.

The circle thus constituted is of a centrifugal nature in the sense that everything, every action, whether mental or bodily, is considered to originate from its center and move toward its periphery. It is also centripetal in the sense that whatever happens within the circle is referred back and reduced to the center as its ultimate ground.

The center of the circle comes in this way to be vaguely represented as a permanent and enduring entity carrying and synthesizing all the disparate and divergent elements to be attributed to the various aspects and functions of the mind-body complex. Thus is born an image of the personal identity

## I The First Person Pronoun 'I'

In dealing with the topic of the two dimensions of ego-consciousness in Zen, it might be thought more in line with Jungian psychology to use the word 'Self' instead of the word 'Ego' to designate what I am going to explain as ego-consciousness in the second or deeper dimension. But there is a reason why I prefer in this particular case to use one and the same word, 'ego', in reference to the two dimensions of consciousness which I shall deal with in this Essay. For it is precisely one of the most important points which Zen makes that the empirical I which is the very center of human existence in our ordinary, daily life and the other I which is supposed to be actualized through the experience of enlightenment are ultimately identical with one another. The two 'egos' are radically different from each other and look almost mutually exclusive in the eyes of those who are in the pre-enlightenment stage of Zen discipline. From the viewpoint of the post-enlightenment stage, however, they are just one and the same. In the eyes of the truly enlightened Zen master, there is nothing special, nothing extraordinary about what is often called by such grandiose names as Cosmic Ego, Cosmic Unconscious, Transcendental Consciousness and the like. It is no other than the existential ground of the ordinary, commonplace man who eats when he is hungry, drinks when he is thirsty, and falls asleep when he is sleepy, that is, in short, the ordinary self which we are accustomed to regard as the subject of the day-to-day existence of the plain man.

But let us start from the beginning. The starting-point is provided by our ego-consciousness as we find it in the pre-enlightenment stage. Historically as well as structurally, Zen has always been seriously concerned with our consciousness



## Essay II

# TWO DIMENSIONS OF EGO CONSCIOUSNESS

Note: This is the first of three public lectures ('Ego Consciousness in Eastern Religions') delivered in New York at Hunter College Playhouse, Oct. 30 – Nov. 6, 1975, as part of the general program for the one hundredth anniversary of Jung's birth under the auspices of the C. G. Jung Foundation. It has been published in *Sophia Perennis*, Vol II, Number 1, Spring 1976, Tehran, Iran.

43. We have earlier encountered the same question in the anecdote concerning Chao Chou's cypress tree in the courtyard.

44. *Op. cit.*, 25-26, pp. 34-35.

45. The new-born baby with long white hair, i.e. baby-old man, being an impossibility, symbolically indicates the seeming non-existence of the man as the 'subject'.

46. The whole energy of the Field is crystallized into One Man.

47. *Op. cit.*, 36, p. 60.

28. That is to say: there is the mountain, but it is so deeply blue that it is hardly distinguishable from the blue sky.

29. From the *Prajñā Pāramitā Sutra* referred to above.

30. *Lin Chi Lu* (*op. cit.*), 33, p. 55. Concerning Lin Chi, see above, note 4.

31. 'Six harmonious correspondences' are (1) sight which is constituted by the correspondence between the eye and visible things, (2) hearing based on the correspondence between the ear and sounds, (3) smell based on the correspondence between the nose and odors, (4) taste based on the correspondence between the tongue and flavors, (5) touch based on the correspondence between the tactile sense and touchable objects, and (6) 'cognition' based on the correspondence between the intellect and concepts-images.

32. *Op. cit.*, 31, p. 48.

33. As we shall see later, the 'Man' in the thought of Lin Chi is no other than the Mind-Reality conceived in a very peculiar way.

34. *Op. cit.*, 30, p. 45.

35. P'ang Yün (the eighth century) was one of the foremost and most distinguished of all the lay-disciples of Zen. The anecdote containing this saying is found in the above-mentioned *Pi Yen Lu*, (J.: *Hekigan Roku*) No. 42.

36. Huang Lung was a great Zen Master in the school of Lin Chi, and the founder of a sub-sect known after his name as Huang Lung school.

37. *Op. cit.*, No. LIII.

38. Chao Chou Tsung Shên (J.: Jōshū Jūshin).

39. No. XXXVII.

40. Niu Tou, a famous Zen master in the Tang dynasty. He was first a Confucianist, and later turned to Buddhism. He became the founder of an independent school in Zen Buddhism.

41. An outstanding figure in the Ts'ao Tung (J.: Sō Tō) school, famous for the strong emphasis he laid on the importance of 'silent-illumination' (*mo chao*, J.: *moku shō*) as the best method for attaining enlightenment.

42. See above, note 4. The quotation is from his *Shōbōgenzō*, Book XXV, *Kei Sei San Shoku* 'The Voice of the Valley and the Color of the Mountain'.



supra-consciousness. And the word *SEE* is supposed to be a literal translation of the Chinese word *chien* appearing in the celebrated phrase *chien hsing* 'seeing into one's nature'.

18. *Qur'ân*, VIII, 17. This passage expresses exactly the same idea as the famous Tradition which God Himself is the speaker and which runs: 'I am his ears, his eye-sight, his tongue, his hands, and his feet. Thus it is through Me that he hears; it is through Me that he sees; it is through Me that he speaks; it is through Me that he grasps; and it is through Me that he walks'. For an 'irfanic discussion of these expressions see Ibn 'Arabî: *Fuṣṣūṣ at Hikam* (ed. 'Aḥī, Cairo, 1946), p. 185.

19. This statement might look at this stage quite an arbitrary one. We shall be in a position to discuss its validity only at the end of our analysis of the whole process. Here the statement must be accepted as it is as a merely phenomenological analysis of Zen psychology.

20. As the famous passage of the *Prajñāpāramitā* Sutra declares: "The sensible is Nothingness, Nothingness is precisely the sensible".

21. Cf. Hideo Masuda: *Bukkyō Shisō-no Gudō-teki Kenkyū*, 'Studies in Buddhist Thought as a Search after the Way', Tokyo, 1966, pp. 219-221. For a more elaborate philosophical treatment of this aspect of Buddhism, cf. Keiji Nishitani: *Shūkyō towa Nani-ka*, 'What is Religion?' I, Tokyo, pp. 135-187.

22. A famous saying of Fu Ta-Shih (J.: Fu Dai-shi, 497-569), the understanding of which has often been considered by Zen masters as a standard by which to judge the depth of Zen consciousness of the disciples.

23. This point deserves special notice because the word *Nirvāṇa* which denotes the same thing as what we here call the subjective Nothingness, has often been misunderstood to mean a total annihilation of consciousness.

24. The field of Nothingness thus conceived is comparable with the metaphysical *Chaos* of the Taoist Chuang Tzū (cf. my paper on Taoism, *Erano-Jahrbuch* XXXVI, 1967, pp. 389-411).

25. Chinese: *San chieh wei hsin, wan fa wei shih*, lit. 'the three regions (of the world of Becoming) are but one single mind, and the ten thousand existents are but one single cognition'.

26. Quoted above, cf. note 11.

27. The distinction between the two phrases 'easy to recognize' and 'difficult to distinguish' is purely rhetorical, a phenomenon which is very common in Chinese prose and poetry. The sentence simply means that both the white particles in the snow and the black molecules of soot in the ink are 'easy to recognize and difficult to distinguish' at one and the same time.

8. Nan Ch'üan P'u Yüan (J.: Nan Sen Fu Gen, 748-834).

9. J.: *Hekigan Roku* ('Blue Rock Records'), a work of the eleventh century (Song dynasty), *Kōan* No. 40.

10. Lu Kêng (764-834) was a high official of the Tang dynasty who occupied a very important position in the administrative machinery of the central government. In Zen Buddhism he was a lay disciple of Nan Ch'üan.

11. Sêng Chao (J.: Sō Jō, 374-414), known as 'the monk Chao'. A Taoist at first, he later turned to Mahayana Buddhism under the direction of the famous Kumārajīva (344-413) who came from Central Asia to China in 401 and who translated many of the Buddhist Sutras and theoretical works on Buddhism from Sanskrit to Chinese. The monk Chao is counted among the greatest of Kumārajīva's disciples. Chao, though he died at the age of 31, left a number of important works on Buddhist philosophy. His interpretation of the concept of Nothingness or 'Void' in particular, which was Taoistic to a considerable extent, exercised a tremendous influence on the rise and development of Zen in China. He is rightly regarded as one of the predecessors of Zen Buddhism.

12. Bertrand Russell: *The Problems of Philosophy*, Oxford, 1954, pp. 8-9.

13. A similar opposition against philosophical 'essentialism' is observable in the relation of Taoism to Confucianism. See my Eranos paper on *The Absolute and the Perfect Man in Taoism* (Eranos-Jahrbuch XXXVI, 1967) pp. 384-411 in particular.

14. This latter psychological state is called in Zen 'dwelling in the cave of devils under the mountain of darkness'. Zen never wearies of reminding us that we should avoid falling unconsciously into such a cave.

15. *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. This Sūtra, first translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Kumārajīva (cf. above, note 12), exercised a tremendous influence on the philosophical elaboration of Zen Buddhism, particularly from the time of the sixth Patriarch of Zen, Hui Nêng (J.: E Nō, 638-713). The Sūtra centers around the Nothingness and 'egolessness' of all things.

16. In the following analysis we shall utilize certain formulae – with some modifications – that have been ingeniously devised by Professor Tsūji Satō for the purpose of clarifying the basic structure of reality as it appears to the eye of enlightenment. See his *Bukkō Tetsuri* 'Philosophical Principles of Buddhism' (Tokyo, 1968).

17. In this and the following formula, the words written entirely with italicized small letters (like *i*, *see*, *this*) shall refer to things and events pertaining to the dimension of ordinary consciousness, while those written with capital letters (like *I*, *SEE*, *THIS*) shall refer to the dimension of

itself to him. And in particular, it brings home to us the fact that, according to Zen, the highest dimension of Reality, i.e. Reality in its pristine and unblemished originality, becomes visible to us only and exclusively at the extreme limit of our own subjectivity, that is, when we become through and through ourselves.

### Notes

1. It is highly significant in this connection that one of the leading Zen masters of the present age, Mumon Yamada, has produced a book entitled 'Who Am I?', *Watashi-wa Dare-ka?* (Tokyo, 1966). The book is a modern interpretation of the First Part of the 'Sayings and Doings of Lin Chi'. In this work the author raises and discusses the problem of Man as formulated in this personal form as one of the most pressing problems which contemporary men must face in the present-day situation of the world.

2. Or 'suchness' (*tathatā*) as the Buddhists would call it.

3. Dōgen (1200-1253) is one of the greatest Zen masters Japan has ever produced. His major work *Shōbōgenzō* is a record of his deep reflections on matters pertaining to Man and the world from the Zen point of view. Besides, it is perhaps the most philosophical of all works written by the Zen masters, whether of China or Japan.

4. Lin Chi I Hsüan (J.: Rinzei Gigen, d. 867). A disciple of the famous Huang Po (J.: Ōbaku, d. 850), and himself the founder of one of the so-called Five Houses of Zen Buddhism (the Lin Chi school), Lin Chi was one of the greatest Zen masters not only of the T'ang dynasty but of all ages. His basic teachings, practical and theoretical, are recorded in a book known under the title of 'The Sayings and Doings of Lin Chi' (*Lin Chi Lu*, J.: *Rinzei Roku*), a work compiled by his disciples after his death. In the present paper, all quotations from this book are made from the modern edition by Seizan Yanagida, Kyoto, 1961.

5. We would like to put emphasis on the word 'thought', because insofar as the personal experience of enlightenment is concerned, we cannot see any real difference among the representative Zen masters. Lin Chi's teacher, Huang Po, for instance, was evidently as great (if not greater) a master as Lin Chi himself. But the *thought* which Huang Po develops in his work, *The Transmission of the Mind*, is admittedly fairly commonplace, showing no particular originality of its own.

6. *Lin Chi Lu*, 36, p. 60.

7. *Ibid.*, 28, p. 40.

wanted the monk to encounter the True Man in his pure subjectivity, without objectifying him. The monk, however, failed to do so. He did objectify his own True Man by attempting, if only for a fraction of an instant, to *think about* him instead of *becoming* or simply *being* the True Man. But once objectified in this way, the True Man is no longer 'without any rank'; he is qualified by all sorts of determinations and delimitations in terms of time and space. The 'now' is no longer the Eternal Now as it is actualized at this very moment. The 'here' is no longer the Ubiquitous Here as it is actualized in this very place.

The image of the True Man as given in the passage which we have just read; namely, the image of Someone coming into the fleshy body and going out of it at every moment, is in reality a rhetorical device. The truth is that it is wrong even to talk about two persons being unified into one person. The two persons whom our analytic intellect distinguishes one from the other and which the rhetorical device presents as (1) the bulky mass of reddish flesh and (2) the True Man transcending all temporal and spatial determinations, are in reality absolutely one and the same person. The True Man as understood by Lin Chi is the sensible *and* super-sensible person in an absolute unity prior even to the bifurcation into the sensible and the super-sensible.

What constitutes the most salient feature of Lin Chi's thought in terms of the history of Zen philosophy is the fact that he crystallized into such a lively image of Man what we have been discussing in the course of the present Essay, first under the traditional Buddhist key-term, 'No-Mind' or 'Mind' and then under the modern philosophical key-term 'Field'. As we have often pointed out, Lin Chi's entire thinking centers around Man, and a whole world-view is built up upon the basis of the image of the True Man. What he actually deals with under the name of Man is, objectively speaking, almost the same as what is usually referred to in Mahayana Buddhism in general by such words as Reality, Nothingness, Is-ness, Mind, etc. But his particular approach to the problem casts an illuminating light on one of the most characteristic traits of Oriental philosophy; namely, the decisive importance given to the subjective dimension of man in determining the objective dimension in which the Reality discloses

But in most cases his disciples get simply confused and dismayed. For, the moment they try to turn their attention to the universal person in themselves, he disappears. When they walk naturally, he is there with them; he is walking with them; or rather it is he who is walking by their feet. But the moment they become conscious of their own act of walking while they are walking, the universal man is no longer there; he has already receded to where they know not. This seemingly strange phenomenon is due to the very simple fact that paying attention to something, turning the spotlight of consciousness toward something means objectifying it. The universal man, being the absolute Selfhood, i.e. pure subjectivity, must necessarily cease to be himself as soon as he is put into the position of an 'object'.

Despite this difficulty Lin Chi with extraordinary stringency requires his disciples to grasp immediately, without ever objectifying it, this absolute unity of the two persons in themselves.

One day the Master took his seat in the lecture hall and said: 'Over the bulky mass of your reddish flesh (i.e. the physical body) there is a True Man without any rank. He is constantly coming in and going out through the gates of your face (i.e. your sense organs). If you have not yet encountered him, catch him, catch him here and now!'

At that moment a monk came out and asked, 'What kind of a fellow is this True Man?'

The Master suddenly came down from the platform, grabbed at the monk, and urged him, 'Tell me, tell me!'

The monk shrank for an instant.

The Master on the spot thrust him away saying, 'Ah, what a useless dirt-scraper this True-Man-without-any-rank of yours is!' And immediately he retired to his private quarters.

The monk 'shrank for an instant', that is, he prepared himself for giving an adequate answer. But in that very instant, the discriminating act of thinking intrudes itself; the True Man becomes objectified and is lost. The True Man, when he is represented as an 'object', is nothing more than a 'dried up dirt-scraper'. The Master grabbed at the monk with violence, urging him to witness on the spot the True Man who is no other than the monk's true self. The Master resorted to such a seemingly violent and unreasonable behaviour because he

Thus Lin Chi's image of Man, if looked at from the common-sense viewpoint proves to be something extremely difficult to grasp. It is difficult to grasp because it presents 'man' in a contradictory way. The image must necessarily take on a contradictory form, because the Field of Reality which forms its basis is itself a contradictory unity of the sensible and the supra-sensible.

The image of Man presented by Lin Chi is not primarily an image of the sensible 'man' who sees with his eyes, hears with his ears, speaks with his tongue and so on and so forth – in short 'man' as the self-conscious empirical ego. Rather it is the image of the supra-sensible Man who, existing above the level of empirical experience, activates all the sense organs and makes the intellect function as it does. And yet, on the other hand, this supra-sensible, supra-empirical Man, cannot actualize himself independently of the empirical 'man'.

Thus man, inasmuch as he is a *total* actualization of the Field of Reality, is on the one hand a Cosmic Man comprehending in himself the whole universe – 'the Mind-Reality', as Lin Chi says, which pervades and runs through the whole world of Being' – and on the other he is this very concrete individual 'man' who exists and lives here and now, as a concentration point of the entire energy of the Field. He is individual and supra-individual.

If we are to approach Man from his 'individual' aspect, we shall have to say that in the concrete individual person there lives another person. This second person in himself is beyond all limitations of time and space, because the Field, of which he is the most immediate embodiment, is the Eternal Now and the Ubiquitous Here. But always and everywhere he accompanies, or is completely unified with, the concrete individual person. In fact Lin Chi does not admit any discrepancy at all between the two persons. Whatever the individual man does is done by the universal person. When, for instance, the former walks, it is in reality the latter that walks. The universal person acts only through the limbs of the individual person. It is this double structure of personality that Lin Chi never wearies of trying to make his disciples realize by themselves and through themselves.

flexible nature that if emphasis is laid on the 'subjective' side, the whole thing turns into the Subject, while if on the contrary emphasis is laid on the 'objective' side, the whole thing turns into the Object. Similarly, if nothing is seen, there is neither Subject nor Object. But if the emphasis is evenly diffused all over the Field, there is the Subject, there is the Object, and the world is seen as a vast, limitless Unity of a multiplicity of separate things. And whichever of these outer forms it may assume, the Field always remains in its original state, that of *I SEE THIS*.

Thus the Field is not to be confused with the purely 'objective' aspect of the world of Being, i.e. Nature conceived as something existing outside the 'mind'. Nor is it to be confused with the purely 'subjective' consciousness of man. That which establishes the 'subject' as the 'subject' (or consciousness as consciousness) and the 'object' as the 'object' (or Nature as Nature) is something that transcends – in a certain sense – this very distinction between 'subject' and 'object' and manifests itself, by self-determination, now as the Subject and now as the Object.

It is on such an understanding of the Field of Reality that Lin Chi founds his characteristic image of Man. For him, Man *is* the Field. Man, in his view, is a personal, human actualization of the Field. And in fact there is absolutely no other type of actualization for the Field. The dynamics of the Field of Reality which we have analyzed is realizable only through the individual man, through the inner transformation of his consciousness. Man, in this sense, is *the* locus of the actualization of the whole universe. And when the actualization really takes place in this locus, the 'man' is transformed into what is called by Lin Chi the 'True Man without any ranks'. As a total actualization of the Field, the True Man embodies the dynamics of the Field. Now he may realize himself as the *I* (= *I SEE THIS*); now he may be the (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*; again, he can be Nothingness, that is, sheer (*I SEE THIS*); and he can also be the nakedly apparent *I SEE THIS*. He is completely free. Lin Chi refers to this kind of freedom which characterizes Man as the direct actualization of the Field when he speaks of 'Man's becoming the absolute Master of the place, in whatever place he may happen to be'.<sup>47</sup>

'Sometimes the man (i.e. the 'subject') is snatched away (i.e. totally negated) while the environment (i.e. the 'object') is left intact. Sometimes the environment is snatched away, while the man is left intact. Sometimes the man and the environment are both snatched away. Sometimes the man and the environment are both left intact'.

Thereupon one of the monks came forward and asked, 'What kind of a thing is the-man-being-snatched-away and the-environment-being-left-intact?'

The Master answered, 'As the mild sunshine of the springtime covers the entire earth, the earth weaves out a variegated brocade. The new-born baby has long-trailing hair; the hair is as white as a bundle of yarns'.<sup>45</sup>

The monk asked, 'What kind of a thing is the-environment-being-snatched-away and the-man-being-left-intact?'

The Master answered, 'The royal command pervades the whole world;<sup>46</sup> the generals stationed on the frontiers do not raise the tumult of war'.

The monk asked, 'What kind of a thing is the-man-and-the-environment-being-both-snatched-away?'

The Master answered, 'The two remote provinces have lost contact with the central Government'.

The monk asked, 'What kind of a thing is the-man-and-the-environment-being-both-left-intact?'

The Master answered, 'As the King looks down from the top of his palace, he sees the people in the field enjoying their peaceful life'.

It is commonly held that of those four states, the last, i.e. the state in which both the man and the environment are left intact, represents the highest degree of the Zen consciousness. Ontologically it corresponds to what Hua Yen (J.: Kego) philosophy calls the 'metaphysical dimension of the unobstructed mutual interpenetration among all things and events' (J.: *ji-ji muge hokkai*), a metaphysical dimension in which the world of Being appears as an infinitely huge network of gems, each one of which illumines and reflects all the others. And in the Hua Yen school, too, this 'dimension' is considered to be the object of the highest and ultimate vision of Reality. But from the standpoint of a Zen master like Lin Chi, each one of the four states that have just been described is in itself a form of the total actualization of the Field. The Field, in other words, is of such a mobile and delicately



'The wind has fallen off', that is, the entire world of Being has fallen into the eternal quietude of Nothingness; and yet 'flower petals are falling still', that is, all things are still vividly and concretely maintaining themselves in their original empirical commotion. 'As a bird sings', that is, precisely because of this colorful presence of things in the empirical dimension, 'the mountain deepens its silence and stillness', that is, Nothingness makes itself felt in its unfathomable depth.

Someone asked the great Zen master of the Lin Chi school in the Sung dynasty, Hsü T'ang Chih Yü (J.: Ki Dō Chi Gu, 1185-1269), 'Tell me, what is the significance of the First Patriarch's coming from the West?'<sup>43</sup> He answered:

Deep is the mountain, no guest is coming.  
All day long I hear the monkeys chattering.

The dynamic structure of the Field which is thus constituted by the very peculiar tension between the *I* (= *I SEE THIS*) and the (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*, and which is actualizable, as we have just explained, in four principal forms was most clearly recognized by Lin Chi who formulated them into what is now usually known as the Four Standards of Lin Chi.

The expression 'Four Standards' means four basic standards by which a Zen master might measure the degrees of the spiritual perfection of his disciples. It is noteworthy, however, that this particular expression, or this particular understanding of the matter, did not originate from Lin Chi himself. It does not necessarily represent his own understanding of the issue. The expression has its origin rather in the historical fact that in the course of the development of the Lin Chi school, the four states as described by Lin Chi came to be used very often by the masters in measuring the depth of the Zen consciousness of the disciples. Lin Chi's intention was, I believe, primarily to establish theoretically the four principal forms which the same Field of Reality can assume, and thereby to indicate the dynamic structure of the Field.

Let us give in translation the relevant passage from the *Lin Chi Lu*.<sup>44</sup>

Once at the time of the evening lesson, the Master told the monks under his guidance the following:

energy that has been evenly saturating the entire Field is now aroused from the state of quietude, gushes forth toward the 'subjective' sphere of the Field, and ends by being crystallized into the Subject. Then, the Field in its entirety is actualized in the luminous point of *I*. Nothing else is visible. The whole world is nothing other than *I*. In such a state, the Zen master would say: 'I alone sit on top of the highest mountain', I alone; nothing else, nobody else. The important point here, however, is that the 'I' is not an empirical ego. The 'I' is a subjective crystallization of the entire Field. Thus the dictum: 'I alone sit on top of the highest mountain' implies that the whole universe is sitting on top of the mountain with the man, or in the form of an individual man.

3. Sometimes, again, the energy aroused from its stability flows toward the 'objective' sphere of the Field. Then it is the Object that is alone visible – the stately Cypress Tree towering up in the midst of the limitless Void – although the same amount of energy that could at any moment be crystallized into the Subject is also being mobilized in the appearance of the Object.

4. Finally the Field may go back again to its original state of Stillness, with the difference that this time both the Subject and the Object are given their proper places in the Field. Superficially we are now back to our old familiar world of empirical experience, where 'the flower is naturally red and the willow is naturally green'. With regard to its inner structure, however, this old familiar world of ours is infinitely different from the same world as seen through the eyes of the purely empirical ego. For our old familiar world, this time, reveals itself in its pristine purity and innocence. The empirical world which has once lost itself into the abyss of Nothingness, now returns to life again in an unusual freshness. 'Here we realize', Dōgen<sup>42</sup> observes, 'that the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth in their original purity and serenity should never be confused with the mountains, rivers, and the great earth (as seen through the eyes of the ordinary people)'. The same idea is expressed in a more poetic way as:

Though the wind has fallen off, flower-petals are falling still,  
As a bird sings, the mountain deepens its silence and stillness.

## VII The Zen Image of Man

The foregoing section will have made it clear that the Reality as Zen conceives it may best be represented as a Field saturated with energy, a particular state of tension constituted by two major sources of force, the Subject and the Object, the word Subject being understood in the sense of *I* (= *I SEE THIS*), i.e. as an actualization of the whole Field, and the word Object in the sense of (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*, i.e. again as an actualization of the same Field. We have also observed how the balance of forces is delicately maintained. The Field itself never loses itself, toward whichever of its two spheres its inner energy be inflected. But the actual – i.e. conscious – point at which the balance is maintained is found to be constantly moving through the entire Field, from the point of pure subjectivity to the point of pure objectivity.

Four major forms are clearly distinguishable in this structure.

1. Sometimes it is as though the Field maintains perfect stability, without there being any particular salient point in the entire Field as the center of the stability. Then the whole Field maintains itself in a state of extreme tension, a state of absolute and universal Illumination, an Awareness where there is nothing whatsoever for man to be aware of. There is in this state neither the 'subject' nor the 'object'. Both *I* and *THIS* disappear from the surface of the Field. This is a state about which Zen often says: 'In the original state of Reality there is absolutely nothing whatsoever'. It is also often referred to as *Oriental Nothingness* in the philosophies of the East.

2. But, sometimes, out of this eternal Stillness, there suddenly arises a glaring consciousness of the Subject. The

'The Reality (i.e. the Field) has no definite aspect of its own; it reveals itself in accordance with things. The Wisdom (i.e. *I SEE*) has no definite knowledge of its own; it illumines in response to situations. Look! the green bamboo is so serenely green; the yellow flower so profusely yellow! Just pick up anything you like, and see! In every single thing *IT* is so nakedly manifested'.

In the philosophical view of Zen a 'concrete' or 'real' thing in the true sense of the term is of such a nature. What we usually regard as a concrete thing – the 'primary substance' of Aristotle – is, from the point of view of Zen, nothing but an abstract entity, not 'reality'. A really concrete individual must be, for Zen, an individual-concrete which is permeated and penetrated by the absolute-universal, or rather which *is* the absolute-universal. A cypress tree is an individual particular; it is *THIS*. But through being *THIS*, it cannot but be an actualization of *I SEE THIS*. The cypress tree is here the focus-point of the Field of Reality. We now understand what is really meant by Lin Chi when, as we have earlier observed, he states that 'the Mind-Reality permeates and runs through the whole universe', but that it is actualized in 'the concrete person who is actually listening to his discourse'. Lin Chi presents the whole thing in the form of Man, the 'subject' in the sense of the master of the whole Field of Reality, the absolute Selfhood. Chao Chou presents it in the form of the Cypress Tree, the 'object' in the sense of the absolute center of the selfsame Field. From whichever direction one may approach, one invariably ends by encountering the Field itself.

What is most important to remark about this problem is that seeing the cypress tree in the courtyard as an actualization of the Field does not mean seeing 'something', say, the transcendental Absolute, beyond the concrete thing. Following Hua Yen (J.: Keron) philosophy which reached its perfection in China, Zen emphatically denies Something Metaphysical lying at the back of the Phenomenal.

Quite the contrary, Zen 'absolutizes' the Phenomenal itself. The cypress tree in its concrete reality *is* the Absolute at this very moment in this very place. It is not even a 'self-manifestation' of the Absolute. For the Absolute has no space 'other' than itself for manifesting itself. And such is the structure of the 'objective' aspect of the Field.

Field. Otherwise expressed, we witness here the whole Field of *I SEE THIS* becoming reduced to the single point of *THIS*, and standing as such before our own eyes. The kōan is known as the cypress-tree-in-the-courtyard of Chao Chou (J.: Jō Shū),<sup>38</sup> and is recorded in the famous kōan-collection *Wu Môn Kuan* (J.: *Mu Mon Kan*).<sup>39</sup> It reads:

Listen! Once a monk asked Chao Chou, 'Tell me, what is the significance of the First Patriarch's coming from the West?' Chao Chou replied, 'The cypress tree in the courtyard!'

The monk asked about the significance of the historical event of Bodhidharma coming all the way from India to China. His intention apparently was to grasp from the inside the significance of this event so that he might participate existentially in the living world of Zen. The answer given by Chao Chou took a very abrupt and unexpected turn to disconcert the monk: 'The cypress tree in the courtyard!'

The inner mechanism of this statement is just the same as that shown in the anecdote of the wild duck and Pai Chang. Only the energy of the Field is this time inflected towards the opposite direction. Chao Chou abruptly puts under the monk's nose the whole Field of Reality in the most vividly real and concrete form of a cypress tree. In other terms, instead of presenting the Field as *I* (*I SEE THIS*) – as Ma Tsu did with Pai Chang – Chao Chou presents it as (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*. This indicates that the 'cypress tree' as presented by Chao Chou is not *simply* or *only* a cypress tree. For it carries here the whole weight of the Field. The cypress tree, a real and concrete cypress tree as it is, stands before our eyes as something growing out of the very depths of Nothingness – the Eternal-Present being actualized at this present moment in this particular place in the dimension of the temporal and phenomenal. In a single cypress tree in the courtyard there is concentrated the whole energy of the Field of Reality.

As Niu T'ou Fa Jung (J.: Go Zu Hō Yū 594-657) remarks:<sup>40</sup>

'A mote of dust flies, and the entire sky is clouded. A particle of rubbish falls, and the whole earth is covered'.

And Hung Chih Chêng Chüeh (J.: Wanshi Shōgaku, 1091-1157):<sup>41</sup>

This dynamic relation between the Subject and Object is admirably described in the following anecdote which in the course of history has come to count among the most important of all Zen *kōans*. The story brings onto the stage two prominent figures in the Golden Age of Zen Buddhism. One is Ma Tsu Tao I (J.: Ba So Dō Itsu, 709-788) and Pai Chang Huai Hai (J.: Hyakujō Ekai, 720-814). Pai Chang, who is destined to become later one of the greatest Zen masters, is in this story still a young disciple of Ma Tsu. The anecdote as it is recorded in the *Pi Yen Lu*<sup>37</sup> reads:

Listen! Once, Ma Tsu was on his way to some place, accompanied by Pai Chang, when all of a sudden they saw a wild duck flying away above their heads. Ma asked, 'What is it?' Pai answered, 'A wild duck'. Ma, 'Where is it flying to?' Pai, 'It has already flown away!' Thereupon the Master grabbed the nose of Pai Chang and twisted it violently. Pai cried out in pain, 'Ouch!' The Master remarked on the spot, 'How can you say that the wild duck has flown away?'

The young Pai Chang is here looking up at the wild duck as it flies away. The wild duck exists as an object independently of Pai Chang who is looking at it. In his eyes, it is as though the bird were subsistent by itself, and it is as though the self-subsistent bird flew away and disappeared beyond the horizon. It is only when he has his nose grabbed and twisted that it dawns upon his mind like a flash that the wild duck is not an 'object' existing independently of the activity of his mind, and that the bird is still there with him, or rather, as his own self. The entire Field comprising both himself and the bird, becomes alive and reveals itself nakedly to his eyes. Pai Chang is said to have attained enlightenment on that occasion.

The anecdote presents an interesting example of the emphasis turning from the 'objective' aspect of the Field (represented by the wild duck) towards its 'subjective' aspect (represented by Pai Chang himself) in such a way that, as a result, the dynamics of the Field in its entirety is realized on the spot.

In the next anecdote, on the contrary, which is as a Zen *kōan* probably even more famous than the preceding one, the emphasis is concentrated upon the 'objective' sphere of the

etc.) is nothing more than an abstraction. It is a concept or image which is obtained when we articulate, whether consciously or unconsciously, the originally non-articulated Field into an active and a passive sphere, and establish the former as an independently subsistent entity. Likewise the 'object' or 'thing' is an abstraction taken out of the whole non-articulated Field by a kind of abstractive inflection of the latter towards the 'passive' sphere.

Zen, however, does not want to remain content with this observation. It goes further and insists that we should attain to a stage at which we could witness the originally non-articulated Field articulating itself freely, of its own accord, and not through the dichotomizing activity of our intellect, into either the 'subject' or the 'object'. It is important to note that in this self-articulation of the Field, the whole Field is involved, not this or that particular sphere of it. Instead of being an abstraction, the 'subject' or the 'object' in such a case is a total concretization or actualization of the entire Field. Thus – to go back to the particular system of formulation which we used in the earlier part of this paper – if the total Field in its original state of non-articulation is to be represented by the formula: *SEE*, the same total Field in its articulated state may be formulated as: *I SEE THIS* (all words being in capital letters). This last formula must remain the same, whether the whole Field actualizes itself as the Subject or as the Object. Thus in this particular context, the Subject or *I* means *I* (= *I SEE THIS*). Likewise, the Object or *THIS* means (*I SEE THIS* =) *THIS*.

At this stage, when I say, for example, 'I', I do not thereby mean my empirical ego. What is meant is rather the 'I' as a concrete actualization of the entire Field. The 'I' at this stage is actually 'I', but it is an infinitely dynamic and mobile kind of 'I' in the sense that it is an 'I' that can at any moment be freely turned into 'THIS' and reveal itself in the latter form. In the same way, 'THIS' is not fixedly 'THIS'. It is a 'THIS' that is ready at any moment to change into 'I' and begin to function as an aspect of, or in the form of, 'I'. All this is possible simply because each 'I' and 'THIS' is in itself a total actualization of the same entire Field.

## VI The Field Structure of Ultimate Reality

We are now in a position to analyze more theoretically the basic structure of Zen epistemology. For that purpose we propose to introduce the concept of 'Field' into our exposition. In fact, what we have been discussing in the foregoing under the key-term 'Mind' may philosophically be represented as a peculiar kind of dynamic Field, from which one could obtain *through abstraction* the perceiving 'subject' and, again *through abstraction*, the object perceived. The 'Field' thus understood will refer to the original, unbroken unity of the whole, functioning as the epistemological *prius* of our experience of the phenomenal world.

We must remember in this connection that the philosophical thinking of Zen – and of Buddhism in general – is based on, and centers around, the category of *relatio* instead of *substantia*. Everything, the whole world of Being, is looked at from a relational point of view. Nothing is to be regarded as self-subsistent and self-sufficient. The 'subject' is 'subject' because it is relative to 'object'. The 'object' is 'object' because it is relative to 'subject'. In this system there is no such thing as *Ding an sich*. The *an sich* is most emphatically denied. For a *Ding* can be established as a *Ding* only when it is permeated by the light of the 'subject'. Likewise there is no 'mind' or 'subject' which has no reference to the sphere of *Dinge*. And since the 'subject' which is thus essentially relative to the 'object', is, as we have seen earlier, both the individual 'mind' and the universal Mind, the whole thing, i.e. the Field itself, must necessarily be also of a relational nature. It is in fact a Relation itself between the sensible and the supra-sensible.

Viewed in the light of this consideration, what we ordinarily call and regard as 'mind' (or 'subject', 'consciousness',



are Mind' at the empirical level, however philosophically elaborated it may be, wondering how it is at all possible for the whole universe to be reduced to one single mind. Note that the word 'mind' itself is taken in the sense of the empirical ego. Chang Sha's answer is a rhetorical question. He means to say: It is absolutely impossible to reduce the whole universe to one single mind, because the whole universe *is* from the beginning the Mind, there being no discrepancy between them. There is, in this understanding, no opposition between the mountains, rivers and the great earth as 'external' Nature and the mind as the 'internal' domain. There is no 'mind' to assimilate the external Nature into its own 'inner' unity.

falling on no other place. Tell me, if you can! To what place does it fall?' Then, without waiting for an answer, he himself replied: 'It drops upon your eyes! It is penetrating into your nose!'

It is highly significant that Huang Lung combines here two contradictory statements. On the one hand, he says, the rain is falling on no other place, and, on the other, he states that it is falling upon the nose and eyes.

The rain does not fall anywhere, to begin with, because in the cosmic landscape of the Mind, the whole universe is nothing other than Rain. If the *whole* universe is Rain, it will be but natural that the latter should find no 'other' place upon which to fall. The entire universe which is no other than the Mind (i.e. *SEE*), is Raining. And since the universe in its entirety is Raining, the Rain, if it falls at all anywhere, cannot but fall to its own self. That is to say, Raining in this particular situation is the same as non-Raining. Yet, on the other hand, it is also true that the rain is actually falling upon the bodily eyes and penetrating into the bodily nose of an individual person. Otherwise there would be no awareness of the 'falling and not-falling' of the Rain in the cosmic dimension of the Mind. The bodily eyes and nose of an individual concrete person are the only *loci* where the Mind-Rain can actualize itself here and now.

What precedes is to be considered a lengthy paraphrase of the Zen interpretation of the 'Mind-Only'-Theory as represented by the extremely terse dictum: *I chieh hsin* (J.: *Issai shin*), 'all things are Mind'. It will have been understood by now that a dictum of this sort does not mean that the whole universe comes into, or is contained in, the 'mind'. It simply means that the whole universe *is* in itself and by itself the Mind.

A monk once asked the famous Zen master Chang Sha Ching Ch'ên (J.: Chōsha Keishin, Ninth century): 'How is it possible to transform the mountains, rivers, and the great earth (i.e. the whole universe) and reduce them to my own mind?' The master answered: 'How is it possible, indeed, to transform the mountains, rivers and the great earth and reduce them to my own mind?' The question and the answer are exactly identical with each other, word for word. But they arise from two entirely different dimensions of awareness. The monk who asks the question understands the 'all things

fluttering is an *actus* of the Mind. But here again we find ourselves faced with a paradoxical situation – ‘paradoxical’ from the viewpoint of common sense. For the ‘whole universe’ in this understanding is nothing other than the Mind. Since the Mind is in this manner an absolute whole for which there is no distinction of the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’, and beyond which or apart from which there can be nothing ‘else’ conceivable, the fluttering of the Mind is no fluttering at all. There is in reality absolutely no movement here. As we have observed before, the Eternal-Present is eternally calm and tranquil in spite of all the motions of the Mind on another dimension.

This ‘paradoxical’ structure of Reality is beautifully and concisely pictured in the famous saying of P’ang Yün (J.: Hō On):<sup>35</sup>

Lovely snow flakes! They are falling on no other place.

It is snowing hard. It is snowing in big beautiful white flakes. Each one of these flakes, considered individually and as a phenomenon pertaining to external Nature, is certainly falling from the sky to the earth. However, at a metaphysical-epistemological stage at which both the snow and the ego-spectator are fused into the original unity of the Mind so that the whole universe has turned into the snow, the snow flakes have no place upon which to fall. As an external landscape, the snow flakes are falling. But as an inner landscape of the Mind, there is no falling, no movement, for the whole universe cannot fall toward any other place. Motion can take place only in a ‘relative’ world. It is meaningless to speak of the motion of a thing in a dimension where there is conceivable no ‘outside’ system of reference which the thing may be referred to. If, even then, we are to use the ‘image’ of falling, we would probably have to say that the snow flakes, i.e. the Mind, is falling toward their own place, i.e. the Mind. But evidently such a falling is no falling at all.

Exactly the same idea is expressed by Huang Lung Hui Nan (J.: Ō Ryū E Nan, 1001-1069)<sup>36</sup> through a similar imagery:

‘The drizzling spring rain! It has been falling from last evening, through the whole night until dawn. Drop after drop, it falls. But it is

This remark of Hui Nêng about the 'fluttering' of the 'mind', as it stands, is liable to lead one into thinking that he was speaking of the individual mind or the individual consciousness of a concrete person. Furthermore, this interpretation seems in fact to suit the situation very well. It does give a certain amount of insight into an important aspect of the Zen world-view. One might find this kind of explanation interesting or curious, and being satisfied, go no further. But that will be fatal to the real understanding of the Zen world-view.

The truly delicate point about this is that such an interpretation of the situation here in question is not entirely wrong either. For it is partially true, though not totally. In order to obtain a total understanding of the matter, we have to begin by taking the word 'mind' as it was used by Hui Nêng in the sense of the Mind or *SEE* having reference to both the empirical and transcendental dimensions of the Zen awareness. It is the Mind taken in this sense that *really* moves.

This last statement implies first of all that in the empirical dimension, the mind of the individual person is set in motion. And the movement or 'fluttering' of the concrete and individual mind on the empirical level of experience becomes actualized in the fluttering motion of the flag in the wind. Here again, be it remarked, there is properly speaking absolutely no room for the word *and* to be inserted between the three factors of the movement. The utmost we can say by way of description is this: By the very movement of the mind, the flag-wind is set in motion. The movement of these three things is in fact one single movement.

This, however, is still but a partial description of the Reality. For, according to the typical Zen understanding which we have explained earlier, there can be no fluttering of the individual 'mind' unless there be at the same time the fluttering of the Mind. A simultaneous fluttering motion occurs in the two dimensions, sensible and supra-sensible. And since there is no connecting *and* between these two dimensions except in rational analysis, the fluttering of the Mind in reality is the fluttering of the individual consciousness. And the fluttering of the Mind of this nature is actualized in the phenomenal world as a total phenomenon of 'a man being conscious of a flag fluttering in the wind'.

As the flag flutters, the whole universe flutters. And this

O venerable Friends, (instead of being caught in the net of phenomenal things), you should grasp directly the Man who is pulling the wires of these shadowy phenomena behind the scenes. If you but realize that the Man<sup>33</sup> is the ultimate Source of all Buddhas, (you will immediately see that) any place in which you actually are at the present moment is the ultimate and absolute place for you, o Brethren!

(You are now listening to my discourse.) It is not your material bodies that understand the discourse. Do your spleen, stomach and liver understand the discourse? No! Does the empty space understand the discourse? No! What, then, is the one that is actually understanding my discourse? It is no other than you yourself who are thus undeniably standing before me. I mean by 'you' that fellow who, without having any definite visible form, is luminous by himself, illuminating himself. It is this very fellow who is actually listening to this discourse of mine and understands it. If you but realize this point, you are on the spot the same as our spiritual ancestor Buddha. Then, everything you do, in all time without interruption, will be in perfect conformity with Reality.<sup>34</sup>

The inner structure of the Mind is thus extremely elusive, at least to the discriminating intellect. Consequently the word 'mind' as used in Zen texts could be very misleading. There is in any case always noticeable in the actual usage of the word a subtle interplay of the sensible and the supra-sensible orders of things. As a telling example of this point we shall mention a celebrated anecdote concerning the debut of the sixth Patriarch Hui Nêng (J.: E Nô) into the world of Zen Buddhism in southern China.

At that time Hui Nêng was still concealing his identity for some political reasons – so we are told. One day he sat in a corner of a temple in Kuang Chou listening to a lecture being given on a Buddhist Sutra. All of a sudden the wind rose, and the flag at the gate of the temple began to flutter. This immediately induced some of the monks in the audience into a hot debate. It started by one of them remarking, 'Look! The flag is fluttering!' 'No', another objected, 'it is not the flag that is moving. It is the wind that is moving!' An endless discussion ensued as to what was *really* moving, the flag or the wind. At last Hui Nêng could not restrain himself any longer. He said, 'It is not that the wind moves. Nor is it the case that the flag moves. O honorable Brethren, it is in reality your minds that are fluttering!'

cannot be said to be purely transcendental, because the activity of this Cosmic Ego is actualized only through the consciousness of a concrete individual person. We must go further and say that the activity of the concrete individual 'mind' is itself the *actus* of the transcendental Mind. There is thus, properly speaking, absolutely no distance between the sensible and the transcendental. And yet there is a certain respect in which they *are* distinguishable from one another; that is, the individual 'mind' is most concretely individual, while the Cosmic Mind is really (i.e. non-metaphorically) absolute and transcendental. And the Mind-Reality in its real sense is a contradictory unity of these two aspects.

This peculiar structure of the Mind-Reality is indicated by Lin Chi in the following way:-

What do you think is Reality? Reality is nothing other than the Mind-Reality. The Mind-Reality has no definite form. It permeates and runs through the whole universe. It is, at this very moment, in this very place, so vividly present. But the minds of the ordinary people are not mature enough to see this. Thus they establish everywhere names and concepts (like the 'Absolute', the 'Holy', 'enlightenment', etc.), and vainly search after Reality in these names and letters.<sup>30</sup>

The sentence: 'It is, at this very moment, in this very place, so vividly present', refers to the individual and sensible aspect of the Mind-Reality. The Mind-Reality, cosmic and all-pervading as it is, necessarily and invariably actualizes itself in the individual minds of individual persons. This point is made clear by the following words of Lin Chi:

O Brethren, the Mind-Reality has no definite form. It permeates and runs through the whole universe. In the eye it acts as sight; in the ear it acts as hearing; in the nose it acts as the sense of smell; in the mouth it speaks; in the hand it grasps; in the foot it walks. All these activities are originally nothing but one single Spiritual Illumination, which diversifies itself into harmonious correspondences.<sup>31</sup> It is because the Mind has in this way no definite form of its own that it can so freely act in every form.<sup>32</sup>

The contradictory unity of the most concretely individual-present and the most transcendently absolute-eternal in the *actus* of the Mind or *SEE* is given by Lin Chi a very original description in the following passage:

(J.: Ei An Zen Shō), for example, when asked, 'What is the one single color?', replied, 'Easy to recognize are the white particles in the snow; difficult to distinguish are the black (molecules) of soot in the ink'.<sup>27</sup> By this he wanted to indicate that the snow which from afar appears as one single mass of white color is found to contain, if examined closely, an infinite number of white particles each one of which is an individual, self-sufficient entity. In the same manner, in a cake of Chinese ink which appears to be a solid piece of black material, there are an infinity of individual molecules of soot.

Likewise Shao Shan Huan P'u (J.: Shō Zan Kan Fu), when asked, 'What is the aspect of the absolute Unity?', replied, 'A snowy heron flies away into the white sky; the mountain is far away and deep blue is its color'.<sup>28</sup>

More celebrated is the saying of Tung Shan Liang Chieh (J.: Tōzan Ryōkai, 807-869), the founder of the Ts'ao Tung (J.: Sō Tō) sect: 'Snow heaped up in a silver bowl, and a white heron hidden in the light of the full moon'.

The picture of a white thing, or an infinite number of white things, in the very midst of a broad white field, visualizes the subtle and mobile relation between the sensible and the supra-sensible. Metaphysically it refers to the *coincidentia oppositorum* that subsists between Multiplicity and Unity – Multiplicity being in itself Unity, and Unity in itself Multiplicity. *Rūpaṃ śūnyatā, śūnyatāiva rūpaṃ. Rūpān na prthag śūnyatā, śūnyatāyā na prthag rūpaṃ*: 'The sensible is Nothingness, Nothingness is the sensible. The sensible is no other than Nothingness; Nothingness is no other than the sensible'.<sup>29</sup>

The word 'Nothing' in this passage refers to the same thing as what is meant by the word *Mind* or *SEE* about which we have been talking. Since the reality itself which is at issue is of a contradictory – so it seems from the viewpoint of our common sense – nature, we are forced, in trying to describe it, to have recourse to a contradictory use of words, saying for instance, that the Mind is sensible and not sensible, transcendental and not transcendental at one and the same time.

The Mind-Reality can by no means be said to be purely sensible; it is transcendental in the sense that it transcends the limits of the empirical ego. For the Mind in the sense of *SEE* is the self-actualizing activity of the Cosmic Ego. But, again, it

The relation between the Eternal-Present and the Time-Space dimension of existence in Zen consciousness is a very subtle and mobile one. It is mobile in the sense that the delicate equilibrium of the mutual interaction of the two dimensions one upon the other is ready to tilt at any moment to either direction. Thus it is now the Eternal-Present that is more prominently in view; the very next moment the Time-Space axis may protrude itself and hide the Eternal-Present behind it. In order to make this particular situation understandable, Zen sometimes has recourse to expressions that may be regarded as approaching symbolism. Then, instead of just throwing out upon the canvas of language bits of external Nature – as was the case with the description of the mountain landscape by Chia Shan – Zen describes certain things of Nature which are put into particular relations with one another in such a way that the description of Nature itself might graphically reproduce the aforementioned subtle and mobile relation between the two dimensions of Reality. The following verses are but one example:

The shadows of the bamboos are sweeping the staircase,  
But there is no stirring of even a mote of dust.  
The moonlight is piercing to the bottom of the deep river,  
But there is not even a scar left in the waters.

The shadows of the bamboos are actually sweeping the staircase. That is, there is motion and commotion in the empirical dimension of the world. But no dust is stirred up by this phenomenal movement. That is, the supra-phenomenal dimension of Reality is eternally calm and quiet. It must be remarked that the commotion of the Apparent and the non-commotion of the Real are not actually separable one from the other. They actualize themselves simultaneously. That is to say, the non-commotion of the absolute dimension of Reality is actualized precisely through the commotion of the phenomenal dimension of the same Reality. The phenomenal commotion and the absolute tranquility are but two aspects of one single Reality. The act of *SEE* is of such a nature.

This delicate relation between the Apparent and the Real, Multiplicity and Unity in the act of *SEE* comes out still more clearly in some Zen sayings which have specifically been devised to visualize it. The Zen master Yung An Shan Ching



But when the eye is adjusted to colors, and when the ear responds to sounds, all existent things are discriminated and recognized. If all things were not thus distinguishable from one another, how could one see their dream-like existences? But of all these mountains, rivers and the great earth, what is there to change?, what is there not to change?

It is of utmost importance to note that the two different dimensions, i.e. that of the empirical world and that of Nothingness, are actualized at one and the same time in this single act of *SEE*. It is not the case that one witnesses this at one time and experiences that at another. Rather, one sees the Apparent in the Real, and the Real in the Apparent, there being no discrepancy between them. This is why many of the famous Zen sayings, poems and paintings look as if they were simply objective descriptions of Nature. Thus the Zen master Chia Shan Shan Hui (J.: Kas-san Zen-ne, 805-881) – ‘Shan Hui of the mountain Chia’ –, when asked ‘How is the landscape of the mountain Chia (Chia Shan)?’, replied:

Monkeys have already gone home behind the blue peaks  
Embracing their young to their breasts.  
A bird has alighted before the deep-green rocks,  
Carrying a flower-petal in its beak.

Our Fa Yen is related to have remarked once on this poem: ‘For thirty years I have mistakenly regarded this as a description of the external landscape!’

Does this remark of Fa Yen mean that the poem in truth is to be taken as a symbolic presentation of an inner landscape? Definitely not. He is trying to say something entirely different. In fact, the things of Nature like the monkeys, bird, blue peaks, green rock, flower-petal etc., are not symbols for ‘something-beyond’. They *are* so many concretely real things. And the poem in this sense *is* a concrete description of external Nature. The important thing here to remark is that the natural landscape is seen with the eyes of the *SEE*. All the events that are described – the monkeys going home and the bird alighting, holding a flower in its beak – are regarded as the Eternal-Present evolving itself on the empirical axis of time and space. ‘What is there to change?, what is there not to change?’

and the so-called 'subject', i.e. a man, stand face to face with each other like two mirrors reflecting one another, there being absolutely nothing between the two. Since both are like lucid mirrors facing each other, one never can tell which is active and which is passive. In fact each of the two is both active and passive, reflecting and being reflected. There is no distinction to be made here between the 'subject' and the 'object' – 'the man sees the mountain, the mountain sees the man', as the above-mentioned Zen saying puts it. Note that there is no place even for the word 'and' between 'the man sees the mountain' and 'the mountain sees the man'. The man, i.e. the 'mind', immediately sees its own reality being reflected – or more strictly we should say: being actualized – in the mountain. But by this very act of the mind, the mountain, on its part, recognizes its own reality as it is actualized in the mind. And throughout the entire process, not a single thing, neither the mind nor the mountain, is objectified. For the whole thing, including the mind and the mountain, the 'subject' and the 'object', is a single act of *SEE*, one single act of the Mind-Reality. This, however, is not to assert that the act of *SEE* is pure 'subjectivity' because where there is absolutely no objectification of anything, there can be no subjectification of anything either.

But such a situation is not certainly anything which one could expect to actualize in the dimension of ordinary empirical experience. It actualizes, if at all, only in an extraordinary – so it appears to common sense – dimension of consciousness. Thus Fa Yen himself later developed his own idea about this point in his celebrated poem entitled 'The Whole World is One Single Mind' as follows:

The whole world is but one single Mind. And all that exist are but one single Cognition. Since there is nothing but Cognition, and since all are but one Mind, the eye is able to recognize sounds and the ear colors. If colors do not enter into the ear, how could sounds touch the eye?

And yet the field of the Mind is so limitlessly vast and infinitely flexible that it may, and does, happen that the eye responds specifically to colors, and the ear to sounds. Then it is that the empirical world takes its rise out of the depths of the Mind. He goes on to say:

monk Chao: 'The heaven and earth (i.e. the whole universe) is of one and the same root as my own self, and all things are one with me',<sup>26</sup> while Ti Tsang listened to them silently. Then suddenly he asked, 'Are the mountains, rivers, and the earth one and the same thing as the self, or different?' 'One and the same', Fa Yen replied. Thereupon, the aged Zen master, without saying anything, put up two fingers, gazed intently at them, then retired to his own room.

As the rain stopped, the three young men were about to leave, when all of a sudden the master Ti Tsang, pointing at a stone in the courtyard said to Fa Yen, 'I understand that you hold the doctrine of the whole world being one single mind. Is, then, this stone inside the mind or outside?' 'Of course it is in the mind', replied Fa Yen. Thereupon Ti Tsang remarked, 'What a cumbersome burden you have in your mind! Due to what kind of network of causes do you have to carry about in the mind such a heavy stone?'

Fa Yen, who did not know what to say, decided to stay there to put himself under the spiritual guidance of Ti Tsang. There Fa Yen learnt that all the philosophical ideas and theories that he had studied were absolutely of no avail if he wanted to obtain the final ultimate answer to the most ultimate existential question. A month or so had passed when one day, having been driven by Ti Tsang into a logical *impasse* and having finally confessed, 'O Master, I am now in a situation in which language is reduced to silence and thinking has no way to follow!', he heard his master remark, 'If you still are to talk about the ultimate Reality, see how it is nakedly apparent in everything and every event!' Fa Yen is thereupon said to have attained enlightenment.

This final remark of Ti Tsang discloses the Zen understanding of the thesis that 'the entire world of Being is but one single mind'. The thesis in this understanding means first and foremost that the self – which at this stage will more properly be written Self – directly and immediately sees its own self reflected on all things as 'two mirrors facing each other without there being between them even a shadow of a thing'.

Thus for a Zen master like Ti Tsang, the dictum: 'all things are but one mind' simply refers to a peculiar state of awareness in which the so-called 'object', a mountain for instance,

it is a state prior to the basic dichotomy of 'subject' and 'object'. Curiously enough, be it remarked, the word *hsin* ('mind') in this context is exactly synonymous with the word *wu-hsin* ('no-mind') which we encountered in an earlier context. The Mind understood in this sense is often called the *hsin fa* (J.: *shin bū*), the Mind-Reality.

As will be explained fully later, the 'mind' as understood in the ordinary sense is, in the view of Zen, but an abstraction, that is, the 'subjective' aspect of the Mind-Reality grasped as an independent factor and posited as an individual, self-subsistent psychological principle. When, therefore, Zen asserts that 'all things are but one mind', it does not mean that the mind as ordinarily understood produces or creates all things out of itself. It simply wants to indicate how out of the Mind-Reality there emerges what we ordinarily recognize as subject and object. The 'mind' as understood in the ordinary sense is in this view only an element indistinguishably fused with its 'objective' counterpart into the unity of the Mind-Reality as a totality.

It often happened, however, in the course of the history of Buddhism that the Mind-Reality was confused with the 'mind'. As a concrete example of this confusion, let us examine the famous anecdote concerning the great Zen master Fa Yen Wên I (J.: Hō Gen Mon Eki, 885-958), the founder of the Fa Yen school, a remarkably philosophical mind, who had been famous before his experience of enlightenment for upholding the idealist position generally known as the 'Mind-Only' - Theory. The theory, put in a nutshell, holds that the whole world of Being is nothing but a grand manifestation of one single 'mind', and that all that exist are nothing but so many products of one single act of 'cognition'.<sup>25</sup>

Once Fa Yen was travelling with two companions in search of the Truth, when they happened to take shelter from rain in a hermitage belonging to a great Zen master of the age, Ti Tsang Kuei Ch'ên (J.: Ji Zō Kei Jin, 867-928). They did not know, however, who he was.

Against the background of the drizzling rain, the three young men discussed with enthusiasm, self-conceit and self-satisfaction, the problems raised by the famous dictum of the

There is here no ego that sees and recognizes a thing as 'something'; nor is there any thing to be seen or recognized as such. For the 'object', whatever it may be, is no longer an object, because it has been deprived of all delimitations. The whole Being at this stage has turned into a vast, limitless space of Void in which nothing may be grasped as something definite. Man directly experiences in such a situation the whole world of Being as Nothingness.

But this very description of Nothingness clearly tells us that the Nothingness which is experienced in this way is by no means 'nothing' in the purely negative sense as the word is liable to be understood. On the 'subjective' side – if we still want to hold fast to the subject-object distinction – the experiencing of Nothingness does not mean our consciousness becoming completely vacant and empty. Quite the contrary; consciousness here is its own self in its pristine purity, a pure Light or sheer Illumination, being illuminated by itself and illuminating itself. It is the *SEE* of which mention has often been made.

But this Illumination, through illuminating itself, illumines at the same time the entire world of Being. This means that on the 'objective' side too, things are not simply reduced to 'nothing' in the negative sense of the term. True, at this stage none of the individual existents exists self-subsistently. But this is not the same as saying that they are simply nil. On the contrary, they are there as concrete individuals, while being at the same time so many actualizations of the limitless, 'aspect'-less aspect of an ever-active, ever-creative Act. But this Act, for the Zen consciousness, is no other than the Illumination of the *SEE* itself which we have just established as the 'subjective' side of the experience of Nothingness.

Instead of describing the *SEE* as Light or Illumination, Zen often refers to this simple Verb *SEE* by the term *hsin*, the Mind. And it often speaks of all things being the products of the Mind. It will have been understood by now that this and other similar assertions are not made on the basis of an idealist view which would reduce everything to 'thought' or 'ideas'. For the Mind as understood by Zen is not the minds of individual persons. What is meant by the word Mind is Reality before it is broken up into the so-called 'mind' and 'thing';

basic stages in the process of the birth and establishment of the *prajñā*-type of cognition, although, to be sure, each of these subjective stages does imply the presence of a corresponding ontological dimension.

Thus the key-word Nothingness in this context refers first and foremost to the nullification of the selfhood, the ego, conceived and represented as a self-subsistent entity. The core of the ego which has hitherto been distinguishing itself from all others, is now broken down and becomes nullified. But the nullification of the empirical ego as conceived by Zen Buddhism cannot be achieved by a total annihilation of consciousness. The epistemological Nothingness about which Zen talks is not to be confused with the state of sheer unconsciousness.

True, the awareness of *myself* as appears in the above-introduced formula (*I SEE*) *myself* is no longer there. In this sense, and in this sense only, the epistemological Nothingness is a region of unconsciousness. However, in place of the awareness of the empirical ego, there is actualized here the absolute Awareness itself, which we have expressed above by the formula:  $S \rightarrow$  or *SEE*, and which has not been activated in the domain of the empirical ego. Zen often calls it an 'ever-lucid Awareness' – *liao liao ch'ang chih*, a phrase attributed to the second Patriarch of Zen Buddhism, Hui K'o (J.: E Ka, 487-593). Strictly speaking, there is in this absolute Awareness no trace even of *I*, so that the formula  $S \rightarrow$ , or *I SEE* must, as we have observed earlier, ultimately be reduced to *SEE* alone. Far from being 'Nothingness' in the negative sense of the term, it is an extremely intense consciousness, so intense indeed that it goes beyond being 'consciousness'.<sup>23</sup>

In exact correspondence to the total transformation of the subject, there occurs on the side of the 'objects' also a drastic change, so much so that they cease to subsist as 'objects'. It is but natural, because where there is no 'subject' confronting 'object', there can be no 'object' remaining. All things at this stage lose their essential delimitations. And being no longer obstructed by their own ontological limits, all things flow into one another, reflecting each other and being reflected by each other in the limitlessly vast field of Nothingness.<sup>24</sup> The mountain is here no longer a mountain, the river is no longer a river, for on the corresponding subjective side, 'I' am no longer 'I'.

world is not a world; therefore it deserves to be called *world*', or 'A thing – anything whatsoever – is not a thing; therefore it deserves to be called *thing*'. This stage is technically known in Mahayana Buddhism as *miao yu* (J.: *myō u*), 'extraordinary Being'. The Chinese word *miao*, meaning literally 'subtle', 'extraordinary', 'miraculously good', is intended to suggest that reality is being seen or experienced here in an unusually elevated dimension, that it is not the world of Being as it is grasped by the discriminating activity of our relative intellect, although outwardly, that is, seen through the eyes of an ordinary man locked up in the limited sphere of empirical experience, it is still the same old world of ours which has nothing extraordinary about it. For it is the common ordinary world which has once lost itself in the abyss of Nothingness and which, then, has taken rise again in its phenomenal form.

What actually happens in the human consciousness between the stage of 'A is non-A' and the next stage, that of 'A is (again) A', crucially determines the nature of Zen Buddhism. The whole thing centers around the total nullification of all individual things in Nothingness and their rebirth from the very bottom of Nothingness again into the domain of empirical reality as concrete individuals, but completely transformed in their inner structure. And the rise of this kind of consciousness in a concrete individual human mind is what is known in Buddhism as *prajñā* which might be translated as 'transcendental cognition', 'non-discriminating cognition' or Supreme Knowledge. We now see that translation, in whatever way it may be made, is, in a case like this, merely a make-shift. For 'non-discriminating' is but an aspect of this type of cognition; nor does 'transcendental' do justice to its reality, because the latter in its ultimate form is, as we have just seen, a matter of the most concrete and empirical experience which is actualized in the dimension of daily life.

The most important point to note about the rise of the *prajñā* is that it consists in a complete, total transformation occurring in the ego-structure of the subject. Formulated as: ['A is A' → 'A is non-A' → 'A is A'], the whole process might look as if it referred purely to the objective structure of the world. But in truth it concerns, primarily and directly at least, the subjective aspect of reality. The three logical stages reflect the three

of the world the narrow spotlight of the discriminating intellect.

The basic difference, however, between the ordinary type of logic and Zen logic comes out with an undeniable clarity at the next stage. For the former naturally develops the law of identity into the law of non-contradiction (*A* is not non-*A*), while the latter develops it into a glaring contradiction, asserting: '*A* is non-*A*'. Zen refers to this contradictory stage by the dictum: 'Mountain is not mountain'. It must be borne in mind, however, that when Zen makes an assertion of this kind, it does not do so in the same epistemological dimension as that of '*A* is *A*'. As long as one remains at the level of '*A* is *A*', i.e. the level of empirical experience, one would never be able to say at the same time, '*A* is non-*A*', unless one goes out of one's mind. This fact will become evident beyond any doubt when one encounters a more strange-looking expression like: 'The bridge flows on; the river does not flow'.<sup>22</sup> Otherwise expressed, the making of an assertion of this sort presupposes on the part of the person the actualization of a total transformation of consciousness in such a way that he is thereby enabled to witness *A* as it 'becomes' *A* itself to such an extent that it breaks through its own *A*-ness, and begins to disclose to him its formless, essenceless, and 'aspect'-less aspect.

Thus understood, the formula: '*A* is non-*A*' will have to be more analytically paraphrased as: '*A* is so thoroughly *A* itself that it is no longer *A*'. Metaphysically, this is the stage of *chên k'ung* (J.: *shin kū*), the 'real Nothingness'. Here *A* is not *A* in the positive sense that it is absolutely beyond the determinations and delimitations of *A*-ness, that it is something infinitely more than mere *A*.

The third stage which immediately follows – or rather we should say: which establishes itself at the same time as – the stage of '*A* is non-*A*' is again '*A* is *A*'. That is to say, at the final stage, we apparently come back to the initial stage. 'Mountain is (again) mountain'. Or, as a more popular Zen adage goes: 'The flower is red, and the willow is green'. In spite of the formal identity, however, the inner structure of '*A* is *A*' is completely different in the two cases. For at the last stage '*A* is *A*' is but an abbreviated expression standing for '*A* is non-*A*; therefore it is *A*'. The Diamond Sutra, to which reference has already been made, describes this situation by saying: 'The



But the word 'Nothingness' as used in Zen Buddhism must be understood in a very peculiar sense.

'Nothingness' in this context, to begin with, refers to the last and ultimate stage in the actualization of Zen consciousness, at which the self, ceasing to set itself up as an 'object' for itself, 'becomes' the self itself, and that so thoroughgoingly that it is no longer even its own self. It is in fact one of the most fundamental philosophical tenets of Zen Buddhism that when a thing – anything whatsoever – becomes its own self thoroughgoingly and completely, to the utmost extent of possibility, it ends by breaking through its own limit and going beyond its determinations. At this stage, *A* is no longer *A*; *A* is non-*A*. Or, to use a terminology which is peculiar to Zen, 'mountain is not mountain'. However, to this statement Zen adds – and this is the most crucial point – that when a thing, by becoming its own self so thoroughgoingly, breaks through its limitations and determinations, then paradoxically it is found to be its own Self in the most real and absolute sense.

This process may conveniently be described in terms of the traditional logical language in the following way.<sup>21</sup> One may note that, thus described, the logic of Zen discloses a remarkable originality which would clarify to a great extent the most characteristic form of thinking in Zen. As in the case of the traditional Aristotelian logic, the starting-point is furnished by the law of identity, '*A* is *A*', which, as we have seen above, constitutes the logical basis of metaphysical essentialism. The law of identity signifies for Zen Buddhism too that a thing, whatever it be, is identical with itself. To express this empirical truth, Zen says: 'Mountain is mountain'.

Thus outwardly at least, there is no difference noticeable here between the Aristotelian logical system and Zen logic. Implicitly, however, already at this initial stage Zen takes a view which considerably differs from the Aristotelian position. For in the law of identity (*A* is *A*) Zen recognizes a characteristic sign of the self-complacency of normal *bon sens*. From the point of view of Zen, the formula: '*A* is *A*', instead of being a description of a well-grounded observation of the structure of reality, is but a logical presentation of the illusory view of reality seen through the veil of *Māyā*, which is the natural outcome of man's casting upon each of the things

seeming solidity. It is felt that the *Dasein* in its empirical form is not the real form of Being, that it is but a pseudo-reality. Urged by an irresistible drive pushing him from the pseudo-reality towards what he thinks to be the real reality, whatever and wherever it might be, man betakes himself to this or that way of possible salvation. Here Zen Buddhism proposes 'sitting cross-legged in meditation' as the most authentic way for cultivating a special eye to see reality as it really is in its original such-ness.

The 'sitting cross-legged in meditation' is a somato-psychological posture by which the naturally centrifugal tendency of the mind might be curbed, and turned toward the opposite, i.e. centripetal, direction until finally the pseudo-ego loses itself in the realization of the true Selfhood which we have indicated by the formula  $S \rightarrow$ .

Zen asserts that this kind of somato-psychological posture is an absolute necessity for the realization of the true Selfhood, i.e. the state of absolute subjectivity, because the real 'self' is never attainable through a purely mental process, be it representation, imagination, or thinking. For it is not a mere matter of cognition. The question is not 'knowing' one's own true self, but rather 'becoming' it. Unless one 'becomes' one's own self, however far one may proceed along the successive stages of self-cognition, the self will not turn into an absolute Selfhood. For the real self will go on receding ever further; it will forever remain an 'object', an object known or to be known. The self as a known object, at no matter how high a stage the cognition may happen to be, cannot by nature be pure subjectivity. In order to realize the self in a state of pure and absolute subjectivity, one has to 'become' it, instead of merely 'knowing' it. But in order to achieve this, the whole unity of 'mind-body' – as suggested by the above-mentioned expression of Dōgen – must 'drop off'. The 'sitting cross-legged in meditation' is, as Zen sees it, the best possible, if not the only possible, way of achieving, first, the unity of 'mind-body', and then the unity itself 'dropping off'.

The expression: 'the mind-body dropping off' means, in the more traditional Buddhist terminology, one's experiencing with his total being the epistemological-metaphysical state of Nothingness (Sanskrit: *śūnyatā*, Ch.: *k'ung*, J.: *kū*).

## V. 'The Whole World is One Single Mind'

We have observed in the foregoing that the basic formula  $s \rightarrow o$ , or *i see this*, which is designed to describe schematically the epistemological relation between the perceiving subject and the object perceived, conceals in reality a far more complex mechanism than appears at first sight. For, according to the typically Buddhist analysis, at the back of  $s$  there is concealed ( $S \rightarrow$ ); at the back of  $o$  there is also ( $S \rightarrow$ ). And the whole thing, as we have observed, is ultimately to be reduced to the very simple, all-pervading and all-comprehensive act of *SEE*.

It often happens that this *SEE*, which is in Zen understanding nothing other than the absolute or ultimate Reality, makes itself felt in the mind of a man living in the empirical dimension of existence. The first symptom of the ultimate Reality breaking into the empirical dimension is observable in the fact that the man in such a situation begins to feel uneasy about the nature of the reality as he actually sees it. Although he is still completely locked up in the dichotomous world-view, he somehow begins to entertain a vague feeling that the true reality, both of himself and of the external things, must be something of an entirely different nature. He vaguely notices at the same time that he is actually undergoing all the tribulations and miseries of human existence simply because he cannot see the reality as he should. This phenomenon, of decisive importance both religiously and philosophically, is called in Chinese Buddhism *fa hsin* (J.: *hosh-shin*), meaning literally the raising of the mind, i.e. the raising of a deep and strong aspiration toward the enlightenment of Buddha. Philosophically, it is to be understood as the very first self-manifestation of the metaphysical  $S \rightarrow$ .

Once this beginning stage is actualized, the *Dasein* as it is naturally given loses, subjectively as well as objectively, its

in a peculiar state prior to its being bifurcated into these two terms. The verbal form itself of *SEE* may, at least vaguely, be suggestive of the fact that, instead of being a thing, be it an 'absolute' thing or be it a 'transcendental' substance, it is an *actus* charging an entire field with its dynamic energy. In terms of the previously introduced basic formula we might say that the whole process of *i see this* is itself the field of the Act of *SEE*. The real meaning of this statement, however, will be made clear only by our analyzing in more detail the basic inner structure of this dynamic field. That will be our task in the following pages.

the Buddhist view, it is not the case that there does exist in the external world a substance with a certain number of qualities, called 'apple'. The truth is rather that Something phenomenally appears to the subject as an 'apple'. The phenomenal appearance of the 'apple' as an 'apple' depends upon a certain positive attitude on the part of the subject. Conversely, however, the very fact that 'apple' phenomenally appears as such to his eyes, establishes man as the perceiving ego, the subject of cognition. Zen describes this reciprocal relationship or determination between the subject and the object by saying: 'Man sees the mountain; the mountain sees man'.

The reality in the true sense of the word, therefore, is Something lying behind both the subject and object and making each of them emerge in its particular form, this as the subject and that as the object. The ultimate principle governing the whole structure is Something which runs through the subject-object relationship, and which makes possible the very relationship to be actualized. It is this all-pervading, active principle that we want to indicate by the formula  $S \rightarrow$ , or rather in its ultimate form, the Verb *SEE*.

But again, the word 'something' or 'ultimate principle' must not mislead one into thinking that behind the veils of phenomena some metaphysical, supra-sensible Substance is governing the mechanism of the phenomenal world. For there is, according to Zen, in reality nothing beyond, or other than, the phenomenal world. Zen does not admit the existence of a transcendental, supra-sensible order of things, which would subsist apart from the sensible world.<sup>20</sup> The only point Zen Buddhism makes about this problem is that the phenomenal world is not just the sensible order of things as it appears to the ordinary empirical ego; rather, the phenomenal world as it discloses itself to the Zen consciousness is charged with a peculiar kind of dynamic power which may conveniently be indicated by the Verb *SEE*.

Thus what is meant by *SEE* is not an absolute, transcendental Entity which itself might be something keeping itself beyond, and completely aloof from the phenomenal things. Rather, what is really meant thereby in Zen Buddhism is a dynamic field of power in its entirety and wholeness, an entire field which is neither exclusively subjective nor exclusively objective, but comprehending both the subject and the object

primary or most elementary aim of Zen Buddhism with regard to those who, being locked up in the magic circle of ontological dichotomy; cannot see beyond the surface meaning of  $s \rightarrow o$  or *i see this* as suggested by its syntactic structure ('subject'  $\rightarrow$  'act'  $\rightarrow$  'object'), consists in attempting to break the spell of dualism and remove it from their minds, so that they might stand immediately face to face with what we have symbolically designated by the Verb *SEE*.

We may do well to recall at this point that Buddhism in general stands philosophically on the concept of *prāṭīyasamutpāda* (J.: *engi*) i.e. the idea that everything comes into being and exists as what it is by virtue of the infinite number of relations it bears to other things, each one of these 'other things' owing again its seemingly self-subsistent existence to other things. Buddhism in this respect is ontologically a system based upon the category of *relatio*, in contrast to, say, the Platonic-Aristotelian system which is based on the category of *substantia*.

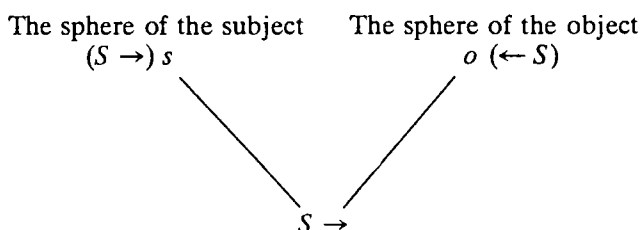
A philosophical system which stands upon the category of *substantia* and which recognizes in substances the most basic ontological elements, almost inevitably tends to assume the form of essentialism.

What is meant by essentialism has roughly been outlined in an earlier context. Just to recapitulate the gist of the essentialist argument for the purpose of elucidating, by contrast, the nature of the position taken by Zen Buddhism, we might remark that the essentialist position sees on both the 'subjective' and 'objective' sides of the  $s \rightarrow o$  type of situation self-subsistent substances, the boundaries of each of which are inalterably fixed and determined by its 'essence'. Here *o*, say, an apple, is a self-subsistent substance with a more or less strictly delimited ontological sphere, the delimitation being supplied by its own 'essence', i.e. apple-ness. In the same manner, the ego which, as the subject, perceives the apple is an equally self-subsistent substance furnished with an 'essence' which, in this case, happens to be its I-ness. Zen Buddhism summarizes the essentialist view through the succinct dictum: 'Mountain is mountain, and river is river'.

The position of *prāṭīyasamutpāda* stands definitely against this view. Such a view, Buddhism asserts, does nothing other than reflect the phenomenal surface of reality. According to

This new formula is so designed as to indicate that here, too,  $o$  is the only thing which is externally manifested, but that behind this phenomenal form there lies hidden the activity of  $(S \rightarrow)$ , of which the empirical ego is still unaware.

In this way, the so-called subject-object relationship or the whole epistemological process by which a (seemingly) self-subsistent ego-substance perceives a (seemingly) self-subsistent object-substance, and which we have initially represented by the formula  $s \rightarrow o$ , must, if given in its fully developed form, be somewhat like this:



In this last formulation, the  $s$  or the empirical ego, which is but a particular actualization of  $(S \rightarrow)$ , is put into a special active-passive relation with the 'object' or  $o$ , which is also a particular actualization of the same  $(S \rightarrow)$ . And the whole process is to be understood as a concrete actualization of  $I SEE$ , or  $S \rightarrow$  without brackets. But even in the  $I SEE$  there is still noticeable a faint lingering trace of ego-consciousness. Zen emphatically requires that even such an amount of ego-consciousness should be erased from the mind, so that the whole thing be ultimately reduced to the simple act of  $SEE$  pure and simple. The word 'no-mind' to which reference has been made refers precisely to the pure act of  $SEE$  in the state of an immediate and direct actualization, that is, the eternal Verb  $SEE$  without brackets.

We now begin to notice that the reality of what has been expressed by the formula: *i see this*, is of an extremely complicated structure at least when described analytically from the viewpoint of the empirical ego. The real metaphysico-epistemological situation which is covertly and implicitly indicated by the formula  $s \rightarrow o$ , turns out to be something entirely different from what we usually understand from the outward grammatical structure of the sentence. And the

( $S \rightarrow$ )  $s$   
or: ( $I \text{ SEE}$ ) *myself*.

As we shall see later in more detail, the empirical ego,  $s$ , can be the real center of all its activities simply because that hidden Principle, ( $S \rightarrow$ ), is constantly functioning through  $s$ . The empirical ego can be selfhood only because every subjective movement it makes is in truth the actualization here and now of that Something which *is* the real Selfhood. The nature of the activity of ( $I \text{ SEE}$ ) may best be understood when it is put side by side with its Islamic parallel presented by the *irfān* type of philosophy which finds an explicit reference to the same kind of situation in the words of God in the Qur'ān: 'It was not you who threw when you did throw: it was (in reality) God who threw'.<sup>18</sup> The important point, however, is that this state of affairs is at this level still completely hidden to, and remains unnoticed by, the empirical ego. The latter sees itself alone; it is totally unaware of the part between the brackets: ( $S \rightarrow$ ).

Exactly the same applies to the 'objective' side of the epistemological relation (represented in the above-given formula by the small  $o$ ). Here again the empirical ego has the awareness only of the presence of 'things'. The latter appear to the ego as self-subsistent entities that exist independently of itself. They appear as substances qualified by various properties, and as such they stand opposed to the perceiving subject which sees them from outside. Viewed from the standpoint of the above-mentioned *prajñā*, the 'transcendental cognition', however, a thing rises as this or that thing before the eyes of the empirical ego simply by virtue of the activity of that very same Something, ( $S \rightarrow$ ), which, as we have seen, establishes the ego as an ego. A thing,  $o$ , comes to be established as the thing,  $o$ , itself as a concrete actualization of that Something. It is properly to be understood as a self-manifesting form of the same *tathâgata-garbha*, the 'Womb of the absolute Reality' which is eternally and permanently active through all the phenomenal forms of the things.<sup>19</sup>

Thus the formula representing the inner structure of  $o$  must assume a more analytic form:

( $S \rightarrow$ )  $o$   
or: ( $I \text{ SEE}$ ) *this*.



existence of the ego-substance which stands opposed to external substantial objects. Whether the subject be represented as being outside the world of objects or inside, this very basic Cartesian opposition is, from the standpoint of Zen, something to be demolished before man begins to see the reality of himself and of so-called external objects.

In truth, however, even in the midst of this empirical view of the things there is hidden something like a metaphysical principle which is, though invisible, constantly at work, ready to be realized at any moment through the human mind to transform the normal view of the world into something entirely different. This hidden principle of the metaphysico-epistemological transformation of reality is called in Buddhism *tathâgata-garbha*, the 'Womb of the absolute Reality'. But in order to see the whole structure from this particular point of view, we shall have to submit it to a more detailed and more theoretical analysis.<sup>16</sup>

The epistemological relation of the ego to the object in the ordinary empirical world-view may be represented by the formula:  $s \rightarrow o$ , which may be read as: *i see this*.<sup>17</sup>

Thus the grammatical subject, *s*, represents the ego-consciousness of man at the level of empirical experience. It refers to the awareness of selfhood as *Da-sein* in the literal sense of 'being-there' as a subject in front of, or in the midst of, the objective world. The *i* is here an independently subsistent ego-substance. As long as the empirical ego remains on the empirical dimension, it is conscious of itself only as being there as an independent center of its own perception, thinking and bodily actions. It has no awareness at all of its being something more than that.

However, from the viewpoint of Zen which intuits everywhere and in everything the act of the *tathâgata-garbha*, the 'Womb of the absolute Reality', there is perceivable, behind each individual *i*, Something whose activity may be expressed by the formula ( $S \rightarrow$ ) or (*I SEE*) the brackets indicating that this activity is still hidden at the empirical level of self-consciousness. Thus the structure of the empirical ego, *s*, in reality, that is, seen with the eye of Zen, must properly be represented by the formula:

Two stages or forms may conveniently be distinguished within the confines of such a world-view. The first is typically represented by Cartesian dualism standing on the fundamental dichotomy of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. As a philosophy, it may be described as an ontological system based on the dualistic tension between two 'substances' that are irreducible to one another. As a world-view, it may appropriately be described as one in which man, i.e. the ego, is looking at things from the outside, he himself being in the position of a spectator. He is not subjectively involved in the events that take place among various things before his own eyes. Man is here a detached onlooker confronting a world of *external* objects. A whole ontological scenery is spread out before him, and he, as an independent personal 'subject', is merely enjoying the colorful view on the stage of the world. This is a view which is the farthest removed from the reality of the things as they reveal themselves to the eyes of the supra-consciousness.

The second stage may conveniently be represented by the Heideggerian idea of the 'being-within-the-world', particularly in the state of the ontological *Verfallenheit*. Unlike the situation we have just observed in the first stage of the dichotomous world-view, man is here subjectively, vitally involved in the destiny of the things surrounding him. Instead of remaining an objective spectator looking from the outside at the world as something independent of him, man, the ego, finds himself in the very midst of the world, directly affecting them and being directly affected by them. He is no longer an outsider enjoying with self-complacency what is going on on the stage of the theatre. He himself *is* on the stage, he *exists* in the world, actively participating in the play, undergoing an undefinable existential anxiety which is the natural outcome of such a position.

The common-sense world-view at this second stage is far closer to Zen than the first stage. Yet, the empirical world-view, whether of the first or the second stage, is strictly speaking totally different from the Zen world-view with regard to its basic structure. For the empirical world-view is a world-view worked out by the intellect that can properly exercise its function only where there is a distinction made between *ego* and *alter*. The whole mechanism stands on the conviction, whether explicit or implicit, of the independent

## IV The Structure of the Empirical Ego

From the point of view of Zen Buddhism, the 'essentialist' tendency of the empirical ego is not admissible not only because it posits everywhere 'objects' as permanent substantial entities, but also, and particularly, because it posits itself, the empirical ego, as an ego-substance. It not only sticks or adheres to the external 'objects' as so many irreducible realities, but it clings to its own self as an even more irreducible, self-subsistent reality. This is what we have come to know as the 'abiding mind' (*praṣṭhitam cittam*). And a whole world-view is built up upon the sharp opposition between the 'abiding mind', i.e. the 'subject' and its 'objects'. This dichotomy of reality into subject and object, man and the external world, is the foundation of all our empirical experiences. Of course even common-sense is ready to admit that the phenomenal world, including both external things and the personal ego, is in a state of constant flux. But it tends to see within or behind this transiency of all things some elements which remain permanently unchangeable and substantial. Thus is created an image of the world of Being as a realm of self-identical objects, even the so-called 'subject' being strictly speaking in such a view nothing but one of the 'objects'. It is precisely this kind of ontological view that Zen Buddhism is firmly determined to destroy once for all in order to replace it by another ontology based upon an entirely different sort of epistemology.

For a better understanding of the world-view which is peculiar to the supra-consciousness, let us, first, take up the normal type of world-view which is most natural and congenial to the human mind, and analyze its inner structure at a philosophical level.

not enough for us to suppress the rise of, or nullify, the object-making consciousness; we should more positively let a particular kind of mind emerge which, though fully conscious of itself as well as of external things, does not recognize any self-subsistent essences in them. This is what we would call supra-consciousness. And this is no other than the 'no-mind' with which we started our discussion in the present section.

The preceding explanation may have succeeded in at least giving a vague general idea regarding the nature of the supra-consciousness. But it has certainly clarified neither its philosophical structure nor the psychological process by which one reaches such a state of the mind. So let us go back once again to the daily level of ontological experience and begin by analyzing the structure of cognition that is typical of that level, with a view to understanding on the basis of that analysis the fundamental metaphysico-epistemological make-up of the supra-consciousness.

about the 'no-mind'. The musician is so completely absorbed in his act of playing, he is so completely one with the harp and music itself, that he is no longer conscious of the individual movements of his fingers, of the instrument which he is playing, nor even of the very fact that he is engaged in playing. In reference to such a situation, no one would say, except figuratively or in a loose sense, that the musician is 'unconscious'. For he *is* conscious. Rather, his consciousness is at the utmost limit of self-illumination. The aesthetic tension of his mind runs so high throughout his whole being that he himself is the music he is playing. Paradoxical as it may sound, he is so fully conscious of himself as identified with music that he is not 'conscious' of his act of playing in any ordinary sense of the word. In order to distinguish such a state of consciousness from both 'consciousness' and 'unconsciousness' as ordinarily understood, we will use the word 'supra-consciousness'.

These and similar cases of 'creative' activity that are known not only in the Far East but in almost every culture in the world are instances of the actualization of the 'no-mind' at the level of ordinary life. But at this level, the actualization of the 'no-mind' is but a sporadic and rather unusual phenomenon. What Zen purports to do is to make man cultivate in himself the state of 'no-mind' in such a systematic way that it might become his *normal* state of consciousness, that he might begin to see everything, the whole world of Being, from the vantage point of such a state of consciousness.

It is to the supra-consciousness thus understood – not in its limited application to aesthetic experience, but as developed into the normal state of an absolute Selfhood – that the famous words of the Diamond Sutra refer:<sup>15</sup>

*Evam apraṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam  
Yanna kvacit praṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam*

(One should never let an abiding mind emerge;  
A mind thus non-abiding one should let emerge.)

The *praṣṭhitam cittam* 'abiding mind' means a mind abiding by something, i.e. sticking to 'objects'. Instead of letting, the Sutra says, such an 'essentializing' consciousness emerge, one should raise a mind that does not adhere to any 'object' in its essential delimitation. This is tantamount to saying that it is

### III Consciousness and Supra-Consciousness

At the end of the preceding section mention was made of the 'no-mind' as the subjective source or basis for the non-essentialist type of world view. The 'no-mind', *wu hsin* (J.: *mu-shin*), which may be translated in a more explanatory manner as a 'mind which is no mind', 'mind which exists as a non-existent mind', or 'mind which is in the state of Nothingness', is not to be understood in a purely negative sense as the mind in the state of torpidity and inertness or sheer ecstasy.<sup>14</sup> Quite the contrary, the 'no-mind' is a psychological state in which the mind finds itself at the highest point of tension, a state in which the mind works with utmost intensity and lucidity. As an oft-used Zen expression goes: the consciousness illumines itself in the full glare of its own light. In this state, the mind knows its object so perfectly that there is no longer any consciousness left of the object; the mind is not even conscious of its knowing the object.

The 'no-mind' has in fact played an exceedingly important formative role in the cultural history both of China and Japan. In Japan the main forms of fine art, like poetry, painting, calligraphy, etc., have developed their original types more or less under the influence of the spirit of the 'no-mind'. Many an anecdote, real and fictitious, has been handed down to us: for example, of black-and-white painters whose brush moves on the surface of the paper as if of its own accord, without the artist's being conscious of the movement the brush makes; or of master musicians who, when they play the harp, feel that it is not they themselves who play the music, but that it is as though music played itself.

The example of a master musician absorbed in playing his harp will be good enough to give at least some idea as to what kind of a thing Zen Buddhism is thinking of when it talks

view, it will always remain in the domain of essentialist cognition. According to Zen, it is not enough that an apple should not be seen *as* an apple; it should not be seen *as* anything whatsoever. Positively stated, an apple should be seen without any delimitation. It must be seen in its indetermination. But in order that the apple be seen in such a way, we as the subjects of cognition must see the apple with *wu hsin* (a Chinese technical term meaning literally 'no-mind'). Only when we approach anything with the 'no-mind' does the thing reveal to our eyes its original reality. At the ultimate limit of all negations, that is, the negation of all the essences conceivable of the apple, all of a sudden the extraordinary reality of the apple flashes into our mind. This is what is known in Buddhism as the emergenc of *prajñā*, transcendental or non-discriminating consciousness. And in and through this experience, the apple again manifests itself *as* an apple in the fullest density of existence, in the 'original freshness of the first creation of the heaven and earth'.

All this is actualized only through our actualizing the state of 'no-mind'. The actualization of the 'no-mind' itself is the pivotal point of the whole system. In the following section we shall take up this problem as our special topic.

exactly by pointing out the questionability of the law of identity. To look at an apple as an apple is to see that thing from the very outset in the state of a particular delimitation. To see *A* as *A* is to delimit it to *A*-ness and put it into a fixed, unchangeable state of identity in such a way that it cannot be anything other than *A*. Thus the normal empirical approach to the world is, scholastically, nothing other than outspoken 'essentialism' in that it recognizes as the most basic and self-evident fact that *A* is *A* because of its *A*-ness, i.e. its 'essence' of being *A*.

The *A*-ness, or so-called 'essence' of *A* is understood in this sense, that is, in the sense of the solidly fixed ontological core which unalterably determines the essential limits of a thing, was known in Buddhism in general as *svabhāva*, 'self-essence' or 'self-nature'. All schools in Buddhism, from the earliest periods of its philosophical development, consistently fought against this type of approach to the world, and denounced it as *lokavyavahāra*, 'worldly habit'.<sup>13</sup> A dictum which was recognized already in primitive Buddhism to be one of the three basic tenets of Buddha's teaching, runs (in Pali): *Sabbe dhammā anattā*, i.e. 'All things are ego-less', meaning that nothing of all existent things has a *svabhāva*, i.e. self-subsistent and permanently fixed essence.

But here again Zen Buddhism recognizes the primacy of the state of the mind, and sees the determining factor in the particular structure of the perceiving subject. Each one of the things of the world, whether internal or external, is seen to have its own solidly fixed essence because the mind so sees it, because the mind 'essentializes'. Essences are perceived everywhere by the mind, not because they are objectively there, but simply because the mind is by nature productive of essences. It is the mind that furnishes a thing with this or that particular essence. Even in the domain of daily experience, we sometimes become aware of the fact that we are actually giving various 'essences' to one and the same thing. An apple, for example, is not necessarily always seen as an 'apple'. In fact, it is sometimes seen as a 'fruit'; sometimes as a special 'form', or 'mass of color'. Sometimes we do treat an apple simply as a 'thing'.

The Zen viewpoint, however, insists on going still further. For no matter how many essences a thing may assume in our



The fact that one and the same thing seems different in accordance with different points of view at the level of daily consciousness is of no vital concern to the Zen Buddhist. His problem lies elsewhere, or is of a different order. For he is concerned with the validity or invalidity of the law of identity, 'A is A', which constitutes the primary basis of human life at the empirical level of existence. The Zen Buddhist questions the very validity of the proposition: 'an apple is an apple'.

In the view of a Zen Buddhist, personal and individual differences and discrepancies in the sensory experience of things, are but events occurring all in one and the same epistemological dimension, that of daily or just normal mental activity. And this dimension is the one in which our intellect or reason exercises at ease its natural functions: identification, differentiation and combination. The ultimate principle governing our entire mental activity in this dimension is 'discrimination'. Buddhism calls this basic function of the human mind *vikalpa*, the 'discriminating cognition', in contradistinction to *prajñā*, 'transcendental or non-discriminating cognition'.

One and the same apple for example may very well appear differently to different persons. But, after all, the apple remains an apple. An apple is an apple, in accordance with the law of identity ('A is A'). And it cannot be something other than an apple, i.e. a non-apple, in accordance with the law of non-contradiction, ('A is not non-A'). However great the individual differences may be in the sensory experience of a thing, the thing is not supposed to step out of its own limited region. If, in the presence of an object, one person obtains the visual image of an apple while another sees a cat, for instance, one of them must be in a state of hallucination.

The very first step taken by the *vikalpa* in the exercise of its natural function is to identify or recognize a thing as itself (the recognition of A as A) by discriminating or distinguishing it from all other things (all non-As). An apple must be recognized and established as an apple. This identification based on discrimination is the basis and starting-point for all subsequent stages of mental activity. Without this basis, the whole world of our normal empirical experience would crumble to pieces and things would irremediably fall into utter disorder.

But, as we have remarked above, Zen Buddhism begins

*The Functional Relationship between Subject and Object* 11

remaining always a concrete individual flower here and now, be your own self, or, for that matter, be the same as anything else? Thus, to come back to our earlier simple statement, the world discloses itself to our eyes in exact accordance with the actual state of our consciousness.

Even without going to the utmost degree of spiritual experience such as has been mentioned in connection with Nan Ch'üan's remark on a flower in the courtyard, the same type of correlation between subject and object is easily observable at the level of our daily life. For that purpose let us begin by making a very commonplace observation. It is a matter of ordinary experience that the world, or anything in the world, appears differently to different persons in accordance with different points of view or different interests they happen to have with regard to the things. The fact is not without some philosophical significance.

Bertrand Russell, for instance, has actually made an observation of this sort the starting-point for an exposition of his philosophical ideas in his *The Problems of Philosophy*.<sup>12</sup> In ordinary life, we often speak of *the* color of a table, assuming that it is of one definite color everywhere and for everybody. On a closer scrutiny, however, we find that such is not the case. There is, he argues, no definite color which is *the* color of the table. For it evidently appears to be of different colors from different points of view. And no two persons can see it from exactly the same point of view. Moreover, 'even from a given point of view the color will seem different by artificial light, or to a color-blind man, or to a man wearing blue spectacles, while in the dark there will be no color at all'.

What Zen Buddhism tries to bring home to us at the very first stage would seem structurally no different from this kind of daily experience. However, there is in fact a fundamental difference between the two positions. The Zen Buddhist is not interested in the shifting viewpoints from which an object may be looked at, while the 'subject' remains always on one and the same level of daily experience. Rather, he is thinking of two totally different dimensions of consciousness; that is, he is interested in a sudden, abrupt shift on the part of the perceiving subject from the dimension of daily consciousness to that of supra-consciousness.

to it, remarked: 'Ordinary people see this flower as if they were in a dream!'

The whole context clarifies Nan Ch'üan's intention. It is as though he said, 'Look at that flower blooming in the courtyard. The flower itself is expressing with its very existence the fact that all things are completely one with our own selves in the fundamental unity of ultimate Reality. The Truth stands there naked, wholly apparent. It is, at every moment and in every single thing, disclosing itself so clearly and so straightforwardly. Yet, alas, ordinary people do not possess the eye to see naked Reality. They see every thing only through veils'.

Since, in this way, ordinary people see everything through the veils of their own relative and determined ego, whatever they see is seen in a dreamlike fashion. But they themselves are firmly convinced that the flower as they actually see it as an 'object' in the external world *is* reality. In order to be able to say that such a vision of the flower is so far away from the true reality that it is almost a dream, they must have their empirical ego transformed into something else. Only then will they be able to assert with full confidence with the monk Chao that the object is no other than the subject itself and that the object and the subject become fused in an indescribably subtle and delicate way into one, and ultimately become reduced to the original ground of Nothingness.

The mysterious fusion of subject and object which the monk Chao talks about requires a great deal of further elucidation before it will disclose to us its real meaning. This will be done in detail presently. For the time being let us be content with simply pointing out that even a flower in the garden will appear differently in accordance with different stages in which the mind of the observer happens to be. In order to see in a single flower a manifestation of the metaphysical unity of all things, not only of all the so-called objects but including even the observing subject, the empirical ego must have undergone a total transformation, a complete nullification of itself – death to its own 'self', and rebirth on a totally different dimension of consciousness. For as long as there remains a self-subsistent 'subject' which observes the 'object' from outside, the realization of such a metaphysical unity is utterly inconceivable. Otherwise, how is it possible that a flower,

true reality, then we will have to do something about the very structure of our own consciousness. And that exactly is what Zen Buddhism proposes that we should do.

A famous Zen master of the T'ang dynasty, Nan Ch'üan<sup>8</sup> (J.: Nan Sen), is said to have remarked, pointing with his finger to a flower blooming in the courtyard: 'The ordinary people see this flower as if they were in a dream'. If the flower as we actually see it in the garden is to be likened to a flower seen in a dream, we have only to wake up from the dream in order to see the flower as it *really* is. And this simply means that a total personal transformation is required on the part of the subject, if the latter wants to see the reality of things. But what kind of transformation? And what will be the reality of things seen by us after such transformation?

What Nan Ch'üan himself wants to convey by his statement is quite clear. He means to say that a flower as seen by the ordinary people under normal conditions is an *object* standing before the perceiving *subject*. This precisely is what Nan Ch'üan indicates by his expression: 'a flower seen in a dream'. Here the flower is represented as something different from the man who is looking at it. The flower in its true reality, however, is, according to Nan Ch'üan, a flower which is not distinguished, which is not distinguishable, from the man who sees it, the subject. What is at issue here is a state which is neither subjective nor objective, but which is, at the same time both subjective and objective – a state in which the subject and object, the man and the flower, become fused in an indescribably subtle way into an absolute unity.

In order, however, to go a step further towards the core of the problem with which we are dealing here, we must replace Nan Ch'üan's words into their original context. It is found in a celebrated textbook of Zen Buddhism, *Pi Yen Lu*.<sup>9</sup> It reads as follows:

Once the high official Lu Kêng (J.: Riku Kô)<sup>10</sup> was holding a conversation with Nan Ch'üan, when Lu remarked: 'Sêng Chao<sup>11</sup> once said: "The heaven and earth (i.e. the whole universe) is of one and the same root as my own self, and all things are one with me". This I find pretty difficult to understand'. Thereupon Nan Ch'üan, pointing with his finger at a flower blooming in the courtyard, and calling Lu's attention

## II The Functional Relationship between Subject and Object

The most fundamental philosophical assertion made by Zen at the outset is that there is a functional relationship between the subject and the object, the knower and the known. Zen begins by recognizing a very close correlation between the state of consciousness of the subject and the state of the objective world which the subject perceives. This correlation between subject and object is of an extremely subtle, delicate, and dynamic nature, so much so that the slightest move on the part of the subject necessarily induces a change on the part of the object, however slight it might be.

The observation of this point, trivial though it may appear at first glance, is in reality of paramount importance for a right understanding of Zen Buddhism, whether practical or philosophical. For both the practice of Zen in its entirety and its philosophical elaboration hinge upon such a relationship between subject and object. It is no less important to observe that in this correlation between subject and object, or the ego and the world, Zen – and, for that matter, Buddhism in general – always recognizes the former, i.e. the subject or the ego, to be the determining factor. The particular state in which the perceiving subject happens to be, determines the state or nature of the object perceived. A particular existential mode of the subject actualizes the whole world in a particular form corresponding to it. The phenomenal world rises before the eyes of an observer in accordance with the latter's inner mode of being. In brief, the structure of the subject determines the structure of the world of objective things.

Consequently, if we feel, vaguely or definitely, that the world as we actually observe it is not the real world, that the phenomenal things which we see are not being seen in their

phenomena from the dimension of absolute Reality. His is a two-dimensional personality. He, as a most concrete individual, living among the concretely existent things, does embody something supra-individual. He is an individual who is a supra-individual – two persons fused into a perfect unity of one single person. ‘Do you want to know who is our (spiritual) ancestor, Buddha (i.e. the Absolute)? He is no other than yourself who are here and now listening to my discourse!’ (Lin Chi)<sup>7</sup> The world-view presented by Lin Chi is a very peculiar view of the world as seen through the eyes of such a two-dimensional person. But in order to have a real understanding of the nature of this kind of world-view, we must go back to our starting-point and try to analyze the whole problem in a more theoretical way. In so doing, our emphasis will be laid on two cardinal points: (1) the epistemological structure of the process by which such a double-natured person comes into being, and (2) the metaphysical structure of the world as it appears to his eyes.

Man was but a natural product of the special emphasis which Zen laid on the experience of enlightenment.

Explicitly, however, and in terms of the history of *thought*, the concept or image of Man did not occupy a key-position in Zen Buddhism prior to the appearance of Lin Chi. Before him, Man had always remained in the background. The image had always been there implicitly, but not explicitly. 'Man' had never played the role of a key-term in the history of Zen thought before Lin Chi. Rather, the real key-terms had been words like Mind, Nature, (Transcendental) Wisdom, Reality (or Absolute – *dharma*) and the like, all of which were directly or indirectly of an Indian origin and which, therefore, inevitably had a strong flavor of Indian metaphysics.

With the appearance of Lin Chi, however, the whole picture begins to assume an entirely different, unprecedented aspect. For Lin Chi sets out to put Man at the very center of Zen thought, and to build up around this center an extremely vigorous and dynamic world-view. The image of Man as absolute selfhood which, as we have seen, had always been there implicitly – hidden, so to speak, behind the scenes – was suddenly brought out by Lin Chi into the dazzlingly bright light of the main stage. At the same time we witness here the birth of *a thought*<sup>5</sup> which is truly original and indigenous to the Chinese soil.

Lin Chi's thought is characteristically Chinese in that it puts Man at the very center of a whole world-view, and that, further, his conception of Man is extremely realistic to the extent of being almost pragmatic. It is pragmatic in the sense that it always pictures Man as the most concrete individual who exists at this very place and at this very moment, eating, drinking, sitting and walking around, or even 'attending to his natural wants'. 'O Brethren in the Way', he says in one of his discourses, 'you must know that there is in the reality of Buddhism nothing extraordinary for you to perform. You just live as usual without ever trying to do anything particular, attending to your natural wants, putting on clothes, eating meals, and lying down if you feel tired. Let the ignorant people laugh at me. The wise men know what I mean to say'.<sup>6</sup>

The pragmatic Man, however, is not at all an ordinary 'man' as we represent him at the level of common-sense thinking, for he is a Man who has come back to this world of

man steps beyond the ken of the dichotomizing activity of intellect, ceases to look at his own 'self' from the outside as an object, and *becomes* immediately his own 'self'. The *Zazen*, 'sitting cross-legged in meditation', is a way specifically devised in order that the subject might delve ever deeper into its own interior so that the bifurcated 'self' – the 'self' as dichotomized into the 'self' as subject and the 'self' as object – might regain its own original unity. When, at the extremity of such a unity, man becomes truly himself and turns into a pure and absolute selfhood, when, in other words, there remains absolutely no distinction any longer between the 'self' *qua* subject and the 'self' *qua* object, an epistemological stage is reached where the 'self' has become so perfectly identified with itself and has so completely become one with itself that it has transcended even being a 'self'. The precise point at which the 'self' becomes one with it-'self' in such an absolute manner has come to be known, in accordance with the technical terminology of Dōgen,<sup>3</sup> as 'the-mind-and-body-dropping-off' (*shin jin datsu raku*). This is immediately followed by the next stage – to be more strictly exact, it is a stage which is actualized at the very same moment as the actualization of the first one – that of 'the-dropped-off-mind-and-body' (*datsu raku shin jin*). This second stage refers to the experiential fact that the moment the mind-and-body, i.e. the 'self', falls off into Nothingness, there is resuscitated out of the Nothingness the same mind-and-body, i.e. the same old 'self' itself, but this time completely transformed into an absolute Self. The 'self' thus resuscitated from its death to itself carries outwardly the same mind-and-body, but the latter is the mind-and-body that has 'dropped off', that is, transcended itself once for all. The image of Man in Zen Buddhism is an image of Man who has already passed through such an absolute transformation of himself, the 'True Man without any ranks' as Lin Chi<sup>4</sup> calls him.

It is evident that such an image of Man as has just been sketched implicitly occupied in Zen Buddhism a place of cardinal importance throughout its entire history. This is evident because from the very beginning Zen centered around the radical and drastic transformation of Man from the relative into the absolute selfhood. The peculiar image of



Every one of us, as a human being, has self-consciousness and is conscious of other human beings surrounding him. Hence it naturally comes about that at the level of ordinary existence all of us possess a more or less definite idea as to what kind of a thing man is. The classical Western philosophy going back to Aristotle elaborates and defines this common-sense image of man as a 'rational animal'.

The image of Man peculiar to Zen Buddhism emerges exactly when such a common-sense image of man, be it pre-philosophical or philosophical, is smashed to pieces. The ordinary image of man on which our daily life is based, and on which our social life is carried out, does not, according to the typically Zen conception, represent the true reality of Man. For man, as pictured in such a way, is but a 'thing' in the sense that it is nothing but an objectified man, i.e. man as an object. Such cannot be a true picture, because according to Zen, Man in his true reality is, and must be, an absolute selfhood.

Without tarrying on the plane of common-sense or empirical thinking, where the primary experience of Reality, including even the absolute ego, in its pure 'is-ness'<sup>2</sup> is necessarily broken up into objectified pieces, Zen proposes to grasp Man directly as an absolute selfhood prior to his being objectified into a 'thing'. Only then, it maintains, can we hope to obtain a true image of Man representing him as he really is, that is, in his real, immediate 'is-ness'.

The image of Man peculiar to Zen is thus derived from a dimension which absolutely transcends the bifurcation, so characteristic of the human intellect, of the subject and object. As will be easy to see, such an image of Man can never be obtained as long as we pursue the question in the form of 'what is man?' The question must necessarily and inevitably take on the form of 'who am I?' Otherwise expressed, Man must be intuited in his most intimate subjectivity. For, no matter how far we may go searching after our own 'self' on the plane of intellectual analysis, the 'self' goes on being objectified. However far we may go in this direction, we always end up by obtaining the image of our 'self' seen as an object. The 'self' itself, the real subjective subject which goes on searching after itself, remains always beyond our reach, eluding forever our grasp. The pure subjectivity is reached only when

## I Zen and the Problem of Man

Buddhism may properly be said to have been concerned from its very historical beginning with the problem of Man, and that exclusively. The starting-point of Buddha's search after the Truth was provided by the disquieting miseries of human existence as he observed them around himself. And the doctrines which he developed after his attainment to enlightenment were through and through human, humane and humanitarian. Buddhist philosophy which began to develop shortly after his death was also 'human' in the sense that it was seriously concerned with the concept of 'non-ego' as one of its most fundamental problems. Here again we observe Man being made an object of philosophical consideration in the particular form of the problematic of 'ego'.

This anthropo-centric tendency of Buddhism was greatly fortified by the rise and development of the Zen sect. By making the actual experience of enlightenment the pivotal point of the world-view, Zen raised, or reformulated, the traditional problem of Man as the problem of the absolute selfhood. We must observe in this connection, however, that Zen raises the question in a very characteristic way. Instead of posing his question concerning Man in an Aristotelian form: 'What is man?', the Zen Buddhist directly begins by asking: 'Who am I?'<sup>1</sup> What is at issue is not the classical problem of the nature of Man in general, but an infinitely more personal and intimate one of *who* is this very human subject who, existing as he does here and now in a time-space system, raises the question about his own self. It is only natural that the image of Man obtained on the basis of such an attitude should be something totally different from an image of Man which forms itself in the mind of an objective observer who would approach the problem by first asking: 'What is man?'



## Essay I

# THE TRUE MAN WITHOUT ANY RANK

— The Problem of Field Awareness in Zen —

Note: This Essay was originally an Eranos lecture delivered at Ascona, Switzerland, in 1969, and published in Eranos-Jahrbuch XXXVIII, 1971, Zürich under the title: 'The Structure of Selfhood in Zen Buddhism'.

standable. This and the other related problems are discussed in Essays I and II.

It must be observed further that Zen Silence, when it expresses itself, does not necessarily express itself in a verbal form. That is to say, the Zen language is not necessarily verbal; it can assume divergent forms. Pictorial language, for example, is one of the most remarkable forms of Zen language. This aspect of Zen is elucidated in Essays VI and VII.

It will be clear that the present work is not a systematic and objective presentation of the philosophical ideas of Zen. It is rather a modest attempt at letting Zen experience philosophize itself. To what extent I have succeeded in doing so, however, is not for me to judge. I only hope that this attempt of mine has not resulted after all in adding one more 'useless entanglement' to the mass of already existing conceptual entanglements.

This book consists of seven Essays, all of which were originally independent papers or lectures which I prepared on different occasions. Sincere thanks are due to the editors of the books and journals who have given me permission to republish these papers in the present form. I would also express here my deep gratitude to Peter L. Wilson for his excellent editorial work.

T. Izutsu  
Tehran  
10 March 1977

the birth of your father and mother', as Zen often says. But the non-articulated does not remain eternally non-articulated.

Zen 'silence' is a silence pregnant with words. It naturally expresses itself – it cannot but express itself – in language. Out of the depths of the Silence there emerges language. The emergence of language out of the Zen awareness of reality may ontologically be described as an event of the self-articulation of the non-articulation. Thus Silence turns into language. The primordial oneness of non-articulation articulates itself 'out' and comes into the dimension of words. It is language viewed in this light that really matters and alone counts in the eyes of Zen – I mean, the special kind of language which emerges directly out of the Zen experience of reality as the self-articulating activity of the non-articulated. But such a language may very well be subjected to an intellectual analysis and elaborated into a peculiar form or forms of philosophy. A philosophy of this kind – the only justifiable one from the Zen point of view – must be a result of philosophizing out of the very midst of Zen awareness. It must be actualized as the self-philosophization of Zen, i.e., Zen reflecting upon its own self. And as such, Zen has, as I said at the outset, remarkable potentials for creating philosophical thought.

It will have been understood that the problem of 'articulation', whether metaphysical or linguistic, is of supreme importance for Zen philosophy. Articulation is the very center and crux of the whole matter. And the present work turns round this central problem. The problem of the metaphysical or ontological articulation of reality is dealt with in Essay IV, while its linguistic or semantic aspect is thematically discussed in Essay III. Essay IV deals specifically with the problem of how and in what sense the Zen language – the language which emerges directly out of Silence – yields 'meaning' in such a way that it may allow itself to be developed into a philosophy.

The articulation of reality, however, is realized to be a philosophical problem of such a serious nature only when one has had a glimpse into the nature and structure of the Zen experience of reality itself, on the understanding of which alone can the true meaning of 'articulation' become under-

experience peculiar to Zen? This is one of the main problems I am going to deal with in this book.

It will have become clear that by the phrase 'philosophy of Zen' I mean the philosophization or philosophical elaboration of the Zen experience. By no means do I want to assert that there is some such thing as the 'philosophy of Zen' already established as a definite type of philosophical thinking and its result, and that I am going to expound it in an objective and descriptive way. What I intend to talk about in this book is the philosophical *potential* hidden in the Zen experience of reality.

Zen does not like to be associated with philosophy in the ordinary sense of the word, for 'philosophy' implies rational, discursive thinking and conceptualization. In this sense Zen is not merely non-philosophical; it is, more positively, anti-philosophical. To many of those who are already familiar with Zen, the expression 'philosophy of Zen' will simply sound like a straightforward contradiction in terms. In fact, the Zen student is always rigorously admonished not to fall into the pitfall of conceptualization and ratiocination. He is to grasp the 'truth' directly through an act of spiritual realization, away from all entanglements of thought. The intricacies of conceptual thinking about the 'truth' are of such a nature that they inevitably induce the Zen student to deviate from the right path, thereby closing the door to the 'real' – as Zen understands it – experience of reality. And, as a matter of fact, there have occurred in the past not a few cases of philosophical distortion of Zen, i.e., the rational or intellectual manipulation of Zen ideas by those 'philosophers' who have no experiential grasp of them.

Thus it is not without reason that Zen tends to entertain a violent aversion toward philosophization and talking about Zen experience in rational terms. For the world of Zen is a world of silence. It is a world of an extraordinary experience which defies thinking and linguistic description. It is a world where all words are ultimately reduced to Silence. The reason why it is so will be fully explained in the following pages.

Philosophically, the Silence is the metaphysical Oneness of absolute non-articulation, the reality before it is articulated into myriads of forms – 'your own Face which you had prior to

## Preface

I have entitled this book 'Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism' on the conviction that Zen is possessed of innate philosophical possibilities. This conviction of mine is based on the view that at the original point of all *Philosophiren* in any form whatsoever, there is, and there must be, a peculiar reality-experience. The empiricist philosophy, for instance, is based on, and originates from, an 'empirical' experience of reality. The empiricist type of thinking begins by observing reality just at the level at which man encounters the external world through what is regarded as the 'normal' exercise of his cognitive faculties, sensation and perception being considered the most fundamental forms of cognition. The empiricist philosophy takes form when one starts to reflect upon one's own perceptual experience in a rational and analytical way.

Zen also has its own peculiar experience of reality, which is remarkably different from the 'empirical' one. Not that Zen 'transcends' at one stroke – as is often said – the empirical dimension of reality. Quite the contrary; the world of Zen at its ultimate stage is also a world of sensation and perception which is no less 'empirical' than the world as seen by the empiricist. 'The ordinary way – that precisely *is* the Way', or 'the willow is green and the flower is red'. The point is rather that sensation and perception as activated in Zen experience assume quite a different significance as they function quite differently from the same faculties of sensation and perception as they are activated on the level of the so-called 'normal' cognitive experience. Hence the peculiarity of the Zen experience of reality. And naturally the peculiar noetic experience produces, or is capable of producing, a unique type of ontology. What, then, is the nature of the noetic



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