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Zen and Creativity

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ZEN AND CREATIVITY

JOHN J.M. LEGATE 1980

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by

John J. M. Legate

An Abstract of a Thesis
in
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements
for the Degree of

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July 1980

State University of New York
College at Buffalo
Department of Creative Studies

Abstract

In this thesis, Zen is examined as a philosophy and practice of creativity which is understood as a process that unfolds as a free flow of energy and power actualized through an appropriate spontaneity. This unfolding is a way of life which is viewed as essential for the whole person. It is the primordial flowering of being.

Zen has made a remarkable contribution to the arts. This is made possible because it is not dependent on words and letters; consequently, it can be applied to any art form. It is an 'artless art' which goes far beyond the learning of technique for one must allow the ego to drop away. The no-mind which results is one's creative genius. It is the source of creativity through which the Zen artist as the martial artist, the flower arranger, the haiku poet, or whatever, masters the art.

The philosophy of Zen deliberately leads the Zen student to the brink of enlightenment; and, at the same time, it vanishes leaving no traces. The practices of Zen, some of which include sitting and walking meditation, chanting and koan study, prepare the student to completely leap beyond the confines of conditioning and ego. It is then that one discovers one's identity as a fully creative person.

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Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1. What is Zen?.....	1
Chapter 2. Zen and the Arts.....	19
Chapter 3. Zen Philosophy - Creating Essential Opportunities..	41
Chapter 4. Zen Practice and Creative Development.....	58
Selected Bibliography.....	70

Chapter 1

What is Zen?

The word, Zen, is a Japanese mispronunciation of a mispronunciation of a mispronunciation of the original sanscrit work, Dhyana. According to historical tradition, a Buddhist monk, Bodhidharma, brought Zen to China from India during the T'ang Dynasty (618-906 A.D.). Dhyana was first phonetically translated as Ch'ana. The sect was known as Ch'an Buddhism. It then spread to Korea where it was pronounced Son. From Korea it was brought to Japan during the latter part of the Heian Period (781-1184 A.D.) where it is known as Zen, the common term used in North America and Europe.

Dhyana means concentration, but it is a concentration with no purpose, object or meaning. This mind of concentration is known as the non-abiding mind (mujushin, Jap.). It is experienced only when the mind through concentration is empty; however, it is a serious error from the Zen point of view, to understand this no-mind as a passive, 'vegetable' or 'navel-contemplating' state for, at the same time one empties the mind, it becomes filled with its own energy or self-power (joriki, Jap.). Joriki arises as the mind becomes unified through the practice of concentration. A contemporary Zen Master, Yasutani, describes joriki as:

...a dynamic power which once mobilized enables us even in the most sudden and unexpected situations to act instantly, without pausing to collect one's wits¹ and in a manner wholly appropriate to the circumstances.

Since a vacuous mind state was often mistakenly thought to be enlightenment (satori, kensho, Jap.), the Zen Masters often warned against this erroneous practice.

In some cases, they would create a confrontation with their students in order to push them beyond such a sticking point. One day, the Zen Master,

Nangaku, went to see his student, Baso, (Ma-tsu, Chin.) who later became one of the most famous Zen Masters in China. Baso was spending his time sitting cross-legged (zazen, Jap.) in order to deepen his concentration so that one day he might become enlightened. Nangaku asked him, "What are you doing sitting cross-legged like that?"

"My desire is to become a Buddha (enlightened)."

The master bent over, picked up a brick and started to polish it on a nearby rock.

"What are you doing, Master?" asked Baso.

"I am trying to turn this into a mirror."

"If so, no amount of polishing will make a mirror of that brick, Sir."

"If so, no amount of sitting cross-legged like that will make you a Buddha," said the Master.²

Nangaku was warning Baso that merely to sit continuously, no matter how arduously, might increase one's concentration and clarity of mind (dhyana), but it would not lead to enlightenment. Zen without satori is not Zen. Nangaku went on to say: "Unless you free yourself from sitting so, you will never come to the truth."³ Satori is seeing into one's true Nature (See Chapter 4 for further discussion).

Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch of Zen (638-715 A.D.) and the Zen Master who most firmly established Zen (Ch'an, Chin.) in China after Bodhidharma, states the issue directly:

...do not fall into the idea of vacuity...when
a man sits quietly and keeps his mind blank he will
abide in a state of "Voidness of Indifference".⁴

This "Voidness of Indifference" is a state of mind with which most Zen students must grapple. If one misinterprets this to be enlightenment then one would be

drastically reducing one's essence by aligning oneself with inanimate objects thus unnecessarily restricting one's being in such a way that this very pleasurable, quiescent and clear state becomes a major stumbling block impeding one's development. It is for this reason that Zen Masters suggest that a student seek a good teacher who can push one over such an impass. Traditionally, a student would study under and be tested by at least three different masters before the 'seal of approval' (Inka, Jap.) is granted. Inka means that one's seeing into one's nature (satori) has been assessed to be sufficient and genuine. In a sense, then, one problem in traditional Zen is that it is only as good as the Zen Masters who are available. Although the student-master relationship is not considered the only way to attain satori, a few people according to the Zen Masters have the capacity to realize enlightenment on their own. The most famous example is that of Gautama Buddha who became enlightened without a master under the bodi tree while gazing up at the Morning Star.

The relationship that does exist between the Zen Master and the Zen student differs from that of other enlightenment philosophies and sects in three major ways. These are most important to consider in order to understand Zen as a philosophy of creativity.

In the first place, the philosophy and Dhyana practice which was brought from India to China considered that one's social status or caste was not significant and hence women could be enlightened as well as men and take their places as Zen Masters. During the T'ang Dynasty in China the Master Chao-chou made a vow:

Even if the person is only seven years old, if he is my superior I shall seek the teaching from him. Even if he is a hundred years old, if he is inferior to me, I shall teach him. 5

Centuries later in Japan, the founder of the Soto Zen sect, Dogen Zenji echoes Chao-chou:

Even a seven-year-old-girl who practices the Buddha Dharma and is enlightened in it is the leader and guide of the fourfold community of Buddhists, the compassionate parent of living beings. 6

Dogen Zenji argued further against Male Chauvinism:

What is there intrinsically about a male to esteem? The body is empty, like the sky, empty is empty... so do not think about such differences as male and female. This is the most basic law of the Buddha Way. 7

The reference to the body being empty means the no-mind which is incompatible with the discriminating consciousness or ego, and as such is the basis for the ethical mind, the compassionate mind (See Chapter 3 for further discussion on the ethics of Zen).

The second major difference between Zen and other Buddhist sects is expressed in the following poem of Bodhidharma which is familiar to all Zen students:

A special transmission outside the Scriptures
No dependence upon words and letters;
Direct pointing to the soul of man;
Seeing into one's nature and the attainment 8
of Buddhahood.

The "special transmission" means that the Zen mind is passed down from generation to generation of Zen Masters so that the Mind of Bodhidharma is the same Mind of a Zen Master living today. And yet in a typically contradictory sense, there is no Transmission at all. As soon as one refers to an enlightened Mind, one has created a dualism - that of Mind and that of ordinary or unenlightened mind. All such dualism must be overcome if one is to experience satori since the no-mind as argued above is incompatible with a discriminating consciousness

"Outside the Scriptures" does not mean that Scriptures are completely ignored in Zen practice for they are chanted in most monasteries. It does mean that intellectual understanding is not enough. From the Zen point of view, there is nothing outside of oneself to search for since such other-directed behaviour would again create a dualism in which the 'me' is separated from the 'not-me'.

Not only is there no dependence on the Buddhist Scriptures; but also there is no dependence on such concepts as satori or Buddha. Often a Zen Master would redirect his students in a startling and humourous way from developing such an intellectual dependency. The following is taken from a talk given by the famous Zen Master, Rinzai, who founded one of the two leading Zen schools active in Japan today:

Followers of the Way, do not take the Buddha for the supreme aim. I myself see him as a privvy hole, and Bodhisattvas and Arhats (saints) as beings who bind men with cangue and chains. 9

In other confrontations with students, the Zen Master would seemingly contradict himself in order to lead the student away from a verbal dependence. In one such case, a student asked the Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng, how he might understand the teaching of another Zen Master, Huang Mei. Hui Neng suggested that he who understood the Truth and Way of Zen would understand. The student then asked if he knew. Hui Neng replied that he did not understand it.¹⁰ In this case, the Zen Master who understood did not want the student 'hanging' on his words. One must look into one's own nature.

In another case, nothing is said and yet a meeting of minds occurs. A student named Kaikaku went to study under Rinzai. Upon seeing him enter the hall, Rinzai lifted up his Hossu, a ceremonial stick with horse hair on the end. Daikaku spread his mat down before him. Rinzai then threw down his Hossu.

Daikaku picked up his mat and found a place to put his things. Some of the others who were present concluded that Daikaku must be a friend of Rinzai's since none of the usual formalities had taken place. When Rinzai heard of this he sent for Daikaku and said, "The monks say you have had no interview with me yet." Daikaku replied, "How strange," and returned to the others.¹¹

The wisdom (prajna, Sanscrit) which accompanies dhyana through the satori experience is an immediate understanding, that is, it is not mediated through words, occurring now.

The third major change, was brought about through the influence of the Zen Master, Pai-chang (720-814 A.D.) who is renowned as the founder of the Ch'an meditation commune. Prior to his leadership, the monks would concentrate on sitting meditation (zazen, Jap.) and other Zen rituals solely. Pai-chang emphasized work as an important part of training. In the Biographies of Eminent Monks, the monastic code of Pai-chang is described: "...they practiced the rule of communal work, showing that high and low must equally exert their strength."¹²

There is also the story about Pai-chang illustrating his own personal emphasis on work. When he was an old man, he still worked hard in the fields with the young men in training. The other monks were worried about his health and hid his tools from him so that he might rest. Pai-chang refused to eat until they allowed him to continue working in the fields. From this situation emerged the saying of Pai-chang which is still referred to today by Zennists: "A day without work, a day without eating."¹³

From this example and the code which emerged, work was neither viewed as something beneath the Zennist nor as a distraction. It became an important part of the practice and training. This emphasized further that any situation or activity could be utilized to further Zen training.

These three developments: the non-elitist attitude, no dependence on words or letters, and the importance of informal or non-ritual activities such as work had a profound impact on the cultures in which Zen was practiced. In the second chapter, the influence of Zen on the Arts, even the Martial Arts, will be discussed.

Zen is not, then, an esoteric philosophy and practice in which satori is understood to be a mystical and transcendental experience taking one away from the world and all its suffering and turmoil. Such a view would be considered heretical by the Zen Masters. Master Tsung Kao in one of his discourses makes this clear:

...You must know that this realm (of enlightenment) is not gained through any exalted religious practice. What one should do is to cleanse the defilements of passion and delusion that have lain hidden in the roots of his own mind from the very no-beginning-time.¹⁴

This means that enlightenment is not achieved. The enlightened Mind is always present and unaffected; it is merely clouded over through enculturation and the resulting ego. The enlightened Mind is to be realized here and now in the mundane situation, and it is nothing special. Any such notions of transcendence, enlightenment, Buddha or even achievement are considered to be manifestations of the discriminating mind which are illusory and far off the mark.

Pai-chang discusses the problems arising from intellectual discussions about enlightenment:

If one says there is an enlightened nature, this is called slander by attachment, but to say there is no enlightened nature is slander by falsehood...to say that enlightened nature both exists and does not exist is slander by contradiction, and to say that enlightened nature is neither existent nor non-existent is slander by meaningless argument.

This passage is an excellent example of Zen logic, and also just how far the

Zennist goes beyond a dependence on words and intellectual understanding. Each statement is in a sense true, but each is also but a mediated experience and hence not Zen. Often a Zen Master will use such a statement if he believes that the student is becoming attached or wanting to be attached to a verbal understanding which is the opposite of the Zen Master's statement. We have already observed such a statement above when Hui Neng suggests to the student that if he understood the Way, he would then understand the teachings of Huang Mei. Hui Neng upon being asked whether he understood said that he did not understand the Way. Hui Neng who was understood at the time to be one of the most enlightened Zen Masters is not trying to deceive the student. He is forcing him to search for himself and not to be reliant on the sayings of Zen Masters.

The logic of the above quotation of Pai-chang forces the student to think and say nothing. To establish this impasse is Pai-chang's intent. From here there is no place to turn except to the experiential situation now unfolding from within oneself.

Pai-chang concludes: "Wisdom is obscure, difficult to explain; there is nothing to which it can be likened."¹⁶ One can never rely on others solely - only on oneself.

The Zen Master Tsun Kao concludes that if we let all such conceptualization evaporate "...the wonder of the effortless mind will then naturally and spontaneously react to all conditions without any obstacle."¹⁷

There is in Zen a simplicity and an ordinariness. The concern is with how we exist as beings in the world and not with how we can escape from it. This simplicity is revealed clearly in the following often-quoted anecdote.

A student asked a Zen Master, "What is Zen?"

The Zen Master replied, "It is eating when you eat, working when you

work, and sleeping when you sleep."

The student responded, "but that is nothing."

"You are right," said the Zen Master, "But few people can do just that."

Expressing the essence of Zen in a similar way, the Zen Master Yun-men wrote the following poem:

When walking, just walk,
When sitting, just sit,¹⁸
Above all don't wobble.

The wobbling indicates a loss of concentration or dhyana, the no-mind. Not to wobble is to act in accordance with the Way (Tao).

The mundane emphasis in which Zen is viewed as nothing special reveals that it is not primarily a religion, nor a teaching of the Arts, nor a psychotherapy. One must go beyond any such institutionalizations. All such formal social structures are but expedient means. For the Zennist, there can exist no a priori forms since, if not overcome, they would lead to dependencies and hence cloud the mind.

On the other hand, Zen is not a radical individualization of the self. To be in and of the world is to be with others. In Buddhism, this concern for others is known as the Mahayana attitude. One's growth is viewed in terms of others. It is for others that one is a seeker. Zennists make a vow to help enlighten others.

As the no-mind evolves through Zen practice, the ego dissolves and with it all personal desires and sufferings. The spontaneous outgrowth of this ego dissolution is a feeling and caring for others. The compassionate attitude is also a result of the unity or oneness accompanying the no-mind. Rather than a vacuum the no-mind is a unity in which everything is experienced as interconnected in a way in which a mirror reflects all that passes. Nothing is

viewed as standing alone. No longer does one feel alienated or confused about the meaning of life. It is right NOW with all the IS present.

On another level, one can not strive for one's liberation since the discriminating mind can not enlighten the discriminating mind no matter how brilliant its philosophical insights are. This activity will only lead to but another discrimination in which the wholeness of being is lost.

An old song of the Way urges this point:

It is the mind itself which is bewildering the mind. 19
Do not set free the mind to the mind.

Zen Master, Hui Hai, reveals through one of his dialogues the attitude of the liberated Mind:

Q: Whereon should the mind settle and dwell?

A: It should settle upon non-dwelling and there dwell.

Q: What is this non-dwelling?

A: It means allowing the mind to dwell upon anything whatsoever. 20

Since the mind is free "to dwell upon anything whatsoever", it is the mind of infinite potential. D. T. Suzuki has translated this nondwelling mind or no-mind as the unconscious which he differentiates from the psychoanalyst's unconscious since the former is lacking in both self and other.²¹ The settling of the mind, in the Zen sense, according to Suzuki is to tap the creative source for it is "the Unconscious, in which lies the source of creative activities and upon which all true artists draw their inspiration."²² He states further that this state of mind involves a unity of the conscious and the unconscious:

To be consciously unconscious, or to be unconsciously conscious is the secret of nirvana out of which issues

the myoyu (that which can not be thought about) 23
of creativity.

The creative process, then, emerges in all acts of being and doing. Suzuki argues that from the Zen point of view we are all "artists of life".²⁴ He goes on to say that the body is like the musical instrument or the painter's canvas. The true artist of life is one who is master of himself no matter what situation arises. Suzuki states:

To such a person his life reflects every image he creates out of the inexhaustive source of the unconscious. To such his every deed expresses originality, creativity, his living personality.²⁵

By examining two of the quotations made by the Zen Masters, Yasutani and Tsun Kao, which are stated above, we can begin to comprehend how the creative process from a Zen point of view functions. The first statement is that of Yasutani who revealed that Zen practice and satori allow us "even in the most sudden and unexpected situations to act instantly without pausing to collect one's wits and in a manner wholly appropriate to the circumstances."²⁶ The other statement made by Tsun Kao revealed that one developed an "effortless mind" which "will then naturally and spontaneously react to all conditions without any obstacle."²⁷ If we take these two statements together, the creative process according to Zen is to act effortlessly through an appropriate spontaneity.

The first characteristic, effortlessness, originated not in Hindu philosophy nor in Zen but in Zen's other Chinese root, Taoist philosophy, where it is known as wei wu wei which literally means doing-not-doing. In order that one's efforts become effortless, one's mind must become empty. Huston Smith suggests the wu wei should be translated as "creative quietude"²⁸ the main behavioral characteristic of which is that of an unhindered flow.

Wu wei is the supreme action, the precise suppleness and simplicity that flows from us, rather through us, when our private egos and conscious efforts yield to a power not their own. 29

This "power" which one does not seem to own is experienced by many creative people and is well described by Carl Jung:

Whenever the creative force predominates, human life is ruled and moulded by the unconscious as against the active will...It is not Goethe who creates Faust, but Faust which creates Goethe. 30

This is the meaning of Suzuki's statement that one becomes "unconsciously conscious". There is no conscious will manipulating the creative act. The unconscious, which is Suzuki's translation of wu wei,³¹ simply flows right through the conscious mind unhindered by any conscious will censoring or analysing what one is doing. One is then doing without doing.

In Chapter 15 of the ancient Taoist text, Tao Te Ching, (6th Century B.C.) a description of the "best man of Tao"³² is given. The idea of flowing is viewed as one of the major characteristics:

I will try to draw a picture of him.

 Fluid as if he were ice melting,
 Solid, as if he were an uncarved block,³³
 Vacant, as if he were a valley,.....

The line referring to the solidity of the "uncarved block" suggests the power as well as the creative potential of the unconscious which through the flow becomes actualized. The "vacant" aspect is a kind of passivity, or as Huston Smith suggests a "quietude", which is not an inertia but rather a readiness to create and sustain mountains. The valley can not exist alone. There can be no valleys without mountains; or as mentioned above, there can be no "Void of Indifference". The "valley" mind is rather a formlessness out of which appropriate forms will flow. This is the unity and the wholeness of

being.

In Taoism, the "valley" is the Yin or passive female aspect of the universe; whereas, the Yang is understood to be the male or active force of the universe. From the Taoist point of view the one can not be understood without the other. Such a conceptual dualism only hints at the oneness of being. Taoism has, however, been called a Yinism³⁴ since the Yin is the dwelling-non-dwelling place of being. It is the non-being upon which being is predicated. Arguing the importance of dwelling in this non-dwelling place, Lao Tzu writes:

The entire universe is basically void, like a bellows:
When it is non-action, it does not lack anything,
When it is in action, it is even more productive.
Debating with words leads to limitations,
Therefore, nothing is better than to remain in³⁵
a state before things are stirred.

A commentator on the Tao Te Ching, Yu Hsin (6th Century A.D.), argues that through nothingness "the spirit of the valley comes to stay."³⁶ The most important aspect of the unconscious is the absence of the ego. Suzuki argues:

To reach the bedrock of one's being means to have
one's Unconscious entirely cleansed of egoism, for³⁷
the ego penetrates even the Unconscious so-called.

This is the point of all Zen practice whether it be in the Arts or in the religious practices of the monasteries. It is the ego from which arises all the often painful and usually unnecessary hindrances.

The ego is the 'I' or self which one culturally affirms. This affirmation establishes a dualism which sets off, and often alienates, the 'me' from the rest of the world. At the same time that one posits the 'me', as a separate entity, one also posits its opposite, the 'not-me' or non-ego. In the Taoist and Zen philosophies, it is not possible, as argued above, to have one existing without the other. The non-ego which must accompany the ego is in

the social and situational sense, the Other whether it be other people, beings, or things, or, what we feel is missing or lacking. In a psychological sense, it is the "dread of nothing" of Kierkegaard. In the final sense it is death.

The "dread of nothing" is a denial of 'my' nothingness. This is the same nothingness in which Lao Tzu urges it is best for one to remain. Ironically, the ego in affirming itself in opposition to its own nothingness, blocks the Way which according to Zen is liberation.

The ego establishes a subjective 'inner' world separate from an objective 'outer' world. It is in this inner world where all one's desires, needs, hopes, fantasies, and the resulting suffering, fears and anxiety arise.

The practice of Zen leads us to our ordinary unhindered mind. In the Mumonkan, a thirteenth century Japanese collection of sayings and confrontations between the Zen Masters and their students through which they freely and directly express their Zen, Mumon wrote a poem on the ordinary mind devoid of the ego viewed as the "vain cloud":

Hundreds of flowers in spring, the morn in autumn,
A cool breeze in summer, and the morn in winter;
If there is no vain cloud in your mind, 38
For you it is a good season.

A Zen Master, Zenkai Shibayama, writes in a Teisho, a commentary on this case: "...it is our discriminating mind working which is a worthless fuss, to no fundamental purpose."³⁹ The ego, as a discriminating mind, is often referred to in Zen literature. It means, first of all, that one is centered only in a fragment of being, the conscious and intellectual mind. Many Zen Masters urge their students to centre on the Hara region which is two inches below the navel. This centre is thought to include the whole being - body and mind. This discriminating mind is also one which selects primarily to uphold, secure, and enhance the ego. It is not understood as a creatively selecting

mind which must pick and choose its way through a project.

The Zen Master, Hakuin, who helped firmly establish Zen in Japan wrote in his Wasan of the human predicament:

It is like water and ice

Apart from water no ice

.....

Not knowing it is near they seek it afar. What a pity! 40

It is like one in water who cries out for thirst.

The first part of the poem reveals the necessity of opposites which was discussed above concerning the ego and the non-ego. The next two lines reveal that It (the Tao) is right here. There is no need to look further than oneself. In fact, there is no need to look at all. The unity of opposites is always present and can never be fundamentally altered. It can be clouded over. One needs only to clear the clouds through satori.

The completely functioning self is that of a simple and free flowing being. It is simple to the extent that one need not posit a discriminating ego fighting for its existence and identity over and against the Other. Zen is a practice and wisdom beyond the contradiction that we are 'born but to die'. In order to become enlightened, whatever that means, one must, however, experience what the Zen Masters call the Great Death of the ego. Such is the main intent of the Zen effort.

Appropriate spontaneity flows freely when 'my' ego constructs are no longer present. This spontaneity is a direct outpouring from the creative wellspring of the unconscious through to the acting of the body-mind. The whole being functions as one without being torn this way or that. The appropriateness occurs when one can act through an all consuming concentration made possible only because the ego interests and concerns are completely absent.

For the purposes of this paper, the enlightened Zen mind is understood

as a continuous unfolding of the creative process described as a free flow of energy and power (joriki) actualized through an appropriate spontaneity. The creative process is, for the "Zen artist of life", the primordial flowering of being. The creative act is continuously and ontologically essential for the whole person.

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Chapter 2

Zen and the Arts

Zen has made a remarkable contribution to the arts primarily because it is a practice and a philosophy which is not dependent on words and letters. One must have no dependence on either Zen Masters or 'Great Works'. The alternative is simply to be. The 'art of being' is itself a creative act through which one expresses one's true self. The form, whether it be that of being a poet or a taxi driver, is not important.

Basho, one of the most renowned Haiku poets, had studied many sutras. Having developed an understanding of Zen, he went to one of the most famous Zen Masters of his day, Takuan, who carefully questioned him. Basho gave many correct answers quoting from the sutras and poems of famous Zen Masters of the past as was the custom.

When Takuan recognized this dependency of Basho on the writings of others, he demanded, "I do not want to hear other people's words. I want to hear your own words. The words of your true self. Quickly, give me one sentence of your own."

Basho was speechless. "I thought you understood Buddhism!" exclaimed Takuan. Basho's mind went blank. He experienced a vast emptiness. Then upon hearing a sound in the garden, he said:

Still pond
A frog jumps in
Splash!

"Well now! These are the words of your true self," stated Takuan. Basho had become enlightened.¹

This poem of Basho's is one of the most famous poems in the history of

Haiku. Its success is not because it is a brilliant poem which accurately and eloquently conforms to the demanding standards of Haiku poetry, but rather because it is a spontaneously appropriate, and hence creative, expression of Basho's true effortless nature through the form of Haiku utilized for that moment only. Form is the shape of an object or that which an act takes on as it exists in the phenomenal world of space and time. Its origin, formlessness, is noumenal. This distinction is discussed more fully in the next chapter on Zen Philosophy.

In this chapter, the main purpose is to examine, from a Zen point of view, various art forms and to understand Zen as a philosophy of creativity.

The 'artless art' of Zen is neither the formless ground from which it originates, nor is it the resulting work of art, the form. The aim of the Zen artist, if this can be said to be an aim, is not that of the successful act or work of art, but of enlightenment itself; consequently the form is not the essential. In fact, once mastered as technique, it must be forgotten. One creates form each time anew. It lives. The emphasis is not to be mechanically enslaved to form.

In the Zen arts, the first stage is the progressive learning and mastery of technique accompanied by dhyana which might be translated as an emptied, and hence, clear mindfulness. Dhyana is the wisdom of Zen art. D. T. Suzuki states that one who truly becomes a master of an art is "...one who has gone beyond the highest degree of proficiency in his art. He is a creative genius."² He states further that to master an art means to strive to be a philosopher - not in the speculative or purely rational sense, but in the sense that a philosopher is a lover of wisdom.³

It may seem strange that he wishes to be a philosopher but in Japan and also in China the arts are not a

matter of technology but of spiritual insight and training.⁴

There is for the Zen artist a very delicate balance between intuition and formal technique (ri and Ji, Jap.) which can not itself be conceptualized. It can only be.

One of the areas in which one can examine this 'delicate balance' is the martial arts, such as Tai Chi Ch'uan, Karate Do, and the arts of the spear, the sword and archery. In the West, these arts would not be considered creative. In Zen, any form can be an 'artless art'.

In all of these arts, one can observe the endless repetition of the choreographic dimension. In Tai Chi, the 'Long Form' consists of three parts of some one hundred and thirty-one different movements; and in Karate Do, there are many katas, each consisting of many subtle movements, which one must master in order to achieve the Black Belt. Trevor Leggett, a Sixth Dan (senior teacher's degree) in Judo from Kodokan and the author of Zen and The Ways, points out:

The main thing to realize is, that it is not a question of established tricks simply going into action automatically as a sort of reflex. The manifestation of ri is quite different from established techniques...It is the very reverse⁵ of mechanical repetition because it is creative.

The creative aspect involves the functioning of one's true self which is no self.

This Zen aspect of the arts can not be conceptualized; consequently, it can not be taught directly. The Zen Master is a teacher who does not teach. He merely points. The famous expression is that he 'points to the moon' which symbolizes through its luminescence and complete circularity, the true self. The Zen Master can only say to the student, "No that is not it", or "Yes, that is It (the Tao)." There is no explanation that the student can translate into

his art. In Zen, the cardinal rule is that one must enlighten oneself.

If we examine Tai Chi Ch'uan, perhaps we can discover what the conditions are that help bring about this enlightened experience.

Some say that Tai Chi began as Shaolin Temple Boxing.⁶ When Bodhidharma brought Ch'an (Zen) to China from India, he stayed at the Shaolin Temple. He saw that many of the monks were falling asleep during zazen (sitting meditation), and so he introduced exercises to improve their practice. These exercises developed into Shaolin Temple Boxing (Shae Lin Ch'uan). Over six centuries later Chang Shan-feng who was an adept of Shao Lin Ch'uan combined these movements with some free-hand exercises developed by Hua-t'o in the Third Century A.D.

Tai Chi is primarily a meditative exercise which manifests itself through a blending of form and the freedom to create. A contemporary Tai Chi teacher writes:

What happens within the form is what you create for yourself in the process of doing it...What happens in between is the real creative process.⁷

The beginner starts with the repetition of the choreographic forms. This gives way to freedom, the freedom within, which allows the creative spirit to effervesce. This type of quiet learning confronts one with one's unnecessary ego 'baggage'. One becomes aware of one's awkwardness and of one's incessant inner dialogue with oneself reminding one what went wrong and what one ought to do. This inner dialogue is the continual emergence of the ego and its concerns. It is this 'talking-in-one's-head' which is the major block to be overcome. Even though one is trying to help oneself by thinking it over, this act itself leads to a subtle reinforcement of the negative assessments. The creative and effortless flow can not happen.

The teacher does not verbally criticize the student. This would merely place emphatic words in the student's mind which would further the inner dialogue and hence reduce the learning capacity of the student. The teacher, instead, might step into the student's exercise alongside him and allow the student to feel and hopefully to experience this flow as his own actuality. Or the teacher might adjust the student's position, without saying anything to a more correct one.

Tai Chi is activated continuously through the stillness of an inner silence, the 'creative quietude' (wei wu wei). The form then can be perceived as something empty. It is this inner spirit which breathes life into it. This allows the body-mind a spontaneity and an unconcerned and complete flow. A nineteenth Century Master, Chang Fang explains this flowing unity in his treatise on Tai Chi Ch'uan:

Every joint of the entire body must be strung together so that the body acts as an integrated unit without the least interruption. Each movement proceeds inch by inch without gaps or breaks in continuity.⁸

The emphasis on "inch by inch" refers to an unmediated presence, a concentration in which one is totally being-with-and-in-the-situation. There is not time for the inner dialogue. There can be no flights of fantasy into the future creating dream scenarios. Nor can there be a concern for winning or losing, nor life or death. Once the student begins to experience this through a wholeness, an integration of his being manifested through the art itself, then Tai Chi becomes a dance and not merely a fight in which there are the victors and the vanquished.

Al Chung-liang discusses and describes this flow so necessary for the development and mastery of the art:

Flow is so overused a word. It sometimes suggests loosely letting go, sloppy, mushy, self-indulgent 'freedom' which is really not true spontaneity. Flow is like blood circulation, or breathing easily without self-consciousness...A person can't force a flow. Flow flows until we block it.

This is the key in Zen training. It can't be forced. The principal learning is not the technique. It is rather an unlearning process. We unlearn in order to learn not to block the creative flow. This 'unself-consciousness' occurs when the mind of the inner dialogue ceases - when it becomes empty. D. T. Suzuki stated: "Fluidity and emptiness are convertible terms."¹⁰ There is also an ancient saying which expresses this sentiment more poetically:

Throw away the little mind which is called I, and see:
There is no limitation in all the three thousand worlds.
Of my home the blue is the ceiling, and the earth the carpet, 11
Sun and moon, the lamps and the wind, the broom.

The Master Wang Chung-yueh describes the stages of development in his "Treatise On Tai Chi":

From the stage of familiarity with the technique comes a stage of gradual understanding of the inner strength, and from the stage of understanding inner strength comes the state of spiritual illumination. However without going through prolonged and serious practice, it is impossible to reach full enlightenment. 12

D. T. Suzuki states: "This insistence on the spiritual discipline entitles the art to be called creative."¹³ This means that spirituality and creativity are synonymous. Spiritual awakening (satori) allows one to be fully creative which is one's true essence.

The dance of Tai Chi involves a special interaction with the opponent which expresses both the effortless effort and the appropriate spontaneity which can only occur when the 'Me' is not present. If the 'Me' is present, many problems arise which are unnecessary and unfortunate. If I worry too

much about my opponent's prowess, or the mistake I just made, or what I want to happen, these thoughts interfere with what is happening now. The flow falters or it may stop altogether. This very thinking process keeps me slightly behind what is happening now, and I defeat myself. My ability to master the techniques, to be appropriately spontaneous, leaves me. If, on the other hand, the 'me' can be let go, then the delicate balance between 'emptiness' and 'solidity' (of my acting) can occur.¹⁴

The Tai Chi Master, Wang Shung-yueh described it most clearly:

Answer a solid intrusion in the left by emptying the left...The more your opponent pushes upward or downward against you, the more he feels there is no limit to the emptiness he encounters. The more he advances against you, the more he feels the distance incredibly long. The more he retreats from you, the more he feels the dead end desperately close.¹⁵

In order for one's opponent to experience this nothingness, one must be so empty as to exist in a state of readiness that flows appropriately with the unfolding situation. Then all one's efforts become effortless. One learns to-be-with and not against, or even consciously in control of what is happening. It is only through an apprehension of the empty mind, in the midst of the situation, that the Zen paradoxes of: 'effortless effort', or appropriate spontaneity, or to be in control without being in control, completely dissolve into the resulting unity of being. Wan Chun-yueh states further:

The basic technique in Tai Chi is to learn to sacrifice yourself in order to follow your opponent. That is, not to initiate action against your opponent but to allow yourself to respond to whatever action your opponent takes. How true is the old saying: Deviation at the beginning of even a hairsbreadth leads to a divergence of a thousand miles at the end. 16

The last part of this statement referring to a 'hairsbreadth' of deviation one can trace back to Zen antiquity. It refers to how completely concentrated th

nihilism nor is it something separate from being-in-the-world. It is total being. In its simplicity, it is doing just what you are doing - it is drinking tea when you are drinking tea. In its complexity, it is effortlessly functioning through the one hundred and thirty movements of the 'Long Form' of Tai Chi with its myriad subtleties. For the enlightened mind, there is no difference between the two.

Karate, one of the most popular martial arts in Japan, also can be traced back to the Shaolin monastery in China. It entered Japan through the southern islands of Okinawa in 1922. A contemporary Karate Master, Takagi, stated that "Karate is moving Zen, and it is the Zen state that you must strive for."²⁰

"Kara" means empty. It is not just the art of the empty hand. It is the 'artless art' of the emptied but integrated mind out of which the creative being flows. C. W. Nichol explains in his book on karate, Moving Zen, what he learned of the "emptiness" as a karate student in Japan:

In savagery and in gentleness, in kindness and in cruelty, and in a seemingly infinite stream of opposites that were not opposites, my teachers and friends demonstrated the timeless Now and the essence of the Karate spirit embodied in the character of "Kara", which means emptiness...²¹

A key phrase in Nichol's statement is "a seemingly infinite stream of opposites that were not opposites". This is the key to understanding the philosophy of Zen. It does not involve choosing and rigorously arguing one side of a dichotomy over another based on a particular metaphysical premise. It is instead a way of dissolving all contradictions. Going beyond opposites without intellectually resolving them, or merely putting them aside, is the very unity of the enlightened Zen mind; and this unity is the primordial origin of creative being. It is a state not to be conceptualized or explained as we shall discuss in the next chapter on the Philosophy of Zen. It is rather being it is

Nichol also came to understand the meaning of the Zen 'mirror state of mind':

The "Kara" or emptiness of Karate also implied an ability to receive the feelings and state of mind of others, to reflect others. I knew that our training was ultimately aimed at this. 22

This ability to reflect others in one's own being is a Zen freedom which is impossible to realize if the ego and its accompanying concerns are present. It is also a compassionate freedom for one is not opposed to the other. One is with the other. This is true for the Zen person even as a martial artist. This totality, this emptiness, this flow, is also necessarily an act of complete concentration - of being in and with the unfolding situation. Takagi, Nichol's Karate teacher (sensei), states:

You must be aware of all that is around you.
Kata is not just a practice of movements, and
neither is it a way of retreating into your own
self...You must have a mind like still water, 23
reflecting all things.

This type of concentration is complete concentration because it is and must remain unfocused. Like a mirror all is reflected without discrimination. It is only your act which discriminates through your mastery of yourself and your art; it is not you.

In the technical sense it is also this type of concentration which allows one to develop extraordinary skills related to the inner power (joriki) which arises. In one instance, a Karate Master placed three old bricks in a pile on the floor. He then punched the top brick and broke only the middle one, the one he was concentrating on.²⁴ In another situation a Tai Chi Master, placed his hand on Nichol's chest:

The initial contact of his hand on my chest was

indeed gentle, but the accelerating propulsion that followed had to be felt to be believed...I was hurled clean across the room and smashed against the wall. 25

A true master, however, would not encourage the student to develop these feats purposely since this type of emphasis would only entrench the student in his own ego successes. They would be shown to the student when the teacher felt they would help the student overcome a difficult sticking point encountered in the midst of training. What was important was to understand and to experience Karate as a moving meditation. 26

Often when a student of the Art of the sword was having difficulty 'emptying' himself, he was told to meditate and to intuit the meaning of the phrase, "the moon on the water" as expressed in the following verse:

The water does not think of giving it lodging
Nor the moon of lodging there -27
How clear the reflection!

In this poem, the totality of presence in absence is clearly hinted at. It would be a mistake to think of this state as a quietism or as a withdrawal.

A stanza from the Hundred Verses of The Spear urges:

Do not thrust with the mind,
Do not thrust with the hands,
Let the spear make the thrust -28
Thrust without thrusting.

Once again the student is confronted with a Zen paradox to 'thrust without thrusting'. This stanza is related to a Zen problem (koan) which is Koan no. 44 of the Shonankattoroku. The Zen Master states: "No spear in the hands, no hands on the spear. If you don't understand, your art of the spear is a little affair of the hands alone."²⁹ The Master is urging the student to go beyond technique to the 'Great Matter' itself of becoming enlightened. In one of the secret scrolls on the Art of the Sword, the Heihokadensho, the

writer describes the "supreme of all the Ways":

Forgetting the training, throwing away all minding about it - to reach that state is a peak of the Way (Tao). This state is passing through training till it ceases to exist. 30

Going through and beyond technique is to be of one mind, a mind which is completely detached from a particular or favourite technique or from winning or losing. And yet to say just this is misleading. The Zen contradiction must be allowed to arise. One becomes attached-detached. The mind is not set and yet the carefully learned skills are all there to be used. The purpose of the koan is to have such contradictions arise in the student's mind in such a way that his mind is brought to a complete halt. The inner dialogue ceases and he experiences 'dwelling on non-dwelling', which was mentioned in the first chapter. If the student is ready then he breaks through (satori) abruptly and he becomes enlightened. Then his creative spirit can truly flow through the art form.

One swordsman, Hariya Sekuin, claimed to be the founder of the school called "The Sword of No-abiding Mind". The emphasis was not on the art of killing but on the development of a "moral and spiritual and philosophical being."³¹ Sekuin's breakthrough, as it was recorded,³² was that technique was not needed. Prior to this he had spent many years concentrating solely on technique. This satori breakthrough is awakening to what D. T. Suzuki called the "Creative Principle". It is not really an abstract principle intellectually conceived; it is rather the ongoing origin of all being, the formlessness out of which all forms emerge. It is returning to the One - to the void of fullness. This further contradiction reminds us that the Zen Way is not negativistic in its approach to life. Nor can one say it is just positive. The identity of opposites is not to be found through an either

or choice nor through some sort of a resolution. It is to be found in an experiential dissolution - the enlightened state of being of which nothing much can be said.

One of the poems pertaining to the mastery of swordsmanship refers to the "creative principle" as the "Great Origin":

Victory is for the one,
Even before combat,
Who has no thought of himself,
Abiding in the no-mindedness of Great Origin. 33

Not thinking of oneself is what the swordsman calls "the mind abandoned and yet not abandoned" or "the everyday mind", or "the mind that knows no stopping". 34

The Zen Master Takuan, who was interested in the Art of the Sword, wrote of this no-mind which does not stop:

A mind unconscious of itself is a mind not at all disturbed by effects of any kind. It is the original mind and not the delusive one that is chock-full of affects. It is always flowing, it never halts, nor does it turn into a solid...it fills the whole body, pervading every part of the body, and nowhere standing still. 36

This 'stopping' or 'halting' of the flow means that a fragmenting of one's being has occurred through a loss of concentration or perhaps an attachment to a favourite technique or whatever. It is this stopping which defeats one. The wholeness is lost. One becomes centered in the mind, which displaces the no-mind, and It can not happen. It (the Tao) is the not-me, the master of the art.

Eugen Herrigel, a Western philosopher, who studied and mastered the Art of Archery in Japan, had great difficulty dropping his ego:

One day I asked the master: "How can the shot be loosed if I do not do it?"
"It shoots", he replied...It awaits at the

highest tension."³⁷

His archery Master, Kenzo Awa explained further, "It dances, and inside and outside are united in this dance. So too the archer hits the target without having aimed - more I can not say."³⁸

Herrigel was not convinced. He felt that if one did not have to aim, then the master should be able to hit the target in the dark. The Master asked him to be at the archery range that night.

He placed a lit wax taper at the end of the archery range. With his first arrow he knocked out the tiny flame. With the second arrow, in the dark, he pierced the first. Referring to the second shot, he asked Herrigel, "What do you make of that? I at any rate know that it is not 'I' who must be given the credit for this shot. 'It' shot and 'It' made the hit."³⁹ In Zen the genius who creates is never 'me'.

The the Master said, "Let us bow to the goal as before the Buddha!"³⁹ Through this final act of reverence, he reveals a profound respect for all things. He views himself as part of the 'All'. At this moment he perceives no difference between him and the 'All'. He explained further, "At this point archery, considered as the unmoved movement, the undanced dance, passes over into Zen."⁴⁰

After some months had passed, Master Awa asked Herrigel whether he understood what he meant by 'It shoots' and 'It hits'. Herrigel replied that he did not know anything anymore:

Bow, arrow, goal and ego all melt into one another, so that I can no longer separate them. And even the need to separate them has gone. For as soon as I take the bow and shoot, everything becomes so clear and straightforward and so ridiculously simple...⁴¹

Kenzo Awa responded in a characteristic Zen way, "... the bow string has cut

through you."⁴²

After Herrigel had been awarded the master title in the Art of Archery, Kenzo Awa expounded to him the "Great Doctrine". He dwelt most on the 'artless art':

He who can shoot with the horn of the hare and the hair of the tortoise, and can hit the centre without the bow (horn) and arrow (hair), he alone is Master in the highest sense of the word - Master of the artless art. Indeed, he is the artless art itself and thus Master and No-Master in one. 43

Shooting with the "horn of the hare and the hair of the tortoise" is a traditional Zen statement revealing the oneness of the enlightened mind. Zen is movement while being centered in the eye of the cyclone through all and yet nothing happens.

The Yoshida Archery School states in one of its secret scrolls:

Release of the arrow is to be as if the string snapped. The Bow does not know; I do not know - this is the important thing. 44

This is the not knowing that Herrigel had come to know. Another archery school describes It more poetically, "Release of the arrow is without thought, without idea, like a dew-drop falling from a leaf or a fruit falling when the time is ripe."⁴⁵ When It happens, it is 'knowing without knowing' and 'seeing without seeing'. The illogical logic of Zen points to, establishes and maintains the true centering and integration of being. It works when words dissolve, when one enters an all-inclusive state of being beyond the known, and hence where there can be no individuation. It is also simple and clear. This is the 'everyday mind'. It is quite ordinary and nothing special. What is special is the ego.

There are many other arts which are not 'martial', such as painting and

calligraphy, poetry, flower arranging, the tea ceremony, and gardening which, depending on the enlightenment of the Master also "pass over into Zen" just in the same way that Master Kenzo Awa has stated that the Art of Archery does.

There is a traditional Japanese expression, Chazen ichimi, which means that Zen and tea are one. The tea ceremony widely practiced today includes many other arts such as gardening, calligraphy, poetry, and flower arranging. The tea room is reached traditionally by walking a garden path, the roji. The hut itself, about ten feet square, is made of odd materials built in such a way as to blend it with the surroundings. Upon entering the room through a lowered entrance designed to make each person stoop regardless of status, one comes upon the takonoma, an alcove or niche, set in the wall where one finds a flower arrangement and often a scroll of calligraphy or a painting with a poem written on it.

The atmosphere is one of silence and emptiness infused with the fullness created by a gentle breeze, the sound of the kettle boiling, and the fragrances from the surrounding garden. The serenity is established through what the Tea Masters call sabi and wabi.

In Japan, sabi and wabi are so much a part of the culture that some speak of a wabi-zumai, the wabi way of living. There is no direct translation into English of either concept. Sabi means primitive, unadorned simplicity, and it refers to things and a particular artistic atmosphere. Wabi is Zen inwardness. It is non-attachment, solitariness and poverty - not just an economic poverty but a religious and philosophical poverty, in which there lies the intangible. There is nothing to be grasped, or held on to.⁴⁶

Wabi, expressed artistically, must be authentic. It can not be stylized; the true expression comes from within. One must not try for a special effect. It just happens.

expressing, the two forms of wabi and sabi merge so that all blends: the sounds, the smells; the flower arrangement, the painting, and the deliberate, ritualized, and yet spontaneous actions of the Tea Master and his few guests. It is an aesthetic oneness.

D. T. Suzuki quotes two poems. The first expresses wabi. The second expresses sabi.

Among the weeds growing along the wall
The crickets are hiding, as if forsaken,
From the garden wet with autumnal showers.

The yomogi herbs in the garden
Are beginning to wither from below;
Autumn is deepening,
Its colors are fading;
Not knowing why, my heart is filled
with melancholy.⁴⁷

In the first stanza, weeds are mentioned instead of brightly colored flowers. There is no hierarchy amongst plants to be emphasized. This is part of the poverty. The cricket is the Zen person who far from standing out as the most important creature of the world is a lowly creature hidden away. This refers to the empty mind. The 'hiding' indicates an absence and yet with "the garden wet with autumnal showers", there is a completeness—a fullness. It all blends. The cricket, even in his absence, is yet fully present.

The second poem, even with the accompanying 'melancholy' of the poet, is more objective, in the sense that it is a description expressing the changing environment. The phrase, "Not knowing why" allows the description of the fading Autumn garden to be the emphatic presence in the poem. The 'melancholy' of the poet ties his humanity to the unfolding scene.

In these arts, the expressions are tied much more to the natural surroundings than in the martial arts although the underlying philosophy is the same. The famous Tea Master, Rykyū, wrote that...

out of his tea room:

The court is left covered
 With fallen leaves
 Of the pine tree;
 No dust is stirred
 And calm is my mind!⁴⁸

In this poem, wabi and sabi are revealed. The scene is allowed to remain just as it is through the Zen mind in which 'no dust is stirred' on account of the absence of the ego.

The Zen Master, Takuan writes similarly:

...we listen quietly to the boiling water in the kettle...and become oblivious of all worldly woes and worries; we then pour out a dipperful of water from the kettle, reminding us of the mountain stream, and thereby our mental dust is wiped off. 49

Zen aesthetics, like the dance of the martial arts, is of a simplicity, a clarity, and a spontaneity which flow from one's unconcerned inwardness. The Zen Master and painter, Sengai, writes, "Every stroke of my brush is the overflow of my inmost heart."⁵⁰ The artistic expressions of the Zen artist are wholly human and completely authentic, and yet at the same time unadorned.

It is because of the simplicity and the creative spontaneity that some Zen Masters prefer to write poetry rather than long involved philosophical treatises.

In some cases, the poem expresses a simple daily way of life as in the one below by the Chinese Ch'an poet, Han Shan:

As for me, I delight in the everyday Way,
 Among mist-wrapped vines and rocky caves.
 Here in the wilderness I am completely free,
 With my friends, the white clouds, idling forever.
 There are roads, but they do not reach the world;
 Since I am mindless, who can rouse my thoughts?
 On a bed of stone I sit, alone in the night,
 While the round moon climbs up cold mountain. 50

Other poems relate to satori and to death:

I've crossed the sea after Truth,
 Knowledge, that snare, must be defied,
 Here and there, I've worn out heaps of sandals.
 Now - moonlit water in clear abyss.

Kakua⁵¹

For seventy-four years
 I've touched east, west.
 My parting word?
 Listen - I'll whisper.

Kokan⁵²

This aesthetic attitude of the Zen artist does not mean that Zen philosophy ought not to come forth. These three poems quoted above are steeped in the Philosophy of Zen. It can not be otherwise, for the Zen artist, if he is enlightened, primarily reveals his Zen mind. The question which is examined in the next chapter is: What would the Zen Master whisper?

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Chapter 3

Zen Philosophy - Creating Essential Opportunites

The Philosophy of Zen is a philosophy of pure unmediated existence. It is the wisdom of 'wei wu wei', of doing without doing or of being appropriately spontaneous as mentioned above. Like the Zen Masters who in guiding others are merely 'pointing at the moon' Zen Philosophy merely hints at the Way, for Zen is not to be found in philosophical treatises, of which there are many in Zen, but in the fullness, the empty clarity of being and non-being, to which the philosophy points. Zen philosophy is in a sense a 'set up'. If it works it leaves one at the brink of satori. Like zazen (sitting) or chanting it is one method which aids one to enter the 'gateless gate' of enlightenment.

Zen Philosophy leaves no traces of itself, when one reaches the ultimate wisdom of satori. It swallows itself up and vanishes even while it develops. It is in this sense that the seeker becomes the sought. There are no words left to cling to or to search for; there is nothing to be named. There is no such thing as Zen. The Tao Te Ching begins:

The Tao that can be spoken of is not the Tao itself.
 The name that can be given is not the name itself. 1
 The unnameable is the source of the universe.

Zen Philosophy is truly a philosophy for lovers and seekers of wisdom. It is not speculative or systematic. It can not be conceived as a 'Zennism'. The Master Te Shan stated, "Our school has no verbal expression, nor does it have any doctrine to teach people."² Its ultimate aim is not to be found in itself, but in the wisdom (prajna) of satori which lies beyond philosophical inquiry. Descartes' famous phrase, the 'Cogito' still rings throughout parts of Western Civilization. "I think, therefore

of rationalism, and it is still fulfilling the expressed goal to 'make us masters and possessors of nature- at great ecological expense. This is an example of words establishing and continuing a particular attitude and its resulting actions.

A Zen parallel would likely be: "Nothing is; therefore, I am not". As the Zen Master Diao states in the first two lines of his enlightenment poem, "No longer aware of mind and object, I see earth, mountains, rivers at last."³

If we examine the Zen statement, "Nothing is; therefore, I am not", which might be used by a Zen Master to push a student further, it is not the logic which is important but rather the impasse it establishes in the mind of the student. Once one says, "Nothing is", the conclusion concerning the 'I' is unnecessary. And if we examine the "nothing is", the two words expressed contradict the true referent. It is in this sense that Zen logic only hints at its intent (which is always the same) by pointing out the direction and then vanishing into its own conundrum which has been purposely created. The student is forced back into his or her own self or inwardness and is left with such questions as: "Who am I?" and "What is this?" The first tenet of Zen practice is that one must enlighten oneself for there is nothing else on which to rely - not Zen, Zen Masters, or famous sayings. If a Zen Master philosophizes, the clear, primordial nothingness, the source from which Zen Philosophy emerges, is to be apperceived as the source of the student's own mind. If anything else is intended, then it is far from Zen.

Upon being asked what is the end of Zen Philosophy, a Zen Master might grab the questioner and demand, "Speak, speak!", as Rinzai was known to do. Or he might, as Joshu did, reply, "The cyprus tree in the garden." In these words what wisdom is there to cling to or even to grasp?

Suzuki reveals the logic of inwardness more precisely:

The following statements are some of what we may designate as the logical counterparts of our inner feeling of freedom, autonomy, authenticity, and creativity:

To be is not to be, not to be is to be;
 To have is not to have, not to have is to have;
 Is-ness is not is-ness;
 A is A because A is not A.⁴

This type of logic leads to such unreasonable expressions as, "The wooden man sings and the stone woman dances".⁵ This type of absurdist statement is meant to open the student to the Self which is "unattainably attainable".⁶

The Zen Master, Daiye, of the Sung dynasty stated to his students:

In the study of worldly things rational interpretation is required, while in the study of things not of this world it is just the contrary: rationalization is to be set aside and it is at this very point that one has to appeal to another source of information.⁷

This other world is not a separate transcendental realm but is the origin of this world. One can not have one without the other. It is another world in the sense that a syllogistic logic does not suffice. One is not looking for a conclusion, but for a non-conclusion-conclusion; and in this sense, it is beyond the intellectual world which we see and understand in terms of cause and effect. The Zen understanding is not an 'either-or logic' through which one would debate the preference of one world, or of one world view, over another. The purpose of Zen logic is understood through the philosophy of the logic which points to enlightenment.

The Zen Master, Ta hui, explains how important it is not to get caught up in the words and statements of the Zen philosopher:

...the former sages took pains to admonish us, to have us detach from the four phases and cut off their hundred negations, to make a clean break directly, and cut off the heads of the thousand...

are "it exists," "it doesn't exist," "it neither exists nor doesn't exist," and "it both exists and doesn't exist." 8

In this statement, Ta Hui logically covers all the possibilities thus negating any syllogistic conclusions. The Zen philosopher uses logic to annihilate his logic and his philosophy and thus an all-encompassing logic emerges. It is this very 'nihil' of annihilate, this nothingness, this Buddhist 'Void', that remains when philosophy and logic emerge as wisdom.

One might be tempted to say, "Ah! Now I understand. Zen is a philosophy of Nihilism." And yet this would be incorrect since one then might assume that this philosophical label had at last 'pinned it down'. One then might try and draw logical conclusions such as: Zen is a negativistic philosophy which would be quite impractical for those who have families and jobs. This type of thought assumes that philosophical intellection suffices and hence the whole point of Zen would be lost. Philosophical statements can be used only to point to the ultimate referent which lies beyond the philosophizing itself in the experiential intuition (satori) through which one apprehends It. In other words, the logic and philosophy of Zen involves a movement from the abstract to the concrete of experience as it is here and now. And thus Joshu answers his student by saying, "The cyprus tree in the garden". What is nihilistic about that statement - there is the tree standing over there. Who can't see it?

The very nothingness, mindlessness, which is found experientially is in the very midst of all THIS. All that has been transcended is the enculturated ego and its limited perceptions.

In another seemingly contradictory sense, we could discuss Zen as a philosophy of Nihilism or of the Absurd. Ta hui explains:

Having penetrated these four phases, when I see someone saying that all things really exist, I go along with it and talk existence, but without being obstructed by this "it really exists"; when I see someone saying that all things are really nonexistent, I go along with it and talk non-existence, but not the nonexistence of the world, totally empty...

Let us then examine Zen as a philosophy of the Absurd in order to understand this most important aspect of Zen. Albert Camus states: "The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of this world."¹⁰ The absurd is born not of an abstraction but of an inner experience, the need to know. The "unreasonable silence" is not a defeat or failure to turn away from. It is to be entered. It is the ground of the True Self. The Absurd experienced as silence or nothingness is the groundless ground of Being. Camus states further that "The feeling of the absurd is not, for all that, the notion of the absurd."¹¹ The absurd can not be conceptualized and reified as something that exists in and of itself apart from being.

This entrance into the 'Silence' is what the Zen Masters have described as entering the Way. Since the 'silence' is also not a concept, it must be apperceived through an experience. It happens when no-mind and no accompanying wish or will for it to happen occur. It is often triggered by something one hears or by a happening which is outside one's understanding. The Master Butsugen once said:

...when the rain keeps on very hard, that is the best moment for you to hear...The sound of the rain - this is the sermon you are giving? Do you understand? When you are immediately clear about it, there is not much after all to understand...¹²

There are many examples of Zen students entering the Way through hearing a sound in a way that is beyond conditions...

about through the mondo (question and answer) between the Master Gensha and his student, Kyosei:

"I am newly initiated and wish to be instructed in Zen."
Thus Kyosei approached the Master Gensha. "How do I enter in the way, Master?"

"Do you hear the rivulet running near by?"

"Yes, I do Master."

"There! here is the way to enter."

This is said to have introduced Kyosei to the 'mysteries' of Zen. 13

In this dialogue, the Master Gensha was able to stop the mind by pointing to the stream. This unexpected and illogical answer created an impasse which allowed Kyosei to hear unconditionally and hence with great clarity. As contradictory as it seems, the absurd once entered is the gate to an unencumbered clarity and not to further chaos and confusion as one might rationally suppose. Camus states further:

One does not discover the absurd without being
tempted to write a manual of happiness...Happiness
and the absurd are two sons of the same earth...
It teaches that all is not and has not been exhausted. 14

Entering Zen, one experiences a new-found, profound, freedom through which one can become in touch with the creativity of being. Camus suggests that "the absurd joy par excellence is creation".¹⁵ A philosophy of the absurd is also a philosophy of creativity. The two are inseparable. One's whole life can be argued to be the "Art of Being" as we have discussed above.

By drawing parallels with Camus' philosophy of the absurd one can see how it can be appropriate to discuss Zen from a particular vantage point. The attempt is not to suggest that Camus' philosophy is Zen because it is far from it, but rather that it can be advantageous to discuss Zen from an absurdist or nihilist or creative viewpoint, as long as one is aware that one has not grasped anything. There is no...

really been understood in these words themselves. As Ta Hui might say, "I go along with the absurd without getting caught up with life being totally absurd."

Zen philosophy can be found in the talks and poems of the Zen Masters, but it also is found and occurs through the dialogue, the mondos between them and their students. Here, as one might expect, the same Zen logic is found. Its purpose is the same: to bring the student to that impasse which leads to awakening, although the method used might be different. For example, in one situation, the Zen Master might appear to contradict what the student thinks is part of a doctrine of Zen. The contemporary Zen Master, Seun Sahn, had the following dialogue with one of his students:

Soen-sa (Zen Master) held up the stick and said, "Do you see this?"
He then quickly hit the table with the stick and said, "Do you hear this? This stick, this sound, and your mind - are they the same or different?"
The student said, "The same."
Soen-sa said, "If you say they are the same, I will hit you thirty times. If you say they are different, I will still hit you thirty times. Why?"¹⁶

If there is no logical answer, what should the student have answered? In this case, Soen-sa shouted and then said, "Spring comes, the grass grows by itself." If one assumes that there is a reason behind this answer to discover, then one is going in the wrong direction. There is not one answer here but an infinite number.

The contemporary Zen Master, Zenkei Shibayama, explains:

A good Zen Master always works like this. He urges his disciple to have an eye to see through the relativistic oppositions and contradictions, and makes him grasp the opportunity in himself of making a leap.¹⁷

Hui Neng urged his successors to use contraries as responses to Zen students' enquiries. At the right time, when the student

would make this 'leap' beyond the relativistic world of 'this and that' and apprehend the identity of all contraries.¹⁸ In the two mondo given above, the dialogue occurs in such a way that there is no room for a third conceptualization expressing the resolution of contraries. The student learns not to seek the answer outside of himself. The 'leap' into the identity of contraries is his own affair.

When this 'leap' is made, all contraries are resolved: subject and object; noumena and phenomena; and life and death:

So many great Masters have assured us that the complete apprehension of this initial identity of conceptual opposites, even of any one such pair, is itself liberation, saying that to 'see' one is to 'see' all, that we should not fail to recognize the importance of this apperception.¹⁹

Satori is a sudden apperception of subject and object as one. This is the revealed truth of Zen. The Zen Master, Shen Hui, pushes Zen logic to its limits when he says, "It is the absence of the absence of subject and object as phenomena that is the ultimate truth that awakens."²⁰

The unity that is discovered does not negate perception or turn it into an absolute void in which there literally is nothing to perceive in the phenomenal world. It is rather a unity in which one becomes all things. The Zen Master is 'the cyprus tree in the garden'. Zen Master Shibayama explains this precisely:

A Zen personality, as creative subjectivity, always expresses itself through the samadhi of becoming the "object itself". "To cast oneself away" is to become the object itself; with the whole of one's being one gives life to the object.²¹

What is important to note here is that one then becomes a fully creative being, an 'artist of life'. The creative artist becomes one with his tools

and with the resulting art form. This is the Zen meaning of Jung's statement, "It is not Goethe who creates Faust, but Faust which creates Goethe", which is quoted above. Shibayama states further:

A grain of wheat is as heavy as Mount Sumeru. At the bottom of the object, "at the bottom of the action, there is so to speak, deep philosophy and the "Person".²²

The 'philosophy' is the wisdom of creative Being untrammelled by the ego tied to a relative, cultural understanding - a world of restricting dualism. From the Zen point of view, it is only then that one is truly free to create.

To go beyond the 'subject-object' and 'mind-body' dichotomies is to enter into an unchanging subjectivity. The contemporary Ch'an philosopher, Wei Wu Wei, explains:

This process of transference of control, from apparent objectivity to permanent subjectivity is the famous leap or jump, sometimes called 'into the void', which evidently is, since the 'Void of Prajna' is just sub-subjectivity.²³

Master Tsung Kao stated, "You feel as if you had stumbled over a stone and stepped on your own nose".²⁴ In other words, all is mind. It is a subjectivity without a subject from which emerges the phenomenal world. Wei Wu Wei explains further, "...phenomena which as the term asserts, we appear to be, are nothing but noumenon; and noumenon which is all that which we are, though as such itself is not, is as phenomena (as its appearance).²⁵ Phenomena, what appear to exist in objective forms, are really noumena which can not exist since only objects exist as phenomena. The unchanging subjectivity is a leap, a continuous leap out of the phenomenal world. And yet this leap is not a leaving for the phenomenal world remains. It, as appearance, is perceived diffidently because in the leap the ego is left behind; consequently, there is a pristine clarity unadorned by...

For Zen, there is no transcendental removal from the world of appearances, the world of objects. There is always something like "the cyprus tree in the garden" or "the grass growing by itself". The apparent contradiction between noumenon and phenomenon dissolves in the satori event. The apperception of the unity experienced intemporally in satori is opened up through relative perceiving in the phenomenal world. This is only an inference, but it may help us understand the experience of timelessness that Zen people who experience satori have noted. The example from Tai Chi, quoted above, we can examine further in this context.

There is a common experience in Tai Chi of seemingly falling through a hole in time. Awareness of the passage of time completely stops and only when you catch yourself, after five or ten minutes or five or ten seconds, is there the realization that for that period of time the world stopped.²⁶

Both time and space are part of the construction of the phenomenal world, but not of noumenon. Immanuel Kant, the famous German 19th Century philosopher, referred to this experience as a transcendental apperception. "This pure original unchangeable consciousness I shall name transcendental apperception."²⁷ He argued:

All necessity, without exception, is grounded in a transcendental condition. There must, therefore, be a transcendental ground of the unity of consciousness²⁸ in the symthesis of all our manifold intuitions...

He also stated, "In all change of appearance substance is permanent; its quantum in nature is neither experienced nor diminished."²⁹

The Zen Master Seung Sahn also recognizes the permanent nature of substance:

Don't know is the mind that cuts off thinking.

When all thinking has been cut off, you become empty mind. This is before thinking. Your before-thinking mind, my before-thinking mind, all people's before-thinking minds are the same. This is your substance. Your substance, my substance, and the substance of the whole universe becomes one. So the tree, the mountain, the cloud, and you become one.³⁰

However, he goes on to caution the student to whom he is writing:

Then I ask you: Are the mountain and you the same or different? If you say "the same", I will hit you thirty times. If you say "different", I will still hit you thirty times. Why?³¹

The words the "same" and "different" belong to the phenomenal world. Seung Sahn wants an answer that comes out of the origin, the substance of being and not an intellectual answer which does not reveal whether the student has yet made the leap. And if he or she has not, then his words are to help bring the student to the edge of phenomenal existence.

The liberating characteristic of satori, complete freedom, emanates from substance. This freedom Kant has called a transcendental freedom which is an absolute spontaneity. Kant argues that transcendental freedom "stands opposed to the law of causality".³² If freedom is restricted by laws, inherent within itself or as outside forces, then it is not freedom. He argues further that there is an absolute spontaneity which is a cause "antecedent" to the happenings in the phenomenal world.³³ This freedom is the creative freedom of Zen. The satori experience is liberating because through its apprehension one apprehends "the uncreate", the unconditional primordial origin of ongoing being, and perhaps of the whole phenomenal world itself.

The problem of being too philosophical is that we become too one-sided - too immured in the intellectual world of abstract appearances. The Zen Master, Ta hui, criticized one of his students for just that reason:

Tun-li, my friend in the Path, when we met in Pien in 1126 you were of mature age and already knew of the existence of the Great Matter. But with your vast erudition you have entered too deeply into the Nine (Confucian) Classics and the Seventeen Histories; you are too brilliant and your lines of reasoning too many, whereas your powers of stable concentration are too few. ³⁴

Along with the intellectual or philosophical insights one gains in Zen, one must also, at the same time, develop a "stable concentration".

In another case, Tokusan who had become an authority on the Diamond Sutra found out that the Zen school was becoming quite influential in southern China and that it was espousing a "transmission outside the scriptures, and not relying on any letters". Tokusan felt that this was an heretical philosophy. Certain of his prowess as a Buddhist philosopher, he stated, "I will overthrow the den of Zen devils and exterminate them!" Taking with him all his notes and commentaries on the Diamond Sutra he journeyed south. Prior to arriving in Ryotan where the Zen Master, Soshin, was staying, he stopped at a tea house where an old woman served him tea. In conversation he told her that he was carrying the Diamond Sutra and some of his commentaries. She said, "Is that so! Then I have a question for you. If you can answer my question, I will provide you with lunch. If, however, you fail to give me a satisfactory answer, I am sorry but you will have to go without a snack." Tokusan agreed, and she asked him. "In the Diamond Sutra it is written that 'past mind is unattainable; present mind is unattainable; and future mind is unattainable'. You are going to light up your mind. Which mind, now are you going to light up?" Tokusan could not answer.

Philosophically, he was quite able to explain the unattainability of the three minds; however, when the question was put existentially, he was unable to answer. This confrontation re-opened Tokusan's quest. He had been

brought to the end of his reasoning. Tokusan carried on to study under the Zen Master, Ryotan.

One evening Ryotan said, "It is getting dark. You had better return to your place." As he was leaving, he said, "It is so dark outside." Ryotan lit a candle and as he was passing it over to him, he blew it out. This was enough to awaken Tokusan. It is reported that the next day he burned his commentaries, and said:

Any knowledge or learning is just like a
drop of water in a valley when it is compared
with the depth of experience.³⁵

A Zen Master who has a student who understands the philosophy of Zen would create opportunities and not words to bring the student to leap into satori. In another case a student pleaded with his Zen Master. Kogen was a Master in the 9th Century. As a Zen student he studied under the Master, Isan, who asked him, "I am interested neither in the scholastic knowledge you have accumulated so far, nor in whatever teachings you might find in the sutras. Just give me a word of yours on your Self before you were born, when the distinction of east and west did not exist."

Isan then proceeded to reject all Kyogen's answers as being too 'bookish'. Kyogen was then driven to his limits. He could find no way through and pleaded with Isan to teach him. But the Master refused by saying, "Even if I show you the answer, it is my answer. It has nothing to do with your understanding which should be experienced and obtained by yourself."³⁶ Kyogen then trained hard to develop his "powers of stable concentration". One day he was sweeping the tiles and a stone hit the bamboo making a sound. His world shattered and his doubts and his quest vanished. All that was left was the sound of his laughter. Of his experience, he said:

The compassion of my teacher is greater than that of my parents. Had he explained to and showed me the answer I should never have been able to have this great joy!³⁷

The compassion of the teacher is important to note here. It is easy to teach someone; it is very difficult to allow them to come to discover on their own. When one teaches another, there is in that very act a 'meta-message' which states that the teacher is the better, more powerful person. This leaves the student aware of his or her own powerlessness. In allowing the student to come to his or her own insight, the power of that person develops and increases. The Zen Master allows the student to perceive his powerlessness and in the end must be defeated by the student. At some point the student of Zen is ready to stand at the edge of the phenomenal world and to plunge into the ever present abyss. He actually does not create his satori. It happens. One can not will it to happen. Wei Wu Wei states:

Noumenally there is no volition - because there is no I.
Phenomenally spontaneity alone is non-volitional.³⁸

The leap of satori is spontaneous and non-volitional. The creative genius of a good Zen Master is that, through his penetrating glance, he correctly responds to the student at the right time. He is like a catalyst; if he is good he speeds up the reaction but does not enter into it himself. As Zen Master, Ta Hui stated:

When I see that they don't understand, I don't spare the mouth-work, but try once more to create trailing vines for them...If your intellect isn't empty how can you distinguish the myriad forms?³⁹

Zen Master Sobaku Harada reveals the correct attitude of the Zen philosopher in the following poem:

For forty years I've been selling water
By the bank of a river.
Ho, Ho!
My labours have been wholly without merit.⁴⁰

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Chapter 4

Zen Practice and Creative Development

The philosophical aspect of Zen, for the beginning student, is a philosophical quest arising out of the all too apparent confusion that one feels about the meaning and turmoil of one's existence. One has experienced and observed too much suffering in oneself and in others. Zen claims to be a way out. As the student progresses first, through an intellectual ripening, the search intensifies. D. T. Suzuki expresses this progression in the following:

The searching mind is vexed to the extreme as its fruitless strivings go on, but when it is brought up to an apex it breaks or it explodes, and the whole structure of consciousness assumes an entirely different aspect. This is the Zen experience. The quest, the search, the ripening and the explosion - thus proceeds the experience.

In the last chapter, we examined how Zen philosophy pushes the student to the brink of the abyss. In this chapter, we shall examine how Zen practice strengthens this process by both enhancing the philosophy and going beyond it at the same time.

Zen without satori is not Zen. Zen without satori is like shadows without light. All of Zen practice is aimed at this point - whether it be zazen, koan study, kinhin (walking meditation), music, chanting, mantras, mudras (manual signs), hua t'ou, etc. When these practices are successful, one's mind can dwell in a state before thinking, the prelude to satori.

The practice of Zen requires, for most, many years of diligent effort; however, this ultimate intuitive experience, when it occurs, often explodes like a clap of thunder. Zen is the school of 'sudden enlightenment'. It is sudden here

phenomenal dimension, and enters a non-dimensional state of noumenon. Wei Wu Wei states:

'Sudden Enlightenment' means precisely the immediate perception of all that in fact we are. 'Enlightenment' is 'sudden' only because it is not in 'time' (subject to sequential duration). It is reintegration in intemporality.²

The complete self-confidence which emerges ends the quest although it may need years of refinement. The following is a poem written by Wei Wu Wei expressing the end of the journey:

The seeker is the found,
The found is the seeker,
As soon as it is apperceived³
That there is no Time.

The seeker-and-the-sought is a dichotomy which can only exist in a dualistic, relative, phenomenal world. When this dimension is left behind, there exist no distinctions.

The following two accounts of the 'sudden' experience are of a 20th Century American and of Han Shan who became a Zen Master in 16th Century China:

All at once the roshi (Zen Master), the room, every single thing disappeared in a dazzling stream of illumination and I felt myself bathed in a delicious, unspeakable delight...For a fleeting eternity I was alone - I alone was...I have it! There is nothing absolutely nothing. I am everything and everything⁴ is nothing.

...his body and mind disappeared and were replaced by a great brightness, spheric and full, clear and still, like a huge round mirror containing all the mountains, rivers, and great earth. Thereafter he noticed a still serenity inside and outside his body and met no more⁵ hindrance from sounds and forms.

There are countless examples of satori in Zen literature. They all tend to describe similar states to greater and lesser degrees. The body and mind seemed

to vanish in light or a brightness; and there is an all-encompassing oneness which is limitless, unformed, nothing and everything - an 'unspeakable' experience which can be only crudely hinted at.

Once one experiences oneself as a creative source, the practices are surpassed. The mind turns around on itself and one faces the "uncreated" self as pure potentiality. The Zen Master Kyogen writes the following in his enlightenment poem:

One stroke has made me forget all my previous
 knowledge,
 No artificial disciplines at all needed;
 In every movement I uphold the ancient way,
 And never fall into the rut of mere quietism;⁶
 Wherever I walk there are no traces left...

The philosophy of Zen is not left behind at this stage for now the Zen student returns to a more serious study of the sutras and philosophy in order to verify and substantiate his awakening. Now begins a deepening process. In some cases he may begin to write his own contribution to the philosophy of Zen as did Huang Po in his Huang Po Ch'uan Hsin Fa Yao, a 9th Century Chinese text.

There are three main requirements for Zen practice: encompassing doubt; unswerving faith; and constant endurance.

The doubting process is common to all philosophers. It is what propels the seeker of wisdom. Zen is no exception. Zen Master Shibayama stated:

To have Great Doubt is the start, or a necessary condition for carrying Zen Training and its consequence is the break-up of dualistic intellect. Zen has the lucidity of breaking entirely through the dualistic intellect.⁷ Zen experience has this philosophical depth in it.

This 'break-up' has been compared to peeling layers off an onion one by one.⁸

This can be the time-consuming factor. The enculturated ego is for most of

us firmly entrenched. Once the diff...

overcome then the creative Zen 'artist of life' can fully emerge. D. T. Suzuki writes:

...without the opposition of subject and object no thinking can take place. This power of thinking has enabled us to grasp the situation in which we are working out our destiny on earth. But at the same time this power of dichotomizing has made us forgetful of the source in which it preserves its creative potentialities.

The doubting process must be so encompassing that it leads to the end of reason and thought. The Zen students come to experience the before-thinking-mind. The Zen Master, Manzan, urged his students:

Doubt, scrutinize, paying no attention to fancies or ideas. Strain every nerve without expecting anything to happen, without willing satori. Doubt, doubt, doubt. If even one idea arises, your doubt is not sufficiently strong, and you must question yourself more intensely.

One can not, in Zen practice, will satori since this would perpetuate the dualism between self and object. Willing means to will something. The most we can say is that there is an intentionality to move in the direction of satori. It is an intentionality which has no known content. It is a concentration, a mindfulness which must occur before thinking.

The doubting process is itself a creative process. The method is one of a profound incubation from which the intuition of satori can arise. During the process one must defer judgment. Often the student will analyse his progress. Such judgments entrench the thinking mind. Deferring judgment is to dwell in the mind-before-thinking. In Zen they are the same. D. T. Suzuki points out that this prolonged period of incubation is not one of mere waiting:

It is to be understood that this period of incubation which intervenes between the state

quietness but of intense strenuousness, in which
the entire consciousness is concentrated on one point.¹¹

This strenuousness involves a constant endurance as mentioned above.

It also involves unswerving faith that the philosophy of Zen and the experience of the Zen Masters is true. As was pointed out in the last chapter, Zen philosophy does not end with an abstract truth concerning the identity of opposites. How can one prove the noumenal aspect of being? The faith then is not in Buddha as such, but in the inherent bodhi mind, the enlightened mind. The purpose of Zen philosophy is twofold: to understand the intellect as a device capable of illuminating 'before thinking' as a groundless ground and to develop a faith in the ongoing experiential outcome.

The Zen Master Pai Chang has written:

...if you create an idea of the Buddha, create an understanding of the Buddha, as long as there is anything sought, it's all called the excrement of fabricated conceptualizations...and it is called dead words.¹²

This iconoclasm in Zen is a direct consequence of the philosophy which leads directly to the unknown.

There are three main purposes which are meant to bring the continuously doubting mind, the unswerving faith, and endurance to the peak, the one-pointed-mind. These are zazen, sitting concentration; koan study; and the hua t'ou.

Zazen is the cornerstone of practice. Zen students will sit (za) twice each day usually early in the morning in the first light of dawn and in the evening. The lotus or half or quarter lotus postures are recommended. With the legs folded, the back straight, and with one's ears in line with one's shoulders, this is considered the most stable position. The sitting may last forty minutes or more.

ten each out-going breath, or repeat a mantra, such as: 'gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, Bodhi, Sva Ha.' More advanced students may work on a koan and a hua t'ou, or practice shikan-taza. Shikan means 'nothing but' or 'just'. Ta means 'to hit' and za, as in zazen, 'to sit'. Zen Master Yasutani explains:

...in shikan taza the mind must be hurried yet at the same time firmly planted or massively composed, like Mount Fuji, let us say. But it must also be alert, stretched, like a taut bowstring. So shikan-taza is a heightened state of concentrated awareness wherein one is neither tense nor hurried, and certainly never slack. 13

This is the key to all zazen - to sit solidly alert without either too much tension, which indicates one is getting too greedy for enlightenment, or too little tension through which one becomes too slack. The difficulty with shikan-taza is that there is no mantra koan, or hua t'ou to help distract one's talking mind.

Koan means 'public case' or 'record'. Each koan is a record of some happening, often between a Zen Master and a student, which creatively reveals an aspect of the enlightened mind. The American Zen Master Phillip Kapleau writes: "The aim of every koan is to liberate the mind from the snare of language, 'which fits over experience like a straight jacket'".¹⁴

There are about seventeen hundred koans. It is said that a student must pass through them all before becoming a Zen Master. This means that the student's satori should be sufficient so that he is able to pass through them all.

The following are examples of koans which are given to beginning students:

1. A monk once asked Master Joshu, 'Has a dog Buddha nature or not? Joshu replied, 'Mu' (not or no). What is this Mu?
2. The Sixth Patriarch said to the monk Emyo, 'Thinking

original face before your parents
gave birth to you?

3. In clapping both hands a sound is
heard; what is the sound of one hand?¹⁵

One of these koans would be given to the student in sanzen, the personal interview in which the student reveals his progress and the Master responds. Typically the student works on the koan for a few days or weeks and returns to the Master with an answer which is promptly turned down often without comment. The student returns again and again with more 'answers' only to be turned down again. Finally the student exhausts all of his cleverly thought out answers, and a new phase of training begins. He struggles to keep the mind-before-thinking.

At this stage, the student may work on a hua t'ou (lit. word-head). The 'word-head' is the moment before a thought arises.

The Zen Master Hsu Yun stated:

All hua t'ous have only one meaning which is very ordinary and has nothing peculiar about it. If you look into him "Who is reciting a sutra?", "Who is holding a mantra...", the reply to "WHO?" will invariably be the same: "It is Mind."...To make it plain, before
a thought arises, is hua t'ou. 16

Both the koan and the hua t'ou are used to cut the mind off before thought. This is the often difficult, continuing practice which proceeds satori. It can take ten to thirty years of ripening for a major satori to occur.

The student's interviews with the Zen Master, sanzen, are dialectical in nature. There is an ongoing 'see-saw' battle or confrontation through which the student moves himself toward an ultimate and boundless synthesis beyond words.

different kinds of answers.¹⁷ Some of these answers are verbal, and some involve some sort of active response on the part of the student or master. In cases where judgments are given, there can be as many answers as one can think up. Here are some of the answers that might be given to a student, who although he knows something about it, asks, "What is Zen?":

"I don't know anything about it."
 "What is the use of asking anybody else."
 "It is like selling water by the river."
 "I will tell you after I have turned to ashes."
 "Your question won't take you anywhere."

There are also an infinite number of answers involving pure action. The following is such a case. A student is asked in an interview by the Zen Master holding a bell, "What is this?". The student takes it and rings it. In another situation, the student may ask, "What is the meaning of Zen?" The Master then holds up his stick and asks the student, "Do you understand?" The student is frightened; and then he becomes centered and aware of his own power. He receives a glimpse of his own creative force and the primordial origin from which his being-alike emerges.

The first satori breakthrough is often merely a glimpse. At this stage the student has entered the Way. A major awakening may be years away; and after that, there are years of refinement which accrue becoming the groundless ground of moment-to-moment existence.

The Zen Master Seung Sahn explained to one of his American students three types of enlightenment. He held up a moktak, a gourd-like instrument carved from a single piece of wood used to establish the beat for chanting; and he said, "This is a moktak. But if you say it is a moktak, you are attached to name and form. And if you say it is not a moktak, you are attached to emptiness." He then asked the student if it was a moktak or not. The

student would reveal his "first enlightenment" if his answer was to hit the floor or shout. In this case, the student snapped his fingers. In this state "All becomes one" - the Zen Master, the student, the sound and the moktak.¹⁸

The type of answer which is indicative of the student understanding the second stage would be: "The wall is white, the moktak is brown...Everything is just like this." The last stage is "final enlightenment". Zen Master Seung Sahn hit the moktak, and said, "Only this. Only one point. The truth is just like this."¹⁹

The koans and hua t'ous work, if within the student is generated an intense doubt. The more it rises authentically, of itself, in the mind of the student, the greater will be the degree of enlightenment when it arises. D. T. Suzuki states:

Intellectual puzzles are everywhere, but the difficulty is to produce a question which is vital and on which depends the destiny of the questioner himself. 20

Once a major satori occurs then the doubt completely vanishes. The student gains a full measure of self-confidence. The Zen Master Kao Feng wrote after his satori experience:

At this moment my doubts were suddenly broken up. I felt as if I jumped out of a trap. All the puzzling koans of the Masters and the Buddhas and all the different issues and events of both present and ancient times became transparently clear to me. 21

When a satori of such depth occurs, one knows. It all appears to be so simple. P'an Shan said, "It's like hurling a sword at the sky: no talk of whether it reaches or not."²²

In this final Chapter, we have seen how important satori is in Zen; without it, there is no Zen. To find oneself one requires all the

effort that one can muster. The enlightenment experience is like a total purging of the limited and one-sided self, the enculturated ego. It is then that one can become truly 'unconsciously conscious'. THIS IDENTITY IS THAT OF A FULLY CREATIVE PERSON, in whom the characteristics discussed in the first chapter are unconsciously actualized. One need take no notice. Nothing has been achieved. There is simply an effortless free flow of energy and power, an appropriate spontaneity, allowing all of one's skill and ability to arise in all that one does. This is the "artless art" of Zen.

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