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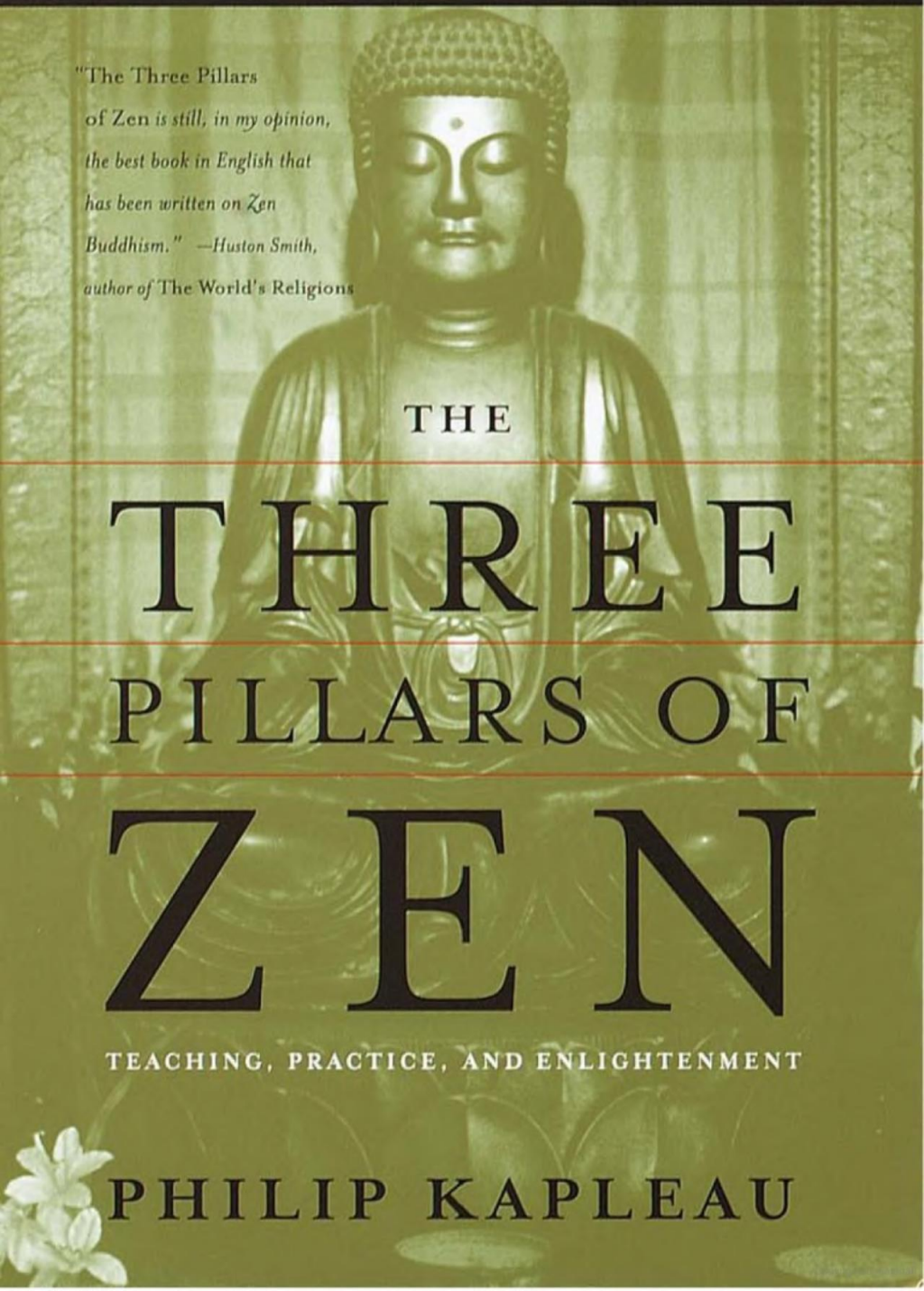

"The Three Pillars of Zen *is still, in my opinion, the best book in English that has been written on Zen Buddhism."* —*Huston Smith, author of* The World's Religions

THE THREE PILLARS OF ZEN

TEACHING, PRACTICE, AND ENLIGHTENMENT

PHILIP KAPLEAU

The Three Pillars of Zen

Teaching, Practice, and Enlightenment

Compiled and Edited by

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A note on the decorations: The section-heading devices, dating from about one to five centuries ago, are *kao*, the fanciful brush-drawn "signatures" or personal ciphers that were often adopted by Zen priests and other cultured Japanese in their literary and artistic avocations. *Kao* were only vaguely related to orthography and are used here, not for meaning, but abstractly, for their decorative quality. On the title page is the kao of Butcho-kokushi, a seventeenth-century Zen master.

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FOREWORD

TRADITION HAS IT that it was in the sixth century A.D., with the journey of Bodhidharma from India to China, that Zen Buddhism first moved east. Six hundred years later, in the twelfth century, it traveled east again, to Japan. Now that more than another six hundred years have elapsed, is it to take a third giant stride eastward, this time to the West?

No one knows. Current Western interest in Zen wears the guise of the fad it in part is, but the interest also runs deeper. Let me cite the impression Zen has made on three Western minds of some note, those of a psychologist, a philosopher, and a historian. The book C. G. Jung was reading on his deathbed was Charles Luk's *Ch'an and Zen Teachings: First Series,* and he expressly asked his secretary to write to tell the author that "he was enthusiastic . . . When he read what Hsu Yun said, he sometimes felt as if he himself could have said exactly this! It was just 'it'!"[1] In philosophy, Martin Heidegger is quoted as saying: "If I understand [Dr. Suzuki] correctly, this is what I have been trying to say in all my writings."[2] Lynn White is not the molder of modern thought that Jung and Heidegger have been, but he is a fine historian, and he predicts: "It may well be that the publication of D. T. Suzuki's first *Essays in Zen Buddhism* in 1927 will seem in future generations as great an intellectual event as William of Moerbeke's Latin translations of Aristotle in the thirteenth century or Marsiglio Ficino's of Plato in the fifteenth."[3]

[1]From an unpublished letter from Dr. Marie-Louise von Franz to Charles Luk dated September 12, 1961.

[2]In William Barrett (ed.), *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. xi.

[3]*Frontiers of Knowledge in the Study of Man* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), pp. 304–5.

Why should the West, dominated to the extent it currently is by scientific modes of thought, go to school to a perspective forged before the rise of modern science? Some think the answer lies in the extent to which the Buddhist cosmology anticipated what contemporary science has empirically discovered. The parallels are impressive. Astronomical time and space, which irrevocably smashed the West's previous worldview, slip into the folds of Buddhist cosmology without a ripple. If we turn from macrocosm to microcosm, from the infinite to the infinitesimal, we find the same uncanny prescience. While the Greeks were positing atoms that were eternal because not composite (*a-tomas*—indivisible, that which cannot be cut), Buddhists were teaching that everything corporeal is impermanent (*anicca*) because constituted of dharmas as miniscule in duration as they are in space—remarkably like the fleeting blips that particles register on the scientists' oscilloscopes.

To return for a moment to the macrocosm, it is not just the dimensions of the scientific cosmology that Buddhism previsioned, but its form as well. We have become familiar with the debate between George Gamow's "big bang" and Fred Hoyle's "steady state" cosmogonies, the first arguing that the universe is the continuing consequence of the explosion of a single primeval atom; the second, that the universe has always been in the state in which we know it, fresh hydrogen being continuously created to replace that which is being emptied out through the stars' recession once they exceed the speed of light. The latest word from Mount Palomar is that both these theories appear to be wrong. The red shifts on the spectrographic reports from distant galaxies suggest they are slowing down. The hypothesis this evokes is that after expanding for a while the universe contracts, only to repeat the cycle indefinitely. As the Harvard astronomer Harlow Shapley puts the matter, instead of the "big bang" or the "steady state" theories, we have the "bang . . . bang . . . bang" theory. "Very interesting," says the Buddhist, this being what his cosmology has taught him all along.

The West may find such instances of Buddhism's scientific prescience striking, but this cannot account for Buddhism's appeal. For one thing, the West cannot feel that in science it has anything to *learn*

from Buddhism; the most it can do in this sphere is give the Buddhists good marks for some precocious hunches. But there is the further fact that it is not Buddhism in general that is intriguing the West so much as the specific school of Buddhism that is Zen. We understand the specific attraction of *Zen* Buddhism when we realize the extent to which the contemporary West is animated by "prophetic faith," the sense of the holiness of the *ought,* the pull of the way things could be and should be but as yet are not. Such faith has obvious virtues, but unless it is balanced by a companion sense of the holiness of the *is,* it becomes top-heavy. If one's eyes are always on tomorrows, todays slip by unperceived. To a West which in its concern to refashion heaven and earth is in danger of letting the presentness of life—the only life we really have—slip through its fingers, Zen comes as a reminder that if we do not learn to perceive the mystery and beauty of our *present* life, our *present* hour, we shall not perceive the worth of *any* life, of *any* hour.

There is the further fact that with the collapse of metaphysics, natural theology, and objective revelation, the West is facing for the first time as a civilization the problem of living without objectively convincing absolutes—in a word, without dogmas. As Christ walked on the waters, so is the contemporary Westerner having to walk on the sea of nothingness, buoyant in the absence of demonstrably certain supports. Facing this precarious assignment, the Westerner hears of men across the sea who have for centuries taken up their abode in the Void, come to feel at home in it, and to find joy within it. How can this be? The West does not understand, but the Nothingness of which it hears from across the sea sounds like something it may have to come to terms with.

Zen tells us that the *is* is holy and the Void is home, but such affirmations are not Zen. Rather, Zen is a method for attaining to the direct experience of the truth of these affirmations. This brings us to the present book, for I know of no other that gives the reader so full an understanding of what this method is. For one thing, it presents for the first time in English Yasutani-roshi's "Introductory Lectures on Zen Training," lectures which have deservedly won the highest of

praise in Japan as being, in the words of Ruth Fuller Sasaki, the director of the First Zen Institute of America in Japan, "the best introduction to Zen Buddhism yet written."

But the book contains another prize that is even more striking. Up to now it has been all but impossible for those who have not themselves undergone Zen training to get much of an inkling of what transpires in one crucial phase of the process, namely *dokusan*—the series of solemn, private interviews in which the roshi guides the student's meditation toward its goal of enlightenment—for the substance of these interviews has been considered personal and not to be divulged. Now a roshi, convinced that our new age occasions new procedures, has permitted a series of these interviews to be reproduced. Such material has never appeared even in Japanese; for it to appear in English, in this book, is a major breakthrough.

No one but Philip Kapleau could have written this book. He knows Zen from thirteen years of ardent training in Japan, three of these years in both Soto and Rinzai monasteries. He knows the Japanese who have collaborated to render his translations of little-known material impeccable. He knows the Japanese language well enough himself to have served as interpreter for his roshi's interviews with Western students. He has the skill of years of training as a court reporter to have recorded these interviews rapidly in shorthand as soon as they were over. And he has a literary style that is lucid and graceful. This assemblage of talents is unique. It has produced a remarkable book that is certain to assume a permanent place in the library of Zen literature in Western languages.

Huston Smith
Professor of Philosophy
Massachusetts Institute of Technology


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available

ment stories of Japanese and American followers of Zen. Yasutani-roshi's introductory lectures on Zen practice, his lecture (*teisho*) on the koan Mu, and his private instructions (*dokusan*) to ten of his Western students form a unity which embraces the whole structure of Zen training in its traditional sequence. One lacking access to a bona fide Zen teacher yet wishing to train in Zen will find this material to be nothing less than a manual for self-instruction.

Both the Soto and Rinzai disciplines are presented here—for the first time in a European language, we believe—as one integral body of Zen teaching, and this is not academically but as living experience. The aims and methods of shikan-taza, the heart of Soto meditative discipline, as well as those of koan zazen, the mainstay of the Rinzai sect, are authoritatively expounded by Yasutani-roshi, who utilizes both in his own system of teaching.

In the introductions I have presented background and supplementary material which I felt would aid the reader to grasp the substance of each section, but I have resisted the temptation to analyze or interpret the masters' teachings. This would only have encouraged readers to reinterpret my interpretations, and willy-nilly they would find themselves sucked into the quicksands of speculation and ego-aggrandizement, from which one day, if they would seriously practice Zen, they would painfully have to extricate themselves. For precisely this reason "idea-mongering" has always been discouraged by the Zen masters.

THIS BOOK OWES much to many people. First and foremost it owes an enormous debt to Zen Master Yasutani, whose teachings encompass more than half of it and who has graciously allowed them to be made available here to a wider public. My collaborators and I, all his disciples, are deeply grateful for his sagacious counsel and magnanimity of spirit which inspired us throughout.

My debt of gratitude to Kyozo Yamada-roshi, the Dharma heir of Yasutani-roshi, cannot be put into words. Friend and teacher, he was a tower of strength to lean on. Were it not for his wise advice and generous assistance, my overall task would have been immeasurably more

difficult, if not impossible. We collaborated on the translations of Bassui's Dharma talk on One-mind and his letters, portions of the Iwasaki letters, the Ten Oxherding Verses, the quotations from Dogen and other ancient masters, and the extract from Dogen's *Shobogenzo.*

Akira Kubota, my second collaborator, was one of Yasutani-roshi's foremost disciples, having trained under him for some fifteen years. Together we translated the lecture on the koan Mu, parts of the Iwasaki letters, and the fourth and sixth accounts in the section on enlightenment experiences. I acknowledge my huge debt to him for his conscientious labors.

My special thanks are due Dr. Carmen Blacker, of Cambridge University. Her on-the-spot translations of many of Yasutani-roshi's lectures on Zen practice were incorporated by me into the translations which appear in this book. Further, I have taken the liberty of adopting without alteration several paragraphs from her own translation of sections of this same material which was published in the British Buddhist magazine *The Middle Way,* since her expression was so felicitous that I could hardly hope to have improved upon it.

I am exceedingly grateful to Dr. Huston Smith, Professor of Philosophy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and author of *The Religions of Man,* for his invaluable advice and encouragement at an early stage of the manuscript, and for his Foreword.

Brigitte D'Ortschy, a Dharma friend, was exceedingly helpful. Her thoughtful reading of the entire manuscript produced many valuable suggestions which have improved the book.

My debt to my wife, deLancey, is no small one. At all stages of the writing she has encouraged and worked with me. Indeed, for several years these labors constituted her major practice of zazen.

IN OUR TRANSLATIONS we have striven to avoid the evils of either a free, imaginative rendering on the one hand or an exactly literal reading on the other. Had we yielded to the first temptation, we might have achieved a stylistic elegance now lacking, but only at the expense of that forthright vigor and calculated repetition which is a characteristic feature of Zen teaching. On the other hand, had we slavishly

adhered to the letter of the texts, we inevitably would have done violence to their spirit and thus obscured their deep inner meaning.

Our translations are interpretive in the sense that all translation involves the constant choice of one of several alternative expressions which the translator believes may convey the meaning of the original. Whether a translator's choices are apposite depends, in the ordinary translation, on his linguistic skill and his familiarity with his subject. Zen texts, however, fall into a special category. Since they are invariably terse and pithy and the ideograms in which they are written susceptible to a variety of interpretations, one key character often conveying a whole spectrum of ideas, to select the shade of meaning appropriate to a particular context demands from a translator more than philological acuity or an extensive academic knowledge of Zen. In our view, it requires nothing less than Zen training and the experience of enlightenment, lacking which the translator is almost certain to distort the clarity and emasculate the vigor of the original.

It may not be out of place, therefore, to point out that every one of the translators has trained in Zen for a considerable time under one or more recognized masters and opened his Mind's eye in some measure.

SINCE THIS BOOK is addressed to the general reader rather than to scholars or specialists in Zen Buddhism, I have dispensed with all diacritical marks, which are apt to prove annoying to those unfamiliar with Japanese, Chinese, or Sanskrit. However, they have been inserted in the Zen vocabulary section. Even at the risk of some inconsistency, I have also dispensed with as much disruptive italicizing as seemed reasonable. In the body of the book I have followed the Japanese custom of writing the names of the Chinese Zen masters and other Chinese terms according to their Japanese pronunciation, just as we speak of *Zen* rather than *Ch'an* Buddhism, but in the vocabulary notes of the final section I have indicated the usually accepted Chinese pronunciations in parentheses. Chinese scholars who find this practice irritating are asked to bear in mind that Zen Buddhism has

been in Japan almost a thousand years and hence is a legitimate part of Japanese life and culture. It could scarcely have survived so long or made such a strong impact on the Japanese had they not abandoned the foreign and, for them, cumbersome Chinese pronunciation.

In writing the names of the ancient Japanese masters I have adhered to the traditional Japanese custom of listing the chief Buddhist name first. In the case of modern Japanese, however, whether masters or lay practitioners, I have followed the Western style, which of course is just the reverse, since this is the way they themselves write their names in English. Where a title comes immediately after a name (such as Yasutani-roshi or Dogen-zenji), for the sake of euphony the name and the title have been written according to traditional Japanese style as here indicated.

Technical Zen names and special Buddhist terms not defined in the text are explained in section XI, "Notes on Zen Vocabulary and Buddhist Doctrine."

While the organization of the book follows the natural pattern of teaching, practice, and enlightenment, each section is complete in itself and can be read at random according to the reader's taste.

All footnotes throughout the book are mine.

PHILIP KAPLEAU
Kamakura, December 8, 1964

Part One

TEACHING AND PRACTICE

1

Yasutani-roshi's Introductory Lectures on Zen Training

Editor's Introduction

Westerners eager to practice Zen yet lacking access to a qualified master have always faced an imposing handicap: the dearth of written information on what zazen is and how to begin and carry it on.[1] Nor is this lack confined to English and other European languages. In the writings of the ancient Chinese and Japanese Zen masters which have come down to us there is little on the theory of zazen or on the relation of the practice of zazen to enlightenment. Neither is there much detailed information on such elementary matters as sitting postures, the regulation of the breath, concentration of the mind, and the incidence of visions and sensations of an illusory nature.

There is nothing strange in this. Sitting in zazen or meditation has been so accepted as the approved path to spiritual emancipation throughout Asia that no Zen Buddhist had first to be convinced that

[1]Zazen is not "meditation" and for this reason we have retained this Japanese word throughout. Its precise meaning will become clear as the book progresses. Pronounced "zah-zen," each syllable is accented equally.

through it one could develop one's powers of concentration, achieve unification and tranquility of mind, and eventually, if one's aspiration was pure and strong enough, come to Self-realization. An aspirant, therefore, was simply given a few oral instructions on how to fold the legs, how to regulate the breath, and how to concentrate the mind. Through the painful process of trial and error and periodic encounters (*dokusan*) with one's teacher, one eventually learned in a thoroughly experiential way not only proper sitting and breathing but also the inner meaning and purpose of zazen.

But since modern people, as Yasutani-roshi points out, lack the faith and burning zeal of their predecessors in Zen, they need a map their mind can trust, charting their entire spiritual journey, before they can move ahead with confidence. For these reasons Harada-roshi, Yasutani-roshi's own master, devised a series of introductory lectures on Zen practice some years ago, and it is this material which forms the basis of these lectures by Yasutani-roshi.

This present translation is a compilation of a number of such lectures which Yasutani-roshi has given, without notes, to beginners over the past several years. No new student may receive *dokusan* until he or she has heard them all.

These talks are more than a compendium of instructions on the formal aspects of zazen, that is, sitting, breathing, and concentration. They are an authoritative exposition of the five levels of Zen, of the aims and essentials of zazen, and of the all-important relation of zazen to enlightenment (*satori*). With them as map and compass earnest seekers need not grope along hazardous bypaths of the occult, the psychic, or the superstitious, which waste time and often prove harmful, but can proceed directly along a carefully charted course, secure in the knowledge of their ultimate goal.

No account of the history and development of Zen, no interpretations of Zen from the viewpoint of philosophy or psychology, and no evaluations of the influence of Zen on archery, judo, haiku poetry, or any other of the Japanese arts will be found here. Valuable as these studies can be, they have no legitimate place in Zen training and would only burden aspirants' minds with ideas that would confuse

them as to their aims and drain them of the incentive to practice. For this reason such studies are deliberately omitted by Yasutani-roshi.

Yasutani-roshi's emphasis on the religious aspect of Zen Buddhism—that is, on faith as a prerequisite to enlightenment—may come as a surprise to Western readers accustomed to "intellectual images" of Zen by scholars devoid of Zen insight. This derives for the most part from the teachings of Dogen-zenji, one of the imposing religious personalities of Japanese history, who brought the doctrines of the Soto sect of Zen Buddhism from China to Japan. Without even a sketchy knowledge of the circumstances of Dogen's life that led him to become a Zen monk and to journey to China, where he attained the Great Way, one would find it difficult to understand the Soto Zen doctrine which forms the core of Yasutani-roshi's own teachings.

Born of an aristocratic family, Dogen even as a child gave evidence of his brilliant mind. It is related that at four he was reading Chinese poetry and at nine a Chinese translation of a treatise on the Abhidharma. The sorrow he felt at his parents' deaths—his father when he was only three and his mother when he was eight—undoubtedly impressed upon his sensitive mind the impermanence of life and motivated him to become a monk. With his initiation into the Buddhist monkhood at an early age, he commenced his novitiate at Mount Hiei, the center of scholastic Buddhism in medieval Japan, and for the next several years studied the Tendai doctrines of Buddhism. By his fifteenth year one burning question became the core around which his spiritual strivings revolved: "If, as the sutras say, our Essential-nature is Bodhi (perfection), why did all Buddhas have to strive for enlightenment and perfection?" His dissatisfaction with the answers he received at Mount Hiei led him eventually to Eisai-zenji, who had brought the teachings of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism from China to Japan. Eisai's reply to Dogen's question was: "No Buddha is conscious of its existence [that is, of this Essential-nature], while cats and oxen [that is, the grossly deluded] are aware of it." In other words, Buddhas, precisely because they are Buddhas, no longer think of having or not having a Perfect-nature; only the deluded think

in such terms. At these words Dogen had an inner realization which dissolved his deep-seated doubt. In all likelihood this exchange took place in a formal encounter (dokusan) between Eisai and Dogen. It must be borne in mind that this problem had perplexed Dogen for some time, giving him no rest, and that all he needed was Eisai's words to trigger his mind into a state of enlightenment.

Dogen thereupon commenced what was to be a brief discipleship under Eisai, whose death took place within the year and who was succeeded by his eldest disciple, Myozen. During the eight years Dogen spent with Myozen he passed a considerable number of koans and finally received *inka*.

Despite this accomplishment Dogen still felt spiritually unfulfilled, and this disquiet moved him to undertake the then-hazardous journey to China in search of complete peace of mind. He stayed at all the well-known monasteries, practicing under many masters, but his longing for total liberation was unsatisfied. Eventually at the famous T'ien-t'ung Monastery, which had just acquired a new master, he achieved full awakening, that is, the liberation of body and mind, through these words uttered by his master, Ju-ching: "You must let fall body and mind."

These words are said to have been uttered by Ju-ching at the commencement of the formal zazen period, in the early morning, as he was making his round of inspection. Spying one of the monks dozing, the master reprimanded him for his halfhearted effort. Then addressing all the monks, he continued: "You must exert yourselves with all your might, even at the risk of your lives. To realize perfect enlightenment you must let fall [that is, become empty of all conceptions of] body and mind." As Dogen heard this last phrase his Mind's eye suddenly expanded in a flood of light and understanding.[2]

Later Dogen appeared at Ju-ching's room, lit a stick of incense (a ceremonial gesture usually reserved for noteworthy occasions), and prostrated himself before his master in the customary fashion.

[2]For a discussion of the significance of a single word or phrase precipitating enlightenment, see page 104.

"Why are you lighting a stick of incense?" asked Ju-ching. Needless to say, Ju-ching, who was a first-rate master, and who had received Dogen many times in dokusan and therefore knew the state of his mind, could perceive at once from Dogen's walk, his prostrations, and the comprehending look in his eyes that he had had a great enlightenment. But Ju-ching undoubtedly wanted to see what response this innocent-sounding question would provoke so as to fix the scope of Dogen's satori.

"I have experienced the dropping off of body and mind," replied Dogen.

Ju-ching exclaimed: "You have dropped body and mind, body and mind have indeed dropped!"

But Dogen remonstrated: "Don't give me your sanction so readily."

"I am not sanctioning you so readily."

Reversing their roles, Dogen demanded: "*Show* me that you are not readily sanctioning me."

And Ju-ching repeated: "*This* is body and mind dropped," demonstrating.

Whereupon Dogen prostrated himself again before his master as a gesture of respect and gratitude.

"That's 'dropping' dropped," added Ju-ching.

It is noteworthy that even with this profound experience Dogen continued his zazen training in China for another two years before returning to Japan.

At the time of his great awakening Dogen was practicing *shikan-taza,*[3] a mode of zazen which involved neither a koan nor counting or following the breaths. The very foundation of shikan-taza is an unshakable faith that sitting as the Buddha sat, with the mind void of all conceptions, of all beliefs and points of view, is the actualization or unfoldment of the inherently enlightened Bodhi-mind with which all are endowed. At the same time this sitting is entered into in the faith that it will one day culminate in the sudden and direct perception of

[3]For Yasutani-roshi's comments on shikan-taza, see pp. 60–62.

the true nature of this Mind—in other words, enlightenment. Therefore to strive self-consciously for satori or any other gain from zazen is as unnecessary as it is undesirable.[4]

In authentic shikan-taza neither of these two elements of faith can be dispensed with. To exclude satori from shikan-taza would necessarily involve stigmatizing as meaningless and even masochistic the Buddha's strenuous efforts toward enlightenment, and impugning the Ancestral Teachers' and Dogen's own painful struggles to that end. This relation of satori to shikan-taza is of the utmost importance. Unfortunately it has often been misunderstood, especially by those to whom Dogen's complete writings are inaccessible. It thus not infrequently happens that Western students will come to a Soto temple or monastery utilizing koans in its teaching and remonstrate with the master over the assignment of a koan, on the ground that koans have as their aim enlightenment; since all are intrinsically enlightened, they argue, there is no point in seeking satori. So what they ask to practice is shikan-taza, which they believe does not involve the experience of enlightenment.[5]

Such an attitude reveals not only a lack of faith in the judgment of one's teacher but a fundamental misconception of both the nature and the difficulty of shikan-taza, not to mention the teaching methods employed in Soto temples and monasteries. A careful reading of these introductory lectures and Yasutani-roshi's encounters with ten Westerners will make clear why genuine shikan-taza cannot be successfully undertaken by the rank novice, who has yet to learn how to sit with stability and equanimity, or whose ardor needs to be regularly boosted by communal sitting or by the encouragement of a teacher, or who, above all, lacks strong faith in his or her own Bodhi-mind coupled with a dedicated resolve to experience its reality in one's daily life.

[4]The conscious thought "I must get enlightened" can be as much of an impediment as any other which hangs in the mind.

[5]For the attitude of one such novice, see p. 147.

Because today, Zen masters claim, devotees are on the whole much less zealous for truth, and because the obstacles to practice posed by the complexities of modern life are more numerous, capable Soto masters seldom assign shikan-taza to a beginner. They prefer to have the student first unify the mind through concentration on counting the breaths; or where a burning desire for enlightenment does exist, to exhaust the discursive intellect through the imposition of a special type of Zen problem (that is, a koan) and thus prepare the way for *kensho.*

By no means, then, is the koan system confined to the Rinzai sect as many believe. Yasutani-roshi is only one of a number of Soto masters who use koans in their teaching. Genshu Watanabe-roshi, the former abbot of Soji-ji, one of the two head temples of the Soto sect in Japan, regularly employed koans, and at the Soto monastery of Hosshinji, of which the illustrious Harada-roshi was abbot during his lifetime, koans are also widely used.

Even Dogen himself, as we have seen, disciplined himself in koan Zen for eight years before going to China and practicing shikan-taza. And though upon his return to Japan Dogen wrote at length about shikan-taza and recommended it for his inner band of disciples, it must not be forgotten that these disciples were dedicated truth-seekers for whom koans were an unnecessary encouragement to sustained practice. Notwithstanding this emphasis on shikan-taza, Dogen made a compilation of three hundred well-known koans,[6] to each of which he added his own commentary. From this and the fact that his foremost work, the *Shobogenzo* (A Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma), contains a number of koans, we may fairly conclude that he did utilize koans in his teaching.

Satori-awakening as Dogen viewed it was not the be-all and end-all. Rather he conceived it as the foundation for a magnificent edifice whose many-storied superstructure would correspond to the perfected character and personality of the spiritually developed individ-

[6]In *Nempyo Sambyaku Soku* (Three Hundred Koans with Commentaries).

ual, the woman or man of moral virtue and all-embracing compassion and wisdom. Such an imposing structure, Dogen taught, could be erected only by years of faithful zazen upon the solid base of the immutable inner knowledge which satori confers.

WHAT THEN is zazen and how is it related to satori? Dogen taught that zazen is the "gateway to total liberation," and Keizan-zenji, one of the Japanese Soto Dharma Ancestors, had declared that only through Zen sitting is the "human mind illumined." Elsewhere Dogen wrote[7] that "even the Buddha, who was a born sage, sat in zazen for six years until his supreme enlightenment, and so towering a spiritual figure as Bodhidharma sat for nine years facing the wall."[8] And so have Dogen and all the other great masters sat.

For with the ordering and immobilizing of feet, legs, hands, arms, trunk, and head in the traditional lotus posture,[9] with the regulation of the breath, the methodical stilling of the thoughts and unification of the mind through special modes of concentration, with the development of control over the emotions and strengthening of the will, and with the cultivation of a profound silence in the deepest recesses of the mind—in other words, through the practice of zazen—there are established the optimum preconditions for looking into the heart-mind and discovering there the true nature of existence.

Although sitting is the foundation of zazen, it is not just any kind of sitting. Not only must the back be straight, the breathing properly regulated, and the mind concentrated beyond thought, but, according to Dogen, one must sit with a sense of dignity and grandeur, like a mountain or a giant pine, and with a feeling of gratitude toward the Buddha and the Dharma Ancestors, who made manifest the Dharma. And we must be grateful for our human body, through which we have

[7]In his *Fukan Zazengi* (Universal Promotion of the Principles of Zazen).

[8]Following Bodhidharma's example, Soto devotees face a wall or curtain during zazen. In the Rinzai tradition sitters face each other across the room in two rows, their backs to the wall.

[9]See p. 36 and section IX.

the opportunity to experience the reality of the Dharma in all its profundity. This sense of dignity and gratitude, moreover, is not confined to sitting but must inform every activity, for insofar as each act issues from the Bodhi-mind it has the inherent purity and dignity of Buddhahood. This innate dignity of the human being is physiologically manifested in an erect back, since humans alone of all creatures have this capacity to hold their spinal columns vertical. An erect back is related to proper sitting in other important ways, which will be discussed at a later point in this section.

In the broad sense zazen embraces more than just correct sitting. To enter fully into every action with total attention and clear awareness is no less zazen. The prescription for accomplishing this was given by the Buddha himself in an early sutra: "In what is seen there must be just the seen; in what is heard there must be just the heard; in what is sensed (as smell, taste or touch) there must be just what is sensed; in what is thought there must be just the thought."[10]

The importance of single-mindedness, of bare attention, is illustrated in the following anecdote:

> One day a man of the people said to Zen Master Ikkyu: "Master, will you please write for me some maxims of the highest wisdom?"
>
> Ikkyu immediately took his brush and wrote the word "Attention."
>
> "Is that all?" asked the man. "Will you not add something more?"
>
> Ikkyu then wrote twice running: "Attention. Attention."
>
> "Well," remarked the man rather irritably, "I really don't see much depth or subtlety in what you have just written."
>
> Then Ikkyu wrote the same word three times running: "Attention. Attention. Attention."
>
> Half angered, the man demanded: "What does that word 'Attention' mean anyway?"
>
> And Ikkyu answered gently: "Attention means attention."[11]

[10]Udana I, 10 (translation by Nyanaponika Thera).

[11]From the *Zenso Mondo* (Dialogues of the Zen Masters), translation by Kuni Matsuo and E. Steinilber-Oberlin.

For the ordinary man or woman, whose mind is a checkerboard of crisscrossing reflections, opinions, and prejudices, bare attention is virtually impossible; one's life is thus centered not in reality itself but in one's *ideas* of it. By focusing the mind wholly on each object and every action, zazen strips it of extraneous thoughts and allows us to enter into a full rapport with life.

Sitting zazen and mobile zazen are two functions equally dynamic and mutually reinforcing. Those who sit devotedly in zazen every day, their minds free of discriminating thoughts, find it easier to relate themselves wholeheartedly to their daily tasks, and those who perform every act with total attention and clear awareness find it less difficult to achieve emptiness of mind during sitting periods.

ZAZEN PRACTICE for the student begins with counting the inhalations and exhalations while seated in the motionless zazen posture. This is the first step in the process of stilling the bodily functions, quieting discursive thoughts, and strengthening concentration. It is given as the first step because in counting the in and out breaths, in natural rhythm and without strain, the mind has a scaffolding to support it, as it were. When concentration on the breathing becomes such that awareness of the counting is clear and the count is not lost, the next step, a slightly more difficult type of zazen, is assigned, namely, following the inhalations and exhalations of the breath with the mind's eye only, again in natural rhythm. The blissful state which flows from concentration on the breath and the value of breathing in terms of spiritual development are lucidly set forth by Lama Govinda[12]: "From this state of perfect mental and physical equilibrium and its resulting inner harmony grows that serenity and happiness which fills the whole body with a feeling of supreme bliss like the refreshing coolness of a spring that penetrates the entire water of a mountain lake . . . Breathing is the vehicle of spiritual experience, the mediator between body and mind. It is the first step towards the transformation

[12] *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism,* by Lama Govinda (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1960), pp. 151–52.

of the body from the state of a more or less passively and unconsciously functioning physical organ into a vehicle or tool of a perfectly developed and enlightened mind, as demonstrated by the radiance and perfection of the Buddha's body . . . The most important result of the practice of 'mindfulness with regard to breathing' is the realization that the process of breathing is the connecting link between conscious and subconscious, gross-material and fine-material, volitional and non-volitional functions, and therefore the most perfect expression of the nature of all life."

Until now we have been speaking of zazen with no koan. Koan zazen involves both motionless sitting, wherein the mind intensely seeks to penetrate the koan, and mobile zazen, in which absorption in the koan continues while one is at work, at play, or even asleep. Through intense self-inquiry—for example, questioning "What is Mu?"—the mind gradually becomes denuded of its delusive ideas, which in the beginning hamper its effort to become one with the koan. As these abstract notions fall away, concentration on the koan strengthens.

It may be asked: "How can one concentrate devotedly on a koan and simultaneously focus the mind on work of an exacting nature?" In practice what actually happens is that once the koan grips the heart and mind—and its power to take hold is in proportion to the strength of the urge toward liberation—the inquiry goes on ceaselessly in the subconscious. While the mind is occupied with a particular task, the question fades from consciousness, surfacing naturally as soon as the action is over, not unlike a moving stream which now and again disappears underground only to reappear and resume its open course without interrupting its onward flow.

ZAZEN MUST NOT be confused with meditation. Meditation involves putting something into the mind, either an image or a sacred word that is visualized or a concept that is thought about or reflected on, or both. In some types of meditation the meditator envisions or contemplates or analyzes certain elementary shapes, holding them in the mind to the exclusion of everything else. Or students may contem-

plate in a state of adoration a Buddha or a Bodhisattva image, hoping to evoke in themselves parallel states of mind. They may ponder such abstract qualities as loving-kindness and compassion. In Tantric Buddhist systems of meditation, mandalas containing various seed syllables of the Sanskrit alphabet—such as *Om,* for example—are visualized and dwelt upon in a prescribed manner. Also employed for meditational purposes are mandalas consisting of special arrangements of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and other figures.

The uniqueness of zazen lies in this: that the mind is freed from bondage to *all* thought-forms, visions, objects, and imaginings, however sacred or elevating, and brought to a state of absolute emptiness, from which alone it may one day perceive its own true nature, or the nature of the universe.

Such initial exercises as counting or following the breath cannot, strictly speaking, be called meditation since they do not involve visualization of an object or reflection upon an idea. For the same reasons koan zazen cannot be called meditation. Whether one is striving to achieve unity with a koan or, for instance, intensely asking, "What is Mu?" one is not meditating in the technical sense of this word.

ZAZEN THAT LEADS to Self-realization is neither idle reverie nor vacant inaction but an intense inner struggle to gain control over the mind and then to use it, like a silent missile, to penetrate the barrier of the five senses and the discursive intellect (that is, the sixth sense). It demands energy, determination, and courage. Yasutani-roshi calls it "a battle between the opposing forces of delusion and bodhi."[13] This state of mind has been vividly described in these words, said to have been uttered by the Buddha as he sat beneath the Bo tree making his supreme effort, and often quoted in the *zendo* during *sesshin:* "Though only my skin, sinews, and bones remain and my blood and flesh dry up and wither away, yet never from this seat will I stir until I have attained full enlightenment."

[13]This statement is made from the standpoint of practice or training. From the standpoint of the fundamental Buddha-mind there is no delusion and no bodhi.

The drive toward enlightenment is powered on the one hand by a painfully felt inner bondage—a frustration with life, a fear of death, or both—and on the other by the conviction that through awakening one can gain liberation. But it is in zazen that the body-mind's force and vigor are enlarged and mobilized for the breakthrough into this new world of freedom. Energies which formerly were squandered in compulsive drives and purposeless actions are preserved and channeled into a unity through correct Zen sitting; and to the degree that the mind attains one-pointedness through zazen it no longer disperses its force in the uncontrolled proliferation of idle thoughts. The entire nervous system is relaxed and soothed, inner tensions eliminated, and the tone of all organs strengthened. Furthermore, research involving an electrocardiograph and other devices on subjects who have been practicing zazen for one to two years has demonstrated that zazen brings about a release in psychophysical tension and greater body-mind stability through lowered heart rate, pulse, respiration, and metabolism.[14] In short, by realigning the physical, mental, and psychic energies through proper breathing, concentration, and sitting, zazen establishes a new body-mind equilibrium with its center of gravity in the vital *hara.*

Hara literally denotes the stomach and abdomen and the functions of digestion, absorption, and elimination connected with them. But it has parallel psychic[15] and spiritual significance. According to Hindu and Buddhist yogic systems, there are a number of psychic centers in the body through which vital cosmic force or energy flows. Of the two such centers embraced within the hara, one is associated with the solar plexus, whose system of nerves governs the digestive processes and organs of elimination. The other center is associated with the *tanden,* a point of concentration, roughly the width of two fingers, located below the navel in the center of the lower belly. Hara

[14] *Psychological Studies on Zen,* edited by Yoshiharu Akishige.

[15] "Psychic" here does not relate to extrasensory phenomena or powers but to energies and body-mind states which cannot be classified either as physiological or psychological.

is thus a wellspring of vital psychic energies. Harada-roshi, one of the most celebrated Zen masters of his day,[16] in urging his disciples to concentrate their mind's[17] eye (that is, the *attention,* the summation point of the total being) in their tanden, would declare: "You must realize"—that is, make real—"that the center of the universe is the pit of your belly!"

To facilitate a direct experience of this fundamental truth, the Zen novice is instructed to focus the mind constantly at the tanden and to radiate all mental and bodily activities from that point. With the body-mind's equilibrium thus centered in the hara region, gradually a seat of consciousness, a focus of vital energy, is established there which influences the entire organism.

That consciousness is by no means confined to the brain is shown by Lama Govinda, who writes: "While, according to Western conceptions, the brain is the exclusive seat of consciousness, yogic experience shows that our brain-consciousness is only *one* among a number of possible forms of consciousness, and that these, according to their function and nature, can be localized or centered in various organs of the body. These 'organs,' which collect, transform, and distribute the forces flowing through them, are called *cakras,* or centers of force. From them radiate secondary streams of psychic force, comparable to the spokes of a wheel, the ribs of an umbrella, or the petals of a lotus. In other words, these *cakras* are the points in which psychic forces and bodily functions merge into each other or penetrate each other. They are the focal points in which cosmic and psychic energies crystallize into bodily qualities, and in which bodily qualities are dissolved or transmuted again into psychic forces."[18]

Settling the body's center of gravity below the navel, that is, establishing a center of consciousness in the tanden, automatically relaxes tensions arising from the habitual hunching of the shoulders, strain-

[16]For further information about him, see pp. 303–306.

[17]See "mind" in vocabulary section.

[18]*Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism,* p. 135.

ing of the neck, and squeezing in of the stomach. As this rigidity disappears, an enhanced vitality and new sense of freedom are experienced throughout the body and mind, which are felt more and more to be a unity.

Zazen has clearly demonstrated that with the mind's eye centered in the tanden the proliferation of random ideas is diminished and the attainment of one-pointedness accelerated, since a plethora of blood from the head is drawn down to the abdomen, "cooling" the brain and soothing the autonomic nervous system. This in turn leads to a greater degree of mental and emotional stability. Thus, one who functions from the hara is not easily disturbed. Such a person is, moreover, able to act quickly and decisively in an emergency because his or her mind, settled in the hara, does not waver.

With the mind settled in the hara, narrow and egocentric thinking is superseded by a broadness of outlook and a magnanimity of spirit. This is because thinking from the vital hara center, being free of mediation by the limited discursive intellect, is spontaneous and all-embracing. Perception from the hara tends toward integration and unity rather than division and fragmentation. In short, it is thinking which sees things steadily and whole.

The figure of the Buddha seated on his lotus throne—serene, stable, all-knowing and all-encompassing, radiating boundless light and compassion—is the foremost example of hara expressed through perfect enlightenment. Rodin's "Thinker," on the other hand, a solitary figure "lost" in thought and contorted in body, remote and isolated from his Self, typifies the opposite state.

The ability to think and act from the hara is, like joriki, only indirectly related to satori and not synonymous with it. Satori is a "turning about" of the mind, a psychological experience conferring inner knowledge, while hara is no more than what has been indicated. Masters of the traditional Japanese arts are all accomplished in thinking and acting from the hara—they would not merit the title "master" if they were not—but few if any achieve satori without Zen training. Why not? Because their cultivation of hara is essentially for the per-

fection of their art and not satori, the attainment of which presupposes, as Yasutani-roshi points out in his introductory lectures, faith in the reality of the Buddha's enlightenment and in their own immaculate Buddha-nature.

With body and mind consolidated, focused, and energized, the emotions respond with increased sensitivity and purity, and volition exerts itself with greater strength of purpose. No longer are we dominated by intellect at the expense of feeling, nor driven by the emotions unchecked by reason or will. Eventually zazen leads to a transformation of personality and character. Dryness, rigidity, and self-centeredness give way to flowing warmth, resiliency, and compassion, while self-indulgence and fear are transmuted into self-mastery and courage.

Because they know from centuries of experience this transforming power of zazen, the Japanese masters have always placed greater reliance on zazen to foster moral conduct in their disciples than upon the mere imposition of the precepts from the outside. Actually, the precepts and zazen, both grounded in the identical Buddha-nature, which is the source of all purity and goodness, are mutually reinforcing. The strongest resolution to keep the precepts will at best be only sporadically successful if it is not supported by zazen; and zazen divorced from the disciplined life which grows out of a sincere effort to observe the precepts cannot but be weak and uncertain. In any case, contrary to what is believed in some sects of Buddhism, the precepts are not just simple moral commandments which anyone can easily understand and keep if they have the will to. In reality their relative-absolute sense cannot be grasped as living truth except after long and dedicated zazen. This is why Zen students are normally not given the book of problems called *Jujukinkai*, which deals with the ten cardinal precepts from the standpoints of the Hinayana doctrines, the Mahayana, the Buddha-nature itself, Bodhidharma's view, and Dogen's view, until the very end of their training, when their enlightenment and zazen power have deepened and matured. Indeed, the Japanese and Chinese masters stress that only upon full enlighten-

ment can one truly know good from evil and, through the power of zazen, translate this wisdom into one's everyday actions.

That a strong sense of social and personal responsibility is inherent in the spiritual freedom of the deeply realized person was made clear by Yasutani-roshi in response to a question addressed to him in America by a group of university students: "If, as we have been led to believe, satori makes clear that past and future are unreal, is one not free to live as one likes in the present, unconcerned about the past and indifferent to the future?"

In reply Yasutani-roshi made a dot on the blackboard and explained that this isolated dot represented their conception of "here and now." To show the incompleteness of this view, he placed another dot on the board, through which he drew a horizontal line and a vertical one. He then explained that the horizontal line stood for time from the beginningless past to the endless future and the vertical for limitless space. The "present moment" of the enlightened individual, who stands at this intersection, embraces all these dimensions of time and space, he emphasized.

Accordingly, the satori-realization that one is the focus of past and future time and space unavoidably carries with it a sense of fellowship and responsibility to one's family and society as a whole, alike to those who came before and those who will follow one. The freedom of the liberated Zen person is a far cry from the "freedom" of the Zen libertine, driven as the latter is by uncontrolled selfish desires. The inseparable bond with all human beings that the truly enlightened feels precludes any such self-centered behavior.

As well as enriching personality and strengthening character, zazen illuminates the three characteristics of existence which the Buddha proclaimed: first, that all things (in which are included our thoughts, feelings, and perceptions) are impermanent, arising when particular causes and conditions bring them into being and passing away with the emergence of new causal factors; second, that life is pain; and third, that ultimately nothing is self-subsistent, that all forms in their

essential nature are empty, that is, mutually dependent patterns of energy in flux, yet at the same time are possessed of a provisional or limited reality in time and space, in much the same way that the actions in a movie film have a reality in terms of the film but are otherwise insubstantial and unreal.

Through zazen the first vital truth—that all component things are ephemeral, never the same from one moment to the next, fleeting manifestations in a stream of ceaseless transformation—becomes a matter of direct personal experience. We come to *see* the concatenation of our thoughts, emotions, and moods, how they arise, how they momentarily flourish, and how they pass away. We come to *know* that this "dying" is the life of every thing, just as the all-consuming flame constitutes the life of a candle.

That our sufferings are rooted in a selfish grasping and in fears and terrors which spring from our ignorance of the true nature of life and death becomes clear to anyone compelled by zazen to confront oneself nakedly. But zazen makes equally plain that what we term "suffering" is our evaluation of pain from which we stand apart, that pain when courageously accepted is a means to liberation in that it frees our natural sympathies and compassion even as it enables us to experience pleasure and joy in a new depth and purity.

Finally, with enlightenment, zazen brings the realization that the substratum of existence is a Voidness out of which all things ceaselessly arise and into which they endlessly return, that this Emptiness is positive and alive and in fact not other than the vividness of a sunset or the harmonies of a great symphony.

This bursting into consciousness of the effulgent Buddha-nature is the "swallowing up" of the universe, the obliteration of every feeling of opposition and separateness. In this state of unconditioned subjectivity I, *selfless* I, am supreme. So Shakyamuni Buddha could exclaim: "Throughout heaven and earth, I alone am the honored One." Yet since awakening means also an end to being possessed by the idea of an ego-I, this is as much a world of pure objectivity. Therefore Dogen could write: "To learn the Way of the Buddha is to learn about oneself.

To learn about oneself is to forget oneself. To forget oneself is to experience the world as pure object. To experience the world as pure object is to let fall one's own body and mind and the 'self-other' body and mind."[19]

TO HELP AWAKEN us to this world of Buddha-nature, Zen masters employ yet another mode of zazen, namely, the chanting of dharanis and sutras. A dharani has been described as "a more or less meaningless chain of words or names that is supposed to have a magical power in helping the one who is repeating it at some time of extremity."[20] As phonetic transliterations of Sanskrit words, dharanis have doubtlessly lost much of their profound meaning through the inevitable alteration of the original sounds. But as anyone who has recited them for any length of time knows, in their effect on the spirit they are anything but meaningless. When chanted with sincerity and zest they impress upon the heart-mind the names and virtues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas enumerated in them, removing inner hindrances to zazen and fixing the heart in an attitude of reverence and devotion. But dharanis are also a symbolic expression in sound and rhythm of the essential truth of the universe lying beyond the realm of the discriminating intellect. To the degree that the discursive mind is held at bay during the voicing of dharanis, they are valuable as another exercise in training the mind to cease clinging to dualistic modes of thought.

The intoning of sutras, while also a mode of zazen, fulfills yet a further purpose. Since they are the recorded words and sermons of the Buddha, sutras do in some degree make a direct appeal to the intellect. Thus for those whose faith in the Buddha's Way is shallow the repeated chanting of sutras eventually leads to a measure of understanding, and this serves to strengthen faith in the truth of the Buddha's teachings.

[19] *Shobogenzo,* first chapter, called the "Genjo Koan."

[20] *A Buddhist Bible,* edited by Dwight Goddard (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1952), p. 662.

In another sense sutra-chanting can be compared to an Oriental ink painting of, say, a pine tree in which most of the picture consists of white space. This empty space corresponds to the deeper levels of meaning of the sutras which the words adumbrate. Just as in the picture our minds are brought to a heightened awareness of the white space because of the tree, so through the reciting of sutras we can be led to sense the reality lying beyond them, the Emptiness to which they point.

During the chanting of sutras and dharanis, each of which varies in tempo, the chanters may sit, stand, or engage in a succession of kneelings and prostrations or make repeated circumambulations in the temple. Frequently the intoning is accompanied by the steady thumping of the *mokugyo* or punctuated by the sonorous reverberations of the *keisu*. When the heart and mind are truly one with it, this combination of chanting and the throb of percussion instruments can arouse the deepest feelings and bring about a vibrant, heightened sense of awareness. At the very least it provides variety in what could otherwise become a somber and rigorous discipline of unrelieved Zen sitting. In a week's *sesshin* few could endure hour after hour of just sitting. Even if this did not prove to be unbearably difficult, it would still doubtlessly bore all but the most ardent. Zen masters, by prescribing various kinds of zazen—that is, sitting, walking, chanting, and manual labor—not only reduce the risk of ennui but actually increase the effectiveness of each type of zazen.

DOGEN ATTACHED great importance to the proper positions, gestures, and movements of the body and its members during chanting, as indeed in all other modes of zazen, because of their repercussions on the mind. In Tantric Buddhism particular qualities of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are evoked by the devotee through certain positions of the hands (called mudras) as well as body postures, and it is probably from the Tantric that this aspect of Dogen's teaching derives. In any event, the prescribed postures do induce related states of mind. Thus to chant the Four Vows while kneeling, with the hands in *gassho* (palms together), as practiced in the Soto sect, evokes a reverential

frame of mind less readily felt when these same vows are chanted seated or standing, as in the Rinzai sect. Similarly, lightly to touch the tips of the thumbs in seated zazen creates a feeling of poise and serenity not so easily attainable with the hands clenched.

Conversely, each state of mind elicits from the body its own specific response. The act of unself-conscious prostration before a Buddha is thus possible only under the impetus of reverence and gratitude. Such "horizontalizings of the mast of ego" cleanse the heart-mind, rendering it flexible and expansive, and open the way to an understanding and appreciation of the exalted mind and manifold virtues of the Buddha and Dharma Ancestors. So there arises within us a desire to express our gratitude and show our respect before their personalized forms through appropriate rituals. These devotions when entered into spontaneously with a non-discriminating mind endow the Buddha figure with life; what was formerly a mere image now becomes a living reality with the singular power to obliterate in us awareness of self and Buddha at the moment of prostration. Because in this unthinking gesture our immaculate Bodhi-mind shines brightly, we feel refreshed and renewed.

In the light of these observations on the interaction of body and mind, we can now consider in fuller detail the reasons why Zen masters have always stressed an erect back and the classic lotus posture. It is well known that a bent back deprives the mind of its tension so that it is quickly invaded by random thoughts and images, but that a straight back, by strengthening concentration, lessens the incidence of wandering thoughts and thus hastens samadhi. Conversely, when the mind becomes free of ideas the back tends to straighten itself without conscious effort.

Through a sagging spine and the consequent multiplication of thoughts, harmonious breathing often becomes superseded by quickened or jerky breathing, depending on the nature of the thoughts. This soon reflects itself in nervous and muscular tensions. In these lectures Yasutani-roshi also points out how a slouching back saps the mind's vigor and clarity, inducing dullness and boredom.

This all-important erectness of the spine and parallel tautness of mind are easier to maintain over a long period if the legs are in the full- or half-lotus posture and the attention concentrated in the region just below the navel.[21]

Moreover, since body is the material aspect of mind and mind the immaterial aspect of body, to assemble the hands and arms and the feet and legs into a unity at one central point where the joined hands rest on the heels of the locked legs, as in the full-lotus posture, facilitates the unification of mind. Lastly, the lotus posture, in which the two knees and the seat form a triangular base of great stability, creates a sense of rootedness in the earth, together with a feeling of an all-encompassing oneness, void of the sensation of inner or outer. This is true, however, only when this position can be assumed and maintained without discomfort.

For all these reasons Zen, as the embodiment of the Buddha's essential teaching and practice, has throughout its long history followed the Buddha's method of sitting as the most direct and practical way to attain emptiness of mind and, ultimately, enlightenment.

This is not to imply, however, that zazen cannot be practiced or awakening attained unless one sits in the full- or half-lotus posture. Zazen can in fact be effective even in a chair or on a bench or while kneeling, provided the back is straight.[22] In the last resort what ensures success in the quest for enlightenment is not a particular posture but an intense longing for truth for its own sake, which alone leads one to sit regularly in any fashion and to perform all the affairs of daily life with devotion and clear awareness. But zazen has always been regarded as fundamental to Zen discipline simply because centuries of experience have demonstrated that it is the easiest way to still the mind and bring it to one-pointedness so that it may be employed as an instrument of Self-discovery. In the long history of Zen, thousands upon thousands have come to awakening through zazen, while

[21] *The hara* (see p. 79).

[22] See section IX for the various correct postures.

few genuine enlightenment experiences have taken place without it.[23] If even the Buddha and Bodhidharma, as Dogen reminds us, had need to sit, surely no aspirant can dispense with zazen. *Kensho* (or satori) is but the first sight of Truth, and whether this is merely a glimpse or a sharp, deep view, it can be enlarged through zazen. Moreover, it is well to remember that unless fortified by *joriki*—that is, samadhi strength, the particular power developed through zazen[24]—the vision of Oneness attained in enlightenment, especially if it is faint to begin with, in time becomes clouded and eventually fades into a pleasant memory instead of remaining an omnipresent reality shaping our daily life. What we must not lose sight of, however, is that zazen is more than just a means to enlightenment or a method for sustaining and enlarging it, but is the *actualization* of our True-nature. Hence it has absolute value. Yasutani-roshi makes this vital point clear in these lectures as well as in his encounters with ten Westerners.

THERE CAN BE no doubt that for most Westerners, who seem by nature more active and restless than Asians, sitting perfectly still in zazen, even in a chair, is physically and mentally painful. Their unwillingness to endure such pain and discomfort even for short periods of time undoubtedly stems from a deeply entrenched conviction that it is not only senseless but even masochistic to accept pain deliberately when ways can be found to escape or mitigate it. Not unsurprisingly, therefore, do we have the attempt on the part of some commentators, obviously unpracticed in Zen, to show that sitting is not indispensable to Zen discipline. In his *The Way of Zen* (pp. 101, 103) Alan Watts even tries to prove, by citing portions of a well-known dialogue, that

[23]The Sixth Dharma Ancestor, Hui-neng (638–713), is the most notable exception. In his autobiography he recounts how he attained enlightenment in his youth upon hearing the Diamond sutra recited by a monk. Evidently he had never practiced formal zazen before.

[24]For a discussion of *joriki*, see pp. 53–54. See also "Samadhi" in the vocabulary section.

the Zen masters themselves have impugned sitting. The following is our translation of the dialogue:

> Ma-tsu was doing zazen daily in his hut on Nan-yueh Mountain. Watching him one day, Huai-jang, his master, thought, "He will become a great monk," and inquired:
>
> "Worthy one, what are you trying to attain by sitting?"
>
> Ma-tsu replied: "I am trying to become a Buddha."
>
> Thereupon Huai-jang picked up a piece of roof tile and began grinding it on a rock in front of him.
>
> "What are you doing, Master?" asked Ma-tsu.
>
> "I am polishing it to make a mirror," said Huai-jang.
>
> "How could polishing a tile make a mirror?"
>
> "How could sitting in zazen make a Buddha?"
>
> Ma-tsu asked: "What should I do, then?"
>
> Huai-jang replied: "If you were driving a cart and it didn't move, would you whip the cart or whip the ox?"
>
> Ma-tsu made no reply.
>
> Huai-jang continued: "Are you training yourself in zazen? Are you striving to become a sitting Buddha? If you are training yourself in zazen, [let me tell you that the substance of] zazen is neither sitting nor lying down. If you are training yourself to become a sitting Buddha, [let me tell you that] Buddha has no one form [such as sitting]. The Dharma, which has no fixed abode, allows of no distinctions. If you try to become a sitting Buddha, this is no less than killing the Buddha. If you cling to the sitting form you will not attain the essential truth."
>
> Upon hearing this, Ma-tsu felt as refreshed as though he had drunk an exquisite nectar.

TO HIS OWN TRANSLATION Mr. Watts adds (p. 113): "This seems to be the consistent doctrine of all the T'ang masters from Hui-neng [the Sixth Patriarch] to Lin-chi [Rinzai]. Nowhere in their teachings have I been able to find any instructions in or recommendation of the type of zazen which is today the principal occupation of Zen monks." Evidently he overlooked *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po* (as translated by John Blofeld), where we find Huang Po, who died in 850, advising

(p. 131): "When you practice mind-control (*zazen* or *dhyana*), sit in the proper position, stay perfectly tranquil, and do not permit the least movement of your mind to disturb you." Surely this is clear proof that zazen as it is carried on in Japan today was an established practice even in the T'ang era, as indeed it was in the Buddha's time.

Moreover, to construe the dialogue quoted above as a condemnation of zazen is to do violence to the whole spirit of the koan. Far from implying that sitting in zazen is as useless as trying to polish a roof tile into a mirror—though it is easy for one who has never practiced Zen to come to such a conclusion—Huai-jang is in fact trying to teach Ma-tsu that Buddhahood does not exist outside himself as an object to strive for, since we are all Buddhas from the very first. Obviously Ma-tsu, who later became a great master, was under the illusion at the time that Buddhahood was something different from himself. Huai-jang is saying in effect: "How could you become a Buddha through sitting if you were not a Buddha to begin with? This would be as impossible as trying to polish a roof tile into a mirror."[25] In other words, zazen does not bestow Buddhahood; it *uncovers* a Buddha-nature which has always existed. Furthermore, through the act of grinding the tile Huai-jang is concretely revealing to Ma-tsu that the polishing is itself the expression of this Buddha-nature, which transcends all forms, including that of sitting or standing or lying down.

To GUARD AGAINST their disciples' becoming attached to the sitting posture, Zen masters incorporate mobile zazen into their training. It is emphatically not true, as Mr. Watts states, that today the principal occupation of Zen monks is sitting. Except for a total of six weeks or so in the year when they are in *sesshin,* Japanese Zen monks in training spend most of their time working, not sitting. At Hosshin-ji, which is more or less typical of most Japanese Zen monasteries in this respect, monks usually sit for an hour and a half in the morning and for about two to three hours in the evening. And since they normally

[25]The Sixth Dharma Ancestor in his Platform sutra states: "If one did not have the Buddha-mind within oneself, where would one seek the true Buddha?"

sleep about six or seven hours, the other twelve or thirteen hours of the day are spent on such labors as working in the rice fields and vegetable gardens, cutting wood and pumping water, cooking, serving meals, keeping the monastery clean, and sweeping and weeding its extensive grounds. At other times they tend the graves in the cemetery adjoining the monastery and chant sutras and dharanis for the dead both in the homes of devotees and in the monastery. Additionally Zen monks spend many hours walking the streets begging food and other necessities, to learn humility and gratitude, as part of their religious training. All these activities are deemed to be the practice of mobile zazen since they are to be performed mindfully, with total involvement. Huai-hai's famous dictum, "A day of no work is a day of no eating," animates the spirit of the Zen monastery today as strongly as it ever did.

Without zazen, whether it be the stationary or the mobile variety, we cannot speak of Zen training or discipline or practice. The Huai-jang koan and all others point to the Buddha-mind with which we are endowed, but they do not teach *how* to realize the reality of this Mind. The realization of this highest truth demands dedication and sustained exertion, which is to say the pure and faithful practice of zazen. The attempt to dismiss zazen as unessential is at bottom nothing more than a rationalization of an unwillingness to exert oneself for the sake of truth, with the obvious implication that in fact no real desire for truth exists. In his *Shobogenzo* Dogen takes to task those who would identify themselves with the highest ideals of the Buddha yet shirk the effort required to put them into practice:

> The great Way of the Buddha and Dharma Ancestors involves the highest form of exertion, which goes on unceasingly in cycles from the first dawn of religious truth, through the test of discipline and practice, to enlightenment and Nirvana. It is sustained exertion, proceeding without lapse from cycle to cycle . . .
>
> This sustained exertion is not something which people of the world naturally love or desire, yet it is the last refuge of all. Only through the exertions of all Buddhas in the past, present, and future do the Buddhas of past, present, and future become a reality . . . By

remote and chimerical. Always he felt in want of a genuine master, a Buddha-like figure who could set his feet on the true path. At forty he finally found him in Harada-roshi, and with this meeting his life took a decisive turn.

He relinquished his principalship, became a temple priest in fact as well as name, and began attending sesshin regularly at Harada-roshi's monastery, Hosshin-ji. At his second sesshin he attained *ken-sho* with the koan Mu.

Yasutani-roshi was fifty-eight when Harada-roshi gave him his seal of approval (*inka shomei*) and named him a Dharma successor. This signal honor implied that his spiritual insight was deep and his capacity to teach proven.

Like his modest temple, Yasutani-roshi was simple and unaffected. His two meals a day included neither meat, fish, eggs, nor alcohol. He could often be seen trotting about Tokyo in a tattered robe and a pair of sneakers on his way to a zazen meeting, his lecture books in a bag slung over his back, or standing in the crowded second-class inter-urban trains. In his utter simplicity, his indifference to finery, wealth, and fame, he walked in the footsteps of a long line of distinguished Zen masters.[28]

The Lectures

1. *Theory and Practice of Zazen*

What I am about to tell you is based upon the teachings of my revered teacher, Daiun[29] Harada-roshi. Although he himself was of

[28]Yasutani-roshi died in his temple in Tokyo on March 28, 1973, at the age of eighty-eight. He was about to take his breakfast when he toppled over and, without pain, passed away. A week earlier his strength had begun to fail and he took more rest from his heavy teaching schedule. Three days before he drew his last breath he administered the precepts to twelve persons in a forty-five-minute ceremony called *jukai*. Afterward he confided to a close disciple, "That is my last jukai. I went through it on sheer willpower."

[29]A Zen name meaning "Great Cloud." See "clouds and water" in vocabulary section. His other name is Sogaku.

the Soto sect, he was unable to find a truly accomplished master in that sect and so went to train first at Shogen-ji and then Nanzen-ji, two Rinzai monasteries. At Nanzen-ji he eventually grasped the inmost secret of Zen under the guidance of Dokutan-roshi, an outstanding master.

While it is undeniably true that one must undergo Zen training himself in order to comprehend the truth of Zen, Harada-roshi felt that the modern mind is so much more aware that for beginners lectures of this type could be meaningful as a preliminary to practice. He combined the best of each sect and established a unique method of teaching Zen. Nowhere in Japan will you find Zen teaching set forth so thoroughly and succinctly, so well suited to the temper of the modern mind, as at his monastery. Having been his disciple for some twenty years, I was enabled, thanks to his favor, to open my Mind's eye in some measure.

Before commencing his lectures Harada-roshi would preface them with advice on listening. His first point was that everyone should listen with their eyes open and upon him—in other words, with their whole being—because an impression received only through the hearing is rather shallow, akin to listening to the radio. His second point was that each person should listen to these lectures as though they were being given to oneself alone, as ideally they should be. Human nature is such that if two people listen, each feels only half responsible for understanding, and if ten people are listening each feels one's own responsibility to be but one tenth. However, since there are so many of you and what I have to say is exactly the same for everybody, I have asked you to come as a group. You must nonetheless listen as though you were entirely alone and hold yourselves accountable for everything that is said.

This discourse is divided into twelve parts, which will be covered in some eight lecture sessions. The first involves the rationale of zazen and direct methods of practice; the next, special precautions; and the following lectures, the particular problems arising from zazen, together with their solution.

IN POINT OF FACT, a knowledge of the theory or principles of zazen is not a prerequisite to practice. Students who train under an accomplished teacher will inevitably grasp this theory by degrees as their practice ripens. Modern students, however, being intellectually more sophisticated than their predecessors in Zen, will not follow instructions unreservedly; they must first know the reasons behind them. Therefore I feel obligated to deal with theoretical matters. The difficulty with theory, however, is that it is endless. Buddhist scriptures, Buddhist doctrine, and Buddhist philosophy are no more than intellectual formulations of zazen, and zazen itself is their practical demonstration. From this vast field I will now abstract what is most essential for your practice.

We start with Buddha Shakyamuni.[30] As I think you all know, he began with the path of asceticism, undergoing tortures and austerities which others before him had never attempted, including prolonged fasting. But he failed to attain enlightenment by these means and, half-dead from hunger and exhaustion, came to realize the futility of pursuing a course which could only terminate in death. So he drank the milk-rice that was offered him by a concerned country girl, gradually regained his health, and resolved to steer a middle course between self-torture and self-indulgence. Thereafter he devoted himself exclusively to zazen for six years[31] and eventually, on the morning of the eighth of December, at the very instant when he glanced at the planet Venus gleaming in the eastern sky, he attained perfect enlightenment. All this we believe as historical truth.

The words the Buddha uttered involuntarily at this time are recorded variously in the Buddhist scriptures. According to the Kegon (Avatamsaka) sutra, at the moment of enlightenment he spontaneously cried out: "Wonder of wonders! Intrinsically all living beings

[30]The traditional Japanese term is *O-Shaka-sama*. It is both respectful and intimate. The *O* and *sama* are honorifics, and rather than attempt an arbitrary translation of them, I have followed the usual English rendering of this title. (See "Buddha" in vocabulary section.)

[31]Other accounts say six years elapsed from the time he left his home until his supreme enlightenment.

are Buddhas, endowed with wisdom and virtue, but because people's minds have become inverted through delusive thinking they fail to perceive this." The first pronouncement of the Buddha seems to have been one of awe and astonishment. Yes, how truly marvelous that all human beings, whether clever or stupid, male or female, ugly or beautiful, are whole and complete just as they are. That is to say, the nature of every being is inherently without a flaw, perfect, no different from that of Amida or any other Buddha. This first declaration of Shakyamuni Buddha is also the ultimate conclusion of Buddhism. Yet human beings, restless and anxious, live half-crazed existences because their minds, heavily encrusted with delusion, are turned topsy-turvy. We need therefore to return to our original perfection, to see through the false image of ourselves as incomplete and sinful, and to wake up to our inherent purity and wholeness.

The most effective means by which to accomplish this is through zazen. Not only Shakyamuni Buddha himself but many of his disciples attained full awakening through zazen. Moreover, during the 2,500 years since the Buddha's death innumerable devotees in India, China, and Japan have, by grasping this selfsame key, resolved for themselves the most fundamental question of all: What is the meaning of life and death? Even in this day there are many who, having cast off worry and anxiety, have emancipated themselves through zazen.

Between a supremely perfected Buddha and us, who are ordinary, there is no difference as to substance. This "substance" can be likened to water. One of the salient characteristics of water is its conformability: when put into a round vessel it becomes round, when put into a square vessel it becomes square. We have this same adaptability, but as we live bound and fettered through ignorance of our true nature, we have forfeited this freedom. To pursue the metaphor, we can say that the mind of a Buddha is like water that is calm, deep and crystal clear, and upon which the "moon of truth" reflects fully and perfectly. The mind of the ordinary person, on the other hand, is like murky water, constantly being churned by the gales of delusive thought and no longer able to reflect the moon of truth. The moon nonetheless shines

steadily upon the waves, but as the waters are roiled we are unable to see its reflection. Thus we lead lives that are frustrating and meaningless.

How can we fully illumine our life and personality with the moon of truth? We need first to purify this water, to calm the surging waves by halting the winds of discursive thought. In other words, we must empty our minds of what the Kegon (Avatamsaka) sutra calls the "conceptual thought of the human being." Most people place a high value on abstract thought, but Buddhism has clearly demonstrated that discriminative thinking lies at the root of delusion. I once heard someone say: "Thought is the sickness of the human mind." From the Buddhist point of view this is quite true. To be sure, abstract thinking is useful when wisely employed—which is to say, when its nature and limitations are properly understood—but as long as human beings remain slaves to their intellect, fettered and controlled by it, they can well be called sick.

All thoughts, whether enobling or debasing, are mutable and impermanent; they have a beginning and an end even as they are fleetingly with us, and this is as true of the thought of an era as of an individual. In Buddhism thought is referred to as "the stream of life-and-death." It is important in this connection to distinguish the role of transitory thoughts from that of fixed concepts. Random ideas are relatively innocuous, but ideologies, beliefs, opinions, and points of view, not to mention the factual knowledge accumulated since birth (to which we attach ourselves), are the shadows which obscure the light of truth.

So long as the winds of thought continue to disturb the water of our Self-nature, we cannot distinguish truth from untruth. It is imperative, therefore, that these winds be stilled. Once they abate, the waves subside, the muddiness clears, and we perceive directly that the moon of truth has never ceased shining. The moment of such realization is *kensho,* i.e., enlightenment, the apprehension of the true substance of our Self-nature. Unlike moral and philosophical concepts, which are variable, true insight is imperishable. Now for the first time

ological functions inevitably involves the mind and thus diminishes its clarity and one-pointedness, which are essential for effective concentration. From a purely psychological point of view, a ramrod erectness is as undesirable as a slouching position, for the one springs from unconscious pride and the other from abjectness, and since both are grounded in ego they are equally a hindrance to enlightenment.

Be careful to hold the head erect; if it inclines forward or backward or sideward, remaining there for an appreciable length of time, a crick in the neck may result.

When you have established a correct posture, take a deep breath, hold it momentarily, then exhale slowly and quietly. Repeat this two or three times, always breathing through the nose. After that breathe naturally. When you have accustomed yourself to this routine, one deep breath at the beginning will suffice. After that, breathe naturally, without trying to manipulate your breath. Now bend the body first to the right as far as it will go, then to the left, about seven or eight times, in large arcs to begin with, then smaller ones until the trunk naturally comes to rest at center.

YOU ARE NOW ready to concentrate your mind.[34] There are many good methods of concentration bequeathed to us by our predecessors in Zen. The easiest for beginners is counting incoming and outgoing breaths. The value of this particular exercise lies in the fact that all reasoning is excluded and the discriminative mind put at rest. Thus the waves of thought are stilled and a gradual one-pointedness of mind achieved. To start with, count both inhalations and exhalations. When you inhale concentrate on "one"; when you exhale, on "two"; and so on, up to ten. Then you return to "one" and once more count up to ten, continuing as before. If you lose the count, return to "one." It is as simple as that.

As I have previously pointed out, fleeting thoughts which naturally fluctuate in the mind are not in themselves an impediment. This

[34]For additional information on concentrating the mind, see p. 144.

unfortunately is not commonly recognized. Even among Japanese who have been practicing Zen for five years or more there are many who misunderstand Zen practice to be a stopping of consciousness. There is indeed a kind of zazen that aims at doing just this,[35] but it is not the traditional zazen of Zen Buddhism. You must realize that no matter how intently you count your breaths you will still perceive what is in your line of vision, since your eyes are open, and you will hear the normal sounds about you, as your ears are not plugged. And since your brain likewise is not asleep, various thoughtforms will dart about in your mind. Now, they will not hamper or diminish the effectiveness of zazen unless, evaluating them as "good," you cling to them or, deciding they are "bad," you try to check or eliminate them. You must not regard any perceptions or sensations as an obstruction to zazen, nor should you pursue any of them. I emphasize this. "Pursuit" simply means that in the act of seeing, your gaze lingers on objects; in the course of hearing, your attention dwells on sounds; and in the process of thinking, your mind adheres to ideas. If you allow yourself to be distracted in such ways, your concentration on the counting of your breaths will be impeded. To recapitulate: let random thoughts arise and vanish as they will, do not dally with them and do not try to expel them, but merely concentrate all your energy on counting the inhalations and exhalations of your breath.

In terminating a period of sitting do not arise abruptly, but begin by rocking from side to side, first in small swings, then in large ones, for about half a dozen times. You will observe that your movements in this exercise are the reverse of those you engage in when you begin zazen. Rise slowly and quietly walk around with the others in what is called *kinhin*, a walking form of zazen.

Kinhin is performed by placing the right fist, with thumb inside, on the chest and covering it with the left palm while holding both elbows at right angles. Keep the arms in a straight line and the body erect, with the eyes resting upon a point about two yards in front of the feet. At the same time continue to count inhalations and exhala-

[35]Shojo Zen (see p. 51).

tions as you walk slowly around the room. Begin walking with the left foot and walk in such a way that the foot sinks into the floor, first the heel and then the toes. Walk calmly and steadily, with poise and dignity. The walking must not be done absentmindedly, and the mind must be taut as you concentrate on the counting. It is advisable to practice walking this way for at least five minutes after each sitting period of twenty to thirty minutes.

You are to think of this walking as zazen in motion. Rinzai and Soto differ considerably in their way of doing kinhin. In Rinzai the walking is brisk and energetic, while in traditional Soto it is slow and leisurely; in fact, upon each breath you step forward only six inches or so. My own teacher, Harada-roshi, advocated a gait somewhere between these two and that is the method we have been practicing here. Further, the Rinzai sect cups the left hand on top of the right, whereas in the orthodox Soto the right hand is placed on top. Harada-roshi felt that the Rinzai method of putting the left hand uppermost was more desirable and so he adopted it into his own teaching. Now, even though this walking relieves the stiffness in your legs, such relief is to be regarded as a mere by-product and not the main object of kinhin. Accordingly, those of you who are counting your breaths should continue during kinhin, and those of you who are working on a koan should carry on with it.

This ends the first lecture. Continue to count your breaths as I have instructed until you come before me again.

2. *Precautions to Observe in Zazen*

In this second lecture I am going to change your breathing exercise slightly. This morning I told you to count "one" as you inhaled and "two" as you exhaled. Hereafter I want you to count "one" only on the exhalation, so that one full breath [inhalation and exhalation] will be "one." Don't bother counting the inhalations; just count "one," "two," "three," and so forth, on the exhalation.

It is advisable to do zazen facing a wall, a curtain, or the like. Don't sit too far from the wall nor with your nose up against it; the ideal dis-

tance is from two to three feet. Likewise, don't sit where you have a sweeping view, for it is distracting, or where you look out on a pleasant landscape, which will tempt you to leave off zazen in order to admire it. In this connection, remember that although your eyes are open you are not actually trying to see. For all these reasons it is wisest to sit facing a wall. However, if you happen to be doing zazen formally in a Rinzai temple, you will have no choice but to sit facing others, as this is the established custom in that sect.

In the beginning, if possible, select a room that is quiet as well as clean and tidy, one which you can regard as special. It may be asked whether it is satisfactory to do zazen on a bed so long as the room is clean and free from noise. For the ordinary healthy person the answer is no; there are any number of reasons why it is difficult to keep the mind in proper tension on a bed. A bedridden person, of course, has no choice.

You will probably find that natural sounds, like those of insects or birds or running water, will not disturb you, neither will the rhythmic ticking of a clock nor the purring of a motor. Sudden noises, however, like the roar of a jet, are jarring. But rhythmic sounds you can make use of. One student of mine actually attained enlightenment by utilizing the sound of the steady threshing of rice while he was doing zazen. The most objectionable sounds are those of human voices, either heard directly or over the radio or television. When you start zazen, therefore, find a room which is distant from such sounds. When your sitting has ripened, however, no noises will disturb you.

Besides keeping your room clean and orderly you should decorate it with flowers and burn incense since these, by conveying a sense of the pure and the holy, make it easier for you to relate yourself to zazen and thus to calm and unify your mind more quickly. Wear simple, comfortable clothing that will give you a feeling of dignity and purity. In the evening it is better not to wear night clothes, but if it is hot and a question of either doing zazen in pajamas or not doing it at all, by all means wear the pajamas. But make yourself clean and tidy.

The room ought not to be too light or too dark. You can put up a dark curtain if it is too light, or you can use a small electric bulb if it

is night. The effect of a dark room is the same as closing your eyes: it dulls everything. The best condition is a sort of twilight. Remember, Buddhist zazen does not aim at rendering the mind inactive but at quieting and unifying it in the midst of activity.

A room with plenty of fresh air, that is neither too hot in summer nor too cold in winter, is ideal. Punishing the body is not the purpose of zazen, so it is unnecessary to struggle with extremes of heat or cold. Experience has shown, however, that one can do better zazen when one feels slightly cool; too hot a room tends to make one sleepy. As your ardor for zazen deepens you will naturally become unconcerned about cold or heat. Nevertheless, it is wise to take care of your health.

NEXT LET US discuss the best time for zazen. For the eager and determined any time of day and all seasons of the year are equally good. But for those who have jobs or professions the best time is either morning or evening, or better still, both. Try to sit every morning, preferably before breakfast, and just before going to bed at night. But if you can sit only once—and you should sit at least once a day—you will have to consider the relative merits of morning and evening. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. If you find that either morning or evening is equally good and you ask which I recommend (because you can sit only once a day), I would say the morning, for the following reasons. No visitors come early in the morning, whereas in the evening you are likely to be interrupted. Also, morning—at any rate, in the city—is much quieter than evening since fewer cars are on the streets. Furthermore, because in the morning you are rested and somewhat hungry, you are in good condition for zazen, whereas in the evening, when you are tired and have had your meal, you are likely to be duller. Since it is difficult to do zazen on a full stomach, it is better not to sit immediately after a meal when you are a beginner. Before a meal, however, zazen can be practiced to good advantage. As your zeal grows it won't matter when you sit, before, after, or during a meal.

How long should you do zazen at one sitting? There is no general rule, for it varies according to the degree of one's eagerness as well as the maturity of one's practice. For novices a shorter time is better. If

must try to practice it as another means of concentrating your mind. Until you come before me again you are to concentrate on counting the inhalations of your breath, not audibly but in the mind only. It is not advisable, however, to follow this practice for long. If you are working by yourself, a week would be sufficient.

Makyo are the phenomena—visions, hallucinations, fantasies, revelations, illusory sensations—which one practicing zazen is apt to experience at a particular stage in his sitting. *Ma* means "devil" and *kyo* "the objective world." Hence makyo are the disturbing or "diabolical" phenomena which appear to one during zazen. These phenomena are not inherently bad. They become a serious obstacle to practice only if one is ignorant of their true nature and is ensnared by them.

The word *makyo* is used in both a general and a specific sense. Broadly speaking, the entire life of the ordinary person is nothing but a makyo. Even such Bodhisattvas as Monju and Kannon, highly developed though they are, still have about them traces of makyo; otherwise they would be supreme Buddhas, completely free of makyo. One who becomes attached to what he or she realizes through satori is also still lingering in the world of makyo. So, you see, there are makyo even after enlightenment, but we shall not enter into that aspect of the subject in these lectures.

In the specific sense the number of makyo which can appear are in fact unlimited, varying according to the personality and temperament of the sitter. In the Ryogon [Surangama] sutra the Buddha warns of fifty different kinds, but of course he is referring only to the commonest. If you attend a sesshin of from five to seven days' duration and apply yourself assiduously, on the third day you are likely to experience makyo of varying degrees of intensity. Besides those which involve the vision there are numerous makyo which relate to the sense of touch, smell, or hearing, or which sometimes cause the body suddenly to move from side to side or forward and backward or to lean to one side or to seem to sink or rise. Not infrequently words burst forth uncontrollably or, more rarely, one imagines he is smelling a particu-

larly fragrant perfume. There are even cases where without conscious awareness one writes down things which turn out to be prophetically true.

Very common are visual hallucinations. You are doing zazen with your eyes open when suddenly the ridges of the straw matting in front of you seem to be heaving up and down like waves. Or without warning everything may go white before your eyes, or black. A knot in the wood of a door may suddenly appear as a beast or demon or angel. One disciple of mine often used to see visions of masks—demons' masks or jesters' masks. I asked him whether he had ever had any particular experience of masks, and it turned out that he had seen them at a festival in Kyushu[36] when he was a child. Another man I knew was extremely troubled in his practice by visions of Buddha and his disciples walking around him reciting sutras, and was only able to dispel the hallucination by jumping into a tank of ice-cold water for two or three minutes.

Many makyo involve the hearing. One may hear the sound of a piano or loud noises, such as an explosion (which is heard by no one else), and actually jump. One disciple of mine always used to hear the sound of a bamboo flute while doing zazen. He had learned to play the bamboo flute many years before, but had long since given it up; yet always the sound came to him when he was sitting.

In the *Zazen Yojinki* we find the following about makyo: "The body may feel hot or cold or glasslike or hard or heavy or light. This happens because the breath is not well harmonized [with the mind] and needs to be carefully regulated." It then goes on to say: "One may experience the sensation of sinking or floating, or may alternately feel hazy and sharply alert. The disciple may develop the faculty of seeing through solid objects as though they were transparent, or he may experience his own body as a translucent substance. He may see Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Penetrating insights may suddenly come to him, or passages of sutras which were particularly difficult to under-

[36]The southernmost of Japan's main islands.

stand may suddenly become luminously clear to him. All these abnormal visions and sensations are merely the symptoms of an impairment arising from a maladjustment of the mind with the breath."

Other religions and sects place great store by experiences which involve visions of God or deities or hearing heavenly voices, performing miracles, receiving divine messages, or becoming purified through various rites and drugs. In the Nichiren sect, for example, devotees loudly and repeatedly invoke the name of the Lotus sutra, to the accompaniment of vigorous body movements, and feel they have thereby purged themselves of their defilements. In varying degree these practices induce a feeling of well-being, yet from the Zen point of view all are abnormal states devoid of true religious significance and therefore only makyo.

WHAT IS the essential nature of these disturbing phenomena we call makyo? They are temporary mental states which arise during zazen when our ability to concentrate has developed to a certain point and our practice is beginning to ripen. When the thought-waves that wax and wane on the surface of the mind are partially calmed, residual elements of past experiences "lodged" in the deeper levels of consciousness bob up sporadically to the surface of the mind, conveying the feeling of a greater or expanded reality. Makyo, accordingly, are a mixture of the real and the unreal, not unlike ordinary dreams. Just as dreams are usually not remembered by a person in deep sleep but only when one is half asleep and half awake, so makyo do not come to those in deep concentration or samadhi. Never be tempted into thinking that these phenomena are real or that the visions themselves have any meaning. To have a beautiful vision of a Buddha does not mean that you are any nearer becoming one yourself, any more than a dream of being a millionaire means that you are any richer when you awake. Therefore there is no reason to feel elated about such makyo. And similarly, whatever horrible monsters may appear to you, there is no cause whatever for alarm. Above all, do not allow yourself to be enticed by visions of the Buddha or of gods blessing you or communicating a divine message, or by makyo involving prophecies

which turn out to be true. This is to squander your energies in the foolish pursuit of the inconsequential.

But such visions are certainly a sign that you are at a crucial point in your sitting and that if you exert yourself to the utmost, you can surely experience kensho. Tradition states that even Shakyamuni Buddha just before his own awakening experienced innumerable makyo, which he termed "obstructing devils." Whenever makyo appear, simply ignore them and continue sitting wholeheartedly.

4. *The Five Varieties of Zen*

I shall now enumerate the different kinds of Zen. Unless you learn to distinguish between them, you are likely to err on decisive points, such as whether or not satori is indispensable in Zen, whether Zen involves the complete absence of discursive thought, and the like. The truth is that among the many types of Zen there are some which are profound and some shallow, some that lead to enlightenment and some that do not. It is said that during the time of the Buddha there were ninety or ninety-five schools of philosophy or religion in existence. Each school had its particular mode of Zen, and each was slightly different from the others.

All great religions embrace some measure of Zen, since religion needs prayer and prayer needs concentration of mind. The teachings of Confucius and Mencius, of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu, all these have their own elements of Zen. Indeed, Zen is spread over many different activities of life, such as the tea ceremony, Noh, kendo, judo. In Japan, starting with the Meiji Restoration, less than a hundred years ago, and continuing up to the present, there have sprung up a number of teachings and disciplines with elements of Zen in them. Among others I recall Okada's System of Tranquil Sitting and Emma's Method of Mind and Body Cultivation. Recently one Tempu Nakamura has been zealously advocating a form of Indian Yoga Zen. All these different methods of concentration, almost limitless in number, come under the broad heading of Zen. Rather than try to specify them all, I am going to discuss the five main divisions of Zen as classified by Keiho-

zenji, one of the early Zen masters in China, whose categories, I feel, are still valid and useful. Outwardly these five kinds of Zen scarcely differ. There may be slight variations in the way the legs are crossed, the hands folded, or the breathing regulated, but common to all are three basic elements: an erect sitting posture, correct control of breathing, and concentration (unification) of mind. Beginners need to bear in mind, however, that in the *substance* and *purpose* of these various types there are distinct differences. These differences are crucial to you when you come before me individually to state your aspiration, for they will enable you to define your goal clearly the better that I may assign you the practice appropriate to it.

The first of these types we call *bompu,* or "ordinary," Zen as opposed to the other four, each of which can be thought of as a special kind of Zen suitable for the particular aims of different individuals. Bompu Zen, being free from any philosophic or religious content, is for anybody and everybody. It is a Zen practiced purely in the belief that it can improve both physical and mental health. Since it can almost certainly have no ill effects, anyone can undertake it, whatever religious beliefs they happen to hold or if they hold none at all. Bompu Zen is bound to eliminate sickness of a psychosomatic nature and to improve the health generally.

Through the practice of bompu Zen you learn to concentrate and control your mind. It never occurs to most people to try to control their minds, and unfortunately this basic training is left out of contemporary education, not being part of what is called the acquisition of knowledge. Yet without it what we learn is difficult to retain because we learn it improperly, wasting much energy in the process. Indeed, we are virtually crippled unless we know how to restrain our thoughts and concentrate our minds. Furthermore, by practicing this very excellent mode of mind training you will find yourself increasingly able to resist temptations to which you had previously succumbed, and to sever attachments which had long held you in bondage. An enrichment of personality and a strengthening of character inevitably follow since the three basic elements of mind—that is, intellect, feeling, and will—develop harmoniously. The quietist sit-

believe otherwise. To such people the world can only seem inherently evil, full of sin and strife and suffering, of killing and being killed, and in their despair they long to escape from it.

THE FOURTH CLASSIFICATION is called *daijo,* great vehicle [Mahayana] Zen, and this is a truly Buddhist Zen, for it has as its central purpose *kensho-godo,* that is, seeing into your essential nature and realizing the Way in your daily life. For those able to comprehend the import of the Buddha's own enlightenment experience and with a desire to break through their own illusory view of the universe and experience absolute, undifferentiated Reality, the Buddha taught this mode of Zen. Buddhism is essentially a religion of enlightenment. The Buddha after his own supreme awakening spent some fifty years teaching people how they might themselves realize their Self-nature. His methods have been transmitted from master to disciple right down to the present day. So it can be said that a Zen which ignores or denies or belittles enlightenment is not true daijo Buddhist Zen.

In the practice of daijo Zen your aim in the beginning is to awaken to your True-nature, but upon enlightenment you realize that zazen is more than a means to enlightenment—it is the actualization of your True-nature. In this type of Zen, which has as its object satori-awakening, it is easy to mistakenly regard zazen as but a means. A wise teacher, however, will point out from the onset that zazen is in fact the actualization of the innate Buddha-nature and not merely a technique for achieving enlightenment. If zazen were no more than such a technique, it would follow that after satori zazen would be unnecessary. But as Dogen-zenji himself pointed out, precisely the reverse is true; the more deeply you experience satori, the more you perceive the need for practice.[37]

Saijojo Zen, the last of the five types, is the highest vehicle, the culmination and crown of Buddhist Zen. This Zen was practiced by all the Buddhas of the past—namely, Shakyamuni and Amida[38]—and is

[37]See p. 313.

[38]See "Amida" in vocabulary section.

the expression of Absolute Life, life in its purest form. It is the zazen which Dogen-zenji chiefly advocated and it involves no struggle for satori or any other object. We call it shikan-taza, and of this I shall speak in greater detail in a subsequent lecture.

In this highest practice, means and end coalesce. Daijo Zen and saijojo Zen are, in point of fact, complementary. The Rinzai sect placed daijo uppermost and saijojo beneath, whereas the Soto sect does the reverse. In saijojo, when rightly practiced, you sit in the firm conviction that zazen is the actualization of your undefiled True-nature, *and at the same time you sit in complete faith that the day will come when, exclaiming, "Oh, this is it!" you will unmistakably realize this True-nature.* Therefore you need not self-consciously strive for enlightenment.

Today many in the Soto sect hold that since we are all innately Buddhas, satori is unnecessary. Such an egregious error reduces shikan-taza, which properly is the highest form of sitting, to nothing more than bompu Zen, the first of the five types.

This completes my account of the five varieties of Zen, but unless I now tell you about the three objectives of zazen my presentation of these five types, especially the last two, will be incomplete.

5. *The Three Aims of Zazen*

The aims of zazen are three: (1) development of the power of concentration (*joriki*), (2) satori-awakening (*kensho-godo*), and (3) actualization of the Supreme Way in our daily lives (*mujodo no taigen*). These three form an inseparable unity, but for purposes of discussion I am obliged to deal with them individually.

Joriki, the first of these, is the power or strength which arises when the mind has been unified and brought to one-pointedness in zazen concentration. This is more than the ability to concentrate in the usual sense of the word. It is a dynamic power which, once mobilized, enables us even in the most sudden and unexpected situations to act instantly, without pausing to collect our wits, and in a manner wholly appropriate to the circumstances. Those who have developed joriki

are no longer slaves to their passions. More fully in command of both themselves and the circumstances of their lives, such people are able to move with real freedom and equanimity. The cultivation of certain supranormal powers is also made possible by joriki, as is the state in which the mind becomes like clear, still water.

The first two of the five kinds of Zen I have spoken about depend entirely on joriki. Now, although the power of joriki can be endlessly enlarged through regular practice, it will recede and eventually vanish if we neglect zazen. And while it is true that many extraordinary powers flow from joriki, nevertheless through it alone we cannot cut the roots of our illusory view of the world. Mere strength of concentration is not enough for the highest types of Zen; concomitantly there must be satori-awakening. In a little-known document handed down by Master Sekito Kisen, the founder of one of the early Zen sects, the following appears: "In our sect, realization of the Buddha-nature, and not mere devotion or strength of concentration, is paramount."

THE SECOND of these aims is kensho-godo, seeing into your True-nature and at the same time seeing into the ultimate nature of the universe and "all the ten thousand things" in it. It is the sudden realization that "I have been complete and perfect from the very beginning. How wonderful, how miraculous!" If it is true kensho, its substance will always be the same for whoever experiences it, whether that one be the Buddha Shakyamuni, the Buddha Amida, or any one of you gathered in this temple. But this does not mean that we can all experience kensho to the same degree, for in the clarity, the depth, and the completeness of the experience there are great differences. As an illustration, imagine a person blind from birth who gradually begins to recover his sight. At first he can see very vaguely and darkly and only objects close to him. Then as his sight improves he is able to distinguish things a yard or so away, then objects at ten yards, then at a hundred yards, until finally he can recognize anything up to a thousand yards. At each of these stages the phenomenal world he is seeing is the same, but the differences in the clarity and accuracy of his views

of that world are as great as those between snow and charcoal. So it is with the differences in clarity and depth of our experiences of kensho.

THE LAST of the three objectives is *mujodo no taigen,* the actualization of the Supreme Way throughout our entire being and our daily activities. At this point we do not distinguish the end from the means. Saijojo, which I have spoken of as the fifth and highest of the five types of Zen, corresponds to this stage. When you sit earnestly and egolessly in accordance with the instructions of a competent teacher—with your mind fully conscious yet as free of thought as a pure white sheet of paper is unmarred by a blemish—there is an unfoldment of your intrinsically pure Buddha-nature whether you have had satori or not. But what must be emphasized here is that only with true awakening do you directly apprehend the truth of your Buddha-nature and perceive that saijojo, the purest type of Zen, is no different from that practiced by all Buddhas.

The practice of Buddhist Zen should embrace all three of these objectives, for they are interrelated. There is, for instance, an essential connection between joriki and kensho. Kensho is "the wisdom naturally associated with joriki," which is the power arising from concentration. Joriki is connected with kensho in yet another way. Many people may never be able to reach kensho unless they have first cultivated a certain amount of joriki, for otherwise they may find themselves too restless, too nervous and uneasy to persevere with their zazen. Moreover, unless fortified by joriki, a single experience of kensho will have no appreciable effect on your life and will fade into a mere memory. For although through the experience of kensho you have apprehended the underlying unity of the cosmos with your Mind's eye, without joriki you are unable to act with the total force of your being on what your inner vision has revealed to you.

Likewise there is an interconnection between kensho and the third of these aims, *mujodo no taigen.* Kensho when manifested in all your actions is *mujodo no taigen.* With perfect enlightenment (*anuttara samyak-sambodhi*) we apprehend that our conception of the world as