Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind

40th Anniversary Edition with a New Afterword

Shunryu SUZUKI

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SHUNRYU SUZUKI

Fortieth Anniversary Edition

edited by Trudy Dixon
with a preface by Huston Smith
an introduction by Richard Baker
and an afterword by David Chadwick

SHAMBHALA
Boston & London
2010

Frontispiece: The characters for "beginner's mind" in calligraphy by Shunryu Suzuki.

Shambhala Publications, Inc.
Horticultural Hall
300 Massachusetts Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02115
www.shambhala.com

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America

♾ This edition is printed on acid-free paper that meets the American National Standards Institute z39.48 Standard.
♻ This book was printed on 30% postconsumer recycled paper.
For more information please visit www.shambhala.com.
Distributed in the United States by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada Ltd

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Suzuki, Shunryu, 1904–1971
Zen mind, beginner's mind / Shunryu Suzuki; edited by Trudy Dixon, with a preface by Huston Smith, an introduction by Richard Baker, and an afterword by David Chadwick.—
40th anniversary ed.
p. cm.
eISBN 978-0-8348-2129-3
ISBN 978-1-59030-850-9 (hardcover: alk. paper)
ISBN 978-1-59030-890-5 (hardcover with slipcase: alk. paper)
ISBN 978-1-59030-849-3 (paperback: alk. paper)
1. Meditation—Zen Buddhism. 2. Zen Buddhism--Doctrines. I. Dixon, Trudy. II. Title.
BQ9288.S994 2010
294.3'4435—dc22
2010023230

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PREFACE

Two Suzukis. A half-century ago, in a transplant that has been likened in its historical importance to the Latin translations of Aristotle in the thirteenth century and of Plato in the fifteenth, Daisetz Suzuki brought Zen to the West single-handed. Fifty years later, Shunryu Suzuki did something almost as important. He sounded exactly the follow-up note Americans interested in Zen need to hear.

Whereas Daisetz Suzuki's Zen was dramatic, Shunryu Suzuki's is ordinary. *Satori* was focal for Daisetz, and it was in large part the fascination of this extraordinary state that made his writings so compelling. In Shunryu Suzuki's book the words *satori* and *kensho,* its near-equivalent, never appear.

When, four months before his death, I had the opportunity to ask him why *satori* didn't figure in his book, his wife leaned toward me and whispered impishly, "It's because he hasn't had it"; whereupon the Roshi batted his fan at her in mock consternation and with finger to his lips hissed, "Shhhh! Don't tell him!" When our laughter had subsided, he said simply, "It's not that *satori* is unimportant, but it's not the part of Zen that needs to be stressed."

Suzuki-roshi was with us, in America, only twelve years—a single round in the East Asian way of counting years in dozens—but they were enough. Through the work of this

small, quiet man there is now a thriving Soto Zen organization on our continent. His life represented the Soto Way so perfectly that the man and the Way were merged. "His nonego attitude left us no eccentricities to embroider upon. Though he made no waves and left no traces as a personality in the worldly sense, the impress of his footsteps in the invisible world of history lead straight on."* His monuments are the first Soto Zen monastery in the West, the Zen Mountain Center at Tassajara; its city adjunct, the Zen Center in San Francisco; and, for the public at large, this book.

Leaving nothing to chance, he prepared his students for their most difficult moment, when his palpable presence would vanish into the void:

> If when I die, the moment I'm dying, if I suffer that is all right, you know; that is suffering Buddha. No confusion in it. Maybe everyone will struggle because of the physical agony or spiritual agony, too. But that is all right, that is not a problem. We should be very grateful to have a limited body . . . like mine, or like yours. If you had a limitless life it would be a real problem for you.

And he secured the transmission. In the Mountain Seat ceremony, November 21, 1971, he installed Richard Baker as his Dharma heir. His cancer had advanced to the point where he could march in the processional only supported

*From a tribute by Mary Farkas in *Zen Notes*, the First Zen Institute of America, January 1972.

by his son. Even so, with each step his staff banged the floor with the steel of the Zen will that informed his gentle exterior. Baker received the mantle with a poem:

> This piece of incense
> Which I have had for a long long time
> I offer with no-hand
> To my Master, to my friend, Suzuki Shunryu Daiosho
> The founder of these temples.
> There is no measure of what you have done.
>
> Walking with you in Buddha's gentle rain
> Our robes are soaked through,
> But on the lotus leaves
> Not a drop remains.

Two weeks later the Master was gone, and at his funeral on December 4 Baker-roshi spoke for the throng that had assembled to pay tribute:

> There is no easy way to be a teacher or a disciple, although it must be the greatest joy in this life. There is no easy way to come to a land without Buddhism and leave it having brought many disciples, priests, and laymen well along the path and having changed the lives of thousands of persons throughout this country; no easy way to have started and nurtured a monastery, a city community, and practice centers in California and many other places in the United States. But this "no-easy-way," this extraordinary accomplishment, rested easily with him, for he gave us from his own

true nature, our true nature. He left us as much as any man can leave, everything essential, the mind and heart of Buddha, the practice of Buddha, the teaching and life of Buddha. He is here in each one of us, if we want him.

Huston Smith
Professor of Philosophy
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

INTRODUCTION

For a disciple of Suzuki-roshi, this book will be Suzuki-roshi's mind—not his ordinary mind or personal mind, but his Zen mind, the mind of his teacher Gyokujun So-on-daiosho, the mind of Dogen-zenji, the mind of the entire succession—broken or unbroken, historical and mythical—of teachers, patriarchs, monks, and laymen from Buddha's time until today, and it will be the mind of Buddha himself, the mind of Zen practice. But, for most readers, the book will be an example of how a Zen master talks and teaches. It will be a book of instruction about how to practice Zen, about Zen life, and about the attitudes and understanding that make Zen practice possible. For any reader, the book will be an encouragement to realize his own nature, his own Zen mind.

Zen mind is one of those enigmatic phrases used by Zen teachers to make you notice yourself, to go beyond the words and wonder what your own mind and being are. This is the purpose of all Zen teaching—to make you wonder and to answer that wondering with the deepest expression of your own nature. The calligraphy on the front of the binding reads *nyorai* in Japanese or *tathagata* in Sanskrit. This is a name for Buddha which means "he who has followed the path, who has returned from suchness, or is suchness, thus-ness, is-ness, emptiness, the fully completed one." It is the ground principle which makes the appearance of a Buddha possible. It is Zen mind. At the time Suzuki-roshi wrote

this calligraphy—using for a brush the frayed end of one of the large swordlike leaves of the yucca plants that grow in the mountains around Zen Mountain Center—he said: "This means that Tathagata is the body of the whole earth."

The practice of Zen mind is beginner's mind. The innocence of the first inquiry—what am I?—is needed throughout Zen practice. The mind of the beginner is empty, free of the habits of the expert, ready to accept, to doubt, and open to all the possibilities. It is the kind of mind which can see things as they are, which step by step and in a flash can realize the original nature of everything. This practice of Zen mind is found throughout the book. Directly or by inference, every section of the book concerns the question of how to maintain beginner's mind through your meditation and in your life. This is an ancient way of teaching, using the simplest language and the situations of everyday life. This means the student should teach himself.

Beginner's mind was a favorite expression of Dogen-zenji's. The calligraphy of the frontispiece, also by Suzuki-roshi, reads *shoshin,* or beginner's mind. The Zen way of calligraphy is to write in the most straightforward, simple way as if you were a beginner, not trying to make something skillful or beautiful, but simply writing with full attention as if you were discovering what you were writing for the first time; then your full nature will be in your writing. This is the way of practice moment after moment.

This book was conceived and initiated by Marian Derby, a close disciple of Suzuki-roshi and organizer of the Los Altos Zen group. Suzuki-roshi joined the zazen meditations of this group once or twice a week, and after each meditation period he would talk to them, encouraging their practice and helping them with their problems. Marian taped

his talks and soon saw that as the group developed the talks acquired a continuity and development which would work well as a book and could be a much-needed record of Suzuki-roshi's remarkable spirit and teaching. From her transcriptions of talks made over a period of several years, she put together the first draft of the present book.

Then Trudy Dixon, another close disciple of Suzuki-roshi who had much experience editing Zen Center's publication, *Wind Bell,* edited and organized the manuscript for publication. It is no easy task to edit this kind of book, and explaining why will help the reader understand the book better. Suzuki-roshi takes the most difficult but persuasive way to talk about Buddhism—in terms of the ordinary circumstances of people's lives—to try to convey the whole of the teaching in statements as simple as "Have a cup of tea." The editor must be aware of the implications behind such statements in order not to edit out for the sake of clarity or grammar the real meaning of the lectures. Also, without knowing Suzuki-roshi well and having experience working with him, it is easy to edit out for the same reasons the background understanding that is his personality or energy or will. And it is also easy to edit out the deeper mind of the reader which needs the repetition, the seemingly obscure logic, and the poetry in order to know itself. Passages which seem obscure or obvious are often illuminating when they are read very carefully, wondering why this man would say such a thing.

The editing is further complicated by the fact that English is thoroughly dualistic in its basic assumptions and has not had the opportunity over centuries to develop a way of expressing nondualistic Buddhist ideas, as has Japanese. Suzuki-roshi uses these different cultural vocabularies

freely, expressing himself in both Japanese and Western ways of thinking. In his lectures, they merge poetically and philosophically. But in transcriptions, the pauses, rhythm, and emphasis that give his words their deeper meaning and hold his thoughts together are apt to be lost. So Trudy worked many months by herself and with Suzuki-roshi to retain his original words and flavor, and yet produce a manuscript that is in understandable English.

Trudy divided the book according to emphasis into three sections—Right Practice, Right Attitude, and Right Understanding—roughly corresponding to body, feeling, and mind. She also chose the titles for the talks and the epigraphs that follow the titles, these being taken usually from the body of the lectures. The choices are of course somewhat arbitrary, but she did this to set up a kind of tension between the specific sections, titles, and epigraphs, and the talks themselves. The relationship between the talks and these added elements will help the reader probe the lectures. The only talk not given originally to the Los Altos group is the Epilogue, which is a condensation of two talks given when Zen Center moved into its new San Francisco headquarters.

Shortly after finishing work on this book, Trudy died of cancer at the age of thirty. She is survived by her two children, Annie and Will, and her husband, Mike, a painter. He contributed the drawing of the fly on page 55. A Zen student for many years, when asked to do something for this book, he said: "I can't do a Zen drawing. I can't do a drawing for anything other than the drawing. I certainly can't see doing drawings of *zafu* [meditation pillows] or lotuses or ersatz something. I can see this idea, though." A realistic fly often occurs in Mike's paintings. Suzuki-roshi is

very fond of the frog, which sits so still it might be asleep, but is alert enough to notice every insect that comes by. Maybe the fly is waiting for the frog.

Trudy and I worked together throughout the development of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind,* and she asked me to complete the editing and see the book through to publication. After considering several publishers, I found that John Weatherhill, Inc., through Meredith Weatherby and Audie Bock, were able to polish, design, and publish this book in exactly the way it should be published. The manuscript was read before publication by Professor Kogen Mizuno, head of the Buddhist Studies Department, Komazawa University, and an outstanding scholar of Indian Buddhism. He generously helped with the transliteration of the Sanskrit and Japanese Buddhist terms.

Except for now and again in lectures, Suzuki-roshi seldom talks about his past, but this much I have pieced together. He was the disciple of Gyokujun So-on-roshi. He had other teachers; the most influential for him was Kishizawa Ian-roshi, a leading authority and lecturer on Dogen. Kishizawa-roshi emphasized a deep and careful understanding of Dogen, the koans—particularly the *Blue Cliff Records*—and the sutras. Suzuki Roshi was twelve when he began his apprenticeship under his father's disciple, Gyokujun. After years living with his teacher, he continued his practice and study at a Buddhist university, Komazawa, and at the main Soto training monasteries, Eiheiji and Sojiji. He also studied with a Rinzai teacher for awhile.

Gyokujun-roshi died when Suzuki was thirty. As a result, he had the responsibility, at a rather young age, of both his father's temple (who had died shortly before Gyokujun) and his teacher's temple. The latter, Rinsoin, was a small

monastery and head temple for about two hundred other temples. One of his main tasks was the rebuilding of Rinsoin in the exacting tradition his teacher and he wanted.

Exceptional for Japan during the nineteen thirties and forties, he led discussion groups at Rinsoin that questioned the militaristic assumptions and actions of the times. Before the war, and from the time he was young, he had been interested in coming to America; however, at the insistence of his teacher, he had given up the idea. But in 1956 and twice again in '58, a friend, who was one of the leaders of the Soto School, persisted in asking him to go to San Francisco to lead the Japanese Soto congregation there. On the third request, Suzuki-roshi accepted.

In 1959, when he was fifty-five, he came to America. After postponing his return several times, he decided to stay in America. He stayed because he found that Americans have a beginner's mind, that they have few preconceptions about Zen, are quite open to it, and confidently believe that it can help their lives. He found they question Zen in a way that gives Zen life. Shortly after his arrival several people stopped by and asked if they could study Zen with him. He said he did zazen early every morning and they could join him if they liked. Since then a rather large Zen group has grown up around him—now in six locations in California. At present he spends most of his time at Zen Center, 300 Page Street, San Francisco, where about sixty students live and many more do zazen regularly, and at Zen Mountain Center at Tassajara Springs above Carmel Valley. This latter is the first Zen monastery in America, and there another sixty or so students live and practice for three-month or longer periods.

Trudy felt that understanding how Zen students feel about their teacher might, more than anything else, help the reader to understand these talks. What the teacher really offers the student is literally living proof that all this talk and the seemingly impossible goals can be realized in this lifetime. The deeper you go in your practice, the deeper you find your teacher's mind is, until you finally see that your mind and his mind are Buddha's mind. And you find that zazen meditation is the most perfect expression of your actual nature. The following tribute from Trudy to her teacher describes very well the relationship between Zen teacher and Zen student:

"A roshi is a person who has actualized that perfect freedom which is the potentiality for all human beings. He exists freely in the fullness of his whole being. The flow of his consciousness is not the fixed repetitive patterns of our usual self-centered consciousness, but rather arises spontaneously and naturally from the actual circumstances of the present. The results of this in terms of the quality of his life are extraordinary—buoyancy, vigor, straightforwardness, simplicity, humility, serenity, joyousness, uncanny perspicacity, and unfathomable compassion. His whole being testifies to what it means to live in the reality of the present. Without anything said or done, just the impact of meeting a personality so developed can be enough to change another's whole way of life. But in the end it is not the extraordinariness of the teacher which perplexes, intrigues, and deepens the student, it is the teacher's utter ordinariness. Because he is just himself, he is a mirror for his students. When we are with him we feel our own strengths and shortcomings without any sense of praise or criticism from him. In his

presence we see our original face, and the extraordinariness we see is only our own true nature. When we learn to let our own nature free, the boundaries between master and student disappear in a deep flow of being and joy in the unfolding of Buddha mind."

Richard Baker
Kyoto, 1970

ZEN MIND, BEGINNER'S MIND

It is wisdom which is seeking for wisdom.

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PROLOGUE

BEGINNER'S MIND *"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few."*

People say that practicing Zen is difficult, but there is a misunderstanding as to why. It is not difficult because it is hard to sit in the cross-legged position, or to attain enlightenment. It is difficult because it is hard to keep our mind pure and our practice pure in its fundamental sense. The Zen school developed in many ways after it was established in China, but at the same time, it became more and more impure. But I do not want to talk about Chinese Zen or the history of Zen. I am interested in helping you keep your practice from becoming impure.

In Japan we have the phrase *shoshin,* which means "beginner's mind." The goal of practice is always to keep our beginner's mind. Suppose you recite the Prajna Paramita Sutra only once. It might be a very good recitation. But what would happen to you if you recited it twice, three times, four times, or more? You might easily lose your original attitude towards it. The same thing will happen in your other Zen practices. For a while you will keep your beginner's mind, but if you continue to practice one, two, three years or more, although you may improve some, you are liable to lose the limitless meaning of original mind.

For Zen students the most important thing is not to be dualistic. Our "original mind" includes everything within itself. It is always rich and sufficient within itself. You should not lose your self-sufficient state of mind. This does not mean a closed mind, but actually an empty mind and a ready mind. If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything; it is open to everything. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few.

If you discriminate too much, you limit yourself. If you are too demanding or too greedy, your mind is not rich and self-sufficient. If we lose our original self-sufficient mind, we will lose all precepts. When your mind becomes demanding, when you long for something, you will end up violating your own precepts: not to tell lies, not to steal, not to kill, not to be immoral, and so forth. If you keep your original mind, the precepts will keep themselves.

In the beginner's mind there is no thought, "I have attained something." All self-centered thoughts limit our vast mind. When we have no thought of achievement, no thought of self, we are true beginners. Then we can really learn something. The beginner's mind is the mind of compassion. When our mind is compassionate, it is boundless. Dogen-zenji, the founder of our school, always emphasized how important it is to resume our boundless original mind. Then we are always true to ourselves, in sympathy with all beings, and can actually practice.

So the most difficult thing is always to keep your beginner's mind. There is no need to have a deep understanding of Zen. Even though you read much Zen literature, you must read each sentence with a fresh mind. You should not say, "I know what Zen is," or "I have attained enlightenment." This

is also the real secret of the arts: always be a beginner. Be very very careful about this point. If you start to practice zazen, you will begin to appreciate your beginner's mind. It is the secret of Zen practice.

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PART ONE

Right Practice

Zazen practice is the direct expression of our true nature. Strictly speaking, for a human being, there is no other practice than this practice; there is no other way of life than this way of life.

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POSTURE *"These forms are not the means of obtaining the right state of mind. To take this posture is itself to have the right state of mind. There is no need to obtain some special state of mind."*

Now I would like to talk about our zazen posture. When you sit in the full lotus position, your left foot is on your right thigh, and your right foot is on your left thigh. When we cross our legs like this, even though we have a right leg and a left leg, they have become one. The position expresses the oneness of duality: not two, and not one. This is the most important teaching: not two, and not one. Our body and mind are not two and not one. If you think your body and mind are two, that is wrong; if you think that they are one, that is also wrong. Our body and mind are both two *and* one. We usually think that if something is not one, it is more than one; if it is not singular, it is plural. But in actual experience, our life is not only plural, but also singular. Each one of us is both dependent and independent.

After some years we will die. If we just think that it is the end of our life, this will be the wrong understanding. But, on the other hand, if we think that we do not die, this is also wrong. We die, and we do not die. This is the right understanding. Some people may say that our mind or soul exists forever, and it is only our physical body which dies. But this is not exactly right, because both mind and body have their end. But at the same time it is also true that they exist eternally. And even though we say mind and body, they are

actually two sides of one coin. This is the right understanding. So when we take this posture it symbolizes this truth. When I have the left foot on the right side of my body, and the right foot on the left side of my body, I do not know which is which. So either may be the left or the right side.

The most important thing in taking the zazen posture is to keep your spine straight. Your ears and your shoulders should be on one line. Relax your shoulders, and push up towards the ceiling with the back of your head. And you should pull your chin in. When your chin is tilted up, you have no strength in your posture; you are probably dreaming. Also to gain strength in your posture, press your diaphragm down towards your *hara,* or lower abdomen. This will help you maintain your physical and mental balance. When you try to keep this posture, at first you may find some difficulty breathing naturally, but when you get accustomed to it you will be able to breathe naturally and deeply.

Your hands should form the "cosmic mudra." If you put your left hand on top of your right, middle joints of your middle fingers together, and touch your thumbs lightly together (as if you held a piece of paper between them), your hands will make a beautiful oval. You should keep this universal mudra with great care, as if you were holding something very precious in your hand. Your hands should be held against your body, with your thumbs at about the height of your navel. Hold your arms freely and easily, and slightly away from your body, as if you held an egg under each arm without breaking it.

You should not be tilted sideways, backwards, or forwards. You should be sitting straight up as if you were supporting the sky with your head. This is not just form or breathing. It expresses the key point of Buddhism. It is a

perfect expression of your Buddha nature. If you want true understanding of Buddhism, you should practice this way. These forms are not a means of obtaining the right state of mind. To take this posture itself is the purpose of our practice. When you have this posture, you have the right state of mind, so there is no need to try to attain some special state. When you try to attain something, your mind starts to wander about somewhere else. When you do not try to attain anything, you have your own body and mind right here. A Zen master would say, "Kill the Buddha!" Kill the Buddha if the Buddha exists somewhere else. Kill the Buddha, because you should resume your own Buddha nature.

Doing something is expressing our own nature. We do not exist for the sake of something else. We exist for the sake of ourselves. This is the fundamental teaching expressed in the forms we observe. Just as for sitting, when we stand in the zendo we have some rules. But the purpose of these rules is not to make everyone the same, but to allow each to express his own self most freely. For instance, each one of us has his own way of standing, so our standing posture is based on the proportions of our own bodies. When you stand, your heels should be as far apart as the width of your own fist, your big toes in line with the centers of your breasts. As in zazen, put some strength in your abdomen. Here also your hands should express your self. Hold your left hand against your chest with fingers encircling your thumb, and put your right hand over it. Holding your thumb pointing downward, and your forearms parallel to the floor, you feel as if you have some round pillar in your grasp—a big round temple pillar—so you cannot be slumped or tilted to the side.

The most important point is to own your own physical

body. If you slump, you will lose your self. Your mind will be wandering about somewhere else; you will not be in your body. This is not the way. We must exist right here, right now! This is the key point. You must have your own body and mind. Everything should exist in the right place, in the right way. Then there is no problem. If the microphone I use when I speak exists somewhere else, it will not serve its purpose. When we have our body and mind in order, everything else will exist in the right place, in the right way.

But usually, without being aware of it, we try to change something other than ourselves, we try to order things outside us. But it is impossible to organize things if you yourself are not in order. When you do things in the right way, at the right time, everything else will be organized. You are the "boss." When the boss is sleeping, everyone is sleeping. When the boss does something right, everyone will do everything right, and at the right time. That is the secret of Buddhism.

So try always to keep the right posture, not only when you practice zazen, but in all your activities. Take the right posture when you are driving your car, and when you are reading. If you read in a slumped position, you cannot stay awake long. Try. You will discover how important it is to keep the right posture. This is the true teaching. The teaching which is written on paper is not the true teaching. Written teaching is a kind of food for your brain. Of course it is necessary to take some food for your brain, but it is more important to be yourself by practicing the right way of life.

That is why Buddha could not accept the religions existing at his time. He studied many religions, but he was not

satisfied with their practices. He could not find the answer in asceticism or in philosophies. He was not interested in some metaphysical existence, but in his own body and mind, here and now. And when he found himself, he found that everything that exists has Buddha nature. That was his enlightenment. Enlightenment is not some good feeling or some particular state of mind. The state of mind that exists when you sit in the right posture is, itself, enlightenment. If you cannot be satisfied with the state of mind you have in zazen, it means your mind is still wandering about. Our body and mind should not be wobbling or wandering about. In this posture there is no need to talk about the right state of mind. You already have it. This is the conclusion of Buddhism.

BREATHING

"What we call 'I' is just a swinging door which moves when we inhale and when we exhale."

When we practice zazen our mind always follows our breathing. When we inhale, the air comes into the inner world. When we exhale, the air goes out to the outer world. The inner world is limitless, and the outer world is also limitless. We say "inner world" or "outer world," but actually there is just one whole world. In this limitless world, our throat is like a swinging door. The air comes in and goes out like someone passing through a swinging door. If you think, "I breathe," the "I" is extra. There is no you to say "I." What we call "I" is just a swinging door which moves when we inhale and when we exhale. It just moves; that is all. When your mind is pure and calm enough to

follow this movement, there is nothing: no "I," no world, no mind nor body; just a swinging door.

So when we practice zazen, all that exists is the movement of the breathing, but we are aware of this movement. You should not be absent-minded. But to be aware of the movement does not mean to be aware of your small self, but rather of your universal nature, or Buddha nature. This kind of awareness is very important, because we are usually so one-sided. Our usual understanding of life is dualistic: you and I, this and that, good and bad. But actually these discriminations are themselves the awareness of the universal existence. "You" means to be aware of the universe in the form of you, and "I" means to be aware of it in the form of I. You and I are just swinging doors. This kind of understanding is necessary. This should not even be called understanding; it is actually the true experience of life through Zen practice.

So when you practice zazen, there is no idea of time or space. You may say, "We started sitting at a quarter to six in this room." Thus you have some idea of time (a quarter to six), and some idea of space (in this room). Actually what you are doing, however, is just sitting and being aware of the universal activity. That is all. This moment the swinging door is opening in one direction, and the next moment the swinging door will be opening in the opposite direction. Moment after moment each one of us repeats this activity. Here there is no idea of time or space. Time and space are one. You may say, "I must do something this afternoon," but actually there is no "this afternoon." We do things one after the other. That is all. There is no such time as "this afternoon" or "one o'clock" or "two o'clock." At one o'clock you will eat your lunch. To eat lunch is itself one o'clock.

You will be somewhere, but that place cannot be separated from one o'clock. For someone who actually appreciates our life, they are the same. But when we become tired of our life we may say, "I shouldn't have come to this place. It may have been much better to have gone to some other place for lunch. This place is not so good." In your mind you create an idea of place separate from an actual time.

Or you may say, "This is bad, so I should not do this." Actually, when you say, "I should not do this," you are doing not-doing in that moment. So there is no choice for you. When you separate the idea of time and space, you feel as if you have some choice, but actually, you have to do something, or you have to do not-doing. Not-to-do something is doing something. Good and bad are only in your mind. So we should not say, "This is good," or "This is bad." Instead of saying bad, you should say, "not-to-do"! If you think, "This is bad," it will create some confusion for you. So in the realm of pure religion there is no confusion of time and space, or good or bad. All that we should do is just do something as it comes. *Do* something! Whatever it is, we should do it, even if it is not-doing something. We should live in this moment. So when we sit we concentrate on our breathing, and we become a swinging door, and we do something we should do, something we must do. This is Zen practice. In this practice there is no confusion. If you establish this kind of life you have no confusion whatsoever.

Tozan, a famous Zen master, said, "The blue mountain is the father of the white cloud. The white cloud is the son of the blue mountain. All day long they depend on each other, without being dependent on each other. The white cloud is always the white cloud. The blue mountain is always the blue mountain." This is a pure, clear interpretation of life.

There may be many things like the white cloud and blue mountain: man and woman, teacher and disciple. They depend on each other. But the white cloud should not be bothered by the blue mountain. The blue mountain should not be bothered by the white cloud. They are quite independent, but yet dependent. This is how we live, and how we practice zazen.

When we become truly ourselves, we just become a swinging door, and we are purely independent of, and at the same time, dependent upon everything. Without air, we cannot breathe. Each one of us is in the midst of myriads of worlds. We are in the center of the world always, moment after moment. So we are completely dependent and independent. If you have this kind of experience, this kind of existence, you have absolute independence; you will not be bothered by anything. So when you practice zazen, your mind should be concentrated on your breathing. This kind of activity is the fundamental activity of the universal being. Without this experience, this practice, it is impossible to attain absolute freedom.

CONTROL *"To give your sheep or cow a large, spacious meadow is the way to control him."*

To live in the realm of Buddha nature means to die as a small being, moment after moment. When we lose our balance we die, but at the same time we also develop ourselves, we grow. Whatever we see is changing, losing its balance. The reason everything looks beautiful is because it is out of balance, but its background is always in perfect harmony. This

is how everything exists in the realm of Buddha nature, losing its balance against a background of perfect balance. So if you see things without realizing the background of Buddha nature, everything appears to be in the form of suffering. But if you understand the background of existence, you realize that suffering itself is how we live, and how we extend our life. So in Zen sometimes we emphasize the imbalance or disorder of life.

Nowadays traditional Japanese painting has become pretty formal and lifeless. That is why modern art has developed. Ancient painters used to practice putting dots on paper in artistic disorder. This is rather difficult. Even though you try to do it, usually what you do is arranged in some order. You think you can control it, but you cannot; it is almost impossible to arrange your dots out of order. It is the same with taking care of your everyday life. Even though you try to put people under some control, it is impossible. You cannot do it. The best way to control people is to encourage them to be mischievous. Then they will be in control in its wider sense. To give your sheep or cow a large, spacious meadow is the way to control him. So it is with people: first let them do what they want, and watch them. This is the best policy. To ignore them is not good; that is the worst policy. The second worst is trying to control them. The best one is to watch them, just to watch them, without trying to control them.

The same way works for you yourself as well. If you want to obtain perfect calmness in your zazen, you should not be bothered by the various images you find in your mind. Let them come, and let them go. Then they will be under control. But this policy is not so easy. It sounds easy, but it requires some special effort. How to make this