

ZEN NOTES

BODHIDHARMA'S TWO ENTRANCES

The Gate of Reason and the Gate of Practice--Bodhidharma's two entrances--are the foundation of Zen. I am not sure if the word "reason" is a good one to use here or not--but I shall use it this once. Reasoning is not physical practice, it is mental activity. By this mental activity we arrive at a conclusion; from the conclusion we perform our action in daily life.

Every religion has these two gates. In Christianity God is the gate of reason, love is the gate of practice. With the understanding reached by the Gate of Reason we perform our daily life. If we perform without it, we perform blindly and make terrible errors. I am sure I do not need to repeat the details of the Oedipus story--how he killed his father and married his mother, not knowing--I shall merely point out that it is an illustration of man's blind life.

The Entrance of Reason in Bodhidharma's theory has no end. It goes so far and then enters chaos; there is nothing at the end of it. This is a wonderful part of Buddhism. The summit of the triangle has no ultimate, it is endless. There was a story--an English poet told this--of a man who went through mountains to find the end of the world. On his way he passed many temples. Finally he came to a place where he was told: "This is the end of the world." But he did not believe it and went on. Finally he came to the edge, the real edge, of the world, a great cliff. There he saw the chaos of the Infinite and couldn't take another step. This is an allegory of the end of reason. When we are thinking about the highest truth, we think and think and think and think until we come to the ultimate, then we cannot think any more. Our thinking mind can go no further. It is a cliff, so our thinking mind cannot step forward. This is the end. If you are thinking about something, you must come to this end of thinking. When you have something more



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to think about, it is not the true end. It is not through thinking about it that you see Truth. You cannot feel it or think about it. When you come to the true end you stop thinking and you see Truth. It is not thinking of Truth, it is not looking at Truth as a picture. You see.

It is as when you use a drill. As long as you can drill, it is not the end. When no resistance is left, when you can drill no more, it goes z-z-z-z-z and the end is reached. We say thought has penetrated through reason. When you have reached the true conclusion, there is no word. When you have destroyed the last word and arrived at chaos it is the Infinite. If you come to God or Buddha or anything, it is not the end. But when you have destroyed the last word, when you cannot think of anything more, then you will see that endless gap. Perhaps you will turn back because you are afraid. But the Zen student is not afraid, he will leap and jump into that Infinite. You must jump into it. Just jump, not your body--your body still sits where it is so you need not be afraid--jump into that conclusion. While you have a word you are not a good student. While there is some picture in your brain, you have not reached the end. If you have a lotus flower in your hand and are mounted upon an elephant, you are dreaming. If you think there is a God sitting upon a cloud and Peter and Mary are on each side, and Christ is in front on a throne, you have not come to the real Truth yet--you do not see the real God. You are thinking about it but you don't see it. You are looking at something, so you haven't come to the end yet. As long as you are thinking something is there and you are thinking about it, it is not the real end. But when there is nothing to think about, and your faculty of thinking has come to an end and you all of a sudden throw yourself into chaos, into the Infinite, and your mind and body and soul all disappear, that is the real end.

In ancient times, students experienced this by meditation. Today we experience this by *sanzen*, but if you practice with both methods it will be as if you were a tiger with wings. If a tiger had wings, what would such a tiger be? The ox is very slow, the horse is very fast. The ox has horns, the horse has not. But if the horse had horns, the horse would be better than the ox.

Shakamuni's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree is an example of entering the end. He proved Nirvana. There is nobody whose name is God, whose name is man, neither devil nor demon, who lives in Nirvana. Nirvana is infinite, boundless.

That is one gate, one side. From there you come back to this life, to the entry of the practice of daily life. Right performance of daily life is the first duty. It is very interesting to see this in Oriental life. The Oriental attitude greatly differs from the Western.

There are four attitudes of performing daily life which are very important for the Buddhist. "Compensation" is the first. The second is

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“ to act in accordance with the course of Nature.” In the Buddhist sense “ course of Nature” may perhaps read “ course of karma.” The third is “ to expect nothing.” The fourth is “ to act in accordance with the first cause (Dharma). The first cause is the entry into chaos.

“ Compensation” means paying back old debts from the deeds of the past. Day by day we are paying back debts of old karma. For instance, someone is talked about badly. Gossip and rumor spread. Wherever he goes everyone laughs and no one takes him seriously; in business everyone despises him and will have nothing to do with him. What would you do if you were he? Would you stand on the corner of the street and say: “ I didn’t do it?” Or would you advertise your innocence in the newspaper and explain it to the whole world? In such a case the Buddhist takes the attitude it is his opportunity to pay back old debts for something he did in the past, or for some element in his mind or character. Say it is a religious teacher who has come to this city and opened his temple. You, and you, and no one comes. He must think: “ I am paying back some unknown sin I committed in the past.” Well, if no one comes he accepts it without a word, not trying to explain. Day and night, month after month, he accepts it in silence until it comes to an end. Until that time he just sits down and waits until the debt is paid. If you have ego in your mind, you couldn’t do this, but if by the Entry of Reason you have annihilated the ego, you can say: “ I did commit a crime in the past, but now they are talking about it, not about me. It is the karma of human life, not of a human being. We are all like waves in the ocean of karma, so we are in the center of the movement of karma. We must move with it and not complain.” But if he thinks no one will believe in him and he cannot teach because he committed some sin in the past, this will give a nauseating feeling to the listeners. They will say, “ Have you heard him? He isn’t bad as a speaker, but there is something about his attitude I can’t stand. It boils my blood.”

When anyone talks about you badly, just meekly accept it. Say nothing, don’t explain, not even to your friend. Silently accept it. Don’t repeat a word. And when something good occurs, you don’t need to advertise that or boast of it either. It is as with the sun and moon: they rise and set when the time comes. Thus every moment of the day is compensation for past karma.

The second attitude is “ to do everything in accordance with Nature’s course.” The wind is blowing. You wish to light a cigarette. What do you do? Strike a match in the wind? No, of course not. You seek or make a sheltered quiet bit of air. You strike the match and carefully shield the light. It is so plain. Do everything in accordance with the course of Nature.

The third attitude is “ to do everything without expecting a result.” When you accomplish something, suppose you expect appreciation.

Perhaps you have made money so you say to your children, "See, my children, what I have made." And your children will say, "Give me that money." Or you expect something for everything you do. "Oh, Reverend, I gave eight dollars. That is three dollars more than usual." Do not expect compensation for each good deed. You may not reap any reward for your deeds, but someone will. And for someone else's good deed you will receive the harvest. Do the best you can without expecting any return. If something returns to you, it is like receiving a gift; if it does not it is like lending money to someone. The reincarnation system is a wonderful way to explain the action of this principle.

The last attitude is "to do everything in accordance with the first principle." Don't put your trust in God, then pray: "Oh, God, give me a nickel." Do the best you can. When we worship, we kneel down inside and join hands with fear, with joy, with awe, to the Infinite. And then we come back and live in the four attitudes without ego. I am accepting the law of compensation in accordance with Nature. The life of compensation is the life of accordance with the course of Nature, the life of not expecting any harvest. I am like an artist who makes a beautiful picture on sand. I am making something and I am happy doing it. And if you rear a child, don't expect anything from it. You see a dog which has its puppies. Does the mother dog expect anything from those puppies? No, she doesn't expect a thing.

To conclude: Do not do anything save in accordance with the first law. The first three attitudes are included in the last, so in the end of religion there is only one attitude. This brings happiness and peace.

SOKEI-AN

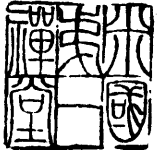
Sokei-an's talk here reconstructed by Euen refers to the theory attributed to Bodhidharma, written down in a work identified by a variety of names. For a translation of one version of it under the title of "The Meditation on Four Acts" and a commentary on the authenticity and significance of this writing, see Dr. Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, First Series, pp. 176-184.

Published monthly by

THE FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.
156 Waverly Place, New York 14, New York



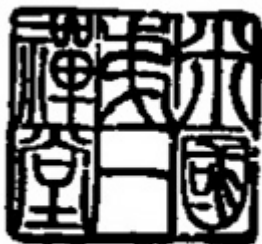
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Vol. III No. 12, Dec.
1 Year \$1.00
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Founded in 1930 by
Sokei-an Sasaki



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