

ZEN NOTES



S O K E I - A N S A Y S

THE HUMAN MIND The human mind is living in this body. This body is nature. Thoughts are the human being really. If you like to find the human being in yourself, your thoughts are the human being. Your body is just the body of an animal.

New York City is a structure of the mind, an expression of mind. If you go to the country, it is just nature, but New York City is nothing but thought. It is very interesting to observe New York City this way. I like the city more than the country because there is more of the human mind about it. The city is the nature of human mind, the country is the nature of nature's mind.

If we withdraw mind from our so-called psychological system there is nothing--no red, no blue, nothing. To Nagarjuna mind was the only true existence. His was the Buddhism of Mind Only. Nagarjuna thought that all existences were nothing but mind. This mind was analyzed into various levels. We human beings are parasites upon a bigger consciousness. We are parasites upon nature.

This mind is a stream. In the beginning the Buddhist is troubled by this. We try to eliminate mind, to brush it aside and come to the state of no-mind. The ancient Zen Masters annihilated this mind and then made an effort to annihilate subconscious mind.

The first part of the training is to annihilate mind; the second is to emancipate mind, to let it go. First stop the mind's movement, then observe its movement. This old Buddhism can be boiled down to that point. After all there is nothing in Buddhism but to stop your mind movement and to watch it flow. You must practice this every moment. Then when you talk to people, when you eat food, you are doing something with your awareness. There is nothing in Buddhism but to find the secret of this natural movement of mind. This is not a philosophy as in the Occident. The Oriental mystic just meditates. The Occidental thinks it is banality to watch the smallest pieces of mind that are in the brain every moment. But when you watch this way two, three years, you will find your mind is like a beautiful garden, carefully arranged. Watch it night and day! After all the koans have been solved, you learn to observe your own mind. You learn to guide it and to know what is happening in it. Then not only will you find your own mind but you can find others' minds too. All the power to read others' minds comes from this practice. All those Zen Masters, when there are no more koans to study, come into this practice.

THE ROOT OF THE TREE As Buddhists we have two directions toward which we are reaching. One is the attainment of enlightenment; the other is to render service to others. The attainment of enlightenment is the attainment of wisdom. To render service to others is to complete our love. Wisdom and love together are our aim; but wisdom is the Buddhist's faith, the foundation; and love is our aim. We educate ourselves to attain enlightenment; only then can we bring happiness to the world, to our home, and to ourselves. There can be no peace in the world, no happiness in the family, no quietude in one's self, if one fails to attain his own enlightenment. We must not fail ourselves. We must be true to ourselves. You can lie to some one else, but you cannot lie to yourself. If you lie to yourself, you have no life of your own. Buddhism teaches us to realize both of these aims, enlightenment and the rendering of service to others; it is a twofold teaching.

Of the two great religions in the world, Christianity places its emphasis on love; Buddhism, on wisdom. But there are not two religions in the world. There is just one. If you were in a treetop and everyone else was in the top-most branches, all stretching their hands to grip one another to make a unity, this would be the Christian approach to love. The Buddhist approach is different. We say that you first must return to the root of the tree, to below the trunk where all are embraced in a true unity in which individuality is lost. Without branches, of course there is no tree; without root there is no tree. Man must have both. Christianity emphasizes associating in peace and unity, loving one another. Buddhism teaches, "Come back to the root and forget yourselves, where there are no numbers of men, but just one!"

The ancients taught that the world in which we are living is not the real world, but a temporary and mortal place, in order to enable men to depart from it as monks or ascetics. Renouncing the world of turmoil, men take an aloof attitude and set their faces against it. This is the first step necessary in entering religion. The next step is turning one's face toward the world again; one comes back into the world and struggles along with its people, telling them about the real foundation of life.

Thus, we have two attitudes in life. First you turn your back against the world and face the Truth; the direction of this attitude is from earth to heaven. In the second attitude, you face from heaven to earth. This is the true attitude of the human being; it is a very great one. With it you can permit all the errors of human life, affirm everything on earth, and have sympathy with others in your compassion. But if you take the first attitude, looking from earth

to heaven, and your friend happens to make an error, you say, "Oh, I cannot associate with you!"

The really great religious teachers have never accused others for their offences. Men punish the criminal; but our great sages have never had the idea of punishing the criminal, of accusing their own brothers and sisters for their errors.

The second attitude, looking from heaven to earth, is the real attitude of the human being. However, to attain it you must attain the real foundation of life, the enlightenment which is the attainment of wisdom. Then, and only then, can you turn to act with love toward others.

The foundation and the aim of life, then, are not two different things. One who has no foundation for his life has no aim either. Everyone has something upon which he can depend and has something for which he works and which he worships. He lives upon it as his foundation; and he renders

service to it. The monks in China and Japan often talk about their faith when they meet a stranger. When a layman visits a monk, the monk asks, "What is your faith, O Gentleman?" You must always be aware of your faith. You must not live like a blind man.

TREE by HIDE OSHIRO

Reconstructed by WILLIAM BRIGGS

FAITH When the Sixth Patriarch was being pursued by the monks, he placed the bowl and the robe on a rock. Myōjōza tried to grasp them, but they were heavy as a mountain and could not be moved. The Sixth Patriarch said to him, "Faith cannot be carried by force."

That "faith" is a good word. It is not necessary to believe anything, it is not necessary to have faith in God or in the Devil, but there is something in the human mind which is the pivot of all consciousness, and we base all our attitudes upon it. There is something in human beings which is grand, penetrating, pure, and sacred. It is not tinted by any color. It has no particle of sound, no taste. It is like air. We feel it. It is faith. Faith is the residence of our religion.

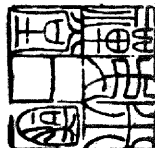
THE FOUNDATION When we have true religion we take refuge in the Dharmakaya, we have a foundation in the Dharmakaya. We do not hold any thought, any thing in our minds when we confront the Dharmakaya and take refuge in it.

Without this foundation we would not have much meaning in our life. In every moment of our lives, whatever we do, we must have this bottomless truth, then we can concentrate on our work, on the moment. When you eat, why do you cover the table with a cloth, and arrange all those different pieces of silver in special ways? You do not know it, but it is religion. We must have this one thing which is the foundation. If anyone asked me, "What is religion?" I would say, "My daily life is religion."

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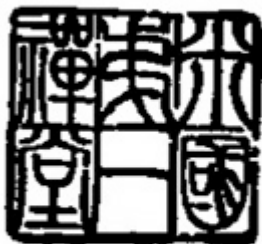
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