

ZEN NOTES



SOKEI-AN SAYS

THE RELIGION OF NORTH AMERICA

To make clear the nature and significance of Buddhism it is necessary to speak of Taoism. One must also make clear the distinction between Christianity and Buddhism. Then we can think what the religion of North America might be in the future.

Many times I have been asked about Taoism but I have not made any particular answer. Lao Tzu left just five thousand words in all. These words are very simple and concise, but without understanding the main principle of Taoism, no one can translate his Tao Te Ching.

Tao is usually translated Way. This is not a very good translation. Tao is way, it is true, but it is also emptiness, naturalness, and purposelessness.

Lao Tzu placed his emphasis on his own conception of Tao, particularly purposelessness. Throughout his five thousand words, the cardinal principle of Tao is *mu-i*. *Mu* means no or not: *i* means "to do." So *mu-i* means "to do nothing," or "doing nothing." In Taoism this "doing nothing" has a special meaning, however. If someone asks, "What are you doing?" and you answer "Nothing," that is not it. You are doing everything, but from the standpoint of the individual *you* are doing nothing. When you digest food, for instance, digesting food is not *your* "doing" but still you are digesting food. I walk the streets. My feet are carrying my body through the street, but *I* am not walking.

If you do not understand this, you will never understand the Chinese. No one on earth can be so charming as a Chinese gentleman. He "does nothing" from morning to evening. The sun rises

in the morning and sets at night; spring comes, flowers bloom; fall comes, the trees shed their leaves. But the sun "does nothing," the trees "do nothing." All these activities have no purpose, they are just phenomena. In the old days, the entire life of the land of China was performed on this principle. It is Taoism. No nation on earth worshipped nature as the Chinese did. Purposelessness is natural and naturalness is emptiness. How could I speak about Taoism without talking about emptiness? Purposelessness, naturalness, emptiness--these are the three standards of Taoism.

Naturalness is like the love of a mother for her child. She is not expecting any reward. She enjoys giving and there is no purpose in her giving. Sometimes we use the words benevolence or sympathy or compassion. But these describe attitudes toward outsiders. These attitudes are not as wonderful as the love a mother gives to her child. You may help someone and not expect a return, but it is not the same as when you help your own child. For when you help someone else, you are aware that you are helping, but when you help your own child, you are not aware of it.

And then there is duty. I was in the Japanese army for eight months when I was young. The officer gave orders and I obeyed. Even if he ordered something impossible, I would reply "Yes, sir." His orders had no selfish motive and I obeyed impersonally. But if I were working in a factory and the proprietor took advantage of me for his own purpose and I would have to obey him as a slave, I would not call this duty. There is no Taoism then, no purposelessness, naturalness, or empti-

JUDO AND ZEN

By

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INTRODUCTION

Everybody knows what judo is. This sport has been known in Western countries for many years, and in the United States it became very popular after the Second World War when American soldiers came back from Japan, proudly wearing the black belt, symbol of the expert. However, how many know what it really is? For many, it is a combat sport, like boxing or wrestling, somewhat spectacular. Two opponents, clad in a special outfit, hold each other by the lapel, walk, and suddenly one is projected into the air and falls. For the lay person, this does not mean very much. To be appreciated and understood, judo must be practiced.

Judo is based on the traditional jiu-jitsu or ju-jitsu of the old Japan, "this art of attack and defense with or without weapons." In the old Japan, the samurai used to carry a sword, but since it was not allowed in the presence of dignitaries, he had developed a special art of self-defense. It included hitting with the hands, poking with the fingers, kicking with the knee or with the foot, and bending and twisting the adversary's joints. However, when in 1871 a decree prohibited the samurais from wearing swords altogether and from practicing other martial arts, jiu-jitsu had likewise to be abandoned.

Professor Jigoro Kano, recognizing the great human values in the principles of the declining jiu-jitsu, made a careful study of the various methods in existence. He eliminated all maneuvers aimed at harming the opponent, refined the techniques, and set the rules of fairness and courtesy. In 1882 he had completed a system of chivalrous sport which he offered to teach to those willing to undergo self-discipline and to renounce the use of brutal power. He called it judo, which might be translated by "gentle way," or "art," or "practice," or "principle." As he declared, "The sport I teach, compared with the old jiu-jitsu, has wider aims and differs in technique, so that I might as well give it another name." To his school, Kano gave the name of *Kodokan*, "school to study the way," the meaning of the word "way" being not limited to the meaning of the process, but to the concept of life (Illustrated *Kodokan Judo*, Tokyo, 1955).

Transplanted into countries with different cultures, developing among other well-known combat sports, judo lost its real meaning; it was de-poetized. To adapt it to Western

civilization, following step by step the Japanese educational principles, was an impossible task. Therefore the teaching methods were adapted to the needs of each country. Judo forms, different from those used in Japan, appeared. Master Kawaishi, a student of Professor Kano, who founded the judo schools in Western countries, declared that the aim of the new methods was to give the Occidentals a general idea of the original judo, preserving its real spirit. What then is its real spirit?

PHYSICAL JUDO

Judo is a perfect method of education, physical as well as mental. It requires a serious training. He who wants to practice this sport as it really should be done must be equipped with a great deal of patience, will and perseverance.

Most of the time, the young student who comes to register for the course hopes to learn in a short time how to win over an opponent inevitably and in a wink. This is understandable. Which man does not want to win over an adversary? Which woman does not want to be able to defend herself against an assailant? Yet, there is something more important than to triumph over an opponent. It is to triumph over oneself. Zen tells us, "the best victory that we can have is over ourselves." And once this conquest is obtained, are we not our own masters? To arrive at this mastery of oneself, judo is a way. It might not be the way of everybody, but it is certainly one of the best.

Judo is the application of the principle "maximum of efficiency with minimum of effort." Its motto is: "In yielding is strength." The strength of the opponent is attracted by non-resistance, that is emptiness, a principle dear to the student of Zen, while the attacker's strength is kept for the final victory. One must win over the other by using the other's own strength. Judo being based on equilibrium, the opponent is to be brought into an instable position by a correlation of movements, with a minimum of effort. The use of strength must be excluded for a true *judoka*--one who practices judo--and his techniques must always be of attacking the weak side of his adversary.

The training develops the sense of balance, calm and concentration. Relaxed as far as possible and in contact with himself, the pupil learns to be ready with every muscle when he feels the attack coming, applying his power exactly at the moment of impact and for the shortest possible time. It is not the fighting spirit that is developed by good judo training, and a true *judoka* does not fight, has no desire to fight. But if ever he is forced to do so, he does it completely, with all his heart and body, and always proportioning

his defense to the attack, that is, remaining fair.

The rituals of the *dojo*--the place where judo is practiced--have many features similar to those of the *zendo*. In a real *dojo*, there is an atmosphere of respect and dignity. Silence is the rule. Entering the *dojo*, stepping on the mat for practice alone or with a fellow student, the *judoka* bows. This is not an ordinary salute. It is an expression of respect for others, for the hall which is a hall of culture, and it must be executed with deference and dignity.

MENTAL JUDO

When a student has practiced judo according to the rules, he has developed more than precision, rapidity of reflexes and other qualities of the body. Perseverance, patience, self-control and non-resistance are not purely physical capacities. The student has realized that he cannot keep his suppleness of body if his mind is busy with hostility, jealousy and other petty preoccupations. He has learned to lose or win with impassibility, with *judoshin*. His mind is freed of all fear and shame; he faces his problems with a mental judo, with humility and dignity.

As understandable as it is to be proud to have overcome difficulties during the training in judo, it is not in its real spirit to boast about it. Here again, we are reminded of Zen that does not want us to speak about our achievements, our personality. Egocentricity has no place in either of these two disciplines, nor has pride or arrogance. Judo can lead us towards our aims, for it is based on a universal principle, the rational utilization of energy for a maximum of effectiveness, for the body as well as for the mind. The *judoka's* capabilities are growing as he is keeping all of his energy, physical and mental, for the final goal. Judo must provoke in the personality a kind of new realization. In Paris, where I received my judo training, my teachers put emphasis on the formation of individuals, not champions. They were proud to see the complete transformation of a timid and fearful student into a man facing life with optimism, virility and serenity. Judo, to be a complete art of living, must ensure the progress of the *judoka* on two levels: technical superiority in the combat for life, spiritual superiority for the conquest of inner life. Like Zen, judo asks a great deal of its adepts, and as in Zen, progress is neither uniform nor absolute. Everyone progresses according to his own efforts and possibilities.

Judo, cultivating body and mind, attempts to find equilibrium with oneself and with others. It is a discipline, a philosophy and above all a school to study "the way, the principle."

WAY TO ZEN

Yet, judo training represents only a few steps on the "way." Living in a materialistic world, we will gain much from taking these steps. A Zen Master said that to avoid being the toy of this world of our senses, we must use these same senses as weapons, and we can do this in training our body; for this training, there are the martial arts of which judo is the most powerful. Most beginners bring to the *dojo*, together with their desire to win, their aggressiveness and hostility, their feelings of superiority or inferiority. Open or hidden, these feelings manifest themselves in tenseness, excitement, laughs and refusal of discipline. Those who realize that they will not be able to abide by the rules leave the school after a few sessions. Some of those who remain and accept the challenge study the forms devotedly and strive toward perfection.

Without expecting my judo students to be or become students of Zen, I attempt to make them aware of their immanent capacity that could lead them to the state of calmness, non-ego and might. A few become fully aware of this and express it in clear terms. Others, without grasping the aim of the training, only feel vaguely that it brings them something invaluable. To see the change that operates in all of them, in their relations to others and--most important--to themselves, is gratifying to the teacher. Yet, the resulting mental power and serenity should not be based solely on the physical concept, on the knowledge of bodily capacity. Genuine serenity can only be achieved in a state of no-mind and full liberation of the *aiki*--the deep-seated power that everyone possesses. And no-mind and *aiki* develop best by meditation, the spiritual exercise of true concentration. Therefore, judo combined with meditation will result, better than the sum of both, in self-realization.

ness. Instead, there are strikes and trouble. When law is based on the Tao, everything moves and is natural. Unfortunately, it is theory I am speaking about; today all is changing.

Here I think of the "love" of Christianity. If I were to translate Tao into a Christian term it would be "love." Pure, disinterested, purposeless, natural love is its name in Christianity. It is the love between father and son--that is Tao, too, isn't it? With it the Western world has had its civilization for two thousand years. It is the love of the father, however. He is kind, but it is not the same kindness as that of a mother to her child.

In Buddhism there is Dharma. In one word, we translate Dharma as "Law" or "Religion." But Dharma is nothing but Tao or Love, too. Then there are the Three Bodies: Dharmakaya--the dynamic body, pure fire; Sambhogakaya--the body in a condition of manifested consciousness; Nirmanakaya--harmony, economics. Taoism speaks of these as natural opportunity, advantage of topography (as in casting horoscopes) and the harmony of man. In Buddhism, the "topographical view" has to do with the Buddhas of the four directions. The Buddha of the East is the healer, the master of medicine. In the West is the Buddha of endless life, or light. Why is the Buddha of the East the healer? Because with the night all maladies cease; all agonies and dreams are wiped out at sunrise in the blue sky. All previous karmas are annihilated, giving way to a new birth, new life. In the West, all comes into one element, reaches annihilation, the wisdom of emptiness and non-emptiness. The god of production is in the South.

Buddhism is a religion that arose on the plateau of the Himalayas--so cold and sane and clear! In Japan, it is not natural to take such an ascetic attitude. We could not understand those monks holding their faces in such sad expressions. Japan is natural--like the cherry blossoms--the people cannot take a Hinayanistic attitude as successfully as the people of India.

Religion must be harmonized with topography. In Tibet where the winters are cold and there is little wood, the men sit wrapped in blankets. They do not eat, drink, or shave--they must practice meditation.

Tao is China; Shinto is Japan. What will be the religion of America? This continent has rich soil, good climate, fat horses, and beautiful women. It is very different from the densely populated Europe it imitates in concentrating its people in certain areas. Yet in its vast West there are still open spaces empty except for sagebrush where you can ride for half a day and see only a few cows or prairie chickens.

There is something of the great-heartedness of the Indian in the American people's generosity, their big-heartedness. Tao is already here. Here Christian Love and Chinese Tao meet.

I think of America like this: It could be the meeting ground for the religions of East and West. If Tao can be incorporated into the life of America what a wonderful country it could be.

Reconstructed by V. Coward and M. Farkas from a 1937 lecture.

MIND STUFF We think our Zen sect is the nearest to the Buddha's Buddhism. Our main emphasis is on meditation. As I am the first to bring this teaching to America, I do not put so much emphasis on meditation, but in China and Japan the monks are always meditating. It is the best method of reaching the goal of Buddhism.

What is the result of meditation? What are we aiming at? To give you an answer, I must indicate the central point of Buddhism. This is not an easy task.

Practicing meditation is to observe your mind stuff and to separate it from your mind, to realize that mind stuff is not your real mind. I have spoken many times about mind stuff and the many kinds we can observe: some kinds are like visions, dreams, notions expressed in words, some are feelings like obsessions. These feelings are neither visions nor notions, but Samskara that creates the nature of the moods we put in our minds. We wish to be sad and we are sad. This is affected, not real sadness. You can observe this at funerals; some weep because they feel they must show grief. Many types of mind stuff are described in Buddhist literature. Usually they are thought to fall into three categories. You must separate these from your mind through meditation.

This was a hard task for me in the beginning, but it is now plain and simple. Subconscious mind stuff is hard to handle because it never comes to the surface. In dreams we reach some shallow parts of the subconscious, but the stuff there is so fine, like seeds flowing in water, that it is impossible to annihilate it. In conscious states we can annihilate

much of the mind stuff by the method of realizing the difference between the mind stuff and the mind itself. We can think of the mind as pure fire and the mind stuff as snowflakes dancing in the fire--"scarlet lotus petals dancing in the fire." It is not easy to make even this distinction. At first, you should try to keep the mind stuff out of your present consciousness for a given period of time, perhaps twenty minutes. You will find that the shadowy stuff will come in just as a bat flies through the evening twilight, but you must not allow your attention to follow the stuff or you will forget that you are meditating. The arising thoughts start as smoke, but suddenly the whole city is on fire. Then you become aware and cry, "I was meditating." This is wrestling with mind stuff.

In American life, there is not much time for meditation. You must make time. In the morning, in the evening, even if it is only for a few minutes, take time to find the difference between mind and mind stuff.

Of course, without mind stuff there is no mind. Yet they are two different things. When you know this, you will touch real life, real existence itself. This is the entrance to Buddhism. Without meditation you cannot enter; it is the only method by which you can feel the real current of Buddha-nature.

The Buddha emphasized meditation. Though you can understand through koans, you cannot analyze the metaphors behind these gigantic questions except through meditation. You begin meditation by watching your mind stuff.

But do not think that meditation is Buddhism; it is only a method to open the gate.

gennata

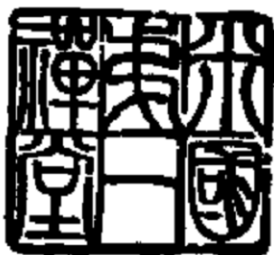
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