

# ZEN NOTES



Rinzai Reed

*These days, students do not know the difference between real and false Dharma. They are like giddy goats that instantly take whatever their noses touch into their mouths. They do not distinguish between master and dependent, nor host and guest. They have gone into the Way for wrong reasons. They cannot bear to go where it is noisy. Do we call someone like this a recluse because he has "left the world" (the householder's life)? He is the really "worldly" one.*

#### SOKEI-AN SAYS

Naga Rajah, the Dragon King, came from the bottom of the sea to offer the Buddha a huge blue stone gong for the Jetavana Vihara. The Buddha built a bell tower for it. Its size can be imagined from the fact that five hundred monks could sit under it at one time to recite sutras. Its vibrations were so marvelous that when sutras were recited beneath it, it resounded to the chanting and recited sutras right along with the monks.

The gong is a symbol of our consciousness, our body, so each temple has a large gong as well as smaller ones.

In its natural condition, a gong vibrates clearly; under unnatural conditions, the vibration is impeded. (Sokei-an covered the gong on his table with his hand, then struck it.) If our consciousness is held back by something--false reasoning, superstition, or circumstances--it is the same as when a gong's vibration is stopped.

Buddhism is very simple. In meditation, our practice is nothing but how to place ourselves on the natural ground of mind as a gong sits on its cushion. We observe how mind naturally functions in us. To understand this,

we have to hold this mind still temporarily to find out how it functions.

The first practice in meditation is: Do not think anything, do not give your mind any force with which to move. Then you will see how your subconscious functions. By holding your mind still for a little while, you allow the subconscious to come up into consciousness. You cannot hold all the small movements of mind still, for they belong to nature, not to you, so you can observe the way mind moves. Next, take your attention off holding your mind still and give reinforcement to the movement of your mind. You will realize that there is no ego, no man's mind. All is nature's movement. Carry this into your daily life, observing how you feel, how you react. This is the way of study in Buddhism. There is nothing else we can do. It is no use to meditate when we do not know what we are doing. In meditation, we learn how our body operates and how our mind operates. We do not think of meanings; meanings are in words rather than in us. Whatever meaning a word carries into your mind is not yourself. All words have one meaning only. One word can transmit all meaning. What is this one word? It is the present.

situation of our mind, so we concentrate to this present attitude of our mind and welcome the words carrying many meanings. Then all words and meanings are just like the sound of the gong. Let it resound, let your brain think many words. The brain is not a word, not a meaning, as the bell is not a sound. But if the mind is not clear, it does not carry the "one meaning."

If you want to know the marvelous work of the mind, you must understand that the present attitude of mind conceives a million meanings at once. When you see another's present attitude of mind, you can read his mind, but only when the attitude of mind is clear as a bell on the cushion. You must keep mind in a healthy condition as you do your body; refrain from all attachment that brings sickness into it. For a little while each day, put yourself into this perfect attitude. Do not beat your mind around from morning to evening. If someone asks you what is Buddhism, what is the practice of Buddhism, there is just one answer--sound a clear bell. The koan is a device to take all attachments from your mind--all superstition and illogical reasoning. Dig to the bottom of the mind, make it bottomless; climb to the highest reasoning and make it topless. You will then know what true Dharma is.

When you know what true Dharma is, you will know how to discriminate between the true and the false. All true religion gives you some sort of idea of purity: "Be pure as the snow," "Be pure as crystal." Some think that all desire is profane, that to smoke, drink, indulge in sex is impure, so to abstain, to become celibate, will

make you pure. But purity is in your mind. You must know all the stages of purity. As a sentient being, you are pure. Do not fall into any superstition. Every student must go through the stage of practice. If you study fencing, you begin fencing with straw dolls, not a real opponent. So the Buddhist student practices how to carry out the teacher's commandments with a pure mind. Devices themselves are not Buddhism, but only to carry you into real understanding through the many stages.

In Japan, some Buddhist abbots put on golden robes and sit upon vermilion chairs, eat no meat, speak no human word, think no human desire, like living Buddhas, but this is not true Dharma. His mind may be just like a layman's if his eye is not open to Reality; wrapped in the five senses, he never sees the real substance of this existence. There are some who cannot even write a letter. Really, they should go back to grammar school, but there they sit! We do not call them masters; they are slaves of ignorance, undertakers just performing funeral services--yet they call themselves Buddhists. Do you think because a man is a patriarch of a great temple, he must be a great monk? Not so. There are not many real teachers today, teachers who have the eye to see the Dharma of Shakyamuni Buddha. It is not easy to meet a real teacher.

*They do not distinguish between master and dependent, nor host and guest.* According to Rinzai's theory, there are four positions (of subject and object, or, as here, master and dependent): The master is in the master's place (position); the master is in the dependent's place; the dependent is in

the dependent's position; the dependent is in the master's place. A master in a master's position is like a wise king on the throne, in the Chinese idiom, "A Dragon in the sun."

But nature hides everything precious--to find a diamond is not so easy. Nature does not produce many precious things; there are not many sages in the world. How many do we know? The Buddha, Christ... Sometimes it takes hundreds of years to convince people of the true position of a great teacher. Even in the Buddha's time, two thirds of the citizens of Shravasti did not even hear his voice proclaiming his Dharma. In that great city of India, only a few listened, and how many really heard? Today, nearly all mankind knows the name of Buddha.

*They have gone into the Way for wrong reasons.* Such people do not enter Buddhism through love of mankind, but are actuated by inferior motives. They hate the "world." Because everything is against their desires, they feel that everything is impure, when nothing is impure but their own minds. All is made of pure earth, fire, and so forth. Such a person puts himself into a temple and cuts off relations with other human beings. He calls himself sacred, but his mind is not sacred as long as he hates the world. He may hide in a grotto, temple, or mountain, but he cannot hide from his own impure mind.

The Buddha entered the Way through love of those in darkness. To enlighten and teach them, free them, he let them know how his mind purely resounded.

*They cannot bear to go where it is noisy.* One may live on a mountain top and be calm there, but if, when he enters the city and meets an insult,

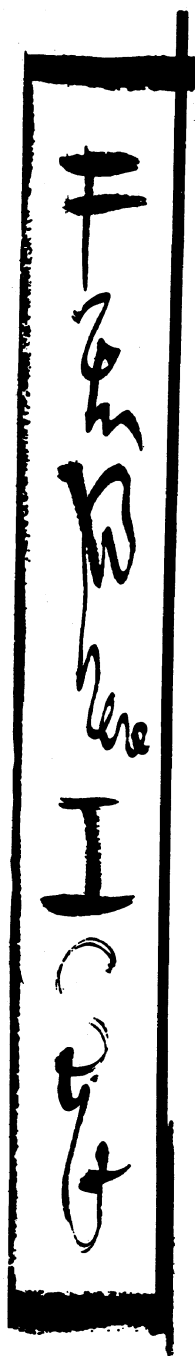
in an instant he has lost his quietude, how can he save others?

*Do we call someone like this a recluse because he has "left the world" (the householder's life)? He is the really "worldly" one.* Rinzai thought that one is not a real recluse when he has renounced just the physical world--as if someone today were to renounce the subway and radio, and all restaurants--but who has not renounced the "world" from his mind. To the real recluse, the mountain top and the bottom of the sea are just one thing; the whole universe is made of one substance. If one is really settled in that substantial understanding, then everything is reduced to one.

But those who run from the sounds of the city are afraid of desire. By suppressing it, they put themselves on the level of desire. If his desire is pure, then in whatever place he stays he is pure and sacred. Though the nature of his mind may change from morning to evening, he himself does not change. He understands the changes in his body and his vibrations in accordance with others. Whatever he may see with the eye, the eye is unstained; and this is so with his consciousness.

RUTH SASAKI'S BIRTHDAY was October 31st. On the cover of Zen Notes is my favorite picture of her, which captures the facet of her personality I found most enjoyable. Taken at Ryosen-an, Kyoto, March, 1951, by an unknown photographer.

Editor



ON READING *ZEN DIARY* by Paul Wienpahl  
by Mary Farkas

I have just finished reading "Zen Diary" by Paul Wienpahl, author of "The Matter of Zen," New York University Press, 1964, and Professor of Philosophy at the University of California.

I became aware of the existence of this book when its publishers, Harper and Row, New York, asked me for the use of a photograph of Zuigan Goto Roshi, formerly used to illustrate my "Kyoto Diary," published in *Zen Notes* after returning from Daitoku-ji, where I too received sanzen from Goto Roshi, in circumstances similar to those described by Professor Wienpahl. (See LK 1964). As I am something of an old hand at observing koans, having begun Zen study with Sokei-an in 1939, and continued it with two other Rinzai roshis as well as Goto Roshi, perhaps a comment from me might be useful.

Professor Wienpahl's report seems accurately remembered and honestly recorded. It presents a convincing picture of his struggle with his mindstuff and Goto Roshi's patient efforts to help him with their tangles.

The thesis of the first chapter is stated in the first sentence: "Western philosophy during the past hundred years seems to be to have consisted in attempts to see through idealism." Descartes, Dewey, Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, James, Heidegger, Mach, and Carnap lead up to Wittgenstein. In conclusion, Wittgenstein is made to indicate that man's problem is a spiritual rather than philosophical one.

(A brisk resume of the course of Eastern philosophy and its relation to "idealism" may be found in encyclopedist Takakusu's "The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy.")

In the introduction to his "Diary" Wienpahl stated that after starting Zen study, "I began to appreciate the fact that philosophical problems are not solved. They can only be dissolved. A man knows all, understands, when he no longer has any questions--not when he has all the answers. The limits of philosophy are mysticism. I'm not there, but I can see the distinction."

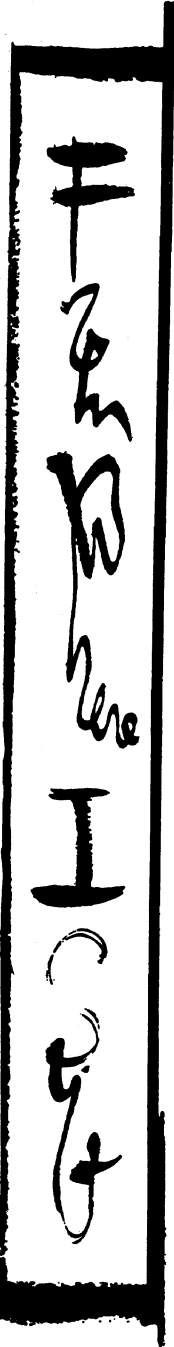
Chapter Two informs us that koan study differs from the methods of the West because of its non-intellectual factors." And the presence of non-intellectual factors is not only a part of the method but itself in a way represents the dissolution of dualism."

The remainder of the book is Wienpahl's report of the way the method of Zen works to dissolve his "dualism," switching him from struggling with philosophical mindstuff to zazen.

The last chapter is a rather useful description of practical matters.

Professor Wienpahl had, correctly, I think, some qualms as to the virtue of exposing his sanzen interviews (on the MU koan) to public gaze. I would personally feel inclined to advise those who might ever expect to observe this koan with a roshi not to read his book until they had either passed this koan or abandoned all hope of undertaking Rinzaï Zen study.

The relating of answers or processes of answering to inexperienced students serves to stultify their reaching for the answer themselves. It is like demonstrating for a child how to use a toy designed to arouse his discovery of its uses. It is also like rushing in with the capping line when a joke is being told. As a major part of jokes is the development of suspense, so observing koans requires having to



overcome the obstacles along the way without any knowledge of their nature.

Goto Roshi was himself a graduate of the Department of Philosophy of the Imperial University of Tokyo and later the President of Rinzai University, so he was, perhaps in all Japan, the roshi best equipped to sympathize and deal with Wienpahl, as with other university professors who studied with him.

More experienced students will smile, kindly, I hope. For, although the answers to koans are logically explainable in their own terms, about which more another time, to approach koans (as is evident in the "Diary") from the point of view of Western reason is probably one of the slowest routes toward passing its first barrier (which Wienpahl did not, at any rate between the covers of this book). Goto Roshi seemingly approached the problem of "teaching" Wienpahl on his own ground as a good bodhisattva should. If, like vaccine, the "medicine" applied brought forth an increase of the symptoms of the disease itself, that would be a normal expectation, similar to the aggravation of neurotic behavior often brought about when psychotherapy is applied. Perhaps other roshis might deal differently with the problem. Thirty blows?

The roshi-Western professor relationship does, of necessity, have a somewhat different atmosphere than that between roshi and eighteen-year-old Japanese novice in a monastery. A tendency toward a "reasonable" approach may well be anticipated. On the other hand, the development of transference phenomena that are a probability when a parental or guru-like attitude prevails is less likely.

The first problem of both roshi and

student is simple verbal communication. There are various possibilities here. 1. When both speak the same language. 2. When neither speaks the language of the other. 3. When the master speaks his and the student's language. 4. When the student speaks both but the master does not. In each of these four situations different problems will predominate.

The second problem is the roshi's giving of the koan to the student when the koan is in a language known to the roshi but not the student. Even if both use the same language this presents some difficulties, dealt with very differently by individual roshis. Let us take, for example, the case where the koan exists in a written form in a traditional collection. The master has several possible ways of dealing with the fact that this may be legitimately unintelligible to the student. Some roshis select koans that are simply stated or translatable. Others alter the statement so as to make it intelligible. Most must give some explanation. The roshis I have met are well aware of the problem. When they rely on their own "intuitive" approach, their ability to convey the most subtle nuances is phenomenal. When they must rely upon interpreters, however, the loss may be great. Although the words of the statement of a koan are not to be clung to, to have them stated in "Japglish" (an expression attributed to Gary Snyder) is a wasteful puzzle. It would be such a great aid to have an annotated English translation prepared by someone who knew what's what.

I remember being given a koan by a roshi (who did not speak English) on which I found five authoritative (by

authoritative I mean by a Zen roshi or professional Zennist who had passed the koan) translations, all differing in fascinating ways. After working on the statement of the koan (not the koan) all night with the aid of a number of Chinese-English and Japanese-English dictionaries, I had still not located some of the critical characters. In the morning, I showed my research to the roshi, who took the attitude that this was undoubtedly due to my lack of ability in looking up characters in dictionaries. When I brought him all the dictionaries and he couldn't find the characters either, he did help me by consulting his own Chinese-Japanese-Buddhist dictionary. I'm not saying this to complain, as I actually enjoyed the challenge, and was driven to exerting my powers more fully by it, but unless you are pretty dogged, the chances of getting an accurate and clear statement of the problem are slim.

When I began Sanzen with Sokei-an thirty years ago I knew nothing of Zen or Buddhism. It was a good proof of the validity of the method, I thought, that with universal mind only, one must grasp it. Otherwise it would be learning rather than awaking, or intuiting. My view of this has not changed. However, the patience and ingenuity it took to dig out even a firm English statement of a koan given orally, privately, and perhaps differently each time, was an experience to test the endurance of a saint. I still remember the first of Sokei-an's lectures I heard in which he was speaking about raveling or leveling something, I never learned which or what.

I had hoped Ruth Sasaki might have time to equip us with the associative

background a professional Western student would do well to cultivate if he plans to undertake Rinzai Zen study, as many metaphorical statements depend on information no Westerner has.

A general knowledge of basic Buddhism would be a great help. The Buddhist doctrines, like that in Joshu's MU (does a dog have Buddha nature or not?) must be either known or pointed out to a Westerner for him to understand the nature of the question asked, as nothing in his experience of Western thinking can clue him in.

Even the most intuitive Westerners reading koan collections and going into ecstasies over the marvelous "meanings" they experience are like persons who cannot read Chinese characters explaining their meanings from an intuitive view. It may well be fun for him and his friends, but to someone who reads the characters, the joke, like trying to explain what is funny about "fractured" French to a Frenchman, is inaccessible.

The greatest difficulty for "reasonable" students is the part of the method that consists of hints, clues, intimations (which, by the way, are often used to lead the "clever" astray).

I was interested in Goto Roshi's statement that passing koans is easier for young girls than for older men. He is not the only one to have noted this. When he was still a student himself, Sokei-an made the same comment to a young girl friend of his back in 1916 or so. She told me he would become angry when he would tell her koans he had passed only after long, arduous struggles and she would grasp them right off. Isn't it possible that this is because fewer young girls have been trained (or attempt) to ap-

*zen notes*

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proach matters such as Zen koans "reasonably" or philosophically? "Subjective and objective, existence or non-existence" don't bother them at all. Intuitional communication is their natural mode, for to function as mothers will require that they be able to receive and transmit "messages" at the unconscious level.

Sokei-an's ability to convey intimations in a non-intellectual way was vividly demonstrated to me on many occasions. Perhaps this can be made clear by a simple example, comparable to the means used to get an idea across employed by a feline genius I once had the privilege to associate with.

After the older and more established members of the Institute had left at meeting time, we "youngers" were invited to remain for "fish-market" sessions on the floor after the chairs had been folded and put away. Sokei-an would then disrobe, that is to say, remove his priest's robe so as not to wrinkle it. But first he would untie his marvelously knotted rope-like belt with, as I recall, silk-tasseled ends. Of course, any cat-person, seeing this tasseled rope, would understand what, at the first of such meetings, I then saw the way I saw it. As he walked past where I was seated Japanese fashion on the floor, he let one tasseled end of the rope drag along the floor in a certain way that one does for cats, though his cat was not present at the time. I realized immediately that this was for me, and in the same instant, had pounced upon it. My reward was a smile. I cannot really describe the elements of my joy in this to you.

The element of playfulness on, the active side, the knowing smile on the

responsive side evoked in Zen study is manifest here. Wit and humor have some connection with it. Hearing with the third ear or using the "miraculous organ" Shakespeare knew are other facets. Magic rides it as a broomstick. A clear demonstration of "becoming" something may be seen at any performance of the incomparable mime Mareel Marceau, who in a recent TV Dick Cavett show said only Zen could "explain" how he could lean on a mantel that wasn't there so convincingly that you could see it.

What is so ponderously described as non-verbal communication training can most conveniently be developed by sensitivity practice with babies or animals. Let me cite a never-to-be forgotten demonstration given me by a mother-pussycat.

Once upon a time I lived in a studio on Sixth Avenue where the heating, janitored by me, was by coal stove that sometimes went out. In the middle of a bitter cold night on which this had happened, I was waked by our Vivien (named for the actress Vivien Leigh, whom we thought she resembled). She perched on my chest, looked me in the eye and tried to convey something mind to mind. I didn't get it. With a hint of impatience in her manner, she turned, leaped off my bed and ran back in the direction of her kittens. A few moments later I heard her slowly returning. Back on my bed, she looked at me severely over a mouthful of kitten which she then deposited on my chest, and was off again, and again, until five furry babies were nested in my bosom. It is true that her message could have been put into words, had we the use of a cat-human dictionary but who needed it?