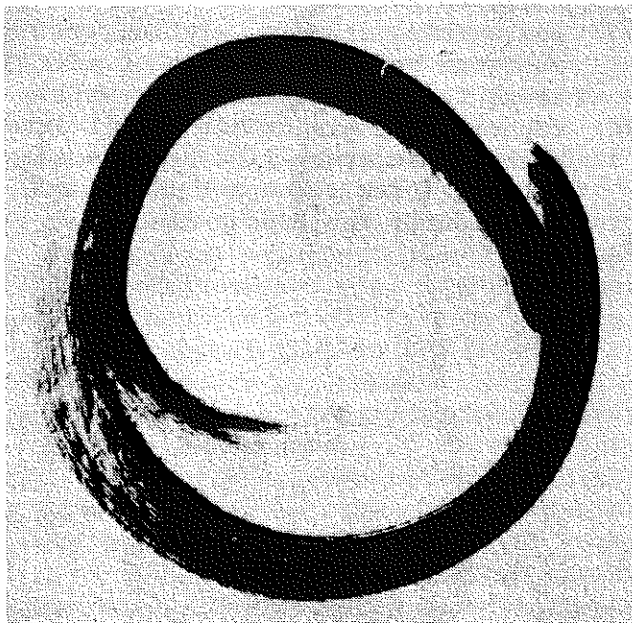


# ZEN NOTES



Circle by Bankei

"The Zen calligrapher uses a circle, the smallest of all images, to reveal the complexities of Buddhism--empty yet full, infinite, luminous, complete."

From Zen and the Art of Calligraphy

"By listening to the voice and observing the movements, an experienced observer is able to discern a person's level of 'Zen-activity.' If one's essence can be expressed in the minor acts of coughing or walking, surely it can be expressed as art. The ultimate nature of Zen practice is revealed as art...one's spirit is etched into the paper...any daily act...cooking, raising children, working with tools or a pen, walking, standing, sitting, lying--can be an instrument of spiritual forging....When a Zen calligrapher pours his or her spirit into each stroke, every line becomes a vibrant force...Zen art is the expression of the Buddha-mind."

Omori Sogen

#### BOOKS NOTED

The question of "Zen art" (Does it exist or does it not?) remains a ticklish one. At one extreme are what might be called the enthusiasts, who maintain that any artwork or performance by a Zen master or "enlightened" practitioner qualifies as Zen art. At the other are the skeptics, who argue that the category is too subjective to be meaningful. While there is art depicting Zen

subjects or created by Zen priests, they say, it has little to do with Zen as such. And this goes for all Zen "arts," including painting, calligraphy, martial arts and the tea ceremony. One leading authority has quipped that "the tea ceremony is to Zen as Bingo is to Catholicism." And a Japanese Buddhologist with long experience in calligraphy once observed that, with a few notable exceptions, Japanese Zen calligraphy was generally inferior in execution, lacking in both strength and fluidity.

Without attempting to enter the debate, I would simply like to mention an attractive paperbound volume of the enthusiast variety issued last year by Routledge and Kegan Paul: *Zen and the Art of Calligraphy: the Essence of sho* (196 pp., \$13.95). Its authors are the Zen Master Omori Sogen, a former President of Hanazono University who is also an expert in calligraphy and the martial arts, and Omori's disciple Terayama Katsujo, whose background is similar to his teacher's. The book contains several discussions of calligraphy and Zen, but its real appeal lies in its numerous examples of brushwork by Japanese Zennists. Brief descriptions accompany each illustration, and the Chinese characters of the inscriptions --often difficult for even trained readers to decipher--have been written out clearly in the margins, together with their "kambun" reading in classical Japanese and an English translation, features useful for students of calligraphy and Japanese. Among the well-known figures whose brushwork is represented here are Daito, Ikkyu, Musashi, Bankei, Hakuin and Sengai; but there are others such as the seventeenth-century eccentric Soto priest-painter Fugai Ekun and the nineteenth-century Shingon master Jiun Sonja whose striking individual styles are probably less familiar to American audiences. Biographical sketches of each artist are supplied at the end of the book, which has been smoothly translated by John Stevens, an aikido instructor and calligrapher residing in Japan.

--Haskel

THE GREAT SIXTH PATRIARCH'S TEACHING  
Chapter IV, 10

*Virtuous friends, it is its own intrinsic nature that tatha-bhutatahata manifests as mind. It possesses the six roots: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and knowing. But it is not stained by all the environments. Thus tatha-bhutatahata never has restrained its own freedom by any fixed rules. In the sutra, therefore, it is said that it has the intuition to know all the existences in the first law, and there is not the slightest evidence of any root of motion.*

SOKEI-AN SAYS

The word *tatha-bhutatahata* is very important in Buddhism. Dr. Suzuki translated this in the early days of his work as "Suchness." We understand that there is no such word in the English language. There is the word "Isness," but this is more likely existence itself. *Tatha-bhutatahata* is that which exists as it is. *Bhuta*, in Sanskrit, means "this exists." So *Bhuta* is existence. *Tatha* means "that." So the nearest translation for *tatha-bhutatahata* is "that existence."

When I hold up a glass filled with water, this is water; but when a human being looks at it, it is not true existence because the human being blends his looking with the five senses. If you take color, form, taste, smell and touch from this object, then it exists as it is. What is it?

In the first koan, "Before father and mother, what were you?", the original aspect is that which is not blended with your five senses. We have never seen the original aspect except through notion, emotion, reason and philosophy, which are to us identified with the thing itself. When you do this, it is not the thing itself. But if you stand yourself in it, all your five senses are included in it. Then it is not abstract but concrete. Later, I will explain how to get the answer to your first koan in your practice of *zazen*. A philosophical conclusion is not identification with the real answer. The real answer does not need any symbol or word; it is the thing itself.

It was told that an artist in New Jersey tried to make the sound of a drop of water falling on a board. He tried with a drum, a piano, but he could not make the sound of water. So he asked the janitor's boy, Johnny, to do it. The boy came, looked and said: "Where is the board?" There was no board so he ran out and brought one, dropping the water on it. The artist had tried to make a sound like the real one, but Johnny went back to the real sound. The only way to do it is to make the sound itself.

Tatha-bhutatahata is like God or human beings; it possesses six roots, the five senses, plus one more which is the brain.

*It is its own intrinsic nature that tatha-bhutatahata manifests as mind. It possesses the six roots: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and knowing. This is an important part--the five senses and one more within the brain.*

The Christian always blames the Buddhist for worshipping a theory, a dry doctrine, while the Christian worships a personal God. They say that the Buddhist worships a philosophical conclusion. They believe that God has attributes like you and me--hate, love and so on--while the Buddhist worships the ultimate conclusion. This is a Christian theory because the Christian has never understood anything about real Buddhism. It is as if one reached conclusions about Japan without ever having been there.

From the Buddhist standpoint, God does not look like us. We don't ask God to have five fingers, eyes, nose, etc. In our conception, God has one thousand eyes, one thousand arms, and one thousand feet; and one thousand eyes on the tip of each finger and the tip of each toe. This is, of course, our conception of God if he is personified as an image.

This idea of tatha-bhutatahata was used by Asvaghosha, a great Patriarch, who lived in Bactria about five hundred years after the Buddha's death. It was used in the Greek colonies in his time. The Greek power has faded, but the influence of the Bactrians is still existing in India and Greece. The Buddhism that was born there was a Greek style of Buddhism, just as its sculpture shows a mixture of

Hindu and Greek.

Tatha-bhutathata manifests as six roots--the five senses and mind. From the Buddha's standpoint, we are a universe. This is a microcosm and a universe is contained in it. But, from the Christian standpoint, man is like God and God is like man. However, this is just using words and the essential thought can be the same; just a different standpoint.

*But it is not stained by all the environments.* When one's eye sees the color red, the eye is not stained. When one hears a loud sound, the ear is not made noisy. Nor do obnoxious odors stain the nose. These impressions pass away like the moon-print in the water. It shines beautifully, but we cannot catch it; there is no moon in the water. All the five senses are like water that keeps the images of the outside but cannot be stained by them, so they always remain pure. All our anxieties and worries are like waves, like shadows that pass over the clear water and fade away, mirrored but not held. It is like the gong that produces a sound which fades as we listen. If you know this, you need not suffer so much, for you can change your way of life and adapt yourself to your environment. Then you will find freedom of mind.

I thought I could not stand it, could not stay here--but in ten or twenty days, I got out of it.

When I sent my wife and children to Japan I was very sad. Behind every bush-top I kept seeing the face of my little boy. Everywhere I turned, he was there; it was very hard.

*Thus tatha-bhutathata never has restrained its own freedom by any fixed rules.* You carry all your furniture to the roof when a flood comes into the house, but when the flood goes away, you do not leave the furniture on the housetop; you carry it down. We don't need to make any fixed law. Time changes everything. Therefore, we make laws according to time, place and condition.

*In the sutra, therefore, it is said that it has the intuition to know all the exist-*

ences in the first law and there is not even the slightest evidence of any root of motion. This "first law," you must understand, is Dharmakaya. The second law is the law of your consciousness, as if it stands in the sky--like heat, light, sound--carried in all directions. It is space and time, south and north, east and west, top and bottom at once. I strike the gong and it sounds all over, every moment in each place. The third law is like a one-way street in New York. You can go in one direction only. If this Tatha-bhutatata comes into the third law, it comes into the body of a woman, a man, a rooster or a snake, and it can make only its own particular sound. The body is limited in its expression by its form and function.

There is no need to talk about the first law because, if we find anything to say about it, it is not the first law.

The second law can be experienced as our own consciousness. Although we cannot talk about the first law, our consciousness knows what it is and calls it "intuition." It is intellectual intuition. There are two kinds of intuition: Sensuous intuition--seeing, hearing, and so on, without any previous experience of eye or ear. Sight and hearing are intrinsic to human beings, receiving impressions from outside. Intellectual intuition is intuitive to things that we cannot perceive through our five senses.

In Buddhism there are two sorts of Sambhogakaya: One, which is consciousness, proves to one's self, and the other, or second, proves to another. To prove to one's self means by one's own exertion; to prove to another means to see all this as ourselves. When this intuition knows about the first law, it does not make any mental motion. If there is any motion, a word in your brain in meditation, it is no longer the first law. Intuition is the intrinsic faculty of our consciousness--not feeling. This falls into the German idea of intuition, but we are not following German philosophy. The Buddha taught

this twenty-five hundred years ago. I wonder if the Germans ever heard about this or had some Hindu teacher--just as Dr. Carus expressed his knowledge of Buddhism, but suppressed the name of young Dr. Suzuki who helped him very much.

The first, second and third laws--we have all these in our consciousness, but we do not use them.

JOSHU SASAKI ROSHI SAYS

Noted by John Storm

In all religions there is the idea of the absolute as creator of the world. Now, we as human beings were made by this same God just like pine trees or cats, but why do we differ, then, from pine trees or cats? Buddhism says that because a rock, a dog, a cat, a pine tree, a mosquito, are all made by God, they are one, they are in a state of equality. If everything is in a state of equality, why are there distinctions? This is a very difficult question. If God, by act of will, said, "You're going to be a rock, you're going to be a pine tree, you be a rich person, you be a deformed person"--if God acted from will--then he would indeed be a tyrannical God. I don't think you would like to listen to the commands of a tyrannical Buddha like that. Before Buddha's time, there had been these teachings in India about Brahma creating the world through will, but Buddha Shakyamuni couldn't relate to them. They didn't make sense to him. He came to the conclusion that although as human beings we tend to personify the process that brings the myriad things into existence and look upon it as having will, in fact that process is a mere process, simply a process. And this process, which proceeds without any personification, which has no will, which is not God, which is not Buddha, he referred to as the activity of Dharma. As this totally spontaneous, natural, will-less, unpersonified activity acts forth, this world of distinctions--these myriad things--comes into existence.

*zen notes*

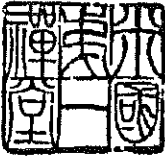
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113 East 30th St., New York, NY 10016

Vol. XXXI, No. 7, July, 1984  
Mary Farkas, Editor  
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