

ZEN NOTES



Satiric scroll by the 12th-century priest-painter Toba Sojo

BOOK NOTED by John Storm

The great Zen masters seem to fall into two broad categories as teachers. There are the hard drivers, those who demand an intense struggle to gain realization, an all-out charge right up the face of the mountain. And there are the easy-does-it types, those who insist that all we need to do--all of us being on the mountaintop already, as it were, though unaware of it--is stop interfering with the natural workings of the True Self. Bankei Yotaku (1622-1693) definitely belongs in the second category.

Speaking in "Bankei Zen," an excellent new translation from the Bankei record by Peter Haskel (Grove Press, 1984, \$8.95), Bankei tells some young people, "Without struggling as I did, you can attain full realization of the Dharma." Just abide in the Unborn Buddha Mind, he says over and over again in his teachings, and without any special effort everything will be managed perfectly. "When you abide in the Buddha Mind and don't become deluded, then without looking for enlightenment outside, you'll just sit in the Buddha Mind, just sleep in the Buddha Mind, just get up in the Buddha Mind--just abiding in the Buddha Mind, so that in all your ordinary activities you function as a living Buddha. There's really nothing to it."

Regular readers of "Zen Notes" may be familiar with some of the material in "Bankei Zen." Haskel is a long-time member of The First Zen Institute, and over the years, as his translation progressed, parts of it have appeared in the Institute's publication. Haskel, who is finishing a Ph.D. degree in Columbia University's Dept. of East Asian Languages and Cultures, dedicates the book to his late teacher and editor, Yoshito Hakeda, who died two years ago after the translation was completed. Hakeda, a Shin-gon priest and a scholar of Buddhism, "spoke directly with the masters of long ago," Haskel says, "and taught me to listen." (For more on Hakeda, see "Zen Notes," v. XXX, 10.)

Bankei has an unmistakable "voice." Clear, confident, unpretentious, directly to the point, it comes through distinctly in such otherwise differing translations as those by D.T. Suzuki in "Living by

Zen" (Rider and Co., 1950), by Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto in "Zen Poems, Prayers, Sermons, Anecdotes, Interviews" (Swallow Press, 1981) and by Norman Waddell in his new book "The Unborn" (North Point Press, 1984, \$11.25). in "Bankei Zen," one can almost hear the old man speaking. In slowly unfolding periods of colloquial yet dignified language, he preaches his message of reliance on the Unborn to one and all--lay people as well as monks, women as well as men, the poor, the illiterate and the outcast as well as merchants, samurai and aristocrats.

Discussing students' efforts to quiet their minds, he says: "It's as if you were pursuing something that's running away. As long as you deliberately try to stop your rising thoughts, the thought of trying to stop them wars against the continually rising thoughts themselves, and there's never an end to it... 'Well,' you may wonder, 'then what can I do to stop them?' Even if, suddenly, despite yourself and wholly unawares, rage or anger should appear, or thoughts of clinging or craving arise, just let them come--don't develop them any further, don't attach to them. Without concerning yourself about whether to stop your rising thoughts or not to stop them, just don't bother with them, and then there's nothing else they can do *but* stop. You can't have an argument with the fence if you're standing there all alone! When there's no one there to fight with, things can't help but simply come to an end of themselves. Even when all sorts of thoughts do crop up, it's only for the time being while they arise. So, just like little children of three or four who are busy at play, when you don't continue holding onto those thoughts and don't cling to any (particular) thoughts, whether they're happy or sad, not thinking about whether to stop or not to stop them--why, that's nothing else but abiding in the Unborn Buddha Mind."

Elsewhere, Bankei assures his followers they don't have to strain to be intelligent: "I tell my students and those of you coming regularly here to the temple: 'Be stupid!' Because you've got the dynamic function of the marvelously illuminating Buddha Mind, even if you get rid of discriminative under-

standing, you won't be foolish. So, all of you, from here on, be stupid! Even if you're stupid, when you're hungry, you'll ask for something to eat, when you're thirsty, you'll ask for some tea; when it gets warm, you'll put on thin, light clothes, and when it's cold, you'll put on more clothes. As far as your activities of today are concerned, you're not lacking a thing!"

And on the struggle for enlightenment, Bankei has this to say to a newly arrived monk: "To take the attitude that, having come all this way, you want to be sure and realize buddhahood now as quickly as you can is to be deluded by your consuming desire for buddhahood. This may seem like something perfectly fine and admirable, but it is, in fact, deluded. When it comes to me, I never even quote the words of the buddhas and patriarchs in the sutras and records. And if you want to know why, it's because I can manage perfectly dealing with people's own selves, so that's all I talk to them about. Your wanting to realize buddhahood as quickly as you can is useless to begin with. Since the Buddha Mind you have from your parents is unborn and marvelously illuminating, before even a single thought is produced, all things are recognized and distinguished without resorting to any cleverness. Without attaching to (notions) of 'enlightened' or 'deluded,' just remain in the state where all things are recognized and distinguished. Let things take care of themselves, and whatever comes along will be smoothly managed--whether you like it or not."



IN MEMORIAM

*Talk delivered at the Memorial Service for
Prof. Yoshida Hakeda, held at St. Paul's
Chapel, Columbia University, October, 1983*

My name is Peter Haskel and I was a graduate student working for many years under Professor Hakeda. I can't help thinking that if sensei could see everyone gathered here like this today, it would bring a smile to his face. Those of us who knew sensei will remember that he tended to avoid formal or ceremonial occasions, and I am sure that the idea of a tribute to himself would have made him laugh and shake his head. In many ways, sensei was the most unassuming person I have ever known. In spite of his extraordinary gifts and accomplishments, he was always absolutely plain, absolutely direct. But even though sensei never advertised himself, people found out about him, and he had a steady stream of visitors from every corner of the globe. The result was that, during my years with sensei, I had the chance to see him in action with all sorts of people: there were eminent scholars and professors, mingled with occasional cranks, young Buddhist monks still wet behind the ears, visiting Zen masters, and, of course, there were students of every variety: some brilliant, some less than brilliant; there were others like myself who appeared in sensei's doorway and confidently announced they were specializing in Japanese Buddhism, without knowing a single word of Japanese; there was even a bum who invaded a restaurant where sensei and I were having lunch and tried to sell sensei a suit of clothes he had found, much to sensei's amusement. What I couldn't help noticing was that, with all these people, sensei's manner was exactly the same--he was always gracious, always relaxed, always totally himself. It wasn't that he was unaware of the differences between people or of people's failings--he assessed these very shrewdly. But he had a strong sense of compassion, and he never lost his wonderful sense of humor. I suppose the only thing that sensei really found objectionable was any display of arrogance or pretentiousness. One of his favorite paintings was a famous satiric scroll by the Medieval Japanese artist-monk Toba Sojo, which depicts various kinds of animals

impersonating generals, monks, courtiers and court-
esans. One scene in particular comes to mind in which
a large, self-important toad, dressed as a Buddhist
abbot, sits in meditation while a rabbit fans him
with a huge banana leaf and several prostrate mon-
keys burn incense at his feet. This painting became
a kind of shorthand with sensei, and whenever he
would encounter some particularly egregious example
of human folly or pretense, he would wink at me and
say: "Ah, Toba Sojo!"

When I think of sensei, I generally picture him
in his office in Kent Hall. Sensei's office was
quite distinctive. Like many other faculty offices,
it was lined with long rows of bookshelves, except
that in sensei's case, the shelves were completely
bare. Not a single book. There was an old copy of
Kenkyusha's Japanese-English Dictionary lying on
his desk, but it had long ago been torn in two and
the pages were falling out. Sensei kept it there for
his students. I never knew sensei to consult a dic-
tionary during the entire time I was with him. Some-
how, mysteriously, all the knowledge was there,
inside him. His approach to translation was basic-
ally intuitive. If a problem came up, he would sim-
ply re-read the passage, close his eyes for a few
moments, and then suddenly present us with the sol-
ution. Translating was a bit like enlightenment, he
said. Either you got it all at once, or you missed
the boat completely.

In a way, I always thought of sensei's office as
being like Vimalakirti's room, which, though rela-
tively small, was able to contain an infinite number
of beings from every corner of the universe. Besides
the constant parade of men and women who beat a
path to sensei's door, the office was always peopled
for me by the intangible presence of the masters of
long ago whom sensei had the marvelous ability to
bring to life--Bankei, Kukai, Myoe, Lin-chi and
countless others. These were sensei's heroes. What
mattered, he felt, was not simply to *study* these
figures, but to meet them, face to face.

In other respects, I always thought of sensei as
being very much like Vimalakirti, a bodhisattva,
living in the world and dedicated to helping others.
The bodhisattva is often said to regard himself as

the mother and father of all sentient beings. Sensei's giving of himself to those of us who were his students was no different--it was complete, cheerful and absolutely natural. In Zen, they have a saying to the effect that the only way one can truly repay a teacher's kindness is to surpass him. In my case, I'm afraid that's impossible. But even so, sensei, I would like to say to you, thank you for everything.

MORE RAT NEWS
by John Storm

A crowd was gathering under the canopy of an apartment building on Park Avenue one day not long ago, and I stopped to see what was going on. One of the doormen, his hands buried in big rubber gloves, was trying to stuff a furry, gray-brown corpse into a makeshift plastic bag, and to his extreme disgust, was finding that the bag wasn't big enough for the job.

A rat, I thought, a Park Avenue rat, an upper-middle-class, affluent rat accustomed to elegant parquet floors, a separate dining room, a fireplace stocked with Vermont logs, maybe even servants' quarters. I caught the eye of a tense, resolute-looking woman who was standing next to me and said, "They have no respect, do they?"

"What are you talking about?" she said.

"The rats," I said. "Rich or poor, it's all the same to them. This one was going right in the front door."

"That's not a rat," she snapped. "I manage this building and that's a mouse!"

"A mouse?" I said. "A one-foot-long mouse?"

She glared at me as if I were trying to subvert her way of life and turned to the doorman, who was now struggling to tuck away a long, stringy, very unmouse-like tail. "Can't you hurry that up?" she said. "This is turning into street theater."

Another woman, who had just emerged from the lobby of the building, leaned over toward me confidentially and said in a low voice, "Of course it's a rat, Dear, but we don't call them that. I call them minks, myself. Isn't that appropriate? And that's the third one I've seen this month."

THE GREAT SIXTH PATRIARCH'S TEACHING
Chapter VI,7

What is that which is called the conversion of one's own nature to enlightenment? It is that you convert the sentient beings--the wrong view, the affliction and the ignorance within your mind--by your true view toward the true law. When you attain the true view, you, every one of you, convert these beings--the wrong view, the affliction and the ignorance within your mind--by destroying them with your prajna. Wrong view to true view, delusion to enlightenment, ignorance to knowledge, and evil to virtue. You must convert. This is called true conversion.

"Worldly desires are endless. I take a vow to bring them to an end," is that you abolish your erroneous thoughts and useless imagination with your innate prajna.

SOKEI-AN SAYS

This chapter of confession in this Record is a very long part of it. In the early period of Zen, Zen monks lived in the Ritsu school, the school of Commandment. Still today there is a Ritsu sect. Through these commandments, you could enter into Buddhism just as the Zen monk, practicing meditation, enters Buddhism. In that period, the monks were practicing meditation, observing the commandments, and discoursing philosophically; all these approaches to Buddhism were existing at the same time. But later, monks practiced one part in particular, some practicing the commandments and others practicing meditation. In the early period of Zen, the monks lived in the temple of the Commandment school. So while Rinzai and Obaku did not speak much about the commandments, the Sixth Patriarch spoke about them very carefully.

*What is that which is called the conversion of one's own nature to enlightenment? It is that you convert the sentient beings--the wrong view, the affliction, and the ignorance within your mind--by your true view toward the true law. This true view, in Sanskrit *samyak drishti*, is part of the Eightfold Noble Path: true view, true goal,*

true speech, true action, true living, true effort, true mindfulness, true contemplation. True view is the most important one. By sanzen, you are trying to attain this true view of Buddhism. If you try to make a view in some term, your view is not true. If you say that the universe was created by God, you are not taking a true view. For a true Buddhist, this is not realistic. From the original standpoint, there is no universe, no such existence, no creation, no becoming, and there is no God because there is no consciousness. Of course, this original view is not the human standpoint. Then why do we call this a view? Because there is nothing to talk about--and "nothing to talk about" is a view, as explained in last week's lecture.

When there is nothing to talk about and nothing to think about, it is a true view. Funny, isn't it? Then how do you express it? Rinzai expressed it with a shout, Tokusan expressed it with a stick, and Gutei expressed it with a finger. I think that in sanzen, day by day, the true view becomes deeper and broader.

If you try to grasp this true view by discourse, by reading, or by thinking, it is in vain. This is particularly Buddhist. If you wish to grasp this true view, you had better try immediately--in this very moment. Otherwise, you must practice meditation for a long time.

When you attain the true view, you, every one of you, convert these beings--the wrong view, the affliction and the ignorance within your mind. The "wrong view" is not only one, but many; each word is a wrong view and affliction. From morning to evening your mind is not easy; there is always something affecting your consciousness, and you cannot get out of it.

There is a koan: "If you meet a giant raksha (dragon) that catches you and flings you around the universe, throwing you into hell-fire---at that moment, how do you observe the commandments?" A good koan! Through this koan, you will really grasp the true foundation of the commandments.

I realized this when I joined the army in the Russo-Japanese war. We were marching under a shower of fire. My comrades on the left and right were

falling down. There was no hope left and it was a piercing moment! I thought, "How can I observe my commandment at this moment?" At such a moment, affliction is nothing at all: hatred, anxiety, anger, love, joy mean nothing. If you come to the true foundation of the commandments, the battle-field is a good experience for everyone. To the conscientious one, the experience of war is a wonderful teaching; to the depraved one, it means nothing.

"Ignorance" here means ignorance of the law of the universe. Had I been taught this in my youth, perhaps I could have escaped the horse-whip of karma. But no one taught me the real law. Later, I learned the three types of commandment:

1. The commandment based on the true foundation of human life. It is the universe--all sentient beings.

2. The natural consciousness of the human being. Normal human beings have this by nature.

3. The commandment of agreement between human beings--for instance, that you shall not go to church on Sunday morning in your bathing suit. You shall not eat garlic before entering the temple. It is not quite natural to human beings, but the Buddha made this law, for with that odor of garlic, both men and devas will run from you, turn their backs and run away.

When I was ignorant, I felt many times that men and devas were against me. I did not know what I was doing: it was not clear and seemed to be imposed. "You must do this--you cannot do that." For thirty years I was making that karma. I asked my teacher, who said: "Find out by your own exertion. If I told you, you would not believe."

So when you, every one of you, attain that true view, you will convert these beings--the wrong view, the affliction and the ignorance within your mind.

By destroying them with your prajna. Prajna means "true wisdom." Manjushri, the god of intrinsic wisdom, holds a diamond sword in his hand to destroy all wrong views, afflictions and ignorance. Manjushri means Dharmakaya wisdom.

When you come in for sanzen and have answered two or three koans, you will think that you have

attained Dharmakaya. I thought so, too! The first time I went back to Japan and met my teacher, after years of separation, I said: "Perhaps I can teach my students Dharmakaya." My teacher said nothing, but smiled, and I suddenly realized that I didn't know anything about Dharmakaya and must go all over it again. Hopeless moment! Each time you pass that period, your knowledge will become deeper. When you pass that gate, your wisdom will be clear. It is said in the Paramita Sutras: "If you try to see Buddha with your eyes or try to hear Buddha with your ears, you cannot find Buddha." Truly, Bhutata-thata can be found only with prajna--in terms of the German philosophers, "intellectual intuition." Perhaps this is empirical or transcendental. Prajna is the diamond wisdom, the superior wisdom. With it you can see the Dharmakaya.

Occasionally, people ask a question of me: "If when you step out of the mirror and there is no reflection, how can you see anything?" This is a good question that only students will understand.

Wrong view to true view, delusion to enlightenment, ignorance to knowledge, and evil to virtue. You must convert. This is called true conversion. I do not accept such conversion! When you go to a Shingon temple, the priest will drop water on your head, or on the head of an infant seven days after birth, saying: "Ya-a-ah!" Then he will say: "You are converted." Such religion is like opium and must be annihilated; it is good for nothing.

I was born the son of a Shinto priest and I saw enough of such religion. I did not believe in it from the first day. I knew that human prayer, through the human throat, cannot be heard by God, but that the prayer which can be heard is the daily life.

I knew this when I was five years old, a true child. When I was fifteen, my father was dying and my mother sent for some sacred water. To that day, I had believed it was sacred--but that day, NO! It was old water, stale with many dusts in it; from being surrounded by God, the gate was closed to me. Perhaps it was because of this, that when I was twenty, I came to Zen. In Zen I found God again.

"Worldly desires are endless. I take a vow to bring them to an end," is that you abolish your

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erroneous thoughts and useless imagination with your innate prajna. We are reciting this every night at the close of the lecture. But these worldly desires will come and come; you cannot entirely destroy them. But when you reach asrava (the state of no-leakage), that is the true end.

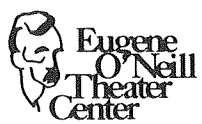
I read in a book that a traveller asked the way over a mountain and finally came to a monastery. He asked: "Is this the end of the road?" "No, go over the mountain." He followed a narrow way over a little mountain. "Is this the end of the road?" "No." Then he went to the edge of a cliff--nothing there but the sky!

To the little wood-worm, eating wood inside the tree, as we breathe air, the tree is the universe. He eats the wood and makes dung of the wood, and when he comes out to the sun, that is the end of him.

It is the same with us. You who are taking sanzen, I will tell you when you come to the end. Then, whatever comes to you, don't worry.

Without this joy, this enlightenment, human life is ashes; it has no meaning at all.

I am within the door of dharmakaya thirty-five years now.



A FOOL'S STORY

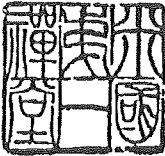
It's perfect heaven here. Work is full. This A.M. I stood on a narrow wooden bridge next to the sea. I stared down at a still stream through the reeds. Suddenly ripples! A little animal paddled towards me. Its bright eyes caught the sun. Its clean fur glisten-

ed. Its body gracefully gliding. I felt deeply moved by its consuming beauty and effortless concentration. I felt...gratitude. Suddenly it swam near me--our eyes met--my reverie ended. It was a rat!

Aha!
I'm still laughing... and thinking of you.
With Love,
Valeria

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