

ZEN NOTES



THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

SIXTY-NINTH LECTURE

Wednesday January 24th, 1940

"O Obedient One! If all the Bodhisattvas realize Pure and Perfect Awakening with this purely awakened mind, they will become aware of the fact that the conscious mind, the roots of the senses and the objective impurities consist of illusory phenomena. They annihilate that which is illusory by evoking illusions. By manifesting illusory phenomena, the Bodhisattvas enlighten the illusory minds of sentient beings. By realizing what is illusory, sentient beings discover great compassion in their own natures and attain lightness of mind. All Bodhisattvas begin their practice according to this Upaya and increase their attainment step by step in compassion and wisdom. This observer of illusion is not the same as the illusion observed. If the observation were not different from the illusion, the observation would be illusion also. Thus they release themselves from illusory forms forever!

This is the Bodhisattvas' marvelous practice by which they complete their awakening, just as the earth sends forth a seedling. This Upaya is called Samapati."

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

The Buddha told Tejovatisvara that there are in the end three types of religious practice. Each sentient being will attain enlightenment according to his own nature by one of these practices.

The first type is to keep the mind quiet and pure in order to discover their original consciousness, which is like a mirror. We practice meditation in our endeavor to find our original nature. Vijyana can be translated as consciousness. Sometimes it is just perception but when we say consciousness, it is instinct. "Instinctive mirror!" And when we say wisdom, it is "Enlightened mirror." Human beings have this mirror within them but we use it without knowing it, just as cats and dogs use their tails. Sometimes when a cat pursues its tail we wonder whether he knows it or not.

When we speak of consciousness, someone may ask, "What is consciousness?" Well, you will not find the answer in the dictionary! We must come back to meditation to find what consciousness

really is. This is the first step to enter Buddhism; to find this original consciousness. Of course this existence itself is the consciousness. This glass of water, this is consciousness!

This was a very important problem to ancient people, but in these days, the science of light and optics will explain it to you if you will take the trouble to look into it. Color is the vibration of ether, of consciousness, as it strikes the retina of the eye. Therefore color is not in the object; objectively speaking, that is not red, black, or green. Then what is it? Your philosopher will call it noumena; and if you ask him what noumena is, he will answer, "That which cannot be seen, heard, cannot be proved by the senses." Then you will ask, "How, then, can anyone know it?" He will say, "By intuition." But everyone misunderstands this intuition; they think it is some marvelous thing. No! Through intuition you will realize noumena.

And then we meditate upon the ear. When we hear the sound of the gong, we listen as it disappears into oblivion, it passes away like the wind. It appears in time and it goes away with time. When you listen to this sound you feel time, but when the sound ceases, you discover yourself in a timeless state. When the sound ceases, your mind should come immediately into a timeless state.

In a sense, you conquer space and time by meditating on eye and ear.

Then you meditate on Samapati, thoughts. At first it seems like a hurricane, a tornado, an earthquake it sweeps you away. And when it goes—"I lost my temper—how foolish!"

Next you meditate upon man's consciousness, and then upon Alaya consciousness. It is all our body, this body! Each pore of the skin is consciousness.

There is a Tibetan God which has eyes everywhere, in the finger-tips, toes, the soles of the feet.

You must clean up the illusory impurities of your mind, misconceptions of your conscious and subconscious mind. In Buddhism, these are called *rajas*; in Chinese, dusts. When you wipe off these dusts, you will find your original mind, the shining mirror. You do not need to close your eyes, you are not going anywhere. Closing or opening the eyes doesn't make any difference in the nature of your consciousness; it is not existing inside or outside, it is here! (strikes breast) Your whole body from the tip of your toes to the top of your head is this! The artist represents this by carving a million eyes to express the omnipotent, omnipresent knowledge that the image represents. When a Westerner sees this—"Dreadful

image, isn't it? These Orientals must be savages!"

I have spoken of the first method to find the pure consciousness. This is the second, *samapati*. It is not cleaning out the illusory state immediately; you find original consciousness by unraveling the complete history of phenomenal appearances; it is then that you awaken "immediately."

I know a mountain where there is a little hut made by two monks who come to meditate for a month or two and then go away. The hut is made of weeds and bamboo. You go there, untie the door of weeds, and you say: "Now we will find the mountain!" You annihilate your eye and ear, reduce everything to the original state. It seems as if you have entered Nirvana; you haven't, but through the annihilation of sight, sound, and thoughts, you imagine that this is Nirvana. It is not the true way. It is just a beginning, the first type of practice.

Another traveler will come and find the little hut of weeds and bamboo. Without destroying or suppressing anything he will sit down and realize that there is no beginning and no end. This is the second and better type.

The third type, *dhyana*, is the highest. "Do not speak of transcendentalism, just sit down, that is all." Why sit down? "So that I may dance!" A monk of this type went through Japan dancing, with a little drum. He made his own sect while other Buddhists were meditating. He had discovered that it isn't necessary to meditate; he had come to the end of thinking, and he began to dance. Of course his followers did not understand, they thought he was just dancing. This is hard to grasp. I must sympathize with his followers, but for those who can understand this type of religion it will be a genuine religion.

Well, I have given much introduction to my lecture tonight, and I have almost exhausted my time, so I will give a short commentary.

"O Obedient One! If all Bodhisattvas realize Pure and Perfect Awakening—with this purely awakened mind, they will become aware of the fact that the conscious mind, the roots of the senses (Indriyana) and the objective impurities consist of illusory phenomena." —When you understand this, you will understand awakening. You do not realize that you are in an intoxicated state. It is as when your father comes home intoxicated: "O father, you are drunk!" "No, my child, I am sober!" So you, believing that you see this illusory world, are intoxicated. One who goes insane is taken to a hospital; but when you are deluded by this phenomena you are not very far from insanity.

"They annihilate that which is illusory by evoking illusions. By manifesting illusory phenomena, the Bodhisattvas enlighten the illusory minds of sentient beings." —They make mandalas, create many consciousness! Why do they create so many consciousness? To teach sentient beings that the whole universe is one mass of consciousness and there is no higher and lower.

"By realizing what is illusory, sentient beings discover great compassion in their own nature and attain lightness of mind." —You go up and down in this "kamadhatu" (world of desire), while behind it all is just one consciousness which is common to all. It gives you lightness of mind, you are emancipated from depression. It is arupadhatu.

"All Bodhisattvas begin their practice according to this Upaya and increase their attainment step by step in compassion and wisdom." —When you concentrate into meditation, if you open your eye and look at your inner wisdom you will find that there is compassion in it.

"This observer of illusion is not the same as the illusion observed. If the observation were not different from illusion, the observation would be illusion also. Thus they release themselves from illusory forms forever. This is the Bodhisattvas' marvelous practice by which they complete their awakening, just as the earth sends forth a seedling." —The earth is illusory, it sends forth a seed which is released from the illusion and you awake from the dream. So illusion is the earth, and the knowledge that you are in this illusory state is the seedling. The seedling bears the grain of *prajna*. When you have *prajna* you are awakened!

"This Upaya is called samapati." A method to discover yourself that is Buddhism.



TALES OF HAKUIN'S FOLLOWERS

Hakuin Ekaku (1686-1769) is generally acknowledged as the key figure in formulating the Japanese Rinzai school of Zen as we know it today. The following anecdotes are taken from *Hakuin monka itsuwasen* (*Tales of Hakuin's Followers*), a translation into modern Japanese of *Keikyokusôdan* (*Tales From the Forest of Thorns*), composed in 1829 by Hakuin's fourth-generation disciple Myôki Seiteki (1774-1848) and published in 1843. *Tales of Hakuin's Followers*, which along with the modern Japanese-language version includes notes, the original Sino-Japanese (*kanbun*) text and its reading into classical Japanese (*yomikudashi*), was prepared by Nônin Kôdô and issued in 2008 in Kyoto by Hanazono University's Zen bunka kenkyûjo (Institute for the Study of Zen Culture).

(Part 10)

We know not even the birthplace of the Zen master Seki'e, "Stone Robe." The master lived in a hut some two *ri* from Hakuin[*'s temple Shôinji*]. He owned no winter clothes and on cold nights would hold a [large stone] in his arms and circumnambulate his hut walking in meditation, only stopping when he had managed to warm himself. People called him "Master Stone Robe." Of his end, nothing is known. He was just like the eccentric sages of long ago. The stone still remains before his hut. (No.33, 225, 80).

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When Master Sôkai was studying under Hakuin at Shôinji, he was frustrated at his inability to rouse the ball of doubt and so would meditate with a skull placed in the palm of his [cupped] hands. Sôkai then began to advance in his practice till finally he smashed through the black lacquer bucket.² For those beginning their study of Zen, this is among the primary expedients.

(No.35, 228, 83-84)

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Grandma Satsu³ was the daughter of Hakuin's paternal uncle. On reaching the age of fifteen, she thought to herself, "It's true I'm no beauty, but thankfully I have a sound body. It seems to me I'm nearing the time for marriage. I just hope I can find a good man!" Secretly, she prayed to the Kannon of Akeno, and day and night recited the *Tennô Kannon sutra*, even when doing the washing

² *Shittsû*. A common metaphor in Zen for ignorance and delusion.

³ Osatsu, as she was commonly known, was a member of Hakuin's father's family, the Nagazawa, daughter of the village head Yûsai (d. 1750).

and sewing. After several days, she suddenly experienced enlightenment.

Once, looking in on Osatsu, her father saw her in the sleeping quarters sitting crouched on [a copy of] the *Lotus Sutra*. "She must have gone crazy!" he thought.

"What do you think you're doing, squatting on the *Lotus Sutra*?" he gently remonstrated with her. "You'll surely be punished by the Buddha!"

Osatsu replied, "What's the difference between the *Lotus Sutra* and my ass?"

Finding this strange, Osatsu's father reported it to Hakuin, who told him, "I've got a way to deal with this." He thereupon brushed [the following] *waka*¹ [on a strip of paper] and gave it to Osatsu's father:

*When in the dark of the night
You hear the voice of the silent crow
That is the yearning for the father before one was born.*

Hakuin then told him, "Go and paste that to the wall where she'll be sure to see it."

Osatsu's father went and did as he'd been told.

Seeing the paper, Osatsu said, "Why, that's Master Hakuin's calligraphy. Is Hakuin like this too?"

Her father, still mystified, reported what had occurred.

Hakuin told him, "You bring Osatsu here to me. I'm going to question her."

The father then brought Osatsu to the master. Hakuin examined her [understanding of Zen], and Osatsu responded smoothly to all his questions. Hakuin thereupon gave her one or two koan, and Osatsu considered them intently.

Hakuin told her, "All right, go and work on them."

Over the course of the next two weeks, Osatsu broke through several stages of koan. Osatsu, however, would not budge from her understanding, and there was considerable arguing back and forth with Hakuin, who finally took his stick and struck her. This sort of

¹ Traditional 31-syllable Japanese poem.

thing happened several times.

Half a year elapsed, during which Osatsu managed to penetrate the highest level koan and completely passed through all the most complex cases of the old maters.

Osatsu's father now found a [prospective] husband for his daughter, but Osatsu would have nothing to do with him.

The father went to Hakuin and reported what had occurred. Hakuin then summoned Osatsu and told her, "You have completed your realization of the law of Dharma. Why do you revile the law of human society? Marriage is the paramount duty for men and women. Please follow your father's wishes."

Osatsu bowed in assent.

Years later, Osatsu mourned the death of a grandchild, overcome with grief. An elderly male neighbor admonished her, "Grandmother, why do you grieve so bitterly? Everyone in the neighborhood is saying, 'Formerly this old woman interviewed Master Hakuin and realized enlightenment. Now she's overcome with grief, mourning her grandchild's death. What's that all about?' Grandmother, reflect on this!"

Glaring at her neighbor, Osatsu upbraided him, "Baldy, what do you know about it? A grandmother's weeping and mourning for her grandchild surpasses even offerings of flowers and candles. Baldy, what do you know!"

Such was Osatsu's typical acrimonious response. The monks at the temple came to dismiss her as "that old woman," while often suffering defeat at her hands in their Zen exchanges.

When Osatsu passed away at home, [Hakuin's disciple] Suiô presided at her cremation, delivering a eulogy which stated in short: "For seventy-five years she startled men from their idle dreams, and with a single step trampled to bits the world of delusion."

Addressing the assembly of monks, Suiô said, "When Master Hakuin was alive there were a great many enlightened laywomen, but Grandma Osatsu surpassed them all. Even among Zen monks who have spent long years in religious practice, her equal is not to be found!"

(No. 38, 232-233, 85-89)

At Hara-juku there lived an old woman. It happened one day that she was in the audience listening to Hakuin's sermon, when

the master said: "Mind alone is the Pure Land; one's own body is Amida Buddha. When Amida manifests himself, the mountains, rivers, and the great earth, [including] the trees, grasses, and forests will instantaneously send forth radiance. If anyone wishes to realize this, he has only to search for it single-mindedly in his own heart. As it is said, 'Within you lies the proof that mind alone is the Pure Land. What further adornment does that Pure Land need? Within you lies the proof that one's own body is Amida Buddha. What further marks of physical excellence¹ does Amida require?'"²

The old woman, hearing this, thought to herself, "That doesn't seem so difficult." And returning home, she devoted herself day and night to examining [Hakuin's words], trying to resolve them whether asleep or awake.

Then, one day, while scrubbing a skillet, she suddenly broke through to realization. Tossing aside the skillet she ran to see Hakuin, exclaiming, "I've penetrated the meaning of 'Your own being is Amida Buddha!' The mountains and rivers, the great earth [including] the grasses trees and forests all emit a vast radiance! How wonderful!" she rejoiced.

Hakuin told her, "Isn't that kind of talk just emitting radiance from your shit-hole?"

The old woman edged closer and gave Hakuin a slap, saying, "This old master still doesn't get it!"

Hakuin exploded in laughter.

(No. 39, 237, 90-91)

Master Daikyû of Iyama would tell his assembled monks: "Here before you it's already manifesting and fully alive, so what keeps you from realizing it and freeing yourselves?" But in the entire assembly there was not one who grasped the master's meaning, to Daikyû's deep regret.

(No.42, 241, 92-93)

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¹ Referring to the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks of physical excellence said to be possessed by a buddha.

² It is unclear from what source Hakuin appears to be quoting here, although all the expressions he invokes--one's own body is Amida, and so forth--are standard elements of the Pure Land-Zen syncretism widespread in Japanese popular belief. Elsewhere, by contrast, Hakuin is critical of such Pure-Land Zen teaching. While he thought it unsuitable for Zen monks, it is possible he accepted such practices and beliefs for lay persons.

Three-Hundred-Mile-Tiger

Sokei-an's commentary on

The Record of Lin Chi

Discourse XVII, Lecture 1

Someone asked, "What is the Land of the Three Eyes?"

The Master said: "When together we enter the land of excellent pureness wearing the garment of purity and speak of Dharmakaya Buddha. When we enter the land of similitude wearing the garment of non-differentiation and speak of Sambhogakaya Buddha. When we enter the land of emancipation wearing the garment of light and speak of Nirmanakaya Buddha. The Land of the Three Eyes is nothing but mutability, a change of states. According to the scholars of the sutras and shastras, dharmakaya is the base and sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya are the use. But according to my view, dharmakaya does not comprehend my sermon. Therefore, the ancients said, 'These bodies exist only in theory, and their fields are the natural consequence of the bodies themselves.' The essential body and the essential field of Buddha are now evident; they are but systems hypothetically established, like an empty fist or a yellow leaf used to deceive a crying child. What kind of juice do you expect to get from such a dry bone? There is no Dharma on the outside, and the inside is unfathomable. So what do you seek? But everywhere you say there is something to practice and something to attain. Do not commit an error! Even if there is something to practice and attain, it is only the karma of life and death."

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

In this section Lin-chi is again speaking about the *trikaya*, the three bodies of Buddha: *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, *nirmanakaya*.

Someone asked, "What is the Land of the Three Eyes?" The explanation of the Land of the Three Eyes appears in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, but it is entirely different from Lin-chi's interpretation. Lin-chi is interpreting this idea from his own standpoint and not that of the *sutra*. Now Lin-chi is asking himself a question, and he himself answers.

The Master said: "When together we enter the land of excellent pureness wearing the garment of purity and speak of Dhar-

makaya Buddha.” According to Lin-chi, this state of existence, *dharmakaya*, is reality, the body of Buddha in real existence.

Dharmakaya can be translated in many ways in English, omnipresent body, essential body, essence, or body of law, but none are good translations. Buddhists speak of buddha-nature, the body of Buddha itself. It can also be the body of God that is omnipresent, which is clearly stated in Christianity. We cannot see it, yet a Zen master will ask you, “How do you see it?” There must be an “excellent” conception about this. When Lin-chi says, “When together we enter the land of excellent pureness wearing the garment of purity and speak of Dharmakaya Buddha” he speaks with his body, his lips, his mind. How does Lin-chi speak of *dharmakaya* with his body? Can you speak by your body and mind?

In Lin-chi's teaching, this “excellent pureness,” always means the absolute state of existence. We know the meaning of the word “absolute,” but with the five senses we cannot prove this absolute existence. All here (the five senses) is relative existence and all these notions, visions or imaginations, which relate to our mind and our concepts of this monistic existence, also relate to our philosophical mind. Our monistic idea is nothing but pure existence of time and space, just as if you were to beget yourself in the center of the sky; you perceive nothing but time and space. That is our concept of monistic existence. But if you carefully think about it, this concept is still relative to our mind. As long as we conceive that existence, it proves there is a concept that is reflecting upon the mirror of our mind. So existence is not yet pure. It is just as two mirrors reflecting each other, pure time and space. Yet between this subjective consciousness and objective existence of pure time and space there is no absolute. The absolute is incomprehensible. We cannot conceive it. We can talk about it, but we cannot prove it. In the *Diamond Sutra* it is said that if you wish to see or hear *tathagata* from his looks or voice, you are practicing the wrong method. You cannot see *tathagata* that way.

Tathagata is a symbol for the absolute Buddha. Shakyamuni is not absolute Buddha, but one who attained buddhahood. Buddha is the infinite, or absolute. In Buddhism we do not use the word “God,” we use “Buddha” instead of “God.” We use the word “Buddha” in the broad sense, such as Amitabha Buddha or Vairochana Buddha. Such use is almost equivalent to “God” in Christianity. In other words, if you try to see God or to hear God, you are using the wrong device. You cannot see God with the physical, mental, or even the single eye, nor can you see *tathagata* with any of these eyes. In meditation we perceive everything upon our own consciousness, and we cannot see God. We recite mantras, try to hear through the inmost ear, but we cannot. In a koan there is a famous question: “How do you see him? By what method do

you see him?" In one word, undemonstrable!

The reality of the universe is incomprehensible through words. This is really the entrance to religion. You cannot understand the true ground of religion through philosophy. You must realize it, enter it, and you will find that all religions of the world are the same. Lin-chi calls this the land of excellent pureness. However, it is not necessary to give it any name.

"When we enter the land of similitude wearing the garment of non-differentiation and speak of Sambhogakaya Buddha." The "garment of non-differentiation" is seen everywhere on the battlefield when two enemies look at one another, realize their unity, and die as friends. Leading your daily life from this standpoint is "speaking of Sambhogakaya Buddha."

Dharmakaya is the body of the ocean, of entire space, of wholeness. *Sambhogakaya* is a little different. Draw an imaginary line in this ocean of water at right angles and each square of water is *sambhogakaya*. It is not different from *dharmakaya* but is observed from the angle of a part, while *dharmakaya* is observed from the aspect of wholeness. My soul, his soul, your soul, the same soul but in a different body, the same quality. You cannot discriminate one from the other. *Sambhogakaya* differentiates but does not discriminate between *sambhogakaya* observed as separate consciousness. If you have no idea of the wholeness of *dharmakaya*, then you will be stuck in the notion of a separate soul, which we call individuality. *Sambhogakaya* is not ego. However, it is Selfhood, but it does not grasp anything as its own. *Sambhogakaya* is that union when the mind comes to the knowledge that that mind is Buddha. It is enjoyment by union when our straying soul once more reaches home.

"When we enter the land of emancipation wearing the garment of light and speak of Nirmanakaya Buddha." *Nirmanakaya* is different from *sambhogakaya* as well. It is action in differentiated bodies. The ox has a big body; the mouse has a small one. But when the ego is thrown away, one lives in a transformed body, the great body of *nirmanakaya*, the "garment of light," as Lin-chi says.

You are dharmakaya, for your body is not different from its essence. Your body is not just this body, for your body is expanding through the universe,

From the standpoint of *dharmakaya*, there is no human being. Just one God existing that is separated into all different stages of consciousness. God enshrines in our body and takes form as a woman, a man, a farmer, a merchant, a soldier, a politician, a spar-

row, a crow, insect, and dog; and all speak the existence of *nirmanakaya* by body, mind, and lips.

“The Land of the Three Eyes is nothing but mutability, a change of states.” When Lin-chi enters the Land of the Three Eyes he wears the garments of *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, and *nirmanakaya*; and from each stage he acts. Real existence is just one existence. Where is this Land?

“According to the scholars of the sutras and shastras, dharmakaya is the base and sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya are the use.” In this sentence Lin-chi is pointing to those scholars on Mount T'ien-t'ai who at that time were studying *sutras* from morning to evening and were talking nothing but philosophy. It is like talking about the menu of a Restaurant and never tasting the food. Zen does not care for such Buddhists, so Lin-chi talks very severely about them.

“But according to my view, dharmakaya does not comprehend my sermon.” When I am speaking and you are listening and apprehending my meaning, who is apprehending? Who is the one in you that does that? That Master has no name, but performs his functions vividly. Yet, when we try to acquaint ourselves with him, he disappears.

Ananda asked Mahakashyapa, “What was it that the Buddha gave you beside the robe and bowl?” Mahakashyapa called, “Ananda!” “Yes” “Put up the awning.” “Ah, yes!” and he understood.

What was it that Mahakashyapa inherited from the Buddha when he held up a flower and Mahakashyapa smiled? That one is *nirmanakaya* but also *sambhogakaya* and *dharmakaya*. It is existence upon a pinpoint, but it also covers the whole universe. It has no three bodies, nor one body. Sometimes it has no body and sometimes it has manifold bodies. Why put this into a category?

In the Zen school, you will be given the question that the Sixth Patriarch put to his opponent: “Before father and mother, what were you?” You will answer this when you come to the point, grasp the reality. It is not *dharmakaya* nor *sambhogakaya* nor *nirmanakaya*, yet it covers the whole universe and stands in its center through past, present and future. It stands upon the moment, though there is no instrument that could point to that particular moment. You will realize it in that moment. This one will understand Lin-chi's sermon. Lin-chi is brushing these terms aside and showing us True reality.

“Therefore, the ancients said, 'These bodies exist only in the

ory, and their fields are the natural consequence of the bodies themselves.” That is, to cough, one must have a throat. Body must have place; without place body cannot stand. So when the Buddha speaks of *dharmakaya*, he must then invent the field that keeps the *dharmakaya* upon it.

“The essential body and the essential field of Buddha are now evident; they are but systems hypothetically established, like an empty fist or a yellow leaf used to deceive a crying child. What kind of juice do you expect to get from such a dry bone?” That is, there is nothing in it, so stop crying. *Dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, *nirmanakaya*, nothing left. Yet, we do not know what it is.

Lin-chi is again saying that we try to get everything out of names, or philosophical constructions, just like one who tries to get juice out of a dry bone. Even a hungry dog cannot make anything out of it. But the foolish dog tries to get something and does not know it is his own saliva. He hurts his lips and tastes his own blood. Everyone can taste philosophy as well, it is just the juice of one's own brain.

Lin-chi strongly abuses philosophical Buddhism, kicks it all out until there is nothing left. Of course, he himself is untouched. That is a strange thing. He destroys everything but says nothing about himself.

When the Buddha said, “All these forty-nine years I have said nothing,” he was fooling us. He was saying all the teachings of the Buddha can be compounded into this: There is nothing to say. But, of course, he did not deny himself nor affirm himself.

A monk once asked the Buddha about *Tathagata*: “Is *Tathagata* eternal or not?” The Buddha did not speak a word; his answer was SILENCE. One cannot say that there was no Zen at the Buddha's time! If the Buddha had said, “*Tathagata* is eternal,” then he would have been trapped in the conception which affirms the ego. If he had said, “*Tathagata* is not eternal,” then he would fall into the pit of absolute annihilation. If there is absolutely nothing in the universe, where does this body come from? Whatever you call this existence, phenomena or noumena, is this eternal or not eternal? How do you answer the koan “Before father and mother”?

It is easy to speak about everything in words. We say Buddhism is not egoism, but you cannot believe this word. When this comes to an end, it will go back to the ocean of soul. So this “I” will be entirely decomposed and amalgamated into this ocean. There is no ego, no soul to return to, the system of reincarnation is wrong. Do you believe this? Then why did the Buddha speak of

reincarnation? You have to feel it. Are you eternal or not? Does the ego exist after death or not? You must feel it as Shakyamuni Buddha realized it in himself and understood it. He said many things, sometimes affirming and sometimes denying. One cannot cling to his words, for a teacher is not in his words at all. So Lin-chi is speaking from his own experience, and his words meet the Buddha's words exactly.

When I was practicing meditation, before entering deep *samadhi*, all fear dropped away, and nothing came up. But coming out of *samadhi* I was still on my chair. What was it? If you do not use your wisdom, you can meditate a million times and not be enlightened. Be enlightened, not in meditation, but in wisdom!

Huang-po said that your body will not give enlightenment to your meditation, is not the real cause of enlightenment, but wisdom is the cause of enlightenment. We talk of wisdom, here, there, but do not grasp it. When we grasp wisdom itself, it is like a moth flying all around the air and finally entering the fire. Wisdom! Wisdom! Wisdom!

When you finally come to focus, the whole universe will shine and shout. Then you will grasp *prajna*, the last vehicle to bring you to nirvana. Everyone thinks wisdom is the last vehicle, so the conception of nirvana ends in ego, in consciousness, in a spark, in light and never knows true nirvana. Sometimes one enters into nirvana and dies never to return, so his understanding (*prajna*) is not that of the Buddha.

To those who long for nirvana (as a child wishes gold and we give him a yellow leaf, and the child believes it is gold) we give *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, *nirmanakaya*. Then, "Ah, I understand, I am enlightened; it is ISNESS!" There is no such enlightenment in the world.

Lin-chi speaks directly to destroy all such Buddhism. He throws dynamite into the philosophical system of Buddhism. It is no wonder that all were afraid of him at that time. If one asked him, "What is Buddhism?"-- Bang!

"There is no Dharma on the outside, and the inside is unfathomable. So what do you seek? The outside is mutable, a vision, not true existence; and the inside is unfathomable. Can you get any dharma from the inside through meditation? Is there anything you can grasp? "Oh, this is the Dharma, it's empty!" This is all vision all from the outside, impressed upon the brain system, as the impression of the sun in your eyes remains after looking at it. The sun and its changing colors are in your eyes, but to your mind that shadow stays a long time and gives you that vision, gives you that

dream. That is not Dharma.

In meditation you grasp nothing. If you are thinking, you are not meditating. Do not be fooled. The interior is incomprehensible. Exactly! Lin-chi is a real teacher. He is not fooling us. He tells the truth.

“But everywhere you say there is something to practice and something to attain.” Yes, we thought so, I am teaching so: “The law (*Dharma*) can be practiced; and in meditation and *sanzen* you realize the Dharma.” You can practice Buddhism, follow the commandments, and finally attain enlightenment by meditation and by reading the *sutras*. But did you realize Buddhism really? I want to know!

“Do not commit an error!” Lin-chi is denying the practice of meditation, reading the *sutras*, keeping the commandments, and so forth. He has brushed them all aside.

“Even if there is something to practice and attain, it is only the karma of life and death.” You say that you attain by practicing. However, from his point of view, practice and attainment are but the karma of life and death. They are karma factories; reading, meditating, and so on. There is a reason for such talk. If, for example, almsgiving is performed from generation to generation without a real understanding of Buddhism, then it is only manufacturing karma.

Sengai Stories - Part 5

(continued from Vol 50, Fall 2003)

In the eighth year of Tenpô (1837), Sengai fell ill and took to his bed. By that autumn, his life seemed to be rapidly approaching its end, and his disciples gathered around his bed.

One of them beseeched the Master, “Your Reverence, please leave us some final words of wisdom.”

Sengai [took up his brush and wrote:] “We die alone! We die alone!”

The disciples, finding such a sentiment shockingly morbid for a revered religious teacher, pressed the Master for something else.

Above it, Sengai then inscribed: “It’s true! It’s true!”¹

¹ Following the version of the story in Fujita (2012), 47.

During the period before Master Sengai had retired to Kyohaku-in, a crisis arose in the Kuroda domain that engulfed the Buddhist priesthood of every school and was centered in Hakata. The cause of this crisis was Gôchô (n.d.), an eminent priest of the Tendai sect, who was in temporary residence at Kaidan-in in Dazaifu.²

Gôchô would make the rounds of all the domain's temples, defeating each of their abbots in religious debate. The keenness of his arguments was prodigious. None could stand up to his lightning retorts. It seemed [to the other abbots] that there was simply no one among them able to defeat Gôchô; and as the wild rumors of Gôchô's rhetorical powers continued to grow, the Buddhist priests of the domain felt like sparrows in the sights of a hawk.

One day the monks of the domain held a meeting, whose result was to form an alliance among themselves to expel Gôchô from the domain. One and all agreed that the only man for the job was Sengai of Shôfukuji, and a delegation of all the local abbots descended on the temple to meet with Sengai and entreat his assistance.

The Master told them, "Very well, I'll go and get him to leave, so don't worry."

The very next day Sengai went to see Gôchô at Kaidan-in, where he found the teacher sweeping the temple grounds.

Approaching him, Sengai said, "I've come to speak with you on something of a private nature.

"What?" Gôchô snarled. "Just what is it you came to tell me?"

In almost a whisper, Sengai replied, "What if I told Your Reverence that your life was in mortal danger? Well that's the truth of the matter, and if you value your life, I ask you to make haste and escape from here."

"What's this all about?" Gôchô barked.

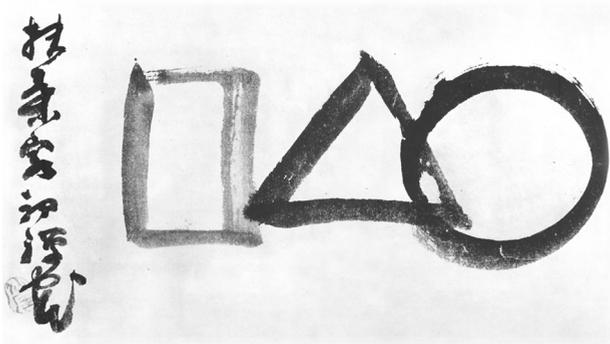
"There's no time to go into all that," Sengai told him. "You've got to hurry, pack your things, and get away. A crowd of men from the Kuroda domain is on its way here now to kill you!" And having delivered his message, Sengai returned to his temple.

² Now Dazaifu City in central Fukuoka Prefecture. Kaidan-in refers either to a now defunct Tendai temple in Dazaifu or a temple where the altar for administering the Tendai precepts to monks of the school was situated.

Like the coward he was at heart, when Gôchô heard this he started to tremble all over with fear. "Of course," Gôchô reasoned to himself, "I've been going all over the domain debating Buddhism, and without intending to, must have provoked everyone into wanting to kill me and now there's not a moment to be lost!" Hastily gathering up all his traveling gear, Gôchô fled the temple for good that very night.

People in the domain were convinced that Master Sengai must have bested Gôchô in debate and driven him right out of the province, and as word got about, people marveled, "That Sengai-*san*¹ is really amazing!"

(Translation and Copyright Peter Haskel)



Sengai's 3 shapes are inscribed with "Japan's first Zen Cave," most likely a reference to Shofukuji, the temple at which he was abbot. Shofukuji was the first Zen temple in Japan, founded by the Rinzai monk Eisai in 1195. Various explanations have been offered for the meaning of the three symbols. D.T. Suzuki in his book on Sengai's paintings, suggests that the circle is "the universe," the triangle, "the beginning of all things," and the square, the triangle doubled, as the multiplicity of things... As for yours truly ... I see a round eyed Buddha with a pointed nose looking u square in the eye . I think Sengai would understand... Do U?

Cover Pic

The picture is Michael Hotz's photo extraction of the phoenix residing on the bag Sokei-an used for receiving donations at his lectures. The bag waits patiently on the back page... no bit coins please.

¹ *San* is used in a Japan as a kind of suffix, with the common meaning of Ms. or Mr., but when used with a first name or a priest's informal name, as here, carries with it a kind of affectionate familiarity. Ryôkan, for example, was often referred to by the neighboring villagers as "Ryôkan *san*," and is still referred to as such in children's stories about his openhearted naiveté.

Sokei-an's Donation bag



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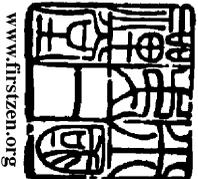
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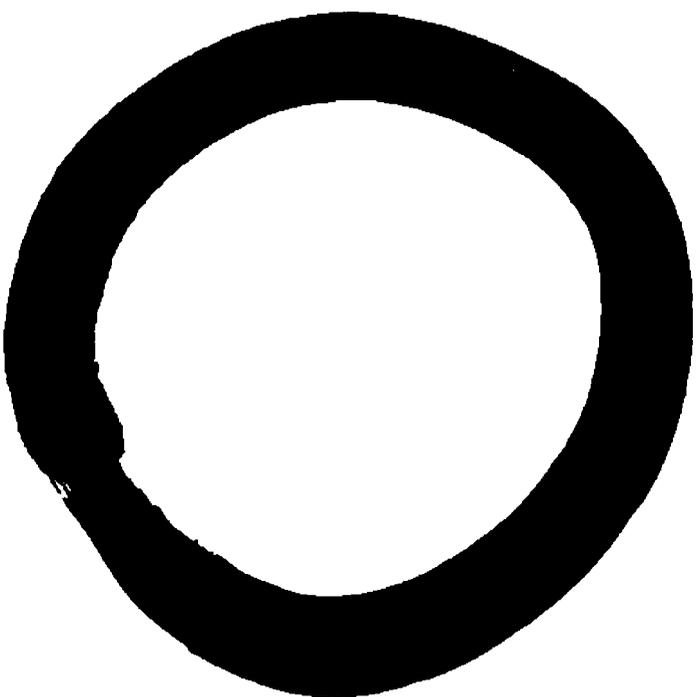
113 East 30th Street
New York City, New York 10016
firstzen@verizon.net www.firstzen.org
(212) 686-2520

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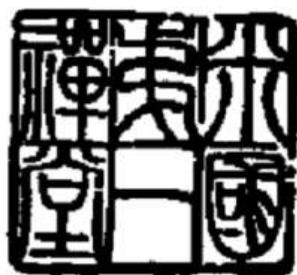


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113 East 30th Street
New York, New York 10016
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First Zen Institute of America
113 E30 Street
New York, New York 10016
(212)-686-2520
www.firstzen.org

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