

CHAPTER 9

Existentialism, Pragmatism and Zen

I

It is significant that the first number of *Philosophy East and West* contains two articles referring to Zen thought. They come from the learned pens of university professors: Dr. H. E. McCarthy of Honolulu and Dr. Van Meter Ames of Cincinnati.¹ The former interprets Goethe's *Faust* in the spirit of Zen, whereas the latter discusses Zen in reference to pragmatism and existentialism.

Dr. McCarthy's article is illuminating and brings out quite fully and clearly the poetical spirit of Zen which is embodied in *Faust*. When I first read *Faust*, I was deeply impressed with the ideas pervading the work, thinking how strongly they reminded me of Zen. The spirit of Zen is really universal, as Dr. McCarthy states; it knows no distinction of East and West.

In fact, Zen, being life itself, contains everything that goes into the make-up of life: Zen is poetry, Zen is philosophy, Zen is morality. Wherever there is life-activity, there is Zen. As long as we cannot imagine life to be limited in any way, Zen is present in every one of our experiences, but this ought not to be understood as a kind of obscure immanism. There is nothing hidden in Zen: all is manifest, and only the dim-eyed ones are barred from seeing it.

When I say that Zen is life, I mean that Zen is not to be confined within conceptualization, that Zen is what makes conceptualization possible, and therefore that Zen is not to be identified with any particular brand of "ism." In this respect,

¹ Harold E. McCarthy, "Poetry, Metaphysics, and Zen," and Van Meter Ames, "America, Existentialism, and Zen," *Philosophy East and West*, 1, No. 1 (April, 1951).

Dr. Ames's comparison of Zen with pragmatism or existentialism may be said to be not quite to the point. It goes without saying that Zen has its own way of expressing itself, and also a theory to rationalize itself. But this ought not to be interpreted to mean that this theory is Zen.

There is something in the theory of Zen that may pass into a form of pragmatism or existentialism, and I think Dr. Ames has taken up this point for discussion in his article on "America, Existentialism, and Zen." Therefore, it is evident that his Zen does not cover the entirety of Zen as such. It is with this reservation, then, that I subscribe to most of what he states in his interesting and thought-provoking thesis.

II

Availing myself of this opportunity, I wish to describe Zen from various points of view in order to bring the moon of Zen nearer to us for our closer observation. As I said before, Zen is life; and since life, as our intellect conceives it, is made up of various elements, let us elucidate Zen briefly under the following headings: metaphysics, including ontology and epistemology, psychology, ethics, aesthetics, and religion.

Zen is not to be conceptualized, let me repeat, if it is to be experientially grasped; but inasmuch as we are all human in the sense that we cannot remain dumb, but have to express ourselves in one way or another, indeed, we cannot have even an experience if we cease to give expression to it. Zen would not be Zen if it were deprived of all means of communication. Even silence is a means of communication; the Zen masters often resort to this method. This is because human silence is not to be subsumed under the same category as animal silence or the silence of heavenly bodies; even these silences, from the human point of view, are full of eloquence. Man is man because he is forever striving to express himself. The saying that man is a rational being means no more than this.

The conceptualization of Zen is inevitable: Zen must have its philosophy. The only caution is not to identify Zen with

a system of philosophy, for Zen is infinitely more than that. What, then, is the philosophy of Zen?

Zen is a school of Buddhism and has developed from the enlightenment-experience of Śakyamuni. This experience is best expressed by the doctrine of *śūnyatā*, which means "emptiness." *Śūnyatā* is a most difficult term for which to find an equivalent in English, and I think it is best to leave the original untranslated, trying in the meantime to make its significance as clear as possible.

First, I must state that *śūnyatā* is not a negative term, as might be suggested, when it is translated as "emptiness" or "void." It is a positive concept with a definite connotation, but it ought not to be considered an outcome of abstraction or generalization, for it is not a postulated idea. It is what makes the existence of anything possible, but it is not to be conceived immanently, as if it lay hidden in or under every existence as an independent entity. A world of relativities is set on and in *śūnyatā*; *śūnyatā* envelops, as it were, the whole world, and yet is in every object existing in the world. The doctrine of *śūnyatā* is neither an immanentism nor a transcendentalism; if we can say so, it is both. If it is declared that immanentism and transcendentalism contradict each other, *śūnyatā* is this contradiction itself. A contradiction implies two terms which are set against each other. *Śūnyatā* is absolutely one; hence, there is no contradiction in it.

A contradiction is felt only when we are out of *śūnyatā*. As long as we live in it, there is no contradiction, and this is where Zen wants us to be. With Zen, therefore, *śūnyatā* is to be experienced and not conceptualized. To experience means to become aware of, but not in the way in which we become aware of the world of sense-and-intellect. In the latter case, we always have a subject that is aware of something and an object of which the subject is aware, for the world of sense-and-intellect is a dichotomous world of subject and object. To be aware of *śūnyatā*, according to Zen, we have to transcend this dichotomous world in such a way as not to be outside it. *Śūnyatā* is to be experienced in a unique way.

This unique way consists in *śūnyatā*'s remaining in itself and

yet making itself an object of experience to itself. This means dividing itself and yet holding itself together. In the case of an ordinary experience, this is impossible, because in the world of ordinary experience every experience is conceptualized, since this world is really our intellectual reconstruction and not reality as it is in itself, not in its "suchness," as Buddhist philosophers would say. *Sūnyatā* is experienced only when it is both subject and object.

The philosopher's way is to start first from the experience and logic of a reconstructed world, and, failing to recognize this fact, he proceeds to apply his "logic" to the experience of *sūnyatā*. This necessitates that *sūnyatā* step out into this world, which means destroying *sūnyatā*. The more thoroughly "logicized," the more thoroughly is *sūnyatā* destroyed. The proper way to study *sūnyatā* is to experience it, to become aware of it, in the only way *sūnyatā* can be approached. That is to say, the philosopher has to purge every residue of what the mind has accumulated by assiduously applying himself to the work of intellection. He has to reverse his process of reasoning, realizing that this is a weapon that is quite efficient in dealing with things of this world of relativities, but that, when we want to get down into the very bedrock of reality, which is *sūnyatā*, we must appeal to another method; and there is no other method than that of casting away this intellectual weapon and in all nakedness plunging right into *sūnyatā* itself. As I said before, *sūnyatā* is what makes this world possible. This being so, when we apply the method to the realization of *sūnyatā*, which we use to know this world, to know things of and in this world, we are trying to force the method to work where it is not useful and where it does not yield fruit.

"Knowing and seeing" *sūnyatā* is *sūnyatā* knowing and seeing itself; there is no outside knower or spectator; it is its own knower and seer. In this respect, *sūnyatā* is *ātman*, master of itself, is not at all conditioned by anything outside. Here is the question: If it is *sūnyatā* itself that sees and knows itself, how can we humans talk about it? We are relatively determined—all our knowledge is conditioned—and so, how can this relatively conditioned being come to the experience of *sūnyatā*?

The answer is: We are *sūnyatā*. We can talk of *sūnyatā* only because we are it. If this were not the case, there would be no philosophy in this world. It is entirely due to *sūnyatā* that we can reason, although reasoning itself cannot lead us to *sūnyatā*. Reasoning comes out of *sūnyatā*; *sūnyatā* is in it, every step of reasoning leaves the mark of *sūnyatā*. It is *sūnyatā* that urges us to go beyond reasoning while we are all the time engaged in reasoning. *Sūnyatā* wants to see itself, to know itself, and it is this want on the part of *sūnyatā* that leads to reasoning, and reason, not knowing this cause of its own activity, defeats itself in spite of its ambitious claim for omniscience. Reasoning defeats itself, finds itself altogether futile, in its attempt to reach *sūnyatā*, because reasoning, instead of trying to see *sūnyatā* itself in the process of reasoning, strives to reach *sūnyatā* as the goal of reasoning, that is, when all the reasoning comes to an end. When we the reasoners realize that *sūnyatā* is working, in reasoning itself, that reasoning is no other than *sūnyatā* in disguise, we know *sūnyatā*, we see *sūnyatā*, and this is *sūnyatā* knowing and seeing itself; and so, we can say that when *sūnyatā* knows itself it is not *sūnyatā* but we ourselves as *sūnyatā*. *Sūnyatā* knows itself through us, because we are *sūnyatā*.

When *sūnyatā* is awakened to itself or becomes aware of itself, which is "knowing and seeing" itself, we have another name for it: *sūnyatā* is *tathatā*, "suchness." *Tathatā* is a concept that is characteristic of Buddhist philosophy. Let us take it up for consideration now.

III

While *sūnyatā* may erroneously appear to be negativistic, there is nothing in the concept of *tathatā* that would suggest the idea of negativity. *Tathatā* is the viewing of things as they are: it is an affirmation through and through. I see a tree, and I state that it is a tree; I hear a bird sing and I say that a bird sings; a spade is a spade, and a mountain is a mountain; the fowls of the air fly and the flowers of the field bloom: these are statements of *tathatā*. When a Zen master was asked,

"What is everyday thought (*hsin*)?" he said, "I sleep when I am tired, I eat when I am hungry." This "everyday thought" is declared to be the ultimate Tao, the highest teaching of Buddhist philosophy.

If *śūnyatā* denies or rejects everything, *tathatā* accepts and upholds everything; the two concepts may be considered as opposing each other, but it is the Buddhist idea that they are not contradictory, that it is from our relativistic point of view that they seem so. In truth, *tathatā* is *śūnyatā*, and *śūnyatā* is *tathatā*; things are *tathatā* because of their being *śūnyatā*. A Buddhist philosopher declares: A mountain is a mountain and water is water before a *śūnyatā*-experience takes place; but after it a mountain is not a mountain and water is not water; but again when the experience deepens, a mountain is a mountain and water is water. This requires a supplementary remark. When the philosopher says that with the experience of *śūnyatā* a mountain ceases to be a mountain and water to be water, this experience must be regarded as not quite reaching its deepest depths: it is still on the level of intellection; there is something of conceptualization; it is not thoroughly purged of all the dregs. When *śūnyatā* is really *śūnyatā* it becomes identical with *tathatā*.

The *tathatā*-concept is what makes Zen approach pragmatism and existentialism: they all accept experience as the basis of their theorization, and this experience is closely attached to the world of relativities. Zen, however, is different in a most significant way from pragmatism: Whereas pragmatism appeals to the practical usefulness of truth, that is, the purposefulness of our action, Zen emphasizes the purposelessness of work or being detached from teleological consciousness, or, as Zen characteristically expresses it, not leaving any trace behind as one lives one's life. It is in this spirit that Hui-nêng (Yeno in Japanese), the sixth patriarch and the originator of Chinese Zen, strongly insisted on the identity or simultaneity of *dhyanā* and *prajñā*. When Hui-nêng is said to have had his insight into the truth of Zen while listening to *The Diamond Sūtra*, we can trace the same idea lurking in the phrase which contributed to his enlightenment, namely, "to awaken the

mind while abiding nowhere," and this means nothing less or more than a non-teleological interpretation of life.

Teleology is a term belonging to a world of time, relativity, causality, morality, and so on, while Zen lives beyond all these limitations. As long as the flies of the field and the fowls of the air live just to demonstrate the glory of the divine life, they are living a purposeless life. So are human beings: When we live not trying to add one cubit to our stature, or without worrying about the morrow as to what to wear or what to eat, but letting the evil of the day take care of itself, is not this kind of life just as glorious as that of the fowls or of the flies? Will not this kind of life be the life God wanted us to live, that is, free from all teleological vexations and humanly intentional complexities? Time and teleology are interwoven, and Zen transcends time and, therefore, teleology also. So, we read in the *Dhammapada*, verse 385:

For whom there exists neither the hither nor the farther shore, nor both the hither and the farther shore,

He who is undistressed and unbound—him I call a Brahman.²

Zen diverges from existentialism in this: There are various brands of existentialism but they seem to agree in holding that finite man is infinitely removed from God, that "the sea of possibilities opening ahead is frightening. They mean freedom, and unlimited freedom means unbearable responsibility." To these thoughts Zen is a stranger, because for Zen the finite is infinite, time is eternity, man is not separated from God. "Before Abraham was I am." Furthermore, Zen does not find anything frightening in infinite possibilities, unlimited freedom, never-ending responsibilities. Zen moves along with infinite possibilities; Zen enjoys unlimited freedom because Zen is freedom itself; however unending and unbearable responsibility may be, Zen bears it as if not bearing it at all. In Christian terminology, this means that my responsibility is shifted to

² *The Dhammapada*. Translation by Narada Thera, with a foreword by Dr. Cassius A. Pereira (rev. 2d ed.; Colombo: Daily News Press, 1946), p. 63.

³ *Philosophy East and West*, I, No. 1 (April, 1951), p. 44.

God's shoulder, that "not my will, but thy will be done," and this is Zen's attitude toward moral responsibility. This is not shunning it, of course. Zen is ready to bear it to its full extent, if necessary, to sacrifice life itself; but the point is that Zen practices the virtue of *dāna*, "giving," the first of the six *pāramitās*, on the plane of *tathatā*, as if "cutting the spring breeze in the midst of a lightning flash."

Kierkegaard was somewhat neurotic and morbid when he dilated on fear: He was obsessed with the feeling because he had an abnormal sense of his separation from God, which prevented a full understanding of the meaning of the freedom which issues from the experience of *tathatā*. The existentialist generally interprets freedom on the plane of relativity where there is no freedom in its highest sense. Freedom can be predicted only of *tathatā* and its experience. The existentialist looks into the abyss of *tathatā* and trembles, and is seized with inexpressible fear. Zen would tell him: Why not plunge right into the abyss and see what is there? The idea of individualism fatally holds him back from throwing himself into the devil's maw.

IV

To Zen, time and eternity are one. This is open to misinterpretation, as most people interpret Zen as annihilating time and putting in its place eternity, which to them means a state of absolute quietness or doing-nothing-ness. They forget that if time is eternity, eternity is time, according to Zen. Zen has never espoused the cause of doing-nothing-ness; eternity is our everyday experience in this world of sense-and-intellect, for there is no eternity outside this time-conditionedness. Eternity is possible only in the midst of birth and death, in the midst of time-process. I raise a finger, this is in time, and eternity is seen dancing at the tip of it. When this is translated into terms of space, the one finger contains in it the three thousand chiliocosms. This is not symbolism. To Zen it is an actual experience.

In one sense Zen may be regarded as momentalistic, but not

as this is commonly understood. Zen has eternity in momentarism, whereas momentarism is devoid of eternity. With momentalists each fleeting moment is only fleeting, and does not carry eternity along with it. Momentalists are therefore irresponsible in a bad sense, they are anti-moral, they are not at all free, not masters of themselves, for they are controlled by the consciousness of momentariness. Zen designates this state of mind as "abiding," as having "a fixed abiding place." One who has an "abiding place" is a prisoner, just like a man tied to a post or hedged around with fences. A free Zen-man has no such abode anywhere; he lives in a circle whose circumference has no limits;⁴ therefore, wherever he is, he is always at the centre of reality, he is reality itself. A momentalist life has no meaning whatever: it is like animal life or plant life—life is there, to be sure, but there is no meaning to it. Why? Because the momentalist is not conscious of eternity while living in time; each moment is to him just that and no more; and like the dog romping about in the yard, he enjoys it; his joy is animalistic and has no value whatsoever.

Momentarism does not know what is meant by the absolute present. Zen lives in this, and therefore is *tathatā*-conscious. In *The Diamond Sūtra* we read: "The past mind is unattainable, the future mind is unattainable, the present mind is unattainable."⁵ This is a significant statement. The idea is that consciousness is in time, it operates in time, it is time itself, and that consciousness is a locus of what is known in Buddhist philosophy as *kṣaṇa* (*nien* in Chinese, and *nen* in Japanese). I venture to translate *kṣaṇa* as consciousness-unit, for consciousness is serially tracing these units. In terms of time, a consciousness-unit is the shortest possible division of time. But

⁴ In the *Dhammapada*, 179 and 180, we read about "the trackless Buddha of infinite range," which exactly corresponds to the Mahāyāna idea of "not leaving any trace" and of "a tub with its hoops all broken off."

⁵ Cf. *Dhammapada*, 348. "Let go the front, let go the back, let go the middle. Crossing to the farther shore of existence, with mind released from everything, do not again undergo birth and death." The front, the back, and the middle correspond to the future, the past, and the present.

as we cannot fix any limit to time-division, we can say that a consciousness-unit is only theoretically assumed. *Ekakṣaṇa*,⁶ that is, the idea of such an ultimate unit, is, to all intents and purposes, unattainable—and this is what is meant by the statement above quoted from *The Diamond Sūtra*. An *ekakṣaṇa* is unattainable, and so is the absolute present, and an *ekakṣaṇa* is an absolute present, eternal Now. Zen is thus said to be realized in an *ekakṣaṇa*.

Every moment of consciousness is an *ekakṣaṇa*, and yet no *ekakṣaṇa* is to be picked out of it and pointed out as such. An *ekakṣaṇa* means the bursting of time out of eternity; it is the awakening of consciousness out of the darkest recesses of the unconscious. At the awakening of an *ekakṣaṇa* the unconscious comes to itself, or we can say that eternity then cuts into time. Therefore, the unconscious is known only through consciousness, and eternity through time. There is no eternity as such: it is always to be in time-process; there is no so-called unconscious which does not come along with consciousness. *Ekakṣaṇa* is often designated as *akṣaṇa*,⁷ and the two terms are used synonymously. *Akṣaṇa* means no-*ṣaṇa*. No-*ṣaṇa*, however, does not mean the effacement of consciousness; it is in and with consciousness, it is an *ekakṣaṇa*, and yet unattainable as such. No-*ṣaṇa* has a positive connotation as eternity.

We can make the same assertion about such ideas as no-acting (*akarma*), no-thinking or no-mind (*acitta*), or no-abiding (*aprasaṅgha*). They are all positive ideas, though negatively expressed. As each *ekakṣaṇa* is *akṣaṇa*, each act is no-act, each thought is no-thought, and each locus of consciousness is no-locus. A mind is said to be awakened to self-awareness, and yet there is no awakening of mind to be so specifically designable: this is the way Zen is to be understood and the way Zen expresses itself.

One may ask, Why these contradictions? The answer is, They are so because of *tathatā*. They are so just because they are so, and for no other reason. Hence, no logic, no analysis,

⁶ *Eka* is "one," *ekakṣaṇa* is "one thought-instant."

⁷ Literally, "no-thought-instant." In Chinese, *wu-mien*; in Japanese, *mu-nen*.

and no contradictions. Things, including all possible forms of contradiction, are eternally of *tathatā*. "A" cannot be itself unless it stands against what is not "A"; "not-A" is needed to make "A" "A," which means that "not-A" is in "A." When "A" wants to be itself, it is already outside itself, that is, "not-A." If "A" did not contain in itself what is not itself, "not-A" could not come out of "A" so as to make "A" what it is. "A" is "A" because of this contradiction, and this contradiction comes out only when we logicize. As long as we are in *tathatā*, there is no contradiction whatever. Zen knows no contradictions; it is the logician who encounters them, forgetting that they are of his own making. Zen takes everything in as it is, and contradictions resolve themselves without much ado. It is not Zen's way to annihilate the whole world or to reduce it to an abstract non-entity in order to experience the dissolution of contradictions.

The main trouble with the human mind is that while it is capable of creating concepts in order to interpret reality it hypostatizes them and treats them as if they were real things. Not only that, the mind regards its self-constructed concepts as laws externally imposed upon reality, which has to obey them in order to unfold itself. This attitude or assumption on the part of the intellect helps the mind to handle nature for its own purposes, but the mind altogether misses the inner workings of life and consequently is utterly unable to understand it. This is the reason we have to halt at contradictions and are at a loss as to how to proceed.

In the *Dhammapada*, 369, we have:

Empty this boat, O Bhikkhu! Emptied by you it will move swiftly,

Cutting out lust and hatred, to Nibbāna you will thereby go.

"Emptying this boat" means emptying our mind of all the concepts we have constructed to handle reality intellectually and to make it yield the best results for our practical life. The sciences have thus developed, mechanical appliances have achieved wonderful results, and our so-called standard of living has attained unprecedented heights. But as to the spiritu-

alization of life or a deeper insight into its significance, I am afraid we have not made much advance: we are not making our life-boat move more swiftly than we did in the past. "Lust and hatred," which are also contents of the boat, are increasing and amassing, and are not cut at all, for intellectualization is helpless to get the boat rid of lust, hatred, and the like.

The doctrine of *śūnyatā*, it is to be remembered, does not mean emptying the boat-of-reality, for reality itself is *śūnyatā*, and there is nothing to empty. *Śūnyatā* is a positive conception, and it is in this positiveness that *śūnyatā* is identified with *tathatā*. Zen views reality as *tathatā*, and because of this *tathatā*-view of reality Zen is said to be radical empiricism. Zen is empiric, because it appeals to *prajñā*-intuition as the means of taking hold of reality itself without any round-about methodology. Zen empiricism is radical because *prajñā*-intuition lies underneath all forms of intuition and intellection, and beyond *prajñā*-intuition there is nothing which makes us come into direct contact with reality. Compared with *prajñā*-intuition, sense experience is not at all direct, for it is an intellectual or conceptual reconstruction. When we see a tree and call it a tree, we think this sense experience is final; but in point of fact this sense experience is possible only when it is conceptualized. A tree is not a tree until it is subsumed under the concept "tree." *Tathatā* is what precedes this conceptualization; it is where we are even before we say it is or it is not; it is when God was still in a state of absolute self-contentment, when He had not yet conceived the idea or will to create, when He had not yet uttered his fiat, "Let there be light." But here I have already said too much, and *tathatā* is far away at an infinite distance.

V

In a way we can say that in the Zen conception of *tathatā* there is something reminding us of an aesthetic appreciation of works of art or of beauties of nature. Let me cite a Japanese *haiku* (a poem of seventeen syllables) to illustrate what I mean. *Haiku* is the shortest form of poetical expression, and

because of this we can more readily analyze its content. Toward the end of the Tokugawa regime there was a poetess named Chiyo, and as she was native of Kaga province she is well known as "Kaga no Chiyo." One of her noted *haikus* is:

Asagao ya!
Tsurube torarete,
Morai midzu.

Literally it means: "Oh, the morning-glory.⁸ The bucket made captive, [I] beg for water."

The *haiku* requires explanation. Early one morning in June, Chiyo went to get water from the outside well. The bucket, which was placed at the edge, was found to be entwined by the morning glory in bloom. Those who have visited Japan must have noticed how beautifully the morning glory opens in bloom before sunrise—the flower looks so fresh, wet with dew. The beauty must have struck Chiyo very deeply indeed that particular morning when she came out for water. She was moved so much by its ethereal beauty that she remained speechless for a little while, until finally she could just say, "Oh, the morning glory!"

This "Oh, the morning glory!" contains everything that any poetic spirit could say about the flower; anything he could add would be but a commentary, which after all does not add much to the original utterance. So it is with Chiyo's "The bucket made captive, I beg for water." She put these two lines just in the way of contrast between the beautiful thing not belonging in this world of defilements and the practical affairs of daily life where utilitarianism rules. The poetess was so absorbed in her contemplation of beauty that it took her a little time to recover from it.

How deeply, how thoroughly she was impressed with the beauty of the flower which was not of this earth is understood from the fact that she did not try to unwind the vine from the bucket, which she could have done readily without hurting the plant. But her sense of identification with the beauty was

⁸ Would it be better to translate this, "Behold the morning glory!"?

so possessing that the idea did not suggest itself to her; she had no desire to pollute things celestial with anything savouring of workaday business. The poetess was, however, also a woman, a country-woman taking care of her house; she could not help thinking about her business: the only thing she could do would be to go to her neighbour and ask for the water she needed for her morning work. Such a reminder of relative life in this world, such an awakening from an undifferentiated absorption in the beauty, marks our human situation, in which we all are inescapably involved.

We cannot remain forever in a state of undifferentiation; we are so mad as to give expression to every experience we go through, and by thus expressing ourselves we realize that the experience grows deeper and clearer. A dumb experience is no experience at all; it is human to express, that is, to appeal to differentiation and analysis; and so, we can say that animals have no experience whatever. *Tatihatā* cannot remain expressionless and undifferentiated; it has to that extent to be conceptualized. While to utter, "Oh, the morning glory!" is to come out of the identification, and hence, to be no more of *tatihatā*, this coming out of itself, this negating itself in order to be itself, is the way in which we all are constituted. And this conceptualization inevitably leads to contradictions which can only be dissolved in the synthesis of *prajñā*-intuition.

Psychologically, Chiyo the poetess required time to be awakened from her contemplation of beauty; but, metaphysically speaking, her absorbing identification and her awakening to differentiation are simultaneous, and this simultaneity takes place in an absolute present—it is an *ekakṣaṇa* of *tatihatā*. This is the philosophy of Zen.

There is a noetic element in *tatihatā*. *Tatihatā* is not just a poetic contemplation of, or an absorbing identification with, reality; there is an awareness in it and this awareness is *prajñā*-intuition. *Prajñā*-intuition may thus be defined as differentiation undifferentiated; here the whole is intuited together with its parts; here the undifferentiated whole comes along with its infinitely differentiated, individualized parts. The whole is seen here differentiating itself in its parts, not in

a pantheistic or immanentist way. The whole is not lost in its parts, nor does individuation lose sight of the whole. The One is the all without going out of itself, and each one of the infinitely varied and variable objects surrounding us embodies the One, while retaining each its individuality.

VI

Zen is often charged with aloofness, solitariness, and being detached from the masses. To a certain extent this is true. The Zen-man is sometimes found to be living in the rarefied atmosphere of "intellectual" superiority; he is apt to be standing aloof from society and from being useful to the community where he belongs. But the fact is that Zen has its conative or affective aspect along with its noeticism. The enlightenment-experience is not devoid of the great compassionate heart (*mahākaruṇā*), but, so far, historical circumstances have prevented its asserting itself in this direction. Zen is socially-minded as much as any other religion, but this has been manifested or demonstrated more individually, owing to its emphasis upon individual experience. As to serving others in social ways, Zen has had its own way of doing it. The following examples will illustrate what I mean.

Since Adam was ordered in the beginning of things, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground," we are all to work hard to remove "thorns and thistles" from the cursed ground in order to raise our staff of life and "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue [it]." This was especially the case in China, where Zen first developed in the form we have it now. The Chinese are great agricultural people and work hard at it. So it was natural for the Zen masters to refer constantly to farming and things connected with farming.

Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch, worked in the backyard pounding rice and chopping wood all the time he was under Hung-jen, the fifth patriarch. Ma-tso hurt his legs while working on the farm with his disciples, one of whom happened to push his wheelbarrow over them. Isan and Hsing-san did not

forget to discuss problems of reality while picking tea leaves. When Pai-chang was asked what would become of him after death, he immediately answered, "I am going to be born as a donkey at one of my villagers." This meant that the master was willing to do anything to compensate for all that the villagers did for him and his monasteries.

Zen literature abounds with such phrases as "in the market place," "in the middle of the crossroads," meaning busily engaged in all kinds of work, or "the face smeared with dirt and the head covered with ashes," also describing a man who toils and is heavy laden. It is a well-known fact that Zen does not despise manual labor, refusing to be "an idle man in the daylight." Pai-chang made this his motto: "A day passed by doing nothing is a day of no-eating"; he was prepared to eat his daily bread in the sweat of his face. In "The Ten Cow-herding Pictures" the last scene shows a happy-looking man entering the market place. The market place contrasts with the mountain retreat: the former is the place where a man serves society, while the latter is where he trains himself to be qualified for public work. The monastery is not meant just to be a hiding place from the worries of the world; on the contrary, it is a training station where a man equips himself for life's battlefield, that is, to do all that can possibly be done for his community. All Buddhists talk about "helping all people to cross the stream of birth and death."

The only thing that makes Buddhists look rather idle or backward in so-called "social service" work is the fact that Eastern people, among whom Buddhism flourishes, are not very good at organization; they are just as charitably disposed as any religious people and ready to put their teachings into practice. But they are not accustomed to carry on their philanthropic undertakings in a systematic way; rather, they have been encouraged to go on with their work quietly, privately, individually, and without letting others know what they are doing. When we read the history of Buddhism in regard to this phase of its activities, we notice how Buddhists labored for the welfare and edification of the masses.

The saddest thing is that most of us are ignorant, benighted,

and utterly egocentric in spite of all the churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, and other institutions of education secular and spiritual. This is what makes the enlightened ones feel sometimes despondent and cheerless, traces of which we can detect in all our saintly figures. Dr. Ames writes: "In utter poverty and desperate circumstances insensibility may be the best, but to think it is the best that human life can offer is a sad delusion."⁹ He is quite right. As long as man is what he is, he cannot remain insensible to any happenings that may take place in his surroundings. His nerves are racked to the utmost when he observes all the human pains, tortures, and miseries unspeakable after an atomic bomb bursts in the midst of a thickly populated city. And the worst thing is that one is utterly helpless in the face of these sufferings. The only remedy one can have, if it is granted, is the gospel of insensibility! How inhuman! But when I reflect that all such things are desperately beyond our individual control, although I am inclined to think that all our group activities are the accumulations of individual thought and action, I cannot help being in deep sympathy with the Biblical writer who makes God soliloquize in this wise:

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.¹⁰

Is God now in earnest engaged in the gigantic task of effacing man from the earth? Apparently he is. If so, inasmuch as man is man, he must have a philosophy to cope with the situation. Can Zen offer this?

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁰ *Genesis* 6:5-7.