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## ABE MASAO

# God, Emptiness, and the True Self*

Abe Masao (b. 1915) is a disciple of both Hisamatsu Shin'ichi and Nishitani Keiji, and maintained a close contact with D. T. Suzuki during the last ten years of his life.

After studying law, philosophy, and comparative religion at Japanese universities, Abe attended Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary on a Rockefeller Research Fellowship. He was lecturer at Otani University, Kyoto University, and Hanazono Zen College and a full professor of philosophy at Nara University of Education. He has held numerous visiting professorships, among others at Columbia University, the University of Chicago, Carleton College, Claremont Graduate School, Princeton University, etc., and was appointed full professor at Claremont College. He has lectured with exceptional frequency in Japan and the United States, including such important lectureships as the Berry Lecture at the University of Hawaii and the Stewart Lecture in World Religion at Princeton University.

The Japan Foundation sponsored his study trips to England, the European continent, India, etc., where he also presented noted papers at innumerable conferences and symposia. Professor Abe is a prolific writer whose essays appear frequently in such learned journals as *The Eastern Buddhist*, *Japanese Religions*, *Japan Studies*, *Indian Philosophy and Culture*, *Young Buddhist*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, *Religious Studies*, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, *Theologische Zeitschrift*, etc., and he contributed chapters to many books as well as articles in Japanese.

Abe Masao has also translated classics like Dōgen and works by Nishida and Hisamatsu into English.

His professorship at Claremont College may well be seen as a first bridgehead of the Kyoto School on the American continent.

A Zen master said, "Wash out your mouth after you utter the word 'Buddha.'" Another master said, "There is one word I do not like to

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hear, and that is 'Buddha.' " Wu-tsu Fa-yen (Jap.: Hōen, d. 1104), a Chinese Zen master of the Sung dynasty, said, "Buddhas and Patriarchs are your deadly enemies; *satori* is nothing but dust on the mind. Rather be a man who does nothing, just leisurely passing the time. Be like a deaf-mute in the world of sounds and colors." At the close of his life, Daitō (1282-1338) of the Kamakura era of Japan left the following death verse:

> I have cut off Buddhas and Patriarchs;
> The Blown Hair (Sword) is always burnished;
> When the wheel turns,
> The empty void gnashes its teeth.

Or in Kobori Nanrei's translation:

> Kill Buddhas and Patriarchs;
> I have been sharpening the sword Suimo;
> When the wheel turns [the moment of death],
> Śūnyatā gnashes its teeth.

Chao-chou (Jap.: Jōshū, 778-897), a distinguished Zen master of T'ang China, while passing through the main hall of his temple, saw a monk who was bowing reverently before Buddha. Chao-chou immediately slapped the monk. The latter said, "Is it not a laudable thing to pay respect to Buddha?"

"Yes," answered the master, "but it is better to go without even a laudable thing."

What is the reason for this antagonistic attitude toward Buddhas and Patriarchs among the followers of Zen? Are not Buddhas enlightened ones? Is not Sakyamuni Buddha their Lord? Are not the Patriarchs great masters who awakened to Buddhist truth? What do Zen followers mean by "doing nothing" and "empty void"?

There is even the following severe statement in the *Lin-chi lu* (Jap.: *Rinzairoku*), one of the most famous Zen records of China.

> Encountering a Buddha, killing the Buddha;
> Encountering a Patriarch, killing the Patriarch;
> Encountering an Arhat, killing the Arhat;
> Encountering mother or father, killing mother or father;
> Encountering a relative, killing the relative,
> Only thus does one attain liberation and disentanglement

> from all things, thereby becoming completely unfettered and free.

These words may remind some readers of the madman described in Nietzsche's *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* who shouts, "God is dead! God stays dead! And we have killed Him." Are Zen followers who kill Buddhas to attain liberation madmen such as Nietzsche described? Are they radical nihilists in Nietzsche's sense? Are they atheists who not only reject Scriptures but also deny the existence of God? What do they mean by the "liberation" that is attained only by killing Buddhas and Patriarchs?

To answer these questions properly and to understand Zen's position precisely, let me call your attention to some more Zen sayings.

A Zen master once said: "Let a man's ideal rise as high as the crown of Vairocana Buddha (highest divinity), but let his life be so full of humility as to be prostrate even at the feet of a baby."

In the "Verses of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures," Kuo-an Chi-yuan (Jap.: Kakuan), a Zen master of the Sung dynasty, said:

> Worldly passions fallen away,
> Empty of all holy intent
> I linger not where Buddha is, and
> Hasten by where there is no Buddha.

What do all these examples mean? When a Zen master said, "Cleanse the mouth thoroughly after you utter the *word* 'Buddha,'" or "There is one *word* I do not like to hear, and that is 'Buddha,'" he sounds like a recent Christian theologian who, by means of linguistic analysis, insists that the *word* "God" is theologically meaningless. The ancient Chinese Zen master, though unfamiliar with the discipline of linguistic analysis, must have found something odious about the *word* "Buddha." The Christian theologian who emphasizes the inadequacy of the *word* "God" still points to the ultimate meaning realized in the Gospel. In other words, he seems to conclude that not God but the *word* "God" is dead. Zen's position, however, is more radical. Statements such as "Buddhas and Patriarchs are your deadly enemies" and "I have cut off Buddhas and Patriarchs," and emphasis on "doing nothing" and the "empty void" take us beyond the Death-of-God theologians. This seems especially

to be true of Lin-chi's above-mentioned saying: "Encountering a Buddha, killing the Buddha."

What is the real meaning of these frightful words? The fourth and fifth lines of Lin-chi's saying, about encountering mother or father or a relative and killing them, remind me of Jesus' words:

> If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26).

With these words Jesus asked his followers to follow him even if this meant opposing earthly obligations.

Lin-chi's words ("Encountering mother or father or relative, kill them") mean much the same as Jesus' words—though Lin-chi's expression is more extreme. The renunciation of the worldly life and the hatred for even one's own life are necessary conditions among all the higher religions for entering into the religious life. Thus Jesus said:

> Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life (Luke 18:29, 30).

In contrast to Jesus' emphasis on doing things "for the sake of the kingdom of God," Lin-chi says that by "encountering a Buddha, killing the Buddha," and so on, "only thus does one attain liberation." This is simply because for Lin-chi to attain real liberation it is necessary not only to transcend worldly morality but also to rid oneself of religious pietism. Zen does not teach that we come to the Ultimate Reality through encountering and believing in Buddha. For even then we are not altogether liberated from a dichotomy between the object and the subject of faith. In other words, if we believed in Buddha, Buddha would become more or less objectified. And an objectified Buddha cannot be the Ultimate Reality. To attain Ultimate Reality and liberation, Zen insists, one must transcend even religious transcendent realities such as Buddhas, Patriarchs, and so forth. Only when both worldly morality and religious pietism, both the secular and the holy, both immanence and transcendence, are completely left behind, does one come to Ultimate Reality and attain real liberation.

The fundamental aim of Buddhism is to attain emancipation from all bondage arising from the duality of birth and death.

Another word for this is *samsāra*, which is also linked with the dualities of right and wrong, good and evil, etc. Emancipation from *samsāra* by transcending the duality of birth and death is called *nirvāna*, the goal of the Buddhist life.

Throughout its long history, Mahāyāna Buddhism has emphasized: "Do not abide in *samsāra*, nor abide in *nirvāna*." If one abides in so-called *nirvāna* by transcending *samsāra*, one is not yet free from attachment, namely, attachment to *nirvāna* itself. Being confined by the discrimination between *nirvāna* and *samsāra*, one is still selfishly concerned with his own salvation, forgetting the suffering of others in *samsāra*. In *nirvāna* one may be liberated from the dualities of birth and death, right and wrong, good and evil, etc. But even then one is not liberated from a higher-level duality, i.e., the duality of *samsāra* and *nirvāna*, or the duality of the secular and the sacred. To attain thorough emancipation one must also be liberated from this higher-level duality. The Bodhisattva idea is essential to Mahāyāna Buddhism. Not clinging to his own salvation, the Bodhisattva is one who devotes himself to saving others who suffer from various attachments—attachments to *nirvāna* as well as to *samsāra*—by negating or transcending the so-called *nirvāna* which is attained simply by transcending *samsāra*.

Therefore, *nirvāna* in the Mahāyāna sense, while transcending *samsāra*, is simply the realization of *samsāra* as really *samsāra*, no more, no less, by a thoroughgoing return to *samsāra* itself. This is why, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, it is often said of true *nirvāna* that "*samsāra*-as-it-is is *nirvāna.*" This paradoxical statement is based on the dialectical character of the true *nirvāna*, which is, logically speaking, the negation of negation; that is, absolute affirmation, or the transcendence of transcendence; that is, absolute immanence. This negation of negation is no less than the affirmation of affirmation. The transcendence of transcendence is nothing other than the immanence of immanence. These are verbal expressions of Ultimate Reality, because Ultimate Reality is neither negative nor affirmative, neither immanent nor transcendent in the relative sense of those terms. It is beyond these dualities. *Nirvāna* in Mahāyāna Buddhism is expressed as "*samsāra*-as-it-is is *nirvāna*," and "*nirvāna*-as-it-is is *samsāra*." This is simply the Buddhist way of expressing Ultimate Reality. Since *nirvāna* is nothing but Ultimate Reality, to attain *nirvāna* in the above sense means to attain liberation from every sort of duality.

Zen takes this Mahāyāna position in its characteristically radical way. "Killing a Buddha" and "killing a Patriarch" are Zen expressions for "not abiding in *nirvāna.*"

Now we can see what Lin-chi meant when he said, "Encountering a Buddha, killing the Buddha; encountering a Patriarch, killing the Patriarch. . . . *Only thus* does one attain liberation and disentanglement from all things." In this way, Zen radically tries to transcend religious transcendence itself to attain thoroughgoing freedom. Therefore the words and acts of the Zen masters mentioned earlier, though they seem to be extremely antireligious and blasphemous, are rather to be regarded as paradoxical expressions of the ultimate truth of religion.

Since the ultimate truth of religion for Zen is entirely beyond duality, Zen prefers to express it in a negative way. When Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty asked Bodhidharma, "What is the ultimate principle of the holy truth?" the First Patriarch replied: "Emptiness, no holiness."

In his "Song of Enlightenment" Yung-chia (Jap.: Yōka, 665-713) said:

> In clear seeing, there is not one single thing:
> There is neither man nor Buddha.

On the other hand, in Christianity, when Jesus emphasized action for the sake of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God is not simply transcendent. Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, Jesus answered them, "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you." With this answer Jesus declared that God's rule is a new spiritual principle already operative in the lives of men, and perhaps referred to his own presence in the midst of his followers. We might say, therefore, that the kingdom of God is both immanent and transcendent.

This may be especially true when we remind ourselves of the Christian belief that the kingdom is within only because it has first entered this world in Jesus, who was the incarnation of God. Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God may be said to be a symbol of "transcending even the religious transcendence." In the well-known passage of the Letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul said:

> Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God

> a thing to be grasped, but *emptied* himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (2:5-8).

As clearly shown in this passage, Jesus Christ is God who became flesh by emptying or abnegating himself, even unto death. It is really through this *kenotic* negation that flesh and spirit, the secular and the sacred, the immanent and the transcendent became identical in Jesus Christ. Indeed, Jesus Christ may be said to be the Christian symbol of Ultimate Reality. So far, this Christian idea of the *kenotic* Christ is close to Zen's idea of "neither man nor Buddha." At least it may be said that Christianity and Zen equally represent Ultimate Reality, where the immanent and the transcendent, the secular and the sacred, are paradoxically one.

In Christianity, however, Ultimate Reality as paradoxical oneness was realized in history only in Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God. Indeed, Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God and man, the Redeemer of man's sin against God, and the only historical event through which man encounters God. Accordingly, it is through faith in Jesus as the Christ that one can participate in Ultimate Reality.

In this sense, being the Ultimate Reality, Jesus Christ is somewhat transcendent to man. He is the object, not the subject, of faith. Therefore, the relation between Christ and his believer is dualistic. A kind of objectification still remains. In this respect Zen parts company with Christianity.

Of course, as Paul admirably stated: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Christian faith has a mystical aspect which emphasizes the identification of the faithful with Christ.

Further, as Paul said, "we are . . . always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:10). Paul died Jesus' death and lived Jesus' life. And this, for Paul, meant being "baptized into Christ," "putting on Christ" (Gal. 3:27), and "being changed into his likeness" through the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

Being "in Christ" in this way, i.e., identifying with Christ as Ultimate Reality is, if I am not wrong, the quintessence of Christian

faith. The essence of Zen, however, is not identification with Christ or with Buddha, but identification with emptiness. For Zen, identification—to use this term—with an Ultimate Reality that is substantial is not the true realization of Ultimate Reality. Hence Zen's emphasis on "emptiness, no holiness," and "neither man nor Buddha."

So far Zen is much closer to the *via negativa* or negative theology of Medieval Christianity than to the more orthodox form of the Christian faith. For instance, in his *Mystical Theology*, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite wrote about God as follows:

> Ascending higher, we say . . .
> not definable,
> not nameable,
> not knowable,
> not dark, not light,
> not untrue, not true,
> not affirmable, not deniable,
> for
> while we affirm or deny of those orders of beings
> that are akin to Him
> we neither affirm nor deny Him
> that is beyond
> all affirmation as unique universal Cause and
> all negation as simple preeminent Cause,
> free of all and
> to all transcendent.[1]

This is strikingly similar to Zen's expressions of the Buddha-nature or mind.

In Pseudo-Dionysius, identification or *union* with God means that man enters the godhead by getting rid of what is man—a process called *theosis*, i.e., deification. This position of Pseudo-Dionysius became the basis of subsequent Christian mysticism. It may not be wrong to say that for him the Godhead in which one is united is the "emptiness" of the indefinable One. The words "nothing, nothing, nothing" fill the pages of *The Dark Night of the Soul*, written by Saint John of the Cross. For him nothingness meant "sweeping away of images and thoughts of God to meet Him in the darkness and obscurity of pure faith which is above all concepts."[2]

Despite the great similarity between Zen and Christian mysticism we should not overlook an essential difference between them. In the above-quoted passage, Pseudo-Dionysius calls that which is beyond all affirmation and all negation by the term *him*. Many Christian mystics call God "Thou." In Zen, however, what is beyond all affirmation and all negation—that is, Ultimate Reality—should not be "him" or "thou" but "self' or one's "true self."

I am not concerned here with verbal expressions but with the reality behind the words. If Ultimate Reality, while being taken as nothingness or emptiness, should be called "him" or "thou," it is, from the Zen point of view, no longer ultimate.

For in this case "nothingness" or "emptiness" is still taken as something *outside* of oneself; in other words, it is still more or less objectified. "Nothingness" or "emptiness" therefore becomes *something* merely named "nothingness" or "emptiness." It is not true nothingness or true emptiness. True emptiness is never an object found outside of oneself. It is what is really *nonobjectifiable*. Precisely for this reason, it is the ground of true subjectivity. In Christian mysticism, it is true that God is often called nothingness or the unknowable. However, if this is taken as the ultimate, or the object of the soul's longing, it is not the same as true nothingness in Zen. In Zen, this is found only by negating "nothingness" as the end, and "emptiness" as the object of one's spiritual quest.

To reach the Zen position, one must be reconverted or turned back from "nothingness" as the end to "nothingness" as the ground, from "emptiness" as the object to "emptiness" as the true subject. Ultimate Reality is not something far away, over there. It is right here, right now. *Everything starts from the here and now.* Otherwise everything loses its reality.

Consequently, while Zen emphasizes emptiness, it rejects mere attachment to emptiness. While Zen insists on killing the Buddha, it does not cling to what is non-Buddha. As quoted earlier, Kuo-an said in his "Verses of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures":

> Worldly passions fallen away,
> Empty of all holy intent.
> Here both worldly passions and holy intent are left behind.
> I linger not where Buddha is, and
> Hasten by where there is no Buddha.

With these words Kuo-an tried to show that if one takes what is non-Buddha as the ultimate, what is non-Buddha turns into a

Buddha. Real emptiness, which is called in Buddhism *śūnyatā*, is not a nihilistic position that simply negates religious values. Overcoming nihilism within itself, it is the existential ground of liberation or freedom in which one finds for himself liberation even from what is non-Buddha, liberation even from a rigid view of emptiness.

Zen's strong criticism of attachment to emptiness or non-Buddhaness is seen in the following stories:

A monk asked Chao-chou, "When I bring nothing at all with me, what do you say?"

Chao-chou said, "Throw it away!"

"But," protested the monk, "I said I bring nothing at all; what do you say I should throw away?"

"Then carry it off," was the retort of Chao-chou.

In commenting on this D. T. Suzuki says: "Jōshū (Chao-chou) has thus plainly exposed the fruitlessness of a nihilistic philosophy. To reach the goal of Zen, even the idea of 'having nothing' ought to be done away with. Buddha reveals himself when he is no more asserted; that is, for Buddha's sake, Buddha is to be given up. This is the only way to come to the realization of the truth of Zen."[3]

Huang-po (Jap.: Ōbaku, d. 850) was bowing low before a figure of Buddha in the sanctuary, when a fellow disciple saw him and asked: "It is said in Zen 'Seek nothing from the Buddha, nor from the *Dharma*, nor from the *samgha*.' What do you seek by bowing?"

"Seeking nothing from the Buddha, the *Dharma*, or the *samgha* is the way in which I always bow," replied Huang-po.

But his fellow disciple persisted: "For what purpose do you bow?" Huang-po slapped his face. "Rude fellow!" exclaimed the other.

To this Huang-po said, "Where do you think you are, talking of rudeness and politeness!" and slapped him again.

In this way, Huang-po tried to make his companion get rid of his negative view of non-Buddhaness. He was anxious to communicate the truth of Zen in spite of his apparent brusqueness. While behaving and speaking in a rude and negative way, the spirit of what he says is affirmative.[4]

As these stories clearly show, the standpoint of emptiness or *śūnyatā* in Zen is not a negative but an affirmative one. Zen affirms the ground of complete liberation—liberation from both the secular and the holy, from both morality and religion, from both theistic religion and atheistic nihilism.

Since the Zen position regarding true emptiness (*śūnyatā*) transcends both the secular and the sacred (through a negation of negation), it is itself neither secular nor sacred. And yet, *at the same time*, it is both secular and sacred. The secular and the sacred are paradoxically identical, coming together as a dynamic whole outside of which there is nothing.

I, myself, who am now writing about the dynamic whole as the true emptiness, do not stand outside of, but within this dynamic whole. Of course, the same is true of those who read what I am writing.

When you see a Zen master, he may ask you, "Where are you from?" "I am from Chicago," you may reply. "From where did you come to Chicago?" the master may ask.

"I was born in Chicago. Chicago is my hometown," may be your answer.

"Where did you come from, to your birth in Chicago?" the master may still ask. Then what will you answer?

Some of you may reply, "I was born of my parents. And their background is Scotland," and so forth.

Others, falling back upon the theory of evolution, may answer, "My origin may be traced back to the anthropoid apes and from them back to the amoeba, or a single cell of some sort."

At this point, I do hope the master is not so unkind as *not* to slap your face. Anyhow, he will not be satisfied with your answers.

Science can answer the question, "How did I get here?" but it cannot answer the question "Why am I here?" It can explain the cause of a fact but not the meaning, or ground of a fact.

Socrates' philosophy started from the oracle's admonition: "Know thyself?" and King David once asked, "But who am I, and what is my people?" (1 Chron. 29:14)

Zen is also deeply concerned with the question, "What am I?" asking it in a way peculiar to Zen, that is: "What is your original face before you were born?" Science seeks for the origins of our existence in a temporal and horizontal sense—a dimension which can be pushed back endlessly. To find a definite answer to the question of our origin we must go beyond the *horizontal* dimension and turn to the *vertical* dimension, i.e., the eternal and religious dimension.

Saint Paul once said, "For in him [the Son of God] all things were created . . . and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16-17). In

Christianity it is through creation, as the eternal work of the only God, that all things hold together. Zen, however, raises a further question. It asks, "After all things are reduced to oneness, to what must the One be reduced?" *Śūnyatā* or nothingness in Zen is not a "nothing" out of which all things were created by God, but a "nothing" from which God himself emerged. According to Zen, we are not creatures of God, but manifestations of emptiness. The ground of my existence can and should not be found in the temporal dimension, nor even in God. Although this groundlessness is deep enough to include even God, it is by no means something objectively observable. On the contrary, groundlessness, realized subjectively, is the only real ground of our existence. It is the ground to which we are "reconverted" or turned back by a negation of negation.

In the *Lin-chi lu*, the story is told of Yajñadatta, a very handsome young man who used to look in a mirror every morning and smile at his image. One morning, for some reason, his face was not reflected in the mirror. In his surprise, he thought his head was lost. Thrown into consternation, he searched about everywhere for it, but with no success. Finally, he came to realize that the head for which he was searching was the very thing that was doing the searching. The fact was that being a careless fellow, he had looked at the back of the mirror. Since his head had never been lost, the more he searched for it outside of himself, the more frustrated he became. The point of this story is that that which is sought is simply that which is seeking. Yajñadatta had searched for his head with his head. Our real head, however, is by no means something to be sought for in front of us, but is something that always exists for each of us here and now. Being at the center of one's searching, it can never be objectified.

You can see my head. When you see my head from where you are, it has a particular form and color; it is indeed *something*. But can you see your own head? Unless you objectify your head in a mirror you cannot see it by yourself. So, to you, your head has no particular form and color. It is not *something* which can be seen objectively by you. It is in this sense formless and colorless to yourselves. We call such a thing *mu* or "nothing" because it is not something objective. It is called "nothing" not because, in the present case, our heads are missing, but because our heads are now functioning as the *living* heads. As such they are *nonobjectifiable*.

The same is true of our "self." We often ask ourselves, "What am I?" and get used to searching for an answer somewhere outside of ourselves. Yet the answer to the question, "What am I?" lies in the question itself. The answer to the question can only be found in this *here and now* where I am—and which I am fundamentally.

The ground of our existence is nothingness, *śūnyatā*, because it can never be objectified. This *śūnyatā* is deep enough to encompass even God, the "object" of mystical union as well as the object of faith. For *śūnyatā* is the nothingness from which God himself emerged. *Śūnyatā* is the very ground of the self and thereby the ground of everything to which we are related. The realization of *Śūnyatā*-as-such is precisely what is meant by the self-awakening of *Dharma*. *Śūnyatā* as the nonobjectifiable ground of our existence *expands endlessly into all directions*. The same is true of "awakening in the *Dharma*." Can we talk about the relationship between ourselves and the world without being, ourselves, in the expanding awakening of the self which embraces the relationship itself? Can we even talk about the divine-human relationship without a still deeper ground which makes this relationship possible? And is not the still deeper ground for the divine-human relationship the endlessly expanding *śūnyatā* or self-awakening?

All I-Thou relationships among men and between man and God are possible only within an endlessly expanding self-awakening. Zen calls this our "Original Face," the face we have before we are born. "Before we are born" does not refer to "before" in its temporal sense, but in its ontological sense. The discovery of one's prenatal face—in its ontological sense—places us within an endlessly expanding self-awakening.

To the extent that we are men, whether from the East or from the West, this is equally true of all of us. We should not think that we will come to our awakening at some future time and place and will then *be* awakened. On the contrary, we *are* originally—right here and now—in the expanding of self-awakening that spreads endlessly into all directions. This is why we can talk about relationships with the world and about an I-Thou relationship with God. Nevertheless, just as Yajñadatta looked for his head outside of himself, we are used to looking for our true self outside of ourselves. This is our basic illusion, which Buddhism calls *māyā* or *avidyā*, i.e., ignorance. When we realize this basic illusion for what it is, we immediately find that, in our depths, we are grounded in endlessly expanding self-awakening.

The "Song of Zazen" by Hakuin, an outstanding Zen master of the middle Tokugawa era of Japan, expresses the point well:

> Sentient beings are really Buddha.
> Like water and ice—
> Apart from water, no ice;
> Outside of sentient beings, no Buddha.
> Not knowing it is near
> They seek for it afar!
> Just like being in water—
> But crying for thirst!
>
> Taking as form the formless form
> Going or coming you are always there
> Taking as thought the thoughtless thought
> Singing and dancing are *Dharma*'s voice.
> How vast the boundless sky of *samādhi*,
> How bright the moon of Fourfold Wisdom.
> What now is there to seek?
> With *nirvāna* revealed before you,
> This very place is the Lotus Land,
> This very body is Buddha.

## NOTES

1. Elmer O'Brien, *Varieties of Mystical Experience* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), pp. 86-88.
2. William Johnston, "Zen and Christian Mysticism," *The Japanese Missionary Bulletin* XX (1966): 612-13.
3. D. T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (London: Rider, 1969), pp. 54-55.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

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