

PROBLEMS IN ZEN

by:

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"We climb a mountain toward the moon. It is an illusion to think that we shall reach it. The mountain doesn't end. But the moon is with us every step of the way."

---D. T. Suzuki
("The Eastern Buddhist," Vol. II. No. I.)

INTRODUCTION

As a young Westerner keenly interested in Zen for the past year, I believe I have encountered problems in its practice which are of concern to many others like myself. These are problems arising from the task of trying to establish Zen practice for oneself in the spiritual climate of the modern world, with its psychedelic-spiritual drugs, fast paced technological society, and peculiar Western spiritual outlook all presenting various choices before one as to how he should best shape his spiritual path. In order to make clearer what I mean by the 'peculiar Western spiritual outlook,' I would like to quote Susan Sontag from an essay entitled "The Artist as Exemplary Sufferer,"

"We do not find among the ancient Hebrews, Greeks, and the Orientals the same value placed on love because we do not find there the same positive value placed on suffering. Suffering was not the hallmark of seriousness; rather, seriousness was measured by one's ability to evade or transcend the penalty of suffering, by one's ability to achieve tranquility and equilibrium. In contrast, the sensibility we have inherited identifies spirituality and seriousness with turbulence, suffering, passion."¹

Intimately connected with the above differences between Eastern and Western spirituality are the age old questions of attachment versus detachment, and the importance of the "is" versus the importance of the "ought to be."

As for the unique contribution of the industrial revolu-

1. Sontag, Susan. Against Interpretation. Dell Publishing Co., New York. 1969. p. 57.

tion to the spiritual climate of today, it would be hard to find a more lucid statement on the subject than that made by Aldous Huxley in his introduction to the Bhagavad-Gita,

"The invention of the steam engine produced a revolution, not merely in industrial techniques, but also and much more significantly in philosophy. Because machines could be made progressively more and more efficient, Western man came to believe that men and societies would automatically register a corresponding moral and spiritual improvement. Attention and allegiance came to be paid, not to Eternity, but to the Utopian future. External circumstances came to be regarded as more important than states of mind about external circumstances, and the end of human life was held to be action, with contemplation as a means to that end. These false and, historically, aberrant and heretical doctrines are now systematically taught in our schools and repeated, day in, day out, by those anonymous writers of advertising copy who, more than any other teachers, provide European and American adults with their current philosophy of life. And so effective has been the propaganda that even professing Christians accept the heresy unquestioningly and are quite unconscious of its complete incompatibility with their own or anybody else's religion."²

In spite of the grave spiritual dangers brought about by our technological society, it cannot be condemned entirely on spiritual grounds since it was this same science and technology that was responsible for the development of the various psychedelic drugs. The religious import of these drugs is astounding. To quote Dr. Timothy Leary on the nature of the revelation often engendered by these drugs,

"One such moment of of revelation is the only purpose of life. One such moment of vision is the end point of the five-billion-year process of evolution on this planet. One such moment makes the remaining decades of life meaningful and worthwhile....

2. Bhagavad-Gita, translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood. Introduction by Aldous Huxley. Mentor Books; New York, 1951. pp. 16-17.

I (Leary) became initiated into an ancient company of illumined seers. I understood the Buddha. I was in complete communication with Blake. I was closer to St. Augustine, Johannes Scotus Erigena, Jacob Boehme, than I shall ever be to any person in rational intercourse."³

Thus, not only does the present day offer serious challenges to the spiritual development of Western man, it also provides ample opportunity for experiment in the speeding up and broadening of that development.

My discussion will also include brief sections on the relationship between religious practice and sex, and spirituality and music. I believe there are some very important things to be said about both.

Finally, my spiritual attainments are naturally far below those of the Zen masters and I have tried to take this into account while remembering that I am writing from an existential-historical perspective that is my own. That is, I have tried to neither over-extend myself nor deny too severely the insights I have had. My hope is that this spirit has resulted in as honest a discussion as possible.

3. Leary, Timothy. High Priest. World Publishing Company. New York, 1968. p. 338.

"The great Way of the Buddha and the Patriarchs involves the highest form of exertion, which goes on unceasingly in cycles from the first dawn of religious truth, through the test of discipline and practice, to enlightenment and Nirvana. It is sustained exertion, proceeding without lapse from cycle to cycle...."⁴

Dogen-zenji

"To live in a state of non-birth is to attain Buddhahood; it is to keep your whereabouts unknown not only to people but even to Buddhas and patriarchs. A blessed state. From the moment you have begun to realize this fact, you are a living Buddha, and need make no further efforts on your tatami mats."⁵

Bankei-zenji

4. Kapleau, Philip. The Three Pillars of Zen. Beacon Press, Boston. 1967. p.23.

5. Zen: Poems, Prayers, etc. edited and translated by Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto. Anchor Books, New York 1963. p. 78.

METHOD OF PRACTICE

One of the longest running controversies in Zen, and the one which is responsible for the existence of the two major sects in Japan today, is that of which is the best way to approach the enlightenment experience and then integrate it into our lives. There are no absolutes here and the method of practice one chooses will depend to a large extent on one's particular emotional and mental make-up. Nevertheless, this same lack of absolutes prompts one to make certain observations concerning traditional training methods of both sects in the hope of helping this training keep up with and benefit from, history.

Before getting into any observations, it is necessary to establish a foundation for discussion. As to terminology, I have decided to employ the standard names of Soto and Rinzai to represent opposite poles of Zen practice. Strictly speaking, the divisions between the two are not that sharp, especially due to recent attempts to combine the best of both into an integral Zen. However, for the sake of a convenient vocabulary I have let myself be guided by the following analogies concerning the two disciplines,

"Among Zen students it is said that 'Rinzai's teaching is like the frost of the late autumn, making one shiver, while the teaching of Soto is like the spring breeze which caresses the flower, helping it to bloom.' There is another saying: 'Rinzai's teaching is like a brave general who moves a regiment without delay, while the Soto teaching is like a farmer taking care of a rice field, one stalk

after another, patiently."⁶

The general approach of these two schools is reflected in the more specific details of mind training where we find the Soto sect emphasizing shikan-taza and the Rinzai sect the use of koans. Shikan-taza is sitting, totally alert, the mind free of all conceptions and points of view, in the unshakable faith that eventually one will come to enlightenment. Koans, on the other hand, require strenuous work since they are "puzzles" beyond the reach of the rational mind and which can only be "solved" by this mental work which cultivates a doubt mass that eventually is smashed through, thereupon revealing the world of enlightenment. There are two useful analogies that illustrate the differences between these two methods of mind development nicely, and that tie in well with the analogies already given regarding Rinzai and Soto differences in general. The first of these likens mind development to the drying out of a wet towel; shikan-taza would be comparable to setting it out, spread out, in the sun to dry gradually and thoroughly, whereas the use of a koan would correspond to wringing the towel out where the towel would be somewhat dry but not completely even after one was through wringing. The other analogy likens mental development to the ripening of fruit and in this case shikan-taza corresponds to letting the fruit fall from the tree when ripe and the use of a koan to picking the fruit while it is still green. Both these analogies point up the fact that although enlightenment is usually gained more quickly through the use of a koan, it is in most cases

6. Kapleau. Op. Cit. p. 49.

not as deep and requires further training in order to "ripen" fully.

With the above as preliminary orientation, we can now proceed on to investigate more fully the fundamental aspects of Zen training that find different representations in the two schools and see how these representations relate to different personalities. The first of these aspects that I would like to talk about is ardor of practice. I feel that it is quite significant that the reviver of the Rinzai school of Zen in Japan, Hakuin, suffered a severe nervous breakdown a year or so after he had his satori.* This information is not easily come by but it is reported in the book Zen Dust which gives as the only reason for the breakdown, "strenuous practices." The question this occurrence raises is just how much psychological harm even more moderate practice might cause. This is not an idle question since it must be remembered that satori does not bring about purification of the character automatically. The insight one has into his own being must be strengthened by post-satori practice in order to become an integral part of his daily life and be able to shape his character accordingly, and the worse one's psychological condition is at the time of satori the more work will be required to enable this experience to mature his character. So the question comes down to what method of practice is most conducive to creating a healthy personality as a setting for the satori experience and perhaps the first thing to make note of here is that the Buddha himself said to reject any teaching that causes suffering. Rinzai Zen's view, though, is elucidated by

*After two years in the mountains with a hermit who understood certain methods of treatment, Hakuin reportedly completely recovered

Zenkei Shibayama when he writes,

"We have to remember that untold hardship and austere discipline is required for anybody to acquire as his own the Way as truly abounding."⁷

It is frustrating indeed to read dogmatic statements that directly contradict one another, and the serious Zen student today cannot help but encounter this frustration. Since the Buddha himself underwent severe austerities before deciding ~~on~~ on the "middle path," was he unwise in telling others to reject suffering? It would seem that the same charges levied against Bankei, the "easy path" Zen master quoted at the beginning of this section would apply to the Buddha also. Bankei almost died in his attempt to gain satori, but once achieved he told others to toil not. But notice what is said about him by Lucien Stryk in his book containing Zen sermons,

"Bankei was above the use of special devices in making people achieve the satori of the birthless Buddha-mind. He simply preached and exhorted. Indeed this may be the feature that appeals to common people, and yet it presents a grave problem from the standpoint of practical Zen. Being an uncommon man, Bankei was able to influence many, but after his death, his type of Zen had, by its very nature, to die out: he wanted people to attain satori without effort, but it is an iron law of Zen that great effort be made, the sort of effort that Bankei himself had to make. Dogen insisted on the importance of sitting in Zen, Hakuin employed the koan systematically, and so on."⁸

Although perhaps in the case of the Buddha and Bankei compassion to some extent ruled over wisdom, let us not forget the case of Hakuin which illustrates all too well the dangers of overexertion. Since Bankei's Zen died out, and Hakuin broke down, it appears

7. Shibayama, Zenkei. A Flower Does Not Talk. Kyoto, 1966. p. 44.

8. Zen: Poems, Prayers, Etc. Op. Cit. p. 73.

a middle path must be found that is somewhere between the Buddha's middle path and the extremes of Hakuin and many of the early Chinese masters. I have found that the following considerations have been of foremost importance to me in trying to locate this path.

The first of these has to do with intention, that is, why religious practice is being taken up in the first place. Although one may cite something like a desire for a fuller existence as a sort of all-encompassing intention, beneath this the intention falls into either the positive or negative category, and it is this initial categorization that says a great deal about the course one's practice should take along this path that, as has already been mentioned, should avoid extremes of severity and laxity. Between these extremes there exists much room for choice and the first consideration in making one centers around the question of whether one's aspiration has positive or negative motivations. For example, on the positive side could be listed such motivations as, "conquering all with a vivacious mind,"⁹ "saving all sentient beings,"¹⁰ or penetrating the farthest gate of Dharma,¹¹ (desire for wisdom), while on the negative side could be listed ones such as "taking refuge in the Dharma,"¹² or "leaving samsara."¹³ Naturally, the motivations of each individual will be mixed and the final judgment on the character of one's aspiration will depend on which motivations are the most meaningful to the individual.

9. Zen: Poems, Prayers, Etc. Op. Cit. p. 66.

10. Kapleau. Op. Cit. p. 281.

11. Ibid. p. 201.

12. Ibid. p. 23.

13. Ibid. p. 168.

In terms of practice, it is my belief that positive motivations find their best orientation in the Rinzai school and negative motivations find theirs in the Soto school. As explained above, I am using the word Rinzai to refer to Zen training that emphasizes passionate work on a koan and the word Soto to refer to training that centers around a sitting in faith. This usage corresponds to the fundamental difference between the two schools and fits in well with a discussion of positive and negative motivations. Let us turn now and investigate more fully the implications of the training methods of these two schools in order to more fully understand how they relate to personal motivations.

Turning first to the Rinzai school, it is not at all difficult to see why the demand to "give up your life when you enter the zendo,"¹⁴ not to mention the ~~severe~~ attitude from which this demand springs, could cause serious conflicts in one who comes to Zen hoping to gain release from inner insecurities, and almost impossible conflicts when these insecurities are tied up with a fear of death, as they many times are with people going into Zen. Are we then to conclude along with the Rinzai master Shozan (1579-1655) that, "Only the valorous can train properly, the ignorant being mild and sanctimonious, mistaken in the belief that such is the way of Buddhist practice."¹⁵ No, there is no reason to conclude this at all, and it might be mentioned here that Shozan was an ex-samurai whose personality colored his view of Zen so strongly that statements like the above are typical. While there is nothing unnatural

14. Miura, Isshu, and Sasaki, Ruth Fuller. Zen Dust. Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York. 1966. p. 45.

15. Zen: Poems, Prayers, Etc. Op. Cit. p. 66.

about a master's personality coloring his view of Zen training, it is unfortunate that these relative views that spring from a particular personality are asserted as if they were absolutes. With this sort of thing occurring across the board in Zen it is no wonder that much importance is placed on the finding of a master that one feels is his master. Extrapolated, this of course means that one must choose the Zen school that is best suited to his personality, and this in turn implies that the demand to give up your life when entering Zen is just a relative view that one should, by no means, worry over. If this kind of dramatic abruptness suits one, fine, and if it does not, that is equally as fine and the Soto school waits with open arms. Compare the following by the Soto master Meiho (1277-1350) to the aforementioned "give up your life" attitude.

"The superior student is unaware of the coming into the world of Buddhas or of the transmission of the nontransmittable by them: he eats when hungry, sleeps when sleepy. Nor does he regard the world as himself. Neither is he attached to enlightenment or illusion. Taking things as they come, he sits in the proper manner, making no idle distinctions."¹⁶

Rinzai training is best suited to those who have a considerable degree of self-assurance concerning their own spiritual aspirations as was summed up by Hakuin when he quoted "a man of old," who said,

"For the study of Zen there are three essential requirements."¹⁷

and then explained the man's statement by adding,

"What are these three essential requirements?"

16. Zen: Poems, Prayers, Etc. Op. Cit. p. 57.

17. Miura, Isshu. Op. Cit. 42.

"The first is a great root of faith; the second is a great ball of doubt; the third is great tenacity of purpose. A man who lacks any one of these is like a three-legged kettle with one broken leg."¹⁸

A person going into Zen in the hope of resolving inner insecurities and literally seeking refuge in the Dharma is unlikely to possess all the above requirements and it is best that such a person seek guidance in the Soto direction which accepts him for what he is, a person who needs help, and is not about to make him feel any worse by making him believe that he is a "broken kettle" that lacks the religious genius to become a vessel of Dharma. Indeed, not only will he become just as worthy a vessel as the tough minded Rinzai disciple if he continues with his practice, but he may even have an edge on the latter in terms of peace of mind. This is because the Rinzai man is very intent on doing something whereas the Soto man is more involved with letting things be as they are. There are some very interesting contrasts to be made on this point. First, notice that Isshu Miura Roshi states concerning the Nanto (most difficult to pass through) koans that,

"Until a Zen monk has reached this point he cannot be at ease even when drinking a cup of tea."¹⁹

That is, until one has settled the Nanto koans, which implies having already attained satori (the initial awakening) and having already settled the Hosshin, Kikan, and Gonsen koans, one is still not free to sit back and relax or do whatever else he will. In light of the above claim the following poem by the Soto master Gasan, (1275-1365), is easily understood.

18. Miura, Isshu. Op. Cit. pp. 42-43.

19. Ibid. p. 58.

"Invaluable is the Soto Way--
 Why be discipline slave?
 Snapping the golden chain,
 Step boldly toward the sunset!"²⁰

It is the rare man indeed who would have the combination of good fortune, strength of character, and inclination that would enable him to pass through the Nanto koans, and to give up hopes for peace of mind without doing so is experientially absurd since there have been far more people who have achieved peace of mind than have passed through the Nanto koans. The point here is again that if one wants to push oneself that is all right but to assume that one should is another matter. However, one should not make the mistake of taking the above poem to mean that one doesn't have to train to gain enlightenment. Training is necessary, absolutely, in both Rinzai and Soto, but it is the spirit of the training that is optional, and it is this spirit that must accord with one's temperament in order for Zen training to be as psychologically healthy as possible.

One other fundamental question that seems to divide Soto and Rinzai training methods is that of doubt. Doubt is a basic but tricky concept as dealt with in Zen. In Hakuin's analogy to the kettle he refers to the great doubt necessary as a pre-condition to enlightenment. But notice what Bankei (1622-1693), (a Rinzai master surprisingly enough, although from his writings this should be taken in name only), has to say on this subject,

"Most masters these days use devices (koan, etc.)
 to teach, and they seem to value these devices
 above all else--they can't get to the truth directly.

20. Zen: Poems, Prayers, Etc. Op. Cit. 4.

They're little more than blind fools! Another bit of their stupidity is to hold that, according to Zen, unless one has a doubt he proceeds to smash, he's good for nothing. Of course, all this forces people to have doubts. No, they never teach the importance of staying in the birthless Buddha-mind. They would make of it a lump of doubt. A very serious mistake."²¹

As Bankei envisions it, people are carrying around useless doubts that only increase their suffering while getting them nowhere. His solution to life's problems is to let them be taken care of by the birthless mind or fundamental intuition, and his path to satori is entirely painless. But as mentioned earlier, his Zen died out because it was evidently too easy and soon lost its substance after his death. But how easy is too easy, and just what part does the notorious "great doubt" play in mind development? The following passages help to answer this question.

The first is quoted by Zenkei Shibayama in his book Zazen Wasan and concerns a certain monk who has just had his "satori" of "everything is good as it is" rejected by Zen master Hogen. It reads,

"Then the monk, being rebuked, hesitated in his mind, and began to ask "Why?" This doubt engrossed his whole being. His Zen consciousness was intensified by doubt though he was not aware of it. Doubt is related to wisdom. He put the same question again to Hogen, but his inner spiritual condition was totally different on the second occasion. Hogen gave exactly the same reply, and this had the effect of breaking through his Great Doubt, and enabled him to open a new eye of wisdom."²²

21. Ibid. p. 88.

22. Shibayama, Zenkei. Zazen Wasan. Kyoto, 1967. p. 52.

D. T. Suzuki further clarifies the nature of this doubt when he explains that this asking "Why?" is far removed from the ordinary asking in that its intensity raises it above the usual sense of doubt and turns it into "... a state of concentration brought to its highest pitch."²³ It is this sustained concentration that ripens the mind for enlightenment. As Yasutani-roshi states, "Kensho (satori) is 'the wisdom naturally associated with joriki,' which is the power arising from concentration."²⁴ Thus it seems that Bankei, in his condemnation of Zen men who encourage devotees to cultivate doubt, and in his making statements like, "One can't talk all day, so one engages in zazen."²⁵, fails to understand the connection between intense doubt and concentration and the ripening ability of this concentration that puts it on a much different level than talking as far as Zen training goes. Also, in contrast to Bankei's statement quoted at the beginning of this section concerning the lack of need for making further efforts after one realizes his birthless mind, Yasutani-roshi points out that,

"...unless fortified by joriki, a single experience of kensho will have no appreciable effect on your life, and will fade away into a mere memory."²⁶

We may safely conclude that Bankei underestimated the value of zazen and misunderstood the use of the word doubt by other Zen men and we should be careful not to make the same mistake.

23. Suzuki, D. T. Essays in Zen Buddhism. First Series. Grove Press Inc., New York, 1949. p. 254.

24. Kapleau. Op. Cit. p. 48.

25. Zen: Poems, Prayers, Etc. Op. Cit. pp. 87-88.

26. Kapleau. Op. Cit. p. 48.

Finally, it is my opinion that both the Rinzai and Soto schools would benefit from borrowing a teaching idea from Tibetan Buddhism. This idea reflects a more liberal and understanding view of the mental condition of the unenlightened aspirant and concerns presenting a conceptual picture of the nature of the mind to him. This is in accordance with the Tibetan yogic precept that states, "Reason, being in every action the best friend, is not to be avoided."²⁷ Although Zen is traditionally opposed to the use of concepts in guiding the student, claiming that the intellect is to the mind as a candle is to the sun, it should be remembered that until the sun appears the candle is all we have. The Tibetan masters are sympathetic to this as indicated by the following,

"...the Nyingmapas and Kargyutpas (two schools of Tibetan Buddhism) have a yogic practice intended to 'point out' the nature of mind, whereby the guru illustrates for the disciple how the 'non-existent' or void aspect of mind is to be looked upon as being the Dharma-Kaya, the radiant or 'bright aspect of mind as being the Sambhoga-Kaya, and the thought flowing nature of mind as being the Nirmana-Kaya."²⁸

These three Kayas are treated somewhat differently in Kapleau's The Three Pillars of Zen where the Dharma-Kaya is said to refer to the experience of enlightenment, the Sambhoga-Kaya to the rapture of enlightenment, and the Nirmana-Kaya to the radiant, transformed Buddha-body, personified by Shakyamuni.²⁹ As can be easily seen, the Tibetan usage is much more helpful in contrib-

27. Evans-Wentz, W. Y. Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines. Oxford University Press. 1935. p..71.

28. Ibid. p. xxxviii.

29. Kapleau. Op. Cit. p. 325.

uting to an understanding of oneself than the usage found in Kapleau's book, and the more one understands oneself, the more one understands what Buddhism is saying about bringing this understanding to its completion. Consequently, the Tibetan Buddhist practice of having the guru "point out" the nature of mind would seem to be a compassionate help rather than a hindrance, provided, of course, that the aspirant fully understood the limited use of concepts and was careful not to mistake the finger pointing to the moon for the moon itself.

The present day, however, offers the seeker of spiritual truths something of much deeper significance than helpful concepts. I am referring of course to the psychedelic drugs, and it is with some of the problems centered around these that the next section is concerned.

"Finally, and most emphatically, drug taking
is not compatible with Zen."³⁰
(Taigan Takayama, master of Toshun Zen temple)

"There was only the sound of the fire crackling
sharper and sharper. An electric hush enveloped the
room. It was a perfect Zen moment. I was dead.
The Timothy Leary game was suspended and the needle
point of consciousness was free to move into any one
of thirteen billion nerve cells or down any one of
a billion billion genetic-code networks."³¹

(Dr. Timothy Leary---while
on LSD)

30. Zen: Poems, Prayers, Etc. Op. Cit. 143.

31. Leary, Timothy. Op. Cit. p. 324.

DRUGS

This discussion will, for the most part, be concerned with the psychedelic drugs and how their spiritual properties relate to Zen practice. It is necessary to consider this issue from three points of view, namely, that of before any Zen practice has been undertaken, that of while Zen training is going on but before any stage of enlightenment has been achieved, and that of while Zen training is going on after enlightenment, (which for the true Zen man means until the end of his life).

As for the first point of view, it has been established beyond any doubt that strong psychedelics such as LSD can serve as initial eye-openers to the spiritual dimension of man. As Philip Kapleau once put it, "If Zen practice can be compared to climbing a mountain, then it can be said that strong psychedelics are often the agents that inform one of the existence of the mountain in the first place."³² Suzuki was also aware that some people are ignorant of even the existence of this "mountain," and he writes,

"A further impression is that, vis-a-vis Zen, there are at least two types of mentality; the one which can understand Zen and, therefore, has the right to say something about it, and another which is utterly unable to grasp what Zen is. The difference between the two types is one of quality and is beyond the possibility of reconciliation. By this I mean that, from the point of view of the second type, Zen belongs in a realm altogether transcending this type of mind and, therefore, is not a worthwhile subject on which to waste much time."³³

However, the psychedelic drugs make the above statement ob-

32. Stated at a talk given at M. I. T. May 1, 1969.

33. Suzuki, D. T. Studies in Zen. Dell Publishing Co., Inc.,

solate to a certain extent. That is, there are some people who are unable to see the value of something like Zen even after a psychedelic trip, but the majority come to appreciate the above in a new depth that would properly put them, after the drug experience, into Suzuki's first category. From this point they could, if they so desired, undertake serious Zen practice since it would now have meaning for them. It is interesting to note here that the famous Zen phrase, "Enlightenment doesn't make the man, the man makes enlightenment,"³⁴ also applies to the psychedelic drug experience and how much significance it carries for one. R.E.L. Masters and Jean Houston report in their book, The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience, that subjects who managed to have psychedelic experiences that were very similar, if not equal, to profound religious experiences were,

"...comparatively very mature, developed personalities who, at least in their public lives, would be generally regarded as functioning in a superior way in the world."³⁵

It appears that for the psychedelic experience to match up to the enlightenment experience more than the drug is necessary. However, one need not touch the fringes of enlightenment in order that the psychedelic experience produce the necessary value changes that would make Zen meaningful. A much shallower experience can still set one's foot on the spiritual path as is indicated by the following remarkable figures reported in Masters' and Houston's book.

34. Quoted by Philip Kapleau during sesshin, February, 1969.

35. Masters, R.E.L., & Houston, Jean. The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience. Dell Pub. Co., New York, 1966. p. 149.

	Ditman and Hayman (supportive environ- ment)	Savage (supportive environment and some re- ligious stim- uli)
	N=74	N=96
"Feel it (LSD) was the greatest thing that ever happened to me:	49%	85%
A religious experience:	32%	83%
A greater awareness of God or a Higher Power, or an Ultimate Reality:" 36	40%	90%

There are two main aspects of psychedelic experience that are very conducive to furthering an understanding of the "raison d'etre" of Buddhism. The first of these aspects is a tremendous increase in the speed of associative thought which amounts to a slap in the face lesson on the relativity of all things. The second is the realization that rationality is a very limited skill possessed by the mind and not the God it often appears to be. Commenting on this last point Timothy Leary states, "...you can't rationalize with a five-billion-year-old energy process."³⁷ It is this feeling that one is part of an energy process that contributes greatly to an appreciation of the "no-soul" doctrine of Buddhism. Thus, the psychedelics provide, at best, a taste of enlightenment itself, but mostly the needed representational reality that can serve as a foundation for practice that leads to an experience of Reality itself.

The next problem is, naturally, the one of what part psy-

36. Ibid. p. 255

37. Leary. Op. Cit. p. 296.

chedelics play while one is practicing Zen. Before enlightenment very limited use can be beneficial as a source of inspiration, however, there are definite problems involved with more heavy usage. One of these problems is the tendency one has while stoned to be the "hero of one's thoughts," (to borrow a phrase from Kapleau). This is a great danger, as much as one as becoming trapped by one's thoughts as far as preparing the mind for enlightenment goes. When thought processes are speeded up, and one relates his stoned thinking to that of the common world of down people, it is all too easy to build up a fantastic ego grounded upon the insights of the stoned intellect. All insights of an intellectual nature are classified in Zen as "makyo," that is, hallucinations, and as such are categorically rejected as useless. Since the mind must be emptied for enlightenment, all of one's previous experiences and learning must, in the end, be transcended. Even powerful psychedelic insights that might be very helpful to one in bringing him closer to Zen or enabling him to function more smoothly in his daily life must be put aside. The more drugs one takes, the greater is the tendency for the ego to be pridefully attached to the psychedelic insights they provide and this in turn works against one's Zen practice. Of course, when very large quantities of psychedelics are consumed mental confusion almost invariably follows, to say the least, and damage to one's mental health hurts all of one's life, not to mention Zen practice.

Another major problem surrounding the relation between psychedelic drugs and Zen practice, and perhaps the biggest problem, is that of will power. Zen practice builds will power

whereas psychedelics, by throwing one into heightened awareness, don't involve the will at all. This may seem to be a trivial point, but it is only so on the surface. The mind works in incomprehensible ways and for some reason the exertion of the will is intimately connected with peace of mind. Philip Kapleau illustrates this point by telling of a man who after one, four day sesshin, came to him and said that he felt much greater after the sesshin than he had during any of the one-hundred mescaline trips he had taken, many of which were extremely beautiful, since he felt the sesshin experience was his own.³⁸ I can also make a similar testimony. The knowledge that nothing artificial has been taken during the sesshin, and that one's mental condition following it is entirely the product of one's own efforts, gives a feeling of freedom unmatched by psychedelics. But even more important than this is the realization after sesshin that one is functioning on a much more efficient level and can translate the wonderful feeling one has into actions that are beneficial to others as well as oneself. This is quite different from being stoned out where one may feel great but be unable to act effectively, thus forcing the experience to be more selfish than one might want it to be. Suzuki's claim that "...the will is the man himself and Zen appeals to it,"³⁹ cannot be made for the psychedelics where the will fails to enter the picture past the actual ingestion of the drug and one finds oneself "taken" on a trip. Thus, while occasional use of the strong

38. Stated at a talk given at M. I. T. May 1, 1969.

39. Suzuki. Essays. Op. Cit. p. 247.

psychedelics can provide strong and helpful inspiration, in no case should it be assumed that they can serve as a substitute for zazen itself, and consequently in no case should their usage take up much of one's training time.

After enlightenment, the use of these drugs depends, as do all actions, upon the individual. The world of enlightenment is beyond the senses and the intellect, and once this goal has been reached one may do with the senses and the intellect whatever suits one best. This spirit is brought out in the following mondo in which the "lion" is meant to represent the senses and intellect,

"Ungan came to Isan, and Isan asked: 'I am told that you knew how to play with the lion when you were at the Yakusan monastery. Is that right?'
 Ungan said: 'That is right.'
 Isan went on: 'Do you play with it all the time? Or do you sometimes give it a rest?'
 Ungan: 'If I wish to play with it, I play; if I wish to give it a rest, I give it a rest.'
 Isan: 'When it is at rest, where is it?'
 Ungan: 'At rest, at rest!'"⁴⁰

Zen, having been the foundation for many art forms, has never been against the aesthetic experience, and since drugs like LSD are capable of providing the utmost in this kind of experience, it would seem that a Zen master so disposed could enjoy psychedelics to their fullest extent. The danger of going on a bad trip would be at its minimum since the enlightened level of consciousness has as one of its characteristics a rock like serenity to which the Zen man can relate himself at will. Notice the following from the Chinese master Yoka Daishi's "Song of Enlightenment,"

40. Suzuki. Studies. Op. Cit. p. 189.

"For walking is Zen, sitting is Zen,
 Whether talking or remaining silent, whether moving
 or standing quiet, the Essence itself is ever at ease;
 Even when greeted with swords and spears it never
 loses its quiet way,
 So with poisonous drugs, they fail to perturb its
 serenity."⁴¹

A mind in possession of such profound peace is capable of the highest pleasure and it is amusing to wonder how the following saying of Gasan (1853-1900, Rinzai) would read if he were speaking of LSD instead of alcohol,

"One 'go' of sake and I'm vivacious, five 'go'
 and I'm mild as a spring day, one 'sho' (ten 'go')
 and the wintry moon is high in the sky, the carp
 leaps from the deep pond."⁴²

Until now I have been referring to the strong psychedelics and before ending this section it is appropriate to say something concerning the milder psychedelics such as marijuana and hashish. While these drugs do not have, nearly, the ability to relate one to his spiritual capacities as do the stronger drugs, they nevertheless can be of aid in furthering inspiration by increasing one's ability to empathize with spiritual writings. Reading a book like The Three Pillars of Zen, especially the section on the enlightenment experiences of contemporary individuals, while high on these milder drugs is a very very moving experience. It seems that the perceptual and cognitive changes produced by these drugs are conducive to a more full appreciation of the spirit behind the letters and the difficulty of relating in print what something as personal as Zen is really all about. This has been not only my experience but also that of my friends who have ex-

41. Suzuki, D. T. Manual of Zen Buddhism. Grove Press, Inc., New York. 1960. p. 94.

42. Zeni Poems, Prayers, Etc. Op. Cit. p. 114.

perimented in this direction; but of course there are no hard and fast rules here. As is the case with the stronger drugs, these milder ones should not be used to the extent where time that could be spent in zazen is used up mostly by the drugs. Philip Kapleau often reminds Zen aspirants that the zazen state of mind is different from the turned on state, and he bases this claim on the personal testimony of a majority of the members of the Zen center in Rochester.⁴³ So, as was found to be the case with the stronger psychedelics, limited use for inspirational purposes can be beneficial with these weaker drugs, but beyond this one's training time is best spent in zazen.

Finally, alcohol, while it can be pleasant, does not carry the spiritual benefits of the psychedelics and while limited use won't hurt one's practice, neither will it be of any help. And, due to its dulling effect on the mind, any more than limited use is very much against the spirit of Zen training. However, after enlightenment use will vary according to the individual and while some masters have prohibited the use of alcohol by their disciples and set a good example by abstaining themselves, others, like Gasan, have indulged as they have seen fit.

43. Stated at a talk given at M. I. T. May 1, 1969.

"Ekido had become a severe teacher. His pupils feared him. One of them on duty, striking the gong to tell the time of day, missed his beats when his eye was attracted by a beautiful girl passing the temple gate.

At that moment Ekido, who was directly behind him, hit him with a stick..."⁴⁴

"...till suddenly, in a soft, shuddering convulsion, the quick of all her plasm was touched, she knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman."⁴⁵

44. Zen Flesh, Zen Bones. compiled by Paul Reps. Doubleday & Company; Garden City, New York. p. 63.

45. Lawrence, D. H. Lady Chatterley's Lover. The New American Library of World Literature, Inc.; New York, 1959. p. 163.

SEXUALITY

Why is it that down through the ages sex has so often been forced to suffer at the hands of religion? In light of the danger involved in repressing sexuality as revealed by modern psychology, the above question takes on more importance than ever before. In trying to answer it and come to terms with some of the issues that gave rise to it in the first place it is appropriate to turn first to a phenomenological work by Merleau-Ponty entitled Phenomenology of Perception. One chapter in this work is devoted to man's relationship to his sexual nature and an especially significant passage from this chapter reads,

"There is interfusion between sexuality and existence, which means that existence permeates sexuality and vice versa, so that it is impossible to determine, in a given decision or action, the proportion of sexual to other motivations, impossible to label a decision or act 'sexual' or 'nonsexual'. Thus there is in human existence a principle of indeterminacy, and this indeterminacy is not only for us, it does not stem from some imperfection of our knowledge, and we must not imagine that any God could sound our hearts and minds and determine what we owe to nature and what to freedom."⁴⁶

The most interesting part of this passage is the last sentence in which nature and freedom are contrasted while at the same time given equal status as desirable possibilities so that one's sexual life becomes entirely a personal affair, free from any "God" that would make one person's sexual life "better" (in terms of spiritual fulfillment) than any other's. But what if the God is freedom itself? If this is the case then of course nature is

46. Merleau-Ponty, M. Phenomenology of Perception. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1962. p. 169.

relegated to an inferior position. It is my belief that religion has often done just this and, while it may have been done with good intentions, it is this relegation that is responsible for much unnecessary human suffering.

First, it should be realized that since Zen claims that the word freedom is empty until we have come to Self-realization, Merleau-Ponty's statement most likely is empty also. It is no accident that religion has treated sex as an enemy, and while we may question this treatment we must do so from the religious point of view and recognize that freedom takes on special significance from this vantage point. Notice how the concept of liberation is handled in the following statement by Bassui (1327-1387 Rinzai),

"When with your whole heart you long for liberation for its own sake, beyond every doubt you will become enlightened." (emphasis is my own) ⁴⁷

Bassui places such a high value on liberation that in his terms we exist for it. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, treats freedom as a commodity which exists for us, along with nature, and which we can use if we want. It is when people misunderstand the value of true freedom that they condemn religion too harshly for its suppression of sex, making the same mistake Merleau-Ponty does in placing at least as high a value on sex as on spiritual freedom. Their mistake is of course rooted in their ignorance which can only be dispelled by spiritual enlightenment, and if they lack faith in what the spiritually enlightened say concerning true freedom then their erroneous views will stand firm.

47. Kapleau. Op. Cit. p. 183.

However, they are not the only ones to err. The very religious have often erred also on this matter but in a different way. While naturally valuing spiritual freedom above all else, they have often failed to see that there is no real incompatibility between nature and freedom. The reason that they believe they have seen one is because as long as one is attached to sensual pleasures spiritual training and mind control are extremely difficult if not impossible. Consequently, much importance is put on breaking these attachments so that spiritual progress can be made. Attachment implies ego, and the importance of getting rid of ego is paramount in preparing the mind for enlightenment. But one need not be attached to sex in order to enjoy it and there is no more reason to believe that sex is of any more harm to one's spiritual development after any attachment has been broken than is eating or sleeping. This would seem to be obvious, but in a world with so many cultures that equate the sex act with having a sense of ego, it is not really so. Merleau-Ponty bases much of his philosophical discussion in the aforementioned chapter on just such a relative assumption. In fact, it is the reason that he finds it necessary to contrast freedom with sexuality, since when ego enters into the sex act there arise the feelings of possessing or being possessed. However, there are other ways of expressing sexuality than in terms of possession, and if one feels that possession is incongruous with his religious being this is no reason to negate sex altogether. That it has been by so many religions so much of the time is not the intrinsic fault of sex but

the failure on man's part to incorporate it into his culture in a healthy manner.

With a healthy attitude free from attachment, one need not feel a dichotomy between freedom and sex. In fact, one cannot really be free and be at odds with such a fundamental part of his being. The ninth koan in the Mumonkan speaks to this point. The verse attached to the koan as a comment by Mumon himself reads,

"It is better to realize mind than body.
When mind is realized one need not worry
about body.
When mind and body become one
The man is free. Then he desires no praising."⁴⁸

What is more, not only is one free when he is at one with his human life, but every action is seen to be an equal expression of his spirituality. Thus, in a work called Centering, which is a compilation of ancient Sanskrit sayings (4-5 thousand years old) dealing with how one may work towards enlightenment in all aspects of his life, we find the following,

"When in such (sexual) embrace your senses are shaken as leaves, enter this shaking."⁴⁹

What a contrast to the Zen vow, "Tormenting passions are innumerable, I vow to uproot them all."! Just because one breaks an attachment to the sensual is no reason to believe that one must continue until he has severed the sensual from his being, if this is even possible.

Psychology has adequately pointed out the dangers present in monastic celibacy, and it is important to realize that this is not a hindrance to spirituality but a blessing.

48. Zen Flesh, Zen Bones. Op. Cit. p. 97.

49. Ibid. p. 167.

"The first story is from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. His living and talking had impressed a musician who began to think that he should give up music and become a disciple of Ramakrishna. But when he proposed this, Ramakrishna said, 'By no means. Remain a musician: music is a means of rapid transportation to life everlasting.'"50

50. Cage, John. Silence. M. I. T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1966. p. 45.

MUSIC

Suzuki writes at one point in his Essays in Zen Buddhism,

"Despairing of the utter irrationality of human affairs, the Buddhist monks have gone to the other extreme and cut themselves off even from reasonable and perfectly innocent enjoyments of life."⁵¹

One of the most tragic indications of this is the lack of music, (aside from chanting), in monastery life. In order to elucidate why I feel this is so, I would like to quote from Nietzsche's The Genealogy of Morals where he writes on Schopenhauer's theory of music, saying that in it music is,

"...seen as apart from all the other arts, the triumphant culmination of all art, not concerned like the others with the images of the phenomenal world but, rather, speaking the language of the will directly from the deep source of Being, its most elementary manifestation."⁵²

I could not agree more. Music has tremendous ability to absorb us down to our very roots since that is where it originates in the first place. Indeed, we even read that, "Confucius forgot about eating for three days, so absorbed did he become in just his music." Thus, it is sad that music is excluded from monastery life not only from an aesthetic point of view but from a spiritual one as well. Zen masters are constantly reminding us of the importance of becoming involved in what we are doing and yet one of the greatest sources of involvement is ignored in Zen training. What is

51. Suzuki, D. T. Essays. Op. Cit. p. 321.

52. Nietzsche, Friedrich. Genealogy of Morals. Anchor Books, New York, 1956. p. 237.

more, involvement is by no means the only aspect of music that is of importance to one's, shall we say, maturing. Music is a mysterious thing that seems to contain truths of a unique quality. These truths cannot be put into words but their karmic influence is profound to the extent that a life devoid of them must surely be said to be incomplete. In Zen it is said that enlightenment does not exist in a vacuum, and this of course means that the wiser and more responsive one is, the better will he be able to express enlightenment in his daily life and the more understanding he will be of others. It is my firm belief that music, whatever kind it may be that one enjoys, contributes to both wisdom and sensitivity in ways that are very important to one's spiritual growth. Consequently, in Zen terminology, music is good karma, very good karma, and while it may be necessary to put aside certain interests when starting out on the spiritual path, music should in no case be one of these.

Ideally, as one's religious practice advances one's appreciation of music should increase due to increased spiritual sensitivity. Philip Kapleau once stated that he never really appreciated certain Beethoven string quartets until after his satori, and when he did appreciate them anew it was almost like a second satori.⁵³ Conversely, his wife listened to Beethoven's A Minor Quartet the evening before her second enlightenment. Having had an intuition that it was going to hit her soon, she prepared her mind with music; it worked.⁵⁴ Music and spirituality really go hand in hand.

53. Stated in a discussion at M. I. T. in February, 1968

"Now of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow."

---A. E. Housman
"A Shropshire Lad"

CONCLUSION

One of the toughest things about Zen practice is the determination required to see it through to enlightenment.

As Harada-roshi reminds us,

"If you are ready for it, [satori], it is yours. If not, you can climb the highest mountain for it--in vain."⁵⁵

When discouragement runs high it is good to remember that the enlightenment experience is a miracle within the already existing miracle of our life as it is. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking--what can be said about them? How amazing just to be alive!

Finally, never get hung up in intellectual concerns rooted in Zen; it isn't worth it at all. To quote D. T. Suzuki,

"A brilliant intellect may fail to unravel all the mysteries of Zen, but a strong soul will drink deep of the inexhaustible fountain."⁵⁶

55. Zen: Poems, Prayers, Etc. Op. Cit. p. 97.

56. Suzuki, D. T. Essays. Op. Cit. p. 247.

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