

# Zen Mind, No Self, and the Wisdom of Kindness

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*"From the beginning all beings are Buddha."*

-Hui-neng

Zen, *Ch'an (Dhyana)*, as with the other paths here considered, has its outer exoteric and inner esoteric understanding of the View, Path and Result. In the major traditions of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition, the **View** of the nature of ultimate reality—the **Ground**—establishes the **Path** or Meditation which ultimately accomplishes the **Result** or Fruition of the View and Path. In Buddhism this Result is Buddhahood. The committed student practices both the exoteric, esoteric and "innermost secret" aspects of the View and Path in order to accomplish the Result. These distinctions of course, are dualistic conceptual subject-object elaborations. Essentially, prior to conceptual thought, there is no difference. Whether esoteric or exoteric, whether *tongo* (sudden enlightenment) or *zeno* (gradual enlightenment), *Zen* is ultimately *Buddhadharma* transmission from heartmind to heartmind, master to student, to world. Esoterically *Zen* is not bound to Buddhism. As with *Dzogchen*, *Zen* is the nondual (beyond subject and object, concept and belief) completion or perfection (primordial Ultimate *Bodhicitta*, *Bussho*, *Fukatoku*), the indwelling heartmind presence (*vidya*, *rig pa*) of the Primordial Ground that is the prior unity of *samsara* and *nirvana*. In this radical nondual view, *samsara* and *nirvana* are the same. There is no *essential* difference. *That* is what must be realized. That is the intrinsic primordial awareness wisdom liberated now, just as it is.

Exoterically, *Zen* is a path to the goal of enlightenment. Esoterically, *Zen* is not a method or a path to a goal. *Zen* is immediate experience of our prior Buddha Nature, already present in the human form, always awake, here now. *Zen* is the release from our egoic self-contraction away from the sourceground. It is this egoic habitual, chronic contraction that obstructs realization of the self-perfected state of our actual, nature, our original face. The concept of a path to this realization implies a dualism of present location and future destination. Enlightenment is always in the future. Perish the thought. The miraculous paradox is this: the perennial wisdom truth is that from the beginning the primordial presence of the Ground, our supreme source is always present, awake, at the spiritual heart (*hridayam/kokoro*) of each human being. Our heart's desire? "It is already accomplished." This is the paradox of the "spiritual path." The great nondual liberation that is the realization of our always present Buddha Nature, this ultimate "Happiness Itself" is already the case. As *Maya*, the veil of ignorance (*avidya*, *ajnana*, *marigpa*) is consumed, this truth becomes a continuity of recognition, as our self-centered material and spiritual strategies for seeking happiness yield to the compassionate wisdom of kindness that is none other than our own happiness. Such is the paradoxical

logic of human happiness.

Perhaps the greatest expression of the wisdom of Mahayana Buddhism is found in the *Heart Sutra* (from the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*): "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form." (To approach these Perfection of Wisdom Sutras we must consult the profound interpretations of Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti, Tsongkapa, and Longchenpa). Our attachment to, or "gaining idea" of this truth is however, according to Suzuki Roshi, dualistic (p. 207). Form is "I", and emptiness is something else. There is a perceiving subject separate from its object. Further, "I" desire to possess or to realize "the goal" of "emptiness" realization through "my" activity of zazen (meditation). There is a subject/object, self/other split. There is a dualism of "my meditation" and my already present Buddha Nature. Yet the Sutra continues: "Form is form, emptiness is emptiness." This is the nondual, no separation view. Form and emptiness are a prior unity. The dualistic practice of "form is emptiness, emptiness is form," is just the necessary beginning. Beginning practice is always dualistic. When we forget about ourselves, about trying to gain something for ourselves, then our concern for others spontaneously arises. Skillful kindness spontaneously arises. And this is happiness. This process is the great secret of *wu-wei*, effortless non-seeking surrender to our primordial source, Tao. The activities, images and appearances of mind continue to arise, but there is no attachment, no self to cling to them, therefore no egoic self motive or "gaining idea." Therefore no Karma. Whatever arises, pure or impure, is allowed to "self-liberate" at the very instant of its arising. This is the nondual practice of "form is form, emptiness is emptiness." When Ummon was ill he was asked "How are you?" He responded, "Sun-faced Buddha, Moon-faced Buddha." Always Buddha. There is no dilemma. No problem. No dualism. There are apparent differences, but no essential difference in all of these arising independent existences, our myriad spacetime realities. *Samsara* and *nirvana* are identical. Form is form, emptiness is emptiness. We are form (epistemological realism). We are emptiness (epistemological idealism). Form and emptiness are a prior unity. These Two Truths cannot be separate. Thus there is one truth and it transcends, yet embraces all assertions, all predicates, all concepts about it. This Ultimate Truth that is nondual Reality Itself cannot be grasped by the concept-mind. Ultimately it can only be realized through the "pristine cognition" (*dharmadhātujnana*) that is our innate Buddha mind. "Truth is One. Many are its names" (*Rig Veda*). "The only difference between a Buddha and an ordinary person is that one realizes it, the other does not... Everything is Buddha from the beginning" (Hui-neng).

So, self-centered, dualistic practice is merely the beginning. Dogen said, "*shoshaku jushaku*," continue in error. "Establish your practice in your delusion." Even in delusion, our Buddha mind is always present. Just to continue with a single-minded effort, from mistake to mistake, is the essence of the Zen master's life; is the essence of the life in Zen. "Success is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm" (Winston Churchill). No problem. "Have a cup of tea."