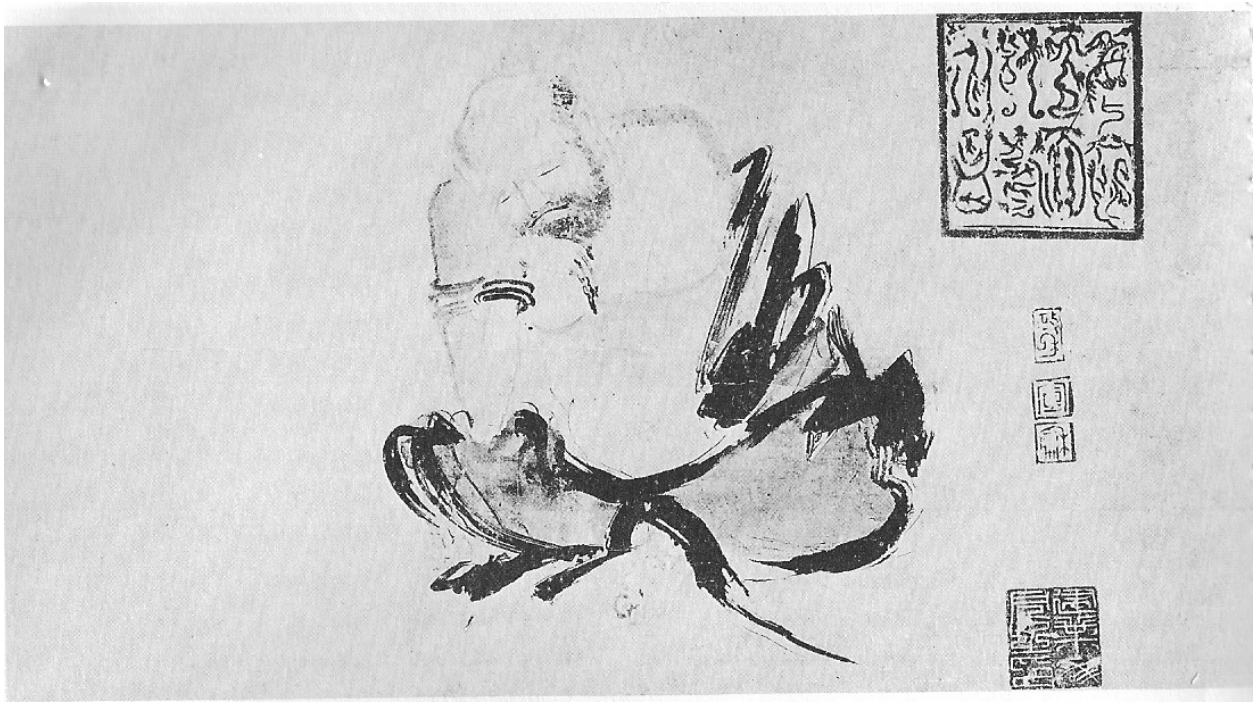

A Zen Master in Meditation, Shi K'o (Sekkaku). 10th Century

Zen Buddhism

Sōtō Zen

Essays from the *Shōbōgenzō by Dōgen Zenji*

[Dōgen Zenji (1200-1253) was the founder of the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism. This essay is part of a remarkable collection of essays called *Shōbōgenzō*, or "Treasury of the Eye of True Teaching." The commentary introducing the essays is by the translator Thomas Cleary.]

The Issue at Hand *(Genjōkōan)*

The term *genjōkōan* seems to appear first in ninth-century China and is often used in Japanese Sōtō Zen to refer to present being as the topic of meditation or the issue of Zen. *Gen* means "manifestation" or "present," *jō* means "become." *Genjō* means actuality—being as is, at hand, or accomplished, as of an accomplished fact. *Kōan* is a common Zen word which is often left untranslated, having to some extent become a naturalized English word. *Kō* means official, public, or open, as opposed to private or personal; *an* means a consideration, or a considered decision. A *kōan* in standard literary Chinese means an official report or an issue under consideration. The term was adopted in Zen with much the same meanings, only transposed into the frame of reference of Zen tradition and experience.

Genjōkōan is one of the most popular and oft-quoted essays in *Shōbōgenzō.* Written to a lay disciple, it contains a number of key points stated in a most concise fashion. The very first paragraph contains a complete outline of Zen, in a covert presentation of the so-called "five ranks" (*go i*) device of the original Chinese Sōtō Zen school. The scheme of the five ranks—relative within absolute, absolute within relative, coming from within the absolute, arriving in the relative, and simultaneous attainment in both relative and absolute—is not overtly used in Dōgen's work, perhaps because of the confusion surrounding it, but its structures are to be found throughout *Shōbōgenzō.*

Following this summary introduction, the essay proceeds to the discussion of enlightenment. Dōgen says the way to enlightenment is to forget the self. The self in this sense refers to an accumulation of habits, including the habit of attachment to this accumulation as a genuine personality. Dōgen calls this forgetting "shedding body and mind," an expression which is said to have galvanized his awareness as a young man and which he repeatedly uses to describe Zen study. Commentators on Dōgen's lectures describe it in these terms: "Each moment' of time is thoughtless; things do not provoke a second thought," and "This is the time when the whole mind and body attains great freedom."

This, however, is not the whole issue. In one of his lectures Dōgen says that "shedding body and mind" is the beginning of the effort, and in *Genjōkōan* he affirms that there is continuing progress in buddhahood, going beyond the attainment of enlightenment: "There is ceasing the traces of enlightenment, which causes one to forever leave the traces of enlightenment which is cessation." In the *Hokke* scripture Buddha reveals to his liberated disciples that nirvana, cessation of afflictive habits, which had been expediently represented as the goal, is as it were a resting place on an infinite path.

In the essay *The Business of Progress (or transcendence) of Buddha,* also in *Shōbōgenzō,* Dōgen wrote, "To go on informing the Buddha of today it is not only today is called the business of progress of Buddha." The celebrated Zen master Hakuin said, "Without cultivation and practice after enlightenment, many who have seen the essence miss the boat"; and Hakuin's assistant Tōrei said, "Lesser enlightenment turns out to be a hindrance to great enlightenment. If you give up lesser enlightenments and don't cling to them, great enlightenment will surely be realized." Dōgen says that there are differences in depth and breadth of the realization of enlightenment, and speaks here of enlightenment as being enlightened by all things. This leads to the issue of perspective.

Dōgen states that delusion is a matter of experiencing things with the burden of the self—the bundle of mental habits, ingrained views, which is identified with the self. This is a basic issue of all Buddhist thought. The condition of the self, with its set of conditioned perceptions and views, is implicitly taken as a kind of absolute or veritable point of reference if one takes one's experience as conceived to be reality. In order to overcome hidden prejudice in the form of unquestioned views, Dōgen says that introspection is necessary, to see that things have no absolute identity, that they are not necessarily or totally as one may view them.

But then Dōgen goes on to point out the absoluteness, so to speak, of relative identity. Logically, if particular things exist, or are defined, relative to one another and therefore lack absolute identity, yet that absolute identitylessness still depends on their relative identity. The approach Dōgen takes, however, is not that of deduction but of direct witness (*genryō*), which he refers to, in classic Zen terminology, as the realms of before and after being disconnected. Thus Dōgen explains the traditional "characteristics of emptiness" called birthlessness and nonperishing in terms of the noncoexistence of before and after, or the nonconcurrence of a state with its own nonexistence. Dōgen's emphasis here seems to be not on discursive understanding of this point of logic, but on presence of mind in the most thoroughgoing sense, direct experience of the present.

Dōgen also speaks of enlightenment in terms of the universal being reflected in the individual; this "merging" of universe and individual does not, however, obliterate the individual or restrict the universal. This leads to the apparent paradox of life being at once finite and infinite. One life, or one sphere of experience, contains everything that is within its scope and nothing that is beyond its range. At every moment we reach, or are at, the full extent of our experience; and yet this never limits the potential of experience in itself. Each moment is complete, hence infinite, in itself, though it be finite as a point of comparison with past or future. In the Kegon philosophy, this interpenetration of the finite and the infinite is represented by the figure of "arriving in one step," each moment of awareness being the focal point of the whole nexus of existence. Again Dōgen drives at the full experience of the present without conceptually delineating it.

Finally Dōgen quotes a classic Zen story alluding to the necessity of practical application even though truth, or enlightenment, is inherent in everyone. A monk asks his teacher why he uses a fan if the nature of wind is eternal and omnipresent; the teacher replies that the student knows the nature of eternity but not the principle of omnipresence, and to illustrate this principle the teacher just fans himself. As one of the Kegon philosophers said, "If not for practice flowing from reality, there is no means to merge with reality."

The Issue at Hand

When all things are Buddha-teachings, then there is delusion and enlightenment, there is cultivation of practice, there is birth, there is death, there are Buddhas, there are sentient beings. When myriad things are all not self, there is no delusion, no enlightenment, no Buddhas, no sentient beings, no birth, no death. Because the Buddha Way originally

sprang forth from abundance and paucity, there is birth and death, delusion and enlightenment, sentient beings and Buddhas. Moreover, though this is so, flowers fall when we cling to them, and weeds only grow when we dislike them.

Acting on and witnessing myriad things with the burden of oneself is "delusion." Acting on and witnessing oneself in the advent of myriad things is enlightenment. Great enlightenment about delusion is Buddhas; great delusion about enlightenment is sentient beings. There are also those who attain enlightenment on top of enlightenment, and there are those who are further deluded in the midst of delusion. When the Buddhas are indeed the Buddhas, there is no need to be self-conscious of being Buddhas; nevertheless it is realizing buddhahood—Buddhas go on realizing.

In seeing forms with the whole body-mind, hearing sound with the whole body-mind, though one intimately understands, it isn't like reflecting images in a mirror, it's not like water and the moon—when you witness one side, one side is obscure.

Studying the Buddha Way is studying oneself. Studying oneself is forgetting oneself. Forgetting oneself is being enlightened by all things. Being enlightened by all things is causing the body-mind of oneself and the body-mind of others to be shed. There is ceasing the traces of enlightenment, which causes one to forever leave the traces of enlightenment which is cessation..

When people first seek the Teaching, they are far from the bounds of the Teaching. Once the Teaching is properly conveyed in oneself, already one is the original human being.

When someone rides in a boat, as he looks at the shore he has the illusion that the shore is moving. When he looks at the boat under him, he realizes the boat is moving. In the same way, when one takes things for granted with confused ideas of body-mind, one has the illusion that one's own mind and own nature are permanent; but if one pays close attention to one's own actions, the truth that things are not self will be clear.

Kindling becomes ash, and cannot become kindling again. However, we should not see the ash as after and the kindling as before. Know that kindling abides in the normative state of kindling, and though it has a before and after, the realms of before and after are disconnected. Ash, in the normative state of ash, has before and after. Just as that kindling, after having become ash, does not again become kindling, so after dying a person does not become alive again. This being the case, not saying that life becomes death is an established custom in Buddhism—therefore it is called *unborn.* That death does not become life is an established teaching of the Buddha; therefore we say *imperishable.* Life is an individual temporal state, death is an individual temporal state. It is like winter and spring—we don't think winter becomes spring, we don't say spring becomes summer.

People's attaining enlightenment is like the moon reflected in water. The moon does not get wet, the water isn't broken. Though it is a vast expansive light, it rests in a little bit of water—even the whole moon, the whole sky, rests in a dewdrop on the grass, rests in even a single droplet of water. That enlightenment does not shatter people is like the moon not piercing the water. People's not obstructing enlightenment is like the drop of dew not obstructing the moon in the sky. The depth is proportionate to the height. As for the length and brevity of time, examining the great and small bodies of water, you should discern the breadth and narrowness of the moon in the sky.

Before one has studied the Teaching fully in body and mind, one feels one is already sufficient in the Teaching. If the body and mind are replete with the Teaching, in one respect one senses insufficiency. For example, when one rides a boat out onto the ocean where there are no mountains and looks around, it only appears round, and one can see no other, different characteristics. However, this ocean is not round, nor is it square—the remaining qualities of the ocean are inexhaustible. It is like a palace, it is like ornaments, yet as far as our eyes can see, it only seems round. It is the same with all things—in the realms of matter, beyond conceptualization, they include many aspects, but we see and comprehend only what the power of our eye of contemplative study reaches. If we inquire into the "family ways" of myriad things, the qualities of seas and mountains, beyond seeming square or round, are endlessly numerous. We should realize there exist worlds everywhere. It's not only thus in out of the way places—know that even a single drop right before us is also thus.

As a fish travels through water, there is no bound to the water no matter how far it goes; as a bird flies through the sky, there's no bound to the sky no matter how far it flies. While this is so, the fish and birds have never been apart from the water and the sky—it's just that when the need is large the use is large, and when the requirement is small the use is small. In this way, though the bounds are unfailingly reached everywhere and tread upon in every single place, the bird would instantly die if it left the sky and the fish would instantly die if it left the water. Obviously, water is life; obviously the sky is life. There is bird being life. There is fish being life. There is life being bird, there is life being fish. There must be progress beyond this—there is cultivation and realization, the existence of the living one being like this. Under these circumstances, if there were birds or fish who attempted to traverse the

waters or the sky after having found the limits of the water or sky, they wouldn't find a path in the water or the sky—they won't find any place. When one finds this place, this action accordingly manifests as the issue at hand; when one finds this path, this action accordingly manifests as the issue at hand. This path, this place, is not big or small, not self or other, not preexistent, not now appearing—therefore it exists in this way. In this way, if someone cultivates and realizes the Buddha Way, it is *attaining a principle, mastering the principle;* it is *encountering a practice, cultivating the practice.* In this there is a place where the path has been accomplished, hence the unknowability of the known boundary is born together and studies along with the thorough investigation of the Buddha Teaching of this knowing—therefore it is thus. Don't get the idea that the attainment necessarily becomes one's own knowledge and view, that it would be known by discursive knowledge. Though realizational comprehension already takes place, implicit being is not necessarily obvious—*why necessarily* is there obvious becoming?

Zen Master Hōtetsu of Mt. Mayoku was using a fan. A monk asked him about this: "The nature of wind is eternal and all-pervasive—why then do you use a fan?" The master said, "You only know the nature of wind is eternal, but do not yet know the principle of its omnipresence." The monk asked, "What is the principle of its omnipresence?" The master just fanned. The monk bowed.

The experience of the Buddha Teaching, the living road of right transmission, is like this. To say that since (the nature of wind) is permanent one should not use a fan, and that one should feel the breeze even when not using a fan, is not knowing permanence and not knowing the nature of the wind either. Because the nature of wind is eternal, the wind of Buddhism causes the manifestation of the earth's being gold and by participation develops the long river into butter.

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The Nature of Things *(Hossho)*

The *nature of things* is a fundamental term of Mahayana Buddhism. It is defined as being the nature of *thusness* (*tathatā*), *emptiness* (*śūnyatā),* and *nirvana.* In pristine Buddhism, nirvana, or "extinction," refers to the attainment of dispassion, peace of mind, freedom from anxiety and mental afflictions. In Mahayana Buddhism, nirvana is commonly used in reference to things, with the meaning of "emptiness." In terms of the person, nirvana refers to the extinction of false description, of fixed views; this results in awareness of the "empty" or "open" nature of things Emptiness means that things in themselves are indefinable; being dependent on relations, things are said to have no individual or absolute nature of their own. It is this nonabsoluteness which is called emptiness. Another way of expressing it is in terms of inconceivability. The descriptions by which things are defined, and even the experience of things, depend on the mind, and are not the supposed things in themselves. Thus the nature of things in themselves is said to be inconceivable, beyond description, or "empty."

Yet this "emptiness" has no existence of its own either, since it is nothing but the nature of things as relative and identityless. That is to say, the emptiness of things and the relative existence of things are not antithetical but identical in essence. The term *thusness* embraces both of these aspects of reality—the relative existence of things and the emptiness of absolute existence of particular things. These two perspectives are referred to as two facets of thusness—that which is unchanging (absolute emptiness) and that which accords with conditions (relative existence). The term *thusness* itself alludes to the simultaneous realization of emptiness and existence, experiencing directly and openly without fixed conceptual glosses, seeing everything as being simply "thus."

This essay by Dōgen clearly aims at countering the mistaken notion that the nature of things *qua* emptiness is opposed to or exclusive of the appearances of things, or relative existence. This erroneous notion posits the obliteration of appearances as the means of realizing the nature of things, something which Dōgen opposes throughout his works. Rather than trying to obliterate anything. Dōgen aims at breaking through the barrier of conception to realize the nature of things in everything, to realize the nature of things *is* everything.

The Nature of Things

In meditation study, whether following scripture or following a teacher, one *becomes enlightened alone without a teacher.* Becoming *enlightened alone without a teacher* is the activity of the nature of things. Even though one be *born knowing,* one should seek a teacher to inquire about the Path. Even in the case of *knowledge of the birthless*[1] one should definitely direct effort to mastering the Path. Which individuals are not *born knowing?* Even up to enlightenment, the fruit of buddhahood, it is a matter of following scriptures and teachers. Know that encountering a scripture or a teacher and attaining *absorption in the nature of things* is called the *born knowing* that attains *absorption in the nature of things* on encountering *absorption in the nature of things.* This is attaining knowledge of past lives, attaining the three superknowledges,[2] realizing unexcelled enlightenment, encountering inborn knowledge and learning inborn knowledge, encountering teacherless knowledge and spontaneous knowledge and correctly conveying teacherless knowledge and spontaneous knowledge.

If one were not *born knowing,* even though might encounter scriptures and teachers one could not hear of the *nature of things,* one could not witness the *nature of things.* The *Great Path* is not the principle of *like someone drinking water knows for himself whether it's warm or cool.* All Buddhas as well as all bodhisattvas and all living beings clarify the Great Path of the nature of all things by the power of inborn knowledge. To clarify the *Great Path* of the *nature of things* following scriptures or teachers is called clarifying the *nature of things* by oneself. Scriptures are the nature of things, arc oneself. Teachers are the *nature of things,* are oneself. The *nature of things* is the teacher, the *nature of things* is oneself. Because the *nature of things* is oneself, it is not the self misconceived by heretics and demons. In the *nature of things* there are no heretics or demons—it is only *eating breakfast, eating lunch, having a snack.* Even so, those who claim to have studied for a long time, for twenty or thirty years, pass their whole life in a daze when they read or hear talk of the *nature of things.* Those who claim to have fulfilled Zen study and assume the rank of teacher, while they hear the voice of the *nature of things* and see the forms of the *nature of things,* yet their body and mind, objective and subjective experience, always just rise and fall in the pit of confusion. What this is like is wrongly thinking that the *nature of things* will appear when the whole world we perceive is obliterated, that the *nature of things* is not the present totality of phenomena. The principle of the *nature of things* cannot be like this. This *totality of phenomena* and the *nature of things* are far beyond any question of sameness or difference, beyond talk of distinction or identity. It is not past, present, or future, not annihilation or eternity, not form, sensation, conception, conditioning, or consciousness—therefore it is the *nature of things.*

Zen Master Baso said, "All living beings, for infinite eons, have never left absorption in the nature of things: they are always within absorption in the nature of things, wearing clothes, eating, conversing—the functions of the six sense organs, and all activities, all are the nature of things."

The *nature of things* spoken of by Baso is the *nature of things* spoken of by the *nature of things.* It learns from the same source as Baso, is a fellow student of the *nature of things:* since hearing of it takes place, how could there not be speaking of it? The fact is that *the nature of things rides Baso;* it is *people eat food, food eats people.* Ever since the *nature of things,* it has never left *absorption in the nature of things.* It doesn't leave the *nature of things* after the *nature of things,* it doesn't leave the *nature of things* before the *nature of things.* The *nature of things,* along with *infinite eons,* is *absorption in the nature of things;* the *nature of things* is called *infinite eons.* Therefore the *here* of the immediate present is the *nature of things;* the *nature of things* is the *here* of the immediate present. *Wearing clothes and eating food* is the *wearing clothes and eating food of absorption in the nature of things.* It is the manifestation of the *nature of things* of food, it is the manifestation of the *nature of things* of eating, it is the

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[1] "The Birthless" means emptiness, also immediate experience without comparison of before and after. This line could read "Even if one be without inborn knowledge . . . ," but in Buddhism the term conventionally refers to knowledge of the uncreated.

[2] The three superknowledges are paranormal perceptions of saints and Buddhas: knowledge of birth and death of beings in the past, knowledge of the features of birth and death of beings in the future, and knowledge of extinguishing mental contaminations. In Zen all three are sometimes interpreted in reference to insight into the fundamental mind, which is in essence the same in all times and has no inherent contamination.

manifestation of the *nature of things* of clothing, it is the manifestation of the *nature of things* of wearing.[3] If one does not dress or eat, does not talk or answer, does not use the senses, does not act at all, it is not the *nature of things,* it is *not entering the nature of things.*

The manifestation of the Path of the immediate present was transmitted by the Buddhas, reaching Shakyamuni Buddha; correctly conveyed by the Zen adepts, it reached Baso. Buddha to Buddha, adept to adept, correctly conveyed and handed on, it has been correctly communicated in *absorption in the nature of things.* Buddhas and Zen adepts, *not entering,* enliven the *nature of things.*[4] Though externalist scholars may have the term *nature of things,* it is not the *nature of things* spoken of by Baso. Though the power to propose that *living beings* who *don't leave the nature of things* are not the *nature of things* may achieve something, this is three or four new layers of the *nature of things.* To speak, reply, function, and act as if it were not the *nature of things* must be the *nature of things.* The days and months of *infinite eons* are the passage of the *nature of things.* The same is so of past, present, and future. If you take the limit of body and mind as the limit of body and mind and think it is far from the *nature of things,* this thinking still is the *nature of things.* If you don't consider the limit of body and mind as the limit of body and mind and think it is not the *nature of things,* this thought too is the *nature of things.* Thinking and not thinking are both the *nature of things.* To learn that since we have said *nature* (it means that) water must not flow and trees must not bloom and wither, is heretical.

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "Such characteristics, such nature." So *flowers blooming* and *leaves falling* are *such nature.* Yet ignorant people think that there could not be *flowers blooming and leaves falling* in the realm of the *nature of things.* For the time being one should not question another. You should model your doubt on verbal expression. Bringing it up as others have said it, you should investigate it over and over again—there will be escape from before.[5] The aforementioned thoughts are not wrong thinking, they are just thoughts while not yet having understood. It is not that this thinking will be caused to disappear when one understands. Flowers blooming and leaves falling are of themselves flowers blooming and leaves falling. The thinking that is thought that there can't be flowers blooming or leaves falling in the *nature of things* is the *nature of things.* It is thought which has fallen out according to a pattern; therefore it is thought of the *nature of things.* The whole thinking of thinking of the *nature of things* is such an appearance.

Although Baso's statement *all is the nature of things* is truly an *eighty* or *ninety percent* statement, there are many points which Baso has not expressed. That is to say, he doesn't say *the natures of all things do not leave the nature of things,*[6] he doesn't say *the natures of all things are all the nature of things.* He doesn't say *all living beings do not leave living beings,*[7] he doesn't say *all living beings are a little bit of the nature of things,* he doesn't say *all living beings are a little bit of all living beings,*[8] he doesn't say *the natures of all things are a little bit of living*

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[3] Var. Lect. "Clothing is the manifestation of the nature of things, food is the manifestation of the nature of things, eating is the manifestation of the nature of things, wearing is the manifestation of the nature of things."

[4] Here "not entering" means that the nature of things is not something external to be entered; rather it is something omnipresent to be lived.

[5] This passage seems to point to *kōan* practice, specifically the use of *kosoku kōan* or ancient *kōan*, Zen sayings or stories used to focus awareness in certain ways. "There will be escape from before" refers to the shedding of former views or states of mind.

[6] The (individual) natures of things are not apart from the (universal) nature of things, because individual natures are relative, hence empty of absolute identity—this emptiness itself is the universal nature of things.

[7] Living beings *qua* living beings—that is, in terms of relative identity or conditional existence—are always such, by definition.

[8] "All living beings" as seen from one point of view (such as that of human perception) are a small part of "all living beings" as seen or experienced from all possible points of reference. This is reminiscent of the Kegon teaching of all realms of being mutually containing one another. According to the Tendai doctrine, the totality of all living beings is defined in terms of ten realms or universes, but as each contains the potential of all the others, this makes one hundred realms. The Kegon doctrine takes this further and says that each of the latent or potential realms in each

beings.[9] He doesn't say *half a living being is half the nature of things.*[10] He doesn't say *nonexistence of living beings is the nature of things,*[11] he doesn't say *the nature of things is not living beings,* he doesn't say *the nature of things exudes the nature of things,* he doesn't say *living beings shed living beings.* We only hear that living beings do not leave absorption in the nature of things—he doesn't say that the nature of things cannot leave absorption in living beings, there is no statement of absorption in the nature of things exiting and entering absorption in living beings. Needless to say, we don't hear of the attainment of buddhabood of the *nature of things,* we don't hear *living beings realize the nature of things,* we don't hear *the nature of things* realizes the nature of things, there is no statement of how *inanimate beings don't leave the nature of things.* Now one should ask Baso, what do you call "living beings"? If you call the *nature of things* living beings, it is *what thing comes thus?* If you call living beings living beings, it is *if you speak of it as something, you miss it.* Speak quickly, speak quickly!

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Birth and Death *(Shoji)*

Birth and Death, which is undated in the *Shōbōgenzō,* integrates transcendence with being in the world. The theme is a reflection of the basic principle that existence is empty and emptiness is existence, which is put into practice by neither grasping nor rejecting, being free from both craving and aversion.

In a well-known Zen story a monk comes to a Zen master, who asks him where he has come from. "The South," replies the monk. The master asks the monk about Buddhism in the South, a region abounding in Zen centers; the monk answers, "There's a lot of discussion going on." The master says, "How can that compare with me planting the fields here and making rice balls to eat?" The monk, who apparently did not see anything enlightening or liberating about this, said, "What can you do about the world?" The master said, "What do you call the world?"

In the final analysis, according to the Zen teachings, it is not that the world binds people, it is people who bind themselves to the world. Bondage and delusion do not come from the world itself, but from ideas and attitudes regarding the world, from people's relation to the world. Therefore the question of what can be done about the world calls forth the question of what people think and feel the world to be.

Birth and Death

"Because there is Buddha in birth and death, there is no birth and death." Also, "because there is no Buddha in birth and death, one is not deluded by birth and death." These are the words of two Zen teachers called Kassan and Jōsan. Being the words of enlightened people, they were surely not uttered without reason. People who want to get out of birth and death should understand what they mean.

If people seek Buddha outside of birth and death, that is like heading north to go south, like facing south to try to see the north star: accumulating causes of birth and death all the more, they have lost the way to liberation. Simply understanding that birth and death is itself nirvana, there is nothing to reject as birth and death, nothing to seek as nirvana. Only then will one have some measure of detachment from birth and death.

It is a mistake to assume that one moves from birth to death. Birth, being one point in time, has a before and after; therefore in Buddhism birth is called unborn. Extinction too, being one point in time, also has before and after, so it is said that extinction is nonextinction. When we say "birth" there is nothing but birth, and when we say

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realm also contains the latent potential of every other realm, so they are, in terms of their endless interrelation, multiplied and remultiplied infinitely.

[9] In terms of the doctrine of the interdependence of everything in the cosmos, as exemplified by the Kegon teaching, all things are a part of the existence of each and every thing and being.

[10] Essence (emptiness of absolute identity) and characteristics (existence of relative identity) may be likened to two "halves" of the totality of all existence and the nature of things.

[11] "Nonexistence of living beings" as emptiness of an absolute nature of "living beings" is the nature of things *qua* emptiness.

"extinction" there is nothing but extinction. Therefore when birth comes it is just birth, and when extinction comes it is just extinction. In facing birth and extinction, don't reject, don't long.

This birth and death is the life of the Buddha. If we try to reject or get rid of this, we would lose the life of the Buddha. If we linger in this and cling to birth and death, this too is losing the life of the Buddha; it is stopping the Buddha's manner of being. When we have no aversion or longing, only then do we reach the heart of the Buddha.

However, don't figure it in your mind, don't say it in words. Just letting go of and forgetting body and mind, casting them into the house of Buddha, being activated by the Buddha—when we go along in accord with this, then without applying effort or expending the mind we part from birth and death and become Buddhas. Who would linger in the mind?

There is a very easy way to become a Buddha: not doing any evil, having no attachment to birth and death, sympathizing deeply with all beings, respecting those above, sympathizing with those below, not feeling aversion or longing for anything, not thinking or worrying—this is called Buddha. Don't seek it anywhere else.

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All selections from:

Cleary, Thomas, trans. *Shōbōgenzō: Zen Essays by Dōgen*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1986.

Rinzai Zen

Zen Comments on the Mumonkan

by Zenkei Shibayama

[For more than seven centuries *Mumonkan* has been used in Zen monasteries to train monks, and by lay Buddhists as a means of refining their religious experience. The *Mumonkan* is a thirteenth-century collection of the sayings and doings of Zen Masters in which they freely and directly express their Zen experience, together with commentary by Master Mumon. As guideposts to students in training, a Zen Master will often make his own comments, or teisho, on the *Mumonkan*.

After Shibayama Roshi, the Zen Master of Nanzenji Monastery (from 1948-1967) in Kyoto, gave his teisho (commentary) on passages from the *Mumonkan* to American college students, he was asked to supervise the translation of the *Mumonkan* into English and to write his comments based on the teisho he had been giving for a quarter-century to Zen Students in training in his monastery.—from the Preface by Kenneth W. Morgan. This first kōan, "Joshu's 'Mu'" is undoubtedly the most famous of Zen kōans. Here we have, first, the kōan, Mumon's 13th century commentary and poem, and then Shibayama Roshi's teisho on the kōan.]

Joshu's "Mu"

KŌAN

A monk once asked Master Joshu, "Has a dog the Buddha Nature or not?" Joshu said, "Mu!"

MUMON'S COMMENTARY

In studying Zen, one must pass the barriers set up by ancient 'Zen Masters. For the attainment of incomparable satori, one has to cast away his discriminating mind. Those who have not passed the barrier and have not cast away the discriminating mind are all phantoms haunting trees and plants.

Now, tell me, what is the barrier of the Zen Masters? Just this "Mu"—it is the barrier of Zen. It is thus called "the gateless barrier of Zen." Those who have passed the barrier will not only see Joshu clearly, but will go hand in hand with all the Masters of the past, see them face to face. You will see with the same eye that they see with and hear with the same ear. Wouldn't it be wonderful? Don't you want to pass the barrier? Then concentrate yourself into this "Mu," with your 360 bones and 84,000 pores, making your whole body one great inquiry. Day and night work intently at it. Do not attempt nihilistic or dualistic interpretations. It is like having bolted a red hot iron ball. You try to vomit it but cannot.

Cast away your illusory discriminating knowledge and consciousness accumulated up to now, and keep on working harder. After a while, when your efforts come to fruition, all the oppositions (such as in and out) will naturally be identified. You will then be like a dumb person who has had a wonderful dream: he only knows it personally, within himself. Suddenly you break through the barrier; you will astonish heaven and shake the earth.

It is as if you have snatched the great sword of General Kan. You kill the Buddha if you meet him; you kill the ancient Masters if you meet them. On the brink of life and death you are utterly free, and in the six realms and the four modes of life you live, with great joy, a genuine life in complete freedom.

Now, how should one strive? With might and main work at this "Mu," and *be* "Mu." If you do not stop or waver in your striving, then behold, when the Dharma candle is lighted, darkness is at once enlightened.

MUMON'S POEM

The dog! The Buddha Nature!
The Truth is manifested in full.
A moment of yes-and-no:
Lost are your body and soul.

TEISHO ON THE KŌAN

This kōan is extremely short and simple. Because of this simplicity, it is uniquely valuable and is an excellent kōan.

Joshu is the name of a place in northern China, and Master Junen (778–897) who lived in Kannon-in Temple at Joshu, is now generally known as Master Joshu. He was an exceptionally long-lived Zen Master who died at the age of one hundred and twenty years.

Joshu was fifty-seven years old when his teacher Nansen died. The great persecution of Buddhism by Emperor Bu-so (845) took place in Joshu's sixty-seventh year, Master Rinzai Gigen died (867) in Joshu's ninetieth year, and Master Gyozan died when he was in his one hundred and fifteenth year. This means that Joshu lived toward the end of the Tang dynasty when Zen with its creative spirits flourished in China. At that time Joshu was one of the leading figures in Zen circles. People who described his Zen said, "His lips give off light," and greatly respected him.

Joshu was born in a village near Soshufti in the southwestern part of Saritosho and entered a Buddhist temple when he was a young boy. Later, while he was still young, he came to Chishuto study under Master Nansen.

When he first met Nansen, the latter was resting in bed. Nansen asked him, "Where have you been recently?" "At Zuizo [literally "auspicious image"], Master," replied Joshu. "Did you then see the Auspicious Image?" the Master asked. Joshu said, "I did not see the Image, but I have seen a reclining Tathagata." Nansen then got up and asked, "Do you already have a Master to study under or not?" Joshu replied, "I have." Nansen asked, "Who is he?" At this, Joshu came closer to Nansen and, bowing to him, said, "I am glad to see you so well in spite of such a severe cold." Nansen recognized in him unusual character and allowed him to be his disciple. After that, Joshu steadily carried on his Zen studies under Nansen.

When Joshu was fifty-seven years old, his Master Nansen died, and four years later Joshu started on a pilgrimage with the determination: "Even a seven-year-old child, if he is greater than I am, I'll ask him to teach me. Even a hundred-year-old man, if I am greater than he is, I'll teach him." He continued on the pilgrimage to deepen and refine his Zen spirituality until he reached his eightieth year. Later he stayed at Kannon-in Temple, in Joshu, and was active as a leading Zen Master of the time in northern China, together with Rinzai.

In the biography of Joshu a series of mondo are recorded, from which this kōan is extracted. There have been many attempts to interpret these mondo and to explain the kōan in relation to them. We do not have to worry about such attempts here but should directly grip the kōan itself. Knowing well its context, Master Mumon presents a simple, direct, and clear kōan. Its simplicity plays an important role.

"A monk once asked Master Joshu, 'Has a dog the Buddha Nature or not?' " This monk was well aware that all sentient beings have the Buddha Nature without exception. This is therefore a piercingly effective and unapproachable question which would not be answered if the Master were to say Yes or No. The monk is demanding that Joshu show him the real Buddha Nature, and he is not asking for its interpretation or conceptual understanding. What a cutting question!

Joshu, like the genuine capable Master that he was, answered "Mu!" without the least hesitation. He threw himself—the whole universe—out as "Mu" in front of the questioner. Here is no Joshu, no world, but just "Mu." This is the kōan of Joshu's "Mu."

The experience of the Buddha Nature itself is creatively expressed here by
"Mu." Although literally "Mu" means No, in this case it points to the income parable satori which transcends both yes and no, to the religious experience of the Truth one can attain when he casts away his discriminating mind. It has nothing to do with the dualistic interpretation of yes and no, being and nonbeing. It is Truth itself, the Absolute itself.

Joshu, the questioning monk, and the dog are however only incidental to the story, and they do not have any vital significance in themselves. Unless one grasps the kōan within himself as he lives here and now, it ceases to be a real kōan. We should not read it as an old story; you yourself have to *be* directly "Mu" and make not only the monk, but Joshu as well, show the white feather. Then the Buddha Nature is "Mu"; Joshu is "Mu." Not only that, you yourself and the whole universe are nothing but "Mu." Further, "Mu" itself falls far short, it is ever the unnamable "it."

Master Daie says, "Joshu's 'Mu'-work directly at it. Be just it." He is telling us to be straightforwardly no-self, be "Mu," and present it right here. This is a very inviting instruction indeed.

Once my own teacher, Master Bukai, threw his nyoi (a stick about fifty centimeters long which a Zen Master always carries with him) in front of me and demanded, "Now, transcend the yes-and-no of this nyoi!" and he did not allow me even a moment's hesitation. Training in Zen aims at the direct experience of breaking through to concrete Reality. That breaking through to Reality has to be personally attained by oneself. Zen can never be an idea or

knowledge, which are only shadows of Reality. You may reason out that "Mu" transcends both yes and no, that it is the Absolute Oneness where all dualistic discrimination is exhausted. While you are thus conceptualizing, real "Mu" is lost forever.

My teacher also asked me once, "Show me the form of 'Mu '!" When I said, "It has no form whatsoever," he pressed me, saying "I want to see that form which has no-form." How cutting and drastic! Unless one can freely and clearly present the form of "Mu," it turns out to b a meaningless corpse.

In the biography of Master Hakuin we read the following moving story of his first encounter with his teacher, Master Shoju. Shoju asked Hakuin, "Tell me, what is Joshu's 'Mu'?" Hakuin elatedly replied, "Pervading the universe! Not a spot whatsoever to take hold of!" As soon as he had given that answer, Shoju took hold of Hakuin's nose and gave it a twist. "I am quite at ease to take hold of it," said Shoju, laughing aloud. The next moment he released it and abused Hakuin, "You! Dead monk in a cave! Are you self-satisfied with such 'Mu'?" This completely put Hakuin out of countenance.

We have to realize that this one word "Mu" has such exhaustive depth and lucidity that once one has really grasped it as his own he has the ability to penetrate all Zen kōans.

Often people remark that "Mu" is an initial kōan for beginners, which is a great mistake. A kōan in Zen is fundamentally different from questions and problems in general. Etymologically the term *kōan* means "the place where the truth is." In actual training its role is to smash up our dualistic consciousness and open our inner spiritual eye to a new vista. In actual cases there may be differences in the depth of the spirituality and ability of Zen students who break through a kōan. This is inevitable for human beings living in this world. For any kōan, however, there should be no such discrimination or gradation as an initial kōan for beginners or difficult ones for the advanced. An old Zen Master said, "If you break through one kōan, hundreds and thousands of kōan have all been penetrated at once." Another Master said, "It is like cutting a reel of thread: one cut, and all is cut."

Hakuin Ekaku (1685-1768)

The use of a kōan in Zen training developed spontaneously in the southern Sung dynasty in China when a reminiscent, traditionalist tendency began to prevail in Zen circles. In the early period of the southern Sung, Joshu's "Mu" was already being used widely as a kōan. Mumon himself was driven into the abyss of Great Doubt by this kōan and finally had the experience of breaking through it. Out of his own training and experience, he must have extracted the most essential part from several mondo and presented it to his disciples as a simple, direct kōan.

This kōan is taken from a mondo between Joshu and a monk, and *Joshu Zenji Goroku* ("Sayings of Master Joshu") and a few other books record similar mondo. In the chapter "Joshu Junen" in *Goto Egen,* volume 4, we read, "A monk asked Joshu, 'Has a dog the Buddha Nature or not?' The Master said, 'Mu.' The monk asked, 'From Buddhas above down to creeping creatures like ants, all have the Buddha Nature. Why is it that a dog has not?' 'Because he has ignorance and attachment,' the Master replied."

Joshu Zenji Goroku has the following mondo: "A monk asked, 'Has a dog the Buddha Nature or not?' The Master said, 'Mu.' Monk: 'Even creeping creatures all have the Buddha Nature. Why is it that the dog has not?' Master: 'Because he has ignorance and attachment.' "

Another monk asked Joshu, "Has a dog the Buddha Nature or not?" The Master said, "U" (Yes). The monk asked, "Having the Buddha Nature, why is he in such a dog-body?" Master: "Knowingly he dared to be so."

Although generally Joshu is supposed to have originated this mondo on the Buddha Nature, we read the following mondo in the biography of Master Ikan (755-817) of Kozenji at Keicho: Monk: "Has a dog the Buddha Nature or not?" Master: "Yes" (U). Monk: "Have you, O Master, the Buddha Nature or not?'; Master: "I have not." Monk: "All sentient beings have the Buddha Nature. Why is it that you alone, Master, have not?" Master: "I am not among all sentient beings." Monk: "If you are not among sentient beings, are you then a Buddha or not?" Master: "I am not a Buddha." Monk: "What kind of thing are you after all?" Master: "I am not a thing either." Monk: "Can it be seen and thought of?" Master: "Even if you try to think about it and know it, you are unable to do so. It is therefore called 'unknowable.' " (*Keitoku Dento-roku*, volume 7)

Let us put aside for the time being historical studies of the kōan. "Mu" as a kōan is to open our spiritual eye to Reality, to "Mu," that is, to Joshu's Zen—this is the sole task of this kōan, and everything else is just complementary and not of primary importance. We may simply read about it for our information.

All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha Nature. This is the fundamental Truth of nondualism and equality. On the other hand, this actual world of ours is dualistic and full of discriminations. The above mondo presents to us the basic contradiction between the fundamental Truth of nondualism and actual phenomena. The ancient Masters made us face the fact that we human beings from the very beginning have been living in this fundamental contradiction. It was the compassion of the Masters that led them to try thus to intensify their disciples' Great Doubt, their spiritual quest, and finally lead them to satori by breaking through it. If here one really breaks through this kōan, which uniquely presents before him the core of human contradiction, he can clearly see for himself with his genuine Zen eye what these mondo are trying to tell us.

TEISHO ON MUMON'S COMMENTARY

Mumon comments: "In studying Zen, one must pass the barriers set up by ancient Zen Masters. For the attainment of incomparable satori, one has to cast away his discriminating mind. Those who have not passed the barrier and have not cast away the discriminating mind are all phantoms haunting trees and plants.

"Now, tell me, what is the barrier of the Zen Masters? Just this 'Mu'—it is the barrier of Zen. It is thus called 'the gateless barrier of Zen.' Those who have passed the barrier will not only see Joshu clearly, but will go hand in hand with all the Masters of the past, see them face to face. You will see with the same eye that they see with and hear with the same ear. Wouldn't it be wonderful? Don't you want to pass the barrier? Then concentrate yourself into this 'Mu,' with your 360 bones and 84,000 pores, making your whole body one great inquiry. Day and night work intently at it. Do not attempt nihilistic or dualistic interpretations. It is like having bolted a red hot iron ball. You try to vomit it but cannot.

"Cast away your illusory discriminating knowledge and consciousness accumulated up to now, and keep on working harder. After a while, when your efforts come to fruition, all the oppositions (such as in and out) will naturally be identified. You will then be like a dumb person who has had a wonderful dream: he only knows it personally, within himself. Suddenly you break through the barrier; you will astonish heaven and shake the earth.

"It is as if you have snatched the great sword of General Kan. You kill the Buddha if you meet him; you kill the ancient Masters if you meet them. On the brink of life and death you are utterly free, and in the six realms and the four modes of life you live, with great joy, a genuine life in complete freedom.

"Now, how should one strive? With might and main work at this 'Mu,' and *be* 'Mu.' If you do not stop or waver in your striving, then behold, when the Dharma candle is lighted, darkness is at once enlightened."

According to Master Mumon's biography, he stayed in a cave in a mountain where he practiced zazen and disciplined himself for six long years. In spite of such hard training he could not fundamentally satisfy his spiritual quest. It was this kōan of"Joshu's 'Mu' "that made him plunge into the abyss of Great Doubt and finally attain satori, breaking through it as if the bottom had fallen out of a barrel. His commentary on this kōan is therefore especially kind and detailed. He tells us most frankly of the hard training he himself went through and tries to guide Zen students on the basis of his own experiences.

"In studying Zen, one must pass the barriers set up by the ancient Zen Masters. For the attainment of incomparable satori, one has to cast away his discriminating mind."

First Mumon tells us what must be the right attitude for a Zen student, that is, what is fundamentally required of him in studying Zen. As Master Daiye says, "Satori is the fundamental experience in Zen." One has to cast his ordinary self away and be reborn as a new Self in a different dimension. In other words, the student must personally have the inner experience called satori, by which he is reborn as the True Self. This fundamental experience of awakening is essential in Zen. Although various different expressions are used when talking about the fact of this religious awakening, it cannot be real Zen without it. Mumon therefore declares at the very beginning that "in studying Zen one must pass the barriers set up by the ancient Zen Masters. The barrier of the ancient Zen Masters is the barrier to Zen, and the obstacle to transcend is the dualism of yes and no, subject and object. Practically, the sayings of ancient Masters, which are called kōan, are such barriers.

The phrase "incomparable satori" indicates the eternal emancipation or absolute freedom that is attained by directly breaking through the Zen barrier. In order to break through it, Mumon stresses that one must once and for all cast away his discriminating mind completely. "Discriminating mind" is our ordinary consciousness, which is dualistic, discriminating, and the cause of all sorts of illusions. Mumon asks us to cast this away. To get rid of it requires that one's whole being must be the kōan. There should be nothing left, and the secret of Zen lies in this really throwing oneself away. One does not have to ask what would be likely to happen after that; whatever happens would naturally and automatically come about without any seeking for it. What is important here is for him to actually do it himself.

"Those who have not passed the barrier and have not cast away the discriminating mind are all phantoms haunting trees and plants."

There is a superstition that the phantoms of those who after death are not in peace haunt trees and plants and cast evil spells on people. Here it means those people who do not have a fundamental spiritual basis, those who cling to words and logic and are enslaved by dualistic views, without grasping the subjective point of view.

Mumon says that anyone who is unable to pass the barrier of the old Masters or to wipe out his discriminating mind—that is, if his Zen mind is not awakened—is like a phantom, without reality. There is no significance in such an existence. Thus, by using extreme and abusive language Mumon tries to make us ashamed of our unenlightened existence and to arouse in us the great spiritual quest.

"Now, tell me," Mumon demands, "what is the barrier of the Zen Masters?" Having aroused our interest, he answers himself that this "Mu" is the ultimate barrier of Zen. If once one has broken through it, he is the master of all the barriers and the forty-eight kōan and commentaries of the *Murnonkan* are all his tools. This is therefore called "The Gateless Barrier of Zen," Mumon remarks. We should remember however that it is not only the first kōan, but that any of the forty-eight kōan of the *Murnonkan* is the barrier of Zen.

'Those who have passed the barrier will not only see Joshu clearly, but will go hand in hand with all the Masters in the past, see them face to face. You will see with the same eye that they see with and hear with the same ear. Wouldn't it be wonderful?"

Mumon tells us how wonderful it is to experience breaking through the barrier and to live the life of satori. Once the Gate is broken through, ultimate peace is attained. You can get hold of old Joshu alive. Further, you will live in the same spirituality with all the Zen Masters, see them face to face, and enjoy the Truth of Oneness. How wonderful, how splendid! He praises the life of satori in the highest terms. There are no ages in satori; no distinctions of' I and you, space and time. Wherever it maybe and whenever it may be, just here and now you see and you hear—it is Joshu, it is your Self, and "Mu." There can be no greater joy. To experience this is to attain eternal peace.

"Don't you want to pass the barrier? Then concentrate yourself into this 'Mu' with your 360 bones and 84,000 pores, making your whole body one great inquiry. "

Having described the great joy of satori, Mumon now turns to his disciples and speaks directly to them, "Are there any among you who want to pass this barrier of the ancient Masters?" He then goes on to give practical instructions as to how they should carry on their training in order to break through the barrier-how to attain satori. He tells them to inquire, with their heart and soul, what it is to transcend yes and no, you and I. They are to cast their whole being, from head to foot, into this inquiry and carry on with it. There will be no world, no self, but just one Great Doubt. This is "Mu." "Just be 'Mu'!" Mumon urges the disciples.

"To concentrate" is to be unified and identified. "To concentrate oneself into 'Mu'" is for "Mu" and the self to be one—to be one and then to transcend both "Mu" and the self.

"Day and night work intently at it; do not attempt nihilistic or dualistic interpretations."

Mumon's instructions continue: never be negligent, even fora short while, but do zazen and devote yourself to the kōan day and night. An old Master described this training process, saying, "Work like a mother hen trying to hatch her eggs." Do not misunderstand "Mu" as nihilistic emptiness. Never in the world take it as a dualistic No in

opposition to Yes. Needless to say, it has nothing to do with intellectual discrimination or dualistic reasoning. It is utterly beyond all description.

"It is like having bolted a red hot iron ball; you try to vomit it but cannot. Cast away your illusory discriminating knowledge and consciousness accumulated up to now, and keep on working harder. After a while, when your efforts come to fruition, all the oppositions (such as in and out) will naturally be identified. You will then be like a dumb person who has had a wonderful dream: he only knows it personally, within himself."

"Like having bolted a red hot iron ball" describes the one who, with his whole being, body and soul, has plunged into the Great Doubt, the spiritual quest. All the emotions are exhausted, all the intellect has come to its extremity; there is not an inch for the discrimination to enter. This is the state of utmost spiritual intensification. When it is hot, the whole universe is nothing but the heat; when you see, it is just one pure act of seeing—there is no room there for any thought to come in. In such a state, Mumon warns us, never give up but straightforwardly carry on with your striving. In such a state no thought of discrimination can be present. "Illusory discriminating knowledge and consciousness accumulated up to now" refers to our dualistically working mind we have had before. No trace of it is now left. You are thoroughly lucid and transparent like a crystal. Subject and object, in and out, being and non being are just one, and this very one ceases to be one any longer. Rinzai said, describing this state, "The whole universe is sheer darkness." Hakuin said, "It was like sitting in an ice cave a million miles thick." This is the moment when the I and the world are both altogether gone. This is exactly the moment when one's discriminating mind is emptied and cast away. When one is in the abyss of absolute "Mu" in actual training, the inexpressible moment comes upon him—the moment when "Mu" is awakened to "Mu," that is, when he is revived as the self of no-self. At this mysterious moment, he is like a dumb person who has had a wonderful dream, for he is fully aware of it, but is unable to use words to express it. The Absolute Nothingness ("Mu") is awakened to itself. This is the moment of realization when subject object opposition is altogether transcended. To describe it we have to use such words as inexpressible or mysterious. "You will then be like a dumb person who has had a wonderful dream: he only knows it personally, within himself."

Then Mumon tries again to describe the experience of the one who has just broken through the barrier: "Suddenly you break through the barrier; you will astonish heaven and shake the earth." I myself, however, should like to reverse the order of these two sentences and say, "Suddenly you break through the barrier; you will astonish heaven and shake the earth. You will then be like a dumb person who has had a wonderful dream: he only knows it personally, within himself." This would be more faithful to actual experience. Zen calls this experience "incomparable satori," or "to die a Great Death once and to revive from death." Mumon described his experience of attaining satori by saying that "all beings on earth have opened their eyes." This is the most important and essential process one has to go through in Zen training.

"It is as if you have snatched the great sword of General Kan. You kill the Buddha if you meet him; you kill the ancient Masters if you meet them. On the brink of life and death, you are utterly free, and in the six realms and the four modes of life you live, with great joy, a genuine life in complete freedom. "

General Kan was a brave general famous in ancient China. With his great sword he used to freely cut and conquer his enemies. Once one attains the satori of this "Mu," his absolute inner freedom can be compared to the man who has the great sword of that famous strong general in his own hand.

Having experienced this exquisite moment of breaking through the barrier, one's self, the world, and everything change. It is just like one who was born blind getting his sight. Here Muman tells us how absolutely free he now is. He sees, he hears, and everything, as it is, is given new life. Mumon in his own poem speaks of this wonder, "Mount Sumeru jumps up and dances." Only those who have actually experienced it themselves can really appreciate what Mumon sings here.

"You kill the Buddha if you meet him; you kill the ancient Masters if you meet them."

This expression is often misunderstood. Zen postulates absolute freedom
in which all attachments and restraints are completely wiped away. The Buddha therefore is to be cast away and so are the Patriarchs. Any restraints whatsoever in the mind are to be cast away. For the one who has passed through the abyss of Great Doubt, transcending subject and object, you and I, and has been revived as the True Self, can there be anything to disturb him? The term "to kill" should not be interpreted in our ordinary ethical sense. "To kill" is to transcend names and ideas. If you meet the Buddha, the Buddha is "Mu." If you meet ancient Masters, they are "Mu." Therefore he says that if you pass the barrier you will "not only see Joshu clearly, but go hand in hand with all the Masters in the past, see them face to face. You will see with the same eye that they see with and hear with the same ear."

To live is an aspect of "Mu"; to die is also an aspect of "Mu." If you stand, your standing is "Mu." If you sit, your sitting is "Mu." The six realms refer to the six different stages of existence, i.e., the celestial world, human world, fighting world, beasts, hungry beings, and hell. The four modes are four different forms of life, i.e., viviparous, oviparous, from moisture, and metamorphic. Originally the phrase referred to various stages of life in transmigration, depending on the law of causation. The reference to the six realms and the four modes of life means, "under whatever circumstances you may live, in whatever situation you may find yourself." Both favorable conditions and adverse situations are "Mu," working differently as you live, at any time, at any place. How wonderful it is to live such a serene life with perfect freedom, the spiritual freedom of the one who has attained religious peace!

"Now, how should one strive? With might and main work at this 'Mu,' and *be* 'Mu.'"

Mumon once again gives his direct instruction on how one should carry out his Zen training in order to break through the barrier of the Zen Masters to attain incomparable satori and his Zen personality. How should he work at "Mu"? All that can be said is: "Be just 'Mu' with might and main." To be "Mu" is to cast everything—yourself and the universe—into it.

"If you do not stop or waver in your striving, then behold, when the Dharma candle is lighted, the darkness is at once enlightened."

This can be simply taken as a candle on the altar. Once one's mind bursts open to the truth of "Mu," the ignorance is at once enlightened, just as all darkness is gone when a candle is lighted.

Mumon warns his disciples that they should not stop or waver in their striving. In other words, he says that with might and main you must be "Mu'" through and through, and never stop striving to attain that. An old Japanese Zen Master has a waka poem:

When your bow is broken and your arrows are exhausted,
There, shoot!
Shoot with your whole being!

A Western philosopher has said, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." When man is at his very extremity and still goes on striving with his whole being, without stopping, the moment to break through suddenly comes to him. This is the moment of fundamental change when one is reborn as a True Self. It is as if a candle were lighted in darkness. Darkness is at once illumined.

Master Engo has a poem in the *Hekigan-roku:*

It is like cutting a reel of thread:
One cut, and all is cut.
It is like dyeing a reel of thread:
One dip and all is dyed.

I join Mumon in saying, "Wouldn't it be wonderful!" In his commentary Mumon has tried his best to tell us how exquisite and wonderful true Zen attainment is, and pointed out the way to experience it.

TEISHO ON MUMON'S POEM

The dog! the Buddha Nature!
The Truth is manifested in full.
A moment of yes-and-no:
Lost are your body and sou!.

Following his detailed commentary on Joshu's "Mu," Mumon wrote this poem to comment on it once more, so that he might clearly and simply present the essence of satori.

He first presents the kōan itself directly to us: "The dog! the Buddha Nature!" What else is needed here? As it is, it is "Mu." As they are, they are "Mu." Those who really know it will fully understand it all by this.

The second line says, "The Truth is manifested in full." The original Chinese term used for Truth literally means "True Law," that is, the Buddha's fundamental command. It is nothing but "Mu" itself. Look, it is right in front of you, Mumon says. A blind person fails to see the sunlight, but it is not the fault of the sun.

"A moment of yes-and-no: lost are your body and sou!." Out of his compassion Mumon adds the last two lines, which say that if even a thought of discrimination comes, the truth of "Mu" is altogether gone. When one is really "Mu" through and through, to call it "Mu" is already incorrect, for that belongs to the dualistic world of letters. "Mu" here is just temporarily used in order to transcend U (yes) and Mu (no). If one is afraid of losing his body and soul, what can be accomplished? The secret here can be communicated only to those who have once died the Great Death.

Shibayama, Zenkei. *Zen Comments on the Mumonkan,* tranlsated by Sumiko Kudo. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1974.