

# **Zen Mind View, Path and Result**

**David Paul Boaz  
(Dechen Wangdu)**

## The View: Zen Mind, No Self, and the Wisdom of Kindness

*"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 priority 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. 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" (*dharmadhatujnana*) 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."

Thus, form is just form, emptiness is just emptiness. Nothing more need be added. If we think we are accomplishing something special, our pride changes it. Pride is added baggage, the egoic "gaining idea" that derails our practice.

**The ultimate nature of mind, of Reality Itself, is emptiness. In emptiness there is no self. Since there is no self, there is no path. Since there is no path, there is no goal. So there is nothing to seek and nothing to gain. Thus our activity is selfless, and happy.**

"When 'self' occurs, so the thought of 'other.' From 'self-and-other' both attachment and aversion come. These two combined are the source of every ill" (Dharmakirti). This simple formula states the perennial problem of human evil. The antidote is our Buddha Nature, the selfless, unseparate, nondual original nature of us. This is simply the primordial wisdom Truth of What Is. **Regardless of what we think or believe, What Is, is. Our thoughts, concepts and beliefs about it are merely limits, relative conditions of What Is. Then we become the defensive advocates of these limits. To see this truth in each moment is the nondual practice.** "Perfect practice" then is the paradox of *shoshaku jushaku*. Begin right now, where you are. Continue to practice the teachings, and just continue. Never quit! Zen is simply seeing Buddha in everyday routine, in whatever arises, in whatever we do. Right here lives our original nature. Nothing special. So now, all that we do is spontaneous, authentic and kind.

Dogen Zenji said, "To give is non-attachment." Giving is the way of being happy. *Dana Prajna Paramita* means to "give" (*dana*) "wisdom" (*prajna*) at "each crossing," each step (*paramita*). To surrender (*pistas* / faith) desire/attachment to what appears, each moment, each step of our crossing of the river of our life, is giving. What we give is not the point. To give or surrender our egoic attachment to a wrong view, or a concept, or an opinion when we find that we are defensive; that is giving. To give a little kindness, or a bit of encouragement, a dollar, a poem, a truth of the teaching, a generous word, when given with little or no egoic gaining idea, that is the wisdom of Zen giving. This is true service to another, and through that we serve our own happiness. It is urgent to understand that, according to our Great Wisdom Tradition—whatever we do to lesson our habitual, narcissitic, egoic self-sense, and to expand our generous kindness in the service of reducing the suffering of other beings—increases our own happiness.

In Tibetan Buddhism this practice of giving without any gaining idea is *tonglen*. This **wisdom of kindness** is compassion (*karuna*), just as compassion is wisdom (*prajna*). "Practice these two as a unity." Such giving has absolute value that cannot be lost, even when it goes unrecognized. As we really begin to see the self-centered separateness of our effort at giving, we realize that our egoic attachment to all that we fear to give, or lose is illusory. Everything is interdependent, utterly connected. This is the great truth of interdependence (*pratitya samutpada*). Everything is transient and passes away. This is the great truth of impermanence (*anitya*). There is no essential intrinsic self (*anatman*) to defend. This is the great truth of selflessness. **So we are all connected and everything changes. Everything now is already gone. Gaté, Gaté. Gone beyond. The transcendence**

**of ego-self and its illusory objects is already accomplished!** This is what is. This is our choiceless choice. The present realization now of this primordial wisdom truth is the great mystery, the wondrous truth of *wu wei* (surrender / no seeking). This is the way of Tao. And this is the supreme view and practice of Zen. Now there is nothing left to do. Thus does the wisdom of kindness spontaneously arise in every thought and action, and in all that we do. So now be supremely happy!

### ***Shoshin: The Beginner's Mind***

This opening to receive everything given, and giving it again, moment to moment, without attachment or clinging, or any "gaining idea" is the essence of what Dogen Zenji and Suzuki Roshi call *shoshin*, "beginners mind." Beginners mind is Zen mind. With open mind, empty mind—free of concept and belief and negative emotion—the mind receives directly that which is given by reality to the senses and the heart. As the egoic concept-emotive logic of the discursive, rational mind is undermined by meditation and transmission from the master, step by step, the luminous primordial suchness, thatness, isness, emptiness, (*Tathata, shunyata, Wu/Mu*) that lives prior to the mind, that is source of the mind, is revealed, and in due course, integrated. **That** is what is to be realized. That is who we are between two thoughts. **That** is who we are before the *kosmos* was born.

**Who is it?** "What is Buddha Nature?" "What is Zen?" "Who am I?" The answers lie not in thought, but in the **realization** of the source or basis of all of **That**, everything that arises. **That** is the deepest expression of our primordially pure original nature. **That** is the original nature that is our Buddha mind, our supreme source in whom all objects and all minds arise. It is **That** that cannot be grasped and understood by dualistic concept mind. Yet, wonder of wonders, this presence is always present, at the heart (*kokoro, hridayam*), conceptually unelaborated, unfabricated, here, now "perfect just as it is."

Perhaps, above all, Zen mind is openness to the direct "heartmind to heartmind" transmission (*denbo*) from the master; for without the wisdom intervention of the master, the heart-mind cannot awaken from its dualistic egoic slumber. Yet the master can only mirror, guide and point. "My understanding has nothing to do with your understanding" (Issan). "This cannot be taught" (Gautama Buddha). The student must arrive at his/her own, unique understanding. The master merely mirrors **That** that is always already present, awake, at the spiritual heart of the student.

One of the great truths of our primordial Perennial Wisdom is this: without the guidance and love of the master, spiritual practice cannot begin to outwit the prideful defenses of the intellectual and the spiritualized ego. The ego-self is truly a false guru. It is told many ways. It is told in each of the traditions of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition. One who chooses to act as his/her own guru has a profoundly foolish student.

## What Is Zen? "Open Mouth, Already A Mistake"

What is the very essence or nature of mind—the nature of reality itself—beyond our thoughts, concepts and beliefs about it? What is this bright primordial awareness of mind without conceptual content? Thoughts, and the process of thought cannot think beyond itself, transcend itself, any more than the eye can see itself. "Who are you between two thoughts?" It is dualistic even to think about Zen. "Open mouth, already a mistake" (*Issa*).

There appears then, need of a bridge from the "dogmatic slumber" of reason to the truth of **That** (*tathata*) that lies beyond, that transcends yet embraces the thinking, feeling bodymind. Even if there were nothing beyond this, reason and "objective science" demand that we explore "the beyond" to discover this for ourselves. "To thine own self be true" (Socrates). Otherwise we have only our subjective unexamined **opinions**—subjective metaphysical assumptions—of the transcendental and the transpersonal. Indeed, the weight of our entire Great Wisdom Tradition urges us to go beyond—*gate, gate, paragate*—the lifestage limits of our present concept and belief systems. Do we not profoundly limit ourselves by our attachment and defense of these ever changing concepts and beliefs?

Thus, Zen is the bridge between human reason and the nondual emptiness base or source in whom everything arises. Zen is the practice of the subject seeking to know its object. Zen is that which the subject seeks, which the knowing subject finally "sees" or recognizes (*zenki, zenkan*), and ultimately realizes (*kensho/satori*) at ever deepening levels. Zen mind as *shoshin*, the beginner's mind (empty mind) is, with *zazen* (meditation), the bridge, the way, the method, and the daily practice. Zen mind as *kensho/satori/daigio tetei* is the basis of the recognition of this primordial base. Zen mind/Buddha mind is **That** (*Tathata*) that is to be realized. Zen mind is the nondual identification, then integration of the seeking/ knowing "subject" with the transcendental "object" of "knowledge" such that the ego or self (*yuga*) is absorbed, enlightened and transcended (*muga*). Zen is the "goal". Zen is the very essence or nature of mind. Zen is the Way (path). Zen is the bridge that makes the goal the path until the bridge itself is transcended in its nondual source. Zen is everyday routine. "Nothing special" (*wu shin*). Zen is the paradoxical negation of all of the above concepts. Zen is the surrender of any and ultimately all such speculation about the Zen of What Is. Zen is the understanding of the foolishness of the endeavor of the crutch and buttress of explanation. Such is the paradox of Zen.

"What is Zen?" asked a novice monk.

Master Hyakuja replied, "It's like riding an ox, and seeking to find it."

Said the student, "After we understand; then what is it?"

The master replied, "It's like riding an ox, and going home on it."

Asked the student, "Then, what do we do with it?"

"It's like an ox-herd who keeps it out of other people's rice fields."

What is Zen? "Three pounds of rice." What is enlightenment? "A dead stump to tie your donkey to" (Te Shan). Is Zen a religion? "In vast emptiness (*shunyata*), there is nothing holy" (Bodhidharma). "With much clay you can make a large Buddha." Zen is not sacred. Nor is anything else. "All that can be shaken shall be shaken." Zen is not tolerant of the dogma of exoteric organized religious *praxis*.

## The Path: Integrating Wisdom and Compassion

Exoterically, *zazen* is formal sitting meditation, a yoga or method, or practice through which the dualistic perceptions and conceptions of the thinking mind are transcended in their nondual source. *Zazen* is the bridge between the relative, conditional truths of reason and causality and that supreme source. As subject-object dualism (the linear, two-valued, true-false dichotomies of thought) is the defining characteristic and very nature or condition of thought and its logical syntax of language, thinking must be transcended, then reintegrated. Concept-mind must be deracinated of compulsive conceptual thinking and ideation in order to integrate the reality that abides beyond (*gate, gate*). Thoughts and the experience of mind (*nyam*) continue to arise, but there is no egoic self-sense, no attachment, not even to yogic bliss. Experience is thereby self-liberated or transcended at the very instant of its arising. However, the "lower" aspect of mind (ego, *yuga, manas*), and the always already present and prior "higher" aspect of mind (*muga, bodhi, gnosis/jnana/yeshe*, primordial wisdom) are **apparently** separate. Exoterically (dualistically) then, *zazen* is the yogic bridge that links them. (The Sanskrit "*yoga*"—linking or union of the lower with the higher—is the etymological root of the Latin "*religio*" from which the English "religion" is derived.) It is the practice of *zazen* that frees the mind of its attachment or clinging to the objects of its thoughts, visions and images (even sublime great images) as they arise from the "lower" mind. *Zazen* illumines the intellectual egoic mind with the luminous, pure clear light of the source (*bodhi*) where the dualism of the reality of *samsara* is transcended and the realization that *samsara* (the cycles of suffering of the phenomenal world) and *nirvana* (what remains after the ego is "blown out", like a flame) are identical. Esoterically, this process is realization of *prajna* (conventional, discriminating wisdom) and *jnana/yeshe* (nondual Primordial Awareness Wisdom), the awakening to the Buddha Nature or Buddha essence (*Bussho*) which is the essential emptiness base (*shunyata*) or Suchness (*Tathata*) of nondual Reality Itself. The expression of that in the world is compassion (*hesed, caris, karuna*), for wisdom is compassion, and compassion is wisdom. Where *karuna* is manifested, there is *prajna*. Where *prajna* is manifested, there is *karuna*. Where *karuna* is objective, *prajna* is subjective. Where *prajna* is objective, *karuna* is subjective. *Prajna* descends; *karuna* ascends. They are the same. "Descend with the view (*prajna*). Ascend with the conduct (*karuna*). Practice these two as a unity" (*Padmasambhava*). "Make the goal the path." This intention to integrate the goal and the path is accomplished to reduce the suffering of beings. We

dedicate anything and everything good that we understand and accomplish to this great theme. This is the great essence of the Mahayana, and the very heart of Zen.

### Advanced Zen Practice

Suzuki Roshi's lineage continues Dogen's tradition of the nondual practice of *Shikan-taza* (*Chih Kuan* or *shamatha-vipashyana*) meditation based in "faith" (*pistis*, ego surrender) without an idea or object. *Chih* means tranquil mind (mindfulness). *Kuan* means insight from contemplation of *shunyata* (emptiness).<sup>1</sup> *Shikantaza* is "advanced" formless meditation using neither a *koan*, nor the following of the breath, nor a deity, nor any idea or image whatsoever. At the root of this practice is the profound faith and understanding that the single-minded persistence of the practice of objectless sitting mediation (*zazen*) and the following of the master's "pointing out" instruction (*denbo* during *dokusan* and *tiesho*), will surely lead to liberation, the realization/enlightenment of that prior, inherent condition that is our original nature, the Buddha Nature present in every sentient being, and indeed in all phenomenal existence. We are not separate from *That*. Thus, there is no need of effort or intention to become enlightened. Indeed, such a "gaining idea" will prevent it. (This is precisely the view of *Dzogchen*). **The greatest barrier to enlightenment (*kensho/satori*) is the idealization and dramatization of it. It is "nothing special" (*wu shin*). With practice, it comes and goes, and comes and goes — without effort (*wu-wei*) — until, ultimately, it comes and goes moment to moment now, forever. This result, this fruition, is known as Buddhahood.**

*Shikantaza* is an advanced practice for those who have developed equanimity, a subtle and stable practice, and a profound desire for enlightenment. Such an adept has usually spent years at sitting *zazen* and walking *zazen* (*kinhin*) and has experience as the Witness, dwelling at the root of attention, prior to the objects and images of thought and idea. **The Zen practitioner and the non-practitioner live not in reality, but in his or her ideas or concepts about it. Zen practice is the purifying or distillation of attention, in all aspects of life, such that reality is experienced directly as it is (*kensho/shoshin*) — at the root of attention — untainted by concept, belief, or negative or positive emotion, even as it arises through body, voice and mind in the everyday lifeworld of "hewing wood and carrying water."**

A man once asked master Ikkyu, "What is the greatest wisdom?" The master wrote with his brush the word "Attention."

The man inquired further, "But surely there must be something more, something profound," the man implored.

Quickly Master Ikkyu wrote, "Attention, Attention, Attention."

"Just what does attention mean anyway," The man demanded.

Spoke the master, "Attention means Attention."

In the advanced nondual yoga practices of *Saijojo Zen*, *Dzogchen*, *Essence Mahamudra*,

---

<sup>1</sup> Yasutani Roshi prescribes "*Shikantaza*" ('just sitting') for advanced students.

*Advaita Vedanta*, and *Tao* all thought forms, mind forms, objects, visions, images, even great and sacred images (avataric and deity forms), are transcended in their nondual source. Here, dwelling at the root of attention, abides the great mystery of the nondual Primordial Awareness Wisdom, *Tao*, Absolute Consciousness-Being Itself, *Dharmakaya*, *Samantabhadra*, *Nirguna Brahman*. Ultimately the dualism of attention itself is released (6th and 7th stage practice) as the "state of presence" (*Atman*, *vidya*, *rigpa*, *logos/Christos*) of the Absolute Ground is lived moment to moment, while moving and acting in kindness and compassion through the world. To be sure, a most amazing paradox.

Nansen and a student were having a cup of tea. The student asked the master, "What is the true secret of Zen?" The master poured the student a cup of tea until it overflowed. Then he spoke, "Like this cup, you are filled to overflowing with your own ideas. How can I show you the secret unless you offer me an empty cup?"

Master Shozan was addressing his students on the dualism of thought. Raising his staff he spoke, "If you call this a staff, you deny it's eternal truth; if you do not call it a staff, you deny it's present fact. What exactly do you call it then?"

## The Result: Seeing Into Unity of the Two Truths

"That everything is included in your mind, is the essence of mind."

- Suzuki Roshi

Zen is the liberating Result, the Fruition of the View and the Path. Just so, Zen is esoterically, the spirit or essence of all religion, morality, art, and culture. For without this spirit of Zen there is only the exoteric, conventional, the academic, the alienated and the banal. Thus Zen is, to the relative-conventional understanding, as arrogant and impudent as it is humble. As Zen is perfection or Buddha Essence in potential or latent form, it cannot be praised or blamed. To the concept-mind Zen is altogether paradoxical.

Zen is the fruition of the combined genius not only of India, China and Japan, but of our entire Primordial Wisdom Tradition. **Thus, like Dzogchen, Zen is not merely a religion or a philosophy which changes and evolves like the prevailing views of exoteric religion, science and culture. As Relative Truth (form), Zen is the manifested change and evolution of the ever changeless Tao. As Ultimate Truth (emptiness) Zen is the ever changeless Tao Itself, the very ground of being in whom form arises.** Zen is the tantric continuum of enlightenment and illusion, *nirvana* and *samsara*, good and evil. Zen is the process of the holarchic reconciliation, inclusion and transcendence of all dualistic spacetime reality in its unbroken whole, the primordial sourceground itself. Thus, Zen is the coalescence of the Two Truths. "Where goodness, beauty and truth are all present as one, there is Zen" (R.H. Blyth).

"Zen is not a state but an activity" (R.H. Blyth). *Satori*/Enlightenment, like love, is not a state, or a feeling, or an experience, but an activity, a continuity of discrete recognitions of the

Nature of mind—“brief moments many times” — continuous from now, to now, to now. Paradoxically, this “remaining naturally in the state” (*satori/vidya/rigpa*) is the **activity of choosing** nondual reality—moment to moment—over any other activity or state. Therefore, ego (*yuga*) and the egolessness (*muga*) of no-mind (transcendence of the dualism of mind) are both necessary parts of the process of Zen mind and Zen practice. Indeed, we accomplish *muga* through *yuga*. We must always remember, these two are not ultimately separate, but are actually an unseparate, non-conceptual prior unity. (We can make no ultimate non-conceptual assertion whatsoever about unity, or anything else because assertions are conceptual statements). We must have the discomfort, the “pinchability” of ego to provide the motive to transcend it. The transcendence of egoity then, with the resulting liberating wisdom and compassion is the fruit or result of Zen.

The nondual wisdom of emptiness recognizes the prior unity of the Two Truths—ultimate and relative. From ultimate emptiness the forms of relative spacetime reality arise interdependently (dependent arising, *pratitya samutpada*) from prior causes and conditions. “Cause and effect are just as real as they are unreal” (R.H. Blyth). **Without this emptiness base, no arising. With no arising, no suffering, no compassion, no Buddhas. It takes these two truths to understand the one truth that is Reality Itself. The nondual awakening to this truth is the fruition of Zen that may result in Buddhahood.** Again, at this level of non-conceptuality we can make no assertions about reality or Buddhahood, or anything else. This Buddha Mind, the very Nature of Mind, can only be realized directly—not at some future moment—but in this very moment now.

Therefore, from the view of Relative Truth, Buddhahood has a cause—the ego and its transcendence through the *sadhana* of the *praxis* of the path. Yet, “From the beginning all beings are Buddha.” We are already Buddha mind. So Buddhahood is already our actual nature now. Yet it has a cause that makes it a future event. Our Great Wisdom Tradition resolves this paradox through the profound teaching of “The Two Truths.” Again, there is the all too real dimension of “Relative Truth,” (*samvriti satya*), the unfolding of the “real” subject-object world of objective cause and effect—relative-conventional reality—and then there is the dimension of “Ultimate Truth” (*paramartha satya*), the atemporal, acausal, nondual unbroken whole that enfolds and embraces, yet transcends the relative spacetime dimension, and in whom its phenomena arise and participate. We live in these two worlds—the finite and the infinite—at once! And the secret is seeing these two, always—moment-to-moment—as an ultimate unity. The liberating result of this moment-to-moment recognition that is realization is meditative stabilization that may ultimately result in Buddhahood, the great happiness that cannot be lost.

Only the truly intelligent understand the principle of the identity of all things. They do not view things as apprehended by themselves, subjectively, but transfer themselves into the position of the things viewed. And viewing them thus they are able to comprehend them, and to master them. . . So it is that to place oneself in subjective relation with externals, without losing objectivity - this is Tao.

- Chung Tzu (author's translation)

And Tao is Zen.

So the fundamental principle of the Zen of nondual seeing is the simultaneous transcendence and inclusion of the subject-object split of dualistic perceptual and conceptual cognition of the continuum of the arising *kosmos*. ("*Kosmos*" here is the Pythagorean *kosmos* which transcends and includes the objective, physical phenomena of the mere spacetime cosmos.) And Zen is the liberating pristine cognition-Buddha gnosis—the recognition, then realization of the prior ontological unity of relative and absolute (The Two Truths) that is the nondual Nature of Mind. This essential mind essence is our supreme identity whose essence is primordial emptiness, whose nature is luminous clarity, and whose expression or manifestation is ultimate compassion (Ultimate Bodhicitta). In human beings this ultimate compassion is spontaneously expressed as compassionate activity—the wisdom of kindness—that is Relative Bodhicitta, the relative "cause" of Buddhahood.

## A Brief History of Zen

Historically, Buddhism has profoundly changed, and has been changed, by each country it has entered. Zen (Ch'an in China) is a school of Mahayana Buddhism which entered China from India in about 521 AD with Bodhidharma (Daruma, 470-543), the twenty-eighth patriarch of Indian Buddhism and the first patriarch of the Ch'an/Zen tradition. Bodhidharma's *Shobo Genzo*, a profound collection of *teisho* (commentaries), is perhaps the greatest work in traditional Zen literature. Thus the Buddhadharmas (Jap. Buppo, the *Dharma* (truth) teachings of Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha) continues in Zen as an unbroken "heartmind to heartmind" transmission lineage from Shakumuni, the Buddha. It continues today throughout the world.

Zen is the short form of *Zenna* which is a Japanese translation of the Chinese Ch'an (*Ch'an-na*) which translates the Sanskrit *dhyana*, meaning meditation (contemplation) on emptiness (*shunyata*) the nondual source or nature of mind prior to, or beyond, or transcendent of all relative mind's dualistic distinctions. The Indian *dhyana* Buddhism of Bodhidharma blended with the Taoism of China to produce the great tradition of Ch'an Buddhism during the T'ang period with many great Ch'an masters, including the great sixth patriarch Hui-neng (Eno, 638-713). Hui-neng founded the Southern School with its new emphasis on *tongo* (sudden enlightenment). While the Northern School remained obscure, the

Southern School evolved into the "five houses/seven schools" (*goke-shichishu*). Other great masters of the T'ang and early Sung periods included Mat Su (Baso), Hyakujo, Tozan and Sozan (founders of Soto Zen), Joshu, Rinzai (founder of Rinzai Zen) and Ummon, author of the *Mumonkan* (1220) which includes the famous *Mu koan*.

Two of these lineages, Rinzai and Soto were exported from China to Japan and have since spread throughout the world. At the end of the 12th Century Eisai Zenji (1144-1215) brought Rinzai Zen (*Oryo* lineage) to Japan (1191). Early in the 13th Century the great Zen master, Dogen Zenji (1200-1253) brought the Soto lineage to Japan. Soto was founded by Tozun (807-869) and Sozan (840-901). Soto is the first two letters in the Japanese name of each. The Rinzai school was founded by Rinzai (d. 803).

Both traditions taught the essentials of the Ch'an tradition (seeing into one's actual original nature which is Buddha Nature (*Kensho/Satori*), but placed different emphasis on *zazen* and the use of the *koan*. In Soto, sitting mediation (*zazen* as *mokusho*) is stressed over *koan* (*kanna*) practice. *Dokusan*, the private direct transmission (*denbo*) sessions between master and student, and *tiesho* (the Roshi's commentaries) have been a fundamental part of Ch'an/Zen practice, and is still practiced with varying emphasis in Rinzai Zen and Soto Zen throughout the world.

While Zen flourished in Japan, Ch'an in China blended with Pure Land Buddhism (the cult of Amitabha, Jap. Amida) in the Sung and Ming periods (1279 forward) and the great tradition of Chinese Ch'an lineage transmission came to an end.

The great reformers of the Ch'an/Zen tradition were Hui-neng (630-713), the 6th and last Ch'an Patriarch, and the great 18th Century Rinzai Zen reformer Hakuin Ekaku (1687-1768).

It was Hui-neng who accomplished the synthesis of Indian Mahayana *dhyana* Buddhism (with its emphasis on both sitting mediation/*zazen*, and intellectual teaching) with the active and practical philosophy of the Chinese Taoism of Lao Tsu and his great disciple, Chuang Tsu.

Taoism emphasized the practical understanding of the eternal flow of change of the changeless supreme source, the nondual unbroken whole that is Tao. In contrast to the Indian mind, the Chinese mind could not accept the monkish lifestyle of the *dhyana* practitioners. Anyone who wouldn't work was suspect. It was Hui-neng and his immediate lineage, the great masters Ma Tsu (Baso), Nansen and Joshu who integrated the bringing of the "heaven" of *dhyana* into the "earth" path of "hewing wood and carrying water." The monk who didn't work, didn't eat. To this day Zen practice emphasizes meditation (*dhyana*) and enlightenment (*kensho/satori*) not in the *zendo* (meditation hall), but at work (*samu*) and in the spiritual crucible of the marketplace. Hui-neng's great teaching legacy to us is in the great *Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (the *T'an-ching* or "Platform Sutra"), one of the great masterpieces of world spiritual literature.

A thousand years later, in Japan, it was Hakuin (1687-1768) whose leadership revived an intellectual and decadent Rinzai tradition into the vital living Zen that it is today

throughout the world. Under Hakuin, Koan practice was transformed from intellectual gamesmanship to its original profundity.

Soto Zen continues to flourish in Japan and was introduced in the United States in 1958 by the great Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki Roshi (1905-1972), a direct spiritual descendant of Dogen. His lineage legacy continues today at the *Zen Center* in San Francisco, California. Roshi's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* is among the most profound, and also readable texts in contemporary spiritual literature.

## Zen and Our Primordial Wisdom Tradition

Esoterically, Zen, like all of the esoteric traditions of our Primordial Wisdom Tradition, transcends its Buddhist origins and conventional Buddhist practice. Whether the pinnacle of individual enlightenment, or the emptiness Base that is the primordial Tao in whom everything arises, Zen is indefinable and incomprehensible (*fukasetzu*), beyond all naming (*namarupa*), definition and concept. Zen is "known" only through direct experience. We barely approach it through language, prose and poetry.

As with Taoism, whose wisdom was assimilated by *Ch'an* Buddhism before it came to Japan as Zen, "The Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao." Zen that can be described is not Zen. With the nondual yogas of *Dzogchen*, *Advaita Vedanta* and the Christian Gnosis of Light, Zen is the presence of the primordial perfection or completion, the perfect symmetry already present within each human form at the spiritual heart (*hridayam/kokoro*) and within every form of *samsaric* experience or existence. Esoterically, Zen is Tao, the direct nondual presence of that primordial source or nature of mind whose exoteric objects arise therein. Like *Dzogchen*, Zen is **That** (*Tathata*) nondual primordial wisdom (*gnosis/jnana*) experienced and realized by all of the *roshis*, *rishis*, saints, sages and *mahasiddhas*, in all of the world systems throughout the timeless *kosmos*. Zen transcends history and its origins. Zen as Tao was present before the worlds began. Zen as experience began with the first experience of a sentient being. Zen as conscious awareness began with the first human experience of the divine. Zen as enlightened experience began with the liberation of the first prehistoric yogi. Zen will continue as long as sentient beings respond to their transpersonal primordial source.

Therefore, as with the other perennial wisdom traditions—Valentinian Gnostic Christianity, *Advaita Vedanta*, *Dzogchen*—Zen is exoterically (conventional, academic Zen, *Bompu*, and "Beat" Zen), a practice for feeling better, or *Shojo* or *Daijo* for delivering us from the state of "ignorance" (*avidya*) to the "goal" of enlightenment *satori*. But esoterically, living Zen is the direct recognition (*kensho*) and then realization (*wu/satori*) of that presence of the supreme source (vertically), and then the compassionate giving (*dana*) or expression, or manifestation (horizontally) in the lifeworld of that prior perfection. And this is the nondual *Saijojo* Zen.

*Shoshin* or Zen mind must remain, from the beginning, the beginners mind, the open, empty, awake mind that includes all possibilities. *Shoshin* is great doubt. *Shoshin* is great faith.

*Shoshin* is great confidence in the face of doubt. These are the Three Pillars of Zen. *Shoshin* is flexible and unfixed, like the mind of a child, like an old man basking in the sun. It does not attach and defend its ideas, concepts and beliefs, for it has none. Zen mind is our vast original mind, "Big Mind", compassionate mind. "When our mind is compassionate, it is boundless" (Suzuki Roshi). The paradoxical "goal" of Zen practice then is to maintain the nondual beginner's mind, *wu-wei*, effortless surrender with no seeking, no goal or "gaining idea." "Make the goal the path."