

ZEN BOW

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The editors of ZEN BOW are pleased to present a new and, they believe, outstanding translation of one of the earliest and most popular Zen writings, the Hsinhsinming (Shinjinmei in Japanese), Verses on the Faith-Mind, by the third Chinese Zen Patriarch, Sengtsan (Sosan).

The translation was made directly from the Chinese by Richard B. Clark, Associate Professor of Biology at Bard College and Research Fellow at the Center for Brain Research at the University of Rochester. Dr. Clark, a long-time student of Zen, is a member of the Rochester Center. He is also a poet in his own right, having several volumes of published verse to his credit.

Translator's Introduction...

What are we to say of a man's life--of this man's life and its relevance to us--Sengtsan, called Sosan by the Japanese? That he lived and that he died, and that such and such tales are told of him, and certain words attributed to him. His death is said to have occurred in the year 606 of our counting of time. His birth date is not recorded--who after all was to know--to know what? Tao-hsun does not give him a biography, only mentions him. He apparently wandered as a mendicant and during the persecution of Buddhists in 574 fled to the mountains. He is said to have been notably kind and gentle and to have come to the dropping away of all bondage and all illusion--with the help of Huike (Eka) his teacher, thus realizing in himself the fullness of man's possible light. He became the third Chinese patriarch of Zen and continued a poor wandering monk. Nothing special.

And he is said to have written this piece--the Hsinhsinming, perhaps the first Chinese Zen document--translated below. The title's first character Hsin shows a man standing by (his?) words, and is often translated as faith or trust. The second Hsin depicts a heart and has come to mean heart, mind, soul, etc., and sometimes Buddha-nature.

* tentatively

ON THE FAITH-MIND
(Verses on the Unfailing Source of Life)

By Sengtsan
in a new translation from the Chinese by
Richard B. Clark

The Great Way is not difficult
for those who have no preferences.
When love and hate are both absent
everything becomes clear and undisguised.
Make the smallest distinction, however,
and heaven and earth are set infinitely apart.
If you wish to see the truth
then hold no opinions for or against.
The struggle between what one likes and what one dislikes
is the disease of the mind.

When the deep meaning of things is not understood
the mind's essential peace is disturbed to no avail.
The Way is perfect like vast space
where nothing is lacking and nothing is in excess.

Indeed, it is due to our choosing to accept or reject
that we do not see the true nature of things.

Be serene (without striving activity) in the oneness of things
and such erroneous views will disappear by themselves.

When you try to stop activity to achieve passivity
your very effort fills you with activity.

As long as you remain in one extreme or the other
you will never know Oneness.

Those who do not live in the single Way
fail in both activity and passivity, assertion and denial.

To deny the reality of things
is to miss their reality;
to assert the emptiness of things
is to miss their reality.

The more you talk and think about it,
the further astray you wander from the truth.

Live neither in the
entanglements of
outer things / nor in
inner feelings of
emptiness.

Stop talking and thinking
and there is nothing you will not be able to know.

To return to the root is to find the meaning,
but to pursue appearances is to miss the source.
At the moment of inner enlightenment
there is a going beyond appearance and emptiness.
The changes that appear to occur in the empty world
we call real only because of our ignorance.
Do not search for the Truth;
only cease to hold opinions.

Do not remain in the dualistic state--
avoid such pursuits carefully.
If there is even a trace of this and that, of right and wrong,
the Mind-essence will be lost in confusion.
Although all dualities come from the One,
do not be attached even to this One.
When the mind exists undisturbed (in the Way)
nothing in the world can offend,
and when a thing can no longer offend
it ceases to exist (in the old way).

When no discriminating thoughts arise,
the (old) mind ceases to exist.
When thought-objects vanish, the thinking-subject vanishes,
as when the mind vanishes, objects vanish.
Things are objects because of the subject (mind);
the mind (subject) is such because of things (object).¹
Understand the relativity of these two
and the basic reality--the Unity of Emptiness.
In this Emptiness the two are indistinguishable
and each contains in itself the whole world.
If you do not discriminate between coarse and fine
you will not be tempted to prejudice and opinion.

i.e., they are mutually dependent for their existence.

To live in the Great Way
is neither easy nor difficult,
but those with limited views are fearful and irresolute--
the faster they hurry, the slower they go--
and clinging (attachment) cannot be limited;
even to be attached to the idea of enlightenment
is to go astray.

Just let things be in their own way,
and there will be neither coming nor going.

Obey the nature of things (your own nature),
and you will walk freely and undisturbed.
When thought is in bondage the truth is hidden,
for everything is murky and unclear,
and the burdensome practice of judging
brings annoyance and weariness.

What benefit can be derived from distinctions and separations?

If you wish to move in the One Way
do not dislike even the world of senses and ideas.
Indeed, to accept them fully
is identical with true Enlightenment.
The wise man strives to no goals
but the foolish man fetters himself.
There is one Dharma (Truth, Law), not many;
distinctions arise from the clinging needs of the ignorant.
To seek Mind with the (discriminating) mind
is the greatest of all mistakes.

Rest and unrest derive from illusion;
with enlightenment there is no liking and disliking.
All dualities come from ignorant inference.
They are like dreams or flowers in air--
foolish to try to grasp them.
Gain and loss, right and wrong--
such thoughts must finally be abolished at once.

If the eye never sleeps,
all dreams will naturally cease.
If the mind makes no discriminations
the ten thousand things are as they are, of single essence.
To understand the mystery of this One-essence
is to be released from all entanglements,
When all things are seen equally
the timeless Self-essence is reached.
No comparisons or analogies are possible
in this causeless, relationless state.

Consider movement stationary
and the stationary in motion,
and both the state of movement and the state of rest
disappear.

When such dualities cease to exist
Oneness itself cannot exist.
To this ultimate finality
no law or description applies.

For the unified mind in accord with the Way
all self-centered striving ceases.
Doubts and irresolutions vanish
and life in true faith is possible.
With a single stroke we are freed from bondage;
nothing clings to us and we hold to nothing.
All is empty, clear, self-illuminating,
with no exertion of the mind's power.
Here thought, feeling, knowledge, and imagination
are of no value.

In this world of Suchness
there is neither self nor other-than-self.
To come directly into harmony with this reality.
Just simply say when doubts arise, "Not two."
In this "not two" nothing is separate,
nothing is excluded.
No matter when or where,
enlightenment means entering this truth.

And this truth is beyond extension or diminution in time or space;
in it a single thought is ten thousand years.

Emptiness here, Emptiness there,
but the infinite universe stands always before your eyes.
Infinitely large and infinitely small--no difference,
for definitions have vanished and no boundaries are seen.
So too with Being and non-Being.
Don't waste time in doubts and arguments
that have nothing to do with this.

One thing, all things--move among and intermingle,
without distinction.
To live in this realization
is to be without anxiety about non-perfection.
To live in this faith is the road to non-duality,
because the non-dual is one with the trusting mind.

Words!

The Way is beyond language,
for in it there is

no yesterday
no tomorrow
no today.

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ZEN WARNING!

...Doing what you like in every way is heresy and deviltry.
(Only) to unify and pacify the mind is quietism and false Zen.
Subjectivity and forgetting the objective world is just falling
into a deep hole... To think of good and evil is to be in Heaven-
and-Hell. Looking for Buddha, looking for Truth outside oneself
is being confined in two iron (stocks). One who thinks he is
enlightened by raising thoughts (discrimination of true and
false) is just playing with ghosts. Sitting blankly in Zen is
an intellectual illusion. Retrogression is to go against our re-
ligion. Neither to progress nor retrogress is to be merely a
dead man breathing. You must make the utmost effort to accom-
plish your enlightenment in this life and not postpone it into
eternity, reincarnating throughout the three worlds.

--by Zen Master Wu-men Hui-k'ai (Mumon)
(translation by R.H. Blyth)

Summer Plans

An unexcelled opportunity for Zen study and practice will present itself in the summer months of July and August when the Center will move to the 350-acre farm-estate of Bill and Harriet Gratwick. Harriet is a charter member of the Center and is presently on the Board of Directors.

The Gratwick farm is located 30 miles south of Rochester and overlooks the historic Genesee Valley. Its acreage includes a vast panorama of rolling fields, woods and a deep ravine teeming with wild life. It is an ideal setting for zazen, as those members who attended the July 1967 sesshin will remember. Who could ever forget sitting under a full moon out in the fields after 10 p.m.?

The Center staff will move into the Gratwick's manor house around June 29. This "Big House"--as it is affectionately called--remains quite cool in the summer, and its wide lawns, swimming pool and water garden command a dramatic view 40 miles across the valley to the distant Bristol Hills. Tentative plans call for a full and varied summer program, including two lengthy sesshins in July and August, and possible guest appearances during the regular summer schedule by people whose life aims have put them near to Zen. The Center plans to invite Dr. Huston Smith, author of the widely read The Religions of Man, and Charlotte Selver with her husband, Charles Brooks, foremost pioneers and exponents of sensory-awareness.

In addition to all this, the Center is working now to implement a program which would allow interested men and women to stay at the farm on a weekly basis for zazen, personal instruction, and physical work. Financial details, specific information, and the exact sesshin dates and fees will be announced in the next issue of Zen Bow.

The June sesshin, however, will be held at the Buckingham Street Center in Rochester, and Philip Sensei will return once a week for two days to the city throughout the summer to conduct scheduled meetings.

It is hoped that all of the Center's membership will be able to participate in one or another aspect of what promises to be a very special summer of study and practice. For those members separated from the area by long distances, the accommodations on a weekly basis offer an appropriate substitute for normal 'summer vacation.'

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Florida Sesshin

In mid-January Philip Sensei conducted a sesshin at St. Petersburg, Florida. The five-day event drew 20 people, most of them from nearby Florida Presbyterian College. For the majority this sesshin was their first experience of intense, prolonged zazen, and their perseverance and response to it warrant commendation from all serious American Zen aspirants.

Announcement

Owing to the increase in membership, greater diversity of Center projects, and particularly the gratifying sesshin

response, the Rochester Center is in need of several items, which include twin-bed sized sheets; air mattresses; cot-sized beds (preferably with box springs and mattresses); dacron pillows. All items should be in good condition.

A major need at the Center for proper coordination of the summer schedule is a used station wagon or Volkswagon bus. Anyone having such a vehicle could either present it to the Center as a (tax deductible) gift, or, perhaps, loan it to the staff for July and August. Either alternative, of course, would be greatly appreciated.

In zazen one is struggling not to escape
from oneself, but to become oneself entirely...

On Zen Sitting

Zen-sitting is the way of perfect tranquility; inwardly not a shadow of perception, outwardly not a shade of difference between things. Do not think of attaining enlightenment. Do not think of discarding illusions.

You are like a flying bird, with no mind to twitter, a mountain unconscious of the others rising around it.

Zen-sitting has nothing to do with the exercise of commandments, the practice of contemplation, the acquisition of wisdom. You are like a fish with no particular design of remaining in the sea...

Guard yourself against the easy conceptions of "this is good, that is bad." Your sole concern should be to question yourself continuously, "Who is it that is above either?" Your Buddha-nature, consummate as the full moon, is represented by your position as you sit in Zen.

The exquisite way of the Buddhas is not the one or the many, not this or that, not being or non-being.

Do not become attached to enlightenment or illusion. Free yourself from liking and disliking. Do not cling to random ideas that arise in your mind, and like reflections in a mirror, they will leave no trace.

The five, the eight, the two hundred and fifty commandments, the three thousand monastic regulations, the Buddha-nature, Bodhisattvahood, and the Wheel of the Dharma--all these are comprised in Zen-sitting and emerge from it. Of all good works, zazen comes first, for the merit of only one step into it surpasses that of erecting the most gorgeous church.

Whether you are a beginner or an advanced student, whether you are learned or ignorant, if you practice zazen, then all you do, perceive and think becomes part of the miraculous Universal Thusness...

--by Zen Master Meiho

(an adaptation from Zen: Poems, Prayers,
Sermons, Anecdotes, Interviews, ed. by
Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto)