

Zen's Significance For Modern Civilization

Part 1

1. Zen and the Buddhist Sutras

"What is Zen?" Simply put, one word could be uttered, or, indeed, none at all. On the other hand, if one were to elaborate, no amount of elaboration could ever exhaust it. The intention here, however, is to be as plain and to the point as possible.

Zen is usually considered a school or denomination of Buddhism which was founded by Bodhidharma in sixth-century China. Speaking for Zen, however, it is not one particular denomination within Buddhism; it is, rather, the root source of Buddhism. There is good reason for saying this, although ordinarily Zen is indeed considered one Buddhist denomination.

Each of the various denominations of Buddhism has a basic expression to characterize its fundamental teaching. Zen's basic expression [attributed to Bodhidharma] is:

Without relying on words or letters,
An independent transmission outside any teaching;
Directly pointing to the human mind [or core],
One sees [original] nature and is Buddha.⁷

不立文字
教外別伝
直指人心
見性成佛

In the traditional Buddhist terms of "setting up a basic principle to found a new denomination," this motto most clearly expresses the reasons for Zen's "foundation." It sought to do several things: To criticize and radically break through the Buddhism prevalent in China at the time, express verbally the true nature of Buddhism, and return to the true source of Buddhism and create from there something new and genuine.

This mode of creative criticism raised by Zen Buddhism fifteen centuries ago may provide a suggestive precedent not only for present-day Buddhism but also for present-day religion in general. For it is an authentic and appropriate way to revive and make fully alive again religions which have succumbed to formality and convention.

As regards the first part of Zen's basic expression, "Without relying on words or letters," this is not to be taken simply literally. "Without relying on words or letters" does not mean the complete negation (as ordinarily understood) of words. Rather, it means "prior to words" in the sense of not depending on words, not being bound or caught by them. "Words and letters" refers to the Buddhist sutras, which are all expressed in words and letters.

Ordinarily, the Buddhist sutras are treated as records of the oral expositions of Shakyamuni and are considered to be the source of and authority for Buddhism. Today, however, modern research into the historical actualities of the compilation of the scriptures has made clear that what is spoken of as the sutras are not all the direct discourses of Shakyamuni, but also include sutras which were composed many centuries after Shakyamuni. Until this realization, however, the sutras were generally regarded by Buddhists as the ultimate foundation and authority of Buddhism. When each of the various denominations of Buddhism was about to be founded, the founder always sought in the sutras the final authority for the truth to be embodied in the new Buddhist form. In the traditional Buddhist view, the final norm of truth was contained in the sutras; that which had no basis in the sutras could not be called truth.

Accordingly, each Buddhist denomination has its own particular sutra (or sutras) as the ultimate authority for its teaching. For example, the *Huayan* denomination has the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, the *Tiantai* [*Tendai*] and the *Hokke* [or *Nichiren*] denominations have the *Lotus Sutra*, and the Pure Land denomination has the "Three Pure Land Sutras." To prove that they are Buddhist and that their

7 The final line can be interpreted to mean "We realize [our own original] nature and actualize awakening." See pp. 12 and 15 below.

teaching is true, the various denominations have recourse to their authoritative scriptures. In this regard, the same is true of Christianity. For Christianity, the Bible is the exact counterpart of the Buddhist sutras; it constitutes for Christianity the final criterion of truth and is itself absolute truth.

Zen, however, has no such authoritative sutra upon which it is based. This does not mean that it arbitrarily ignores the sutras, but rather that it dares to be independent of them. Zen severely condemns the dogmatic thinking and magical practices which characterized the Buddhist denominations that made the sutras the final norm of truth. Zen points out that they lack the root source. Thus, it casts off such dogmatism and magic and seeks to return to the source of the sutras — that is, to that which is “prior to” the sutras. In this respect, Bodhidharma’s response of “No merit!”⁸ was a great criticism of the Buddhism of his time; indeed, it was revolutionary.

When I say “prior to” the sutras, this is liable to be taken temporally or historically. But, of course, I do not mean historically “prior to.” I mean, rather, the *source* which is “prior to” the sutra expressions. In Zen, this source is expressed by the term “mind” [or “core”; 心], which is radically different from what we today commonly call mind. It is, for Zen, this “mind” which is the root source of the sutras, and, thus “prior to” the sutras.

This “mind” as the source of the scriptures is what is meant in the previously mentioned, “Directly pointing to the human mind [or core], one sees [original] nature and is Buddha.” The word nature in “sees nature” refers to humankind’s original nature, that is, our true way of being. In Buddhism this is generally called Buddha nature, meaning awakened nature, or mind nature. In Zen, however, it is called self nature or “original face,” expressions which are far more intimate to us. Self nature is the original nature of us humans, which is none other than the human mind. For Zen, it is precisely this original nature of humankind which is the Buddha nature or awakened nature; it is precisely the human mind which is the “Buddha mind.” Apart from it, there is no true “Buddha.” Again, Buddha is not to be sought outside of this mind.

Consequently, “One sees nature” means, finally, that we human beings “see” our original nature. This does not mean objectively to see, contemplate, cognize, or believe in the nature of some Buddha which is wholly other to us humans. Though we speak of “seeing,” this does not mean to see with the eyes. Nor does it mean to contemplate, as in “contemplating the dharma.” As the Chinese Zen master Dazhu said, “Seeing is itself the [original] nature!” This “seeing” is humankind’s awakening to our own original nature. In Zen, apart from the one who has awakened to his original nature, there is nothing to be called Buddha. It is the awakening of humankind’s original nature which is the actualization of Buddha; hence, “One sees [original] nature and is Buddha.”

As you may know, the Sanskrit term “Buddha” means “an awakened one,” i.e., human beings awakening to their own original nature. Shakyamuni is called “Buddha” only because he awakened to this original nature.

Concerning the Buddhist sutras, many things are written there which just don’t make sense today, no matter how much one may try to force an interpretation — as Bultmann has pointed out in the Christian context with his “de-mythologizing.”⁹ Especially today when the influence of Western religion, philosophy, and science has penetrated Buddhist countries, if we are caught by the words in the sutras, then we become trapped and bound by words expounded in the distant past. This becomes an obstacle to understanding the original meaning, and also prevents us from giving that original meaning a fresh and free contemporary expression. Rather than rely on what has been expressed in the past, that is, sutras and scripture, it is far better to enter directly into the source “prior to” what is expressed. Then, with “the sutra-reading eye,” we can interpret them freely and, according to the situation, give a new and truly spontaneous expression of their “source.” As it is said in [Kumarajiva’s translation of] the *Mahaprajna-paramita Sutra*, “Using words to expound the dharma which is without words.”

Zen, thus, does not rely on the sutras but rather makes its main concern the direct entering into the mind which is “prior to” the sutras. To repeat, Zen does not stand on any authoritative sutras. This, after all, is what is meant by the phrase

8. See pp. 16-17 below.

9. See, for example, Rudolf Bultmann’s *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (listed in bibliography).

"outside any teaching" in the expression, "An independent transmission outside any teaching." "Outside the teaching" stands in contrast to "inside the teaching." "Teaching" here means the teaching which has been established with the written sutras as its basis. In contrast to that Buddhism which relies on the sutras and is therefore said to be "inside the teaching," Zen, not relying on the sutras but entering directly into the mind which is the source of the sutras, is said to be "outside any teaching." "Outside any teaching" thus does not mean apart from or outside Buddhism; rather, it means the inner source of that which is "inside the teaching." In other words, considered from the side of the sutra-expressions, Zen is "outside"; considered from the source of what is expressed in the sutras, Zen is even more "inner" than what is ordinarily called "inside the teaching." Thus, the innermost source of what is ordinarily called "inside the teaching" is what Zen speaks of as "outside the teaching." If we think in terms of authority, Zen's authority is the root source which is even more "inner" than the sutras!

2. The Zen Understanding of Buddha

It should now be clear that Zen does not rely on the sutras; actually, though, it does not rely on *anything*. Thus, *The Record of Linji [Rinzai]* speaks of "self-emancipated and independent."¹⁰ This derives from the basic nature of mind itself. If there is relying and relied upon, or even if there is no relying on the sutras, this is still not ultimately not relying on *anything*. Not relying on anything, one relies on nothing other than oneself — this is true reliance. Zen's authority is found in the nonduality of relying and relied upon; their being one and inseparable is true reliance. And since there is neither relying nor relied upon here, there is actually no reliance: True reliance is not relying. As Huangbo said: "During the twelve periods [i.e., twenty-four hours] of the day, not relying on anything."

In this respect, Zen Buddhism greatly differs from Christianity and even from Pure Land Buddhism, religions which rely absolutely on God or Amida Buddha. In these religions, that which relies is always that which relies, and that which is relied upon is always that which is relied upon. Their duality is never overcome. It is for this reason that Christianity is called a religion of absolute dependence and Pure Land Buddhism a religion of absolute "Other Power." Consequently, the understanding of humankind in these religions is that of a being absolutely dependent upon and supported by God or Amida.

This is not the Zen view of humankind Linji [Rinzai] describes as "self-emancipated and independent," "independent man of the Way," and the "true man" or "authentic person." He even asserted that other than this person there is nothing to be called Buddha. And in a very severe statement he declared:

Encountering a Buddha, killing the Buddha; encountering a patriarch, killing the patriarch; encountering an arhat, killing the arhat; encountering mother and father, killing the mother and father; encountering a relative, killing the relative: Only thus does one attain liberation and emancipation from all things, thereby becoming completely unfettered and independent.

In a later period, Wumen, in his comments on the first case of his *Gateless Barrier [Mumonkan]*, declared:

Encountering a Buddha, killing the Buddha; encountering a patriarch, killing the patriarch: Thus does one attain great freedom at the brink of life-and-death and actualize the samadhi of unfettered playfulness in the midst of the four modes of birth in the six realms of existence.

These expressions emphasize that in Zen the true person is emancipated even from Buddhas and patriarchs: Absolutely independent and autonomous, beyond even Buddhas and patriarchs.

In the *Xuemei-lun*, attributed to Bodhidharma:

¹⁰ 独脱無依. A favorite expression of Hisamatsu's, it consists of two separate terms found in the *Record of Linji*: *dokudatsu* (独脱), which means solitarily-emancipated, awakening on one's own, and *mue* (無依), which means not dependent on anyone or anything. These two terms are brought together in later works such as the *Xutang-lu* (*Kidō-roku*).

Confused beings do not know that their being Buddha is true Buddha. They waste their time running to and fro, searching outwardly, contemplating Buddhas, honoring patriarchs, looking for Buddha somewhere outside of themselves. They are mistaken. Just know your own mind! There is no Buddha outside of mind.

In the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, Huineng says, "One's being Buddha is true Buddha" and "Your own mind is Buddha."

Mazu says: "Outside of mind, no other Buddha; outside of Buddha, no other mind."

In *Essentials of the Transmission of Mind-Dharma*, Huangbo says: "Your mind is Buddha, Buddha is mind: Mind and Buddha are not different."

In *Poem on Actualizing the Way*, Yongjia states: "In clearly seeing, there is not one single thing: Neither man nor Buddha."

On the surface such statements appear to be negating Buddha and to be extremely anti-religious. From the standpoint of Zen, however, any self dependent on Buddha or dharma is not truly emancipated, free, self-supporting, and independent.

The aim of Buddhism, first and foremost, is to get free from all bondage: This is complete and final emancipation in Buddhism, for it is freedom from all, including the dualities of life-death, right-wrong, good-evil. This thoroughgoing emancipation is bound by nothing, dependent on nothing, without anything whatever: *Utterly unobstructed and independent*. The Heart Sutra's "Mind has no hindrance, no obstruction" refers to nothing other than this.

Rather than seeking this emancipation as a future ideal never to be actualized, however, Zen insists on its actualization here and now. A self still dependent on some Buddha is not yet the authentic Buddhist self or Zen "mind." The mind in Zen is not dependent on any external Buddha or dharma; it is Buddha itself as root source of all.

In Buddhism, Buddha is considered the most honorable. But even that which is most honorable, if it is outside of us, would bind and hinder us. Bound or caught by something insignificant, we soon become aware of it; captured by something very precious and honorable, however, and we are awed and bedazzled by it.

The ultimate in Buddhism is for us to awaken to the self which is not bound by anything — not even by its "not being bound" — and thus works independently. To be more precise: Just because it is not bound by — or to — anything it can work independently.

Ordinarily, the above-quoted Zen phrases about "killing" Buddha and patriarchs would be an expression of the most extreme anti-religiousness. To draw one drop of blood from the body of a Buddha is considered one of the five grave sins. Thus, to kill Buddha or patriarchs is, from the viewpoint of Buddhist faith, absolutely inadmissible. For Zen, however, such utterances most thoroughly express what is "outside any teaching," free even from Buddha-bondage or dharma-bondage. Indeed, these phrases express the ultimate position of true faith. Sengcan, the third patriarch of Chinese Zen, spoke of this in his *Verses on the Faithful Mind*: "The faithful mind is nondual; nondual is the faithful mind."

In Buddhism there are ordinarily innumerable forms of Buddha. But as stated above, in Zen the authentic Buddha is mind emancipated from every kind of bondage and completely free of all forms. Zen does not call authentic any Buddha depicted on paper, or in earthenware, wood, or metal, nor even those most sublime Buddhas possessing the so-called thirty-two major and eighty minor marks of excellence. For Zen, not even the Buddhas of the reward body, the response body, or the transformation body are true ones.

Pure Land Buddhism is centered in the Buddha-with-form called Amida Buddha. The source of Amida, however, is the *dharmakaya* [dharma body], which is without form. Shinran states in his *Yuishinshô-mon'i*:

The *dharmakaya* is without shape or form and thus is beyond the reach of the mind, beyond description in words. That which takes form and comes forth from this [formless] suchness is called *upaya-dharmakaya* [skill-in-means dharma body].

Again, in his *Jinenhônishô*, written at the age of eighty-six, Shinran proclaims:

The supreme Buddha is without form. Because it is without form, it is called self-effected. If represented in form, it cannot be spoken of as the supreme Nirvana. It is to make

known this [ultimate] formlessness that we speak of Amida Buddha. So have I learned.

In short, *Upaya-dharmakaya* expressed in form, that is Amida Buddha, is not the supreme Buddha or supreme Nirvana.

Shinran, in "The True Buddha and his World" section of his main work, *Kyôgyôshinshô* [Teaching-Practice-Faith-Authentication], quotes from *The Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* [one of the "Three Pure Land Sutras"] that attaining rebirth in the Pure Land is "enjoying the self-effected, unlimited dharma body of Emptiness."

This is only natural, once "rebirth" in Pure Land Buddhism is considered equivalent to the final emancipation of Nirvana. Attaining Nirvana is considered rebirth or the "going aspect" in Pure Land Buddhism. Nirvana, however, is self nature or the original way of being of all things. This is why Shinran in his *Yuishinshô-mon'i* depicts attaining Nirvana as "returning to the capital of dharma nature."

It's clear that a Buddha which has form is not the ultimate or true Buddha: The true Buddha is without form. For Zen the Buddha without form is the true Buddha; and it is precisely this true Buddha which is the true self, the true man or authentic person mentioned above.

Thus, Zen has nothing to do with idols — and this in a most thoroughgoing manner. Zen Buddhism does not worship, pray to, or believe in any Buddha with an objective form, whether material or ideational. For Zen, Buddhism is awakening to the true, formless mind; that is, awakening to the true Buddha. It is this awakening to the true Buddha that Zen calls "see[ing original] nature," or awakening to our original face. In Zen it is precisely the original face of any of us human beings which is the true Buddha. The true Buddha is no other than our original way of being, our true self. And awakening to our original face is the above-quoted "One sees [original] nature and is Buddha." This seeing or realizing nature does not refer to any objective contemplation, awareness, or cognition of something called self nature or Buddha nature; it is the awakening of self nature itself. Since there is no Buddha apart from this awakening, saying that one "is Buddha" means true self awakening. Indeed, the term "Buddha" means "an awakened one." In Zen there is no true Buddha outside of the person awakened to the true self; thus, this awakened one is called true man or authentic person in *The Record of Linji*. All forms of Buddha, including the so-called reward body, response body, or transformation body, are but different modes of expression of this authentic person and have meaning only as such.

In a word, Zen is neither a theism based on a transcendent God, nor a humanism centered on man in the ordinary sense. It is rather a "true-man-ism": Awakening to the true man or authentic person as our original face.

3. The Method of Zen

As mentioned above, Zen does not rely on any authority. If "authority" is spoken of in a Zen context, the basic authority would be the true self, that is, the true man or genuine person. Such, however, would be the authority of no-authority. Thus, the method of Zen Buddhism is to get oneself — and others — to awaken to this true self with which we all are originally equipped. This is "Directly pointing to the human mind," mentioned in the beginning.

Zen does not seek "inside the teaching" for occasions or opportunities to come to this awakening, but rather finds them freely and directly in living itself in its every aspect and action: Going, staying, sitting, lying, hearing, seeing, raising the eyebrows, blinking the eyes, and so on. This is obvious if we take a look at the various occasions and opportunities for awakening in Zen history. Such occasions and opportunities, according to time and place, are innumerable, but a few well-known examples will suffice: Nanquan's "Killing the cat"; Zhaozhou's "Have a cup of tea" and his "Cypress tree in the garden"; Longtan's "Blowing out the candle"; Yunmen's "Why don a clerical gown when the bell rings?" and his "Dry hunk of shit!"; Shoushan's "Bamboo staff." According to time and place, any of the innumerable phenomena of life become occasions to awaken oneself and others to this self nature.

Seeking for Buddha externally is wrong in its very direction. In the Zen encounter known as "Ordinary mind is the Way," Nanquan goes so far as to say to Zhaozhou, "In seeking for it, you've already gone astray." Linji often cites the example of Yajnadatta — who thought that he had lost his own head and so ran about searching for it — to warn that in searching externally for Buddha one only goes further away from it. The *Xuema-lun*, cited above, states that if one does not know one's own mind as Buddha but instead searches externally, even though one is busy the whole day contemplating Buddha and making obeisance to patriarchs, one

will never find Buddha.

As far as Zen is concerned, Shakyamuni is Buddha only because he awakened to his self nature. Not only Shakyamuni but anyone without exception who is awakened to their self nature is Buddha. This is the universal equality of Buddha. All people are completely equal in terms of Buddha nature. The true Buddha is not some particular person, not something transcendent. Further, anyone who is *not* Buddha is not in their authentic way of being as a person. That's why it's said that each person, just as he or she is, is Buddha, and even that not being Buddha is *maya*, or illusion. That's also why the sixth patriarch of Chinese Zen, Huineng, states in his well-known verse:

Originally not a single thing;
Where can any dust collect?

Historians speak of Shakyamuni who lived in India 2,500 years ago, but that is the Shakyamuni with form. Shakyamuni as Buddha is not the Shakyamuni who existed in a time 2,500 years ago in a place called India; he is the authentic person without form, not delimited by time or space. Shakyamuni is *the eternal right now*, *the infinite right here*. Shakyamuni as Buddha will never be understood by those historians who try to deny self-as-Buddha through their use of spatial-temporal categories. Shakyamuni as Buddha can never be known simply as an objective fact, but only as self-awakened existence, only through awakened subjectivity.

Wherever and whenever a person — any person — awakens to this self nature, there is Buddha, there is Shakyamuni. And there is the root source of Buddhism “prior to” the sutras. From here we can create, free and afresh, dharma expressions appropriate to time and place without being bound to established dharma expressions of the past such as Buddhist sutras or images. “Without relying on words or letters” means freedom not only from established forms but from all form. Thus, while continually creating forms as self-expression, one is never captured or caught by those forms nor even by their creation. *The Vimalakirti Sutra's* “All things are established on the basis of non-abiding” and the sixth patriarch's “Because there is no dharma to be attained, one can give rise to all dharmas” refer to nothing other than this.

Zen thus may be said to have two aspects: 1) *true Emptiness* of the true self, unbound by and completely free from all form; 2) *wondrous working or activity* of the true self, unbound by any form yet actualizing all forms. These two aspects constitute the “essence” and the “function” of the true self. True Emptiness is the “abstraction” of all forms; wondrous working is the free formation of every form. This is self-expression of the absolutely formless self.

Here, by the way, is the nondualistic ground of thoroughgoing *abstraction* and thoroughgoing *expression*. Ordinary abstraction is only a stage in the process going toward liberation from form; it is not yet complete freedom from form itself. Likewise, ordinary expression derives from some kind of form; it is not yet self-expression unbound by anything. Herein lies the Zen basis for thoroughgoing abstract art and thoroughgoing expressionism.

When Zen arose in China around the sixth century, much had been going on in Chinese Buddhism including translations of and commentaries on the sutras, creating Buddha images, building monasteries, and giving alms to monks. Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (reigned 502-549) had achieved so much in this way that he was called the Buddhist-minded son of heaven. It was during his reign that Bodhidharma (considered the first patriarch of Chinese Zen) happened to come to China from India. Bodhidharma was asked by the Emperor what merit had accrued from the innumerable good works he had sponsored since his enthronement, such as the construction of monasteries, the copying of sutras, and the ordination of monks. Bodhidharma responded: “No merit!”

This single phrase of “No merit!” was a basic and thoroughgoing criticism of Buddhism at the time. For Bodhidharma, those good works were trivial fruits attained within the life-death cycle of samsara, mere causes producing defilement, and were not to be regarded as real.

Emperor Wu then asked what was genuine merit. Bodhidharma answered: “Pure wisdom, wondrous and perfect; self, empty and calm of itself.” Bodhidharma points directly to the root source of every merit, the merit of all merits. In effect, he is stating that if this is neglected, no matter how devotedly one undertakes the construction of monasteries, the copying of sutras, the ordination of monks and so

on, one is merely chasing after inconsequential branches and trifling leaves without getting down to the root of the matter. Bodhidharma's "self, empty and calm of itself" is nothing other than the above-mentioned self of true Emptiness as our original face. For Bodhidharma, awakening to this is the highest merit, the essential meaning of Buddhism. This radical criticism by Bodhidharma, together with the later spread of Zen, brought about a great change in Chinese Buddhism, redirecting it from its diversion toward accidentals back to its root source.

This direction toward the root source, however, does not mean *the process of going toward* the root source, but rather means, as expressed in the Zen phrase "directly pointing to the human mind," *directly entering into* the root source, that is, directly awakening to our original face. That is why direct and straightforward ways to open up this awakening came to be so greatly emphasized. Indeed, the innumerable occasions of satori, or "seeing [original] nature," in Zen history are so many instances both of this unique method and of its actual fruition in self awakening.

The "ancient-case" koans collected in classic Zen texts such as *The Blue Cliff Record*, *The Congrong-lu [Shôyô-roku]*, *The Gateless Barrier* and so on, comprise no more than a very small portion of these Zen occasions. And such occasions all involved the concrete things around them at the time, including such extremely common things of the natural world as the sky, earth, mountains and rivers, various trees such as the bamboo, peach, pine and cypress, various animals such as the dog, cat, duck, ox and tiger, not to mention daily activities of the times such as going on pilgrimage, begging alms, drinking tea, eating meals, bathing, talking, keeping silent, raising the hands, or stretching out the legs.

These concrete things, however, are only the occasion according to the time and place for directly attaining true Emptiness, as the Heart Sutra states: "Form is itself empty." They are no more than the occasion for getting free from concreteness and attaining "abstractness," that is, true Emptiness-formlessness. And this "abstractness," as indicated by the Heart Sutra's "Emptiness is itself form," is not simply the negation of concreteness. It is the very basis and root source for the transformation of ordinary concreteness (which, as illusion, must be negated) to true concreteness as wondrous being.

We have seen that natural things and human affairs serve as the occasions and opportunities for awakening. There are, however, not a few instances in which phrases from the various Buddhist scriptures, such as *The Vimalakirti Sutra*, *Diamond Sutra*, *Avatamsaka Sutra*, and *Lotus Sutra* also serve this function. For example, two excerpts from *The Vimalakirti Sutra*:

Original being is consummate and fulfilled in itself; why then does it take the form of all beings and go astray?

Entering the dharma gate of nonduality.

The *Avatamsaka Sutra* speaks of "The fourfold dharma world."
From the [Shou]Lengyan-jing:

By nature pure and undefiled; why then do mountains, rivers, and the great earth emerge?

Two excerpts from the *Diamond Sutra*:

Let the mind arise that abides nowhere.

Seeing me in form or seeking me in sound, one practices the wrong way and cannot see the tathagata.

And from the Heart Sutra:

No eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no consciousness.

These "koans from inside the teaching" are not quoted, however, out of respect for what is written in the sutras or for the purpose of indulging in verbal comments or textual exposition. Zen rather takes these phrases and makes them its own, using them as occasions and opportunities according to the requirements of time and place. Scriptural phrases are given a treatment completely different from

the close, logical reasoning they receive in Indian Buddhism and the textual exegesis and commentary they receive in Chinese Buddhism. In this respect, the Indian and Chinese treatments are "inside the teaching" while the Zen treatment is a living usage "outside the teaching." Zen, being separate from and yet the root source of the sutras, makes free and unique use even of scriptural phrases as moments for "Directly pointing to the human mind, One sees [original] nature and is Buddha."

Occasions for Zen awakening often take the form of *mondô* question-and-answer exchanges. Such *mondô* are not dialectical or theoretical discussions, nor are they mere everyday conversations. Created for the purpose of bringing about awakening or, when used by those already awakened, to gauge the depth of each other's awakening, they are unique to Zen and not to be found elsewhere. In these *mondô* one throws oneself forth headfirst as none other than the wondrous working of true Emptiness. As mentioned above, the sundry functions of humankind are included: Everything and anything at any time or any place can be taken as an opportunity.

Unlike most ordinary question-and-answer exchanges, Zen *mondô* need not be based on words. For example, many instances involve blinking the eyes, raising eyebrows, cupping the ears, raising a fist, a blow with a stick, a shout, eating, drinking, bowing, raising implements such as a whisk, and the like. And yet, in all these *mondô* the wondrous working of true Emptiness is present.

In short, the direct and vigorous activity of "Directly pointing to the human mind, One sees [original] nature and is Buddha" unfolds in awakening and getting others to awaken. The unique and marvelous character of Zen *mondô* lies in its never being mere talk or silence, sitting or lying, drinking or eating, using a stick or giving a shout; it is always the wondrous working of true Emptiness. Without this — and if this is not understood — Zen *mondô* would be nothing but a falsehood, a boast, a kind of madness, or at best a kind of wit or riddle.