

Chapter II

The Real Self

1 The Real Self means the Absolute Self which Buddhism preaches

By "the real self" I mean "Shinga," a true self. In other words, the absolute self. The statement may invite a protest from some among my audience who would say, "You appear to be a believer in Buddhism, so you may well know that the Buddha preaches "Muga", selflessness. You sound rather strange in speaking of "Shinga" true self, in spite of the fact that you are a follower of the Buddhist faith, which teaches selfeffacement."

But now let me tell you the story of Kashō recounted in the *Dai-ne-han-gyō*, whose faith matured under the tender care of Nyorai, until he attained sainthood that qualified him as a bodhisattva. One day he asked the Buddha whether all sentient beings have an individual ego. The Buddha said in reply to his question that they do possess it of course, for the Buddha-nature is *Shinga*, true self. At His words, Kashō the Venerable, with a look of rising temper retorted. "Your Highness has repeatedly preached on self-effacement, and for my part, I, inquiring into the true state of things with as much insight as I have, reached the conclusion that no individual self exists at all."

He was so confident that it was the real truth of the matter that the remarks the Buddha made about *Shinga*, true self, sounded illogical after what the Buddha had preached so far. Then the Buddha observed once again in answer to his somewhat aggressive question that the universe might indeed be selfless when viewed in one aspect, while in another it should be regarded as *Shinga*, true

2 Ego, Self that is subject to perpetual repetition of birth and death

self. Although the true self does exist from the first, it is virtually nonexistent so long as it remains in a latent and undeveloped state.

That is the gist of the doctrine described in the eight chapters on Nyorai Shōhon of *Dai-ne-han-gyō*. A passage in it reads as follows: “the Buddha-nature is the true self that can compare with an adamant, because it is impossible to break it.” And elsewhere the true self is described as the absolute self. No one should try to destroy it, because it is unbreakable. In India something that is unbreakable is often likened to a piece of diamond, and that applies exactly to the absolute self. Whatever I have said about the existence of true self, is in no way contrary to the teachings of the Buddha.

In Buddhism, when a statement gives rise to doubt as to whether it accords perfectly with the original teachings of the Buddha and the spirit of Buddhism, it must satisfy three following conditions before it can obtain recognition of its correctness. They are *Mujō*, impermanence, *Muga*, self effacement and *Nehan*, Nirvana, known as the three seals of the law. It is not until it is proved to possess all these qualifications that it is accepted as conformable to the teachings of the Buddha. Thus selflessness is one of the Buddhist qualifications. When I mention selflessness, or non-self, it means phenomenal self, individual ego, not a self that really exists, the real self. When I speak of *Shinga*, true self, I mean the real self, so named in terms of realist philosophy.

The word “real” used in the context of the statement meaning *Shinga*, is same as “real” in the sense of the term which is adopted by realist philosophers. For them “real” means “unchangeable and endless.” They participate in the practice of Zen meditation so that they may be awakened more thoroughly to the real self.

2 Ego, Self that is subject to perpetual repetition of birth and death

Whenever I visit a Zen temple, I am asked by the head priest to tell my name. He begins with, “may I have your name?”. I do so.

Then he asks me to bring him my real self with me when I got it through the practice of meditation. What do you think of his suggestion? Are all of you aware of your real self? At this you may reply: "Can't you see me sitting here? Do you tell me that what you see here is my false self?"

We are composed of body and mind. We are by no means merely material objects, because we are not dolls, but beings endowed with a mind. Do you find anything real in your body? As I stated earlier, by real I mean permanent and unchangeable. All of you are able to see me. But if you think you are now looking at a person named Sasamoto, who is one and the same with the one whom saw ten days ago, you are grossly mistaken. I have taken a bath a number of times in ten days and shaved myself quite often.

Of course you are not seeing through into the bones hidden inside my body. The upper layer of the skin keeps peeling off in dirt, mixed with particles of dust stuck to the skin. Therefore a person known as Sasamoto that you are looking at today is a new being.

To speak from the physiological standpoint, it is known that a systematic circulation of blood is completed in only fifty-six seconds, even in cases blood takes the longest way around, it takes less than a minute. When it follows the shortest route, it completes a round of circulation in less than twenty-two seconds. Now I propose to explain what is meant by blood-circulation. The blood which runs from the heart continues on its course of circulation, absorbing at every turn exhausted matter that have accumulated in the body and supplying fresh nutriment. On returning to the heart, it is transmitted to the lungs, where it is discharged at every breath and becomes freshened by taking in oxygen from the air inhaled. In this way the replacement of the old for the new is ceaselessly repeated. This is called metabolism.

Metabolism does not denote transformation of matter, but replacement of one for another in the sense that a new visitor is received in place of the earlier guest who bowed out. It is just like flow of water. When you fix your eyes on a point, you seem to be

watching the same water but the fact is that you only look the water as it shifts from moment to moment.

According to an American physiologist of note, all of the matter that composes a human body at this moment is gradually discharged from it in course of metabolism until it is completely replaced by new matter. The complete replacement takes place in seven years, and I shall be a new being, totally different from what I am now as far as my material body is concerned. It is a fact that my material being is completely replaced by new matter before I am aware of it. I change into another being which is physically different despite the resemblance in appearance. Though you may take it for granted that this body is your own, no part of it is real in the physiological sense of the word.

Buddhism preaches, "Nothing ages but it is replaced by the new." Indeed no human body is old, for your body did not exist at all until about ten months prior to its birth, while there will not be the least sign of its bones within a hundred years of its burial after death.

In a factory like ironworks, it may happen that a worker falls by accident into the molten iron ladle. The moment he sinks into the furnace a wisp of smoke arises. No matter how closely you may search the spot the victim was seen to fall, you will be unable to discover even the smallest pieces of his clothing.

Indeed human beings are subject to transformation into a wisp of smoke, if the worst happens. Though we are facing each other like this now, we are in fact nothing more than a modification of a wisp of smoke. We are originally nonexistent and shall cease to exist at any moment; we are such ephemeral beings.

Viewed in the light of realist philosophy, the span of our life is so brief. On the other hand, when considered in terms of value, we are firmly convinced that our life is capable of spiritual growth under the favour and compassion of Nyorai. The human flesh is a vessel in which a personality is fostered and disciplined by Nyorai. This personality may become an heir worthy of Him, who is father

to us all, even though it may be a helpless and short-lived being as the realist philosopher describes. Though this body may certainly belong to us, it meets in no way the conditions of a real self.

But we have a mind in us, since we are not mere dolls. For instance, whereas we perceive no warmth in our bed when we are fast asleep, on awakening from slumber we begin to feel comfortable in bed relishing its agreeable warmth. A sharp pinch to the skin will make you feel a pain. In other words, make you aware of the pain. It is that awareness that testifies to the existence of a mind within you. But no matter how hard you may try to search for it, you will find nothing that is regarded as real in your mind.

Sorrow or joy is a particular state of mind. If the mind is the "real self" which is permanent and unchangeable, a sorrowful or joyful mind ought to remain forever as it is now. It being far from the case, however, the mind as it is can by no means be considered to be "real."

As for memory, anyone that has a knowledge of psychology would hardly count it as ever-enduring. It owes to your power of memory that you can call to mind the face of your mother or of a friend. In fact you have to possess something to go by, before you can recollect your friend's face. It is because an awareness of your mother's face already exists in your mind that you can recall her face. When you recall it from your mind, it is consciousness. But when you are not recalling it, it is not consciousness. It is preserved in a certain physiological state of the brain cortex. It will not appear from that state unless "brought to memory."

By saying that memory is usually preserved within the cerebral cortex in a certain physiological state, I do not mean the way in which paintings and other artistic works are kept in a museum. The paintings remain unchanged in their nature whether they are laid away in the museum stock-room, or placed on exhibition. But the case is quite different with memory preserved in a physiological state of the brain cortex.

In case something is called to mind, it enters into your conscious-

ness and appears as a thought. But so long as it is preserved in a physiological state of the brain cortex, it is not consciousness. Each time it is recollected, it is a renewed consciousness. So memory too could not be called "permanent and everlasting."

On the other hand, memory being existent in the brain cortex, it cannot possibly be considered to remain the same as it was seven years before, even when viewed from the physical standpoint. The brain cortex answerable for memory being subject to constant metabolism, it suffers material changes until memory ceases to function properly as it did formerly. You may complain that you can no longer recollect anything as vividly and in detail as you used to. It is said that nerve cells contained in the cerebrum number approximately five billion. But the cells responsible for memory alter as they are replaced with the new ones in course of metabolism. This is why time wears away memory.

In case a certain quantity of substance is destroyed both in the right and left section of the visual center located in the brain cortex in which memory is stored, you will lose not only your eyesight but also all the past memory, as well as knowledge acquired by means of eyesight. In the same way, if a portion of the left and right section of the auditory center in the brain cortex is destroyed, you are deprived of not only the sense of hearing but all the past memory and knowledge of experiences gained by means of hearing. Hence it follows that memory, knowledge and even soul are after all nothing more or less than the brain cortex.

Dr. Shūzō Kure writes in his book entitled *Seishin Keibi* (an attempt to penetrate into the gloom which surrounds the mind) that the spirit is a nervous system, or more strictly, the cerebral cortex. His words mean by implication that when a man dies and his remains are cremated, he turns into ashes. Whether there are Hell and the Pure Land or not, he has nothing to do with them. Because he no longer exists, it is impossible for him to go to either of these.

And the belief that your immortal self remains after your death, which may be damned for the sins it has committed to fall into Hell

(*Akuin kuka* ; evil deeds cause bad results), or be welcomed to the Pure Land (*Zen'in rakuka* ; good actions have good results), is nothing but a mere coinage of fancy, dating back when science was still to be developed and no experimental research was thought of.

So far as I have noticed by now, it is obvious that nothing real, nothing permanent and endless exists either in the body, mind or memory. When you consider the matter in the light of the statement I have made so far, you may be led to believe materialist philosophy is the more convincing, for the real self is found to exist nowhere. An individual ego that we recognize as our own self is termed "*Mōga*" a false self, in Buddhism. Since we are merely seeming beings, that have nothing real in them, we have little reason to say anything against it. "*Mōga*" a false self, is the opposite of "*Shinga*," the real self, as viewed in the light of realist philosophy, not as conceived of in terms of moral value.

3 Self as a Unitary Subject, The Absolute Self

Now I should like you to join me in examining the points at issue in due order. Each of us is *an individual subject that is capable of perceiving various objects* : 覚 (*wakari*)*. When we look at an object, we can see it, and on listening to a sound, we can hear it. It is very unlikely that this blackboard feels pain when beaten. When fast asleep, we are unable to perceive the warmth in the bedclothes, just as if we were stones or trees. When wide awake, however, we are capable of feeling and perceiving objects of various descriptions — a fact which distinguishes us from trees and rocks.

Each of us is an individual subject that feels and perceives pain. When I am given a pinch, it is I who feel pain, whereas all of you except myself feel no pain. And in case you get pinched, you feel pain, while I don't. From this fact it follows that there exists an individual subject that feels pain, and another that does not feel pain.

* This is a word of Sasamoto Shōnin's coinage. —1919

Now I am going to clap my hands and I want you to compare the sound with other one that will follow and tell which is the louder of the two.

(He claps his hands lightly and after a short while he claps his hands again but more heavily.)

Now you have heard two claps in succession at short intervals. Of course you are able to distinguish between the two sounds and can tell which sounded louder by comparing them. It is only when the same individual hears both sounds that he can discern between the two by comparing one with the other. Supposing each of the two individuals hears only one of the two sounds, neither could tell which clap was louder or less loud, for the reason that it is impossible for either of them to compare.

The fact that distinction is possible by means of comparison clearly indicates that the individual who hears the first sound is one and same individual that hears the second. It is not two individuals, for it is hardly conceivable that you cease to exist as an individual by the time the second sound is produced. You who hear the first sound are not equal with you who hear the second, but one and the same.

Accordingly, although the first sound differs in quality from the one which follows it after an interval of a few seconds, as far as the hearer is concerned, it is one and the same individual that hears both sounds, a fact which indicates the existence of a permanent and unchangeable self.

Ben-nei Seija defined the permanent and unchangeable experiencing self as a unitary subject. This is good definition, which strengthens our conviction of the existence of self as a unitary subject. As it is, viewed in the light of materialist outlook, all things in nature including the human flesh, are nothing but an aggregate of numberless electric molecules linked together in a certain condition. Consequently a human body is no unitary being but numberless individual molecules conjoined into a certain state, each of which is capable of being dispersed and reassembled.

Such is also the case with nutriments taken into the body and excrements discharged from it as well. (In this way a human body may be likened to an battery which stores electricity and releases it if need be.) And it is not always the same molecules that compose the body, for they are ceaselessly discharged from it, and replaced by new ones which take over.

When viewed in the light of physiological facts, we see the same thing. A human body is composed of approximately four hundred trillion cells, while the brain cortex which has the closest bearing on the mind is an aggregate of around five billion individual nerve cells, that are subject to constant metabolic replacement.

A currently accepted view identifies your ego as an experiencing agent with the brain cortex, but if you consider the matter in light of the actual facts, you will immediately realize that such a view is far from correct.

As I described already, in the case of a certain section of the brain being damaged, the corresponding part of remembrance and knowledge is lost. It is evident from this fact that the brain cortex is responsible for various kinds of memory and knowledge according to its corresponding sections. As far as the brain is concerned, the occipital lobe operates as a visual agent, while the center of the temporal lobe acts as auditory agent. Even if the center of the occipital lobe is destroyed, hearing ability is unaffected. So the subject that sees and that which hears are two independent agents, so far as the brain goes.

Therefore, if a man is supposed to be a totally material being, the existence of a unitary self within him is quite inconceivable. Nevertheless, the unitary subjecthood is a psychologically ascertained fact, though a unitary subjective self does not mean the unification of several subordinate sections by a head body. On the other hand, considered under mental aspect, a mind is known to have a wide variety of knowledge and memories. A number of objects you are able to call to mind at this very moment show that you possess a knowledge of almost innumerable things.

Therefore viewed from that aspect, your mind can be considered as consisting of innumerable and widely varied memories and information. On the other hand, as far as your individual ego as an experiencing agent goes, it is one and the only being. Though the memory of various colour may indeed differ from that of sounds, it is a psychologically ascertained fact that one and the same subject knows not only colour but also sounds. This indicates the undeniable existence of a self that has a unitary subjecthood. It is simply because the brain cortex can hardly be considered to be a unitary subject, that no materialistic theory is warrantable with regard to facts.

Can you say that though it may certainly be you yourself that hear the sound now, it was not your own self that heard the sound ten years ago? Of course I am talking about the self as an experiencing agent. Let it be assumed that you who saw and heard them ten or fifteen years ago were someone other than you that are seeing and hearing them now. Then it would be hardly possible for you to discern the possible difference in loudness between the two sounds, by comparing them, or to distinguish the house you saw previously from the one you see now by comparing their relative sizes.

As a matter of fact you are able to know one from the other by means of comparison, even though they are seen or heard at long intervals and in different places. It is justly concluded from this fact that, so long as you are alive, you remain one and the same as an experiencing subject.

In my childhood the elementary education was mainly conducted in a kind of seminary generally known as *Terakoya*, which literally means "temple cottage." I still remember the set-up of a *Terakoya* class, with the school master seated at a large *escritoire* opposite the rows of small desks for the pupil. He used to teach us by pointing the characters with a rib probably disjointed from his wornout umbrella, and I remember the pricking strokes he would give me on

the head from time to time. It is over forty years since then, and it is I who saw and heard things more than forty years ago that continue to be as an experiencing agent still seeing and hearing them as ever before.

It is an obvious fact that at least as long as one is alive, one and the same self exists, and outlives the lapse of fifty or sixty years time. Now, let me ask you a question, taking for granted that you have nothing to say against the statement I have made so far. Even if you have become persuaded of the existence of the self as a unitary subject, a question may arise among you as to where to locate it. For I know that you are no longer so positive by now as before that it exists right there pointing to your body. So far as matter is concerned, what composed the body seven years ago is no longer existent, while the unitary self as an experiencing agent remains one and the same regardless of the passage of time.

Viewed in that light, the unitary and real self as an experiencing agent is a self that survives the body, which is subject to constant metabolism. If the body can hardly be the seat of that self, in what else is it to be found? It is obviously impossible to identify it with thought or memory itself. Even though persuaded of the existence of the unitary self as an experiencing agent, you have not the slightest idea as to where it is located and what it looks like. This deluded state of mind is what is termed *Māyā*, ignorance or delusion, in Buddhism.

Māyā does not necessarily signify the restless state of the spirit in which an unladen ghost haunts this world with a rueful look, for one may fall into a state like that while alive. But those who are spiritually awakened and attained the conviction that the self as the knower (perceiver) is the absolute self that pervades over the great universe, will be able to get at the true meaning of the following passage in a Sutra. "It is not the eye that can see, it is not the nose that can smell nor is it the tongue that can taste."

I believe that those who are fully awakened to the existence of the absolute self in themselves will realize that it is needless to bring

out a question as to in what particular place to locate the seat of the self as the knower, or as to whether a clapping sound is produced and heard between your hands or inside of your ears.

But for the eyes, you cannot see anything. But nothing is seen inside of your eyes ; it is where a thing is seen that your individual self has its existence. When you come to think in that way, I should say you may not need to attend my lectures. Indeed, the knower is the absolute self that coextends with heaven and earth. Provided that you are awakened to the absolute self, you are enlightened.

It is just as if you were fallen fast asleep. As long as you remain in that state, you are utterly unaware of not only your own existence, but also of the existence of your wife and family, not to speak of your property. It is because you are wrapped in a deep slumber that you are altogether unconscious of the real self in all its aspects. Buddhism defines that kind of sleep as "a protracted unlit night slumber," the unlitness meaning the very opposite of the light of Nyorai's grace. It is a state of complete darkness, because no light of grace enters and therefore it is impossible to find the least vestige of the real self. The single-minded invocation of Amida Buddha, however, will enable you to share in the light of grace, so that you may be the more fully awakened to the real self as its radiance shed on you.

Though you may be easily roused out of a short slumber by a slight shake, it would be no easy matter for you to awake to your real self. It is not until the light of grace dawns on you that you become fully conscious of your real self. On being fully awakened to your real self, you will realize it is one and the same with the universe.

Now this main hall of the temple looks very spacious because it is flooded with electric lighting. But if the light is turned off the hall may appear much narrower in darkness. Because it is lit up to every nook and corner it looks so large. When illuminated by more high-powered lamps, it will appear more spacious.

In the same way, so long as our mind is in the dark, it appears

to be very narrow, and we come to take it for granted that our individual self is nothing more or less than this small body of ours. Once, however, we receive the full light of Nyorai's grace shining on us, we realize the truth that the very universe is one and the same with our own self. This is not a theoretical reasoning but a plain statement of facts as they really are.

It is true that some distinguished philosophers of world wide fame argue that the great cosmos is the absolute self, a greater self. But their argument which is based on rational demonstration can hardly claim to be a statement of the fact as ascertained in the light of direct cognition. After all the self awakened by means of rational argument remains a small ego.

It is reported that Schopenhauer, who demonstrated in a way worthy of the great philosopher that he was, that the great universe is the absolute self, kept crying until his last moment in this world that he did not want to die. This expression of his earthly attachment belies his philosophical assertion, for he ended in being merely awakened to the ever-changing and mortal self.

The moment, however, you become fully aware, in the light of His grace, of the absolute self which identifies itself with the entire universe, you recognize it in your own usual self. When you are awakened to your real self, namely the absolute self, you will never concern yourself about the idea of death, for you have attained an infinite life.

4 The Awakening of the Real Self

Now let me take occasion to give you an account of the life of Hara Seimin Shōnin, in regard to his awakening to the absolute self, though it might be better for me to do so later. As I have often stated, it is because I am well acquainted with him that I propose to give you some facts about his life.

Mr. Hara, former editor-in-chief with Jōdo Kyōhō Press, was then a resident priest of Shōjōji Temple in Matsuba-chō, Tokyo. He

was in the same class with me in the early years at Jōdo-Sect College, predecessor of the present Taishō University. Prof. Shūgyoku Kato taught then a course in dogmatics. To whatever question the professor asked during his lecture, Mr. Hara would only repeat the same reply that the question was beyond him, until at last the professor put him down as a student totally ignorant of the Buddhist teachings, calling him by the nickname of "Physics."

Mr. Hara fell ill from lung tuberculosis some time before graduating from the college, which was the highest institution of sectarian education of the day. His trusted family doctor, whom he went to consult, after careful examination gave him five years to live. At the doctor's unexpected prediction as to his fate, he was immediately thrown into a panic at the thought of death. It may be the case with you too. If it occurs all of a sudden, death may not cause you too much pain, but it must be an unbearable trial for you to watch yourself getting nearer to death step by step while you can do nothing about it. Mr. Hara was no exception.

The idea of death struck him with such increased force that he could hardly stand it. But he could not bring himself around to say "Amen" after the Christian manner or to repeat the sacred name of Amida, or to sit in meditation on the Buddha for help.

In due course of time, however, he was initiated into the teachings of Ben-nei Seija, the Sage, and stubborn unbeliever though he had been, he was able to establish his religious faith under the personal guidance of Ben-nei Seija, who was justly called a living Buddha. Then it was in the thirty-eighth or thirty-ninth year of Meiji Era, that he secluded himself in Senju-in, near Kamakura to devote his time to the Nembutsu. The writings left by Mr. Hara were published in book-form after his death. It is an octavo volume of about two hundred pages.

The book gives an account of his unswerving devotion to the invocation of the sacred name of Amida Buddha, sometimes keeping vigil for a few nights on end in the face of his fatal ailment. One night while absorbed in the Nembutsu practice, he began contemplat-

ing the relationship he bore to all things in nature surrounding him. It was worthy of a philosopher who earned the nickname of "Physics," that he gave much of his thought to such an abstruse problem.

Keeping this question before his mind, he continued with his repetition of the sacred name. All of a sudden, he noticed all things were gone, disappearing into emptiness. He could no longer hear the sound of the wooden drum, *Mokugyo*, he was beating. There were no walls around him, no ceiling over him, and no matted floor under him any more. Even the translucent lightness completely vanished. The sensation of colour, and of heaviness or lightness was all gone, and even his own body ceased to be there. Nothing remained except a state of being wide awake, which was beyond description either by pen or by word of mouth. There was neither form nor colour, neither sound nor smell, neither hardness nor softness, neither warmth nor coldness. By the above statement I mean that his world became void and empty of all that had their existence in it. To describe that state in other words, all vanished into the void except for a lucid consciousness of himself.

You are quite mistaken, however, if you think that Mr. Hara had fallen fast asleep as he contemplated on the relationship between himself and the whole creation in course of invoking Amida Buddha. On the contrary he was wide awake all the time, and yet neither colour nor sound, neither east nor west, neither heaviness nor lightness existed any more.

Though this may sound most unreasonable, it was a positive fact, an absolute reality. Before long he came to his senses and went to bed for the night. On the following morning getting out of bed, he walked into the garden to take a look around him. At that time he experienced a strange sensation he could in no way account for. He might well have given a pinch to his limbs to make sure of himself. For he became aware of a complete change in the relationship between himself and the whole creation around him, as he had conceived of it until the previous night.

Until then all things in nature had seemed to exist outside of himself. On that day, however, he was beginning to see them all originate within himself. Thus inspired with a new outlook, Mr. Hara was led to conceive of all things in nature as a thought of his own, and all of their movements as originating from his own mental action. And as he found himself in the same state of mind on the following day, he could regain composure.

Just in the other way round, most of us take for granted that various things are seen and different sounds heard outside of them, and do not bother to ask themselves why it is all like that. To most of us it is a matter of course that all things are seen outside of us and we would take little account of it. But I should think that our sheer indifference to the question which Mr. Hara took so seriously is the most unaccountable.

In case you have some knowledge of mental physics which specializes in the study of the relations of thought with the brain cortex, you will not be so sure that all things are seen outside of you. When going on a sightseeing tour, you take, as it were, a good number of mental snapshots, which you bring home with you, so that you may call to mind for example the splendid sight of the famous Yōmei Gate you visited at Nikkō.

As you think of the gate, you are able to conjure up a vivid image of the exquisite work of architectural art in your mind. All shapes as well as sounds are reproduced within your brain, just as the reflection is made in the film within the camera, when a photo is shot. But most of you would give little thought to the reason why this blackboard (pointing to it) is seen outside of you. Your incredible indifference may be attributed to the gross misconception you have of the matter.

As I told you before Mr. Hara reached the conviction that the whole creation exists inside of him, and established a firm belief that his own self was no longer the small ego that he had so far taken as his own self, but it was the real and absolute self. Thus he came to be absolutely persuaded of the endlessness of his life, and is said to

have cried for joy to heaven and earth. Believe me, I am not reasoning with you, I am simply stating facts as they really are.

Some philosophers, arguing from a rational point of view, remark that the great universe is the very absolute self. Dr. Hisomu Nagai, professor of physiology at Tokyo University School of Medicine, published years ago a voluminous work under the title of *The Boundary between Biology and Philosophy*.

I remember the great delight with which I first read through this wonderful work. As a matter of fact I had thought it must be a book written in advocacy of materialism as might be expected of an author, who was professor of biology. Contrary to my anticipation, I found it to be of a very different tenor.

For instance, in a passage, after making critical observations on various schools of philosophy ancient and modern, the writer goes so far as to put down materialism as an absolute absurdity, and closes the passage with the statement of his own view. He is positive that the great universe is the absolute self, and argues that there are two sides, material and spiritual to the greater self. But, he says, they are two aspects of the same being, matter and spirit coming from the identical origin. It is, however, by process of theoretical reasoning that he reaches the conclusion that the universe is verily the greater self.

It is in truth not logical reasoning but Buddhist practice that enables you to attain genuine awareness of your real self. On being awakened to it, you will know for certain that the philosopher did not lie but told the truth. Mr. Hara was the one who was led to make himself one with the great universe under the compassionate instruction of Nyorai. His is an instance of spiritual enlightenment to be attained through the Zen practice.

We mortals are bound up with life and death. Fated through our life to decay, when we are released from this bond and outgrow our former self, it will be possible for us to attain a state of *Shinjin datsuraku*, freedom from the bonds of body and mind, *Shutsuri shōji*, deliverance from perpetual repetition of life and death, or *Gedatsu*

myōshiki, spiritual awakening that transcends body and mind, so termed in the Zen Sect.

Tetsugen Zenji (High Priest) describes this state as that in which all things are one and the same and of a mind, even though they vary in appearance and form. Freed from the ever-changing self, which is subject to metabolism both physical and mental, all are one and the same and of a mind. For they have nothing that they can claim to be their own originally, and there is neither east nor west to them originally.

It is a state in which, while body and mind exist as they are, only the impartial and one-minded absolute self functions as an agent of perception. No objects of perception exist any more, for all of them become as many agents of perception. On the subject of the absolute self which has been explained in various terms, I shall discuss later.

5 The Object of Buddhist Practice

In referring to the object of Buddhist practice, I often repeat, by way of explanation, a well-known episode in the life of Daruma Daishi, a great Zen master. It tells how he sat in Zen meditation facing to a wall for nine long years. On hearing the story, some may remark cynically, how foolish it was of the Great Master to have wasted his time, when he might have made a far better use of it even in clearing the road of jagged pieces of rock to save many car-tires from getting punctured.

It is, however, because they are totally ignorant of the true object of Buddhist practice that they can be so cynical. Once you are awakened to the absolute self, you are able to attain complete freedom from such foolish repetition of birth and death. Suppose you go into a certain field of learning. Even if you feel confident for a moment of having made some progress in it, the time is bound to come when you will have to renounce all and end your life all alone.

Some among your followers may take over your study. But the earth itself is destined to meet with final destruction, and no one can

tell how long it will maintain its existence. No matter how much money you may have and be proud of the fine house you had built for you, the day is sure to arrive when you have to give it all up and end lying in your grave. You could not forever enjoy yourself painting pictures, carving statues, or composing poems.

Such being the case, however rich you may be, you will have to part with all you possess and take your abode under the tombstone in the end. No matter how much wealth you may have accumulated, by exhausting your brains even during the watchful hours of the night and by working as hard as you could, the day will most certainly come when you have to relinquish all your worldly desires and be buried in the grave.

Some end their lives in a violent agony of pain, grasping at the air, with the white of their eyes exposed and screaming over and over again for help. So afraid are they of death. So bitterly do they grudge leaving this world. It is the inevitable advent of death that prevents us from finding a complete gratification in whatever we undertake to do in this world.

Indeed it is this situation that the Buddha felt most anxious about. In his time India which looks like a tongue on the maps drawn then, was divided into sixteen independent states. Shakyamuni Buddha born as a prince in Kapilavastu which was a kingdom among those sixteen states, was heir apparent to the royal throne. One day as he went out through a palace gate to take a walk, he saw a bent old man plodding along the road with a cane. The sight of the poor aged man induced the prince to reflect on the hard fact that all mortals age only to turn into such helpless beings like him. Shakyamuni Buddha felt so discouraged at the thought, that he changed his mind and went back to the palace.

Another day strolling out through another gate for an airing, he found a sick man writhing in agony by the roadside. When he saw the poor invalid, he felt the helplessness of human beings. It is their lot to suffer from painful ailment as the poor man did. Feeling so depressed at this thought, he turned back the way he came, making

for his palace.

On a third day, as he went on a walk leaving the palace at still another gate, he discovered a man lying dead on the road. He was brought to realization that no human being could escape a same kind of fate and how brief the span of human life was. No longer able to find it in his heart to continue his walk, he immediately returned home to his palace.

A few days afterwards, going on an outing from the fourth gate, he came across a mendicant friar on his way, from whom he gained an idea of the way of life that a monk followed. It is then that the prince was inspired with a great desire to attain, through the practice of meditation, endless life and permanent peace of mind, not to be disturbed even by the gusts of wind blowing from all directions.

And at last he made up his mind to relinquish his royal status and stole out of his palace under cover of night. He cast off the gold crown and ornamental jewellery he wore. After having all of them sent back on horse to his palace, he clothed himself in rags he picked up on the road, and went into a mendicant life, so that he might devote himself to the practice of meditation to attain an infinite life, without worrying too much about his livelihood. This is a famous legend of *Shimon Yūkan* (going out at the four gates to take an excursion).

It is needless to repeat that Nirvana means infinite life and permanent peace and joy, and that it was in order to attain Nirvana, *Nehan* that Shakyamuni Buddha renounced his princely status to apply himself wholly to the practice of meditation. Then he dedicated fifty years of his life to preaching that his audience might share with him the peace and joy which he had secured for himself. Unless awakened to your absolute self, you could never hope for enjoyment of an infinite life. Daruma Daishi, after sitting in Zen meditation facing to the wall for nine long years, was awakened to his absolute self and realized the aim of the practice, setting an example for you to follow to share the true happiness he secured.

Once you become aware of your absolute self by means of

Chapter II

single-minded practice for Buddhahood, you will be able to receive the whole creation into yourself. I believe some among you have already attained that state, for going from place to place on my lecture tour, I meet with not a few people among my audience who have attained an infinite life. Mr. Hara was a believer who was confirmed in his conviction of the absolute self.

Thus I have come to know a good number of enlightened devotees who could identify themselves with the universe. This is no question of reason or logic. When blessed with the light of Nyorai's grace, you are freed from the annoying thought of death, because rebirth in the Pure Land is secured for you. As you get His light of grace to fall on you, you feel so pleasant and at ease with yourself, now that you have attained infinite life and peace of mind undisturbed by whatever may happen to you. It is the Elysian Land that you now belong to, for any mortal being can enter it by means of single-minded invocation of the sacred name of Amida Buddha. Through the untiring practice for Buddhahood, he will be able to awake to his absolute self.

All you need is religious faith in order to be awakened to your absolute self. You feel no need for religious faith when your only care in this world is to earn your daily bread. If it is your sole concern to feed yourself, you are in no way different from dogs and cats.

Do you still think it to be a more meaningful act to remove scattered pebbles from the road for safe traffic? If you ever persist on directing ridicule against Daruma Daishi, who sat in meditation before a wall in complete silence for nine years, when, as you would think, he could have made a better use of his time in clearing the road of the pieces of broken rock, it is just because you are totally ignorant of the true aim of the practice of Zen meditation.