# *PASSIVITY IN THE BUDDHIST LIFE*

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## *Preliminary Note*

‘Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be;
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.
Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it leads
Right onward to Thy rest.
Choose Thou for me my friends,
My sickness or my health;
Choose Thou my cares for me,
My poverty or wealth.
Not mine, not mine the choice
In things or great or small;
Be Thou my guide, my strength,
My wisdom, and my all.

— Horatius Bonar, 1808-1889

The feeling of passivity in religious experience, so typically given expression here, is universal and natural, seeing that the religious consciousness consists in realizing, on the one hand, the helplessness of a finite being, and, on the other, the dependability of an infinite being, in whatever way this may be conceived. The finite side of our being may protest, saying, ‘Why hast thou forsaken me?’, but while this protest possesses us there is no religious experience, we are not yet quite saved. For salvation comes only when we can say, ‘Father, into thy hands I entrust my spirit,’ or ‘Lord, though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee.’

This is resignation or self-surrender, which is a state of passivity, ready to have ‘thy will’ prevail upon a world of finite beings. This is the characteristic attitude of a religious (p. 268) mind towards life and the world; and we know that all religious experience is psychologically closely connected with the feeling of passivity. The object of the present Essay is to see how this feeling rules and in what forms it expresses itself in the Buddhist life, including that of Zen.

# I

## *The Doctrine of Karma*

Superficially, passivity does not seem to be compatible with the intellectual tendency of Buddhism, especially of Zen, which strongly emphasizes the spirit of self-reliance as is seen in such passages as 'The Bodhisattva-mahasattva retiring into a solitude all by himself, should reflect within himself by means of his own inner intelligence, and not depend upon anybody else' (*The Lankavatara*). Or as we read in the *Dhammapada:*

> By self alone is evil done
> By self is one disgraced
> By self is evil undone
> By self alone is he purified
> Purity and impurity belong to one
> No one can purify another (Edmunds, The *Dhammapada*, p. 165)

The four Noble Truths, the Twelvefold Chain of Origination, the Eightfold Path of Righteousness, etc.—all tend towards enlightenment and emancipation, and not towards absolute dependence or receptivity. 'To see with one's own eyes and be liberated' is the Buddhist motto, and there is apparently no room for passivity. For the latter can (p. 269) take place only when one makes oneself a receptacle for an outside power.

The attainment of passivity in Buddhism is especially obstructed by the doctrine of Karma. The doctrine of Karma runs like warp and weft through all the Indian fabrics of thought, and Buddhism as a product of the Indian imagination could not escape taking it into its own texture. The Jataka Tales, making up the history of the Buddha while he was yet at the stage of Bodhisattvahood and training himself for final supreme enlightenment, are no more than the idea of Karma concretely applied and illustrated in the career of a morally perfected personage. Sakyamuni could not become a Buddha unless he had accumulated his stock of merit throughout his varied lives in the past.

The principle of Karma is 'Whatever a man sows that will he also reap', and this governs the whole life of the Buddhist; for in fact what makes up one's individuality is nothing else than his own Karma. So we read in the *Milindapanha*, 'All beings have their Karma as their portion; they are heirs of their Karma; they are sprung from their Karma; their Karma is their refuge; Karma allots beings to meanness or greatness.' (Warren's *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 255) This is confirmed in the *Samyutka-nikaya*:

> His good deeds and his wickedness,
> Whate'er a mortal does while here
> 'Tis this that he can call his own,

This with him take as he goes hence.
This is what follows after him
And like a shadow ne'er departs. (Warren, p. 214)

According to the *Visuddhimagga*, Chapter XIX, Karma is divisible into several groups as regards the time and order of fruition and its quality: (1) that which bears fruit in the present existence, that which bears fruit in rebirth, that which bears fruit at no fixed time, and bygone Karma; (p. 270) (2) the weighty Karma, the abundant, the close-at-hand, and the habitual; (3) the productive Karma, the supportive, the counteractive, and the destructive. (Warren, p. 245) There is thus a round of Karma and a round of fruit going on all the time. And who is the bearer of Karma and its fruit?

No doer is there does the deed
Nor is there one who feels the fruit
Constituent parts alone roll on
This view alone is orthodox

And thus the deed and thus the fruit
Roll on and on, each from its cause
As of the round of tree and seed
No one can tell when they began

Not in its fruit is found the deed
Nor in the deed finds one the fruit
Of each the other is devoid
Yet there's no fruit without the deed

Just as no store of fire is found
In firewood, cow dung or the sun
Nor separate from these exists
Yet short of fuel no fire is known

Even so we ne'er within the deed
Can retribution's fruit descry
Not yet in any place without
Nor can in fruit the deed be found

Deeds separate from their fruits exist
And fruits are separate from the deeds
But consequent upon the deed
Fruit doth into being come

No god of heaven or Brahma-world
Doth cause the endless round of birth
Constituent parts alone roll on

From cause and from material sprung (Warren, p. 248)

(p. 271)

The working of Karma is apparently quite impersonal, as is explained in these quotations, and it may seem altogether indifferent for anybody whether he did something good or bad. There is no doer of deeds, nor is there any sufferer of their fruit. The five Aggregates or constituent parts (*skandhas*) [of a being] are combined and dissolved in accordance with the inevitable law of Karma, but as long as there is no personal agent at the back of all this, who really feels the value of Karma, it does not seem to matter what kind of deed is committed and what kind of fruit is brought forth. Still the Buddhists are advised not to practise wickedness:

> If a man do wrong
> Let him not do it repeatedly
> Let him not take pleasure therein
> Painful is wrong's accumulation (Edmunds, *The Dhammapada*, p. 117)

Why painful? Why pleasurable? The Hinayanist reasoning is logically thoroughgoing, but when it comes to the question of practical psychology, mere reasoning does not avail. Is the feeling no more real than the mere bundling together of the five Aggregates? The combination—that is, unity—seems to be more than the fact of combination. Whatever this is, as I am not going to discuss the doctrine of Karma here in detail, let it suffice to give another quotation from Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamakakarikas*, Chapter XVII, where the doctrine of Karma appears in a new garment.

> [quote] All sentient beings are born according to their Karma: good people are born in the heavens, the wicked in the hells, and those who practise the paths of righteousness realize Nirvana. By disciplining himself in the six virtues of perfection, a man is able to benefit his fellow-beings in various ways, and this is sure in turn to bring blessings upon him, not only in this but also in the next life. Karma may be of (p. 274) two sorts: inner or mental, which is called *cetana*, and physical, expressing itself in speech and bodily movement. This is technically known as Karma "after having intended."
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> Karma may also be regarded as with or without "intimation". An act with intimation is one the purpose of which is perceptible by others, while an act without intimation is not at all expressed in physical movements; it follows that when a strong act with intimation is performed it awakens the tendency in the mind of the actor to perform again deeds, either good or bad, of a similar nature.
>
> It is like a seed from which a young plant shoots out and bears fruit by the

> principle of continuity; apart from the seed there is no continuity; and because of this continuity there is fruition. The seed comes first and then the fruit; between them there is neither discontinuity nor constancy. Since the awakening of a first motive, there follows an uninterrupted series of mental activities, and from this there is fruition. Without the first stirring of the mind, there will be no stream of thoughts expressing themselves in action. Thus there is a continuity of Karma and its fruit. Therefore, when the ten deeds of goodness and purity are performed, the agent is sure to enjoy happiness in this life and be born after death among celestial beings.
>
> There is something in Karma that is never lost even after its performance; this something, called *avipranasa*, is like a deed of contract, and Karma, an act, is comparable to debt. A man may use up what he has borrowed, but owing to the document he has some day to pay the debt back to the creditor. This "unlosable" is always left behind even after Karma and is not destroyed by philosophical intuition. If it were thus destructible, Karma would never come to fruition. The only power that counteracts this (p. 275) "unlosable" is moral discipline. Every Karma once committed continues to work out its consequence by means of the "unlosable" until its course is thwarted by the attainment of Arhatship or by death, or when it has finally borne its fruit. This law of Karma applies equally to good and bad deeds. [end quote]

While Nagarjuna's idea is to wipe out all such notions as doer, deed, and sufferer, in other words, the entire structure of Karma-theory, this introduction of the idea 'unlosable' is instructive and full of suggestions.

Taking all in all however, there is much obscurity in the doctrine of Karmaic continuity, especially when its practical working is to be precisely described; and, theoretically too, we are not quite sure of its absolute tenability. But this we can state of it in a most general way: that Karma tends to emphasize individual freedom, moral responsibility, and feeling of independence; and further, from the religious point of view, it does not necessitate the postulate of a God, or a creator, or a moral judge who passes judgments upon human behaviour, good or bad.

This being the case, the Buddhist conviction that life is pain will inevitably lead to a systematic teaching of self-discipline, self-purification, and self-enlightenment, the moral centre of gravity being always placed on the self, and not on any outside agent. This is the principle of Karma applied to the realization of Nirvana. But, we may ask, What is this 'self'? And again, What is that something that is never 'lost' in a Karma committed either mentally or physically? What is the connection between 'self' and the 'unlosable'? Where does this 'unlosable' lodge itself?

Between the Buddhist doctrine of no-ego-substance and the postulate that there should be something 'not to be lost' in the continuation of Karma-force, which

makes the latter safely bear fruit, there is a gap which must be bridged somehow if Buddhist philosophy is to make further development. To my mind, the conception of the Alayavijnana ('All-conserving soul') where all the Karma-seeds are deposited was an inevitable consequence. But in the meantime let us see what 'self' really stands for.

## *The Conception of Self*

'Self' is a very complex and elusive idea, and when we say that one is to be responsible for what one does by oneself, we do not exactly know how far this 'self' goes and how much it includes in itself. For individuals are so intimately related to one another not only in one communal life but in the totality of existence—so intimately indeed that there are really no individuals, so to speak, in the absolute sense of the word.

Individuality is merely an aspect of existence; in thought we separate one individual from another and in reality too we all seem to be distinct and separable. But when we reflect on the question more closely we find that individuality is a fiction, for we cannot fix its limits, we cannot ascertain its extents and boundaries, they become mutually merged without leaving any indelible marks between the so-called individuals. A most penetrating state of interrelationship prevails here, and it seems to be more exact to say that individuals do not exist, they are merely so many points of reference, the meaning of which is not at all realizable when each of them is considered by itself and in itself apart from the rest.

Individuals are recognizable only when they are thought of in relation to something not individual; though paradoxical, they are individuals so long as they are not individuals. For when an individual being is singled out as such, it at once ceases to be an individual. The 'individual self' is an illusion.

Thus, the self has no absolute, independent existence. Moral responsibility seems to be a kind of intellectual makeshift. Can the robber be really considered responsible for his deeds? Can this individual be really singled out as (p. 277) the one who has to suffer all the consequences of his antisocial habits? Can he be held really responsible for all that made him such as he is? Is his *svabhava* all his own making? This is where lies the main crux of the question, 'How far is an individual to be answerable for his action?' In other words, 'How far is this "he" separable from the community of which he is a component part?' Is not society reflected in him? Is he not one of the products created by society?

There are no criminals, no sinful souls in the Pure Land, not necessarily because no such are born there but mainly because all that are born there become pure by virtue of the general atmosphere in which they are brought up. Although environment is not everything, it, especially social environment, has a great deal to do with the shaping of individual characters. If this is the case, where shall we

look for the real signification of the doctrine of Karma?

The intellect wants to have a clear-cut, well-delineated figure to which a deed or its 'unlosable' something has to be attached, and Karma becomes mathematically describable as having its originator, perpetrator, sufferer, etc. But when there are really no individuals and Karma is to be conceived as nowhere originated by any specifically definable agent, what would become of the doctrine of Karma as advocated by Buddhists? Evidently there is an act, either good or bad or indifferent; there is one who actually thrusts a dagger, and there is one who actually lies dead thus stabbed; and yet shall we have to declare that there is no killer, no killing, and none killed? What will then become of moral responsibility? How can there be such a thing as accumulation of merit or attainment of enlightenment? Who is after all a Buddha and who is an ignorant, confused mortal?

Can we say that society, nay, the whole universe, is responsible for the act of killing if this fact is once established? And that all the causes and conditions leading to it and all the results that are to be connected with it are to be traced to the universe itself? Or is it that the individual is an ultimate absolute fact and what goes out from him comes back to him without any relation to his fellow-beings and to his environment, social and physical?

In the first case, moral responsibility evaporates into an intangible universality; in the second case, the intangible whole gets crystallized in one individual, and there is indeed moral responsibility, but one stands altogether in isolation as if each of us were like a grain of sand in no relation to its neighbours. Which of these positions is more exactly in conformity with facts of human experience? When this is applied to the Buddhist doctrine of Karma, the question comes to this: Is Buddhist Karma to be understood individualistically or cosmologically?

## *Mahayana Buddhism on the Theory of Karma*

As far as history goes, Buddhism started with the individualistic interpretation of Karma, and when it reached its culminating point of development in the rise of Mahayana, the doctrine came to be cosmically understood. But not in the vague, abstract, philosophical way as was before referred to but concretely and spiritually in this wise: the net of the universe spreads out both in time and space from the centre known as 'my self', where I feel that all the sins of the world are resting on my own shoulders. To atone for them I am determined to subject myself to a system of moral and spiritual training which I consider will cleanse me of all impurities, and by cleansing me cleanse also the whole world of all its demerits.

This is the Mahayana position. Indeed, the distinction between the Mahayana and the Hinayana forms of Buddhism may be said to be due to this difference in the treatment of Karma-conception. The Mahayana thus came to emphasize the

'other' or 'whole' aspect of Karma, and, therefore, of universal salvation, while the Hinayana adhered to the 'self' aspect. As Karma worked, according to the (p. 279) Hinayanists, apparently impersonally but in point of fact individualistically, this life of pain and suffering was to be got rid of by self-discipline, by moral asceticism, and self-knowledge. Nobody outside could help the sufferer out of his afflictions. All that the Buddha could do for him was to teach him the way to escape; but if he did not walk this way by himself, he could not be made to go straight ahead even by the power and virtue of the Buddha. 'Be ye a lamp and a refuge unto yourselves' was the injunction left by the Buddha to his Hinayana followers, for the Buddha could not extend his spiritual virtue and attainment over to his devotees or to his fellow-beings. From the general position of the Hinayanists, this was inevitable:

> Not in the sky
> Not in the midst of the sea
> Nor entering a cleft of the mountains
> Is found that realm on Earth
> Where one may stand and be
> From an evil deed absolved. (Edmunds, *The Dhammapada*, p. 127)

But the Mahayana was not satisfied with this narrowness of spiritual outlook; the Mahayana wanted to extend the function of Karuna (compassion) to the furthest end it could reach. If one's Prajna could include in itself the widest possible system of universes, why could not Karuna too take them all under its protective wings? Why could not the Buddha's wish for the spiritual welfare of all beings also efficiently work towards its realization? The Buddha attained his enlightenment after accumulating so much stock of merit for ever-so-many countless kalpas. Should we conceive this stock of merit to be available only for his own benefit?

Karma must have its cosmological meaning. In fact, individuals are such insofar as they are thought of in connection with one another and also with the whole system which they compose. One wave good or bad, once stirred, could not help affecting the entire body of water. (p. 280) So with the moral discipline and the spiritual attainment of the Buddha: these could not remain with him as an isolated event in the communal life to which he belonged. Therefore, it is said that when he was enlightened the whole universe shared in his wisdom and virtue. The Mahayana stands on this fundamental idea of enlightenment, and its doctrine of the Tathagatagarbha or Alayavijnana reflects the cosmological interpretation of Karma.

## II

### *The Development of the Idea of Sin in Buddhism*

As long as Hinayana Buddhism restricted the application of Karma to individual deeds, its followers tried to overcome it by self-discipline. Life was pain, and pain was the product of one's former misconduct, and to release oneself from it, it was necessary to move a force counteracting it. Things thus went on quite scientifically with the Hinayanists, but when the Mahayanists came to see something in Karma that was more than individual, that would not be kept within the bounds of individuality, their scheme of salvation had to go naturally beyond the individualism of the Hinayanistic discipline. The 'self-power' was not strong enough to cope with the problem of cosmological Karma, and to rely upon this self as segregated from the totality of sentient beings was not quite right and true.

For the self is not a final fact, and to proceed in one's own religious discipline with the erroneous idea of selfhood will ultimately lead one to an undesirable end and possibly bear no fruit whatever. A new phase was now awakened in the religious consciousness of the Buddhist that had hitherto been only feebly felt by the Hinayanists; for with the cosmic sense of Karma thus developed there came along the idea of sin.

In Buddhism sin means ignorance, that is, ignorance as to the meaning of the individual or the ultimate destiny (p. 281) of the self. Positively, sin is the affirmation of the self as a final *svabhava* [intrinsic nature] in deed, thought, and speech. When a man is above these two hindrances, ignorance and self-assertion, he is said to be sinless. How to rise above them, therefore, is now the question with the Mahayanists.

Calderon, a noted Spanish dramatist, writes, 'For the greatest crime of man is that he ever was born.' This statement is quite true, since sin consists in our ever coming into existence as individuals severed from the wholeness of things. But as long as this fact cannot be denied from one point of view, we must try to nullify its evil effects by veering our course in another direction. And this veering can take place only by identifying ourselves with the cosmos itself, with the totality of existence, with the Buddhata in which we have our being. The inevitability of sin thus becomes the chance of devoting ourselves to a higher plane of existence where a principle other than Karmaic individualism and self-responsibility reigns.

When Karma was conceived to be controllable by the self, the task of releasing oneself from its evil effects was comparatively an easy one, for it concerned after all the self alone; but if it is sin to believe in the ultimate reality of an individual soul and to act accordingly as if salvation depended only on self-discipline or on self-enlightenment, the Mahayanist's work is far greater than the Hinayanist's. As this goes beyond the individual, something more than individual must operate in

the Mahayanist heart to make its work effective. The so-called self must be aided by a power transcending the limitations of the self, which, however, must be immanently related to it; for otherwise there cannot be a very harmonious and really mutually-helping activity between the self and the not-self.

In fact, the idea of sin, and hence the feeling of pain and suffering, is produced from the lack of a harmonious relationship between what is thought to be 'myself' and what is not. The religious experience with the Mahayanists is to be described in more comprehensive terms than with the Hinayanists.

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### *A Reality Beyond Self*

Buddhata or Dharmata is the name given by the Mahayanists to that which is not the self and yet which is in the self. By virtue of this, the Mahayanists came to the consciousness of sin and at the same time to the possibility of enlightenment. Buddhata is the essence of Buddhahood, without which this is never attained in the world. When the Buddha is conceived impersonally or objectively, it is the Dharma, law, truth, or reality; and Dharmata is what constitutes the Dharma. Dharmata and Buddhata are interchangeable, but the experience of the Mahayanists is described more in terms of Buddhata.

With the conception of Buddhata, the historical Buddha turns into a transcendental Buddha; he ceases to be merely the Muni of the Sakyas; he now is a manifestation of the eternal Buddha, an incarnation of Buddhata; and as such he is no more an individual person limited in space and time; his spirituality goes out from him, and whatever power it has influences his fellow-beings in their advance or development towards Buddhahood. This will take place in proportion to the intensity of desire and the sincerity of effort they put forward for the attainment of the goal. The goal consists in getting cleansed of sin, and sin consists in believing in the reality of self-substance (*svabhava*), in asserting its claims as final, and in not growing conscious of the immanency of Buddhata in oneself.

The cleansing of sin is, therefore, intellectually seeing into the truth that there is something more in what is taken for the self, and conatively in willing and doing the will of that something which transcends the self and yet which works through the self.

This is where lies the difficulty of the Mahayanist position−to be encased in what we, relative-minded beings, consider the self and yet to go beyond it and to know and will what apparently does not belong to the self. This is almost trying to achieve an impossibility, and yet if we do not achieve this, (p. 283) there will be no peace of mind, no quietude of soul. We have to do it somehow when we once

tumble over the question in the course of our religious experience. How is this to be accomplished?

That we are sinful does not mean in Buddhism that we have so many evil impulses, desires, or proclivities, which, when released, are apt to cause the ruination of oneself as well as others; the idea goes deeper and is rooted in our being itself, for it is sin to imagine and act as if individuality were a final fact. As long as we are what we are, we have no way to escape from sin, and this is at the root of all our spiritual tribulations. This is what the followers of Shin Buddhism mean when they say that all works, even when they are generally considered morally good, are contaminated as long as they are the efforts of 'self-power', and hence will not lift us from the bondage of Karma. The power of Buddhata must be added over to the self or must replace it altogether if we desire emancipation. Buddhata, if it is immanent—and we cannot think it otherwise—must be awakened so that it will do its work for us who are so oppressed under the limitations of individualism.

The awakening and working of Buddhata in mortal sinful beings is not accomplished by logic and discursive argument, as is attested by the history of religion. In spite of the predominantly intellectual tendency of Buddhism, it teaches us to appeal to something else. The deep consciousness of sin, the intensity of desire to be released from the finality of individual existence, and the earnestness of effort put forward to awaken Buddhata—these are the chief conditions. The psychological experience resulting therefrom will naturally be connected with the feeling of passivity.

### *A New Phase of Buddhism*

Buddhism, whose intellectual tendency interpreted the doctrine of Karma individualistically in spite of its teaching of non-ego (*anatta*), has at last come to release us all from (p. 284) the iron fetters of Karma by appealing to the conception of Buddhata. Finite beings become thus relieved of the logical chain of causation in a world of spirits, but at the same time the notion of sin, which is essentially attached to them as limited in time and space, has taken possession of their religious consciousness. For sin means finite beings' helplessness of transcending themselves. And if this be the case, to get rid of sin will be to abandon themselves to the care of an infinite being; that is to say, to desist from attempting to save themselves, and instead to bring about a spiritual state of passiveness whereby the ground for the entrance of a reality greater than themselves is prepared. Thus sings Wordsworth:

> Nor less I deem that there are powers
> Which of themselves our minds impress;
> That we can feed this mind of ours
> In a wise passiveness.

Think you, ‘mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come
But we must still be seeking.

—Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
Conversing as I may,
I sit upon this old grey stone,
And dream my time away.

We can thus say that Karma is understood by the Mahayanists rather cosmologically, or that the super-individualistic aspect of Karma came to assert its importance more than its individualistic aspect. Nagarjuna’s attempt to nullify Karma is the negative side of this evolution that has taken place in the history of Buddhism. As long as Karma was conceived individualistically by Hinayanists, there was no room for them to entertain a feeling of passivity. But with the Mahayanist interpretation of Karma a sense of overwhelming oppression came to possess the minds of the Buddhists, because Karma was now understood to have a far deeper, stronger, and wider foundation than hitherto (p. 285) thought of. It grew out of the cosmos itself, against which finite individuals were altogether powerless. This feeling of helplessness naturally turned the Mahayanists towards a being who could overcome the enormity of Karma-force.

There was another factor in the religious consciousness of the Mahayanists that made them ever persistent in applying for the super-individualistic powers of Buddhata. By this I mean the feeling of compassion (*karuna*) going beyond individualism. This is an annoying feeling, to say the least; it goes directly against the instinct of self-preservation. But there is no doubt that its roots are deeply laid, and in fact it makes up the very foundation of human nature.

Compassion then walks hand in hand with sorrow, for a compassionate soul is always sorrowful when he observes how ignorant and confused the world is, and grows conscious of something in himself that makes him feel his own participation in universal confusion and iniquity. The sense of sin is the outcome of all this. Perhaps here lies one of the reasons why the practice of asceticism has a strong appeal to the religiously-minded, who feel a shadow of penitence not always realizing exactly why they do. When the overwhelming force of Karma is thus combined with compassion, sorrow, and even sin, the attitude of the Buddhist towards himself assumes an altogether different aspect; he is no more a self-reliant individualist, he now wants to identify himself with a power that holds in itself the whole universe with all its multitudinousness.

## III

### *The Psychology of Passivity*

Passivity is essentially psychological, and to interpret it metaphysically or theologically is another question. The feeling that one has been cleansed of sin is passive as far as (p. 286) the sinner's consciousness is concerned. This subjectivism may be objectively verified or may not. But to say that in this consciousness there is absolutely no other feeling than passivity is not correct.

This feeling, which came upon us indeed quite abruptly or without our being conscious of every step of its progress, is no doubt predominant especially when we know that with the utmost voluntary efforts we could not induce a state of liberation. But when the feeling is analysed and its component factors are determined, we realize that this passivity is made possible only when there is something intensely active within ourselves. Let this active background be all blank, absolutely colourless, and there is not even a shadow of passivity felt there. The very fact that it is felt to be passive proves that there is a power on our side that prepares itself to be in a state of receptiveness. The exclusive 'other-power' theory maintained by advocates of the Shin school of Buddhism as well as by the Christian quietists is not tenable.

While a man is attached to individualism, asserting it consciously or unconsciously, he always has a feeling of oppression, which he may interpret as sin; and while the mind is possessed by it, there is no room for the 'other-power' to enter and work: the way is effectively barred. It is quite natural, therefore, for him to imagine that with the removal of the bar he became altogether empty. But the removal of the bar does not mean utter emptiness, absolute nothingness. If this were the case, there would be nothing for the 'other-power' to work on.

The abandoning of the 'self-power' is the occasion for the 'other-power' to appear on the scene. The abandoning and the appearance take place simultaneously; it is not that the abandoning comes first, and the ground remaining empty there is a vacancy, and finally the 'other-power' comes in to claim this vacuity. The facts of experience do not justify this supposition, for nothing can work in a vacuity. On the contrary, there must be a point to which the 'other-power' can fix itself, or a form into which it can, as it were, squeeze itself. (p. 287) This self-determination of the 'other-power' is impossible if there is nothing but an absolute emptiness of passivity. The suppression of the self does not mean its utter annihilation, but its perfect readiness to receive a higher power into it. In this receptivity we must not forget that there is a power that receives, which has been made passive. The absolute 'other-power' doctrine is not psychologically valid, nor metaphysically tenable.

[Transcriber's note: The section of the essay entitled "Absolute Passivism and Libertinism" has here been omitted, as the transcriber saw little danger in anyone misinterpreting the philosophy of passivism to justify nihilism, existentialism or libertinism. Of it, the following account of a devotee who has become a complete innocent has been included, as it accords with descriptions of many saints and sages.]

### *Absolute Passivity as Innocence*

Kichibei was a wealthy farmer of Idzumo province, but when his religious consciousness was awakened he could no more rest satisfied with his old conditions. He sold all his estate and with the money thus realized he wandered about from one place to another to get instructed in Shin Buddhism. Later he sold out even his godowns, furniture, and house itself. Thus freeing himself from all earthly treasures, he devoted himself to the study of Buddhism, that is, he was never tired of travelling far and near listening to the religious discourses of Shin teachers.

Many, many years passed like that and his neighbours used to remark, 'Kichibei goes around in sandals made of gold,' meaning that all his money and property had gone into his religion. He did not at all mind his poverty, saying, 'Enough is the living for the day.' At seventy he was still peddling fish to get his daily livelihood, though his earning was no more than a few pennies. When a neighbouring child brought him one day a bunch of flowers, he was very grateful. 'By the grace of Amida I live this day to make him this flower-offering'; he went up to the altar. The child was rewarded with two coins, the whole earning of the day.

Is not such a Buddhist a good follower of Jesus too? He had no thought for the morrow. There is something most captivating in a life like Kichibei's. Rolle speaks of 'a contemplative man [who] is turned towards the unseen light with so great a longing that men often consider him a fool or mad, because his heart is so on fire with the love of Christ. Even his bodily appearance is changed, and is so far removed from other men that it seems as if God's child were a lunatic.' 'God's fool' or 'God's lunatic' are expressive terms. Kichibei was surely changed in his appearance and had become a splendid lunatic.

### *The Passive Life Described*

The psychological state of such religious belief can be explained in the language of Madame Guyon as follows: (As quoted in Thomas C. Upham's *Life and Experience of Madam Guyon*, p. 305)

[quote] I speak to you, my dear brother, without reserve. And, in the first place, my soul, as it seems to me, is united to God in such a manner that my own will is entirely lost in the Divine Will. I live, therefore, as well as I can express it, out of myself and all other creatures, in union with God, because in union with His will. . . . It is thus that God, by His sanctifying grace, has come to me All in All. The self which once troubled me is taken away, and I find it no more. And thus God, being made known in things and events, which is the only way in which the I AM, or Infinite Existence, can be made known, everything becomes in a certain sense God to me. I find God in everything that is, and in everything that comes to pass. The creature is nothing; God is ALL. [end quote]

(p. 295)

Thomas C. Upham further gives, according to Madame Guyon's autobiography and other literary material, his own version of the conversation which took place between her and Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, at this time confessedly the 'leader of the French Church'. The conversation is quite illuminating as regards the quietist point of view of religious experience, and I allow myself to quote the following:

*Bossuet:* I notice that the terms and phrases which you employ sometimes differ from those with which I frequently meet in theological writings. And perhaps the reason which you have already suggested explains it in part. But still they are liable to be misunderstood and to lead into error: and hence it is necessary to ascertain precisely what is meant. You sometimes describe what you consider the highest state of religious experience as a state of *passivity*; and at other times as *passively active*. I confess, Madame, that I am afraid of expressions which I do not fully understand, and have the appearance at least of being somewhat at variance with man's moral agency and accountability.

*Madam Guyon:* I am not surprised, sir, at your reference to these expressions; and still I hardly know what other expressions to employ. I will endeavour to explain. In the early periods of man's religious experience, he is in what may be called *a mixed life*; sometimes acting from God, but more frequently, until he has made considerable advancement, acting from himself. His inward movement, until it becomes corrected by Divine grace, is self-originated and is characterized by that perversion which belongs to everything coming from that source. But when the soul, in the possession of pure or perfect love, is fully converted, and everything in it is subordinated to God, then its state is always either passive or passively active.

But I am willing to concede, which will perhaps meet your objection, that there are some reasons for preferring the term *passively active*; because the sanctified soul, although (p. 296) it no longer has a will of its own, is

> never strictly inert. Under all circumstances and in all cases, there is really a distinct act on the part of the soul, namely *an act of cooperation* with God; although in some cases it is a simple cooperation with what *now is*, and constitutes the religious state of submissive acquiescence and patience; while in others it is a cooperation with reference to what *is to be*, and implies future results, and consequently is a state of movement and performance.
>
> *Bossuet:* I think, Madame, I understand you. There is a distinction undoubtedly in the two classes of cases just mentioned; but as the term *passively active* will apply to both of them, I think it is to be preferred. You use this complex term, I suppose, because there are two distinct acts or operations to be expressed, namely the act of preparatory or *preventive* grace on the part of God, and the cooperative act on the part of the creature; the soul being passive, or merely perceptive, in the former; and active, although always in accordance with the Divine leading, in the other. [end quote]

'Passively active', or 'actively passive', either will describe the mentality of the quietist type of the mystic. He is not generally conscious of his own active part in his religious experience, and may wish to ignore this part altogether on the ground of his religious philosophy. But, as I said before, there is no absolutely passive state of mind, for this would mean perfect emptiness, and to be passive means that there is something ready to receive. Even God cannot work where there is nothing to work on or with. Passivity is a relative term indicating a not-fully-analysed state of consciousness. In our religious life, passivity comes as the culmination of strenuous activity; passivity without this preliminary condition is sheer inanity, in which there will be no consciousness from the very first, even of any form of passivity.

'I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me.' This is passivism as far as somebody else, and not the self has taken possession of that which lives, but that which lives stays there all the time. (p. 297) 'Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.' Something in you is dead, which is to die sooner or later, but that which is to live keeps on living. This does not mean that you are altogether annihilated, but that you are living in the most lively sense of the word. Living is an activity, in fact the highest form of activity. Absolute passivity is death itself.

### *Passivity and Pure Land Buddhism*

It is in the Pure Land school that the idea of passivity is most clearly traceable in Buddhism, though even in the Holy Path school it is not quite absent. Shinran, a great advocate of the Tariki ('other-power') doctrine, naturally upholds passivity in the religious life of his followers. His idea is manifest in such passages as this, in which he repudiates 'self-power' or 'self-will':

[quote] By ‘self-power’ is meant the self-will of the [Holy Path] devotees, relying on which each of them, as he finds himself variously situated in the circumstances of life, recites the Buddha-names other [than Amida’s], and disciplines himself in good works other [than uttering the name of Amida]. He upholds his own will, by which he attempts to remedy all the disturbances arising from body, speech, and thought, and, thus making himself wholesome, he wishes to be reborn in the Land of Purity.

The ‘other-power’ devotees, on the other hand, put their whole-hearted faith in the original vow of Amida, as is expressed in the Eighteenth Vow, in which he vows to receive all beings to his Land of Purity if they only recite his name and desire to be saved through him. In this, says the Holy One, there is no human scheme because there is here only the scheme of the Tathagata’s vow. By ‘human scheme’ is meant ‘self-will’, and ‘self-will’ is self-power, which is a human scheme. As to ‘other-power’, it is a whole-hearted belief in the original vow, and as the devotee is thus assured of his rebirth in Amida’s land there is no human scheme in the whole procedure. And, therefore, again he need not feel any anxiety in his mind as to whether he would be welcomed by the Tathagata because of his sinfulness.

Let him remain undisturbed, even with all his passions, because they belong by nature to him as an ignorant and sinful mortal. Nor let him imagine that he should be reborn in Amida’s land because of his good will and good conduct, for as long as he has the mind of relying on his ‘self-will’ he has no chance for rebirth in the Pure Land. [end quote]

Shinran’s vocabulary is rich in such phrases as ‘artless art’, or ‘meaningless meaning’, ‘no scheming whatever’, ‘naturalness’, or ‘suchness’, or ‘the natural course of things’, ‘the passages of absolute freedom’ or ‘unobstructed path’, ‘beyond the intelligence or contrivance of the ignorant’ as it is the will of the Buddha, ‘an absolute trust in the Tathagata’s vow which is not tinged with human contrivance’, ‘the great believing heart is Buddhata and Buddhata is the Tathagata’, etc.

The ultimate meaning of all these phrases so common in the lexicon of Shin Buddhism, is the upholding of passivity in the psychology of its followers. Let Amida work out his original vow as he made it in the beginning of his religious career, which means, ‘Let us believe in it wholeheartedly and it will find its way inevitably, naturally, spontaneously, and without any contrivance on our part, into our sinful hearts and take us up into his Land of Bliss and Purity after our death.’ While we are living here on Earth as the result of our past Karma, bound by the laws of the flesh and driven by the instinctive and uncontrollable urge of life, we cannot escape its course, but so long as there is the original vow of Amida, which

has proved effective in his own attainment of supreme enlightenment, we need not worry about the sinful urge of our earthly life.

Absolute faith puts an end to our spiritual tribulations, (p. 299) which annoy us on account of our sins. Sins themselves as they are committed by us mortals may not be eradicated, for as long as we are relative existences, limited and governed by forces beyond our 'self-power' to control, we cannot rid ourselves completely of defiled passions and desires and impulses. In spite of this fact, we are not troubled about sin, because our sin no more affects our life after death. Have we not already been saved by the original vow of Amida, which we have unconditionally accepted? Was it not our worry about our afterlife, or immortality, as the Christians would put it, that made us feel concerned about this sinful state of affairs on Earth? It is not that we keep on sinning or that we take delight in sinning, as some antinomians do; indeed we feel seriously concerned about sinning, but this sinning no longer shakes our faith in Amida and our final enlightenment and emancipation. The soul is no more disturbed, and with all its sins and regrets and lamentations it retains its sincerity, its hope, and its transcendental joy.

Richard Rolle, the author of *The Amending of Life*, was a Christian mystic of the fourteenth century. His idea of sin and purity of heart has much to remind us of the view presented above. He writes:

> [quote] Who can truly say 'I am free of sin?' No one in this life; for as Job says, 'If I wash myself with snow water and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.' 'If I washed myself with snow water' meaning true penitence; 'and make my hands never so clean' by works of innocence, 'yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch' of venial sins that cannot be avoided, 'and mine own clothes shall abhor me,' that is to say, by flesh makes me loathe myself, and sensuality that is so frail, slippery, and ready to love the beauty of this world, often makes me sin. The apostle said, 'Let not sin reign in your mortal body,' that is to say, 'Sin must be in us, but it need not rule over us.' . . . Though he sometimes commit a venial offence, yet henceforth, because his whole heart is turned to God, sin is destroyed. The fire of love burns up in him all stain of sin, as a drop of water cast into a furnace is consumed. [end quote]

Ichiren-in (1788-1860) was a modern follower of the 'other-power' school; he used to teach in the following manner:

> [quote] If you have yet something worrying you, however trivial it may be, your faith in Amida is not absolute. When you have a feeling of unrest, this is of course far from believing in Amida; but even when you are rejoicing as having at last found rest, this is not real rest either. To make strenuous effort because you have not yet gained a restful heart is also not

quite right. To put your belief to a test wishing to know if it is firmly resting on Amida is again wrong.

Why? Because all these are attempts to look into your own mind; you are turned away from Amida, you are facing the wrong direction. Indeed, it is easy to say, 'Abandon your self-power,' but after all how difficult it is! I, therefore, repeat over and over again and say, 'Don't look at your own mind, but look straight up to Amida himself.' To rely on Amida means to turn towards the mirror of the original vow and see Amida face to face. [end quote]

### *Passivity is Accepting Life As It Is*

Passivity is not self-reflection or self-examination. It is an unqualified acceptance of Amida. So long as there is a trace of conscious contrivance, you are not wholly possessed of Amida. You and the original vow are two separate items of thought, there is no unity, and this unity is to be attained by accepting and not by striving. In this case passivity is identifiable with accepting existence as it is.

To believe, then, is to be and not to become. Becoming implies a dissatisfaction with existence, a wishing to change; (p. 301) that is, to work out 'my will' as against 'thy will', and whatever we may say about moral ideals of perfection, religion is after all the acceptance of things as they are, things evil together with things good. Religion wants first of all 'to be'. To believe, therefore, is to exist—this is the fundamental of all religions. When this is translated into terms of psychology, the religious mind turns on the axle of passivity. 'You are all right as you are', or 'to be well with God and the world', or 'don't think of the morrow'—this is the final word of all religion.

It was in this spirit that Rinzai (Lin-chi, died 867), the founder of the Rinzai branch of Zen Buddhism, said:

> [quote] The truly religious man has nothing to do but go on with his life as he finds it in the various circumstances of this worldly existence. He rises quietly in the morning, puts on his dress and goes out to his work. When he wants to walk, he walks; when he wants to sit, he sits. He has no hankering after Buddhahood, or the remotest thought of it. How is this possible? A wise man of old says, If you strive after Buddhahood by any conscious contrivances, your Buddha is indeed the source of eternal transmigration. [end quote]

To doubt is to commit suicide. To strive, which means to 'negate', is, according to Buddhist phraseology, eternally to transmigrate in the ocean of birth and death.

A man called Joyemon, of Mino province, was much troubled about his soul. He had studied Buddhism, but so far to no purpose. Finally he went up to Kyoto where Ichiren-in, who was a great teacher of Shin Buddhism, resided at the time, and opened his heart to him, begging to be instructed in the teaching of Shinran Shonin. Said Ichiren-in, 'You are as old as you are.' (Amida's salvation consists in accepting yourself as you are.) Joyemon was not satisfied and made further remonstration, to which Ichiren repeated, 'You are saved as you are.'

The seeker after truth was not yet in a state of mind to accept the word of the teacher right off, he was not yet free (p. 302) from dependence on contrivances and strivings. He still pursued the teacher with some more postulations. The teacher, however, was not to be induced to deviate from his first course, for he repeated, 'You are saved as you are,' and quietly withdrew. It was fortunate that he was a 'tariki' teacher; for if he had been a Zen master, I feel sure that Joyemon would have been handled in an altogether different manner.

John Woolman (1720-1772), a Quaker, died of smallpox, and towards the end his throat was much affected and he could not speak. He asked for a pen and ink and wrote with difficulty, 'I believe my being here is in the wisdom of Christ; I know not as to life or death.' This confession exactly tallies with that of Shinran when he says in *The Tannisho*: 'I say my Nembutsu as taught by my good teacher. As to my being reborn after death in the Land of Purity or in hell, I have no idea of it.'

Shinran quite frequently makes reference to the inconceivability of Buddha-wisdom. Our being here is entirely due to it, and it is not in our limited knowledge to probe into its mystery nor is it necessary to exercise our finite will about it. We just accept existence as it is, our trust is wholly placed in the infinite wisdom of Amida, and what we have to do is to get rested with this trust, this faith, this acceptance, and with this ignorance. And the wonderful thing is that this ignorance has such a wisdom in it as to give us entire satisfaction with this life and after.

(p. 303)

The mystic knowledge or mystic ignorance and the satisfaction derived from it are also illustrated by the poem of thirty-one syllables composed by Ippen Shonin (1229-1289). When he was studying Zen under Hoto (1203-1298), the latter wanted to know how Ippen understood the meaning of the statement that 'As a thought is stirred there is an awakening.' Ippen's answer was in verse:

When the Name is uttered
Neither the Buddha nor the Self there is:
Na-mu-a-mi-da-bu-tsu—
The voice alone is heard.

The Zen master, however, did not think Ippen rightly understood the point, whereby the latter uttered another verse:

> When the Name is uttered
> Neither the Buddha nor the Self there is:
> Na-mu-a-mi-da-bu-tsu,
> Na-mu-a-mi-da-bu-tsu!

(p. 304)

This met the master's approval. In Ippen's religion we find Zen and Shin harmonized in a most practical way. When this *sonomana* idea is translated into human relations, we have the following, in which self-will is denounced as hindering the work of the All-One, that is, Amida.

> [quote] When the rebellious will of your self-power is given up, you realize what is meant by putting trust in Amida. You desire to be saved and the Buddha is ever ready to save, and yet the fact of your rebirth in the Land of Purity does not seem to be so easily establishable.
>
> Why? Because your rebellious will still asserts itself. It is like contracting a marriage between a young man and a young woman. The parents on both sides want to see them united in marriage. The one party [the bridegroom's parents] says, 'There is no need of the bride's being provided with any sort of trousseau.' But the other thinks it necessary, seeing that the bridegroom belongs to a far richer family, and it would not do for the bride not to be supplied even with one wardrobe. Both are ready and yet the sense of pride is their barrier. If the bride's family took the proposal made by the other party in the same spirit as it was made by the latter, the desired end would be accomplished without further ado.
>
> Quite similar to this is the relationship between the Buddha and sentient beings. The Buddha says: 'Come'; why not then go to him even as you are? But here the rebellious will shakes its head and says, 'With all his good will, I cannot go to him just as I am; I ought to do something to deserve the call.' This is self-pride. This is more than what the Buddha requires of you, and anything extraneous coming out of your self-conceit and limited philosophy obstructs the passage of the Buddha's mercy into your hearts. For all that is asked of you is to put your hand forward, into which the Buddha is ready to drop the coin of salvation. The Buddha is beckoning to you, the boat is waiting to take you to the other shore of the stream, no fares are wanted, the only movement you are to make is to step right into the ferry. You cannot protest and say, (p. 305) 'This is a difficult task.' Why don't you then give yourself up entirely to the Buddha's vow of salvation and let his will prevail over yours? (Sasaki, *Sayings of Shuson*, 1907)

Molinos writes to Petrucci: 'One of the fundamental rules which serve to keep my soul in constant inner peace is this: I may cherish no desire for this or that separate good, but only for that good which is the highest of all, and I must be prepared for all that this highest good gives me and requires of me. These are few words but they contain much.' (Kathleen Lyttleton's Introduction to Molinos' *Spiritual Guide*, p. 25) If one asks a Shin teacher what are few words containing so much as productive of the highest good, he will at once say, 'Na-mu-a-mi-da-bu-tsu, Na-mu-a-mi-da-bu-tsu!' For this is indeed the magical "Open Sesame!" that carries you right to the other side of birth and death.

*Ignorance and Passivity*

The significant fact about religious experience, which is to be noticed in this connection, is that it always insists on abandoning all knowledge and learnedness acquired by the seeker of God or truth. Whether it is Christian or Buddhist, whether it is the Pure Land or the Holy Path, the insistence is equally emphatic.

It is evident that religious experience stands diametrically opposed to intellectual knowledge, for learnedness and scholarship do not guarantee one to be a member of the kingdom of God, rather 'being like a child' not only in humbleness of heart but in simpleness of thought. The stains of vanity, conceit, and self-love which are so-called human righteousnesses are indeed 'as a polluted garment' which is (p. 306) to be cast off by every one of us, but why is the use of the intellect too to be avoided? The soul may long for solitude and silence, but why does the constant reading of religious books grow wearisome? Why was Jesus thankful for his Father's hiding 'these things' from the wise and prudent and revealing them unto babes, who are incapable of 'careful meditations and subtle reasoning'?

St. Bonaventura 'teaches us not to form a conception of anything, no, not even of God, because it is imperfection to be satisfied with representations, images and definitions, however subtle and ingenious they may be, either of the will or of the goodness, trinity and unity; nay, of the divine essence itself'.

St. Augustine soliloquizes: 'I, Lord, went wandering like a strayed sheep, seeking thee with anxious reasoning without whilst thou wast within me. I wearied myself much in looking for thee without, and yet thou hast thy habitation within me, if only I desire thee and pant after thee. I went round the streets and squares of the city of this world seeking thee, and I found thee not, because in vain I sought without for him who was within myself.'

The reason why intellection is in disfavour with religious teachers is this: it does not give us the thing itself, but its representations, images, explanations and references. It always leads us away from ourselves, which means that we become lost in the jungle of endless speculation and imagination, giving us no inner peace

and spiritual rest. The intellect always looks outwardly, forgetting that 'there is an inward sight which hath power to perceive the One True God'. So Gerson expresses himself, 'Though I have spent forty years in reading and prayer, yet I could never find (p. 307) any thing more efficacious, nor, for attaining to mystical theology, more direct than that the spirit should become like a little child and a beggar in the presence of God.' . . .

It is true that Buddhism is more intellectual than Christianity and that the whole drift of Buddhist thought tends to encourage and intuitive grasp of the emptiness of existence instead of being embraced in the love of the highest being. But in spite of this fact there is a strong [emphasis] in the Buddhist teaching on the futility of all intellectual attempts in the experience of the Buddhist life, which consists in abandoning every self-centred striving and preconceived metaphysical standpoint. This is to keep the consciousness in utter purity or in a state of absolute neutrality or blankness; in other words, to make the mind as simple as that of the child, which is not at all stuffed with learning and pride.

Honen Shonin's (1133-1212) 'One-Sheet Document' illustrates the Pure Land attitude towards ignorance and simple-heartedness:

> [quote] By Nembutsu I do not mean such practice of meditation on the Buddha as is referred to by the wise men of Chine and Japan, nor is it the recitation of the Buddha's name, which is practised as the result of study and understanding as to the meaning of Nembutsu. It is just to recite the name of Amida, without doubting that this will issue in the rebirth of the believer in the Pure Land. Just this, and no other considerations are needed. Mention is often made of the threefold heart and the four sorts of exercise, but these are all included in the belief that a rebirth in the Pure Land is most conclusively assured by the "Namu Amida Butsu". If one imagines something more than this, one will be excluded from the blessings of the two holy ones, (p. 308) Amida and Sakyamuni, and left out of the original vow. Those who believe in the Nembutsu, however learned they may be in all the teachings of Sakyamuni, should behave like an ignoramus who knows nothing or like a simple-hearted woman-devotee; avoid pedantry and recite the Buddha's name with singleness of heart.' [end quote]

Shinran Shonin (1173-1262) as disciple of Honen voices the same sentiment in his *Tannisho*:

> [quote] Some say that the salvation of those who do not read and study the sutras and commentaries is doubtful. Such a view as this is to be regarded as very far from the truth. All the sacred books devoted to the explanation of the truth of the other-power show that every one who, believing in the original vow, recites the Nembutsu will become a Buddha. Apart from this, what learning is needed to be reborn in the Pure Land? Let those who

> have any doubt on this point learn hard and study in order to understand the meaning of the original vow. It is a great pity that there are some who, in spite of a hard study of the sacred books, are unable to understand the true meaning of the sacred doctrine. Since the Name is so formed as to be recited by any simple-hearted person who may have no understanding of even a single phrase in the sacred books, the practice is called easy.' [end quote]

That Zen, representing the Holy Path wing of Buddhism, also avoids learning and sutra-reading can be seen from the way the historians of Zen treat Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch of Zen; for he is made an ignorant pedlar of firewood as compared with his rival Shen-hsiu, whose scholarship was the object of envy among the five hundred disciples of Hung-jen; and also from one of the chief mottoes adopted by Zen followers, 'Depend not on letters!', for it was indeed on this that the T'ien-tai advocates of the Sung concentrated their assaults on Zen.

Those who have at all studied Zen know well what attitude is assumed by Zen toward scholarship and intellection. Its literature is filled with such passages as these: 'I have not a word to give to you as the teaching of Zen'; (p. 309) 'I have not uttered even a syllable these forty-nine years of my preaching'; 'That is your learning; let me have what you have discovered within yourself'; 'What are you going to do with your sutra-reading, which does not at all belong to your inner self?'; 'With all your erudition, do you think you can cope with Death?'; 'All the sutras and commentaries so reverently studied by you, are they not after all mere cleaning rags?' and so on.

Of the reasons why ignorance or simple-mindedness is so exalted in religious experience, the most weighty one is perhaps to be found in the nature of the intellect itself. Being essentially dualistic, it requires a point of reference from which it starts to make a statement, or to advance an argument, or to give a judgment.

This mental habit of having a proposition definitely ascertained and holding fast to it goes against the religious frame of mind, which principally consists in accepting existence as it is without asking questions, without making protests, without entertaining doubts. Religious experience depicts in plain, unqualified and straightforward statements, refusing to have anything to do with quibbling and dialectics. Whether of the Zen or of the Shin kind of Buddhism, mystic intuition thrives best in a mind which has no predilection, especially nursed by learning. When the mirror of consciousness is thoroughly cleansed of intellectual muddle it reflects the glory and love of God, as the Christians would say. Hence ignorance and naivety go hand in hand with passivity.

### *Selflessness and Emptiness*

When this doctrine of passivity is rendered into philosophical phraseology, it is the doctrine of Anatman or non-ego, which, when further developed, turns into that of Sunyata or emptiness. As I explained elsewhere, the doctrine of no self-substance is not so nihilistic as non-Buddhist scholars may imagine, for this denial of the ego (p. 310) is also constantly on the lips of the Christian mystics. St. Bernard, quoting Isaiah 10:15, 'Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that moveth it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or if the staff should lift itself as if it were no wood,' concludes, 'In fact, the ability to glory in God comes from God alone'. Cannot we draw another conclusion, saying, 'God is all in all, there is no ego-substance'? or 'In him we live and move and have our being, and therefore all relative existences are as such empty and unborn'? Logically speaking, Buddhist scholars are more frank and radical and self-consistent in developing this theme.

Says the author of *Theologia Germanica*, 'We must understand it as though God said: "He who willeth without me, or willeth not what I will, or otherwise than as I will, he willeth contrary to me, for my will is that no one should will otherwise than I, and that there should be no will without me, and without my will; even as without me there is neither substance, nor life, nor this nor that, so also there should be no will apart from me, and without my will."' . . . Or, according to the *Visuddhimagga* (Chap. XVI):

> Misery only doth exist, none miserable
> No doer is there; naught save the deed is found
> Nirvana is, but not the man who seeks it
> The Path exists, but not the traveller on it

We must remember that the Buddha's teaching of Anatman or Anatta is not the outcome of psychological analysis but is a statement of religious intuition in which no discursive reasoning whatever is employed. The Buddhist experience found out by immediate knowledge that when one's heart was cleansed of the defilements of the (p. 311) ordinary ego-centred impulses and desires, nothing was left there to claim itself as the ego-residuum. It was Buddhist philosophy that formed the theory, but that which supplied it with facts to substantiate it was Buddhist experience. We ought always to remember this truth, that religion first starts with experience and later philosophizes, and, therefore, the criticism of the philosophy must be based on facts and not on the philosophy itself as thus formulated.

The doctrine of Sunyata too is a statement of religious intuition, and not an abstract formulation of empty ideas. If this were not so, it could never be the fundamental concept of all the schools of Mahayana Buddhism, and have such an inspiring influence upon the religious consciousness of its followers. The subject was treated somewhat fully in my *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra*, and I would not repeat it here except that Sunyata, which is generally translated emptiness or

vacuity, which is its literal meaning, is not to be interpreted in terms of relative knowledge and logical analysis, but it is the utterance of direct insight into the nature of existence. Whatever philosophy it has gathered about it is later addition and the work of Buddhist scholarship.

## IV

### *Passivity and Patience or Humility*

The life of passivity shows much aloofness from human concerns. There are, however, some practical moral virtues arising from the experience of passivity, or, stated conversely, where there are these virtues they issue from the experience. They are highly characteristic of the religious life irrespective of its theology, be it Buddhist or Christian.

In Buddhism the virtues thus realized are generally (p. 312) estimated at six, called *Paramita: Dana, Sila, Ksanti, Virya, Dhyana* and *Prajna*. The latter two, meditation (*dhyana*) and intuitive knowledge (*prajna*), may not be in any direct relationship to passivity, and here we will not touch upon them. The first four are important and we may say that the Mahayanist life is summed up in them. Still, of these four, the first, the practice of charity, which in Buddhism also involves the giving up of one's life to the cause, and the second, the observance of the moral precepts, may not engage our attention here. For I wish to give especial consideration to one or two classical instances of *Ksanti* and *Virya*, both of which I take to be closely connected with the life of passivity and the philosophy of Sunyata. We may think that *Ksanti* (patience) may have something to do with passivity; but how about *Virya* (energy), which is apparently an opposite quality of meek suffering? How could energy be thought of as issuing from religious passivity and emptiness?

[Transcriber's note: As with the section on libertinism, the transcriber here has taken the liberty of leaving out pp. 313-322 and offers her own comment in its stead:
Of the six Mahayana perfections, some (giving, moral virtue and patience) are virtues of an enlightened being while others (zeal and dhyana) are simply practices that help one to reach the opposite shore. They neither issue from nor arise from passivity. The difference between patience and zeal is that one must have patience and forbear reacting to anything that one cannot control, while zeal requires that one be impatient with one's own failings, slowness of progress and hindrances that are within one's control.]

## V

### *Prayer and Nembutsu*

The Christian method of awakening the religious feeling of passivity is prayer. 'When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.' (Matthew 4:6) This is the example shown by the founder of Christianity on how to bring about the state of religious consciousness in which 'thy will' and not 'my will' is to prevail. And the author of the *Imitation of Christ* simply follows this when he says: 'If thou desirest true condition of heart, enter into thy secret chamber and shut out the tumults of the world, as it is written, "Commune with your own heart and in your chamber, and be still." (p. 322) In thy chamber thou shalt find what abroad thou shalt too often lose.' (Book I, Chapter XX)

To retire into solitude and devote oneself to praying, if one is a Christian, or to meditating if one is a Buddhist, is one of the necessary conditions for all religious souls to gain access to the ultimate reality with which it is always seeking to be in communion.

The following story of three monks is taken from H. L. Hubbard's Introduction to Rolle's *Amending of Life*. In it, each monk 'seeks to exercise his vocation in a different direction. One chose to be a peacemaker between men, the second to visit the sick, and the third to dwell in quietness in the desert. The first two, finding it impossible to fulfill their self-chosen tasks, went and recounted their failures to the third. The latter suggested that each of them should fill a vessel with water and pour it into a basin. Then he bade them look into the basin immediately and tell him what they saw. They replied that they saw nothing. After the water had ceased to move he told them to look again. Then they told him that they could see their faces clearly reflected in the water "So is it with you and me," said the hermit; "you who live in the world can see nothing because of the activities of men. I who dwell alone in peace and quietness can see both God and men."'

Evidently God does not cast his image on a body of disturbed water. To use Buddhist terminology, as long as self-power is trying to realize itself there is no room in one's soul for the *tariki* (other-power) of God to get into it, however intellectually this concept may be interpreted. A Catholic Father Tissot writes in his *Interior Life* that 'God wishes himself to be the life of my life, the soul of my soul, the all of my being; he wishes to glorify himself in me and to beautify me in himself'. To effect this state of spirituality, 'my' mind must be like a mirror, freshly polished and with no stain of 'self-dust' on it, in which God reflects himself and 'I' see him then 'face to face'. (p. 323)

As regards the spiritual training of the mind so that it may finally experience passivity in the communion with God, Catholics seem to have a fuller literature than the Protestants. It is natural, seeing that the latter emphasize faith in the scheme of salvation more than any form of mental training. Catholics may tend towards formalism and ritualism, but their 'spiritual exercises' are

psychologically quite an effective means to induce the state they contrive to bring about, as long as they have no intellectual difficulties in taking in all they teach. The mystical experiences which they consider to be special gifts of God require, no doubt, some such preliminary steps for the devotee, which are variously designated by them as ‘preparation’, ‘purgation’, ‘consideration’, ‘meditation’, or ‘contemplation’.

In Buddhism, the Shin, like Protestantism, emphasizes faith, and as the result its followers have no special psychological method with which they attempt to strengthen the subjective force of faith, except attending religious discourses given by the preacher and being interviewed by him on doubtful points. It is true, however, that it is in Shin more than in any other school of Buddhism that the *tariki* (other-power) or passivity side of experience is most persistently insisted on. As far as their teaching goes Shin tells us not to put forward anything savouring of ‘self’ but just to listen to the teacher and accept him; that is, his message as transmitted onward from Sakyamuni, who was the first historically to get us acquainted with the original vow of Amida. The Shin is really a consistent passivity-religion.

The Jodo, however, from which the Shin branched off as a special sect of the Pure Land school of Buddhism, has a way to prepare the mind for the final experience of what is known in Buddhism as *anjin* (peace of mind), that is, a restful state of mind or ‘interior quiet’. This is saying the Nembutsu; that is, reciting the name of Amida, Namu Amida Butsu (in Sanskrit, *namo ‘mitabhaya*), ‘Adoration to the Buddha of Infinite Light’. The formula or phrase (p. 324) is to be repeated in its Chinese form (*na-mo-o-mi-to-fu*) or in the Japanese (*na-mu-a-mi-da-bu-tsu*), and not in the original Sanskrit nor in any other translation. Some earnest devotees are reported to have repeated the phrase ten hundred thousand (a million) times a day; for instance, T’an-luan, Honen, etc.

The conscious object, of course, is to be embraced in the grace of Amida by repeatedly pronouncing his name, but psychologically it is to prepare the mind in such a way as to suspend all the surface activities of consciousness and to wake from its unconscious sources a power greater than the empirical ego. Theologically or metaphysically it may mean many things, but from the psychological point of view the Nembutsu is like a certain kind of prayer, an attempt to tap new life for the mind that has reached, as it were, the end of its rope. The Nembutsu is thus meant to exhaust the power of a finite mind which, when it comes to this pass or impasse, throws itself down at the feet of something, it knows not exactly what, except that the something is an infinite reality.

*The Practice of Zazen and Passivity*

In Zen there is apparently no passivity traceable. As it claims, it is the strong 'self-power' wing of Eastern Mahayana Buddhism, and besides it is intellectual in the sense that it puts its whole stress on the intuitive apprehension of the truth. It is almost a kind of philosophy. but as far as psychology is concerned, the Zen consciousness cannot be different from other religious consciousnesses; the way it works in our empirical mind is the same as in other religious experiences. Whatever metaphysical interpretations and contents we may five to its experience, there is a certain feeling of passivity in it. To go beyond the realm of limited intellection is not to use the intellect itself; it comes from something more than that, and as long as there is something transcending the mind, whose working is nevertheless manifested in and through the mind, the mind must become passive; there is no other choice for it.

The consciousness of 'self-power' may be too prominent in the Zen mind, but this cannot overrule the principle of the experience by which alone the mind is made to realize what is beyond itself. 'Passively active' or 'actively passive'—the choice of one term or the other depends upon the individual psychology more than upon the fact itself, for the fact always lends itself to alternative interpretations. To understand the position of Zen in this matter we must have the knowledge of its practice of Dhyana or Zazen, as it is called in China and Japan.

Dhyana is generally translated as meditation, but it is really the practice of mental concentration, in which the reasoning process of the intellect is cut short and consciousness is kept clean of all other ideas except the one that is given as the subject of meditation. Zen does not exactly coincide with Indian Dhyana, although zen is an abbreviation of zenna, which is in turn the transliteration of (p. 326) the Sanskrit dhyana; in practice, however, the same bodily posture is assumed.

The following directions given by a Zen master (1265) may throw light on what Zen proposes to do.

> [quote] The Bodhisattva who disciplines himself in Prajna should first of all awaken a great compassionate heart, make great universal vows, and thoroughly be versed in all Samadhis, in order to deliver all beings; for the Bodhisattva does not seek emancipation for his own benefit. Let him renounce all external relations and put a stop to all worldly doings, so that his mind and body becoming one they can be kept, moving or sitting, in perfect harmony with each other. His food should be regulated, neither too much nor too little; and his sleep also should be moderate, neither too long nor too short.
>
> When he wishes to practise meditation, let him retire into a quiet room where he prepares a thick well-wadded cushion for his seat, with his dress

and belt loosely adjusted about his body. He then assumes his proper formal posture. He will sit with his legs fully crossed, that is, place the right foot over the left thigh and the left foot over the right thigh. Sometimes the half-cross-legged posture is permitted, in which case simply let the left leg rest over the right thigh. Next, he will place the right hand over the left leg with its palm up and over this have the left hand, while the thumbs press against each other over the palm.

He now raises the whole body slowly and quietly, moves it repeatedly to the left and to the right, backward and forward, until the proper seat and straight posture are obtained. He will take care not to lean too much to one side, (p. 327) either left or right, forward or backward; his spinal column stands erect with the head, shoulders, back, and loins each properly supporting others like a chaitya. But he is cautious not to sit too upright or rigidly, for he will then feel uneasy before long. The main thing is to have the ears and shoulders, nose and navel stand to each other in one vertical plane, while the tongue rests against the upper palate and the lips and teeth are firmly closed. Let the eyes be slightly opened in order to avoid falling asleep.

When meditation advances the wisdom of this practice will grow apparent. Great masters of meditation from of old have their eyes kept open. Yuan-t'ung, the Zen master of Fa-yun, has also had a strong opinion against the habit of closing the eyes, and called such practisers 'dwellers of the skeleton cave in the dark valley'. there is a deep sense in this, which is well understood by those who know. When the position is steadied and the breathing regular, the practiser will now assume a somewhat relaxed attitude. Let him not be concerned with ideas good or bad. When a thought is awakened there is awareness; when there is awareness, the point is missed. When the exercise is kept up steadily and for a sufficient length of time, disturbing thoughts will naturally cease and there will prevail a state of oneness. This is the technique of practising meditation.

Meditation is the road leading to peace and happiness. The reason why there are so many people who grow ill is because they do not know how to prepare themselves duly for the exercise. If they well understand the directions as given above, they will without straining themselves too much acquire not only the lightness of the body but the briskness of spirit, which finally brings about the clarification of the consciousness. The understanding of the Dharma will nourish the spirit and make the practiser enjoy the pure bliss of tranquillity.

If he has already a realization within himself, his practice of meditation will be like a dragon getting into water, or a tiger crouching against a hillside. In case he has yet nothing of self-realization, the practice will be like (p. 328) fanning the fire with the wind; not much effort is needed [he

will soon become enlightened]. Only let him not too easily be deceived as to what he may regard as self-realization.

When there is an enhanced spiritual quality, there is much susceptibility to the Evil One's temptation, which comes in every possible form both agreeable and disagreeable. Therefore the practiser must have his consciousness rightly adjusted and well in balance; then nothing will prevent his advancement in meditation. Concerning various mental aberrations worked out by the Evil One, a detailed treatment is given in *The Leng-yen Sutra* (*Surangama*, fas. VIII), the *T'ien-tai Chih Kwan*, and Keui-feng's *Book on Practice and realisation*. Those who wish to prepare themselves against untoward events should be well informed of the matter.

When the practiser wants to rise from meditation, let him slowly and gently shake his body and quietly rise from the seat; never let him attempt to rise suddenly. After the rising let him always contrive to retain whatever mental power he has gained by meditation, as if he were watching over a baby; for this will help him in maturing the power of concentration.

In the study of Buddhism, the practice of meditation comes foremost. When the mind is not sufficiently brought under control no tranquillity obtains in it, and the practiser will be at a loss how to cope with a critical moment that may arise. When looking for a gem the water must not be disturbed; the waves make it difficult to get hold of the gem. Let the waters of meditation be clear and undisturbed, and the spiritual gem will all by itself shine forth. Therefore we read in the *Sutra of a Perfect Enlightenment* that 'Prajna pure and flawless is produced by means of meditation'. In the *Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Law* we read, 'Retire into a solitary place and have your mind under full discipline, and let it be as steady and immovable as Mount Sumeru'.

We thus know that the sure way to realize saintliness (p. 329) that goes beyond worldly trivialities is attained by means of a quiet life. It is all through the power of concentration, indeed, that some of the old masters have passed away into eternity even while sitting cross-legged or standing upright. There are many chances of interruption and failure even when one is devoting one's life; how much more if illness gains a hold of you! How can you resist the assault of Karma? So says an ancient teacher: 'If you have not acquired the power of concentration strong enough to destroy the camp of Death, you will have to come back with your eyes blindfolded and with nothing achieved. Your life will thus be utterly wasted.'

Good friends of Zen, be pleased to read these words repeatedly, and whatever benefit that accrues will be not only yours but others' too, for you will thus all finally attain enlightenment. [end quote]

*The Function of Koan in Zen*

When it is said that Buddhism, Mahayana as well as Hinayana, is rich in the intellectual element, it does not mean that Buddhism lays its principal stress on logic or philosophy in the unfoldment of religious consciousness, but that it upholds an intuitive understanding of ultimate religious truth rather than a merely faithful acceptance of the teaching of its founder. And as the most efficient means to come to this intuitive understanding it teaches the practice of meditation known as Dhyana or Zazen. The direction given above is thus followed by all Buddhists, Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese, except the adherents of the Pure Land school of Buddhism. For the former believe that the understanding grows by itself from within when the practice of Zazen is brought to perfection. As is stated, Prajna reflects itself on the serene undisturbed water of Dhyana. (p. 330)

When, however, in the history of Zen the system of koan came to be in vogue, meditation so-called was pushed behind in order to bring the intuition more to the foreground. Tai-hui boldly declares, 'Others give priority to Dhyana rather than to intuition (*prajna*) but I give priority to intuition rather than to Dhyana.' He was one of the strong advocates of the koan exercise in China in opposition to his great contemporary Hung-chih. As I have already explained in my previous Essay as well as in the First Series, the koan students of Zen are almost violently aggressive in their attitude towards the realization of the passivity phase of the religious experience.

No signs of passivity seem to be noticeable in their exercise, but what is aimed at here is intellectual passivity and not the emotional one which comes out in view so much in Christian mystics and also in the followers of the Pure Land school of Buddhism. The [purpose] of the koan exercise is to blot out by sheer force of the will all the discursive traces of intellection; this prepares the consciousness to be the proper ground for intuitive knowledge to burst out. Students march through a forest of ideas thickly crowding up into their minds, and when, thoroughly exhausted in their struggles, they give themselves up, the state of consciousness which they have so earnestly but rather blindly been seeking unexpectedly prevails.

This last giving-up is what I would term a state of passivity in our religious experience. Without this giving-up, whether intellectually or conatively or emotionally, or in whatever way we may designate this psychological process, there is generally no experience of a final reality. Let me give here some quotations from a book known as (p. 331) *Changuan cejin* (*Ch'an-kuan t'se-chin*) which may be translated *Whip for Spurring Students Onward Through the Chan Barrier Checkpoints*, and which is very much read by Zen students as a most energizing stimulant to their wearied nerves.

> [quote] Have the two characters 'birth' and 'death' pasted on your forehead until you get an understanding into their meaning; for the Lord of

Death will surely demand of you a strict account of your life when you have to appear before him. Don't say then, 'I have never been reminded of this!'

When you apply yourself to the study of Zen, what is necessary is to examine yourself from moment to moment and to keep the subject (koan) always before your mental eye, so that you can see by yourself when you have gained strength and when not, and also where your concentration is needed more and where not.

There are some who begin to doze as soon as they are on the cushion, or allow all kinds of rambling thoughts to disturb them if they are at all wakeful; and when they are down from the cushion their tongues are at once set loose. If they try to master Zen in this fashion they will never succeed even if they are alive unto the day of Maitreya. Therefore you should, exerting all your energy, take up your subject (koan) and endeavour to get settled with it; you should never relax yourself day and night. Then you are not merely sitting quietly or vacantly as if you were a corpse. If you find yourself in a maze of confusing thoughts and unable to extricate yourself in spite of your efforts, drop them lightly, and coming down from the seat, quickly run across the floor once, and then resume your position on the cushion. Have your eyes open, hold your hands clasped, and keeping your backbone straight up, apply yourself as before to the koan, when you will feel greatly refreshed. It will be like pouring one dipperful of cold water into a boiling cauldron. If you go on thus exercising yourself, you will surely reach the destination. [end quote]

(p. 332)

Another Zen master advises thus:

[quote] Some masters there are these days who, in spite of their eyes not being clearly opened, teach people to remain satisfied with mere empty-mindedness; then there are others who teach people to accept things blindly as they are and contemplate on them as such; there are still others who advise people not to pay any attention to anything at all. These are all one-sided views of Zen, their course of exercise is altogether on the wrong track, it will never come to a definite termination. The main idea in the study of Zen is to concentrate your mind on one point; when this is done everybody will get it; that is, when thus the proper time comes and conditions are fully matured, realization will come by itself all of a sudden like a flash of lightning.

Let your everyday worldly consciousness be directed towards Prajna, and then you will avoid coming under the control of your past evil Karma at the moment of death even if you may not attain to realization while in this

> life. In your next birth you will surely be in the midst of Prajna itself and enjoy its full realization; this is a certainty, you need not have any doubt about it.
>
> Only let your mind have a good hold of the koan without interruption. If any disturbing thoughts assail you, do not necessarily try to suppress them too vigorously; rather try to keep your attention on the koan itself. Whether walking or sitting, apply yourself surely and steadily to it, give no time to relaxation. When your application goes on thus constantly a period of indifference [literally 'tastelessness'] will set in. This is good, do not let go, but keep on and the mental flower will abruptly come to a full bloom; the light illuminating the ten quarters will manifest the land (p. 333) of the treasure-lord on the tip of a single hair; you will then be turning the great wheel of the Dharma even when you are sitting in the midst of an atom. [end quote]

This Zen exercise, full of arduousness and strenuousness, with which the task of self-inspection is carried on, seems to be the very reverse of passivity. But we must remember that passivity never comes by itself, nor is it to be confounded with a mere apathetic, indolent state of mind, which is no less than vegetation. Passivity in its highest religious connotation means breaking up the hard crust of egotism or relativism and melting itself in the infinity of the Dharmadhatu. This melting is felt psychologically as a mood of receptivity, and, theologically interpreted, as the feeling of absolute dependence which is what I have designated in this Essay as passivity.

With followers of Zen this is 'being wholly possessed by Prajna', or 'realizing Prajna'. The Mahayana sutras are generally dedicated not only to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas but to Prajnaparamita, which is remarkable. In all the Zen hymnals reference is always made to 'Mahaprajnaparamita' as if it were a personality like the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past, present and future. Further, Prajna is compared to a great perfect mirror in which is reflected a world of multiplicities just as they are, *yathabhutam*. This is the perfect mirror of passivity, to use the terminology adopted here. What follows, I hope, will make this point clearer.

## VI

### *The Perfection of Passivity in Buddhist Life*

When the religious experience just described is matured, i.e. when it accompanies moral perfection, Buddhists will (p. 334) finally acquire what is technically known as *anabhogacarya* (no-thought), and theirs will also be its wonderful achievements as most elaborately detailed in the *Dasabhumika Sutra*, where they are said to take place in the life of a Bodhisattva, the ideal being of Mahayana Buddhism. We can say that the effortless life is the perfection of passivism.

According to the *Dasabhumika Sutra*, the effortless life is attained when a Bodhisattva passes from the seventh to the eighth stage of spiritual life by realizing what is known as the 'acceptance of all things as unborn'. To quote the Sutra:

> [quote] The Bodhisattva Vajragarbha said, O son of the Buddha, when the Bodhisattva, while at the seventh stage, has thoroughly finished examining what is meant by cleansing the paths with transcendental wisdom and skillful means, has accumulated all the preparatory material, has well equipped himself with the vows, and is sustained by the power of the Tathagatas, procuring in himself the power produced from the stock of merit, attentively thinking of and in conformity with the powers, convictions, and unique characteristics of the Tathagatas, thoroughly purified, sincere in heart and thoughtful, elevated in virtue, knowledge and power, great in pity and compassion which leaves no sentient beings unnoticed, and in pursuit of the path of wisdom that is beyond measurement; and, further, when he enters, truly as it is, upon the knowledge that all things are, in their nature, from the first, unborn, unproduced, devoid of individualizing marks (*alakshana*), have never been combined, are never dissolved, nor extinguished, nor changing, nor (p. 335) ceasing, and are lacking in self-substance; when he enters upon the knowledge that all things remain the same in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end, are of suchness, non-discriminative and entering into the knowledge of the all-knowing one; [and finally] when he thus enters upon the knowledge of all things as they really are; he is then completely emancipated from such individualizing ideas as are created by the mind (*citta*) and its agent (*manovijnana*); he is then as detached as the sky, and descends upon all objects as if upon an empty space; he is then said to have attained to the acceptance of all things as unborn.
>
> O son of the Buddha, as soon as a Boddhisattva attains this acceptance, he enters upon the eighth stage called immovable (*acala*). This is the inner abode of Bodhisattvahood, which is difficult to comprehend, which goes beyond discrimination, separated from all forms, all ideas, and all attachments; which transcends calculation and limitation, as it lies outside the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas and above all disturbances and ever in possession of tranquillity.
>
> As a Bhikshu, furnished with supernatural faculties and freedom of mind and gradually entering into the Samadhi of Cessation, has all his mental disturbances quieted and is free from discrimination, so the Bodhisattva now abides in the stage of immovability, that is, detached from all works of effort (*abhoga*); he has attained effortlessness, has put an end to strivings mental, verbal and physical, and is beyond discrimination as he

has put away all forms of vexation; he is now established in the Dharma itself, which he enjoys as the fruit of his past work.

It is like a man who, in a dream finding himself in a great river, attempts to go to the other side; he musters all his energy and strives hard with every possible means. And because of this effort and contrivance, he wakes from the dream, and being thus awakened all his strivings are set at rest. In like manner the Bodhisattva sees all beings drowning (p. 336) in the four streams, and in his attempt to save them he exerts himself vigorously, unflinchingly; and because of his vigorous and unflinching exertion he attains the stage of immovability. Once in this stage, all his strivings are dropped, he is relieved of all activity that issues from the notion of duality or from an attachment to appearance.

O son of the Buddha, as when one is born in the Brahman world, no tormenting passions present themselves in his mind; so when the Bodhisattva comes to abide in the stage of immovability, his mind is entirely relieved of all effortful activities which grow out of a contriving consciousness. In the mind of this Bodhisattva there is indeed no conscious discrimination of a Bodhisattva, or a Buddha, or enlightenment, or Nirvana; how much less the thought of things worldly.

O son of the Buddha, on account of his original vows the Bodhisattva sees all the Buddhas, the Blessed ones personally presenting themselves before him in order to confer upon him the wisdom of Tathagatahood whereby he is enabled to get into the stream of the Dharma. They would then declare: 'Well done, well done, O son of a good family, this is the Ksanti (acceptance) of the first order which is in accordance with the teaching of the Buddhas. But, O son of a good family, though hast not yet acquired the ten powers, the fourfold fearlessness, and the eighteen special qualities possessed by all the Buddhas. Thou shouldst yet work for the acquirement of these qualities, and never let go they hold of this Ksanti.

O son of a good family, though thou art established in serenity and emancipation, there are ignorant beings who have not yet attained serenity, but are being harassed by evil passions and aggrieved by varieties of speculation. On such ones thou shouldst show thy compassion. O son of a good family, mindful of thy original vows, thou shouldst benefit all beings and have them all turn towards inconceivable wisdom.

O son of a good family, the ultimate essence of all things is eternally such as it is, whether or not Tathagatas (p. 337) have come to appear; they are called Tathagatas not because of their realization of this ultimate essence of things; for all the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, too, have indeed realized this essence of non-discrimination. Again, O son of a good family, thou shouldst look up to our body, knowledge, Buddhaland, halo

of illumination, skillful means, and voice of purity, each of which is beyond measurement; and with these mayest thou too be completely equipped.

Again, O son of a good family, thou hast now one light, it is the light that sees into the real nature of all things as unborn and beyond discrimination. But the light of truth possessed by the Tathagatas is as regards its infinite mobility, activity and manifestation, beyond all measurement, calculation, comparison and proportion. Thou shouldst raise thy intention towards it in order to realize it.

O son of a good family, observing how boundlessly the lands extend, how numberless beings are, and how infinitely divided things are, thou shouldst know them all truthfully as they are.

In this manner, O son of the Buddha, all Buddhas bestow upon the Bodhisattva who has come up to this stage of immovability infinitude of knowledge and make him turn towards knowledge of differentiation and work issuing therefrom, both of which are beyond measurement.

O son of the Buddha, if the Buddhas did not awake in this Bodhisattva a desire for the knowledge of the all-knowing one, he would have passed into Parinirvana, abandoning all the work that will benefit beings. As he was, however, given by the Buddhas infinitude of knowledge and work issuing therefrom, his knowledge and work that is carried on even for a space of one moment surpasses all the achievements that have been accomplished since his first awakening of the desire for enlightenment till his attainment of the seventh stage; the latter is not comparable even to one-hundredth part of the former, nor indeed even to one immeasurably infinitesimal part of it; no comparison whatever is possible between the two. (p. 338) For what reason?

Because, O son of the Buddha, the Bodhisattva who has now gained this eighth stage after starting first with his one body in his course of spiritual discipline, is now provided with infinite bodies, infinite voices, infinite knowledge, infinite birth, and infinite pure lands; and has also brought infinite beings into maturity, made offerings to infinite Buddhas, comprehended infinite teachings of the Buddhas, is furnished with infinite supernatural powers, attends infinite assemblages and sessions; and, by means of infinite bodies, speeches, thoughts, and deeds, acquires perfect understanding of everything concerning the life of the Bodhisattva, because of his attainment of immovability.

O son of the Buddha, it is like a man going into the great ocean in a boat; before he gets into the high sea he labours hard, but as soon as his boat is pulled out to sea he can leave it to the wind, and no further efforts are

> required of him. When he is thus at sea, what he can accomplish in one day would easily surpass what is done even after one hundred years' exertion in the shallows.
>
> In like manner, O son of the Buddha, when the Bodhisattva, accumulating a great stock of meritorious deeds and riding in the Mahayana boat gets into the ocean of the life of a Bodhisattva, he enters in one moment and with effortless knowledge into the realm of knowledge gained by the omniscient. As long as he was dependent upon his previous achievements, which were characterized with purposefulness (*sabhogakarma*), he could not expect to accomplish it even after the elapsing of innumerable kalpas. . . . [end quote]

[Rather freely done, for a literal translation would be to most readers quite unintelligible. The text goes on still further into details of the life of the Bodhisattva at the eighth stage of immovability. But the above may be sufficient to show what the spirituality of the Bodhisattva is like when he realizes a life of effortless activities.]

When the assertion is made that what has been described in the *Dasabhumika Sutra* somewhat diffusely is the Buddhist life of passivity, we may think it to be very different from (p. 339) what is ordinarily, and especially in the Christian sense, understood to be passive or God-intoxicated or wholly resigned to 'thy will' or to Tariki, other-power. But the fact is that Buddhism is highly tinged with intellectualism, as is seen in the so frequent use of the term 'knowledge' (*jnana* or *prajna*), though it does not mean knowledge in its relative sense but in its intuitive, supra-intellectual sense. Even in the Pure Land school of Buddhism, where the sentiment-aspect of the religious life is very much in evidence, the trust in the all-embracing love of Amitabha goes on hand in hand with the giving-up of the self to the unfathomable wisdom of the Tathagata. Indeed, the final aim of the Shin followers is to attain supreme enlightenment as much as any other Buddhists, though the former's ambition is to do it in the Land of Purity presided over personally by Amitabha Buddha, and in order to be permitted to his Land they put themselves unconditionally under his loving guardianship.

As a matter of fact, the two sides of the religious experience, sentiment and intellect, are found commingled in the heart of the Shin devotee. The consciousness of sin is its sentimental aspect while the seeking after enlightenment is its intellectual aspect. While passivism is more strongly visible in the sentiment, it is not altogether missing in the Buddhist intellect either, as when the intellect is compelled to abandon its logical reasonings in order to experience the supreme enlightenment attained by the Buddha, or the life of the Bodhisattva, which is purposeless, effortless, and above teleological strivings.

To show the difference between the Christian and the Buddhist point of view concerning the fundamental notion of passivism, whereby followers of the

respective religions attempt to explain the experience, I quote a suggestive passage from *Theologia Germanica*, which stands in close relation to the Buddhist sentiment and yet misses the central point of it.

(p. 340)

> Dost thou say now: "Then there was a Wherefore in Christ"? I answer: "If you wert to ask the sun, Why shinest thou? he would say, 'I must shine and cannot do otherwise, for it is my nature and property, and the light I give is not of myself, and I do not call it mine.' So likewise is it with God and Christ and all who are godly and belong unto God. In them is no willing, nor working nor desiring but has for its end goodness as goodness, for the sake of goodness, and they have no other Wherefore than this." (Winkworth, 1901)

With this the Buddhists are in sympathy, no doubt, but 'goodness' is too Christian, and besides does not touch the ultimate ground of all things, which is 'Emptiness'. Sings P'ang (a younger contemporary of Ma-tsu) therefore, in the following rhythm:

> Old P'ang requires nothing in the world;
> All is empty with him, even a seat he has not,
> For absolute Emptiness reigns in his house.
> How empty indeed it is with no treasures!
> When the sun is risen he walks through Emptiness;
> When the sun sets, he sleeps in Emptiness.
> Sitting in Emptiness he sings his empty songs,
> And his empty songs reverberate through Emptiness.
> Be not surprised at Emptiness so thoroughly empty,
> For Emptiness is the abode of all the Buddhas.
> Emptiness is not understood by men of the world,
> But Emptiness is the real treasure.
> If you say there is no Emptiness,
> You commit a grave offense against the Buddhas.

### *Emptiness and the Zen Life*

'Emptiness' (*sunyata*) is the gospel of the *Prajnaparamita-sutra* and also the fountain-head of all the Mahayana philosophies and practical disciplines. It is indeed owing to this Emptiness as the ground of existence that this universe is at all possible with its logic, ethics, philosophy and religion. Emptiness does not mean relativity as is sometimes interpreted by Buddhist scholars; it goes beyond that; (p. 341) it is what makes relativity possible. Emptiness is an intuitive truth whereby we can describe existence as related and multifarious. And the Buddhist life of passivity grows out of this intuition, which is called Prajnaparamita in the

*Prajnaparamita-sutra* and Pratyatmaryajnana in the *Lankavatara-sutra*. The intuition is enlightenment as the culmination of Buddhist discipline and as the beginning of the life of a Bodhisattva. Therefore, we read in the *Vimalakirtinirdesa-sutra* that all things are established in 'non-abiding', which is Emptiness, and in the *Vajracchedika-sutra* that 'thoughts should be awakened without abiding anywhere.'

When a thing is established, there is something fixed, definitely settled, and this determination is the beginning at once of order and confusion. If God is the ultimate ground of all things, he must be Emptiness itself.1 When he is at all determined in either way good or bad, straight or crooked, pure or impure, he submits himself to the principle of relativity; that is, he ceases to be God, but a god who is like ourselves mortal and suffers.

[1 To quote further from the Theologia Germanica (p. 184): 'For God is One and must be One, and God is All and must be All. And now what[ever] is, [yet] is not One, is not God; and what[ever] is, [yet] is not All and above All, is also not God, for God is One and above One, and All and above All. . . . And a man cannot find all satisfaction in God unless all things are One to him, and One is All, and something and nothing are the same. But where it should be thus, there would be true [fulfillment], and not else.' . . . Inasmuch as Buddhist scholars fail to penetrate into the true signification of Sunyata and are contented with interpreting it as relativity or mere nothingness, they can never expect to understand the Mahayana. Again, it is only possible in Emptiness to see 'something and nothing alike'. 'Something' here is Buddhist *asti* and 'nothing' *nasti*, and true Prajna obtains only when the dualism of being and non-being is transcended.]



'To be established nowhere' thus means 'to be empty', 'to be unattached', 'to be perfectly passive', 'to be altogether given up to other-power', etc.

This Buddhist or Zen life of Emptiness may be illustrated in three ways, each of which has its own signification as it depicts a particular aspect of the life.

1. When Subhuti was sitting quietly in a cave, the gods praised him by showering celestial flowers. Said Subhuti, 'Who are you that shower flowers from the sky?'

'We are the gods whose chief is Sakradevendra.'

'What are you praising?'

'We praise your discourse on Prajnaparamita.'

'I have never uttered a word in the discourse of Prajnaparamita, and there is nothing for you to praise.'

But the gods asserted, 'You have not discoursed on anything, and we have not listened to anything; nothing discoursed, nothing heard indeed, and this is true

Prajnaparamita.' So saying they shook the Earth again and showered more flowers.

To this Hsueh-tou attaches this poem:

'The rain is over, the clouds are frozen, and day is about to break;
A few mountains, picture-like, make their appearance;
how blue, how imposing!
Subhuti, knowing nothing, in the rock-cave quietly sits;
Lo, the heavenly flowers are pouring like rain with the Earth shaking!'

This poem graphically depicts the inner life of Emptiness, from which one can see readily that Emptiness is not relativity, nor nothingness. In spite of, or rather because of Subhuti's 'knowing nothing', there is a shower of celestial flowers, there tower the mountains huge and rugged, and they are all like a painting beautiful to look at and enjoyable to all who understand.

2. While Vimalakirti was discoursing with Manjusri and others, there was a heavenly maiden in the room who (p. 343) was intently listening to all that was going on among them. She now assumed her original form as a goddess and showered heavenly flowers over all the saintly figures assembled there. The flowers that fell on the Bodhisattvas did not stick to them, but those on the Sravakas adhered and could not be shaken off though they tried to do so. The heavenly maiden asked Sariputra, one of the foremost Sravakas in the group and well known for his dialectic ability:

'Why do you want to brush off the flowers?'

'They are not in accordance with the Dharma, hence my brushing,' replied Sariputra.

'O Sariputra,' said the maiden, 'think not that the flowers are not in accordance with the Dharma. Why? Because they do not discriminate and it is yourself that does the discriminating. Those who lead the ascetic life after the teaching of the Buddha commit an unlawful deed by giving themselves up to discrimination. Such must abandon discrimination, whereupon their life will be in accord with the Dharma.

'Look at those Bodhisattvas, no flowers touch them, for they are above all thoughts of discrimination. It is a timid person that affords a chance for an evil spirit to take hold of him. So with the Sravakas, as they dread the cycle of birth and death they fall prey to the senses. Those who have gone beyond fears and worries are not bound by the five desires. The flowers stick where there is yet no loosening of the entanglements, but they fall away when the loosening is complete.'

The life of Emptiness, thus we can see, is that of non-discrimination, where the sun is allowed to rise on the evil and on the good, and rain is sent on the just and on the unjust. Discrimination is meant for a world of particulars where our relative individual lives are passed, but when we wish to abide beyond it, where real peace obtains, we have to shake off all the dust of relativity and discrimination, which has been clinging to us and tormented us so long.

Emptiness ought not to frighten us, as is repeatedly given warning in the *Prajnaparamita-sutra*.

'When all is done and said,
In the end thus shall you find:
He most of all doth bathe in bliss
That hath a quiet mind.'
(Lord Vaux Thomas)

Where to find this quiet mind is the great religious problem, and the most decided Mahayana Buddhist answer is 'In Emptiness'.

3. According to the *Transmission of the Lamp* by Tao-yuan, it is recorded that before Fa-yung interviewed Tao-hsin, the fourth patriarch of Zen in China, birds used to visit him in a rock cave where he meditated and they offered him flowers. Though history remains silent, tradition developed later to the effect that Fa-yung after the interview no more received flower-offerings from his flying admirers of the air. Now a Zen master asks, 'Why were there flower-offerings to Fa-yung before his interview with the fourth patriarch? and why not after?' Fa-yung was a great student of the Prajnaparamita, that is, of the doctrine of Emptiness. Did the birds offer him flowers because he was holy, so empty-minded? But after the interview he lost his holiness for some reason, and did the birds cease to revere him? Is holiness or saintliness the same as Emptiness? Is there still anything to be called holy in Emptiness? When Emptiness is thoroughly realized, does not even holiness or godliness or anything else disappear? Is this not a state of shadowlessness (*anabhasa*)?

Fa-yen of Wu-tsu Shan was asked this question, 'Why were there the flower-offerings to Fa-yung before the interview?'

'We all admire the rich and noble,' answered the master.

'Why did the offerings cease after the interview?'

'We all dislike the poor and humble.'

Does Wu-tsu mean that Fa-yung was rich before the (p. 346) interview and therefore liked by all beings belonging to this world, but that, growing poor and empty after the interview, he was no more honoured by anything on Earth?

Tao-ch'ien, who was a disciple of Wen-I, however, gave one and the same answer to this double question.

'Why the flower-offerings to Fa-yung before the interview?'

'Niu-t'ou.'

'Why the cessation of the offering afterwards?'

'Niu-t'ou.'

Niu-t'ou is the name of the mountain where Fa-yung used to retire and meditate. Does this mean that Fa-yung is the same old hermit-monk no matter what experience he goes through? Does he mean that the ultimate ground of all things remains the same, remains empty forever, whether or not diversity and multiplicity characterize its appearances? How Zen wants us to look for a life of passivity or that of Emptiness, as it is lived by the Buddhist, will gleaned from the statements of Subhuti and the heavenly maiden and from the remarks on the flower-offering to Fa-yung.

[End of PASSIVITY IN THE BUDDHIST LIFE]