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ZEN ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE INTELLECTUAL APPROACH

It is often tempting to neglect intellectual effort in a study of the sutras and teachings in Zen Buddhism. One of the predominant characteristics of Zen is often understood as an anti-intellectual movement. What is the place of intellectualization and the learning of sutras in Zen? How can one be enlightened without any intellectual process? Even though one may not realize truth through intellectualization, the intellectual attempt to understand the true self is inescapable for the beginner. Perhaps "(it) is the only way possible for the beginner," as Garma Chang describes, "for who can get into Zen without having first some understanding or 'conceptual knowledge' about it? There is no exception to this for anyone."[1]

Even though an intellectual study of the sutras and teachings can never lead us to the actual realization of enlightenment, it is an inevitable stage which all must endure. It is then an intermediate stage which becomes a means to a higher stage of enlightenment experience. Even though the intellectual process of understanding may cease to function at a certain stage of enlightenment, the study of the sutras and teachings may not stop, for it is an intrinsic part of spiritual life. The sutras and teachings are indispensable guides for the searcher of truth. Ordinarily an intensive study of the sutras and teachings is preceded by the spirit of inquiry. There are some classical examples which indicate that the spirit of inquiry is dramatically unfolded in the reading of the sutras or the hearing of the teachings. A well-known illustration of this is the experience of St. Augustine whose spirit of inquiry takes a dramatic expression in the reading of scripture. Augustine in his autobiography, **Confessions,** des-

1. Garma C.C. Chang, *The Practice of Zen,* (New York: Perennial Library, 1972), p. 158.

cribes his experience of conversion to the Christian faith. While he was in the garden, he heard a child's voice, singing from the neighbouring house: "Take it, read it! Take it, read it!" Augustine rose, returned to Alypius, opened his scroll and read: "Not in riotings and drunkenness, not in chamberings and impurities, not in contention and envy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its lusts." This reading from Paul's Epistle gave a new focus to Augustine's inquiring spirit. He returned to Monica and was baptized a Christian. We find a quite similar example in the East. Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch, was one of the great Zen masters in China. In his **Platform Sutra,** he narrates his own experience of becoming a novice. When he was still a child, his father died and his old mother and he as a solitary child lived together. He sold firewood in the market place to sustain their lives. "Once," he said, "a customer brought some fuel and led me to a government store. The customer took the fuel-wood and I received the money. As I withdrew toward the door, I suddenly saw a customer reading the **Diamond Scripture.** As soon as I heard it, I understood and was immediately enlightened."[2] After this experience Hui-neng left his mother and went to Feng-mu Mountain to become a student of Hung-jen, the Fifth Patriarch. Here, an inquiring spirit and hearing the **Diamond Sutra** seemed to take place simultaneously in a dramatic fashion.

Even though the formal study of the sutras and teachings seems to be followed by the initial awakening of the inquiring spirit, it is difficult to say that the latter, the first stage of enlightenment, always precedes the former, the second stage of enlightenment. In Hui-neng's case the inquiring spirit seems to be accompanied by the hearing of the sutras. It is, then, possible to believe that both the inquiring spirit and the study of sutras are mutually dependent and complementary. It is not always true that the inquiring spirit precedes the study of the sutras.

Let us now focus our discussion on the study of the sutras in the process of enlightenment. The sutras are necessary parts of Zen. Through the sutras and teachings the student or novice can find the way among the passions and desires that blind the right path of self-realization. The sutras are then pointing the way to liberation. They must not be taken literally. They are merely traces of reality. "A favoured analogy is," as Suzuki

2. *The Platform Sutra,* 2 (Wing-tsit Chan's translation).

pointed out, "to point at the moon a finger is needed, but woe to those who take the finger for the moon; a basket is welcome to carry our fish home, but when the fish are safely on the table why should we eternally bother ourselves with the basket?"[3] They are like the pointers to the moon, or the menus for the foods. They are only menus to understand reality. Therefore, Ta-hui (Daie in Japanese) warned in his letter to one of his disciples Chen-ju Tao-jen:

> There are two forms of error now prevailing among followers of Zen, laymen as well as monks. The one thinks that there are wonderful things hidden in words and phrases, and those who hold this view try to learn many words and phrases. The second goes to the other extreme, forgetting that words are a pointing finger, showing one where to locate the moon...reject all verbal teachings and simply sit with eyes closed, letting down the eyebrows as if they were completely dead.[4]

Let us first take up the error of those who think that the words of sutras and teachings contain the wonderful things or the true Self that we seek and who, therefore, like to memorize as many words and phrases as possible. By doing this, they think, they can acquire the knowledge of truth. Memorization is a process of objectification which does not become an integral part of self-realization. It is illustrated well by a Chinese Zen master Mu-chou, who was known also as "Sandal Chen" because of his generosity of providing straw sandals for the poor. He was visited by a monk who wanted to receive instruction. The master Mu-chou asked him: "Where do you come from?"

The monk replied, "Lui-yang."

The master then said, "What did the Ch'an (Zen) master in Liu-yang say about the meaning of Ch'an?"

The monk answered, "You can go anywhere, but you cannot find the road."

The master asked "Is that what the old master there said?"

The monk answered, "Yes. It is."

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3. D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*: First series (New York: Grove Press, 1961), p. 19.
4. D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*: Second Series (London: Rider and Company, 1950), p. 85.

The master gave him a blow and said, "This fellow remembers only words."[5]

The master Mu-chou noticed that the monk memorized the words of the master in Liu-yang, "You can go anywhere, but you cannot find the road." The master realized that the monk simply repeated words which were not his own experience, which did not belong to him in reality. The words or sutras themselves do not possess truth. To memorize them as if they contained realities is to falsify oneself. What the monk said was not his own realization of Zen or Ch'an but someone else's. It is so easy to get "hung-up" on words as well as words about words. For the most part, the Christian Church has been so deeply preoccupied with words, especially with sutras or scriptures, that we often take them literally and forget that they are merely traces of truth rather than truths themselves. They are merely pointing to reality. Because we have stressed the words so intensely, we have forgotten that sutras and liturgies are merely sounds and actions which open to us the deeper reality of our existence. We often mistake the map for the actual territory. Basing our real experience on words is as false as eating the menu for the real dinner.

Memorizing the sutras is not only meaningless but a hindrance to the actual progress of spiritual realization. The master Yün-men (Unmon in Japanese) was well known as one of the most eloquent lecturers. His sermons were filled with force and fluency, "like the rain showers." However, he never permitted his listeners to take notes, saying "What good is it to record my words and tie up your tongues?" Moreover he chased away those who wanted to memorize his lectures.[6] Unless listening to the teachings and reading the sutras are properly carried out, their real functions are lost. It is so easy for us to depend on the sutras that we are unable to experience reality itself. When we are attached to them, we are externalized and are unable to reach the inward reality. Those who experience reality go beyond the sutras and the teachings. The master Lin-chi (Rinzai in Japanese) once climbed up the mountain after the summer season had passed and visited his master Huan-po, who was reading a sutra at that time. Lin-chi said to him: "I thought you were the perfect man,

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5. *The Transmission of the Lamp,* Chüan 12 (Chang Cung-Yuan's translation). See Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism, tr. by Chang Chung-Yuan (New York: Vintage Book, 1969), p. 109.
6. *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism,* p. 267.

but here you are, apparently a dull old monk, swallowing black beans (Chinese characters)."[7] If one is to realize his true nature, he must transcend the reading of sutras and hearing of the teachings, for they are only traces of reality. However, as we have already pointed out, reading the sutras and hearing the teachings are part of life that do not end at the time of enlightenment. It is part of the spiritual process. The question is how we read and listen rather than whether we do or not. To rely on them as if they were real and possessed all the wisdom that we need in order to know the reality of our true self is the first error that we commonly admit in the process of self-realization.

This common error, to rely on written words or speeches, is often made by the learned man or scholar. When we are completely dependent on books and audiovisual materials in our conventional learning process, we cannot experience the reality of life that we seek. We often seek authenticity in the books and words which are none other than traces of reality. To rely on the traces of reality is to tie our mind rather than liberate it to the creative process of self-realization. There is a famous story of the monk Te-shan (Tokusan in Japanese), who would perhaps be called a scholar of the sutras in a conventional sense. On his way to the mountain Lung-t'an, Te-shan stopped at a tea-house for a lunch or **tien-hsin,** which literally means "punctuate the mind."

The old woman who served him asked, "What do you carry on your back?"

He answered, "They are commentaries on the **Vajracchedika.**"

The woman then said, "May I ask you a question? If you answer the question to my satisfaction, you will get the lunch free, but if you fail, you will have to go away without a lunch."

Te-shan agreed.

The woman asked him, "I read in the **Vajracchedika** that the mind is attainable neither in the past, nor in the present, nor in the future. If so, which mind do you wish to punctuate?"

Te-shan was unable to answer the question despite his profound scholarship of the **Vajracchedika** together with various commentaries. With a feeling of great humiliation at the hands

7. *The Transmission of the Lamp,* Chüan II; Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism, p. 119.

of an insignificant woman-keeper of the tea-house, Te-shan went away without a lunch.[8] After this experience, Te-shan burnt all the commentaries and reduced them to ashes. This kind of resolution to renounce his attachment to books gave him courage to go beyond the conventional scholarship which is dependent on words and sutras.

The inadequacies of words to express the reality of life is not only expressed in Zen teachings but is also clearly present in the central teaching of Taoism. There is an interesting dialogue between Lao Tzu and Confucius.

Lao Tzu said, "The Six Classics are but the worn-out footprints of the sages of the past. The footprints are made by shoes, but they are not the shoes themselves...Hawks stare at one another and without moving their eyes their young are produced. There is a male insect which chirps with the wind while the female chirps against it, and thereby their young are produced. There are hermaphroditic animals which produce their own young independently."

Confucius thought of these remarks for three months and returned to Lao Tzu and said: "Magpies and their kind hatch out their young from eggs. Fish reproduce their kind by the impregnation of their milt. The wasp gives rise to itself by the process of metamorphosis. When the young brother is born the elder brother cries."

Lao Tzu answered: "Good! You have it! You have grasped the Tao."[9]

In this dialogue we notice that the Six Classics or the most important sutras of Confucius could not answer the reality of life. They are only the footprints of saints or the traces of reality. Confucius' answer comes from his immediate experience of life itself. Because the words cannot contain the reality, **Tao Te Ching** begins: "The **Tao** that can be told is not the real Tao and the name that can be named is not the real name." The Tao which represents the ultimate Reality cannot be said. As soon as it is said, it is no longer the real Tao. Thus P'o Chü-i, of the ninth century, comments on this as follows:

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8. D.T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*: Second Series, pp. 46-47.
9. *Mondo* (Wen Ta in Chinese), Chap. XIV: Chang Chung-yuan, *Creativity and Taoism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 46.

Those who speak do not know;
Those who know do not speak.
This is what we were told by Lao Tzu.
Should we believe that he himself
was the one who knew;
How could it then be that he wrote
no less than five thousand words.[10]

Even though the reality of experience cannot be expressed in words, we are often tempted to dig into the sutras and the teachings as if they contain truth. This kind of temptation has been repeated quite frequently by most students of spiritual life. Chikan Zenji was a native of Ching Chou. Renouncing the layman's life, he left home and came to master Kuei-shan (Isan in Japanese) to receive instruction. The master gave him a question or **Koan,** "Tell me in a word, what were you when you were still in your mother's bosom?" Chikan sought very hard to find the answer. He struggled with the question and gave the master several answers but all of them were rejected. Filled with the most intensive desire to find the answer he went to the study and opened all the books available. He searched through all the sutras, the five thousand and forty-eight volumes of Buddhist scriptures which are merely "pictures of food."[11] Words and the sutras are none other than pictures or traces which do not give us the living experience of reality. However hard we may search for truth within these words, there would be nothing but traces. The reality is not found in its traces. That is precisely why the study of the sutras never discloses the real light of enlightenment. It is only a means to reality. In other words, "the teachings of the sutras are like a finger pointing to the moon."

Another common mistake that the layman as well as the monk makes is, as Ta-hui said to his disciple, to neglect the study of the sutras and the teachings completely because they do not contain reality. Since truth is not in the words or the sutras, we are easily tempted to give up their study completely and rely on the inner self alone. This kind of sentiment is often expressed in the teachings of Zen masters. For example, in the forty fascicles of **Avatamsaka,** the dialogue between Sudhãnana and

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10. Chang Chung-yuan, *Creativity and Taoism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 30.
11. Sokei-an, "The Clatter of a Broken Tile" in *The World of Zen,* ed. by Nancy Ross (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), pp. 63-64.

Manjushri seems to suggest the complete renunciation of the sutra study. In response to Sudhanana's question, Manjushri replies, "This is the truth that knows neither birth nor death, neither loss nor destruction, neither going nor coming; these are all words, and the truth has nothing to do with words,....it has nothing to do with idle reasoning and philosophical speculation....it is essentially quiet, realizable only in the inner consciousness of the wise..."[12] If truth has nothing to do with words, it leads one to conclude that the study of the sutras is simply a waste of time and has no place in the process of enlightenment. We also get the same kind of impression in the teaching of Szu-hsin (Shishin in Japanese) of Huang-Lung (1043-1115) who said, "Do not waste your time with words and phrases, or by searching for the truth of Zen in books; for the truth is not to be found there. Even if you memorize the whole **Tripitaka** as well as all the ancient classics, they are mere idle words which are of no use whatever to you at the moment of your death." Unless we are careful, we are easily misled into believing that Szu-hsin tells us to give up the study of the sutras completely. It is certainly a waste of time if we are looking for **truth** in the **sutras.** However, it is not a waste of time if we are looking for **pointers** rather than **revealers** of truth.

If we examine Te-shan's experience we can see clearly that the renunciation of the study of the sutras came at the time when the higher insight or the truth of Zen was revealed. In other words, when the searcher gets into the higher realm of wisdom toward the realization of truth, the study of the sutras is no longer necessary. When Te-shan (Tokusan in Japanese) gained the insight into the truth of Zen, he immediately took all his commentaries on the **Diamond Sutra** once so valued and considered indispensable that he had to carry them wherever he went that he set fire to them, reducing all the manuscripts to nothingness.[13] In Te-shan's case, the renunciation of the study of sutras resulted when the higher insight was attained. Thus the sutras are compared to the vehicles which are left behind when no longer needed.

Chuang Tzu said,

> The fishing net is used to catch fish. Let us take the fish and forget the net. The snare is used to catch hares. Let us take the

12. D.T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*: Second Series, p. 21.
13. *Essays in Zen Buddhism,* First Series, p. 247.

> hare and forget snare. The word is used to convey ideas. When ideas are apprehended, let us forget the words. How delightful to be able to talk with such a man, who has forgotten the words.[14]

If we compare the study of the sutras to a pointing finger, showing where the reality of experience lies or the vehicle which carries us to the other shore of self-realization, we cannot dismiss the study of the sutras and the teachings in the process of enlightenment. The sutras are important for the realisation of enlightenment. Without them we are lost. We need a guide or direction that points to truth. Thus we should not neglect the study of the sutras in the process of enlightenment.

The sutras and teachings are indispensable guides to the beginner. Even though Zen claims to be the "special transmission outside the sutras with no dependence upon words and letters," Zen monks wrote more books than the monks of any other Buddhist sect in China.[15] These books were meant to be read by those who are interested in the search of Zen. Moreover, certain sutras are regarded as the indispensable tools for the training of the novice. For example, the study in the **Lankavatara sutra** is highly recommended. Thus Suzuki says:

> When Zen unconditionally emphasizes one's immediate experience as the final fact on which it is established, it may well ignore all the scriptural sources as altogether unessential to its truth; and on this principle its followers have quite neglected the study of the *Lankāvatāra*. But to justify the position of Zen for those who have not yet grasped it and yet who are desirous of learning something about it, an external authority may be quoted and conceptual arguments resorted to in perfect harmony with its truth. This is why Dharma selected this sutra out of the many that had been in existence in China in his day.[16]

As long as the sutras are studied as a guide for the deeper understanding of reality, they are a necessary part of Zen training.

Let us now take up the intellectual process of understanding the sutras and teachings. The process of intellectualization is so closely linked with the study of the sutras that it is not possible to separate them. Since the intellectual process is comprehend-

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14. *Chang Tzu*, Ch. XXVI (Chang Chung-yuan's translation).
15. Chang, *The Practice of Zen*, p. 161.
16. *Essays in Zen Buddhism*: First Series, p. 87.

ing the sutras, we are here dealing with a methodological question. This method of understanding the words and the sutras through intellectual effort is so vehemently opposed by the Zen masters that it seems pointless to even discuss it. However, when we examine the requisite mental dispositions of Zen training, an intellectual method of understanding is indispensable. It is an important stage towards enlightenment which may not be neglected. Like the study of the sutras, the process of intellectualization becomes a means to a higher insight which grasps the reality of enlightenment.

In approaching enlightenment, there are two kinds of errors that most people make. There are those who think that the intellectual process is completely unnecessary since it is not only misleading but also entangling and confusing. On the other hand, there are those who think that the intellectual process is the only means to an understanding of the meaning of reality. As we shall see the intellectual process is not a proper method of approaching enlightenment, but is a very necessary part of it. Just as external appearance is not a proper criterion by which to judge a man even though it is a very necessary part of him, so also an intellectual process is inadequate yet essential in attempting to understand reality, more so for a beginner. Since we are born in a world of conventions where the intellectual process is an intrinsic part of understanding life, we cannot escape it. Thus, to understand reality we must begin with the intellectual method first. As Chang said, to understand the reality of Zen, an intellectual approach is not "reprehensible," but the only way possible for the beginner.[17] Thus an intellectual approach can neither be dismissed completely nor accepted completely in the process of enlightenment.

Let us try to understand why the intellectual approach is not wholly acceptable. First of all the intellectual approach is an external process, which is opposite to the process of enlightenment that deals with the inward reality. Because it is an external process, it is working against enlightenment. Huang-Po said that the people in his days were so interested in knowledge and the intellectual process which work toward the contrary effect of piling up obstacles that they suffered from indigestion. "When so-called knowledge and deductions are not digested, they become poisons, for they belong to the plane of **samsara.** In the Absolute, there is nothing at all of this kind. So it is said:

17. Chang, *The Practice of Zen,* p. 158.

'In the armoury of my sovereign, there is no sword of thusness.' All the concepts you have formed in the past must be discarded and replaced by void."[18] The more we intellectualize, the more we are externalized and objectified. Thus, it is best to stop the process of intellectualization. The master Hsing-yen (Kyogen in Japanese) said, "The Tao (enlightenment) is attained by one's inner awakening; it does not depend on words. Look at the invisible and the boundless. Where can you find any intermittence? How can you reach it by the labour of the intellect? It is simply the reflection of illumination, and that is your whole daily task. Only those who are ignorant will go in the opposite direction."[19] The labour of the intellect drives us further away from the inner reality. Somehow, the Kierkegaardian dictum that subjectivity alone is real seems relevant. Since the intellect is the countermovement of the pure subjectivity, the inner reality of Zen, which is more closely associated with subjectivity, is not attained by the external objectifying process of the intellect.

The external process of intellectualization presupposes a dualistic world-view, where the external and internal or object and subject are clearly differentiated. Thus, "Intellection is necessarily dualistic because it always implies subject and object."[20] Any rational and intellectual process presupposes a separation between subject and object. It is often called "gap-thinking," which sets one against the other. It creates a "gap" or "gulf" in the middle. Thus it is often called the approach of the "Excluded middle," for it excludes the middle between the two extremes, the antecedent and consequence or, between subject and object. Thus Suzuki said, "So far as the intellect is concerned, there is an unsurpassable gap between the antecedent problem and its consequent solution: the two are left logically unconnected."[21]

This dualistic nature of the intellectual process is well illustrated in the Aristotelian logic, which is based on the law of identity (A is A), the law of contraction (A is not non-A), and the law of the excluded middle (A cannot be A **and** non-A, neither A **nor** non-A). Aristotle stated, "It is impossible for the same thing

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18. *Huang Po Chu'an Hsiu Fa Yao,* 29; John Blofeld tr., *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po on the Transmission of Mind* (New York: Random House, 1958), p. 56.
19. *The Transmission of the Lamp, Chüan* 11: *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism,* p. 220.
20. D.T. Suzuki, *op. cit,* pp. 46-47.
21. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*: Second Series, pp. 64-65.

at the same time to belong and not to belong to the same thing and in the same respect...This, then, is the most certain of all principles."[22] This kind of approach is also known as the **Svabhava-** way of thinking, which presupposes a world of independent, unitary and static existence.[23] This dualistic tendency in thinking process has to be eliminated if one wishes to understand the real meaning of enlightenment, which deals with the wholeness or the totality of Self. Yet Ultimate Reality cannot be finally dualistic. Thus, when Lin-chi asked about the Ultimate Reality of Zen, he was given thirty blows from his master Huang-po. After he attained enlightenment and understood the meaning of Huang-po's blows, he said, "There is not much in Huang-po's Buddhism." We are not sure what this "not much" really meant to Lin-chi. When this "what" was demanded by Tai-yu, Lin-chi simply poked his ribs.[24] Before enlightenment, there was an eternal gap between antecedent and consequent or between subject and object. But when Lin-chi was enlightened, the gap no longer existed. He became spontaneous and direct, for he was no longer dualistic in thinking. "To identify oneself with reality immediately, one should speak non-dual words."[25] That is why Huang-po said, "You should refrain from every kind of dualistic distinction. Hills are hills. Water is water. Monks are monks. Laymen are laymen."[26] The experience of enlightenment is all inclusive and overcomes this fundamental tendency of dualistic thinking. When Ramakrishna experienced **nirvikalpa-samadhi,** which is considered the highest stage of enlightenment, he tells us that all traces of duality vanished and the conscious and thinking ego was totally obliterated. Thus an intellectual process which presupposes a dualistic view of the world is incompatible with an understanding of the Ultimate Reality of the Enlightenment Experience.

Illusion may be created by dualistic thinking. As Huang-po said, "Illusion is not something rooted in reality; it exists because of dualistic thinking."[27] This illusion is the by-product of the

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22. Aristotle, *Metaphysics, Book Gamma,* 1005 b 20 (R. Hope's tr.).
23. Garma C.C. Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality,* (University Park: Penn. State Univ. Press, 1971), p. 85.
24. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism: Second Series, pp. 64-65.*
25. *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism,* p. 245.
26. *Huang Po Chu'an Hsin Fa Yao 11:17;* John Blofeld's tr., p. 81.
27. *Huang Chu'an Hsin Fa Yao,* 1. 32; See Blofeld's tr., p. 59.

false distinctions of our intellectual process. Again Huang-po said, "Give up those erroneous thoughts leading to false distinctions! There is no 'self' and no 'other.' There is no 'wrong desire,' no 'anger,' no 'hatred,' no 'victory,' no 'failure.' Only renounce the error of intellectual or conceptual thought-processes and your nature will exhibit its pristine purity—for this alone is the way to attain enlightenment, to observe the Dhamma (Law), to become a Buddha and all the rest."[28] In the experience of the Ultimate Reality, there is no duality. It is a oneness, the wholeness of experience, which transcends any dualistic distinctions. Thus the **Hsin-hsin-ming** or "Inscribed on the Believing Mind" says,

> When the mind rests serene in the oneness of things,
> The dualism vanishes by itself.
> And when oneness is not thoroughly understood,
> In two ways loss is sustained-
> The denial of reality may lead to its absolute negation,
> While the upholding of the void may result in contradicting itself.
> Wordiness and intellection-
> The more with them the further astray we go;
> Away therefore with wordiness and intellection,
> And there is no place where we cannot pass freely.[29]

Those who are caught in dualistic thinking are trapped by the logic of their own creation. Their condition is often compared to the predicament of frogs in a dry well struggling to find liberation. They are entangled by the illusion of their own creation. In Shing Hsii's poem, which was written later to supplement Kakuan's, the predicament of the herdsman is described as the condition of entanglement: "Caught, like a bird in a nest which is covered with grass, he turns round and round in the small cave."[30] Here, the small cave and a nest are the symbolic expressions of the intellectual process. Thus the herdsman is compared to a prisoner in a cell. Enlightenment is certainly attained when one liberates himself from the prison cell of conceptualization. The need to win freedom from the entanglement of intellectualization is well illustrated in the story of Nan-ch'uän and the

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28. *Ibid,* 11. 26. See Blofeld's Translation, p. 88.
29. D.T. Suzuki's translation: See his *Essays in zen Buddhism*: First Series, p. 197.
30. *The Ox and His Herdsman: A Chinese Zen Text,* tr. by M.H. Trevor, (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1969), p. 8.

governor. One day Lu Hsüan (the governor) came to master Nan-ch'uän and asked, "A man raised a goose in a bottle. As the goose grew bigger, the man realized that he could not get it out of the bottle without killing it. He wanted neither to break the bottle nor to kill the goose. What would you do, master?"

Nan'ch'uän immediately cried out, "oh! Governor!"

"Yes, Master?"

Then Nanch'uän said, "It is out!"

At that moment the governor was awakened.[31]

Here, the emancipation of the goose is the liberation of oneself from the prison-house of his intellectual process, which was the creation of his own mind.

As long as we cling to the dualistic thinking, we are bound within the samsaric realm. In this respect the intellectual approach to enlightenment is futile. It is incompatible with the process of enlightenment. However, as we have already indicated, it is necessary to pass through this stage. It cannot be bypassed because it is an inevitable step for the beginner. Even though it is ultimately incompatible, without it there can be no enlightenment. The intellectualizing process cannot be neglected but only exhausted or overcome by intensifying it. Just as the solution to suffering that Buddha taught is not an escape but a conquest of suffering, our intellectual process must be overcome by intensifying intellectualization. When the intellectual process reaches its maximum degree, a leap to a new dimension of understanding is possible. Therefore, the primary aim of koan (Kon-an in Chinese), for example, is to intensify the intellectual activity so that one can separate his mental activity from the intellectual process. This intensified stage of intellectual activity is depicted by Hsiang Yen in the ninth century. He said to his disciples: "A man is hanging from a branch by his teeth, and his limbs are suspended in the air without any support. Now he was asked, 'What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West (or Zen)?' If he does not answer, he falls short of replying; but if he does, he will fall down from the tree and lose his life. What should he do?"[32] Here, one's intellectual activity reached its limits. He is compelled to retreat to a dead-end. By pushing one step be-

31. *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism,* p. 136.
32. Chang, *The Practice of Zen,* p. 159.

yond to the unknown, he may be able to leap beyond the samsāric realm of dualistic thinking. Thus Buddha says in the **Majjhima Nikáya,** 138: "Let not thy mind be disturbed by external objects, nor let it go astray among thy own ideas. Be free from attachments, and fear not. This is the way to overcome the sufferings of birth and death."[33]

Enlightenment is possible only when one becomes free from his intellectual process. Nevertheless an intellectual approach is one of the inevitable preludes to enlightenment. One can transcend the intellectual knowledge only when his intellectual activity is completely exhausted and has ceased to function. Thus it is not possible to neglect the intellectual struggle completely in the search for reality. Lin-chi did not see the master Huang-po for three years, because he did not find any question to ask him. Why? Suzuki thinks that,

> Lin-chi's three years under Huang-po were spent in a vain attempt to grasp by thinking it out—the final truth of Zen. He knew full well that Zen was not to be understood by verbal means or by intellectual analysis, but still by thinking he strove for self-realization...If it had not been for three years of intense mental application and spiritual turmoil and vain search for the truth, this crisis could never have been reached. So many conflicting ideas, lined with different shades of feelings, had been in *melèe,* but suddenly their tangled skill was loosened and arranged itself in a new and harmonious order.[34]

There was an elderly monk who tried ninety-six times to make a statement which would prove to be a sign of enlightenment but he failed each time. Finally, when he made a statement in his ninety-seventh trial, the master agreed that his statement was correct. Then the elderly monk cried out, "Sir! Why didn't you say this sooner?" During the previous ninety-six attempts the master was no doubt in the most intensive process of thinking, which finally broke open at the ninety-seventh time. When the intellectual search is exhausted, a leap to higher wisdom is possible.

Without intellectual inquiry, Zen experience is not much different from auto-suggestion, which does not necessitate such

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33. Suzuki's Translation. See his *Essays in Zen Buddhism:* The First Series, p. 148.
34. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism:* Second Series, pp. 50-51.

intensive intellectual activity. Suzuki remarks, "In auto-suggestion there is no intellectual antecedent, nor is there any intense seeking for something, accompained by an acute feeling of uneasiness."[35] Therefore, Suzuki concludes that a preliminary intellectual process is necessary for the maturing of Zen training. Even though Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch of Zen Buddhism, was illiterate, he knew the **Vajracchedika,** which is filled with higher metaphysics when he heard it, "Zen masters were invariably students of philosophy in its broadest sense."[36] The higher wisdom of man enabling him to see his true Self becomes possible following an intensive intellectual struggle. Thus the effort to understand the sutras and the teachings intellectually is indispensable in the process of enlightenment. It appears a necessary prelude which, hopefully, may lead to the climax of Enlightenment.

35. *Ibid,* p. 57.
36. *Ibid.,* p. 52.