

the Horse that Refused to Drink

By Tony Henderson

Other books

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Many thanks to journalist and old pal Stephen Knipp for editing the English in the original draft. Also to new soul-painter pal Vonnie Boston who made valuable suggestions. My debt to my great friends and co-workers environing Silo's Message who have accompanied me on this lifelong journey must be here recognised as fundamental. Also, the always cheeky patience of partner Carmella Rodico. Without each and everyone, nothing worthwhile could have been accomplished. As to Silo himself, well, what do you think!

Dedicated to
my parents, Robert & Sarah Henderson
my dear brothers Robbie and Alex
and, my loving sister Annette

To think one is important is to stretch the point whereas to think one is unimportant is to underestimate one's worth. The Golden Mean is to keep going forward without losing faith in oneself yet without really thinking one is making an essential difference that would not be covered by someone else but with the proviso that what one is doing is actually unique so why not keep going and do it, completely, without burdening oneself with thoughts of 'only me'. The more we are in this together the less the imposition on this little one, but this little one is not insignificant.

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the Horse that Refused to Drink

Preface

While it remains true that you can take a horse to water but you cannot make it drink, the way things pan out means, you take a run of horses to water and the thirsty horses will drink, even if the majority shy away and look elsewhere for sustenance.

In that vein this writing unrolls itself before us, you and me!

Among the matters and issues I will approach here are: the viability of Zen; how I came into Zen and Yoga, and Buddhism, and all the affairs usually associated with the various ways of closing in on the Sacred, the Profound, or however this may be termed.

I will delve the internal world of the Argentinian man of wisdom Silo also because in that world that he introduced I found clarity and cheerfulness and a practical promise that can take us all into a better future. I say all because, as I poetically wrote in *The Answer is a Circle*:

CAMPING IN THE LOW WOOD

*Withering leaves whispered secrets of the wood,
To the wind.
Bending trees groaned,
Telling huge nature thoughts.
The grasses tried in vain,
To conceal those sacrilegious conversations.
Velvet green moss soaked-in sounds of treason.
One 'gainst other the contest waged,
And the soul of the wood was saved.
Not by the one,
Or by the other.
But by the whole.
Thus only will the world be saved.*

What lies in Zen and its associated lore and practices that is useful to us today that can be rescued, if it needs rescuing? I asked this question of myself - and share this reply with friends - because the daily news is a mixture of new ideas, like innovations in technology, cures in medicine, etc, and contrarily, violent upheavals everywhere. This latter quite terrible and frightening reality points at a very big problem, as if the human species is floundering and can't decide whether to let everything go to hell or, to stop, reconsider what's what, and move in the uphill direction on an evolutionary road.

The inertia among us humans is apparent in that we all want an easy life and many think they deserve it. There is a great reluctance to travel that upward journey. In the past - though we are all guilty of a too-rosy view of the 'good old days' - when we in the West were so fresh into individualism that it was generally

considered a panacea for all things, we didn't give sufficient credit to the merit of the group. And it is only now that we are confronted with the demerits of strict individualism.

This can be seen in the "Great Leader" types who turn on their own people when their power is threatened; the egoistic State President who takes all the power unto him-herself and tries to have it indefinitely into the future; the military chief who thinks his uniform and medals far outweigh the rights of the people he is supposed to defend; the multinational supremo who is inured from seeing the devastation caused by his corporation steamrolling over the rights and dues of ordinary people in the enterprise's bulldozing penetration into world markets. This can be seen in all those headstrong people who want to be Leaders, instead of guides and co-ordinators. Examples from the year of this writing, 2011, are: Muammar Gaddafi on the political front and on the business front, Rupert Murdoch!

I have had enough of the Industrial Revolution and its ramifications, the complicity of formal democracy that binds people into a system of supply-over-demand to feed a voracious appetite for cheap labour, cheap fuel, and an enslaved proletariat and more.

In the opinion of my friends and I, the human species is on the hump of a bridge and is seeing a grand perspective of life on Earth and duly notes that division in the road which leads both down into the lower latitudes and up into the stratosphere and on to Outer Space, even unto infinity!

What is it that can lead us into that upper road? It is heightened consciousness, it is deep insight into the nature of this life as a human being on the planet Earth. Allow me to use the term 'mystical experience' as a catchall phrase to point at that moment of conversion where the chaos and meaninglessness is as if sublimated and the view gained is ample and uplifting. Uplifting in the sense that it is the human spirit that declares itself. This is where we can trace religions to their origins, in such vivifying experiences.

This is what happened to Abraham (born before Moses and the Commandments so not so-much Jewish, or Christian either!), also the later prophets Isaac and Jacob, in the Jewish tradition. Before these spiritual pioneers from the western sector of the planet - and here I reach the limits of my grasp of history so do forgive me - there were the religions of the Ancient Near East, the Minoan religions, Assyro-Babylonian religions, and Ancient Egyptian religions.

The religions of the Ancient Near East were mostly polytheistic and exerted strong influence on the Ancient Greek religion. The Assyro-Babylonian religion influenced Achaemenid-era Zoroastrianism and Judaism. Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Greek traditions in turn strongly influenced Christianity. All and each of the foregoing came about as the consciousness of Man broke through barriers to a grander understanding.

These breakthroughs can be related to certain 'humanist moments' that can be discerned among the chaos of our collective history, these 'moments' are proposed by Silo (Mario Rodriguez Cobos – more commonly known as Silo – the prolific Argentinean author and founder of the Humanist Movement - see footnote below) and detailed in his *Dictionary of New Humanism*, where it speaks of the social consciousness of certain cultures. In some, the presence of humanist moments can be taken as represented by a person or group of persons that has attempted to institutionalize such moment from a position of power (political, religious, cultural) in an elitist way, "from the top down". (An example of this is rendered in Chapter Eleven on Judaism).

Silo mentions: *"In pre-Colombian South America, a similar tendency appears in the Inca ruler Cuzi Yupanqui, who was given the name Pachacutéc, "reformer," and in Tupac Yupanqui. Further cases emerge as the number of cultures about which we have knowledge and the depth of that knowledge increases and, of course, as the linear historical account of the nineteenth century is increasingly challenged.*

"So, too, has the influence of the great religious reformers and cultural heroes been interpreted as the opening of an h.m. which continued forward in a new stage and even at times a new civilization, but which eventually came to an end, deviating from and annulling the initial direction."

It is remarkable that in certain places and times there has been present a distinctly heightened sensitivity to the human condition, and plight, and potential. Among the Greeks in the sixth century BCE and time-

likewise in India and China; the former demarked by the final flourishes of the Vedic Era and the appearance of Gautama the Buddha, and the latter with Lao Tzu.

Thus, the East has its own set of religious traditions, paths, and pioneers. Among these we find the Buddha, and following the lineage of patriarchs in Buddhism we will come to Bodhidharma, the first Chinese Patriarch of Buddhism and the commonly accepted founder of the Zen school of Buddhism.

It is because of my own familiarity with Zen Buddhism that I presume to involve myself in speaking about it here in this writing and clearly this means I have found value in Zen. My earlier writings on Buddha's teaching can be found in my book, *Yamabushi, the Third Force*. Also, in the same book, there are detailed notes on Shamanism which is the reason I have not included any comments on this very widely spread yet commonly ignored major religious way in *the Horse that Refused to Drink*.

However, to better understand what takes place in Zen and in the other religious ways and their associated practices, I have found it most useful to take recourse in the works of Silo, founder of Universalistic Humanism. As part of the Humanist Movement I have personally known Silo for many years and I have familiarity with this man's works, seeing him as I do as a twenty-first century guide to the 'inner roads'.

Come, drink!
Tony Henderson
March 4, 2012
oh, it's my son Christian's birthday

PS: though I did not seek permission from Silo to use his 1975 London talk as the forward of this writing I have little doubt that such request would have been granted though I hasten to add Silo never had sight of this writing - though he expressed appreciation of earlier works - thus his involuntary contribution stands alone and is not in any way to be taken as a validation of what is offered here.

Note:

Reflecting on what Silo wrote back in 1981 in the Internal Landscape, part 2 of "Humanise the Earth".

"I will tell you the meaning of your life here: It is to humanise the earth. And what does it mean to humanise the earth? It is to surpass pain and suffering; it is to learn without limits; it is to love the reality you build. I cannot ask you to go further, but neither should it offend if I declare, 'Love the reality you build, and not even death will halt your flight!'"

Mario Rodriguez Cobos, Silo, born 6th of January 1938, died 16th of September 2010 aged 72. He is survived by his wife Ana Luisa and their two sons Alejandro and Federico (deceased). Author of several books including, "Humanise the Earth", "Silo Speaks", "Letters to my Friends", "Silo's Message" and "Contributions to Thought" among others, founder of the Humanist Movement and the Parks of Study and Reflection. In October 1993 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the National Academy of Sciences of Russia.

Forward

On the Search for an Object by Silo

I believe our big problem is that we are all seeking objects. And some people might not be seeking objects, but are seeking to complete themselves internally. This search also brings contradictions. There are those who consider themselves incomplete internally, so they make an effort to integrate themselves internally, in order to be complete in themselves. Whether you're looking for objects outside, or seeking to complete yourself inside, either way you suffer from contradiction.

In general those who seek spiritual things, or things of mystical consciousness, are either seeking God or seeking to complete themselves, to be illuminated. Buddha proposed the same problem and explained that to achieve illumination you can't seek illumination; but then how do you achieve something if you don't seek it? We don't seek to achieve anything, we don't propose this in a possessive sense, we don't say that we need to get something in order to integrate it, that we need to take objects in order to have them; we say something else: that one must overcome contradiction, overcome suffering. We define our Work as the work not of the full hand, but of the empty hand.

You know how they catch certain monkeys: they put some rice in a tree trunk with a small hole, then the monkey puts his hand in the hole, takes the rice, and then can't get his hand out again. He sees that they're going to catch him, but he doesn't want to let go of what he has in his hand. The monkey suffers from a great contradiction.

We say we have to let go of our internal seeking. We don't surrender to the pain, what we are concerned with is overcoming contradiction. So our concern is not to acquire things, but to let go of things mentally. You can have things in your daily life, but you are not trying to fill yourself up with things. You may be very interested in the phenomena of higher consciousness, but if you seek those phenomena, you create a lot of inner pain for yourself.

It seems as if one achieves things by making a void and not filling it.

Your attention will increase when you try to empty your mind, and not when you contemplate an object. That's the way it is with many phenomena. In general we are accustomed and educated to do the opposite. We are used to taking, and taking not only objects but people. [following slightly edited] ... we want to take people's feelings, we want to take their affections all for 'me', we want to be their only love... Our very way of loving is possessive. We love with that kind of violence; it doesn't occur to us how we could love without that possessive and self-obsessive violence. But, there's a way to do everything without violence.

It's good for us to know things, to be informed about things; you can inform yourself about many things, but we can't impose the belief that our information solves problems. Intellectuals usually believe that they can solve their internal problems by accumulating data. In reality that does solve many problems of daily life; it's thanks to accumulated social experience, it's thanks to people having worked with information, with technical things, that humanity has been able to remove many problems. We wouldn't be able to be here

talking if many generations had not made an effort to elaborate language, to finally develop the clothes we are wearing. In no way do we disqualify human effort to solve immediate problems.

We are simply saying that Internal Work might not be similar to the work one does in nature, in the sense that we are accustomed to struggling with nature, with natural laws, and that's fine, that's the way humanity moves. But this may not be the appropriate form for Internal Work. So we distinguish very well between all the work done in the world of nature, in daily life, and the appropriate mental attitude about our own contradictions.

If nature imposes on us a struggle and a whole phenomenon of alteration, perhaps the compensation for all that should be sought in inner stillness. We are very fond of generalizing and believing that the laws are the same for all universal phenomena, but they have different planes of application. On the inner plane the sentiment of possession doesn't seem valid, while in the struggle against nature possession is indispensable. Logically the sentiment of possession can take on a character that is more social than individual; in the measure that societies advance this sentiment keeps becoming more social than individual. But in the context of Internal Work we don't see this progress, we don't see this evolution. With our individual consciousness, with our individual I, we filter all the data that come from the world, or we interpret the world according to that filter, and things may be very different from what our "I" sees through its filter. There are some who have gone further and have believed that their "I" must be immortal – imagine how boring it would be to live for thousands of years with this same I, with this individual I, if on top of everything it is an I full of contradiction and suffering!

When by some accident you have experienced a very great, sudden joy, or a very great comprehension, also of things, those sudden phenomena of great emotion or of great comprehension, observe that in those cases you haven't been thinking about your I. You get the impression that something else has happened, that the I has disappeared. In those situations you don't say: What is happening to me!? Instead you were contemplating and feeling that experience and when you started to think about what was happening, the phenomenon disappeared. It's not clear whether the phenomenon disappeared because the I appeared, or the other way around, but what is clear is that this phenomenon is incompatible with the psychological I. However you can say that you had that experience, but you know that that experience is not the same kind of experience you have with the psychological I. That experience is not possessive, that experience is very broad, it seems universal, you can't even attribute that experience to yourself, and you feel like that experience should be communicated to all humanity, when you have really felt it.

So we are talking of a phenomenon that is notable for the human consciousness, where the possessive I does not appear, where the search does not appear, and something happens, and when we want to make it happen again it doesn't work, and we can't get to it again by searching for it either.

If we are seeking to feel good, it's likely that we won't achieve it. On the other hand if we take that emotional tension we have when we are together with several people and we try to dissipate it internally, to relax it, to loosen it, in reality we aren't trying to acquire anything, in reality we aren't thinking about feeling good, we are thinking simply of letting go of emotional tensions. If we can work with the empty hand, we aren't looking for a good feeling, we are looking to relax that tension, and in addition we feel good.

That is the meaning of the Work, and it is not a renunciation, nor is it a sacrifice, nor is it self-elimination. Do you get the idea more or less? Not much more than that, except the pleasure of having been with you.

A talk by Silo in London, May 15, 1975

Chapter One

Humanists and Not Not-Buddhists

If you want to follow the way of the Buddha, you don't have to join the club, that is, go through initiations or ceremonies of the formal Buddhist tradition. However, if you want to join the Order of Buddhists, as a Bhikku, there is a long process of discipline, training and education. In the first case one lives as a righteous householder, acts with virtue and performs deeds of merit. This is the life of the *upasaka* or lay disciple. The lay Buddhist takes a personal vow not to intentionally destroy life; not to steal; not to have illegitimate sex, not to tell lies; and not to get into any strangely altered state through misuse of intoxicants.

As a Bhikku, a member of the community of monks or Sangha, then the Dharma is yours, and the Buddha. These are the Triple Gems holding the teaching. Container, content and eternal gratitude. To speak of the teaching of the Buddha, we must speak in terms of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.

Essentially, there is no other teaching of the Buddha. What remains are the various means, with the injunction that at the Golden Mean, the Middle Way, ends and means are not two! When the Buddha awakened into enlightenment he became consciously human and because he decided to share that understanding with others he became an active humanist - Buddha as Humanist!

Before stating the Four Noble Truths that developed within the teaching of the Buddha, it has to be said that because the word *dukkha* (the key word in understanding this path to liberation) can only be simply translated as 'suffering' this does not do justice to his teaching. It makes it sound pessimistic. But the teaching of the Buddha is neither pessimistic nor optimistic, it is realistic.

Dukkha also means that things and life itself, are imperfect. The aim of Buddha's teaching however, is happiness and there is no recommendation of sacrifice of happiness in the present - for a possible happiness in the future. 'Be that now' is proposed.

The First Truth is the acceptance (this is something for us to do, not just read); that illness, discord and suffering are inherent in earthly life, as is impermanence.

The Second Truth is that suffering arises because of our clinging to things that are by nature impermanent. The recommendation is to discard that clinging.

The Third Truth is that suffering ends when we give up clinging to things, including our limited sense of self, which is also ever changing. Realising there is no permanent self to cling to releases us from our last traces of any clinging and we may enter into the Great Peace. To realise this.

The Fourth Truth is the Noble Eightfold Path, a practical way to dwell in this *Nirvana*. We try to walk this path and have an aim to keep to it. The Noble Eightfold Path starts with Right Views - understood as the acceptance of the Four Noble Truths - because all that we are is the result of our thinking that determines 'the view'.

The central experience originating this doctrine is no different in other religions but the structure of the thought, the building blocks or terminology does differ, while the essential experience is outside the grasp of words. Also, the experience is not limited to a religious sphere though it does arrive modulated on the religious feeling that is part of our human make up.

A word conveys a concept but this is personal reality, quite deeper than words that merely point at it. The effort is towards this experience, 'coming home' it can be called, to one's true self.

The remainder of the Eightfold Path is a guide to practical application, in all of life's aspects - in right aspiration or thought; right speech; right action; right livelihood; right effort; right mindfulness; and right meditation.

Right aspiration, where thought gives wholesome direction to life. Right speech, that is truthful without being hurtful, without idling in trivia. Right action is conduct that has the intention to least injure another, whether a person, creature or thing; also non-stealing; and not over-indulging in sex to the result of impaired health or hurting others.

Right Livelihood is implied in Right Action but specifics are given cautioning the soldier, the butcher, the hunter and those producing or dealing in intoxicants, poisons, weapons and death.

Right Effort means permanence without undue stress, striving without clinging to gains, and without disheartenment, knowing that with appropriate measures the end is gained without being compromised by the means.

Right Mindfulness, or awareness, includes self knowledge, self remembering, integration of thoughts, feelings and action resulting in an active inner peace. It is a continuous state where there is a permanent reference or centre of gravity - the elusive true-self. Right Meditation or prayer or contemplation is gained when our thoughts do not wander in automatic associations but remain centred close to objective reality.

With this 'calming of the heart', got by watching the breath or by Entering the Void or Buddha, seeing God or the 'essential flower' - deathlessness is revealed. Then the physical body is seen as a valuable container useful for earthly life and the meta-physical is the 'Not-A'.

Given the mystery of this experience that leads from life to more life -the aim of the teaching of Buddha as Humanist - that can be called enlightenment, there are any number of ways to Buddhahood. There is orthodox and unorthodox, old and new. Neither Ch'an nor Zen nor any Mahayana vehicle can answer to everyone. Neither can Theravada be meant for everyone, neither even are the teachings of the Buddha, nor is any religion exclusive, neither is atheism nor any ism, nor any philosophy. But for millions in the East and thousands in the West, the teaching of the Buddha has brought great peace and much delight.

The put off is, with all these don'ts.....where is the spoken of freedom? Well, we are free to choose. The Buddha offered a way of life, with guidelines based on non-harming. In this the Buddha is a guide, that is all.

The Buddha offers this guidance out of experience, out of suffering and the realisation of the way out of suffering -leading to happiness. You are also free to suffer, to choose that strange path -and not to choose is to relegate that choice, leaving it to the strongest momentary influence.

The only sin in Buddhist teaching is ignorance, sometimes called illusion. There is no need of guilt, though there will be remorse after straying from the path. The only sin in humanism is to be un-human, in-human and anti-human, which comes through ignorance - just as in Buddhism.

The Buddha's teaching includes the personal entering into *Nirvana*, the wondrous world of the Now in non-duality. Real freedom exists at that / this moment - circumscribed by the practical reality of a living

human life-form while at the same time, revelling before the Infinite so revealed. In humanism the conversion experience converts the non-meaning into meaning, and is brought about by nulling the contradictions

In the life as a householder, or *upasaka*, you take a more gentle approach to this experience - it all depends on sincerity. In the life of the *bhikku*, there is the possibility of a more direct attempt to scale the heights, or depths. As an ordinary man it is like the householder whereas for a truth seeker a more radical search for the real is launched, but only for a set length of time and ordinary life is not to be abandoned or denied.

But, this is the twenty-first century - can a Buddhist go to war or even pay taxes when these payments are diverted to weapons purchases? Can a Buddhist enjoy medical benefits gained by the sacrifice of monkeys, rats etc in painful experiments? If life is sacrosanct can a Buddhist destroy insect pests that threaten food supplies or consume foods grown by methods using violence against Nature? Is it allowable to help produce advertising, for example, that sells harmful or superficial and luxurious items - aiding and abetting the consumer society that is a far cry from any system based on Buddhist economics?

Yes, to all of these. Yes - if such be the personal necessity when there is limited choice in the matter. The way forward is to increase the range of choices, to open up the future.

It is such questions that have given rise to the yes-no title of the Not Not-Buddhists. The superstitions carried into the present, through aberrant and distorted forms proclaiming to be Buddhist, deposit a cautious approach today.

Buddha's Teaching

While China is influenced by Buddhism, the most humanistic form, Hinayana Buddhism, did not play any great role in the land but rather the Mahayana Buddhist schools. Dr Salvatore Puledda affirmed this in a personal note to this writer (Puledda as friend and collaborator of Silo), saying: "Buddhism, especially in its Hinayana form, can claim to be one of the highest forms of Humanism, or at least the most developed one from a philosophical point of view."

Mahayana Buddhism is said by some to be very much more removed from humanism than is Theravada Buddhism. One commentator suggested that a comparison between the two schools could be placed in the mental frame of... Hinayana emphasizing the humanity of the Buddha; Mahayana emphasizing the Buddha-nature of humanity... (source unknown). Vajrayana Buddhism is the furthest removed from Humanism. If a meaningful comparison of Buddhism and humanism has to be made it has to be made with the authentic teaching of the Buddha which can be gleaned from the *Pali Canon* (a worthy reference is, *What the Buddha Taught*, by Walpola Rahula).

However, due to the negative connotation of the term Hinayana, the World Fellowship of Buddhists decided that the term Hinayana should be dropped when speaking about Buddhism today, and the term Theravada should be applied.

In its original form the teaching of Buddha was without extra-worldly dimensions and applied to the ordinary man and woman. The Mahayana could be much more comprehensively interpreted and is the freer form but had additions of transcendental buddhas that confused the original purity. In that sense I take Dr Puledda's statement of the original having the more humanistic application. Dr Puledda went on to say that: "Mahayana Buddhism played an important role within Chinese culture over the last millennium and had a fundamental role in shaping Chinese values and society at large."

Sticking with Buddhism and regarding the idea of rebirth and karma, with the doctrine of *annatta*, absence of an abiding essence or soul (Sanskrit: *atman*) - what is there to be reborn? Not to follow mechanically the general view that the Buddhists are in fact saying there is no nebula of self or soul or ego whether at birth or later - in a nihilistic manner but that to use such as a basis for realisation brings

difficulties. Identification with such self or soul and to think 'that is me', 'this is me', being a cause of developing from a temporarily acceptable ignorance into something worse.

Note: Soul: For Silo, in at least one interpretation, the term soul equals psyche. Others see this equivalence in various ways, with Soul equal to Being, and Spirit equal to the Breath of Life or Vital Energy (*chi, prana* or Life Current). Living matter generates a field of energy and in some traditions this is called Soul. But for me the meaning becomes rarefied with those latter terms. Silo wanted to use common unflashy language and also to get away from using already commandeered terms in Sanscrit, Pali or other ancient and revered tongues to bring these studies into ordinary daily life. Likewise with Vital Energy, Silo would use the term, the Force. Dealing with the Force is an energetical work that can augment the consciousness. Whether done under the sway of the Silo School Disciplines or by *zazen*, or whatever.

Thus, misplaced or inappropriate belief in *atman* is seen by some Buddhists as the first illusion, set in ignorance, which itself is the primary cause of all misery. Some Mahayana Buddhist *sutras* and *tantras*, however, strongly insist upon the ultimate reality of the *Atman* when it is equated with the essential and eternal being of the Buddha (Tathagatagarbha Doctrine) and, co-incidentally, is that which is within you and me that offers us the opportunity to become Buddha in this life.

According to some, *karma* works within the *samsara* proposal, taking it that all fruits of *karma* appear during the single physical life-time as far as that individual is concerned while further effects of that life continue to be felt among the succeeding generations. Re-birth is seen as a constant process that takes place during one's lifetime where individuals continuously change in response to physical and psychological events. Within that, each such transformation can be seen as a "re-birth".

The goal of enlightenment is the Buddhist way out (or in); for the new universal humanists, it is the conversion experience and the ensuring process of liberation as one lives a full life. The foregoing allows the goal of 'being reborn' in this life to take affect. It also allows for the building or creation of a soul, better declared as conscience - a real self or centre-of-gravity that makes an individual substantial, with due gravity of being - however lighthearted the manifest person.

Thus, while we may be born without a substantial soul, or self, we can develop such. In this light the Buddhist Ch'an and Zen schools of the Mahayana Vehicle invoke due respect where their aspirants reach for self-realisation in the now, in this life. With success, this would complete the full circle of Buddha's enlightenment and deposition of a Way, the travelling and building of a tradition, one that became overweight with accumulations, but that does include a return to the source in the experience of enlightenment or conversion. The result is a real human being.

Buddhist-Humanist Economics

With Buddhist-Humanist economics it is very likely that the practitioner will not get materially rich. However, there is every indication that a sustainable and contented life is possible. One's children can go to a decent school, home ownership is possible, a car if required, is possible. If it comes easy, a home in a classier area and even a Rolls Royce is quite possible. However, these would be exceptional. Ordinary things come to ordinary people and ordinary life is satisfactory when it includes security, sufficient food, pleasing clothes, friendly neighbours, and an open future for kith and kin.

Buddhist-Humanist economics requires an outlook that strikes a balance between giving and taking. Not to take more than is due and not to give less than is due. This is reciprocity, a life governed by mutually benefiting relationships and good neighbourly practices. It is the co-operative style.

The co-operative style cannot be legislated for - though it does need legislation - as it relies on the spirit of co-operation. This can only be developed with a fair perspective on things, on their relationships, on realising that what is harmful harms me. This latter effect causes me to be more careful, of self and others.

This attitude also impinges on environmental affairs so the stewardship principle becomes paramount. With this attitude industrialists manufacture with a minimum of destruction of the environment. They place the whole before the part.

To know where to draw the line in affairs goes by the name of discrimination and this faculty has the place of highest honour in Buddhist teaching. In all things, from sex to work, the important thing is to know where to end, when to go on. There is a humanist principle, 'you are free to do as you will, as long as you do not harm others' - from *The Inner Look*, by Silo. The Five Precepts of Buddhism cover the more obvious cases of probable harm to others, that's all.

Although the major Buddhist clause is that of *ahimsa* or non-harming (for the humanist, active non-violence) - and this includes all creatures - this does envisage taking an active stance in life, as human beings. We continually make choices that sacrifice other life forms. So care is taken.

This can mean - if we eat meat we kill a fellow creature. If we don't want to kill a fellow creature, we don't eat meat. It is a case of ethics, of value judgements, of responsibility.

Most of the food we eat is produced using industrialised farming with its broadscale use of synthetic fertilisers and across-the-spectrum pesticides whereby the living soil is laid sterile and many organisms and larger creatures lose their niche and role, thus the whole is negatively affected. All that done by incidental poisoning. So as activists we pressure officials to offer alternatives to scale -meanwhile we eat that tainted food. Because what other choice? Little choice but a firm choice to eat what is simplest in my environment, keep healthy, and to be an activist.

What of our friends in the military, the soldier. A soldier following the way of the Buddha? Why not? A good soldier that thinks before killing, that minimises destruction when there has to be destruction. A mentally-emotionally balanced soldier that keeps the mind clear to act with honour and personal integrity. It is not easy to be such a soldier - or policeman. Yet, any person, any group, has the right to defence, the right to life. In promoting that right for self and others, that one is a soldier following in the path of Buddha, of Gandhi and the humanist way of active non-violence. Of course for the purist, the fundamentalist, no way!

When there is a problem, there is a solution - it's the Middle Way. Human life holds priority over natural life for us, as humans, because we choose so! We are within the expression of Buddha Nature, what is also termed God by many believers. The Buddha's teaching is meant for humans, not for the bees, birds and beasts. It is the human species that is disrupting life so our overlapping generations of elders, middle-aged and youthful ones must come to grips with this society we are willy-nilly or intentionally building. This diversity of societies that is being bequeathed to the world's children.

In that effort lies the very essence of the life of the Bodhisattva, the Karma Yogi, the Saint, the Holy Madman; a life filled with an intention that sometimes troubles, sometimes brings laughs, but anyway makes the days worthwhile.

So what difference Christian, Muslim, Jew, Hindu, Sikh, or Buddhist? In essence, non at all. Whether we feel the need to give ourselves a name, Humanist, Buddhist or not Buddhist, or even Not Not-Buddhist, is a matter of reflection and choice. A name is but a signpost pointing somewhere. Are we going there or not? It's the same place! The universal human nation.

Chapter Two

How and when it happened - extracts from the author's, *The Answer Is A Circle*

Here is a repeat of this event that changed my life as I sailed as radio officer on the good ship *Alkis*: It was the most peaceful vessel on earth. We cruised between ports without a murmur of discontent or disrespectful orgies to stultify the growing of the soul. The other seafarers were aged remnants of yesteryear thus I was left to provide my own tranquillity. There we were in the blue of Caribbean with love and the setting sun bestowing its nightly grace on all who cared. That was really how it all began. I was totally unaware of anything in particular.

During lazy afternoons I would stroll back and forth on the top deck and day dream, every day for days and days as we made for Rio de Janeiro. I became more and more peaceful and smiled into the sea without reason. The pantry boy would steal up behind and seat himself out of sight and wonder at my smiles of peace and more than that.

Every happiness was brought to the surface to be kissed with understanding and sent on its way for some other to use in the universal joy of true life.

Nature abhors a vacuum and that was what I became. A void with gently flitting poems of life simmering in the mist of consciousness. I understood the Holy Trinity, the Joy of Three, The Father, Son and Holy Ghost; the spirit of Unity and Diversity. Thoughts arose having a luminous quality that brought insights new and splendid, symbols with their meaning, a coverlet gently hiding a subtlety beyond words.

I would stop walking, amazed and with some strange acceptance, walk on, my smile not widening but deepening. These thoughts were flowering with a gentleness and love that left me quite unaware that anything unusual was happening. I slept in peace, woke in peace and ate and talked in peace. Then it happened.

I experienced the Void of existence, of my existence, of your existence and this because the fullness of total existence, of your existence, of my existence, is Void. No this and that, no me and you, only the One and this One an unlimited One. I felt it all and it was as if I saw it all, though both words seeing and feeling are not quite enough. I was this whole affair; it was me undergoing evolution. I saw the planet, the sea. I was I and this I was an unlimited I. I was God. God was I.

Let no man put apart what god hath joined in holy matrimony. All was revealed. The scriptures fell apart and the supreme relatedness of each thing, however minute, was presented in their place. Einstein's theory illumined into pure life and life being shown as energy and energy being shown to take on many forms and these forms combining and rising and falling, building up and breaking down.

All things changing, perpetually changing, and turning through circles to spirals as the process of evolution took place before me and through me. I became insignificant -to return and take my rightful place with all things in nature, becoming in turn significant.

I had been born of events and until death must walk upright as a man. The Greater Laws formulated before my eyes, cuddling into their vastness the little Earthly laws. The great indeterminate being presented before me and causing such emotion I was smiling past smiling.

I had halted in my tracks and gazed at the sea; it was the first time I had seen the sea despite having traversed its surface for years on ships. The beauty of the pure sea, yes the sea was the same, it was myself which had become cleansed. My clouded mind had hidden the real sea from my eyes. It was as if I had not seen the sea before and I stood there, amazed.

Posts and stanchions were a pure white and stood in their real aspect before me and this also produced amazement.

'There is a reason for everything', this sentence glowed with depth. 'To every law there is an exception, and this exception proves the law,' this triteness also glowed. 'Everything is related,' this saying was veritably incandescent. Heaven and Earth were one at that moment and death held no terror.

Life after death? The universe is bursting with energy and life, no need to consider this question which is purely a selfish clinging to a life which is only here and now and goes the way the candle flame goes. Did Einstein really have an ecstatic understanding of his theory -or did his theory remain cold and logical?

The joy, I was beyond tears and thankful for one other thing: this revelation was not given in symbolic form. No hallucination, no Jesus, no recourse to the Bible, no teaching, no Grand Master. No spirituality about it. No religiosity. No sacred mysteries. The simplicity of life and the insignificance of this planet in the real depths of Space was brought out. The essential mystery which belied this simplicity and yet allowed it, as Man was seen as merely a human being and not the All and Everything.

Knowing, seeing, feeling the movement of the total universe is one thing, countering it with the knowledge of our limited form is another. Life greater than an individual. Holy communion; this was it, my first holy communion.

No longer a Catholic -though the word itself means universal -but Catholic is a division against other denominations and there was no division in my view, only misunderstanding and being 'a Catholic' would not clear up that state, even being a good, true Catholic. But catholic yes, a transcendent catholic, this term could be used, but it immediately makes itself redundant and to be true to my new knowledge I could not any more call upon my birth in a Catholic family as a tie to the reality of the situation.

Faith equates with hope and produces charity in this exulted state. There is no such word as artificial, in this state everything is real and the word artificial becomes an impossibility, but not just that petty word, but all words become useless and all that I could utter was to a degree misleading. All this set down here is debris of an internal explosion which as the pieces re-assembled themselves in better accord, laid the foundation for the development of a new man.

This spiritual convulsion should, in an ideal environment, be a natural growing process, something encountered from day-to-day and not burst like a fireball through the roof of the mind.

It would be quite right to say I was unbalanced, crazy beyond words. I was so far removed from the norm of everyday thinking and behaviour I deserved locking up. The state of the world is strange indeed when the life that should be is not and the life which should not be is. Are we looking upside down at everything? Is everyone blind? Why all the dissension everywhere? Why does Man sleep? How can Tony Henderson awaken any man from apathy and lethargy. The essential birthright needs be shown. But how, when all that can be said passes without real content? Nothing can be said that is worthwhile! All I can do is possibly stimulate the other to a search for the Real.

Life must be grasped and used. People must be loved and allowed to love and live and when necessary be helped. Harmony must be restored to our common heritage, this Earth, our one opportunity to live in

Paradise, the Christian Heaven, the Buddhist Nirvana is indeed Now on Earth. But one chance! Anyone knowing this could not attempt suicide, yet now on earth the whole of planetary Man seems bent on destruction, all because life is lived as if it was a dream.

I was so glad there was no intermediary in my experience, no voices, no gods or angels or devils -only me and the universe. What joy, what beauty, what goodness. Joy, Beauty, Goodness; these words fall together and become one - Love. Love is supreme and ties together all the threads of existence. Without love the planets cease to turn, the plant has no flower. Love is transcendent organisation. God is love. This makes sense only after such an experience. The word God should not be used unless assured in the knowledge of just what is implied by the term - the word should be dropped from general conversation.

Love between man and woman is rightfully joyful yet even that does not reach the level of intensity as at the heights of feeling that comes as a consequence of a person's acceptance of the Great Love, of the great mystery of life on reaching right to the bottomless bottom.

The infinite revealed remains the infinite. The eternal is not to be reached by human thought however inspired. Gratefully accepted is the full knowledge of what the eternal implies. The eternal becomes the Eternal, spoken with great reverence. The Eternal is God and likewise the mystery is deepened in its revelation. To reveal the depths of the unlimited reveals that it is without limits - that's it!

This knowledge is mine, only mine, and mine because it was 'me' that grasped it. I was able to grasp it because I was not grasping, not wanting, had no desire. Even in such light mood, the personal emptiness, a mere pocket, was filled by the greater Self. The emptying of the fullness and the filling of the emptiness goes toward the achieving of balance, under the laws of equalisation that are universal.

I defied the law, though unwittingly. It was a freak event and I will accept in a limited sense that I did not deserve it. I did not consciously work toward that day of revelation. But the great unknown would have its way using my past disappointments and errors, all the mistakes I made from birth onwards in the great trial and error of life. My conscious reflection on these errors may have been slight at the time of their making, covered up by instant shame, embarrassment, a joke or other such device but they were all registered. Thus the process was entered into.

Especially in those years of newly sensitized youth, when the emotions run deep, there is retention of even the slightest event, to nurture, combine and care until I was ready to synthesize all in one moulding characteristic -when the time was ripe. Bursting forth, in dreams or while in the relative dream of daily waking existence. Those days termed blue; those happy days for no reason at all. All the conditioning influences.

Life's pattern is too intricate for me to know 'why' me. Various factors in my personality. A naivety. An optimism. A happy-go-lucky style but also an insecurity, fear, and the internal mess of a confusedly 'religious' upbringing which luckily did not stunt my growth altogether as has happened to others, but gave a deep-rooted questioning for the mind to resolve and the answer amazed the questioner.

On that ship I found myself physically independent for the first time. Debts had been paid off. Ties with family and friends and virtual country were in order and even let go of as the ship was crewed by Greek nationals. I had everything from tent to sleeping back, primus stove to collapsible knife fork and spoon in my ruck-sack aboard ship -what kind of sailor that?

I knew I could leave the ship at any port in the world and would be no worse off. With these physical ties cut there remained the non-physical, the psychical - these had to be cut. I was growing out of past entanglements which cause such a mix of personal sadness and happiness in anyone but the whole perspective was not gained at once. The light blinds and blinded I stumbled against my own conditioned past. The date was May 1965. Twenty-three years old and life took a chance with my early exposure.

Chance? - there being no such thing. Yet what else? What other word so nearly fits? Fate? Luck? Coincidence? Freak occurrence? Whatever it be called, it was a thousand million threads all brought together to culminate in that special fusion and there I was, 'by chance'. This event I had to ratify to myself and I

thought to others too. I was I -what the whole of life had made me and I included the experience of my being in conscious relation to the whole as a part of this growing process.

I understood nothing, that is, no thing or No Thing; that is I possessed the essential nature of withoutness, of emptiness and from that, everything else in its complete relationship poured into this essential base.

I understood the sea. The unveiling of the mysteries, yet there are no mysteries, it was but my clouded mind. It's all there under our noses. All I did was to step back, to dissolve into my self and I knew myself. I did not see with my eyes, I was immediately part of it all and the all was what we have given the unutterable name.

At last I could love what was God more than I could love my most intimate ones, my parents. I understood what kind of love was meant by those words in the school catechism. Poor, weak words; useless words; all words are useless: this is useless which is proven by all those who on reading this have not understood. The few who can understand have gained this understanding of themselves and not through this tale of it happening.

Take heart, I say this to myself also, especially to myself, as I know the life of joy that is waiting for it's Spring. I know the time is ripe and those who flower will bear fruit, and to those who are immersed in the turmoil of life and have no will to change to the good life they know in their essential self is the true life, to you may I say your day will come. When in the last sleep of death, do not be afraid for these words are true: God is infinitely merciful.

I wondered, could I not offer some helpful thought or consolation to others? I did try and it ended in confusion -or another beer. There is nothing to say. No message to give -just a life and a smile.

THE AFTER EFFECTS

How does one contain profound experience? Knowing what I knew and not being able to relate to anyone, wandering about with a blown mind and my countenance reflecting the ecstatic strangeness of my exposed soul.

Steaming in and out of bars with an ecstasy of love of the all with the mystical fission burning brightly within, giving an over-abundance of energy which was used to meet, greet and love each soul and scene with a holy excitement and indulgence of total self and with such immersion. I was neither coming nor going. I was there. And, Rio, the first port of call of the good ship *Alkis*, was enough to blow one's head clean off even in the normal condition of non-being which is the usual state of people.

I felt I must justify my very existence by leaping into the river of life and beating the chaos at its own game which causes quite a wind wherever let alone in the cauldron of Rio looked over by an outstretched Christ on the mountain top -seen in the parting of mists in the wheeling night. It was the fight to regain a standing of some solidity on a plateau of life up and removed from my previous earth-point. A fight with none other than the Devil himself. The devil in a very worldly form, one that captivates the body and liberates the soul; this to the devil's delight. In a cosmos which is a universe in harmony, there can be no such division as the cosmos includes the all and I knew I was but a micro-whirl in the relative.

I was purged of my original sin, handed down by my forefathers like a mote in the eye of my essential selfhood. In the peace of this the twilight of my being I arrived in Europe once again, thinking the struggle was over and the battle won, but I had yet to personally assimilate my separate selves.

I, a stranger even to myself, was also lost among my old friends, even those I cared for most. There were things to do; questions to be answered. There was something I had to have, confidence in what had been granted in me to know.

I had the feeling that what I must do is get my 'experience' confirmed. This much I had read in books on Zen Buddhism, after following up on Jack Kerouak's notes on Zen. But it likely also came from influences of the Catholic rites of confirmation, which takes place a few years after one's First Holy Communion.

Chapter Three

So, what is Zen?

Zen Buddhism came to Japan from China where it was known as Ch'an Buddhism. These paragraphs take Zen, not Ch'an, as their focus because of the idiosyncrasies of Japanese culture where it was nurtured, which culture is quite different from that of China. While the aim of both is the same, the trappings differ.

Not much useful can be said about Zen, there are many forms. One such would be where a gathering of a few people takes place for the expressed purpose of each helping the other to create a centre, an essence, a foundation. How can a person reach enlightenment, when considering the general mess of possibilities that make up the common man or woman?

In other words, who can be enlightened when there is no one there, no minute by minute solidity, no continuity to implement the decision to seek enlightenment, as the seeker holding the original intent disappears and the new 'centre in passing' has no such inclination.

First and foremost in any gathering of the 'heirs apparent' (heirs to their own selfhood) is the daily, mutually- reminded vow to remain awake and to keep the others awake. Sudden awakening is virtually impossible to attain for such seekers. No, there will be a slow awakening, a gradual realisation, a heightening change - if all goes well that is.

Unfortunately, all too often a deeper state of sleep is the only reward, a special state of sleep or peculiarly unbalanced awakening. But it is no good waiting for a Master to appear to lead through such pitfalls, it is all part of the adventure. The group and the work of awakening by the group is of paramount importance, and success can be achieved.

The present situation on this earth is terrible enough and, strangely contrasting, beautiful enough, to provide the energy necessary for the solidification of the real to take place. When you have a self, it is yours, then the search can begin. Until then.... who will search, with what will the search take place? Zen is lifting up the bucket while standing inside it, you effectively make your own instrument, your self, but this self needs to be a permanent self.

Zen, necessarily, is about revolution. The revolution is quite personal but the revolutionary change that takes place is fundamental and therefore the overall effect is widespread beyond the individual person. The revolution is not final but continuous; there is no end, only a 'further on'. The initial set is a strange one for a would-be revolutionary, it is called 'the sitting down and attaining quiet'. It is not easy to keep still over a long period, neither is it natural; but that is the way, to do the un-natural in awareness of what is being

done. The result is friction -a production of energy, and this energy can be used in the effort needed to follow the road.

Sitting absolutely still... no twitches, blinking, coughing... no bodily disturbance whatsoever, reflects in an equivalent state in the brain's activity. A quietude achieved when the mind is disciplined in this way. There is a mental stillness and a clarity witnessed as an awareness.

To an outsider there may appear to be no activity at all nor any use in such a 'mindless posture'. But they are not to know what the energy is doing on the 'inside'. Energy is similar in its activities to water. It attempts to find equilibrium, always trickling here and there, seeping down into hidden places, creeping up into the most remote and unlikely spots.

Here the effects of the energy can be self-observed in the oddest emanations, hitherto unknown emanations, giving rise to occurrences commonly defined as in the realm of the super-natural. But these are merely 'damp spots' on the mental frame.

This is due to the unbalanced state of the body, the cracks that appear will gradually... given time... repair. The body itself has a self-healing urge, also, as part of the psycho-physical unit, an evolutionary urge and it cannot help sacrificing itself for its further possibilities, it is its own cross which it carries to its crucifixion.

In a healthy man or woman energy in its many aspects plays a wide variety of functions and this kind of health is the primary achievement of this silent meditation. Although meditation is the wrong word, this is the precursor to meditation, this is 'just sitting' where the body's energies are given the freedom to perform the tasks they alone know how to perform. No hindrance from an interfering un-enlightened mind. Months may pass, nay, years, before the body's natural rhythm is established, its cycles of activity and rest normalised, a permanence in health made real. Then the energy will flow without dis-ease or mental disturbance producing disruptions and a greater efficiency will be obtained.

Who ever 'has it' in Zen can be of service to mankind, even if he or she lives on the remotest of mountain tops. But no one, however good intentioned, can be of service when they are unwittingly a drain on other people's mental and emotional energy. The whole purpose of a revolution is to be of service to mankind, thus the so-called revolutionaries of this day are reduced to mere criminals, despite the genuine nature of their causes. Without wisdom they can only destroy. It needs wisdom, which is the uncommonest of common sense. The people bombing and destroying today are in desperate need of a genuine revolution, their intentions are for some localised good and redress, but their actions show they are far from truth.

It is not too difficult to join in a cause far from home, but to return home... to one's own heart... takes courage. It also means a fight. It also means great changes take place. The new takes over from the old, the latent becomes the real... there can be no doubt a revolution takes place. Consider how Gandhi got the British out of India... with non-violence.

In this world there are (at least) two possibilities - the one of being but fodder for the changing, sometimes beautiful, sometimes tragic, processes of nature to consolidate creation, and the other, of reaching into a deeper understanding of the relationship of ourselves to the universe and to belong in so doing to that minority of mankind that unwittingly forms the vanguard of the new society.

This new society has a duty that is self-taught and spontaneously determined and yet its members are difficult to discern in the milling crowd. Thus the attraction of such as the way of Zen, as many intuit the reality that this everyday limited condition of the becoming human is not all there is, but further and untold vistas await the unfolding.

Obakusan

In 1971, on a return trip to Japan from Mauritius where I worked, I again stayed at Obakusan Mampukuji, near Kyoto, after several years absence. It was just for a few nights (noted in my writing *The Answer WAS a Circle*).

I went to Kyoto first to meet Eshin Nishimura (author: *Secret of the Lotus*). He was not in his Honazono University office. Disappointed, what to do? I waited, but no Eshin. In time, more-or-less giving up, I sought out a bus destined downtown Kyoto and sat there among the passengers. A fellow passenger took my attention. Surely not... it looked like Eshin... and amazingly, there he was, sitting next to me on the bus! I enquired of him, "are you Eshin Nishimura? He indicated that was so. "I am looking for you, I came to Honazono," I declared. "Now do you believe in God," he immediately quipped....

After meeting with Eshin I took a train out to Uji and there I re-encountered my student monk friend Genrin Nagata who hailed from a town near Kamakura, Tokyo. Over the intervening years he had become an instructor monk and was as wild looking with his shaved head, as any of the monks that so impressed on my first visit to that Obaku sect temple. He appeared quite overjoyed; as I was delighted at his apparent maturity. He gave me a Buddhist name, Forever Walking, or Ei Fu.

How our text of *The Sermon of Tetsugen* (see Chapter Four) came about

On my visits to Obakusan Mampukiji I mostly dealt with a lesser known monk, K. Sugiyama, as we had a joint project concerning the translation done by my Mauritian pal Ahmad Baboo. This was a rendition of monk Tetsugen's lecture tour from his efforts in the 17th century. The *Sermon of Tetsugen* gives the central themes of the sermon used on Tetsugen's tour of Japan and the contents come from the *Shurangama Sutra* (or *Surangama*).

Ours is an interpretive adaptation of that original emanation of the monk who spoke to the Japanese with a substrata of inferences on the teachings on re-incarnation, illusion, the Pure Land of Heaven and so on. Such have been re-interpreted in our text to give a hopefully more approachable read and every short-coming in this attempt lies with the present writer.

The original Japanese was translated into French by Masumi Shibata and the French version placed in English by a Mauritian friend -I lived in Mauritius for two years at the end of the 1960s. Although I had been in correspondence with Masumi Shibata, I was not really acquainted with this Zen Sect priest but thank him for his fine efforts and to relate here that his version is but a basis upon which our text has been built and not a translation. In fact, readers need to go to the *Shurangama Sutra* itself, this record is simply an explanation of how I came to be linked to these matters.

It was a few years later that I spent one memorable afternoon with Zen master and Mampukuji abbot Gemyo Murase, where we shared pots of sake. During the afternoon he 'confessed' to being a 'very bad monk' in that we were drinking sake! He was not, of course. As head of this important temple he had to play his role. He was very well esteemed. His refined style was enlivened with a quiet detachment and humourful asides as an illuminating joke was never far away.

The *Sermon of Tetsugen* manuscript was duly handed over to the temple office and on my part, in 1977, the item was published as a booklet under the auspices of APH Press Publications, 34 Motoshio-machi, Himeji, Japan. The printing was done at the Tyneside Free Press Workshop, a co-operative in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, near my home town of Blaydon-on-Tyne, in northeast England. I had resided in that area over those few years having returned from Japan as my parents were getting old. See how things get around?

Obaku-shu - the Huang Po sect or school

Obaku Zen: The Emergence of the Third Sect of Zen in Tokugawa Japan: *a review of the book by Helen Josephine Baroni by Hakuyu Ikeda - revised opinions about the worth and value, and relevance, of Obaku Zen*

While not claiming to be a guide to the practices of the Obaku-shu, Baroni's study does touch on the distinctive methods which have characterised the school. To this end, Baroni has examined primary sources detailing the formation of the Obaku-shu (Obaku school) including those available at Mampukuji Obakuzan, the Honzan or main temple of Obaku-shu in Uji, near Kyoto.

As Baroni observes, "Rinzai scholars have generally dismissed Obaku as an aberrant or even heretical form of Rinzai practice, the study of which adds nothing significant to an understanding of Rinzai teaching or history." A current Western Zen glossary has described the Obaku-shu as 'practically of no importance today' - but, with 460 temples scattered throughout Japan (587, including smaller branch temples), that is surely an unfair judgement. Baroni's study goes some way to revise that perspective.

As a relatively late arrival (most of the famous Rinzai and Soto temples in Japan had been established in the Kamakura Period), the appearance of Ingen Zenji (1592-1673) and related teachings informed by the Ming Dynasty re-statement of Ch'an, aroused mixed reactions. It effectively led to the formation of Obaku-shu as the third school of Zen in Japan. This says something about the politics of Japanese Buddhism, for technically speaking, Ingen -the Chinese founder of the Obaku Shu - came from a Lin-chi (Rinzai) background. Going by Baroni's remarks, it seems doubtful whether the authorities who invited Ingen to take up residence in western Japan had originally envisaged setting up a third school. Baroni explores the various tensions which led to the formation of the Obaku-shu as a separate entity in Japanese Zen Buddhism.

Ostensibly, the chief issue likely to be of interest to Western Buddhists is the status of Obaku-shu's joint Zen and Pure-Land practice. While some of the Kyoto Buddhist fraternity welcomed the arrival of fresh blood from China, others seem to have adopted a less favourable view. As noted above, Ingen's teaching reflected Ch'an as found in its Ming style -with the incorporation of Pure Land mantra practices besides such the *koan* puzzles of Ch'an, by then having become established.

Alongside other factors, this was not to the liking of key figures at the Rinzai temple of Myoshinji, even though Ingen had been invited to Western Japan through the initiative of Ryokei (1602-1670) - then Abbot of Myoshinji, who had even envisaged placing Ingen in charge of this renowned temple. Expectations had been high, after the first reports of Ingen's teaching came from the temples in Nagasaki, where Ingen had more or less been confined since his arrival in Japan.

What Baroni relates concerns a rather complex process of in-culturation. Up to a point, the very appeal of Ingen's circle was its Chineseness. Without offering a contrast, or some distinguishing feature to set it apart from the established Zen schools, the Obaku-shu would not have been able to garner support or patronage. As can be learned from Hakuin's experience, Rinzai Zen was in a state of decline in the Tokugawa era. Hence, the fresh arrival of Chinese masters promised to be a welcome source of stimulation...

...the problem here, is that the type of Pure Land practice which had struck the dominant note in Japanese Buddhism (i.e. that of Shinran) more or less ruled out joint-practice. As an extreme form of '*tariki*' or reliance on 'other power,' it was hard to reconcile with Zen and its stress on '*jiriki*' or 'self-power.' Still, Baroni is clear about the fact that this problem would not have applied to the Obaku-shu's understanding of joint-practice - for whom Pure-land would not have meant absolute '*tariki*'. For its own part, the perspective of Obaku-shu is 'Pure-land on the outside, Zen on the inside'. There may be conscious irony in the fact that Hakuin had called Ming-style Ch'an - 'Zen on the outside, Pure-land on the inside' - without explicitly naming the Obaku-shu.

...The whole temple complex at Mampukuji is basically a 'Ming dynasty' style temple, in perfect condition. It has long cultivated its own forms of calligraphy among other expressive forms. Tetsugen Zenji's Buddhist Press (nearby) is still in operation, making the hand-carved boards or plates for reprinting copies of the *Tripitaka*. With various revisions, the Tetsugen/Obaka-shu edition of the *Tripitaka* provided the impetus for the Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo - the standard edition of the Sino-Japanese *Tripitaka* in use today.

Chapter Four

The Sermon of Tetsugen

based on the Surangama Sutra (The full title: Sutra of the Foremost Surangama at the Crown of the Great Buddha; and of All the Bodhisattvas' Myriad Practices for Cultivating and Certifying to the Complete Meaning of the Tathagata's Secret Cause - Ch. Da Fo Ding Shou Leng Yan Jing (in Tetsugen's Canon, Taisho Tripitaka, No. 945).

On the first aggregate: matter.

Matter is all that is manifest to the senses; it is the human body, the Land, the Sea and the whole Universe. Conversely, the blood, the corpuscles and molecular components with their diverse elemental structure, down to what in terms of matter are termed nuclear forces, which can be spoken of as energy. All this is the diversity of the form taken on by matter.

'Due to the formulation of what is termed an ego, that is a self-recognising part, an illusion is born that this ego-body is separate from the whole of existence and under this illusion the ego-body commits transgression after transgression, and this has occurred from the infinite past'. This illusion, due to the power of the imagination, became a reality as the real situation was lost in the complexity of the multi-fold nature of the illusion. Human beings became mere things in their own reckoning.

Not recognising that all and everything is from the one source and all must return to this one source, the essence of being remains hidden from realisation. People claim the body as their own, but regard the other forms of life as foreign. Not content with so regarding other life-forms, people even set themselves up against them and even against their own likeness in human form. In this conceit, which is a great blindness, arise all kinds of wrong-doing, as man is at present unaware of his real condition.

One of the great errors of man's ego-attached thinking is this: we observe the animal traits of the body, its noxious exhalations and excretions; its disgusting habits as it physically matures into a capable living creature; its subjection to disease and finally its dissolution in death, with the decay of the flesh into a stinking mess fit for maggots alone and people identify with these aspects of the body.

Another error is that committed by those who, living a life far above those identifying with the body in its gross form, live within law, but not from direct, personal enlightenment, but because they wrongly think of un-earthly rewards for so doing. This is due to a more subtle illusion and though this conditioned-thinking bestows short-term benefits on other living creatures it is to the detriment of the person so thinking should their way of life not evolve into the higher aspect of actual life.

The enlightened man goes beyond the present earth-bound morality of the believer and can state with the Prajnāparamita Sutra: 'Matter is Void and Void is Matter'. The body is composed of matter and this matter is conditioned by multifarious past events in the realms of matter's evolution and must exist within its self-binding laws. Looking into matter, vast emptiness is discovered and it becomes apparent that even the most dense matter is using huge tracts of emptiness to realise its form. Just as the Universe is largely composed of space, internally the same is true. In form lies void and in the void appears form. Not two, form and void, but one total existence using the complements of form and void. They both have intrinsic essence, the essence of form can be alluded to in word and thought; but the essence of void, being logically without any thing, cannot be approached in words; yet the void has an essence which is firmly grasped by the enlightened.

On the attainment of enlightenment a man exclaims, 'The sea is the sea, how many times have I stood by the sea without seeing it as the sea and now here it is: the sea!'. The same with the trees and the mountains. During these illuminations each thing is seen in its essential form and the essence of no-thing is seen as the exception which proves the rule, completing the whole. The infinite is revealed in its myriad form. Words disintegrate and such enigmatic expressions as used in the Zen School become the obvious. Confusion is resolved in simplicity, the simple is the mysterious and the mysterious is the simple.

In this state we realise that there is no isolated particle, each thing is related and has its being in an evolving whole. Only nothing is absolute in itself and this by its very nature is related to the whole and harmony is achieved. The stone has the quality of a stone, it is not dead, it has the life of a stone and becomes, remains and decays as a stone. How else would one have the life of a stone? In essence the enlightened person and the stone have a deep affinity, both are enlightened, the stone as a stone and the Man as a Man. The essential quality which is manifest in both is without beginning and without end. Into the depths of the past when the Universe as known today was but possibility, pre-existing in a particular form, conditions arose to produce both stone and Man; and so in spirit they have their relation. Both have an essential value and self-merit and deserve their existence in their respective spheres of being. This is why it is declared, 'even the stones recite the name of Buddha'; Buddha is the Law, having no other characteristic other than that possessed by stones.

The truth lies in simplicity and is only considered mysterious by the confused thinking of the unenlightened. Terms such as Buddha Nature and Formless Void have merit as pointers to a reality only. They teach not to limit thought, or, not to be limited by thought. On enlightenment the words fall apart and on falling apart become real. The state of things as they are now is perfection; there can be no greater perfection. This is the permanent aspect of the Absolute, the fulfilment of the law which is without defilement.

When this is directly known without recourse to the thinking mind, the peace of co-existence prevailing will be reflected through the personal being. Matter will be known for what it is, not only in its real, lower aspect, but in its higher evolving aspect and the two balanced. The result being a life in the relative infused with the vision of life in the Absolute, and this refining the man into a Man, living with an acceptance of, and in harmony with, his own nature. *Zazen* is one of the means whereby the condition for enlightenment may be formalised.

On the second aggregate: impressions (feelings).

Due to outside influences, people are impressed into states of mind, arousing feelings that are known by the opposites of suffering and pleasure. There is also a third state which is neither of these and is neutral, such as walking from one place to another, it is usually neither pleasant or unpleasant. These effects are all due to impressions.

These impressions are appreciated through the organs of touch, taste, sight, smell, hearing and the co-ordinating mind, producing a consequent state perturbed in pleasure or suffering. These inhalations of the

mind are some times known as dusts, as they cover the originally clear, reflecting mind and produce a distorted image of reality.

When pleasure is being experienced, the body tends to continue this pleasurable state, which is against nature, as all things must come and go. This brings the double displeasure of, firstly, losing the original pleasure and, secondly, being left with memory of that pleasure which initiates a search from a state of emptiness which is mentally compared with the previous state of pleasure. Consequently the resultant displeasure is greater than the previous pleasure in terms of intensity.

When pain is being experienced, as in illness, relief is sought and no kind of action brings peace unless it is related to eliminating the pain. With the decrease and end of pain, pleasure is experienced, though no thing actually exists to cause that pleasure, but pleasure is experienced; pleasure and suffering being relative to each other have no fixed line of demarcation. Nonetheless, this acts as a reality with the result that pleasure is sought after and suffering avoided.

This way of action is natural, and even an enlightened man acts so, but the man who is still subject to these impressions and not their master, tends to chase after pleasure and flee from suffering. This is not natural as suffering must be accepted just as pleasure must be accepted. One is said to come from heaven, the other from hell. Both are aspects of the one reality and in this reality we live and have our being and in no way are we dissociated from this reality, what else can be done but to experience pleasure and suffering as they find us along the way.

Instead of an enlightened acceptance of things which cannot be avoided, an ignorant man chooses to ignore real life and biases his living towards pleasure alone. This disregards the law and causes an immediate disharmony which must be re-harmonised. For one man's undeserved pleasure another man must pay. It may be in instant self-compensation, or the balance may remain to be paid by another. Should a man go his whole life through in such a careless manner, the shock of being brought face to face with his own past will cause such suffering as to be beyond the description of fiery hells; mental anguish being so much worse than physical pain-and one cannot escape from one's self.

The greater the pleasure experienced, the higher is lifted the border line of suffering and an even greater pleasure is tended toward with suffering lurking always just behind, waiting, threatening. To steal deprives someone else of pleasure, and leaves a debt to be paid, the other person suffers for the thief's pleasure, and pays the debt. It could stop there with no further repercussions. But the suffering person decides to steal from another and so the original transgression continues. Should someone steal from an enlightened man, the act comes to an immediate end, for no further stealing occurs. The enlightened man can forgive the transgressions of others - besides those of his own. Only good is transmitted, evil acts comes to a halt and are finalised. With the present state of man all base acts are multiplied, in thought, word and deed; and the result is: wars; pollution; excessively rich and excessively poor; and diseases both mental and physical. This is the present hell which man has made for himself and all because he insists on getting more than his justifiable level of pleasure - desire being the root of suffering, with excessive desire exacerbating the problem.

All this is happening now, yet pleasure remains in its relative aspect of life which must be countered by dis-pleasure and thereby the mean attained. Not to grasp, but to accept and in this acceptance seeing that what is pleasurable for one man is not necessarily to the next. In other words, a man's personal pleasure is self-conditioned. An Englishman refuses to eat raw fish and actually abhors it; but to a Japanese it is a delight. The maggot enjoys the putrefaction of a corpse; but this turns the stomach of every man. Yet a man will eat a piece of game flesh, or stinking cheese and blackened aged eggs, all according to his conditioning. The problem -when it is seen as a problem -rests with the individual.

But, what of the pleasures gained from eating such foods which entail the suffering of animals and birds and fish! An animal is no less deserving than a man when life is questioned. Also a man can live well enough on less exotic foods than such a diet that is based on animal and like kinds of flesh. Where is the debt being

paid for such a diet? Is man living in the debt of animals by remaining at the animal stage of evolution and remaining so until animals and birds and fish release him from their bondage when he releases them from his bondage. Most animal flesh taking is not in the natural order of eating, but is done in the fashion of the day. Luxury pervades the tables of all but the poor, and un-natural eating habits are the bane of man. The unenlightened eat without thinking, allowing their conditioned past to condition their present and future eating habits, as well as the entire way they live. What for one is pleasure, for a host of others is suffering, and this being so, can man say he is enjoying life when he is aware of the suffering he inflicts on others, whether mankind, animals, birds, fish or grasses?

[Note: Environmental observations directly indicate the greed of man extracting from the earth more than is lawful. The result is seen as a barren earth; the air unbreathable in the very places where people need good air, where they live. Sparkling rivers gather from the mountains in sweet streams until the habitat of man is reached, then to be replaced by turbid waters of stinking browns and belly-up floating fish who are paying man's debt.]

Impressions or feelings, which are the second aggregate, amount to the error arising from suffering which is mistaken for pleasure. When continually influenced by such impressions an unenlightened man fluctuates between pleasure and suffering, the gain and the loss. Those who happily amuse themselves with their possessions suffer more when their possessions decrease. The poor suffer from not having, and the rich suffer from having too much. Flattery is a suffering and pride really a great sorrow. All growth is suffering. Love itself is suffering. Life is suffering as it is a growing process. Yet life loves to grow, it is born to grow and has joy in this growth; depending on how life is viewed, it can be either pleasurable or painful.

On losing a job, a man may feel a break in his security, or, that new vistas open up before him. With an open unconditioned mind, life can be grasped and seen in its positive flow, what may be an obstacle to the ignorant could be a stepping stone to the enlightened due to his re-orientation of view.

To be free from the influence of impressions (feelings), and thus pleasure and suffering, a special, neutral state must be achieved, a non-reacting. The man must initiate all actions and not be like a flag waving to every change in the breeze. Then a man can choose what he decides is right.

On the third aggregate: concepts

On this, the third aggregate, the concepts are considered [apperception will arrive at this point but generations later!]. When a man sees his image reflected in water, should he be aware of his situation, he will understand that the image therein is an image and his real form lies outside of the water. How is an unenlightened man to know where lies his real existence when he cannot even see the water, let alone consider his real condition? A man dreams, and on awakening becomes less of the dream and more of the real, but is it the real, or are there still elements of the dream carried over into the waking state? In a dream a man identifies with the events taking place, he lives the dream and similarly in the waking state, by identifying with daily events he lives 'usual life'. He never considers that it is a possibility not to live this usual life, no original thought arises that such a chaotic life-style has an alternative. The mass of Mankind lives this great dream existence and thereby gives the dream reality. It is a real dream.

Why does a man make use of alcohol to such an extent? Because it enables him to hang on to his dream existence; all's well with the world. Yet when confronted by reality - on waking up - the suffering is known and felt. There is no such thing as other people's sufferings, this is a mis-conception, we suffer generally but individually repress this reality. Concepts are corrupted by biased viewpoints, the real cannot be viewed from inside a dream, for the real is out of context in the unreal, the unreal's real quality, the whole purpose of remaining in the dream is to exclude the real. There is no searching for the real, the real glares at a man with a brightness that makes man hide, for it takes a Man to look the real in the eye.

What is the purpose of concepts? To grasp the current situation and relate it to what a man is. That is why a man refuses to come out of his dream, what he is in no way relates to the needs of the present situation. Man has a responsibility which he is currently refusing to recognise.

A clear concept of 'what is' would shatter his existence in its present mode and thus clear concepts are denied and only distorted versions of the real allowed into cognition. In this way man is refusing to grow up, to mature, which he one day must.

The concept of love, the concept of hate, in the illusory condition which the unenlightened mind functions the one turns into the other. A man loves a woman and in an hour, in a month, or a year, the same feelings of love have reversed - harking back to the first condition, that of love, what kind of concept is that? What is its validity? Is that love?

An awareness of Reality is not for mystics alone; the tradesman, the housewife, the unskilled worker, all have this need; and it is displayed in dreams and aspirations wrapped in symbol and myth, reaching up into consciousness but denied access due to the condition. It is much easier to choose usual life than embark on a search for the real. Concepts are built up from the past and are self-limiting, they cannot contain nor enable a man to vie for the greater reality. The difficulty is in the effort required, and the courage needed to abandon the old and leave oneself bare, in readiness to take on the new. On two levels the historical Gautama denuded himself; of his wife and children, his greater family and friends, his home and all this in readiness to leave behind all former ideas, concepts and conditioned reactions. First the physical and then the mental, the gross and then the subtle.

Illusions keep man in bondage, bound to those illusions, the dream. A concept is such a dream in that it changes its form and content to suit prevailing circumstances. To break free of such concepts is to see the unlimited beyond the limited. The abandoned lover would have no recourse to suicidal thoughts were he to be aware of the transient nature of his feelings, and that the sun always rises in the morning.

Self-imposed suffering in its most extreme is suicide, there is a real problem to be overcome, but staying within the limits of the problem causes a recycling of energies all bound up with no escape. In transcending the situation the problem does not disappear, it remains but in relation to the greater situation which shows, not a way out, but a way through.

To rise beyond the third aggregate, that of concepts, the state of enlightenment must be realised. Why remain in self-slavery when the self holds the key to its own freedom?

On the fourth aggregate: mental formations

The fourth aggregate is that which constitutes the ever changing mind; that which resides in thought and comes to an end with the disappearance of thought. Without object, thought, there is no subject, mind; the converse is also true, without subject, thought, there is no object, mind.

Acknowledging the speed of thought and thought's constant flow, in the succession of thought after thoughts, this flow conditions the mind which directly influences the actions controlling the body. Thus, via the synthesising function of the mind, a man is carried along as a leaf caught in the river's flow. From morning till night a man constantly changes and to a similar set of circumstances he may react in one way in the morning and in the exact opposite in the evening. To view the real; the unchanging; the unborn; with the unreal; the changing; the born; is the fruitless quest of the unenlightened.

Just as when a man is seated in a boat and another boat nearby pulls away, it is momentarily difficult to tell whether it is the boat he sits in, the other boat, or even the bankside that is pulling away. The mind's associative response to situations causes its conditioned reaction.

If we do not bring a halt to this production and destruction of thoughts which keep the function of mind occupied, the attention of mind is solely upon these ever changing phenomena and cannot come to rest on the absolute condition inherent in the total of these events. This could be usefully equated with self-extinction as with the annihilation of thought - where lies the cognising part? Remaining is everything

that was before the act of self-extinction, no other change than that the limited and limiting self is no more in evidence. What is experienced at this juncture is just this whole aspect viewed through the still mind. No concepts, no ideas, no thoughts; thus no opinions, no bias, no conditional aspects. Pure mind, no self-contamination. A mirror which only reflects, no dust on the mirror, no ruffled waters; a clear view through a still mind.

A mirror reflects the things in its span: tables, chairs, walls and people; yet the mirror is none of these things, it remains a function of reflection and does not meddle in the affairs of other things. A man should understand by comparison with the mirror that, while reflecting itself in all the Dharma, a man's true mind does not participate in their differences nor does it pass away, or come into being. The one in error sees only the reflection in the mind, he does not see the mirror aspect of the true mind. This is what the Buddha declares in the *Sutra of Complete Awakening*: 'Man takes the reflections caused by the six dusts for the real aspect of his true mind'.

It is the unenlightened who say they see the mirror when all the images have been swept away and what remains is without manifest content. A man should silently consider this simple mirror which has neither past nor future, is colourless and odourless, reflecting indifferently the table and the chair.

Also in the *Diamond Sutra*: 'The Tathagata comes from nowhere and does not go anywhere. If a man's true mind is like this mirror, it is the same with all the Dharma. He who discovers the mirror aspect is known as the Saint'.

To use a comparison, it is like making figures of wax. Considered from the viewpoint of the figures, the figure of the Devil is horrible, whilst the figure of the Buddha is venerable; The old man wrinkled, the young man handsome; a crane is long legged, a duck has short legs; the pine is straight, the bramble twisted. From the viewpoint of wax, the Devil is wax, the Buddha is wax; no difference between the man and the woman; no distinction on the social scale between the noble and peasant. The tall crane is waxen as well as the short-legged duck; the pine, the bramble are both of wax; it is always the same substance, and among the figures is not the least difference. It is the same with all the Dharma. Considered from the heavenly viewpoint, everything appears of the original substance and there is not the least difference; considered from the point of views of the particular, they arise in many forms. From the point of view of the Absolute, there is no difference between any of the many and varied particular forms manifest at any moment. Considered from the point of view of the enlightened, being one particular among many particulars, the difference only is that seen.

When the unity of each and everything is known, the tendency to see the difference is replaced by seeing the harmony of all things. Evil does not exist and neither does good. There is always a threesome, good-bad-and their relative aspect. This third factor is ever present and unifies the two opposites, showing their relation to one the other and the impossibility of the one's existence without the other. Also, from the point of view of the Absolute, they have an essentially zero nature in their self-cancelling conclusion. Thus, the third factor enables a transcendent view to be taken. For this one must remain detached. For the unenlightened this is difficult as there is identification with every event, not realising these events are not a part of him and in no way affect him, unless he acts as host to them and this he unwittingly does.

The essential mind remains pure despite the flux of ever changing events, in that the mirror was never born and not being born it can never die. The 'no entering' and 'no leaving' refer to the Unchanging, the absolute aspect of the mirror. The phenomena are not of the mirror, being of relative existence, thus they are born and also die. As the mirror reflects without transforming itself into the reflection, so all nature is clearly reflected by it.

There is no definite line between what is reflected and what reflects, only in extremes is man's awareness of the difference. There is no line of demarcation between any two things, no actual point where it can be said, 'Now that does not exist but the other exists.' Only when the 'other' has established itself can it be said to exist, and that only when its combining factors are overlooked, that is, from a relative view point.

This gives rise to the comment, 'All the Dharma are ghostlike' or 'Everything manifest in the physical universe is but illusion.' A man must solidify this illusion by realising the illusory nature of all things and thereby the illusions become the real.

When an ignorant man approaches a mountain and an enlightened man also sees the mountain, both may exclaim: 'It's a mountain'. One day perhaps, should the unenlightened man wake up from his dream existence, and should he be looking in the direction of the mountain, there is little doubt that the first words he will utter will be 'It's a mountain'. Indeed there is only one mountain but there are many views.

If on looking a man sees that 'hidden' thing he is like a blind man being born anew, with eyes wide-open in astonishment at the wonder of the commonplace, thus there is a smile upon his heart. What can the man do other than bow before the mountain?

To tell an unenlightened man that nothing which he sees is actually real brings disillusion with his whole life and causes him to actualise this new dream, that nothing exists and he also is non-existent; this is bad. Tell him he has an eternal aspect and is not in the least separate from Buddha Mind, and this causes his little self to inflate and in this way his condition becomes just as bad. To say nought at all is reasonable in such difficult circumstances. In Zen the way is to say least under all circumstances, and to state the negative in most circumstances. In this manner is the most said and the positive affirmed.

When someone asks, 'On listening to you reasoning I am in sympathy with what you say and understand most, I do not doubt that I am in essence Buddha and that this world is the Pure Land. Nevertheless, when I see suffering around me and see myself taking part in this suffering, I wonder at the reality of my being the Buddha, and that this is the Pure Land'. I must reply that the questioner has a partial knowledge of what I say, but this has been gained by the particular imagination, the intellect. Though it appears something like illumination, it is not yet the realisation of true illumination. Thus it is not therefore the full awakening from ignorance.

So, though the truth is almost grasped, it may as well be a million miles away, for how has it profited the man when there is no reason to will the good and no understanding to foster compassion? Still remains self seeking and the inevitable ego, The dream has become more subtle and in this state there are more shadows to hide the real. To cut away all this dross takes great sincerity of effort and mindfulness. To guess with one's imagination causes pitfalls along the way. No idea is the only idea. Any other idea will give a bias to one's efforts to attain to that idea and then how can the Real be obtained? If a man wants to identify himself with the real, then he must drop every logic, every passion, rise beyond good and evil, and with a true and solid will, as one climbing a mountain, begin the task.

Meditate without looking forward or backward, and doubt continuously. No thinking of heat or cold, food or sleep. Of course eat when hungry, move to the warmth and avoid the cold, but do not put that in front of your task. When the time arrives, the bottom will fall away from your feet and all which was will fall into its Original Condition. Such a laugh will be wrought at that moment, and a clapping of the hands in joy, or a deep sob and a wringing of the fingers as simply gaining a real perspective will resolve every problem. But it is difficult to break down the ignorance gathered throughout extensive time without great aspiration.

A long time ago the venerable Tchang-tse, being doubtful about the meaning of the phrase from the *Surangama Sutra*: 'Why does the Pure Substance of the Origins suddenly reveal itself as nature before our eyes?' asked the teacher Houe-kio of Lange-sie: 'What does this phrase mean?' Lange-sie replied, 'Why does the Pure Substance reveal itself as nature before our eyes?' Hardly had Tchang-tse heard this, when he realised the great illumination, as if the bottom of the pail had gone. He was thus in the state where he transcended the aggregate of the mental formation. The meaning of this phrase from *The Sermon of Tetsugen* is indicated by the following: when the venerable Buddha declared to the assembly at Surangama, 'This world

is originally the Pure Earth and of the Pure Substance,' the monk Purna asked him, 'If this world is the Pure Earth and of the Pure Substance as you, the Tathagata say, why is it endowed with all the conditional aspects of nature which undergo birth and death?' Chang-tse was very much in doubt as to the true sense of the meaning of the phrase from the *Surangama Sutra*, Purna too had doubts. Such were the replies both monks were delivered from their dream state and for the first time discovered the plan of the Pure Substance.

Formerly a monk asked an ancient master, 'What is to be done if I am not calm because of production and destruction?' The master replied, 'You should immediately become like cold ashes or a dried tree.' The same monk asked another master, 'What is to be done if I am not calm because of production and destruction?' He replied, 'Idiot, where is there production and destruction?' Hardly had the monk heard these words when he realised the great illumination. These instances indicate the state of a man when he comes into harmony with the Real by transcending the aggregate of the mental formations.

On the fifth aggregate: consciousness.

Consciousness is at the root of the four other aggregations: of matter, impressions, concepts and mental formations, and these taken collectively have given rise to the entire manifest universe. This means consciousness is the origin of all deception, though consciousness is the True Mind, it is called consciousness on account of the difficulties caused by ignorance. Kouei-fong has said, consciousness that is the result of imaginative projection in ignorance shows the True Mind as changeable, yet the essence of the True Mind does not change. Consciousness further resembles the state of a sleeping person in that, if the person does not sleep, he cannot dream.

In sleep, dreams of all sorts are taken for reality, yet in themselves they do not exist. It is the same with consciousness. When it is the True Mind in its essence and it is not asleep in ignorance, there exist no distinction, consequently to what does man oppose Heaven?

When the sleep of ignorance covers our Original Face it is said that the fundamental ignorance prevails. It is the source of all subsequent aberrations. While this fundamental ignorance prevails, we dream of various things. Things such as Heaven and Hell, and in so doing Heaven and Hell appear as real. Nothing is seen as it is, an aspect of the True Mind. Each thing is tainted with personal bias, with associations and limits. Space, or non existence is missed in its essential quality of withoutness. The unenlightened man thinks that space exists, in thinking it exists he has thought it into existence and thereby tainted the perfect purity of its non-existence that lies beyond consciousness. What results is the source of error of subsequent thought pertaining to the eighty-four thousand things [a way of alluding to the immense complexity of all and everything]. Acknowledgement of the eighty-four thousand things of existence creates desire as some things lead to pleasure and others to pain and thus pleasure is desired and pain avoided, giving rise to the antipodes of Heaven and Hell.

When a man realises that the pleasures of this world are conditioned and impermanent, and consequently belong to the realm of dreams; when, say, this man awakens to the knowledge of the Great Truth and practices sitting meditation, then the three states of good, bad and indefinite appear in his mind. These three kinds of thinking act contentiously and each in turn spring into the mind and at one moment a man thinks of the good, and then thinks of the bad, at another time he thinks of neither the good nor the bad. The bad thoughts arise due to man's self-created Hell; the good thoughts due to his self-created Heaven and the indefinite due to ignorance which cannot distinguish which is good and which is bad. The novice who is not ardent in his sitting meditation is thus prey for the good, the bad and the indefinite.

When the aspirant strengthens his will and can remain detached from the springing up of these thoughts and he practises sitting meditation with all of his heart and without any discomfort in this, his mind becomes clear and polished like a mirror. This lasts for some seconds, it is a sign, ephemeral as the dew, that the mind is ready for concentration. Should such a state arise, the man should give even greater attention to his efforts.

If this is done without negligence, the mind, which is purified for only a short time in the beginning, will very soon remain in this state of purification for longer periods. It will eventually be possible to remain in a pure state during a third of the meditation period and then eventually for half of the period. It is only a matter of constant practice before the whole meditation period is consumed in this purified state, without the least thought of good, nor bad, nor without being indifferent. The mind remains pure, like the polished mirror on its stand, or like the vacuity of space, and an incomparable freshness pervades the whole being. In this condition more than half the way of *zazen* has been traversed. This called in the Zen school, 'To gather the all in one'.

But, when this state continues for a certain time, the novice thinks he has realised illumination and that he is equal to Sakyamuni or Bodhidharma. It is a great mistake. To have come to this point is to attain to the essence of the fifth aggregate, what the *Surangama Sutra* calls: 'To enter into the calm and being at one with it, is to be on the verge of consciousness'. When the seeker practices *zazen* firmly, he finds himself in this situation and immediately he believes that illumination has been realised comparable to Lin-tsi and To-chan. And so he proclaims aloud that he has obtained the Original Face, the Real Kingdom. He then behaves as he assumes a Zen Master behaves, by according to others the certificate giving them permission to propagate Zen; by giving the smacks with the stick and by shouting. But such people do not, as yet, know the interior experience of the Buddha or the Zen Patriarchs, and they have not yet arrived at the origin of the Unique Mind. Others, without even reaching this stage make use of the Doctrine and think they have attained enlightenment. Some of the deluded think that the Universal Vacuity is illumination. All of these are far from the spirit of Buddha and the Zen Patriarchs.

Yet the one who is led astray by the fifth aggregate and thinks he is illumined is different from those who have only a superficial knowledge. His exercises have led him far because he has followed the path of Truth, though he does not yet know how to transcend this state of consciousness; deceived by the latter he makes of it the True Mind. It is because exercises are not enough! The *Sermon of Tetsugen* declares: 'The state in which all discrimination disappears is neither existence nor non-existence'. From this it can be known, and to remain separate from the world, even in this subtle manner, does not further the approach to the Real.

The Buddha and the great Ch'an Masters have all spoken in the same way and show the absence of reflection, and of thought, after having abandoned discrimination; the state in which a man is immersed in purity and remains as clear as the calm sky, this is the eighth consciousness of living beings and its lack is a cause of aberration in this world.

Though this consciousness resembles the True Mind, it is not this mind, and the Buddha did not imprudently explain this to seekers. The reason is this: if the Buddha declared this state of consciousness to be true, the seeker would immediately stop there. And, believing he is fulfilled, he would not strive any longer in his *zazen*. If the Buddha declared that it is an illusory state, the seeker will then suppose that all is useless and that the True Mind does not exist at all. And he will eventually think that all is ended at his own death and will never really know the True Mind. This situation is razor sharp and the Buddha did not explain it rashly. Though consciousness is an aspects of True Mind, it cannot be called the True Mind; yet it is not altogether an aberration, because all illusions are abandoned in this state.

If the seeker has come to this stage, he should continue his *zazen* even more strenuously, already the signs of the True Illumination are manifesting themselves. It can be compared to the first signs of dawn, but when the sun has not yet risen above the horizon. Though the darkness of night has been dissipated, the seeker does not know how it has disappeared, nor how the entire world became bright. If he abandons his exercises through taking the paling of darkness of illusion and the clearness of his soul state for the realisation of illumination he will never find the Sun of Wisdom. Know that this state is not yet the True Illumination, although the darkness of illusion has vanished. Without abandoning this state, without rejoicing, without waiting for illumination; only remaining in the state, without reflection or thought, the

aspirant should continue with a steady sincerity. Suddenly the True Illumination will appear and it will illumine all the Dharma as if a hundred suns were rising. This is called, 'becoming the Buddha by seeing one's proper nature' or, 'The great Illumination and the Great Insight', or, 'The Joy of Annihilation'. Then the aspirant will meet all the Buddhas of the past, the present and the future all at the same time and he will know the essence of Sakyamuni and Bodhidharma; he will find the true nature of all living beings, he will penetrate to the very core of the sky and earth and all things. The great joy of this moment is overwhelming. So, the *Surangama Sutra* declares: 'In an extreme clearness, light pervades everywhere. A luminous peace suffuses all space, coming to the real world, one seems to have come from out of a dream'.

When this enlightenment is achieved, all nature is of the Substance of the Essence of Nature, where calmness and enlightenment are not separate. And in the whole universe there does not exist anything which is not True Mind. This is spoken of as 'Changing the whole earth into gold and churning the rivers into cream'.

Long ago a monk asked Yun-sen, 'What is to be done when no thought springs up?' Yun-sen replied, 'Mount Semeru'. Another monk asked Tchao-tsu, 'What is to be done when I do not bring anything?' Tchao-tsu replied, 'Abandon it'. The monk continued, 'I do not bring anything, what should I abandon?' Tchao-tsu said, 'If you cannot abandon it, then go to get it'. Hardly had he said these words when the monk realized the Great Illumination. One of these monks said, 'No thought springs up' and the other 'I do not bring anything'. They had both come to the state of non-reflection and no thought. They had questioned the Masters. The Masters replied as they did because they knew that the monks were spiritually sick. With this 'Mount Semeru' and this 'Abandon it' a man comes to the domain of the Original and there he can meet Yun-sen and Tchao-tsu. Be steadfast in *zazen* and the domain will be reached. This why an ancient has said 'Remove the hands from the edge of the precipice and grasp it yourself; if you are reborn after death, no one can deceive you'.

Chapter Five

Ancient India the milieu from which Buddhism sprang!

It will do no harm and actually quite a lot of good to hark back to Mother India to better grasp where the Iguts of *The Sermon of Tetsugen* came from, such as the *Surangama Sutra*, among others. The gist of the Tetsugen sermon is contained in the *Surangama* translated in 705 CE by Sramana Paramiti, likely of Nalanda university. This travelling monk journeyed to China and translated the text while residing in Guangzhou Province - in T'ang Dynasty China.

For that useful Indian context I will turn to my friend and colleague Fernando Garcia's book *Humanism in India*, which informs the interested reader of the ways and means whereby India produced the likes of Mahatma Gandhi, a promoter of active non-violence and non-discrimination. This is of direct relation to the present writing, *the Horse that Refused to Drink*. Garcia's analysis explains to the reader how it was possible for this vast hubris of a Hindu continent to produce such major Buddhist works.

His book also informs us about a host of other individuals with humanistic leanings, and introduces currents of thought and action and particular humanist moments of India's history that helped change the course of its people's lives, their thinking and their cultural development. The result of this impinges on all of us today, well, especially those of us digging into these 'abstruse' matters and engaged in these studies on the intentional evolution of the human being.

To look into any issue a writer needs a good angle to allow the reader to maintain a solid reference, despite mental excursions along a multiplicity of paths without losing the plot... and when it comes to the complexity of India this is essential. I found the graspable tag on how humanism was founded and developed in India the ideal means to the end of understanding how those diverse elements that resulted in cultural depositions and transgressions influenced the entirety of this great nation, though in some areas less than others, considering the cultural backwaters that exist in any region or country.

It is early apparent that Mr Garcia has taken recourse in the tools supplied under the terms of the Four Universal Laws and the Method (for comprehension and action) from Silo's very early works, as brought to public attention in the first pages of that 1972 book by the author of *Siloism*. The results show the merit of this classical Siloist approach. Via Garcias's writings understanding is continually augmented and I for one felt I had grasped the Indian nettle without that familiar sting of impenetrability.

In practice, this possibility is offered by Garcia in his focussing on the differentiation, the complementation, and the synthesis of each and every budding factor of newness that arrived to the Indian sub-continent, whether from an individual, or from some epochal ramification.

The first fifty-five pages introduce and define modern humanism, that is, one devoid of the old silliness and compensations that might have been necessary as instanced in a humanism that went against religious orthodoxies that were fraught with extremism and fundamentalism to bring us to the present where the principles are geared toward freedoms rather than condemnations, so needed today.

Not just tolerance, but respect and appreciation of the other's point of view is proposed. This takes in everything from legitimate independence and autonomy movements, the demonized Taliban, ostracized groups such as outcasts and gypsies, prostitutes and whatever other sector or strata of the human condition is being systematically opposed and violated, as per the *adivasi* or so-called 'tribals'.

India as such is dealt with from the book's Part Two, Converging Diversity, which title sums up today's India when viewed in the best light. Immediately the untruth that India's greatness lies in the arrival of the Aryans from the north is dealt with, not so, the unsung mass which dwelt on the Indian continent absorbed and amalgamated those cultural inputs, over time, humanising the totality. This is an important reckoning as it means Indians have come to their present stage of development on their own efforts and worth, and not because of some foreign influence.

It is noted that the institutional patterns of the Harrappan (Harappan Civilization ca. 3000-1500 BCE) - pre-Aryan but Indian - are still preserved in some villages, discerned from ritual instruments to cults like mother goddesses, to *linga*, *yonis*, *svastika* and deities that became part of Hinduism - eg, the *Kali* cult of the folk-goddess who emerged as the mother-force of the universe.

Note: Earliest archaeological evidence of svastika-shaped ornaments date back to the Indus Valley Civilization of Ancient India as well as Classical Antiquity. In Tantra the symbol is used to evoke 'shakti' a sacred force the most significant form being Kundalini Shakti. In other Hindu traditions of Shaivism and Vaishnavism, Shakti embodies prakriti, the active feminine energy Prakriti of Purusha, who is Vishnu in Vaishnavism and Shiva in Shaivism. Vishnu's female counterpart is Lakshmi, Parvati is the female half of Shiva. The swastika is also a Chinese character used in East Asia representing eternity and Buddhism.

The Sindhu Valley Civilisation (or Indus Valley Civilisation) made a definite contribution to the cultural development of India. Also, the ideas of renunciation and asceticism leading to *moksha*, *mukti* and *nirvana*. The Jain precept of non-violence appears pre-Aryan as well.

The author points at the era that fermented the rise of the *Upanishads* (800 to 500 BCE) as interesting from the humanist point of view, an era ridden with diverse creeds and opinions. He quotes Radhakrishnan on the *Upanishads*: "Their aim was not science or philosophy, but right living." Then came Buddhism and Jainism in rebellions against Vedic concepts of the divine, as thinkers began placing the human being as a central value.

Indeed: "...in the post-Vedic philosophies of the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the Buddhist and the Jaina scriptures, it is men who hold the centre of interest, the gods are subsidiary'. "...we notice that in this period sacrifices yield place to human ethics, monotheism replaces polytheism, and instead of Vedic rituals we have a growing urge toward knowledge and devotion," Garcia declares.

Garcia categorises Buddhism and Jainism as revolutionary, and the other major forces of Vaishnavism and Saivism as Reformist movements. He also mentions that this epoch was that which gave birth to the intellectual visions of men like Plato, Lau Tzu, Second Isaiah, Yajnavalka and more.

"Both Mahavira and the Buddha opposed the idea of a hereditary caste system..... no doubt both succeeded in removing caste distinctions in their monastic order, but they failed in their attempts to abolish it permanently from society," concludes Garcia.

There are separate sections of the teaching of the Buddha, on the Jains, also on Ashoka where this writer learned that this king among kings of the Mauryan Dynasty became a Buddhist, which I knew, but that he did not impose Buddhism on his people, merely proposing the tenets that the Buddha taught as a way of life of holding to an attitude of social responsibility. Buddhism was not made the state religion.

In the paragraphs introducing Hinduism the *Mahabharata* is quoted. This book is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, the other being the *Ramayana*. It contains philosophical and devotional material, such as a discussion on the four "goals of life" as *dharma* (right action), *artha* (purpose), *kama* (pleasure), and *moksha* (liberation).

For Garcia, by the time Hinduism took shape it had been given a humanistic touch, bringing human beings closer to the centre of religious concern.

This identification of the universal divine principle with the essential identity of every human being was first formulated in the *Upanishads*, and was further elaborated by Shankara -(169 to 799 CE) - a Brahman from India's southern state of Kerala, propagator of Advaita (Monoism) philosophy where man is equal to the divine principle that permeates the whole of reality. "This dignifying tenet is at the heart of Hinduism, still struggling against the inertia of caste discrimination, communalism, and national chauvinism," comments Garcia.

With the arrival of Islam at India's door, a further cross-cultural mix took place and when the turbulence mostly settled, as time took its toll, the remaining friction was due to bigotry on both sides: "...due to the respective orthodox minorities, namely the Muslim theologians (Ulema) and the Hindu Brahmin caste. These minorities monopolised the interpretation and application of religion, acting as intermediaries between scriptures and people, between the divinity and the believers," he says.

Garcia hands authority over to K. M. Sen's book *Hinduism* to point at the origins of another important influence - the Bhakti movement - that guided Indian thought: "The Bhakti movement seems to have therefore non-Aryan roots and indeed the *Padmapurana* declares Bhakti to be a product of the Dravidian land. There is no doubt that the Bhakti movement was long opposed by Brahmins because of its disregard of traditional religious ceremonies and its indifference to caste divisions, which annoyed the Brahmins."

Quoting A. K. Majumdar's *Bhakti Renaissance*, Garcia has it that: "Any person irrespective of age, sex or caste could have the *darsana* or vision of the deity through His grace or surrender to Him. Therefore the sectarian creeds like Vaishnavism, Saivism, or Sakti worship developed catholicity of spirit and universal outlook which are absent in the Vedic religion, in which the knowledge of the Vedas, confined to the males of the upper castes, was a prerequisite to the realisation of Brahman or Supreme Reality."

The point being, that the Bhakti movement seems to have very early non-Aryan roots. However, it was Ramananda (ca. 1370 to 1440) that gave medieval mysticism its momentum by challenging caste divisions, questioning the traditional religious ceremonies, and by preaching in Hindi rather than Sanscrit. Ramananda founded a new school of Vaishnavism. The saint Kabir was his most famous disciple.

From the fourteenth century on the Bhakti movement became a dynamic force in north India. However, the development of this movement was tightly linked to Sufism which came along with Islam with the arrival of Arabs, Turks and Afghans. The early Sufis were Muslim mystics from Persia who first settled in Sind and Punjab, in northern India, their teachings trickling into Gujarat, the Deccan, and Bengal.

Treated as heretics by the Islamic orthodoxy, the Sufi *sheikh* or *pir* was treated just as the Hindu guru to the extent that over time multitudes of Hindu pilgrims began to visit the shrines of Sufi saints and holy sites. The Sufis contested with the theologians of the Ulema on grounds that they were deviating from the original democratic principles of the Qur'an, placing emphasis on their mystical doctrine of union with God achieved through the love of God.

According to Garcia, for Sufis: "... love of God implied the love of humanity, so service for humanity was regarded as part of the mystical discipline." This is an important tenet of Universal Humanism and the Humanist Movement activities practiced by Siloists, to which group, like myself, Garcia belongs.

Garcia includes Akbar the Great in the paragraphs on Indo-Islamic interaction in recognition of this son of the sixteenth century Mughals as the sole exponent of Muslim rule that did not consent to bigotry. Jalaluddin Mohammad Akbar was born in Sind, and coming to power, he worked hard to promote Hindu-Muslim unity. And it is said that under Akbar the Mughal Empire was equal to or ahead of Europe in most areas.

The saint Kabir ((1440-1518) nurtured an offshoot blend of Hindu and Muslim ideas, though continuing in the Bhakti line. He was a major influence of Nanak who founded the great Sikh religion. Both of these religious leaders... "had large followings among the artisans and cultivators to whom the emphasis on simple living and an absence of incomprehensible ritual made strong appeal," notes Garcia, who continues with: "There was also much honest common sense and practicality in the writings of both men, extreme patterns of living being rejected in favour of a normal balanced life as a part of society."

On the same note, Garcia brings in the Bauls with the quote: "Be truthful, be natural; truth alone is natural. Seek the truth within your own heart, for there is no truth in external religious observances; neither in the sects or the holy vows, neither in the religious garb nor in pilgrimages. Truth resides within the heart and is revealed in love, in strength, in compassion. Conquer hatred, and extend your love to all mankind, for God resides in all." From the book *Bhakti Renaissance*.

The Bauls are itinerant poets, reciters, musicians and singers as often as not met up with on river journeys, at festivals, on Holy Days. Gypsy-like nomads that live according to their simple dictates: "What need have we of other temples,' they ask, 'when our body is the temple where our spirit has its abode,'" defines K. M. Sen in his writing, *Hinduism*. Thus, with the Bauls, the Bhakti movement is given further scrutiny.

Part 5, Response to Colonialism, takes in the nineteenth century with its foreign domination and lingering anti-humanist traits as factors influencing humanism in India, set as it was among the reform movements. Here we are introduced to the likes of Gujarat's Swami Narayana (1781 to 1830) and West Bengal's Raja Rammohan Roy (1774 to 1833).

Roy founded the Brahma Samaj to launch activities of anti-colonist agitation, especially against the armed British East India Company. His work was continued by Devendranath Tagore (1817 to 1905) - not to be confused with his son, the famous poet-activist Rabindranath Tagore - who came on the scene later (1861-to 1941) to play his valuable part - and Keshab-chandra Sen, with his Indian Reform Association. The Parsees had their own reformists within their community and Parsi women moved freely early on in public.

Garcia proceeds, after detailing the more well-known revivalists and spiritual figures that influenced events, to enlarge on India's Independence Movement - Swaraj, meaning a movement leading to self-government: "... as one of the most significant historical processes of the twentieth century".

Here we encounter civil disobedience, non-violent resistance, Swadeshi - starting up national industries, banks and factories, and Satyagraha - Gandhi's novel method of non-violent struggle. This led to the straightforward statement by Gandhi (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, 1869 to 1948) on 14 July, 1942, that there was no room for a compromise and that the British must "Quit India".

"Gandhi's idea of *ahimsa* (non-harming) was not based on the Vedic concept of *ahimsa*. He ruled out all exceptions in the application of *ahimsa*. He derived his *ahimsa* from ascetic sources, and it was this ascetic or *sramanic* concept which he applied, for the first time, to politics and economics," declares Garcia.

The final pages of *Humanism in India* are devoted to After Independence, the title of Part 6, beginning with the Radical Humanist M. N. Roy - Manabendra Nath Roy, of West Bengal. Vinoba Bhave and the Sarvodaya (Welfare for All) movement is also introduced.

The resurgence of Buddhism in India is highlighted by bringing Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, 1891 to 1956) forward whose wholehearted efforts at liberating the Untouchables from the oppression of the caste system gained him wide public attention in India, and vastly repopulated the Indian Buddhist community.

In his winding up, Garcia notes that besides the issue of caste as a factor that runs throughout the efforts at the humanising of India, the role of mysticism or religion is also integral to India's social transformation.

Further: "Indian history shows three distinct moments in which humanist values flourished. These three moments are linked to respective rebellions against anti-humanist issues when different cultures came into contact. There was always an ascendant one, clashing with, the rest, and an ultimate convergence and merge. The first was during Aryan ascendancy, i.e., marked by the *sramanic* resistance led by Buddhism and Jainism. The second was during Islamic ascendancy, 'against Hindu and Muslim orthodoxies, i.e., marked by the Bhakti movement led by Hindus, Muslims, Jains and Buddhists. The third was during British ascendancy, against colonialism, i.e., Renaissance and Independence movements, which everybody joined."

As his writing tells, mysticism or religiosity was always the underlying force for change in India, a benign force that held the proponents of positive change together and deposited what is today a field tilled and ready for universal humanism, whether so-named or not.

Chapter Six

Buddha's teaching - reading between the lines

Meandering among the bookstores of Manila, I came across a booklet by Richard H. Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began*, emphasising certain points of relevance to interpreting what Buddha must mean. For this writing, most timely!

Gombrich mainly pursues the theme of how Buddha's teachings emerged through debate with other religious teachings of his day. And Gombrich also discusses how Buddha's early followers, in attempting to preserve the teachings, unintentionally may have changed them. The *Pali Cannon* might well include passages from his followers, and, he looks at what might be seen as discrepancies between what the Buddha actually said and the Pali texts. Initially Gombrich speaks of essentialism and nominalism: "...the validity of an intellectual position in no way depends on authority; it does not matter who holds it or has held it in the past" - in religious and even academic affairs this is ignored".

To continue with his thoughts... Buddha's teachings show he was a nominalist, in that everything we conceive are mere conceptualisations, mere labels, but that does not deny that the *Pali Cannon* is realistic and does not deny that there is a world 'out there' - neither did the Buddha. The Brahminical scriptures of the Buddha's day, the Brahmanas and the early Upanishads, were mainly concerned with a search for the essences of things, not the immediate concern of a nominalist, which takes the Buddha into the field of science.

Buddha seen each sentient being as a composition of five aggregates, or *khandhas* in Pali, or *skanda*, in Sanskrit, as already noted in Chapter Four here. Gombrich prefers: physical forms, feelings, apperceptions, volitions and consciousness (note difference to previous terms and note how moderns such as Christmas Humphreys in his *The Wisdom of Buddhism* prefers form, sensation, conception, discrimination, and cognition!), the Buddha taking interest in how these functioned, or worked. His teachings were given the name, the Dharma, a set of truths, 'abstract and eternal like all truths - as in mathematics for example'. The Buddha said that just as the ocean has one flavour, that of salt, his teaching had one flavour, that of liberation. The Buddha stressed that what gave him the right to preach his doctrine as the truth was that he had experienced its truth himself.

One of the basic propositions of the Dharma, of Buddhism as doctrine, is that all empirical phenomena, all mental events and physical states are impermanent and this includes Buddhism.

For Buddha and his followers, things - they focussed mainly on living beings - exist not as hard essences but as dynamic processes. These processes are not random, but causally determined - one thing leads to another. Thus, Buddhism is not an inert object: it is a chain of events.

Gombrich applies the Buddhist teaching of impermanence and conditioned genesis to Buddhist history as a whole; and in his writing, likewise to the *Pali Canon*. It is the duty of scholars to analyse and repair any corruption.

The critical studies of *The Bible* got underway in the nineteenth century and these are accepted nowadays as fundamental to any serious study of Christianity. The Pali commentaries on the *Canon*, which were put into the form in which we have them today by Buddhaghosa and others in Sri Lanka and south India (such as Dhammapala) likely in the fifth and sixth centuries AD, pointed out such corruptions in the Theravadan tradition.

The vast majority of surviving Pali texts are less than three hundred years old with hardly any more than five hundred years old - quite different from *The Bible*. The canonical texts cannot be from later than the first century BCE to third century BCE. During the centuries of transmission, both oral and written, they were inevitably subject to corruption.

Chinese translations were made from other Indian languages and not from the Pali; the accuracy can only be guessed. However, we can apply our critical intelligence to the texts today. What is the harm in stating what makes common sense, as long as it is pointed out it is a personal opinion?

Gombrich further opines that inconsistencies in texts do not in themselves prove inauthenticity. A sacred tradition is at least as likely to iron out inconsistencies as to introduce them, a principle known as *lectior difficilior potior* that the banal reading is more likely to replace the oddity than vice versa. This kind of levelling has also occurred in *The Canon* on a vast scale as passages were translated from their original contexts to be repeated in other contexts.

The Buddha was communicating in a social context, reacting to his social environment and hoping in turn to influence those around him. The Buddha's experience of Enlightenment was of course private and beyond language, but the truth or truths to which he had 'awakened' had to be expressed in language, which is irreducibly social - the set of categories and concepts any language embodies.

The Dharma is the product of argument and debate, the debate going on in the oral culture of renouncers (Jains and other heterodox or non-Vedic groups), and Brahmins, in the upper Ganges Plain in the fifth century BCE. There is no firm evidence that writing even existed in India in the Buddha's day; we are only certain that writing came into use in India during the reign of Ashoka (269 BCE to 232 BCE), one and a half centuries later. The Jain texts were probably written down in the fifth century AD.

An example of a misleading presentation of Buddha's teaching without explaining its Indian background is in the West, where it's said the Buddha taught the doctrine of 'no soul' - *anatman*. What is being denied? - what is a soul? For Aristotle and thus Thomas Aquinas, the Italian Catholic theologian, it is the form of the body. But most Christians say that the soul is something other than the body, as in Plato. A disembodied mental, moral agent, which survives the body at death.

None of the foregoing has to do with the Buddha's position where he was opposing the Upanisadic theory of the soul where it is opposed to both the body and the mind as an essence that thus cannot change. In essence it was the same as the Universe. The Buddha was refusing to accept that a person had an unchanging essence. There was no need to posit a soul to explain how people 'worked'.

Buddha said that an Enlightened monk neither agrees nor disagrees with anyone, but goes along with what is said in the world without being attached to it. He said that he does not dispute with the world; it is the world that disputes with him. This is where 'skill in means' comes in, skill in adapting one's message to the audience, done by putting oneself in the position of the questioner from the start. The aim was to lead to *arhat*-ship, into Nirvana. Thus the words chosen accorded with whom the Buddha was speaking and to explore that today means reading between the lines.

Not doing so has led to seeming inconsistencies as the Buddha expressed his message in many different ways. The variety in the backgrounds of the Buddha's disciples also means differences in the texts they composed as there were several currents intermingling.

Allegory is seen in the handed down texts, which Gombach takes as an extension of metaphor into narrative, an artful form of literalism. An unintentional literalism has been a major force for change in the early doctrinal history of Buddhism. Texts have been interpreted with too much attention to the precise words used and not enough to the speaker's intention, the spirit of the text - especially notable in scholastic literalism.

An instance is given, that of the inflexible monk Ariththa, and the raft. The Buddha compares his teaching to be like a raft. Once used to cross a body of water, there was no need to carry the raft. Once enlightened a monk need not cling to the teaching as it was pragmatic in the sense of a particular formulation used at that time. It does not mean to abandon the teachings of the Buddha!

Gombrich further questions to what extent Buddha wished to present a philosophically coherent doctrine? Such is found in the *Pali Canon* but was that the work of later systematisers. The problem is seen in the history of Buddhist thought. The Madhyamikas, followers of Nagarjuna, dived into two camps, the Prasagikas - who held that their philosophy could only serve to demolish the positions held by others and taking their stance in that Buddha had said that he himself had no viewpoint. Or, the Svatantrikas, who appealed to the authority of the canonical passages where the Buddha's right view is recommended.

The Buddha's emphasis was on experience: the experience he had himself, and the experience he wanted others to have, too. In other words, direct knowledge grounded in one's own experience that can be called upon. He advises that the words of the wise should be heeded and taken into account. But not passive acceptance; rather, constant questioning and personal testing to identify those truths which you are able to demonstrate to yourself which can actually reduce your own stress or misery.

The term Dharma has to do with the normative system to be applied as Buddhism, also, Dharma are 'objects' of experience in insight meditation. In early Buddhism there are six senses, the mind is treated on par with the other five - physical sense organs are accepted, but sense perception is not reified. The term noeta is applicable here, or simply, 'things'.

To add a note on noetic: "Dharma can also mean the objects of thought as sounds correspond to hearing. Lifting the last words out of context, Mahayana texts claimed that the Buddha prescribed the abandonment of all objects of thought; and by the same token he also recommended the abandonment of the opposite, non-objects of thought." (page 25 of Gombrich's, *How Buddhism Began*)

Four Steps of the Teaching

Gombrich continues: In the fundamental texts on meditation, the *Satipatthana*, and, the *Maha Satipatthana Sutta*, the meditator has to train himself to see reality as the Buddha has taught it to be. He is to do this in four stages. First he learns to observe physical processes in his own and other people's bodies; then he learns to be similarly aware of feelings; then states of mind. Finally he learns to be aware of *dharma*. This has been rendered as 'his thoughts'. But the *dharma* that the text spells out are in fact the teachings of the Buddha, such as the Four Noble Truths. The meditator moves from thinking about those teachings to thinking with them: he learns to see the world through Buddhist eyes. This theory of sense perception has similarities with the school of Vaisheshika philosophy.

The Buddha did not reify consciousness. Vinnana is one of the five *khanda*, and is a process, not a thing: consciousness is always consciousness of. Pure consciousness is just an abstraction. Existence is conscious (*cit*) or rather consciousness (*vajnana*).

Consciousness for the Buddha is a process which illuminates objects. So when there is nothing to illuminate, there is no illumination: 'consciousness has no attribute'. The reference is to *Nirvana*, the

condition in which consciousness of duality and hence of specific entities has been transcended. This does not mean that consciousness is a thing which exists independently of its operations, let alone that other entities depend on it for their existence.

The Buddha's interest is in how, not what; his emphasis is on processes rather than objects, and could be said to be summarised in his teaching of the *patica-samuppada*, 'conditioned origination'.

In Buddhism 'purification' became a dominant metaphor for spiritual progress. An Enlightened person has not expunged *karma*, as said of the Jain saints, but no longer holds bad intentions and renders *karma* irrelevant. The Buddha's re-definition of 'action' as 'intention' turned the Brahmin ideology upside down and ethicised the universe... a turning point in the history of the world.

Nirvana ('blowing out') is part of an extended metaphorical structure which embraces Enlightenment and its opposite. What has to be blown out is the set of three fires: greed, hatred and delusion. The Buddha introduced the concept of these three fires in his *Fire Sermon, Aditta-pariyaya*. The three can be taken as alluding to the three fires that the Brahmin householder was committed to keeping alight that symbolised the life in the world: life as a family man; one's parents, one's household and dependants; renunciates and Brahmins. Actually, the Buddha meant 'everything', from all our faculties, the five senses and the mind.

Buddha was not a saviour, just a teacher who explained how one could save oneself, though the term saviour is acceptable in the sense that he taught a way to salvation. The Buddha taught that kindness - what the Christians tend to call love - is the way to salvation. However, kindness and compassion have been interpreted as mental attitudes, meditative exercises rather than calls for action, and this is notable in many Buddhist cultural settings.

For the Buddha it is a basic wrong to think, "I am" (*asmi*) - perhaps better "I exist", which is a radical attack on Vedanta and denying Descartes into the bargain. Existence for the Buddha implies stasis: it is the opposite of becoming. The attack is on the *Upanishads* where the individual self is sacrificed in the hope of attaining heaven when the self dies; life in heaven eternal, as in Christianity. Being lies at the heart of the Upanishadic world view: Action lies at the heart of the Buddha's. Action is *kamma* (Pali, Sanscrit: *karma*), and primarily it refers to morally relevant action.

For about a thousand years, Buddhism in India was a religion which could be characterised as antithetical to Tantra (rather than a single coherent system, Tantra is an accumulation of practices and ideas characterized by the use of ritual), or at least to Saiva/Sakta Tantra, the Tantric religion par excellence. Buddhism was never antinomian (the Christian theological doctrine that by faith and God's grace a person is freed from all laws - including the moral standards of the culture), and under no circumstances could normal morality be transcended.

By the sixth century, Buddhism had been massively invaded by Tantra, and the Vajrayana tradition was born, a paradoxical Buddhism that has turned the tradition on its head but was recolonised by Buddhist ethics. Its purpose was never immoral, the allegorical dramas enacted in Buddhist ritual and visualised by its practitioners always witness the triumph of good over evil, and are interpreted as leading to Enlightenment.

What makes the Vajrayana Buddhist is its ethics! - Gombridge.

On that note let me end this review of Mr Gombrich's writing, and offer this selective view to those friends engaged in seeking to access those levels of the Sacred already toured by Mr. Buddha. As seekers we will benefit by standing on the shoulders of our predecessors in these matters, which surely will be to their delight and our gain.

Chapter Seven

Tao-ism as a Useful Way

When Buddhist thought arrived in China, the Taoists had already set up shop and, together with the Confucians, the various 'players' by their opposition, incorporation and melding, produced a merry religious mix indeed, and one that has to be taken into account in any research into the possibilities of confronting one's own 'original face'!

Where else to start when looking to see if there are clues about the existence of a workable, walkable, set of steps within the Taoist tradition that can be followed to reach into the bliss realm of the Sacred, where immortality is spoken of - other than with the *Book of Lau Tzu, the Tao Te Ching -The Way and Its Virtue (T'ai I Chin Hua Tsung Chih)*. This must be basic to the study of Taoist thought.

However, what we have in that writing is the attitude bequeathed to one familiar with the said Sacred and that reading takes us to a more likely source of information regarding the defined quest, to *The Book of Consciousness and Life, (The Hui Ming Ching)*. This was written by Liu Hua-yang, in 1794, a Buddhist giving Taoist directions for meditation.

Here we find this anomaly of a mix of Taoist and Buddhist teachings. But then we need to make a side turn to see where this came about so it is worth considering that in the eleventh century China the Taoist pantheon contained no Buddhist deities or fictional gods, at all. It was only after sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that various Taoist gods came to be implored together with Buddhist ones when petitioning.

The writer Liu Ts'un-yan thinks the merging of Buddhist and Taoist deities in the widely read novel titled *Feng-shen*, compiled about 1545, may have strongly influenced religious practices in China as mixed Taoist-Buddhist deities started to appear after the publication of this novel. What's more -the first temples which adopted such practices were situated in Northern Kiangsu, near Hsinghua, the native district of Lu, the author of the novel.

It is necessary to understand that this mixing also resulted from those in power wanting to appeal to the common worshipper because some Taoists borrowed from the more exact Buddhist practitioners' works to better legitimise their own. This was to make more widely appealing what the Taoists had to offer. Previous to this blending the Taoist offerings were very diffuse, according to the nature of the Way of Tao.

This is of interest to anyone looking for purely Taoist practices, after all, the prime movers and originators of Taoist thought had clearly reached into the plane of the Sacred, so, how did they do it? Was there's a practical path that can be walked today?

The Tao

I cannot help but consider this a dip into the well of the sayings of affiliates of the semi-historical figure of Lao Tzu, that became Taoist lore. This was the sixth century BCE philosopher (or 'Old Sage' - born Li Erh - his surname was Li and his courtesy name Boyang) with whom the philosophy of Taoism began. Some scholars believe he was a slightly older contemporary of Confucius. Other scholars feel that the *Tao Te Ching* - the 5,000 character writing translated as *The Way and Its Virtue* - is really a compilation of paradoxical poems written by several Taoists using the pen-name, Lao Tzu. There is also a close association between Lao Tzu and the legendary Yellow Emperor, Huang-ti.

The first authenticated reference to the Tao occurs in the book *Kwan-tsu*, a collected work compiled by Kwan-chung (died 645 BCE, 100 years before the Confucian era), written in the 7th century BCE. It states: When the world began, universal Tao divided into two parts, the Tao of Heaven, T'ien Tao, and the Tao of Earth, T'i Tao. The Tao of Man comes into that duo to make it a three-o as the Chinese described all human religion, as they themselves knew it, as Jen Tao, the Tao of Man - thus the threefold origin of all things human in Chinese philosophy as can be noted in such as classical flower arrangement with the placing of the three main stems. Both Confucius and Lao Tzu followed the ancient Tao of China.

The *Kwan-tzu* lays emphasis on the human factor and less on the superstitious but that does not contradict a neutral attitude toward religion. In fact, the compiler would not neglect the traditional belief in God and the custom of worshipping from the Zhou dynasty on because it was believed that those beliefs and customs contributed to enlightening the ordinary people and protecting the nation. The atheism in those works have exercised an undeniable influence on later generations of atheists, but Kwan's atheism is not radical or systematically developed.

The tendency is to put the one philosophy against the other, the strict Confucianist thought against the iconoclastic mysticism mixed with down-to-earth life and anarchy of the Taoists -the latter attitude said to have been influential in preparing the ground for the easier deposition of the Way of Ch'an (Jap. Zen) of the Buddhists, also reputedly starting with Bodhidharma (Ch. Da Mo, sixth century) so much later in Chinese history.

Taoism took delight in the primitive agrarian communities and government under extreme laissez-faire conditions and a mystical union with the Tao for the liberation of one's individual human life. That mysticism was taken ahead by Chuang-tzu, of the late 4th century BCE who spoke of individual transcendence and going beyond death.

Whatever the truth, Taoism and Confucianism are best seen side-by-side as two distinct responses to the social, political and philosophical conditions of life two and a half millennia ago in old China. Confucianism concerned with social relations, conduct and a human society; Taoism much more demonstrably individualistic and mystical in character, greatly influenced by the big and small in wild nature, from blossoms to mountains. Both ways leading to an expanded human but essentially compassionate view of life.

To quote Mr L. Cranmer-Byng, from his *The Vision of Asia*: The Tao of Confucius is based on the "observance of the laws of social life which are called *li*, that is, all the good rules of human conduct, rescripts and customs of family life, society and government, besides rites and religion - in short, about the whole Tao of Man." Because the Tao of Confucius is the Tao of Race, "...whereas the Tao of Lao Tzu is that of the life-principle acting through the individual soul to the Universal and reacting through the Universal to the individual."

Thus when the Chinese gives reverence to the ancestors, he acts as the link betwixt the past and the future and that is the essential value, whereas: "For the Hindu, God is everywhere and may be approached

through any of His names and attributes, whether as Shiva, Vishnu or Sri Krishna. He is to be sought and found through the beauty of His own works from Himalaya to Ganges, through His revelation of the dawn and His mysteries of the twilight," again quoting Mr Cranmer-Byng.

Introducing basic concepts

Taoism is best understood as a way of life rather than as a religion; many of the written works frame Taoism as a school of thought focussed on the quest for immortality. Different branches of Taoism often have quite distinct beliefs. Nevertheless, there are core beliefs that nearly all the sects share. Taoism has never been a unified religion, rather it has consisted of numerous ideas based on various intuitions.

Taoist 'theology' emphasizes various themes found in the *Tao Te Ching*, ascribed to Lao Tzu. Chinese tradition has it that Lao Tzu lived in the 6th century BCE. Western historians, however, contend that Lao Tzu is a set for multiple historical figures and that he is a mythical figure. Or, contrariwise that he actually lived in the 4th century BCE, concurrent with the Hundred Schools of Thought and Warring States Period. Chinese scholars by and large accept Lao Tzu as a historical figure.

Another source of Taoist 'theology' stems from the works of Chuang Tzu, with his naturalness, vitality, peace, "non-action" (*wu wei*, or 'effortless effort'), detachment, flexibility, receptiveness, and spontaneity.

Chuang Tzu is believed to have lived in the fourth or third century BCE, at a time when China was split into a number of states weakly ruled under the Chou Dynasty. Chuang Tzu was said to be a minor government official for a while and was offered higher office, but declined on the grounds that it would limit his freedom.

Taoist Terms

Tao most straightforwardly means "the way", that is, the grand way of all things on a universal scale and in the daily ebb and flow of ordinary human life amid nature and human civilisation. Life energy comes in here as the flow of *chi*, the essential energy of action and existence, which mirrors the universal order of Tao, as it's counter pole. Tao is also associated with the complex Chinese concept of *de*, power, virtue, integrity, the active expression of Tao with *de* as active cultivation of the Way.

Wu wei is a central concept in Taoism, "non action". It is often expressed by the paradox *wei wu wei*, meaning "action without action" or "effortless doing". The practice and efficacy of *wu wei* are fundamental to Taoist thought. The aim of *wu wei* is alignment with Tao. It is believed by Taoists that masters of *wu wei* can observe and follow a certain potential innate to the Way.

In historical Taoist texts, *wu wei* is associated with water because likewise water is yielding in nature. Water is soft and weak, but can move mountains. Taoist philosophy proposes that the Universe works harmoniously according to its own ways. When a person exerts his or her particular will against those ways, the overall harmony can be disrupted. However, Taoism does not identify Man's actions as the root problem. Rather, Taoism suggests that Man had better place his intentions in harmony with the grander natural scheme thereby not going against the grand design.

P'u is a term used in Taoist thought to point at the mental state of *wu wei*. The term means 'uncut wood' or 'simplicity', a state of pure potential and clarified perception, that is, without prejudices and emotional overtones or misconceptions. In this state, Taoists believe, everything is seen as it actually is, without illusion.

P'u is believed to be the original nature of mind. In the state of *p'u*, there is no right or wrong, beautiful or ugly. There is only pure experience, or awareness, free from learned labels and definitions. It is this state of being that is the goal of following *wu wei*.

Taoists say that man is a microcosm of the Universe. Like the Hermetic maxim of, "as above, so below", Taoism suggests that Man may gain universal knowledge by understanding himself. Alchemy and various spiritual practices are used by Taoists to improve health and extend life, some say even to the extent of immortality.

The Taoist Pantheon

Taoism has its pantheon and Lao Tzu is today depicted as a Taoist deity. Traditional Chinese religion is polytheistic, it has numerous deities that form a heavenly hierarchy that interestingly mirrors the bureaucracy of Imperial China. No chance happening that! The particular deities worshipped vary according to geographical regions and historical periods in China, though the general pattern of worship is uniform.

Popular Taoism typically has the Jade Emperor as the head deity. Those considering themselves an elite, such as the Celestial Masters Sect, usually present Lao Tzu and the Three Pure Ones at the summit of the pantheon. The task of the Sage Kings is to ensure that the human and the natural worlds are in harmony.

The Three Pure ones are:

The "Jade Purity" as "The Universal Lord of the Primordial Beginning";

The "Supreme Pure One", as "The Universal Lord of the Numinous Treasure" and, The "Grand Pure One" or "The Universal Lord of the Way and its Virtue", manifest as Lao Tzu, also known as the Lord of Man who is the formal founder of Taoism. He is the most eminent, aged ruler, thus the only Pure One depicted with a pure white beard.

Each of the Three Pure Ones represents both a deity and a heaven. The first heaven is Yu-Qing, and it is found in the Jade Mountain. The entrance to this heaven is named the Golden Door - "He is the source of all truth, as the sun is the source of all light". The Supreme Pure One (Ling-Bao Tian-Song) rules over the heaven of Shang-Qing. The Grand Pure One (Lao-Jun) rules over the heaven of Tai-Qing. The Three Pure Ones are often depicted as throned elders.

Schools of Taoist thought developed around each of these deities. Taoist Alchemy was a large part of these schools, as each of the Three Pure Ones represented one of the three cinnabar fields of the body: *jing*, *qi* and *shen*. The congregation of all three Pure Ones resulted in the return to Tao.

The Cinnabar Fields, or *dantian*, are suggested as three loci in the human body that play their roles in breathing, meditation, and *neidan* (internal alchemy) practices. These are located in the regions of the abdomen, heart, and brain, but are devoid of material counterparts. These establish a threefold division that corresponds to other threefold motifs in the Taoist pantheon and its cosmology.

To speak a bit more of the heavens associated with the Pure Ones, the first pure one represents universal or heavenly *chi*. The second pure one represents human plane *chi* and third pure one represents earth *chi*. Heavenly *chi* includes all and everything, in Western eyes like the energy of god as the force of creation and universal love. Human plane *chi* is the energy that exists on the surface of our planet which sustains human life, and the earth *chi* includes all of the forces inside the planet as seen in the five elemental forces.

While a number of immortals and other mysterious figures appear in the *Chuang Tzu* (or *Zhuangzi*), the book of the same name as its author and in the *Tao Te Ching*, these are not objects of worship as Taoism is not theistic or a monotheism in the Western sense. Being at one with the Tao means living in accordance with Nature.

The *Chuang Tzu*, popularly said to be written by one Chuang Tzu, was likely the production of a thinker of the third century CE named Kuo Hsiang. Though Kuo was long called merely a 'commentator' he was much more: he was the creator of the 33-chapter text of *Chuang-tzu* ... Regarding the identity of the original person named Chuang, there is no reliable historical data at all.

The Techniques

Laozi, the Old Master, could be said to have internalized the old rites - instead of following the externals - as could be said of the Confucian Schools - and advised those in some authority to acquire an interior, spiritualised conformity with the Way.

One reflection on the matter has it that because the *Tao Te Ching* was born in a period when life was fragile and anything could happen anytime, the better attitude was one of care, momentary retreat and calming the mind by moving away from the excitement - let problems sort themselves out in the way of *wei wu*.

Laozi devoted thirty chapters of his book to the mystical discipline that would transform the interior life of the prince - to whom it was directed - to give him the power to replenish and restore the world, as the ancient kings had done.

The very first chapters introduce readers to Laozi's method. The sage ruler had to learn to think in an entirely different way. Ordinary rational thought was useless: doctrines, theories, and systems could only impede progress, because one must enter a dimension that exists beyond language and concepts. Hence Laozi began:

The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way... and so on...

This was quite in the tradition of Chinese yoga, *zuo-wang*, which taught adherents to shut out the external world and close down ordinary modes of perception - which was essential to the mystical process he outlined... though these were not detailed.

The Void - and The Womb of all being...

We should not fear nothingness because it is at the heart of reality he said: "The thirty spokes of a wheel share one hub," Laozi pointed out, "but it is at the centre, the hole in the axle where there is nothing, that the efficacy of the cart lies."

The point of interest in the present writing is to look into the techniques that were available for achieving that contact with the Profound, that elusive immortality. Research tells of dietary regimens, breath control, meditation, sexual disciplines, alchemy, the use of magical talismans, and a search for the Isle of Bliss. Dietary concerns focussed on nourishment while abstaining from foods which caused the onset of disease, old age, and death.

By the use of breath control and the movement of 'breath' throughout the Cinnabar Fields, the individual reached for immortality in this life and was said to have achieved it finally through the nourishment of an "embryonic body," which became the immortal self after death. What this means remains to be explained, importantly, what did immortality mean to the ancient Chinese mind and is it the same to the twenty-first century mind as shared East and West?

By avoiding ejaculation during the sexual act, it was believed that the sex energy could be combined with the 'breath' to further nourish the 'embryonic body' by urging it back through the spinal passageways, as in Indian Yoga, to excite the 'higher centres'. In the search for an elixir of immortality, Taoist alchemy developed both chemical experimentation (*waitan*) and a theoretical internal or psychological alchemy (*neitan*).

It is this esoteric Taoism which constitutes the native Chinese counterpart to Indian and Tibetan Tantra, and Western Qabalah, that is the main focus of the present search. However, little has been unearthed, so far, of clear and specific steps as are found in Buddhist practises on meditation.

Note: The Taoist School differs from the Ch'an Buddhist School in that it has confirmatory signs for each step of the way. While Ch'an Sect Buddhism was not of a 'set path' nature, certainly when it came to meditation, of fixing contemplation (chih-kuan), the Buddhist method practised in such as the T'ien-tai School of Chih-I does have its steps and signs.

Chapter Eight

The Secret of the Golden Flower

The *Secret of the Golden Flower (T'ai I Chin Hua Tsung Chih)* is a Taoist text of Chinese Yoga and an alchemical tract. First printing was in the eighteenth century, though a wood block form existed in seventeenth century. However, the oral tradition from which the writing stemmed, the Religion of the Golden Elixir of Life or *Chin-tan-chiao*, has passed into whispers. Tradition informs modern times that, in turn, that had come from Kuan Yin-hsi, the Master Yin-hsi of the Pass - for whom, again according to tradition, Lao Tzu wrote his *Tao Te Ching* that had been developed by the eighth century, in the heady T'ang times.

This book, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, is concerned with the means of cultivating life and shows at first how to start by sitting properly to prepare for meditation. Also, the method of 'reversing the flow' is introduced.

How to sit properly for sitting meditation

(The following abridged and edited from the book)

...Therefore the Master makes especially clear the method by which one enters into the cultivation of life, and bids people look with both eyes at the tip of the nose, to lower the lids, to look within, sit quietly with upright body, and fix the heart on the centre in the midst of conditions.

Keeping the thoughts on the space between the two eyes allows the light to penetrate. Thereupon, the spirit crystallizes and enters the centre in the midst of conditions. The centre in the midst of conditions is the lower elixir-field, the place of energy (solar plexus). [this is the only paragraph that reads different from the Buddhist recommendations when sitting]

The Master hinted at this secretly when he said that at the beginning of practice one must sit in a quiet room, the body like dry wood, the heart like cooled ashes. Let the lids of both eyes be lowered; then look within and purify the heart, wash the thoughts, stop pleasures, and conserve the seed. Sit down daily to meditate with legs crossed. Let the light in the eyes be stopped; let the hearing power of the ear be crystallised and the tasting power of the tongue be diminished; that is, the tongue should be laid to the roof of the mouth; let the breathing through the nose be made rhythmical and the thoughts fixed on the dark door. If the breathing is not first made rhythmical it is to be feared that there will be difficulty in breathing, because of stoppage. When one closes the eyes, then one should take as a measure a point on the bridge of the nose,

which lies not quite half an inch below the intersection point of the line of vision, where there is a little bump on the nose. Then one begins to collect one's thoughts; the ears make the breathing rhythmical; body and heart are comfortable and harmonious. The light of the eyes must shine quietly, and, for a long time, neither sleepiness nor distraction must set in. The eyes do not look forward, they lower their lids and light up what is within. It shines on this place. The mouth does not speak nor laugh. One closes the lips and breathes inwardly; breathing is at this place. The nose smells no odours; smelling is at this place. The ear does not hear things outside; hearing is at this place. The whole heart watches over what is within; watching is at this place. Thoughts do not stray outward; true thoughts have duration in themselves. If the thoughts endure, the seed is enduring; if the seed endures, the energy endures; if the energy endures, then will the spirit endure. The spirit is thought; thought is the heart; the heart is the fire; the fire is the Elixir. When one looks at what is within this way, the wonders of the opening and shutting of the Gates of Heaven will be inexhaustible. But the deeper secrets cannot be effected without making the breathing rhythmical.

In meditating a man must have a sort of conscious intuition, so that he feels energy and breathing unite in the field of the Elixir; he must feel that a warm release belonging to the true light is beginning to stir dimly. Then he has found the right space.

Confirmatory Experiences during the Circulation of the Light

...If, when there is quiet, the spirit has continuously and uninterruptedly a sense of great joy as if intoxicated or freshly bathed, it is a sign that the light-principle is harmonious in the whole body, then the Golden Flower [immortal spirit-body] begins to bud. ...and one has the feeling that this great earth is a world of light and brightness, that is a sign that the body of the heart [consciousness] opens itself to clarity. It is a sign that the Golden Flower is opening.

Furthermore, the whole body feels strong and firm so that it fears neither storm nor frost. Things by which other men are displeased, when I meet them, cannot becloud the brightness of the seed of the spirit... that is a sign that the Golden Flower is crystallised.

...At times the following can be experienced: as soon as one is quiet, the light of the eyes begins to blaze up, so that everything before one becomes quite bright as if one were in a cloud. If one opens one's eyes and seeks the body, it is not to be found any more. This is called: 'In the empty chamber it grows light'. Inside and outside everything is equally light. That is a very favourable sign.

Or, when one sits in meditation, the fleshly body becomes quite shining like silk or jade. It seems difficult to remain sitting; one feels drawn upward. This is called: 'The spirit returns and touches heaven.'

...different things appear to different persons according to his or her disposition. If one experiences these things it is a sign of good aptitude.

The Living Manner of the Circulation of the Light

Just to preface what we are about to read, a note about the Circulation of the Light is warranted: ...very like the Tantric *kundalini*, in ascending, the *ch'i* progresses through various stations of the Elixir-Field, the Yellow Hall and so on, but the difference from Shakta-based Tantra is, on reaching the top of the head, the *ch'i* then descends down the front of the body, down to the navel, and then around again, forming a complete circuit. This circuit is known as "The Circulation of the Light". Reading on...

...When there is a gradual success in producing the circulation of the light, a man must not give up his ordinary occupation in doing it.

... when the pupil succeeds in concentrating with true thoughts always on the space of energy, he does not have to start the light rotating, the light rotates by itself. When the light rotates, the Elixir is made spontaneously, and the performance of worldly tasks at the same time is not a hindrance...

..."If one cultivates one's actions while mingling with the world and is still in harmony with the light, then the round is round and the angular has angles; then he lives among men, mysterious yet visible, different yet the same, and none can compass it; then no one notices our secret actions."

A Magic Spell for the Far Journey

The action of non-action:

Even as heaven turns about the polar star as a centre point, so among men the right intention must be the master. Therefore the completion of the Elixir of Life depends entirely on the harmonising of the right purpose.

...If one wants to penetrate the more subtle regions by this method, one must first see to it that body and heart are completely controlled, that one is quite free and at peace, letting go of all entanglements, untroubled by the slightest excitement, and with the heavenly heart exactly in the middle....

To sit in meditation as told... until... one is aware of effulgence and infinity. The whole body feels light and wants to as if fly. This is the state of which it is said: Clouds fill the thousand mountains... The pulse stands still and breathing stops. This is the moment of true creative union, the state of which is said: The moon gathers up the ten thousand waters....The time when the child comes to life.

Then there is the contemplation of emptiness:

... when a person has found the method of making thoughts and energy harmonise, he or she can complete the Elixir within the hundred days... When the Elixir is completed, spirit and energy are pure and clear; the heart is empty, human nature (*hsing*) manifests, and the light of consciousness transforms itself into the light of human nature.

... If the life-energy is led through the 'backward-flowing' process, that is, conserved, and made to 'rise' instead of allowed to dissipate, the animus has been victorious, and the ego persists after death [this is the terminology used in the Jung-influenced Richard Wilhelm translation]. It then becomes *shen*, spirit or god. A man who holds to the way of conservation all through life may reach the stage of the Golden Flower, which then frees the ego from the conflict of opposites, and it again becomes part of the Tao, the undivided, great One.

The further writings in *The Secret of the Golden Flower* as extant today are not presented with any detailed instructional value, rather hints and pointers are given. The method of 'making firm' and 'letting go' are in another book, *the Method of Prolonging Life* or *The Book of Consciousness and Life* (*Hsu Ming Ching*). What we are given to rely on in the briefed foregoing and in the *Tao Te Ching* itself are the words of the old Master Lu-tsu, the Guest of the Cavern, as rendered by Lau Tzu.

For the seeker the problem is with the differences in the mental form from those times so long ago and today, when practitioners demand a more approachable format, with images more applicable in this twenty-first century. What is of value though is to understand that even in those times thousands of years ago a Path was available to the Chinese that led to the Sacred. It remains to be disclosed whether or not this Path is still viable today in China.

Chapter Nine

And then there was Master Kong

Confucius the Humanist

Ask any thinking Chinese ‘who was the first Chinese humanist?’ and the sage Confucius pops up. Certainly, this sage had a real love of the people and wanted a society that was just. A society where everyone - not only the elite and moneyed - could enjoy a contented and happy life.

Given the times, while the new universal humanists speak of non-violence, Confucius spoke of ‘virtue’, and displayed his renown straightforwardness within rather strict ethical bounds. That given, Confucius certainly has all the credentials any modern humanist might want to assume.

In *The Life Of Confucius*, by Qu Chunli (1989), it can be read that Confucius is accepted as a great thinker, statesman and educationalist. He was born in the poetically termed Late Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BCE -in the Zhou Dynasty, 1122 BC -256 BCE), where feudalism and warlords as vassal rulers competing for supremacy reigned under the weakening authority of that Zhou Dynasty.

His place of birth is said to be Jining (in Shandong Province, also the homeland of Mencius) as his ancestors had settled down in Qufu, the capital of Lu -the state was a fief granted to the Duke of Zhou by King Wu of Zhou. The actual birth took place at Mount Niquiu, on the twenty-seventh day of the eighth lunar month in 551 BCE. His name: Kong Qiu.

Regarding the name of Confucius, the Duke of Zhou eventually addressed him as Grand Master, spoken as Fuzi in Chinese and he was then-after called Kong Fuzi [today in modern Chinese Kung-Fu Tzu] from which the Westernised name of Confucius was derived. Note: "In China the more renown had several names - some given at birth, others adopted later. Sun Yat-sen (Sun Yixian) was also Sun Zhongshan (place name).

The high reputation of Confucius stems initially from his works as magistrate of Zhongdu and chief justice in the state of Lu as he created conditions where: "people didn't have to lock their doors at night, and no one picked up things others had lost."

Confucius was seen as an upright man. His achievements were outstanding, beginning from his early years soon after formal schooling. He had his own family comprising of son Kong Li, and daughter Wuwei not the Taoist term that has become popular today as Confucius was no Hippy, rather a place name. Though,

in that lighter vein, Confucius did leave home and family to study the *guqin*, seeking out a master of that instrument who was rumoured to be living on Taihang Mountain in the state of Jin.

Confucius taught the six-arts: the rites, music, archery, chariot-riding, calligraphy and arithmetic. He is also credited with expounding, collating and editing *The Book of Poetry*, *The Book of Rites*, *The Book of Music*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Book of Documents*, and composing *The Spring and Autumn Annals*.

He was filled with a sense of mission. After meeting with a poor but ardently keen want-to-be student who presented the teacher with ten pieces of dried meat as a humble offering. That 'entrance fee' became the norm then-after.

Taking the meat, Confucius said, "I attach little importance to gifts but great importance to teaching. Now that I start to teach, I will eliminate the outmoded conventions in government schools. I will treat with impartiality all those who want to study with me, regardless of their social status. Even so, since the giving of an initial gift to the master is such a commonplace practice, I will accept as my disciple anyone who wants to study with me and brings ten pieces of dried meat as a gift."

Note: later Confucius admitted an even poorer student whose father - already a disciple of Confucius - had no meat at all but had prepared the boy in initial studies. And the sage remarked: "I did say that anyone who offers a gift of ten pieces of meat will be accepted as my disciple regardless of origin. But I did not say only those who offer such gifts will be accepted," and told the prospective student to get up (from the kowtow) and enter the school.

Thus he opened the first private school in China. In teaching, Confucius adjusted his method to individual differences and proved skillful at giving systematic guidance. Sometimes he lectured in the courtyard of the living quarters under the old scholar tree (*Sophora japonica*), talking about the classic books, sometimes in his room answering questions from pupils and sometimes he took his students out to the suburbs, balancing their temperament by play and sightseeing.

Confucius was fond of praising others for their merits but refrained from discussing their shortcomings. He considered this a rule to be observed by all gentlemen; only petty men liked to rake up other people's faults while saying nothing of their merits.

As his story unfolds the reader witnesses that the good sage, "...failed to find a ruler willing to commit himself to the moral reforms advocated."

That Confucius was human there is no doubt, so what of his humanist leanings? The essentials of any humanism lie in non-violence and non-discrimination. In both of these aspects Confucius took a stand that was within this remit though it did accord with his times of - feudalism and fighting - but his way of dealing with situations does reveal something quite remarkably beyond that problem solving norm of those centuries. In that he deserves to be credited as much as a modern day humanist.

Intending pupil Zhong You, who had taken an occasion to display his fine swordsmanship declaring this is the way a gentleman could resolve disputes, Confucius in his always pedantic reply told of two warrior kings in an eye-to-eye who declined to draw swords and remarked: ..."Yet they both achieved victories. This is called subduing others by virtue. In my opinion, you can only truly subdue someone by virtue. This has been proved by numerous events. On the other hand, people subdued by force seldom accept the situation wholeheartedly."

On the virtues of a '(mature man) man' Confucius gave them as four in number - First: he was upright and well behaved, conducting himself with caution and sticking to the rites of Zhou. Second: he served his lord earnestly, treated people of inferior ranks with respect, and consulted people from all circles so that he could avoid making mistakes. Third: he advocated frugality, opposed extravagance, and loved the people as if they were his own children. The people were able to live in peace and happiness because of his good

management of the state. Fourth, he executed a benevolent rule, employing people and resources with care and did not make the people do anything against righteousness."

This fourth requirement that depended on benevolence was fundamental and as chief virtue equated with non-violence today. Confucius extolled benevolence as the fundamental virtue. He spoke to a disciple much later in life thus: "A benevolent man is one who helps others establish what he wants to establish himself, and helps others to achieve something he wants to achieve himself. To treat others as one wants to be treated oneself is the way of the benevolent."

This latter phrase not only finds echoes in all the great religions but is the guiding principal of all of Silo's teachings (see the bibliography appended here). The relation to our quest is that the Way of Master Kong can be equated with the 'gradual School' within the Siloist tradition.

In commentaries by Confucius on the legends of the first ancestors of China, as depicted and recorded on paintings and ancient writings at a revered ancestral hall visited, he answered questions on Fu Xi and Nu Wa - those same first ancestors - saying these were: "sent from heaven". As deities they appeared strange, with human heads and bodies and dragon tails. Ancient tales told that this duo married and gave birth to humans... "therefore we regard them as ancestors and call ourselves descendants of the dragons."

Fu Xi is said to have taught the people fishing and hunting skills and is also said to have invented the eight trigrams. It happened that heaven collapsed and floods and beasts brought calamity to the world. Nu Wa mended the walls of heaven and used a giant turtle to support its four corners. In these ways Nu Wa enabled people to live in peace and contentment as the beasts had been subdued as well."

At the same ancestral hall where the depictions were seen, a scroll read admonishments to the people which ended with: "Heaven is partial to no man, but men of benevolence will be blessed."

In the preceding paragraph the attitude of Confucius is declared in regard to the more illusive enviroing factors that encompass people's lives. Their origin, the great universe which holds and sustains us, as in the old legends. The matter is dealt with giving due respect to the general view and discord or bewilderment is not sown in people's thoughts in any denial of those stories nor in the way of encapsulating truths difficult to state in common language.

That stance is not removed from modern universal humanism with its regard for other's beliefs where they carry no harm nor further ignorance. The views are stated with compassion while leaving what is profound mixed with what is infantile.

Contrariwise, on a related topic, the position of Confucius in front of death, the sage was a bit more pointed as it is recorded in his reply to one of his students on being asked: "Master, are there really gods in heaven?"

"There are the sun, the moon, and the stars in the sky. Apart from that, I suppose the sky must be empty."

"In that case why do people offer sacrifices to heaven so devoutly?"

"People need something to hope for. They regard a drought as Heaven's punishment of their misdeeds, so they offer sacrifice to Heaven by way of appeasement. But it does not always lead to rain. As I remember, there have been many instances when sacrifices were offered without producing a single drop of rain, so that all the crops dried up in the end."

"When a man dies, will his soul live on?"

"A dead man can be compared to a lamp that has used up its oil. Nothing is left of him except the body."

"If there is no soul living after death, why do you offer sacrifices to the ancestors?"

"I regard ancestral worship as an occasion to eulogize the virtues and merits of our forefathers. When offering the sacrifice, I feel as if my forefathers were standing in front of me and giving me instructions on how to conduct myself properly. Therefore, I never ask anyone else to offer sacrifices on my behalf."

Note: I must re-introduce Silo's words at this juncture as his commentary is more detailed on this matter. Silo gives five positions that can be taken in front of death:

"...five states associated with the problem of death and transcendence. Every person can be found in one of these five states. "There is a state in which a person has indisputable evidence of transcendence, arrived at not through education or surroundings, but through the person's own experience. For such people, it is completely clear that life is only a transition and death the merest accident. "Others believe that the human being will go on to a state of transcendence of some kind, and this belief comes from their education and their surroundings..." "There is a third way of locating oneself with respect to meaning in life, and it is present in those people who want to have an experience of faith or certainty of meaning... They have no faith, they have no belief, but they have a desire to believe..." "There are still others who suspect, intellectually, that there may, perhaps, be a future beyond death, that some sort of transcendence could exist. They believe that this is possible, although they have had no experience of transcendence nor do they have any sort of faith, nor do they aspire to have that experience or that faith. "There is, finally, a fifth state, which corresponds to those who deny any possibility of transcendence." "So we see that, with variations, each person can locate him-or herself among those who have evidence of transcendence and for whom it is indisputable; or among those who have faith because they were taught to have faith when they were young; among those who wish they had that experience or that faith; or among still others who consider it to be an intellectual possibility but don't give it much further thought; or finally among those who deny any possibility whatever of transcendence."

(From *Silo Speaks*, page 21, Meaning of Life, record of an interchange with a study group in Mexico City, October 10, 1980.

This is an important question, how one locates oneself with respect to the possibility of transcendence.

The Rites and Ceremonies

The subject of the rites is an illusive one. These can be divided into two kinds, according to L. Cranmer-Byng, editor of the *Wisdom of the East Series*, secular rites and religious rites: "The latter rites connected with worship and divination. Reverence, courtesy and politeness are the outcome of this intense attachment to observances." The rites relate to the principles of proper behaviour. It was said that the sage kings of old acted in accordance with Heaven and acted in the interests of the country and the people. Confucius wanted that emulated in his own time.

The Message, Silo's latest and last literary-philosophical exclamation (that continues to purvey: When you treat others as you want to be treated, you liberate yourself) with its Ceremonies proposes guidelines for modern rites that are an integral part of Silo's humanism. Similar to the rites from Confucius' days, those rites are used to mark occasions, moments of passage, with the potential of bringing forth a joyous and profound internal experience, combining the secular and the sacred. In old China a person might fast for three days before performing an important ceremony; likewise a certain disposition is important for the Ceremonies today.

One wise man that Confucius visited advised that: "If proper manners are observed in the family, the relationship between the junior and senior members will be kept in good order; if the women observe proper manners, the household will enjoy harmony; if the king observes proper manners, all the court officials will show respect; if all the officials observe proper manners, victories on the battlefield will be achieved."

The wise man advisor also told that all the matters Confucius was studying, all that had been handed down since olden times, those regulations were not to be regarded as infallible and for instance though people of a certain rank should go out in a chariot, if there was no chariot they could still go out..! These words appear quite humourous and are surely aimed at the strict Confucius getting bound by the formalities and

taking the letter-of-the-law, the rites, too much to heart while overlooking the essential spirit and in fact the whole point of the rites.

There was a third piece of advice given by another wise man that also shows where Confucius drew his inspiration from - in his meetings with remarkable men. "People of virtue and learning are usually calm and inconspicuous. It is the same in doing business. A good merchant does not display his best wares," he was told.

When Confucius recounted what kind of person that advice giving wise one was, he exclaimed: "It is hard to describe him clearly. To my knowledge, the bird on the wing can dart into the clouds, yet it can be shot down by arrows.... Only the dragon is beyond the reach of men. The dragon can swim in the four seas or ride on clouds and fogs, going freely wherever it wants. I cannot say what kind of person he really is, but perhaps he can be compared to a dragon."

The wise man was one of a band of Taoists, followers of the Way after the manner of Lao Tsu.

A disciple asked: "If one governs a state by benevolence, what will happen?"

"He will be in the same position as the Big Dipper," replied Confucius... he remains still in the centre, while the other stars move around him."

"If a sage ruler appears, how long will it take to establish a benevolent government?"

"Even if there is a sage ruler it will take at least thirty years to establish benevolent rule."

The disciples were all astonished, being youthful, they wanted fast results.

"To govern a state well there must be a complete system of regulation, a strong army and virtuous ministers. Only thus can we guard against internal revolts and invasions from outside. When the state is peaceful, people will be in harmony. When people are in harmony, the government will be efficient. When the government is efficient, the people will become wealthy. When the people are wealthy, the state will grow strong. To stray from this would be attending to trivialities and neglecting the fundamentals."

How can we obtain people's trust and govern the state well?

"The ancient kings governed the world by benevolence. If the king obtained people's trust by his cleverness but failed to educate them in benevolence, he would lose their trust gradually. If the king obtained people's trust by his cleverness and educated them in benevolence, but failed to treat them seriously, people would not live in harmony. The king must obtain people's support by his wisdom, instruct them in benevolence, treat them seriously and mobilise and employ their labour reasonably. Only in this way could he retain people's support forever. Peoples' support is the key to prosperity and strength."

Another disciple asked: "I would like to obtain benevolence, but it is beyond me at this stage. May I have a single sentence to guide my action for life?"

Loyalty and forgiveness," replied the sage, adding: "Do not impose on others what you do not want for yourself."

This variation on the golden rule of the humanists declares itself again as the way of benevolence, of non-violence and non-discrimination.

Asked again about a superior man, Confucius replied: "A superior man has no worries. When he has not yet attained benevolence, he studies hard in order to attain it. After attaining benevolence, he strives to uphold and enhance it. He regards honour and wealth as floating clouds; since he does not strive for them, why should he worry about losing them? Therefore a superior man is always calm and well at ease. He rejoices all his life and does not worry for a single day."

It is clear with these words that the term superior does not mean 'a cut above the rest' but rather a person with an other-than-worldly materialistic reference, someone not depending on social status or acquisitions.

When not dependant on external things then one rests on what one is, one's being-as-one-is. This is more on the inner side though it cannot simply let the external fly off as the two are sides of one.

"What about a petty man?"

"The reverse is true of a petty man. A petty man strives for profits instead of righteousness. When he has not obtained profits, he worries all day for failing to obtain them. Having obtained profits, he worries all day for fear of losing them. Therefore a petty man is always anxious. He worries all his life and does not enjoy a single day."

Lamenting on the difficult days he had passed and the failure in finding anyone in authority that would listen to his advice, and when instead there was only harassment by local villains, Confucius heard one disciple mutter: "It seems that our dream will never come true."

The sage threw out his chest and said firmly: "I still believe the words of the ancient sages that someday the whole world will become one community." Adding: "The progress of the Great Way can be compared to the Yellow River. It has many twists and turns along the way and sometimes even goes backward, but it will finally flow into the East Sea."

Inner faith is of the utmost importance. Without faith, there is nothing. Universal Humanism distinguishes between fanatical faith (which is expressed destructively), naive faith (which can endanger a person's vital interests), and faith that serves to open the future and advance constructive goals in life.

In those same ancient days a prince - who had lost faith completely, quite at the end of his tether, and life - was despondent and questioned Confucius on what could be done at such a late date!

"Government is founded on the principle of uprightness. If the ruler can formulate regulations and issue orders reasonably and his ministers can take the lead in following them, the common people will offer their support. When he has the people's support, there will be harmony all across the land and the state will grow upright and strong."

This delighted the distraught prince.

An interesting note on the need to get to the root of the problem and not try to salvage things ad hoc was the advice offered to a magistrate who was doing good to the local people to compensate for lacks in the system; but using his own wealth out of goodness of his heart instead of putting the place in order so the good works could flow from the proper source.

"As the magistrate you have to conduct yourself in the best interests of your lord and the king of Zhou. Since some people are starving, you should report the matter to the lord and beseech him to show sympathy by opening the state granaries to relieve the hungry. Then the common people will be grateful to their sovereign and the king of Zhou and obey the edicts wholeheartedly in the future. Instead, by feeding the hungry with your own salary, you are trying to cultivate your own popularity by dispensing petty favours. The common people will be grateful to you, not to the lord and the king. Think carefully: what will happen in the long run if people cherish such sentiments."

Confucius continued: "People must tend their respective duties, if great harmony is to be achieved in the world. This can be compared to a magnificent pagoda, with the king of Zhou standing at the top supervising all important affairs under heaven. Immediately below him are the vassal lords, who pay homage to the king and command their ministers, who in turn govern the scholars and the common people."

Asked by a student to describe how himself and two of his colleagues were viewed, as they each had quite different characters, Confucius replied: "One is a man of virtue and benevolence, and the other is a man of great bravery. You are a man of great intelligence."

"And what are the characteristics of those three types of men?"

"An intelligent man is never deceived, a benevolent man is never worried and a brave man is never afraid.

"Master, are you endowed with all these attributes?"

"Unfortunately I have none of these characteristics. I am merely a man who is eager to learn, who is not ashamed of asking advice from people below himself in rank, and who is afraid of missing anything important. What else? I am just eager to learn."

Assessing the work of one of his disciples that had been placed in office, Confucius, having travelled to the place, noted the well-tilled fields, luxuriant crops and mentioned in passing to his accompanying students: "Only when the people have faith in the authorities will they spare no effort digging ditches to irrigate the fields and tend the crops."

Note: This brought to my mind the fact that when the British installed the Zamindar system in parts of India - now Bangladesh - poor farmers lost their land to those upstart landlords and thus stopped digging irrigation ditches and in later times these myriad ditches silted up and could no longer channel the flood season waters usefully across the land - uncontrolled flooding then began to disrupt life and livelihood - even to this day!

Grasping the truth that that particular disciple had done wonders in the district where he had applied himself, Confucius remarked: "It was well said by the ancients that a worthy disciple will excel his master someday. The young are to be regarded with awe, for they will get ahead of their seniors."

For the sage, he considered that Man's nature is good at birth but education and other influences result in differences in people's character.... "There will be a time when, under a benevolent government, people all over the world will have plenty to eat and wear, all children will receive a good education, and benevolence will become the ultimate standard by which people talk, behave and deal with one another. When that day comes, there will be no more wars and therefore no sufferings and ruined families."

This can be taken - given my interest in the matter - to directly allude to the Universal Human Nation as spoken of in the new humanism writings of Silo as though he, and we, are revamping Confucian thought and highlighting its relevance to today. In *The Crisis of Traditional Humanism and Remarks on New Humanism*, a talk by Salvatore Puledda, University of Rome, on April 16, 1996, we have:

"Our planet today is rapidly being unified, with peoples and cultures thrown forcibly together, with the result that their various visions of the world encounter other visions with differing purposes and contrasting values. Then what can we find to serve as the common denominator which, while recognizing diversity, will at the same time make possible a convergence, a uniting of the many peoples, the many cultures, the many religions of the world? How can all people come together to create a truly universal human nation? In Silo's formulation this is possible as each culture discovers or rediscovers the humanist periods in its own history, in which their finest productions and actions have been associated with the following characteristics: (1) placement of the human being as the central value and concern; (2) affirmation of the equality of all human beings; (3) recognition of cultural and personal diversity; (4) development of knowledge beyond what has been accepted as "absolute" truth; (5) affirmation of freedom of ideas and beliefs; and (6) repudiation of all forms of violence.

"Humanism defined as such an approach and attitude toward personal and community life is not, then, the legacy of any one culture, it is the common heritage of all the cultures of the Earth. And it is in this sense that such a humanism can be spoken of as a universal humanism."

Under conditions of impending turmoil Confucius discussed leaving a particular district and finding more suitable environs for the work, commenting: "When the world is at peace, one should come out to take office; when the world is in turmoil, one should conceal oneself and not take office..."

Also:

"When the ruler is wise and benign, it would be shameful for a man with wide vision not to take office and remain humble and poor. It is also shameful for him to obtain wealth and honour when the ruler is fatuous and malevolent."

These truths need to be heeded in China today, in fact across Asia, and in another institutionalised form, in the West, where the intrigues are less obvious and the people beaten into submission by an acquiescent media that supplies most everything as entertainment and a capitalist system of control, using money.

If some readers are now asking the question... what has this got to do with seeking the Sacred, the answer lies in the reply: '...and once in the presence of the sacred, what next? Well, nothing more than bringing That into present day life for the benefit of everyone; a task Master Kong excelled at, despite his sense of being a failure!

It is more than just a footnote to this study to bear in mind that, as the editors of *Funk and Wagnall's Encyclopaedia* contend: "Chinese thought has always tended toward humanism rather than spiritualism, rationalism rather than mysticism, and syncretisms rather than sectarianism."

To see why this is it deems us to make a fuss about Confucius and his ilk from so long ago. After all, China is now one of the world's major powers and with a huge population; and what is done in China affects a major chunk of humankind. On a most contemporary note, the Chinese Communist Party is seeking a spiritualising core to combat the rise of the religions and superstitions. It is here contended that such can be found entirely within its own cultural customs and creeds and that Confucius is a likely lad to give an acceptable face and focus to that search. But that will not be enough!

This view is likewise espoused by Kang Xiaoguang, former social policy advisor to former Premier [1998-2003] Zhu Rongji and a strong proponent behind the revival of Confucian theories - and surely the behavioural characteristics of that Master Kong.

Note: Political scientist at Beijing University, Hu Xingdou, however, does not share Mr Kang's views because those olden days are long gone he says, and cannot be recaptured. But rather than attempt the Confucian ideals he advocates adherence to the more tangible measures of democratic elections, rule of law and accountability. For Kang, though the return of Confucianism with the favouring of Confucius is sure, what is unsure is, which place he will take -as the perfect educationalist, as political ideologue? Or centrepiece of a 'national' religion'?

It is true enough, it's not that the answer lies in the past but by studying what is worth studying in the past, China can readily identify those currents that flow closest to its modern heart. The term humanism taking the human being as the central value - remains dynamically applicable to today's plight in China, in Asia, and all across the world.

Chapter Ten

The Taoist Great Way and the Confucian Virtues

Asked about the relationship between the Great Way and virtue, Confucius replied: "The Great Way makes people cultivate their virtue, and with their virtue cultivated people can follow the Great Way unswervingly."

"The ancients held that a man without virtue will not follow the Way. Given a fine horse capable of covering a thousand *li* (one *li* is about half a kilometre) in one day, if you do not ride it in the right way, it will not obey your call. If a ruler who has thousands upon thousands of subjects does not even govern them in the right way, they will not obey his commands. Therefore a sage ruler always attempts to cultivate the seven virtues and attain the three ultimates. With the seven virtues cultivated, he will govern the nation well without much effort; with the three ultimates attained, he will enable the people to live in wealth without spending money himself. Nowadays the rulers act just in the opposite way. They attempt to achieve their goals by force and violence and indulge in extravagance at the expense of the common people."

The seven virtues refer to: filial piety, respect for the elderly, generosity, attachment to virtuous men, love of virtue, aversion to greed, and modesty.

"The seven virtues are the foundation of good government. The ruler is the role model for his subjects. If he is upright in his behaviour, who else would dare to be crooked? Therefore a sage ruler first achieves benevolence himself, then proceeds to make the ministers loyal, the scholars sincere, the common people forthright, the men honest and the women chaste. When all this has been achieved, the ruler's edicts will spread all over the nation and be followed by every household. People will stay away from the wicked and seek after the pure, evade petty men and respect superior men. All evil men and evil practices will be wiped away like the snow under the sun."

Confucius continued: "The sage rulers promoted virtuous men and demoted treacherous men, so that virtuous men could give full reign to their talent whereas treacherous men could find no chance to do evil. If the ruler takes pity on the widowed, cares for orphans and the son-less, helps the poor, educates the filial, and employs the talented, there will be no lawbreakers over the four seas. If the ruler treats his subject the way he treats his brothers, his subjects will respect and serve him as if he were a parent to them. With such a relationship between the ruler and ruled established, people will obey orders with gladness, and even

barbarians from remote areas will come to submit themselves to the sage ruler. The ancients said that people will stop complaining when oppressive policies are done away with and stop breaking the law if severe penalties are done away with. Therefore the sage ruler is able to subdue the barbarians without resorting to military forces and establish order without resorting to punishment. People will cherish intense gratitude to the ruler, and even those who live in distant quarters will feel close to him because they have benefited from his favour."

As for the harsh penal codes: "The ancient sage rulers obtained people's willing submission by educating them in the codes of proper conduct, but nowadays rulers tend to force the people into submission with harsh penal codes. As a result, people become estranged from their rulers."

One disciple asked how to remedy the situation of too many thieves across the land? The sage replied: "People become thieves because of poverty. If you enable the common people to enjoy a good life, no one would resort to theft even if you should set a reward for it."

On state killing: "Why should you resort to killing in governing the state? To govern well, you must first be upright. When you are upright, who dares not to be upright? The ruler can be compared to the wind and the common people to the grass. Whichever way the wind blows, the grass will bend in that direction. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that, if you are upright, people will carry things out without your ordering them, and if you are not upright, people will not carry out anything even when ordered to."

The campaigns against the death penalty and government's penchant for imprisonment as a punishment rather than for a term of re-education and reconciliation with society are cases in point where Confucius is in full agreement with humanism.

"I have never heard your teaching about heaven, said a disciple.

"The way of Heaven is open for all to see. It is unnecessary for me to talk about it."

Confucius died following a vision of a shining pagoda. His parting words were: "When the great harmony is achieved, the whole world will become one." It was early morning on the eleventh day of the second month in the sixteenth year of Duke Ai of Lu's region - 479BCE.

A year later pupil Zeng Shen agreed to continue the tradition of teaching in the manner of Confucius. The disciples of Confucius decided to plant pines and cypresses around his grave, with junipers especially favoured, because they not only remain green all the year round but are very tall and upright and have luxuriant leaves. "They can be a symbol of the perseverance of our late master," they agreed.

Following in the footsteps of Confucius

An outstanding Confucian was Master Xun Zi (Wade-Giles: Hsün Tzu), who concentrated on the issues of living on Earth rather than what's up in Heaven. Like all Chinese, he revered nature as 'godlike' - *shen*. His religious rationalism was based on mystical silence. Xun Zi agreed with Zhuangzi, "that the mind was 'empty' if it remained open to new impressions, instead of clinging to its own opinions; it was 'unified' if it did not force the complexity of life into a coherent, self-serving system; it was 'still' if it did not indulge in 'dreams and noisy fantasies' and nurture ambitious 'plots and schemes' that hindered true understanding. Emptiness, unity and stillness," Xun Zi explained, "these are the qualities of a great and pure enlightenment."

Master Xun held that divested of egoistic obsessions, an ordinary human being could achieve the panoptic vision of the sage.

While Confucius did not speak directly on such basic issues of his day as the nature of human beings, the rights of the people against tyrannical rulers, and the influence of the supernatural in human affairs, two of his later followers did. These were Mencius or Mèng Zi, (372 – 289 BCE); and Hsun-tzu (312–230 BCE).

Mencius held it that human nature was basically good, that it could be developed - not just by study, as Confucius seemed to teach - but by a process of inner self-cultivation akin to mysticism. Mencius has been called the first democrat and even a pre-Christ Christian.

It was Mencius who renovated the concept of the Mandate of Heaven whereby the Zhou rulers held their position, holding it subject to the will of the people, who, if they withdraw their support and rose up against and overthrew such tyrannical rulers, gave proof that Heaven had withdrawn its mandate. In other words the people had the right to rebellion, according to Mencius.

Among the later activists that can be categorised along with Confucianists was the originator of the Mohists - Mozi, or Master Mo (c.480-390 BCE), one of the *xie* or *shi* (old fashioned scholars) who, "turned his back on militancy and preached a message of nonviolence."

He was disgusted with the extravagance of the elaborate ceremonial rites in the ancestral temples, the expensive funerals, the three year mourning period which was fine for the rich but not for the poor who must work and indeed the entire economy depended on their work. Mozi's favourite from the past was Emperor Yu.

Yu the Great (Da-Yu), is the legendary founder of the Xia Dynasty that began in 2205 BCE. He is best remembered for developing water distribution and irrigation, controlling the rivers and lakes to prevent flooding. Instead of building more dikes, Yu had a different plan and began to dredge new river channels, to serve both as outlets for the torrential waters, and as irrigation conduits.

Mozi, as a practical man, gladdened at that story from the distant past. Mozi spoke of *jian ai* - an attitude of benevolence and equity - which led to nonviolence in daily life.

Again and again the great ones who we look to for exemplary conduct themselves admired and took example from their forebears who cared for the people and who used their power and influence to bring the common lot to a better estate. This is where we find practical solutions as an end product of mysticism, where a humanism was deposited, one that took the human being as the central point of interest. It was not until the Medieval Age in the second and third centuries and the downfall of the Han Dynasty that the philosophical void was filled by Taoism and Buddhism, the latter filtering into China from India and Central Asia from the first century to the sixth century.

The Central Asia translator Kumarajiva (** see note below) was pivotal in bringing Buddhist texts into Chinese. These, much later, gave birth to the syncretic metaphysics of the T'ien Tai Sect and its great doctrinal contribution to Buddhism. However, it was the Meditation Sect - of Mahayana Buddhism - that brought the intuitive method of penetrating the true nature of Man-and-Universe that had far wider appeal and permanence in China.

In terms of 'humanist moments', one such that suggests a closer look was the time when T'ai Tsung ascended the throne, in 627, when the forces of Taoism and Confucianism were about equally balanced. Cranmer-Byng points out (in his *The Vision of Asia* classic) that it is significant that when this state of balance prevailed, the Empire prospered - Confucianism as the ethical system of the north and Taoism, the idealist philosophy of the south.

Then, Emperor T'ai Tsung's capital, Chang'an, was open to Nestorians in the year 635 an Assyrian named Olopun (Hsian-Fu) arrived at Chang-an with sacred books, Manicheans (***) see note below) and Muhammadans also made their mark in that period - which started from the beginning of the T'ang Dynasty, to pass from the land under the two great emperors of the Ch'ing - K'ang Hsi, and Ch'ien Lung. In the twelfth century the 'humanist moment' peaked.

In Japan these 'moments' began towards the end of the sixth century in the reign of Empress Suiko and flowered in the fourteenth century under Yoshimitsu of the Ashikaga Dynasty, fading with the long peace of the Tokugawa Dynasty established by Iyeyasu in the seventeenth century. The peak was in the fourteenth century as Japan gradually came under influence of the Chinese Sung Dynasty.

*** Buddhism - Kumarajiva (Kiu-kiu-lo: 344 - 413) was a Kuchean Buddhist monk, scholar and translator whose father was from an Indian noble family, and whose mother was a Kuchean princess - from a place in the Tarim Basin in Central Asia, now the Xinjiang Province of China - who significantly influenced his early studies. He first studied teachings of the Sarvastivada schools, later studied under Buddhasvamin, and finally became a Mahayana adherent, studying the Madhyamika doctrine of Nagarjuna. He settled in Chang'an. He is mostly remembered for the prolific translations of Buddhist texts, written in Sanskrit, into Chinese. A work he carried out during his later life.*

**** Manicheans This text gives the organisation better press than is usual when referring to the intent: "To penetrate the mysteries, to bless with a good conscience, to be great and yet empty, to return to stillness and be forgiving, to be compassionate and to deliver all people, to do good deeds and help people reach the other shore - these are the great benefits of our Path of cultivation. To calm people in stormy times, to help them understand the nature of things, to maintain purity, to nourish all things, to respect all life, and to answer the needs of those whose beliefs come from the heart these are the services the Order can offer." - from a Chinese stela, 781 CE.*

Neo-Confucian Developments

One event followed another in China and in the progress of Confucianism but in the course of this initial study we can jump to the fifteenth century and the neo-Confucian School of Mind's most formidable spokesman, Wang Yang Ming (1472 -1529). He held it that: mind was pure Principle Li (*li* -a reflection of the Great Ultimate, *Tai-chi*) unencumbered by *ch'i* (the physical propensities) therefore mind has essential goodness as human nature.

This school asserted that all things - *Tai-chi* - were composed of these two elements, *li* and *ch'i*. Everybody thus possessed innate good knowledge and needed only look within the mind to find it. Philosopher Wang also held that good knowledge and action formed a unity. After Wang's death the neo-Confucian school lost its true course as set by Wang.

In the 1890s K'ang Yu-wei (1858 -1927) attempted to adapt Confucianism to the modern world in a manner that could resist the force of Western imperialism and though there was a brief period of reform, in 1898, the entrenched orthodox Confucian followers had him exiled.

In 1905 China finally abrogated the imperial examination system and thoroughly changed the relationship between the intellectual elite class and the Chinese political regime.

Wang Hui, ex-Institute of Literature, Beijing in his *Humanism as the Theme of Chinese Modernity* states: "Following the abrogation of the imperial examination system the class of *xei* disappeared from Chinese history. Also, the Chinese Confucian classics gradually lost their influence on society because of the abrogation of this system. Again, following the abrogation of this system, there appeared a large number of newspapers and periodicals run by intellectuals outside of the national regime, and they chiefly discussed the political situation and spread modern Western culture. At the same time, there developed gradually the system of the modern university."

The next major event that presented Confucius again as an aid to the country was the May Fourth Movement, an anti-imperialist, cultural, and political movement in early modern China. Beginning on May 4, 1919, the day marked the upsurge of Chinese nationalism, and a re-evaluation of Chinese cultural institutions, such as Confucianism.

Chiang Kai-shek and his wife Soong May-ling started a New Life Movement in the 1930s that involved a revival of Confucian ethics - but without a manifesto of action that could relate to the real situation of the poverty stricken, it was just a set of ideals.

"It merits our attention that the discourses of Chinese humanism do not have a significant relationship with the courses of the social sciences and humanities in Chinese universities," continued Wang Hui. "It is because the Chinese discourses of social sciences and humanities were established with the Marxist mode of production as the core, not with "human being" and human self-understanding as the core."

This brings the study to today, when the massive if disjointed and unbalanced economic upturn of China is demanding the addition of some factor that can bring reason into play, human reason, because, the original true spirit of Communism having departed, left merely a shell of formality. An enlivening spirit is needed.

Whether that comes in the form of an object-person - Confucius, or a movement - Humanism, is a valid question and a question not lost on the governing class in Beijing.

It is customary in China for the authorities to invoke Confucius into new schemes and it was rumoured that the Chinese Communist Party in 2007 would bring the man back into play to bring spiritual values into a society governed under an otherwise empty economic policy of, "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics". It was becoming too obvious that the old traditions and superstitions - and religions - were making a comeback and the Communist Party had nothing to oppose them. However, the re-insertion of Confucius did not eventuate.

Had that spiritual side been given its due, Confucius was the obvious choice as a role model with humanism as supporting cast. The New Humanism born in Latin America is the most appropriate humanism; with its ideology, precise definitions and with a functioning Humanist Party and manifesto of social-political action. Plus, different from other humanist groups, there is a respect for the Sacred without which, no human being is complete.

Could it be that no such humanism is needed as humanism is intrinsic to Chinese culture? The entire history of Chinese philosophy some say is but the history of humanism!

"European humanism appears as a "movement" rather than an intrinsic cultural quality," says academic Joseph Wu in an essay: *Basic Characteristics of Chinese Culture*, in the journal *Comprehensive Harmony*. "Renaissance humanism is a movement rebelling against the religious authority of Christianity, while Existential humanism is a reaction against scientific materialism and modern technology. Chinese humanism, however, has been internal to the whole cultural development of China, and is embodied pervasively in all parts of Chinese culture."

Mr Wu reminds us that in ancient Chinese cosmology, as embodied in the doctrines of the *I-Ching*, Man is the co-creator of the universe. He actively takes part in the creation of the world and his own destiny. Even in religious thought, instead of worshipping some transcendent or supernatural force, i.e., God, they worship men - the ancestors.

When Mr Wu crystallises the difference in the fundamental character of Western peoples and those of the East, of Asia, the self-reliance of the former and mutual dependence of the latter surely lends itself very well to the humanist dictum of co-operation and reciprocity, without which universalistic humanism does not work.

What is needed though is an intention to humanise and that is quite different from relying on and waiting for the general evolution of Man into maturity to secure worthwhile conditions for a fair human life.

That Chinese humanism highlighted by Mr Wu surely demands that outsiders take another look at their proposals when it comes to China and its chosen way into a better all-round future for its huge population. But, it does not extract the Chinese from the predicament and the only way to surpass the suffering is to humanize the intention of everything that relates to the human being.

Chapter Eleven

The Profound in Judaism, Christianity and Islam

According to Jewish tradition the earliest writings on Judaism are contained in the *Torah*, traditionally said to have been revealed to Moses in 1312 BCE on Mount Sinai. However, most likely the *Torah* was compiled from a multitude of fragments gradually accreted over many centuries and going through many hands.

Whatever the origins, the *Torah* is the primary holy scripture of Judaism, and the foundation of Jewish belief stems from its revelation that the Lord is the God Who created the world. The *Torah* is the first of three parts of the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible), the founding religious document of Judaism, the *Pentateuch* or *Five Books of Moses* - called in English: *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*, in reference to their themes.

Jewish writings offer various ideas on when the entire *Torah* was revealed. The revelation to Moses at Mount Sinai is considered by many to be the most important revelatory event. Outside of its central significance in Judaism, the *Torah* is accepted by Christianity as part of *the Bible*, comprising the first five books of the Old Testament. While Christianity includes the five books of Moses among their sacred texts, Islam only believes that the original *Torah* was sent by the One True God.

In early Christianity a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible was used, dating from the 3rd century CE. Incorporated into the Catholic and Christian Orthodox biblical canon - which also includes books not found in the *Tanakh* - it contained additional variant material besides the original and was regarded as the standard form of the Old Testament to the early Christian Church. It is considered canonical in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Muslims call the *Torah* the *Tawrat* and consider it the word of God as given to Moses. But, Muslims also believe that this original revelation was corrupted over time by Jewish scribes and they do not revere the present Jewish version *Torah* as they did before. A number of verses from the *Qur'an* referring to Muhammad as the promised and final prophet are still preserved in the *Torah*. Muslims believe in the *Torah*, and the prophethood of Moses, as fundamental tenets of Islam.

However, it is the *Zohar* (meaning Radiance) that is the foundational work in the writings of Jewish mystical thinkers, known as *Kabbalah* (*Qabbalah*), a set of books including commentaries on the mystical aspects of the *Torah* and scriptural interpretations. It also contains writings on theosophic theology, mythical

cosmogony, and mystical psychology. That is, on the nature of God, the origin and structure of the universe, on souls, redemption, the relationship of 'Ego to Darkness', "true self" and, "The Light of God." It offers notes on the relationship between "universal energy" and man. The scriptural exegesis presented is generally considered an esoteric form of the *Midrash*, which elaborates on the *Torah*.

The *Zohar* is mostly written in what has been described as an exalted, eccentric style of Aramaic, a language spoken in the land of Israel during the Roman Period in the first centuries CE.

The *Zohar* first appeared in Spain in the 13th century, published by a Jewish writer, Moses de Leon. De Leon ascribed the work to a 2nd century rabbi, first laid down during the Roman persecution. This is in accord with the tradition that the *Kabbalah* is the concealed part of the Oral Torah. However, some learned adherents theorize that De Leon was the actual author.

Even if de Leon wrote the text, the entire contents of the book may not be fraudulent. Parts of it may well be based on older works, and, it was a common practice to ascribe the authorship of a document to an esteemed rabbi to give a document weight. In this sense, it is quite possible that Moses de Leon considered himself inspired to write or compile this text.

The *Zohar*, the most significant text in Jewish mysticism - as mysticism is where we will end up in this particular writing - states that the *Torah* was created before the creation of the world; it was the blueprint for Creation.

It was said that the teachings of *Kabbalah* - the Sephirothic Tree (made up of symbols of a hypothetical cosmic system) - were transmitted from teacher to teacher, in a long and continuous chain, from the Biblical era, and their meanings must be divined as the result of study and meditation; also that the *Kabbalah's* teachings are in essence a revelation from God to the Biblical patriarch Abraham, Moses and other ancient figures - only set down in print and made publicly available at the time of the *Zohar's* medieval appearance.

Modern commentators say: According to *Kabbalah*, the true essence of God is transcendent and cannot be described, except with reference to what it is not. This true essence of God is "without end", which encompasses the idea of His lack of boundaries in both time and space.

Also: This Incomprehensible Principle can only be discovered by a process of elimination of all of its cognizable attributes. That done, all that remains is AIN SOPH, the eternal state of being. Although indefinable, the Absolute permeates all space. Abstract to the degree of inconceivability, AIN SOPH is the unconditioned state of all things. Its symbol was a closed eye, also, a circle. The Kosmic Egg, not opening till the day, Be With Us, at the end of the Cycle of Necessity.

The system of worlds, letters and numerals surrounding the *Kabbalah* is the domain of specialists, as is the workings of those psychic machines, the enneagrams, that are associated with *Kabbalah*. However, in this present quest which is to demystify rather than mystify mysticism it is more worthwhile to turn to that meaningful experience that grounds the mystic in the real, in the everyday life of the everyday world -yet retaining the essential mystery and our sense of wonder and consequent gratitude for life.

One of the 'few' better examples of a form of mysticism that is useful to this study is the work of Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer (1698–1760), also known as the Ba'al Shem Tov, who is seen as the founding figure of Hasidic Judaism - which originated in an age of persecution of the Jewish people. Baal Shem Tov, a mystical rabbi, is also called the Besht, he was born in a small village that over the centuries was part of Poland, Russia, and is now part of Ukraine.

For him: "the ideal of man is to be a revelation himself, clearly to recognize himself as a manifestation of God." Mysticism, he claimed, was not the *Kabbalah*, which anyone can learn, but that sense of oneness, strange and incomprehensible. Anyone capable of this feeling is endowed with a genuine intuition and it is the deep perception of such person that is called prophecy, according to the degree of insight. Such person can claim authority equal, in a certain sense, to the authority of the old prophets. For the Besht, that oneness

and personal revelation brings a mystical interpretation of Judaism into panentheism. More importantly, through a sense of oneness with God, Man forges a connecting link between the Creator and creation.

Panentheism, positing that God exists and interpenetrates every part of nature, and timelessly extends beyond. Panentheism is distinguished from pantheism, which holds that God is synonymous with the material universe. In pantheism, "God is the whole"; in panentheism, "The whole is in God." In panentheism, God is not necessarily viewed as the creator, but the eternal animating force behind the universe; the universe as nothing more than the manifest part of God. While pantheism asserts that God and the universe are coextensive, panentheism claims that God is greater than the universe and the universe is contained within God. Hinduism is highly characterized by both attitudes.

Hasidic Judaism is not one movement, but a collection of separate individual groups with some commonality. It originated at a time when European Jews had turned inward to Talmud study; many felt that most expressions of Jewish life had become too "academic" and that they no longer had any emphasis on spirituality or joy. The Ba'al Shem Tov set out to improve the situation. Hasidism met with opposition from the misnagdim - literally meaning "the opponents." In its initial stages, the most notable opponent was the Vilna Gaon, leader of the Lithuanian Jews, who generally adopted a hostile approach.

Under the Hasidic movement, ideas of reward and punishment were avoided, and were replaced by the spiritual life of cleaving to God in all daily conduct. The Ba'al Shem Tov, and Hasidism, also opposed the earlier mystical and ethical ascetic paths of fasting and self-mortification, seeking to serve God by infusing physical activities with new spiritual inspiration.

Characterized by sincerity and simplicity, the Hasidic founder looked to meet the spiritual needs of the masses. He taught them that true Divine service consisted not only of religious scholarship, but also of a sincere love of God combined with warm faith and belief in the efficacy of prayer; that the ordinary person filled with a sincere belief in God, and whose prayers come from the heart, is more acceptable to God than someone versed in and fully observant of Jewish law who lacks inspiration in his divine service.

This democratization of Judaism attracted to the teachings not only the common people, but also the scholars whom the rabbinical scholasticism and ascetic Kabbalah failed to satisfy. Hasidism gave a ready response to the burning desire of the common people, in the simple, stimulating, and comforting faith it awakened in them. The scholars attracted to Hasidism, also sought to learn selfless humility and simple sincerity from the common folk. In contrast to other sectarian teachings, early Hasidism aimed not at dogmatic or ritual reform, but at a deeper psychological one. It aimed to change not the belief, but the believer.

By means of psychological suggestion, the aim became to create a new type of religious man, a type that placed emotion above reason and rites, and religious exaltation above knowledge. The unlearned common folk were given spiritual enlivenment, as their sincerity also made them close to God. The great activity of Jewish study could, in contrast, offer the scholar spiritual peril, if it contributed to the sense of ego, and therefore became a barrier to God's presence.

As with other great faiths, Man's ego was the barrier or stumbling block. Judaism teaches that sin is an act, and not a state of being and sin is any thought, word, or deed that breaks God's law, by omission or commission.

In this writing I am giving my overview of the better known religious ways in order to reference their various idiosyncrasies, as already mentioned, using as reference the works of Silo. In so doing, I must comment on the different interpretations of what can be termed signs or signals from the Profound. For a direct appraisal of those signals - not an interpretation - I will again allow Silo to speak for himself:

What is important is the translation of those signals," Silo maintained. "It is the translation of that profound interiority which produces great things in the development of the religions.

In Israel before their immigration to Egypt they talked of the god of Israel and they accepted other gods that were hostile to the god of Israel.

The Egyptian sacerdotal caste managed the political, social and economic values in addition to the religious values in a monopolistic way; perhaps it was seeing all the values and the power of control over them concentrated in one single caste that made Akhenaton think of one all-powerful god and initiate his political-religious revolution. "God is only one," "Oh god Aton you are the only god and the god of all things," said Akhenaton.

When the Jews immigrated to Egypt, they adhered to Akhenaton's political-religious revolution and then the god of Israel became the only god: That was the situation the people of Israel were in when Akhenaton's political-religious revolution came about.

Then comes the counter-revolution and those who adhered to Akhenaton are not wanted and are exiled from Egypt, and the Israelites depart, in a huge crisis." (Note below)

Silo, Mendoza, 26 November 2006: in conversation with Enrique Nassar, Humanist Movement.

Note: This was taken by Silo as one of the more notable historical examples of a humanist moment that did not mature. When that king attempted to impose his reforms, there was an immediate reaction from the generation being displaced. All of the structural changes he had initiated were dismantled, which brought about, among other new circumstances, the exodus of certain peoples, who in their departure from the lands of Egypt carried with them the values of that time.

Looking at the Dictionary of New Humanism, the definition of the humanist moment explains further: "Historical situation in which a younger generation struggles against the generation in power in order to modify the dominant anti-humanist framework. Such a period is often identified with social revolution. A h.m. acquires full significance if it inaugurates a stage in which successive generations can adapt and further develop the founding proposals of this process. Frequently, however, the h.m. is cancelled by the very generation that came to power with the intention of producing a change of schema or system. It may also happen that the generation that initiates the h.m. will fail in its project."

This anecdotal extract brings us to a close on the earliest writings of Judaism, hinting at how the landscape of formation determines just how everything is viewed, and indeed, how the signs and signals are interpreted and the dangers of depending on the letter when it is the spirit that is paramount and may well have moved on leaving empty vessels whereof, only the smell of the good wine remains!

Chapter Twelve

Mainly the Eastern Church of Christianity

Instead of taking an orthodox look at Christianity in search of its mysticism, and given that this writing is taking place in Asia, a start can be made by way of introduction with the Nestorian Church. David Wilmshurst, writing in the *Royal Asiatic Society's Hong Kong Branch Journal* (Vol 30, 1990) in an article titled, *The Syrian Brilliant Teaching*, details its history.

"In the next century and a half [from the twelfth century] the Nestorian heresy was stamped out within the territories of the Roman Empire, and its adherents fled to neighbouring Persia. Although the state religion of Sassanian Persia was Zoroastrianism, Christianity had firmly established itself in the western provinces of the Persian Empire, particularly among the mainly Syrian population of northern Mesopotamia and in Khuzistan and Fars, and Persia's Christian minority by and large sympathised with the theological position which Nestorius had taken. The influx of Christian refugees from the Roman empire strengthened the native Persian church, and after the Persian empire was conquered by the Moslem Arabs in the seventh century the Nestorian church enjoyed a period of rapid expansion. Syrian and Persian Christians were tolerated by their Moslem rulers and organised into a *melet*, or official minority group, headed by the Nestorian patriarch. Although they were not permitted to convert Moslems, Nestorian missionaries were otherwise given a free hand, and by the end of the twelfth century Nestorian churches could be found in Egypt and Cilicia, in Persia and Mesopotamia, in India, Ceylon and Socotra, and in much of Turkestan. All these churches, organised into at least twenty and possibly as many as thirty, metropolitan provinces, recognised the authority of the Nestorian Patriarch or catholicus, who ruled from Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid caliphate."

Note: It is claimed that Socotra was visited by Thomas the Apostle in AD 52, one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus. He is reputed to be the only Apostle who went outside the Roman Empire to preach the Gospel. He is also believed to have crossed the largest area, which includes the Persian Empire and India. The islands of Socotra are dependant on the trade winds and they lie in the path of traders. It is reasonable to believe that St. Thomas came to India, preached the gospel, established his church and died there as a martyr. It is believed that St. Thomas arrived in Cranganore, Kerala, India in the year 52CE.

Socotra, by the way, is mentioned in The Travels of Marco Polo according to which "the inhabitants were baptised Christians and had an archbishop" who, it is further explained, "has nothing to do with the Pope in Rome, but is subject to an archbishop who lives at Baghdad."

China was then under the Mongols, and Christian support was seen to give advantage against the invading Moslems, and the Nestorians in their turn took advantage of that situation to establish in strength. This peaked late second half of the thirteenth century. However, as Mongol power lessened Islam's power grew. By the middle years of the fourteenth century the Nestorian church in China was no more. Today pockets survive in Kurdistan and a diaspora in the West. (Wilmshurst gives a figure of 1.7 million in 1989.)

Historically though, for almost a thousand years, from T'ang and into the Mongol Yuan Dynasty, Nestorian Christians could be found in significant numbers in China - there were also the Manicheans, who also originated in Persia, who used the Chinese term the shining teaching - *ming chiao* - for their religion. There was a Nestorian monastery in the capital Ch'ang-an (now Xi'an ex-Sian), founded in 638.

Another Nestorian monk, Rueben, had travelled to Ch'ang-an in 635, bringing Nestorian writings. It is said that the Nestorians along with other Christian churches, catered to the needs of the Syrian and Persian merchants from along the Silk Road rather than to any spiritual needs of the Chinese; it was not that Chinese were converting to the religion.

[Further notes on this topic can be found in my *Yamabushi - the Third Force*.]

Mr Wilmshurst tells us that the term used for Christianity was *Ta-ch'in Ching-chiao* - Syrian Brilliant Teaching, but points out that by saying Syria the church was saying the Christianity of the wider Mediterranean as by that time Syria was ruled by Arab Moslems. The word brilliant as used in Chinese could be found in Buddhist texts. *Note: in China, T'ein-chu is used for Catholic Christianity and Chieh-tu chiao for Protestant Christianity.*

There is record of Adam (the inspirer of the Nestorian Stone stele) and the Kashmiri monk Prajna co-operating to translate the *Satparamita Sutra* from an Uighur text, despite that Adam did not know Sanscrit nor the Buddha's teaching and Prajna knew neither Uighur or Chinese. The scholar and Emperor Te-tsung rejected the translation. Richard H. Gombrich cautions proving well founded (see Chapter Six).

Further Nestorian manuscripts were found at a site in Tun-huang (Dunhuang) on the lip of the Gobi Desert - where the Nestorian monastery was known by the name of the nearby town of Sha-chou.

In China, in the earliest days, God was understood in an anthropomorphic sense and not creator as in the Hebrew sense. From the Chou Dynasty on, the god of the Chinese became impersonal. *T'ien* or Heaven, representing the supreme power of both the personal and later impersonal divine. *Ti*, as the first ancestor of the people of Shang, combined gods and ancestors.

God, in Chinese, might be *T'ai-chi*, the Great Ultimate, but that, neither, can be paralleled with the West's God. As Robert Neville says in his essay in the book *Understanding the Chinese Mind*, "I cannot suppress my delight at the irony of my preliminary findings, however, namely, that Chinese thought gives a more inclusive and balanced expression to the genius of creation *ex nihilo* and a Platonic cosmology than the West has been able to achieve."

The Nestorians had drawn apart from the orthodox stand on the Jesus as Son of God issue and preferred Jesus as son of Man. This doctrine was condemned as heresy - committed by Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, 423-431, who was anathematized in 431 by the Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus which was principally called to discuss the Nestorian viewpoint. Nestorianism upheld the doctrine of Incarnation. Jesus the man born of Mary, who became the Mother of Christ - not mother of god. The Council of Chalcedon (451) finally formulated the resulting orthodox doctrine of two natures, divine and human, in the one person Jesus.

The Nestorians held to their own doctrine and became known over wide areas as the Church of the East or Persian Christianity, while in the West, Christianity held its own in but France and Italy. Islam recognised the Nestorian Patriarch as the official representative of all Christians in the domain of Islam.

By the 13th century the Church of the East had developed strongly but later suffered severely along with much else under the sweep of the Mongols in the 14th century. The remnants of the Nestorian church fled to the mountains of Kurdistan. The doctrinal issue outstanding is the relationship between the humanity and the divinity of Christ - which the 451 Council attempted to conclude, as the dispute concerning the nature of Christ was splitting the Christian Church.

It is a worthy matter to contemplate, possibly reaching that plateau-of-being where there is no difference in the two stands, Jesus offering both possibilities on his plaintively outstretched hands radiating His love.

Returning to mainstream Christianity we can see the mystical implications of it's two foremost and basic tenets:

In Christianity the greatest sin is Pride. Jesus Christ states in Matthew 22:35-40:

* 36 Master, which [is] the great commandment in the law?

* 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

* 38 This is the first and great commandment.

* 39 And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

* 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Ego is nulled by a selfless love of God and love of one's neighbour also promotes one's neighbour's welfare above one's own, again, an ego striking dictate!

In Buddhism the Abrahamic concept of sin does not apply. Buddhist ethics is consequentialist in that it is founded upon compassion for all sentient beings and upon the duty to cause their happiness and to prevent their suffering - pleasing any transcendent non-earthly form is not a factor. The well-being of all sentient beings is seen as an end-in-itself and Buddhist ethics more closely corresponds to secular ethics. *Karma* is accepted whereby widespread suffering is the inevitable consequence of greed, hatred and delusion. Buddhism seeks to end suffering by replacing greed with selflessness, hatred with compassion and delusion with wisdom.

However, to get away from all the not-quite nit-picking but anyway, all the differentiation, better turn to an exemplary mystical text, or devotional classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, written in the late fourteenth century, likely by a monk or was it by a country parson of the Dean Stanley stamp but further 'into the cloud'?

No set of step-by-step instructions there but a read of this slim volume and the Christian Way almost permeates into the very skin. At the outset though there is a warning - wither the *via positiva or negativa*, the cataphatic or apophatic, with preferences in Buddhism for the latter via.

For many a modern mind the contemplation thus enthused about is too 'rich' and only the die-hard Christian will penetrate that so-defined 'cloud'. Christians today had better turn to the likes of the Austrian monk David Steindl Rast to see the result of a contemplative Christian life in modern times. Indeed, listening to this practical yet mystical monk the words of Leo Tolstoy are made real - "He who loves Life, loves God."

In *Silo Speaks*, the author introduces Judaism, Christianity and Islam simply with: "Judaism produced both the religion of its own people, its national religion, and a universal missionary religion: Christianity. The genius of the Arab people in turn wove together out of the diversity of its tribal beliefs a religion that was also missionary and universal in character - Islam, sometimes also called Mohammedanism - which was

in its origins indebted to Judaism and Christianity as important sources. Today, Judaism as a religion of the Jewish people and Christianity and Islam as universal religions are still living and continue to evolve."

In talks with friends in Mendoza, in 1999, Silo mentioned that in the case of Christianity its gestation period started approximately 200 years before its appearance. The Essenes and some manuscripts prepared the way. There are no historic documents by the chroniclers of that epoch that support the existence of Jesus - even by the Romans, exceptional account keepers - or, as Silo said to my friend and fellow Ernesto (Tito) de Casas: "...the Romans, who even took a census of how many hens they had in the colonies, don't mention him at all, not even once..."

Furthermore, the cities (as described in the gospel and other scriptures) visited by Jesus did not exist in that epoch. Why all this fabrication? It was done for the people living in that current moment.

The dispersion of Christianity resulted from the Jews who used to travel to Galias, Spain, and other places, where they had relatives who observed the Jewish rites. These first Christians introduced their doctrine in those ambits. Silo found it interesting how the first apostles, especially Paul, organized the religion in the beginning. Paul made it clear that his doctrine was not a heresy. He said that the Jewish tradition did not have to be continued, and finally that the orders of the Church of Jerusalem should not be followed. He exhorted others to preach the doctrine to the Gentiles and not to Jews.

At that point things became anchored and the myth of Christianity was configured. Later on they saw the need for support for their diffusion and that's how the gospels were born. In reality they are four different versions by four evangelists which talk about the same thing in their own words. These became official. There were many others, *The Apocryphon* (literally, "secret book") of John [was one]. Years later the *New Revelations* and the *Epistles* were added. This configured the *New Testament*. They saw it would be convenient to attach the *Old Testament* to the other manuscripts (the *Old Testament* was not altogether Jewish since part of the manuscripts came from other peoples and cultures.) This was how *The Bible* was configured. Manicheanism corresponded to the Persian wise men that said Mass. Later the Christians appropriated this rite. Jesus' birth was visited by the three wise men (Persian priests) which was easy to assimilate by the Christians. But it was Constantine 400 years later with *The Nicene Creed* who took the definite step of the configuration of the new Christian religion.

In his mainstream writings Silo hardly delved such as Christianity but he was not averse to sharing his thoughts on the matter as the above paragraphs show.

Silo gave examples of the contemplative path within Christianity using the works of Master Nicephorus (of *Philokalia* renown) saying:

...it is not by practicing the prayer of the heart that he reaches a particular level. On the contrary, it is through the direction of his own process toward the essential (when he locks himself in on Mt. Athos) that he produces the prayer of the heart. That which is essential has to do with a process and not with practices. Practices do not give you a definite direction. The meaning of life is not solved with a practice. Our conversation goes in the direction of the essential. Experience with internal weight. Practices are things you acquire but in the end they do not give you meaning. Reflection on our actions is what generates maturity to clarify meaning. This reflection is not a technique, it is an attitude. The profound change comes from reflecting on one's own process. It is a way of clearing our path and taking weight off oneself.

It is worthwhile repeating an example from material used in the early days of the Silo group. Taken from research noted as a brief biographical note, in *Notebook #6* : The Telediol:

"Our holy father Nicephorus lived a life of intense spiritual work on Mount Athos, dying shortly after the year 1340. He was master and guide to Gregory of Salonica (Palamas), in the study and method of training to obtain the highest wisdom according to the testimony of his own disciple. In silent seclusion undisturbed by mundane problems and keeping his attention exclusively within himself, he attained the indescribable internal union with the Eternal God, receiving in his heart the blessed enlightenment of the Divine Grace. Exalted by this divine gift, he is like a father guiding us with his writings on the same path. He selected from the books and lives of the Holy Fathers passages relative to sobriety, attention, and prayer adding finally advice derived from his own experience and inviting us all to elevate towards the most perfect communion with the Lord through the prayer of the mind and of the heart."

Thus begins the translation of the first theme or chapter from the book *Philokalia*, translated directly from the Russian text.

QUESTION (to Nicephorus): We have learnt from previous evidences that the work as practised by the holy fathers pleased God; and that there is a certain work that rapidly liberates the soul from passions and that by love unites it to God. Practice that is indispensable to anyone who is moved by these things. Thus, we beg of you to teach us what is attention of the mind and how to capacitate one to acquire it, for that work is absolutely unknown to us.

REPLY (by Nicephorus): In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ Who said: "Without me you can do nothing" (John, XV, 5). Having invoked Him to help me, I shall try to my best to show to you what attention is and how, if God allows it, one can succeed in acquiring it.

Some of the Saints have called attention to the preservation of the mind; others, to the protection of the heart, and yet others awakened have called it so many other similar names. However, all these names mean the same thing. Exactly as of bread, one can say: a slice, a piece, or a morsel, in the same way you must understand all these expressions. Regarding attention itself and its characteristic features, we shall study it right now.

Attention is a signal of sincere repentance. Attention is the image or appearance the soul can have of itself, rejecting the world and ascending towards God. Attention is renouncing sin and the acquisition of virtue. Attention is the absolute certainty of the forgiveness of sins. Attention is the beginning of contemplation, or rather, its necessary condition, for through it God approaches and reveals Himself to the mind. Attention is the serenity of the mind, or in other words, is to remain undisturbed, without reveries in the gift of divine mercy. Attention means stopping thoughts; it is the abode of the memory of God and the house of the treasure where lies the power to resist everything that may come.

Consequently, attention is also the origin of faith, of hope and of love; for he who is lacking in faith cannot resist all the afflictions coming from the world and he who does not voluntarily suffer them, cannot say: "He is my refuge and my strength" (*Psalms, X, VI, 2*); and he who has not the All Powerful as his refuge, cannot be truly sincere in his love for Him.

This work, the major of all the great works, can be accomplished by many and even by all if they are duly trained. A few men receive this gift directly from God without need for teachings and they work by inner compulsion and at the warmth of their faith. Nonetheless, what is the exception is not the rule.

Therefore, it is necessary to search for a master who is not himself in error, to follow his instructions and thus learn to distinguish, in matters of attention, defects and excesses of the right and of the left, which emerge through diabolic suggestions.

From his own experience about temptations, he will explain what is necessary to do and show us correctly the mental path that we then must follow with fewer impediments.

If such a master is out of your reach, you must search for him relentlessly. However, if in spite of such search he is not found, then, with contrite spirit, invoking God and praying to him assiduously and in humbleness, work according to my explanations.

You know that your breathing consists of inhalation and of exhalation of air. The organ that serves this purpose is the lungs that surround the heart in such a way that the air that circulates through them involves in passing, the heart. Consequently, breathing is the natural path to the heart. Thus, having united your mind within yourselves (which is also attention), direct it towards the respiratory channel through which air reaches the heart and, together with the inhaled air, oblige the mind to descend into the heart and keep it there.

Get used to it brethren, do not come out from the heart too soon although at the beginning you will experience great solitude in such isolation and seclusion. When you become accustomed to it, on the contrary, you will begin to feel disgusted by the non-sense of the external world and it will not be unpleasant or tedious to remain within the heart.

Exactly as a man that has been far away is invaded on returning home by a great happiness on meeting his spouse and his children; he embraces them all and everything that he may say to them will never be enough; in the same way to unite oneself to one's own heart is experienced by an inexpressible happiness and delight. Then one sees that the Kingdom of Heaven is really within ourselves; and seeing it now in oneself, one struggles and make efforts with pure prayer to keep it and strengthen it there, understanding that everything that is external is of no importance and completely unattractive.

When you enter in this way to the place of the heart as I have prescribed, praise God and, asking for his mercy, preserve this work and He will teach you things that you could not possibly learn by any other means. Moreover, you should know that whilst the mind establishes itself in the heart, it should not be left there in silence and idleness but rather to repeat constantly the prayer: "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me". For this practice moves away reveries from the mind, makes evasive and impenetrable to the suggestions of the enemy and guides it each day more and more and fervently to love God.

If, however, and in spite of all your efforts you do not succeed to entering in the kingdom of the heart according to what I have said, do what I shall now tell you, and with the help of God you will find what you are seeking. You know that in every human being, internal talk depends on the chest. Thus, in spite of our lips being silent, it is in the chest where we converse and talk to ourselves, pray, sing hymns, and do many other unsuitable things.

Then, having driven away all thoughts of this inner chattering (which can be done if one wishes), give the chest the following short prayer: "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me" - and force it in spite of any other thought in order to have only this sound within. If you work in this manner with permanence, in all attention, then, and in time, this will open the path to the heart, as it has been already described. It is not possible to doubt this for we have verified it by ourselves through experience.

If you work in this way with a strong wish and with great attention, full of sweetness, a complete range of virtues will come: love, joy, peace, and others, through which every petition you make will be answered in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be in honour and glory, power and adoration now and always and for ever more. Amen.

/ends...

Note, see: Nicephorus the Solitary, Writings from Philokalia (The Love of Good). Nicephorus lived on Mt Athos and died before 1340. He was a 'spiritual worker' teacher and guide to Gregory of Salonika (Palamas). He received the blessed illumination by Divine Grace and there-with spoke the mind-heart prayer, sharing his spiritual experience with others, speaking in terms of Sacred Sobriety.

To bring in the topic of Christianity and not mention the Gnostic gospels, the fifty-two texts discovered at Hammadi, Egypt, is remiss. These include previously unknown gospels, poems and myths attributing to Jesus sayings, also, beliefs that are very different from those in the *New Testament* but which have already

been alluded to in this writing, on the Nestorians. Scholar Elaine Pagels explored these documents and their implications in her book *The Gnostic*, speaking of Naj 'Hammádî at the Jabal al-Tárif, a mountain honeycombed with more than 150 caves. Originally natural, some of the caves were further cut and painted and used as grave sites as early as the sixth dynasty, some 4,300 years previous. Ms. Pagels says that what was discovered at Nag Hammadi is, apparently, a library of writings, almost all of them Gnostic, in 1947 [by Muhammed edh-Dhib and Ahmed Mohammed, two Bedouin shepherds of the Ta'amireh tribe]. These texts refer to the scriptures of the *Old Testament*, and others to the letters of Paul and the *New Testament* gospels. They include the same individuals as the *New Testament* - Jesus and his disciples, yet the differences are striking, she concludes.

Orthodox Jews and Christians insist that a chasm separates humanity from its creator: God is wholly other. But some Gnostics who wrote these particular gospels contradict this: self-knowledge is knowledge of God; the self and the divine are identical. And, the 'living Jesus' of these texts speaks of illusion and enlightenment, not of sin and repentance, like the Jesus of the *New Testament*. Instead of coming to save us from sin, she continues, he comes as a guide who opens access to spiritual understanding. But when the disciple attains enlightenment, Jesus no longer serves as his spiritual master: the two have become equal even identical!

Orthodox Christians believe that Jesus is Lord and Son of God in a unique way: he remains forever distinct from the rest of humanity whom he came to save. Yet the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* relates that as soon as Thomas recognizes him, Jesus says to Thomas that they have both received their being from the same source. Jesus said, "I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become drunk from the bubbling stream which I have measured out... He who will drink from my mouth will become as I am: I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him."

Does not such teaching - the identity of the divine and human, the concern with illusion and enlightenment, the founder who is presented not as Lord, but as spiritual guide sound more Eastern than Western, that is Ms. Pagel's flourishing end point. But there is no East or West to call when the central and core experience itself is the arbiter!

Chapter Thirteen

Islam - and the Arabs

Islam, though closely bound up with the other two religions of 'the Book', has a different set of priorities for its degrees of sin. Top priority is, 'associating anything with Al-Llah'; while number two is 'murder'; three is 'practising magic'; four is 'not praying'. 'Not paying Zakat' comes next, then, not fasting on a Day of Ramadan without excuse; 'not performing Hajj, while being able to do so'; 'disrespect to parents'; 'abandoning relatives', etc. Islam sees sin as anything that goes against the will of Al-Llah and also teaches that sin is an act and not a state of being.

However, instead of reaching into the vagaries of Islam, its origin and the various clashing denominations in our search for what's of value to us on this quest for clues to reach into Being, let us delve the human geography as part of the Islamic empire (small e) that is associated with being an Arab, so what constitutes an Arab today?

Modern Arab history begins with the Ottoman conquests of 1516-1517, during which a modern gunpowder army with muskets defeated a medieval army wielding swords', from: *The Arabs*, a history, by Eugene Rogan, an Oxford don who specialises in Middle East studies.

The book tells us that the great cities at that time were Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo. Under the Ottomans the Sarabs were ruled from Istanbul. So long as taxes were paid rule was light and the likes of non-Muslim minorities were allowed to organise their own affairs, under their own communal leadership and religious laws. The Arabs were other Muslims in a great Muslim empire.

As the fall of the Ottoman Empire approached - 1918 - many Arabs and their provinces had become uneasy and dissatisfied with what was in reality subjugation and called for reforms and independence, seeing how they themselves had lagged behind in various aspects of usual life.

'The British and French used the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 to apply the modern state system to the Arab world', says Rogan, 'with all Arab lands bar central and southern Arabia falling under some form of colonial rule'.

Further disappointments that appeared following the Second World War where the promises of self-determination for the Arabs were quashed -which brought to mind another epic moment, that recorded under the guise of T. E. Lawrence, portrayed for western audiences in the movie, *Lawrence of Arabia*.

The Cold War brought to the fore the dominant powers of the United States of America and the Soviet Union and until 1990 again the Arabs found themselves constrained by outside influences jockeying for their

allegiance, but reluctant to allow self-determination. In an effort of mitigation the Non-Aligned Movement took shape. However, every Arab state had to take sides!

As Mr Rogan has it: 'Those states that entered into the Soviet sphere of influence called themselves "progressives" but were described in the West as "radical" Arab states. This group included every Arab country that had undergone a revolution: Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and South Yemen. Those Arab states that sided with the West - the liberal republics like Tunisia and Lebanon, and conservative monarchies like Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States - were dubbed "reactionaries" by the progressive Arab states but were considered "moderates" in the West.'

The Cold War came to an end in 1989 after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In the Arab world there was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait - 1990. The UN authorised a US-led war against Iraq and US power on the world stage was shown absolute. The USA's unilateralism meant that following the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, "...the war on terrorism was launched that focused on the Muslim world, with the Arabs as prime suspects'.

It is highly pertinent today to take a detailed look at what constitutes the Arab world and the only way to do this is from a historical perspective and with an overview of the diversity that goes to make of Arab culture with its array of music and other artistic forms that tell of a way of life equally deserving wider attention. After all, the point is to reach solutions, to cultivate a way seeing things that is inclusive and supportive of all that is good and worthy.

In general terms the media has not looked for the positives in Arab lifestyles and criticisms are so easy given the highly structured form of Arab societies but what has not been seen is those periods where Islamic culture has deposited golden moments, nay, epochal eras.

Certainly, for my learning and pleasure, *The Arabs*, brought to my attention the Mamluks and their role in establishing, 'the oldest and most powerful Islamic state of its day' (1250) comprising Egypt, Syria, and Arabia. 'They were the ultimate warriors in hand-to-hand combat and had overpowered the greatest armies of the Middle Ages' - they drove the Mongol hordes out of Arab lands, and expelled the last of the Christian Crusaders. The modern Turkish army routed them in the end.

'Nationalism emerged in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire at the start of the twentieth century. It was at first difficult for the Arab peoples of the empire to imagine themselves in a separate state after nearly four centuries under Ottoman rule. Arab disenchantment with Ottoman rule grew more widespread after the 1908 Young Turk Revolution. The Young Turks were ardent nationalists who instigated the revolution to force the sultan to restore the 1876 constitution and to reconvene the Parliament.'

Mesopotamia - not just Arabs

Mesopotamia has long been a place peopled over wide tracts of land and today over three provinces, with the Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shiites, divided in their aims and aspirations.

Looking at Iraq:

Shi'ite Arabs: 55-60% of population.

The Shia arose from a 7th-century split within Islam over the rightful heirs to Muhammad. Many Shia disdain Sunnis for having followed "usurpers" not in the Prophet's direct bloodline. The Shia approach to Islam is marked by religious rituals that honour the martyrs of their faith. Most Shia in Iraq are ethnic Arabs (unlike those in neighbouring Iran, who are Persian).

Although in the majority, the Shia long suffered under Sunni rule in Iraq. Ongoing persecution escalated under Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein, who executed many Shi'ite clerics and brutally crushed Shia opposition after the first Gulf War. Almost inevitably, the Shia will emerge as the dominant force in the new Iraqi government.

Sunni Arabs: 15-20% of population.

Sunni Islam, shaped by scholars and jurists, has excelled in political rule. The Sunni governed the Ottoman Empire - which included present-day Iraq - from the 1500s through World War I. Their largely secular rule endured in Iraq until the toppling of Saddam Hussein and his Baath Party in 2003.

A Sunni-led insurgency hoped to expel USA troops and re-establish Baathist rule. Many Sunnis resented and feared the then new Shia-dominated police force and military. They also worried that the Shia, and the Kurds who inhabited oil-rich regions, would keep most of the country's wealth for themselves. So the big question was: Will the Sunnis accept or resist a diminished role?

Sunni Kurds: 20% of population.

Inhabiting a region that crosses into Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria, the Kurds are a non-Arabic people with their own language and culture. Fairly liberal Muslims, the Kurds often wear Western-style clothes, and Kurdish women never hide their faces or wear head-to-toe chadors.

Atrocities under Saddam included the murder of thousands of Kurdish peasants when he used chemical weapons to punish their support of Iran in its war with Iraq in the 1980s. Forever under the thumb of others, the Kurds have long dreamed of an independent Kurdistan.

The Holy Places: Disputes

In 1851 - 1852, regarding the Christians, from The Arabs:

'[what was demonstrated at the time was] the dangers of great-power intervention on all parties. Differences arose between Catholic and Greek Orthodox monks over the respective rights and privileges to Christian places in Palestine. France and Russia responded by putting pressure on Istanbul to confer privileges on their respective client communities. The Ottomans first conceded to French pressures, giving the keys to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem to the Catholics. The Russians were determined to secure a bigger trophy for the Greek Orthodox Church so as not to lose face to the French. But after Ottoman made similar concessions to the Russians, the French emperor Napoleon III dispatched a state-of-the-art propeller driven ship up the Dardanelles to deliver his ambassador to Istanbul and threatened to bombard Ottoman positions in North Africa if the Porte did not rescind the concessions to Russia's Orthodox clients.'

The Holy Land refers to the geographical region of the Levant of no definite borders which has significant religious importance for Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Bahá'í Faith. Nowadays, it comprises roughly the territory of Israel, the Palestinian territories and parts of Jordan and Lebanon. It has religious significance because of Jerusalem, the holiest city to Judaism, the birthplace of Christianity, and the third-holiest to Islam. The perceived holiness of the land to Christianity was the ideological driving force behind the Crusades. The land has been a destination for religious pilgrimages since biblical times.

In Judaism, Jerusalem, Hebron, Tzfat and Tiberias are regarded as its holiest cities. Jerusalem, as the site of the Temple, has been the spiritual focus of Judaism. The area of Jerusalem called Mount Moriah, believed to be the Temple Mount. Jews turn towards Jerusalem to pray. The Western Wall of the Temple of Jerusalem, also known as the "Wailing Wall," has been a site of pilgrimage by Jews and non-Jews for centuries. It and the Temple Mount are considered the holiest sites to Jews.

Christianity

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Christianity. The Holy Land is also significant in Christianity because of the association with the place of birth, ministry, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, who Christians regard as the Saviour or Messiah.

The holy cities for Christians of all denominations are:

a) Jerusalem, believed to be the site of some of Jesus's teaching, the Last Supper (believed to have occurred at the Cenacle), the subsequent institution of the Holy Eucharist as well as His entombment;

Christians believe he was crucified on a nearby hill, Golgotha (sometimes called Calvary). It notably contains the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of All Nations, but many other Christian institutions as well.

b) Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus.

c) Nazareth, Jesus's hometown and the site of many holy places, including the Church of the Annunciation in Basilica and Mary's Well.

During the Crusades, Christian pilgrims often sought out the Holy Places, besides the sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem:

a) Sefhoria (Tzippori), where the Virgin Mary was said to have spent her childhood

b) The River Jordan, site of Christ's baptism

c) Cave dwelling of John the Baptist

d) Sea of Galilee

e) Mount Tabor, site of the Transfiguration of Jesus

d) Jericho, along the road to which was the location of the Good Samaritan's charity.

In Islam

Muslims consider the land of the Mount Sinai to be sacred. The first few months of Islamic history considered Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem to be the first Qibla (direction of prayer), as opposed to the Ka'aba in Mecca. Both Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque, are considered to be sacred in Islam. In Arabic, the city of Jerusalem is known as "Al-Quds", meaning "the Holy".

Muslims also consider the depression below Mount Sinai, known as "Tuwa", to be sacred.

The term "Holy Land" is also often used by Muslims (although not in *The Qur'an*) in reference to the Hijaz - the land of the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah. Shi'a Muslims also include the land of Karbala under the high status of a "Holy Land".

Baha'i

The Bahá'í World Centre is the name given to the spiritual and administrative centre of the Bahá'í Faith located in and around Haifa and Acre, Israel.

Succession to Muhammad

The death of the prophet Muhammad gave rise to one of the earliest splits in Islam as his followers disagreed over how to choose his successor, or caliph, to head the Muslim community. One group of Muslims argued for succession within the family of the Prophet and championed the candidacy of Ali ibn Abu Talib, who, as first cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, was his closest relative. This faction came to be known in Arabic as Shi'at Ali, or the Party of Ali, from which the word Shiite is derived. The majority of Muslims however argued that the caliph should be the most pious Muslim best able to uphold the suuna, or practices and beliefs of Islamic history. The Sunnis have been the dominant majority of the community of believers, particularly in the Arab and Turkish world, with variants of Shiite Islam taking root in South Arabia, Persia and South Asia.

The Rightly Guided Caliphs were the first four successors of the Prophet Muhammad - Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, and 'Ali - who ruled the early Islamic community in the seventh century. They were followed by the Umayyad dynasty, which ruled from Damascus between 661 to 750.

And, what of Muhammad, the Prophet, and the scripture that he brought to the Arabs.....

Chapter Fourteen

Muhammad -the Last Prophet

On the seventeenth night of Ramadan (about 610) Muhammad (ibn Abdallah of the Quraysh tribe), an Arab merchant of the city of Mecca in the Hijaz, had an experience that would ultimately change the history of the world... writes author Karen Armstrong, in her book *Muhammad*. The merchant had the customary practice of retiring in spiritual retreat at that time of year, a not uncommon local practice. He would be with wife and family.

In the context it has to be appreciated that the Meccans were proud of their commercial success and held prestige among Arabs and had taken on the responsibility of caring for the Ka'aba, the ancient cube-shaped shrine at the centre of the city which many believed was the Temple of Allah, the High God of the pagan Arabs. But, something was remiss, whereas the Jews and Christians had their divinely inspired sacred books, the Arabs had none-such. That lack hung like a dark cloud over the Meccans' otherwise pleasantly fulfilling enough life.

"That changed on the seventeenth night of Ramadan when Muhammad was torn from sleep in his mountain cave and felt himself overwhelmed by a devastating divine presence. Later he explained this ineffable experience by saying that an angel had enveloped him in a terrifying embrace so that it felt as though the breath was being forced from his body. The angel gave him the curt command: '*iqra!*', 'Recite!' ... he found the divinely inspired words of a new scripture pouring from his mouth."

The Holy Book would be called *The Qur'an*: the Recitation.

At that time the various Beduin tribes were each a law unto themselves and constantly and often violently squabbling. Into that human cauldron of seemingly hopeless barbarism entered 'the Word' of Muhammad. Twenty-three tumultuous years later, by the time Muhammad died, nearly all the tribes had been brought into the new Muslim community - while there remained many spiritual beliefs associated with ancient desert lore and paganism.

"...Muhammad's teaching had unlocked such reserves of power that within 100 years, and the Arabs' empire stretched from Gibraltar to the Himalayas," informs Ms Armstrong.

The Qur'an did not arrive all at once, as is said of the *Torah*, or the Law, which according to the *Bible* was revealed to Moses on one go on Mt. Sinai. "*The Qur'an* came line by line, verse by verse, chapter by chapter. Sometimes the messages dealt with a particular situation in Mecca or Medina," says Ms Armstrong.

Muhammad was not an educated man, in the sense of reading and writing, and he spoke out the revelations aloud. These were memorised by companions and associates wrote them down. "They were

pronouncements and reflections on various themes, like God's presence in nature, the lives of the prophets, and the Last Judgement... the book was not designed for private perusal but for liturgical recitation..."

Modern scholars who have been able to date the *suras* with reasonable accuracy, point out that, for example, the earliest parts of *The Qur'an* refer to the special problems that Muhammad encountered while his religion was still a struggling little sect... In *The Qur'an*, therefore, we have a contemporaneous commentary on Muhammad's career that is unique in the history of religion: it enables us to see the peculiar difficulties he had to contend with, and how his vision evolved to become more profound and universal in scope."

What is of great interest of the life and times of Muhammad the Prophet in relation to *the Horse that Refused to Drink* is how a person 'comes by' or is infected with, 'the conversion experience', and is inspired to go to such lengths working for the common cause, at times against self-interest, to the point of going beyond the rationale of self-preservation, a basic instinct giving primacy to staying alive. Also, how to generate that state of inspiration instead of having it as if falling on one's head. Typically, Muhammad might swoon and perspire heavily, even when it was cold, or he might feel a great heaviness and an emotion like grief. Lesser mortals might just burst into tears, or, contrariwise, feel highly elated.

Besides touching on those matters there is something else, the predisposition. At the time when Muhammad came 'on the scene' there was a latent expectation-wish of a saving being, a messiah, already prevalent among Jews who would not recognise Jesus as such, a like ferment and search-wait that was alive as an undercurrent of Arab daily life. It's a perennial wish of any disgruntled society, largely based on personal and group inertia where there is an aversion to 'work out one's own salvation'. Rather, a benevolent patriarchal figure arrives to solve all the problems and of course "I" am on the inside and others are on the receiving end of the big stick necessary to knock people into shape... nothing much has changed today.

Muhammad would be 'susceptible' to that influence and as his intuition was fired owing to his retreats in relative seclusion set amid all the problems of his age what else could burst through into his awareness other than what was in dire need but also what was clearly a way through, a way of surpassing all the violence and squabbling that would bring unity and peaceful relations to bear on the region. A unifying force, spiritual in nature, practical in content. The message of the Qur'an was laid out in a series of 'recommendations' that were pertinent to actual situations despite that the guidance came by way of dreamlike states where in an altered state the utterances when translated into action furthered the general good.

Another feature of Muhammad was his sensitivity towards women and his reliance on his wife Khadija, particularly in regard to his revelations which physically took their toll, shaking him with their experiential depth and power. She was the first person to recognise his exceptional nature and she 'strengthened him, lightened his burden, proclaimed his truth...' (From a biographical account of Muhammad's life, by A. Guillaume).

By the time Muhammad was around forty years old his spiritual retreats had taken on a seriousness that led to him having dreams 'radiant with promise', signs of an internal process that indicated a surpassing of the initial stage of efforts at reconciliation to an attention toward what was outstanding in the present circumstance and that bordered on a search for resolutions that led into a better future. Then came the seventeenth night of Ramadan! How else to speak of those events other than by drawing on symbolic and allegorical stories of Angels. In particular of one Angel, Gabriel - the Spirit of Truth!

Ms Armstrong speaks of this as an 'overwhelming, towering experience of a Presence which filled the entire horizon and from which escape was impossible. Muhammad had that overpowering apprehension of numinous reality which has been described as the *mysterium terribile et fascinans* and in Judaism it has been called *kaddosh*, 'holiness', the terrifying otherness of god."

Continuing... "It seemed to have come upon him entirely unsought and left him feeling suicidal and despairing. He had been propelled into a sphere that he had never imagined and had somehow to explain to himself. In his isolation and terror, he turned instinctively to his wife."

Over time Muhammad was acclimatised to his vision and though seemingly poetic and convoluted, in essence what was brought to earth was... "a requirement that men and women strive to create a just society, where the vulnerable are treated decently." This was the bedrock of the Qur'anic message..." (Armstrong). But as Karen Armstrong points out this would not have been accomplished with mere socialism, a transcendent beyond the personal-factor was needed to bind people together as it once was, when the tribe was paramount as a unifying force whereas with city life, in Mecca, money was at the centre of all affairs. Just like today, which is much worse.

Given Muhammad's penchant for seclusion and the physical proximity to other current practices, those of the Desert Fathers were surely to a degree formative in determining his way of prayerfulness as these contemplatives were active in his time. This brings to mind such as the *Philokalia* - though not as ample as it is today (the collection's early title is *The Philokalia of the Niptic Fathers*, published in Venice, 1782, as a collection compiled in the eighteenth-century by St. Nikodemos of Athos and St. Makarios of Corinth. But, in the epoch of Muhammad its *hesychasm* (quietness) root would still be in dark vitalisation as an inner spiritual tradition with practices include contemplative prayer, quiet sitting, and recitations.

Niptic is derived from the Greek *nepsis* referring to contemplative prayer and meaning "watchfulness". Watchfulness in this context includes close attention to one's thoughts, intentions, and emotions and trying to maintain a constant state of remembrance of God. It refers to much more than general spiritual alertness and vigilance, but includes the practice of watching all of one's thoughts and fantasies, keeping guard over the heart and mind.

Philokalia is defined by its modern compilers as: 'the love of the beautiful, the exalted, the excellent' understood as the transcendent source of life and the revelation of Truth and is said to: '...show the way to awaken and develop attention and consciousness, to attain that state of watchfulness which is the hallmark of sanctity.' '...a learning which is not a matter of information or agility of mind but of a radical change of will and heart leading man towards the highest possibilities open to him, shaping and nourishing the unseen part of his being, and helping him to spiritual fulfilment and union with God.'

Nikodemos and Makarios as monks at Athos, a mountain in northern Greece historically considered the geographical centre of Orthodox Christianity spirituality and home to many monasteries, described the collected texts as 'a mystical school of inward prayer' which could be used to cultivate the inner life and to 'attain the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'

Also, monotheism was not an unknown concept in the Arabian Peninsula at the time. Ever since the early days of the religion of Abraham, Hanafiyyah, as the law of Ibrahim, minority groups were familiar and held to this 'new' concept. While a few Arab groups took Judaism as their religious way in general the Jews did not integrate because Judaism was regarded as their own religion, a religion based on race, with the Jews considering themselves to be superior to the followers of other religions. In addition, the Jewish laws were not appropriate to the Bedouin life style.

However, *The Qur'an* gave a progressive revelation and granted the opportunity to surpass all of those diverse beliefs.

Chapter Fifteen

The Sufi as the Pure

When speaking of Islam and of ways to access the Sacred we must also turn to Sufism because of the universality found among the Sufis, the cross-links with the Buddhist Way, and the point-of-interest which as it happens reflects my own interest and that of others close to me. If the foregoing chapter end paragraphs gives the proposed Islamic behavioural code for daily life then what is going on in the Islamic world today? Well, the Sufi's are not to blame - let us give heed to 'a friend' who simply calls himself Pashi:

"I have been hearing a lot of talk of Sufi Islam these days. Well, I have news for you. Sufis have long closed their shops. First of all their work was time-, place-and people bound in accordance with the most important precept of their teachings. Secondly, they have moved on and they have dissimulated themselves in the modern world -just like a pinch of salt they have been dissolved in the soup of this humanity, but not without giving it a distinct taste and flavour.

Just like 1400 years ago, it became evident that there was no need for any more prophets, similarly, Sufis have determined a while back that there was no need to organize like they used to be a few hundred years ago -like Qadris, Naqshbands etc. Whatever is left out and claims now to be a Sufi system, in fact, is a residual system devoid of any functionality - no matter how well meaning it may sound or intends to be."

Excerpt from: *South Asian History* (History of the Indian sub-continent: Islamic Religion and Culture, Sufism)

Sufi Currents and Civilization in the Islamic Courts

"No serious examination of the civilizations that flourished in the courts of the Islamic rulers is possible without an understanding of Sufi currents that played a vital - even decisive role in shaping the cultural output of the great Islamic empires. As any student of world history may note, civilization typically comes to a grinding halt wherever the writ of a revealed religion runs supreme.

"For any civilization to blossom, there has to be a certain intellectual and cultural space that is relatively free from dogma and hidebound traditions. In the earliest examples of the Islamic courts, particularly during the reign of the Abbasids in Baghdad, there was an informal separation of church and state and Arab civilization was able to make important gains, drawing inputs from a variety of eclectic sources - both indigenous and external (such as Indian and Mediterranean).

"But once the paramountcy of *The Qur'an* and the Shari'at laws began to be more strictly enforced - the Islamic courts needed some alternate current to prevent the newly established Islamic societies from slipping into the dark ages as had occurred in the Christian kingdoms of early medieval Europe. Sufism thus emerged

as a protestant and liberalizing current, that eventually became the primary vehicle for intellectual advance and the dissemination of culture in societies governed by Islamic sovereigns.

"Amongst the most interesting of these were the Spanish Sufis of the 'Illuminist' school - many of whom were great admirers of Indian civilization - and had access to translations of Indian philosophical and scientific texts. The Spanish Sufis took a great interest in preserving and enhancing philosophical and scientific knowledge, and had a tremendous influence on Franciscan Monks such as Roger Bacon (1268) who thus summarized their world view: There are two modes of knowledge, through argument and experience. Argument brings conclusions and compels us to concede them, but it does not cause certainty nor remove doubts in order that the mind may remain at rest in truth, unless this is provided by experience."

(Excerpt ends, continues later in this chapter.)

The Path of Sufism

The path of Sufism starts for any individual when that person becomes a student (disciple) and takes an oath of allegiance with a teacher, practically, a transaction takes place and the student is committed, likewise the master.

A Sufi usually has authorization to be a teacher for one particular path, but there is no restriction, also a particular path may have more than one Sufi at its head at a time. A Sufi or Pir is accorded the status by his Shaikh by way of Khilafat, succession, which is the process whereby a Shaikh identifies one of his disciples as his successor - that also is not limited to only one successor.

That said, which shows the tightly controlled structure that the Sufi operates in, tells a different story that indicates that there is something more interesting than the festive frolics of the people attracted to shrines on popular holy days of Islam.

Note: Pir, it may be noted, is Persian for "old [person]" and is a title for a Sufi master. These masters are also referred to as a Shaikh, Arabic for Old Man. The title is often translated into English as "saint" but in Sufism a Pir's role is to guide and instruct his disciples on the Sufi path. Surely, given that the Sufi path is a mystical one, within Islam, sainthood is a distinct possibility given an active religious life, validated or not by any authority. The instruction on the Path is often done by giving general lessons and individual guidance.

The not-quite-that Evil One

The radical interpretation of events and reassessment of certain historical or mythical characters that appear through Sufic lore have always tickled my imagination. For instance, the claim by some Sufis that Satan actually loved God more than the other angels because Lucifer, whose name means, 'Light Bearer', had refused to honour another creature in the same vein as God was honoured. This refers to the story that at the behest of God the angels were asked to honour Adam, the first human being.

Shaitan is the equivalent of Satan in Islam - meaning 'astray' or 'distant', and sometimes translated as 'devil', that can be applied to both man and *jinn*. Iblis is the personal name of the Devil who is mentioned in the Qur'anic account of Genesis. According to *The Qur'an*, Iblis disobeyed an order from al-Llah to bow to Adam and as a result was forced out of heaven though given respite until the day of judgment from further punishment.

The Qur'an: "When al-Llah commanded all of the angels to bow down before Adam (the first human), Iblis, full of hubris and jealousy, refused to obey God's command - he could do so because he had free will - seeing Adam as being inferior in creation due to his being created from clay as compared to him (who was created of fire)."

It was after this that the title of *shaitan* was given, which can be roughly translated as 'Enemy'. *Shaitan* then claims that if the punishment for his act of disobedience is to be delayed until the Day of Judgment, that he will divert many of Adam's own descendants from the straight path during his period of respite. Al-Llah allowed Iblis to roam the earth to attempt to convert others away from his path.

Satan: In the the Hebrew *ha-Satan* is translated by the Greek word *diabolos* (slanderer), the same word in the Greek New Testament from which the English word devil is derived. *The Talmud* mentions Satan in many places. In all of these places, Satan is an agent of God, and has no independent existence. Satan is traditionally identified as the serpent who convinced Eve to eat the forbidden fruit; thus, Satan has often been depicted as a serpent.

Before his insurrection, the myth states that Satan was among the highest of all angels and the 'brightest in the sky'. His pride is considered a reason why he would not bow at God's command as all other angels did. The popularly held beliefs that Satan was once a prideful angel who rebels against God, however, are not portrayed explicitly in the Bible.

In the Bahá'í faith, Satan is not regarded as an independent evil power as he is in some beliefs, but signifies the lower nature of humans. Abdu'l-Baha explains: "This lower nature in man is symbolized as Satan - the evil ego within us, not an evil personality outside." All other evil spirits described in various faith traditions such as fallen angels, demons and *jinn*s are also metaphors for the base character traits a human being may acquire and manifest when he turns away from God (*An Introduction to the Baha'i Faith*, by Peter Smith).

Such thoughts on sifting the real from the dross also take me to Nikos Kazantzakis, and his *Last Temptation of Christ* where Judas is no way a traitor but a fulfiller of the law and the only one attuned enough to Jesus' mission to accept the short straw.... knowing he would suffer ostracism later as no one could defend him.

To continue to quote from the pages of... the history of the Indian sub-continent: *Islamic Religion and Culture, Sufism - Sufi Currents and Civilization in the Islamic Courts...*

...Sufi currents were essential in easing the transition from the earlier Hindu, Buddhist, Judaic, Christian, Manichean, and Zoroastrian societies that had existed prior to the victory of the Islamic conquerors. Sufism provided a way to reconcile some of the religious doctrines of these earlier cultural or religious systems. Sufi scholars went to great lengths in establishing a sense of continuity and evolution amongst the various revealed faiths - such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In helping to reconcile formally differing beliefs amongst Christians, Manicheans, Jews, and Muslims, the Sufis were instrumental in limiting political tensions and in facilitating a modicum of social peace and stability.

But even as many Sufi scholars staunchly affirmed their loyalty to *The Qur'an* and Shari'at law, others used Sufism as a means of escaping the patriarchal weight and authority of Islam. Some of the earliest of the Sufi scholars were women such as Rabia (9th Century) and Nuri (10th Century) - who both emphasized worldly renunciation and suggested that spiritual salvation lay in discovering the 'god' within. In their rejection of orthodox rituals and the domination of the conservative clergy, they shared a certain commonality with some of their Hindu or Buddhist predecessors.

As Sufi literature and practice evolved, there was much that Indians would later find oddly reminiscent of what had been emphasized not only by some authors of the *Upanishads*, or practitioners of Buddhism, but also by Indian folk and devotional saints. Mughal prince Dara Shukoh in his *Confluence of the Two Seas* made special note of this.

In fact, many aspects of Sufi belief systems and practice had their parallels in Indian philosophical literature, but often, amongst the more conforming streams of Sufi discourse, these had to be circumscribed within the boundaries of what Islam could politically tolerate. Even though most Sufis (like many Hindu

Vedantics) considered formal religion a shell - they didn't reject formal religion - allowing that for the average practitioner, day-to-day rituals and traditional religious practices could play a useful role. Most were not outright rebels - but adapted to the pressures of mainstream religion. Nevertheless, Sufis were much less likely to approve of rigid and literalist interpretations of *The Qur'an*. "Words cannot be used in referring to religious truth, except as analogy". This sentiment of Hakim Sanai as expressed in his *The Walled Garden of Truth* echoed what is most immediately evident in some phrases from the *Upanishads*.

Over time, a variety of Sufi currents flourished. The more advanced of the Sufi scholars worried less about Qur'anic compatibility, and emphasized that there was a spiritual truth that exceeded what could be gleaned from the standard religious texts. There was an emphasis on spiritual discovery and cultural evolution - through practical experience, through the development of intuition and a sharpened world perspective as opposed to the mere repetition of dogma. As the Sufis synthesized older ideas and philosophical traditions that attracted them -they also transcended them in some ways, adding their own unique and perspicacious insights as they went along...

quote / ends.

The times of the Persian poet Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) - he was born in Afghanistan - were special moments of brilliant illumination among the Sufis and among them Rumi is called the Quth, the pole of love. Rumi is known as Mevlana in Turkey and Mawlana in Iran and Afghanistan. Under pressure from the invading Genghis Khan Mongols his family ended up in Konya, Anatolia (now Turkey) and the cities he dwelt in were at the time included in the greater Persian cultural sphere of Khorasan, the easternmost province of Persia, thus he is known as a Persian poet.

Hi adventures with Shams Tabriz, or Shams, resulted in mystical conversion - sobbet - and this inspired a whole genre of mystical poems in the theme of love, earthly and yet divine. His poetry was spontaneous, taken down by scribes, revised later.

After Rumi's death his companions, including his son, founded the Mevlevi Order, also known as the Order of the Whirling Dervishes, famous for its Sama ceremonial and meditative dance. Rumi's poetry is usually divided into the categories of quatrains (*rubaya't*), odes (*ghazal*) of the Divan, and the six books of the *Masnavi*. The prose works are divided into *The Discourses*, *The Letters*, and *The Seven Sermons*.

*Why should I seek more?
I am the same as he.
His essence speaks through me.
I have been looking for myself.
Rumi*

What particularly draws me to the Sufis though is not the divine love poems that are like ephemeral Mayflies despite their infinite amplitude but the more long term - though contrarily span-limited - practical works of Sufi saints such as the celebrated Khan Jahan Ali, who flourished at Khalifatabad (Bagerhat) in the first half of the fifteenth century when Iliyas Shahi Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah was ruling at Gaur.

Khan Jahan, a noble under the Tughlaqs, seems to have come to Bengal just after the sack of Delhi (1398) by Timur. He acquired the forest area of the Sundarbans as *jagir* (fief) from the Sultan of Delhi and subsequently from the Sultan of Bengal. He cleared up the dense forest in the Sundarban area to set up human settlements, and soon got the Masjidkur and adjacent areas on the eastern bank of the Kobadak suitable for habitation through the untiring efforts of his deputies Burhan Khan and Fateh Khan.

Local tradition ascribes to Khan Jahan the first Muslim colonisation of a part of greater Jessore and Khulna districts. The titles Ulugh Khan and Khan-i-Azam of Khan Jahan, as inscribed on his tomb, suggest that he was not an independent freelancer but that he owed fealty most probably to the Sultan of Gaur.

Khan Jahan was a great builder. He founded some townships, built mosques, *madrasahs* and *sarais* (caravansarais), roads, highways and bridges, excavated a large number of *dighis* (tanks) in the districts of greater Jessore and Khulna. Besides his fortified metropolis of Khalifatabad (modern Bagerhat) he built three townships, Maruli Kasba, Paigram Kasba and Bara Bazar. He is said to have built a highway from Bagerhat to Chittagong, a twenty-mile long road from Samantasena to Badkhali, and a road running from Shuvabara to Daulatpur in Khulna.

The most notable of his architectural monuments are Shatgumbad Mosque (circa 1450) at Bagerhat, Masjidkur Mosque at the village Masjidkur, his own tomb (1459) near Bagerhat and a single-domed mosque attached to his tomb.

Of the large number of *dighis* and ponds excavated by him the most notable are the Khanjali Dighi (1450) near his tomb and Ghoradighi to the west of Shatgumbad Mosque.

Khan Jahan introduced a new architectural style in his buildings, which is named after him. The Khan Jahan style is seen in a group of buildings in the greater districts of Khulna, Jessore and Barisal. His buildings show an affection for the Tughlaq architecture of Delhi. (Source: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

Chapter Sixteen

The practice of *zazen* or sitting Zen

To return closer to our central theme, in Zen Buddhism the way of meditation is termed *zazen* - sitting meditation. It is a way of learning through the body. In the practice of *zazen*, posture is important. If you are going to sit, the well tried lotus posture is still highly recommended, even to Westerners not used to the position. The process, which takes many months and much pain, of conditioning the body and mind to sit at ease in the lotus posture, is part of the battle.

However, sitting cross-legged is not mandatory. The position of the body must be correct: Sitting down, with the back perpendicular and to sit without leaning on the back of the chair so that one is not overly relaxed and placing the waist forward and not backward - which produces an arch in the shoulders. While closing the eyes feel a certain sensation of swaying - though one is not swaying, this is the correct posture.

From your first attempts - when five minutes is too much - until the posture can be taken up with ease for 30 to 40 minutes at a time, the request is to remain aware - as if 'the flash' can occur at any time.

The pain itself can become a vehicle, and those who laugh up their kimono because they have conquered the pain should in reality be cautioned, as they must now find another way of raising the energy. Pain may dull in many circumstances, but in *zazen* one is both in pain and not in pain at the same time. For example: what pains, where is this pain, where does it originate, where does it go and where does it register? Why should it be overcome, does enlightenment depend on the overcoming of pain...?

Pain is screaming at the student, "This is it, there is nothing else, why do you look for another - here, now, no now, in between, both, climb above it, be it, transcend."

At first it is better to sit in a quiet place, and a holy place if possible. Good vibrations from without to within and then later from within to without. Not too hot. Not too cold. No draughts. No dampness. No sudden interruptions; until the student becomes accustomed to remain aware over longer and longer periods, and the more adverse conditions can be tackled.

Zazen is not an escape, rather it is to get inside things, to confront life; this is quite the opposite of what human nature likes. And it is especially difficult for the student - purposely so. In our usual life we take the path of least resistance. And this is the natural way: water flows in this manner. Here we go against Nature, we place the human in there.

The state of man today is such that he cannot decide which is the path of least resistance. Man cannot make a decision. Not being enlightened, chaos reigns. An individual can attain *satori* (as the conversion

experience is called in Japanese Zen), gradually or suddenly. This is the reason for sitting. But there is no message as such, no formula, nothing in particular to expect... just sitting, breathing in a natural rhythm, aware that what is, is.

Of the strange phenomena that occur as the mist clears... as the student passes through the different levels of awareness or being (beware of such terms), look beyond. Some experiences are frightening, and this may put the student off sitting for a while; the answer is to wait patiently until reassurance comes and start sitting again - it will be okay. Certain people are of the opinion that these phenomena are 'merely' mental projections, but they are decidedly the student's mental projections and to him or her are as real as a red hot poker. Looking beyond them is an effective attitude to adopt. They are of the relative world and the student is destined to transcend the relative for a glimpse of the Absolute (even greater care must be taken when people start talking about the Absolute, God always comes in as a just dessert after a decent helping of the Absolute). A touchstone of reality is the aim, to gain perspective is the purpose of sitting, to experience for oneself, totally and finally, the singular event documented in sacred literature for aeons and contorted by the confused mind of Man.

Once *satori* is gained, let the whole thing drop - it will drop of its own accord anyway - and become whatever the circumstances have occasioned. What does a potter do but make pots, a baker bakes bread. The difference between an enlightened baker and an unenlightened baker lies in the bread they bake - and the student must taste it to know the difference, never should he or she rely on the opinion of others. To witness the correct mental attitude with the intent of carrying it back to the Zazen Hall the student could take a walk into the depths of a fir forest, sit down. Let the silence descend again. Observe how the firs stand alone and silent, unmoving, yet accomplishing all that is intended of firs. An experience of this special silence, the dynamic silence of the Absolute, can be retained and used as a reminder when settling down into *zazen*. It is a reference. Eyes should be slightly open, all movements within range are cognised, though not reacted too. Anyone rushing up and crashing a stick on the floor by the student's side can then be followed with inner amusement, whereas if the eyes were closed naturally the student will be more than a little curious about the event....

Looking at things through the stomach may seem absurd but it is a good figurative phrase when trying to relate a change in the centre of cognition. Experiences which enter the head, leave the head after a few rebounds while the stomach hangs onto experiences and insists on their assimilation and digestion.

If the student finds he or she is falling asleep an occasional bellyful *mu* shout can do the trick. Personally I prefer the *aum* sound and find it brings a good deal of energy with its exhalation, and the ensuing silence when I shut up makes it very worthwhile.

Mentally, instead of merely giving one's attention to the actual sitting situation as is, that awareness can be usefully supplemented by also attending to a hand, or the entire body, at the same time as one is 'gathering one's thoughts'. This exercise is concerned with applying apperception by way of 'attentional division'.

Note: in the Silo School: "attentional division (below) is done once the Force is mobilised and not before so that from the beginning one counts on all the attention to mobilise the Force, and later on the attitude of consciousness of self makes the produced phenomenon conscious. It can then be noted that the phenomena do not take a side road as happens in semi-sleep. Make this clear: the consciousness of self is put into action after and not before the mobilisation of the Force so as not stop everything from the very beginning." (From the works of Silo.)*

(attention plus a chore of attending to a hand, or the body yet still seeing whatever it is one might be looking at and in the present case looking at or seeing oneself in situ and using that as a reference. Let us extract a paragraph from L. A. Ammann's book, Self Liberation: "When one's level of consciousness drops, what we call the mechanisms of reversibility are blocked;*

conversely, they become unblocked as one's level of consciousness rises. The reversible mechanisms allow the consciousness to direct its operations in a more or less "voluntary" way; that is, the reversible mechanisms are operating when the consciousness directs its attention towards the source of some sensory or memory impulses. This is the case of evocation (attention plus memory) as opposed to simple remembering in which the impulses reach the consciousness from the memory without any attentional function. The second case of reversibility is known as apperception (attention plus perception), which is different from simple perception where the information reaches the consciousness without the latter having intentionally gone to the source of the stimulus."

There are many points and sub-points, but all can be known by practice: stillness is most important, for the stillness of the body is reflected on the mind and vice versa. This is the primary aim. Fidgety sitting is one of the worst of faults and greatly hinders any progress on the path of Emptiness. This is where fear of the warning stick comes in handy, fidgety students can be quickly reprimanded, though few in the West care for this treatment, myself included. I acknowledge the warning stick's usefulness. Become as an empty vase, you will know when emptiness has been achieved, for you will be filled.....

Chapter Seventeen

Ch'an Buddhism on Hong Kong's Lantau Island

Overlooking the green clad hillsides that dropped away to the once sleepy village of Tung Chung, through the haze, over a stretch of sea, lay Castle Peak and an emerging hint of Kowloon's urban sprawl. However, despite that reminder of the insolently real, sufficient distance and quiet detachment can settle over the traveller in this place of solitude to allow the peaceful recollection of the various things that go to make up a life. That was one very good reason to be there, with Buddhist inspired friends -to share a day or two at Lantau's Po Lam temple.

While Po Lin Monastery gets ever more popular, particularly since the installation of the Temple of Heaven, Tian Tan or Big Buddha, there are other attractions in that area that are not so rumbustious due to the often infuriating tourist packs. One such is described in his article, *Life at Po Lam Ch'an Monastery*, by Eric Johns (See Appendix One) formally monk Sik Hin Lic, and a pal of mine when Hin Lic was at Po Lam.

Po Lam-ji, a sub-temple, is hidden away down and behind the well known Po Lin Monastery at Ngong Ping, on Hong Kong's Lantau Island. Not for the casually curious, this Ch'an Sect temple takes its delvings seriously, maintaining a daily monastery routine under abbot Yat Fa Si. (Master Hsing Yat at Po Lam, deceased August 3, 2010). It is possible, though, for those with an interest to plan a few hours, days, or even longer, among the monks and elderly people, mostly women, who have `taken refuge in the Buddha, The Dharma, the Sangha' - the Buddha, the Truth, and the community of Buddhists. It's an early rise for prayers, then meditation for an hour or so, some quiet time for reading or strolls before a light breakfast of tea and biscuits.

Occasionally, there is an intensive retreat of short duration. My introduction had been thanks to that young Englishman turned monk, Sik Hin Lik, befriended under odd circumstances of another telling. Yes, it is a problem getting the monk's proper acquaintance, which is important to achieve 'invited friend' status. Cantonese is very useful when seriously planning to take the meditative plunge. But a call-off there for lunch at mid-day and to use the facilitates for your own quietude is a possibility and from then, it can be better arranged for the longer stay. Usually there are non-Chinese monks in residence, so questions can be asked by the non-Chinese speaking as to their Buddhist Way and the paradoxes of Ch'an which some say means Mind, other say meditation and I'll say means Truth, at least for today!

Nestling among the shadows of little trodden paths on either side of the valleys of Po Lin are many places of solitude, hermitages of different branches and schools; some private places, some belonging to institutions. Po Lam, though, is easier to locate than these. It lies on the track behind Po Lin, going as though to the Tea Gardens but turning off towards a dip in the hills on the track leading to the arduous climb up Lantau Peak. On reaching the pavilion on the saddleback, a path is seen progressing down in the direction of Tung Chung, which, once a small village, is now a New Town, easily reached in an hour or so on foot. Po Lam is 15 minutes walk and can be recognised by its distinctive bell tower with ceramic tile roof and eaves. Po Lin itself was originated by three monks who came to Lantau around 1905. As recluses the remoteness of Ngong Ping was ideal. The monastery was officially inaugurated in 1927. It remained a simple affair until the late 1960s when embellishment started. Today it is the most well known Buddhist site in Hong Kong.

Ch'an Buddhism in Hong Kong in the early twenty-first century

Buddhism first came to Hong Kong back in the fifth century when monk Piu To set up a hermitage on Castle Peak. Jump forward to the twenty-first century and even now, in the commercial-financial centre of Hong Kong with its hard-nosed reputation, there is the compassionate teaching of Ch'an Buddhism, far removed from that commercialism.

I have not followed the history of what happened at Castle Peak, but at the Stone-Stream-Woods Monastery, near Tai-O, on Lantau Island (in Cantonese spoken as Sek Kai Lam Ye) I did have meetings with the Ch'an master, Sam-meng Fa-tse, who's own master was Hsu Yun (or Xu Yun), who died October 1959 at a rare old age. (Extract follows from this writer's, *Yamabushi - the Third Force*). At Sek Kai Lam Ye there is no outward sign of any significance, nor huge temple hall, merely a common building with glass-encased Buddha figures in the lower room, and another in the upper room.

The master lived in a recently reconstructed detached bungalow of rudimentary construction, conveniently near the path leading into this cluster of buildings, with a newly made path up to the main group that passed over a bouldered stream. The place had considerable charm, very much in line with what is read in descriptions of how the old masters lived. In a valley, somewhat remote, paths leading here and there through gnarled trees. The group I visited with was a lay support group -about thirty members gathered there with at least half that number on our bus from Mui Wo on a wet Sunday morning. It was good to see so many people doing things other than in relation to salaried work or inward-looking family affairs in money-grubbing Hong Kong.

We had hardly settled with a cup of tea, drying off, when the master came into the room. He looked frail, hardly noticeable except for his yellow stole over a grey robe, showing he had rank. His three bows before the Buddha were made with great humility, slowly, with composure. This master's bow appealed to the devotional, to Pure Land and Bhakti Yoga. It was not long before this Western visitor was sat around Sam-meng Fa-tse, and my fellow seeker and interpreter-pal Yuen Man Chun, was asking if there was any questions.

I started with one about the teaching of Ch'an in China today, as I had heard it is only taught with a mixture of Pure Land Buddhism. I mentioned that in the West we mainly only have recourse to books rather than enjoying direct contact with Ch'an or Zen and we read about the old masters and a radical Zen using knocks with sticks and other rough means; but that when we come to Asia none of this is found - so we don't know what we are getting. The master replied that a purer Ch'an is taught to a degree in Sichuan Province (China), but it can be found in its most clean form in Guangxi (west of Guangdong Province). He added that while the Emptiness is taught, reciting the name of the Buddha is also taught, with the proviso that the question be asked continually: 'Who is this reciting the name of the Buddha?'

I was going to ask which of the sutras pertained to Ch'an. But before I could, just like in the hoary anecdotes, he told me that the *Diamond Sutra* was primary and central to Zen.

The master continued to speak about the self-questioning, with the question continually held: 'Who is this sitting in meditation?' 'Who is this walking along here?' He continued with a chat about the essential emptiness of things, and was in full swing using as a vehicle for teaching the water melon which had been placed before us. Then lunch interrupted the talk. It was a fine vegetarian lunch -using two sets of chopsticks, one for retrieving the food from the communal plate and the other set for eating. People ate with considerable decorum, including the few children present. It was notable how happy people were, no excesses or mad guffaws. A friendly contentedness among us, very civilised, very ordinary - so unusual in Hong Kong. The young nuns in attendance had good composure, too, giving me a strong impression that they really knew what they were doing.

After lunch the master continued - in fact we asked him to continue the Water Melon Discourse. He had lots of humour. One eye was closed so when the master looked at me his one eye was the dominant thing, so I cheekily named him - only to myself - the Master of the One Eyed Dharma.

His talk moved around the theme that no thing had any essential nature, everything was essentially Void. That everything shared this essential withoutness. Another item he used was the glass of tea in front of him. "Originally this was water, now it is tea! Where is the water?" Similarly with cooked rice. "First you have water, then you put rice in the water and cook it. Now it's rice! Where is the water? Your essential self is the water." "Look he is Chinese, you are English, but essentially there is no difference. It just happens that out of all that, he is called Chinese and you English!" What I noticed was that as these classical statements were made, as we all talked, questioned and listened, understanding grew as if it was a climate generated in the room. Whereas at the beginning it was as if the statements were the same things again, with the warming up of the social atmosphere of communication, the situation became more amenable to positive exchanges. Harkening back to earlier in the day, the master who entered the room appeared of little consequence to the visitors. As it turned out he had the ability to provoke understanding by his quite kindly discourse accentuated by his insistent eye when making a special point. Cantonese seemed a good medium for such exchanges as it is direct and pithy.

There was a permanent gathering around Sam-meng Fa-tse as he spoke. The members of the group were quite devoted to him. Yet others just came and went, going along with the other activities related to the day. What was happening was a real dialogue. For me, very rare. I felt reluctant to write down what the master said because I would have to interpret his words as I did so and that could be misleading.

Urban Zen

Another Hong Kong Ch'an master was eighty-four year old Mrs. Leung, and she lives in the half refurbished, half decrepit urban area of Shaukiwan on Hong Kong island. I was hardly in the entrance of her hard-core frugal flat before she was as if incidentally saying, "When you let go of the madness of the mind, there is *bodhi*" (wisdom mind).

This hard-core frugality I had noted did not pertain to Ch'an as much as it did and does pertain to the typical single old ladies living in this area. This could have been any apartment at all. A bare tabletop, worn flask of lukewarm tea, two plain glasses. Dim interiors with a poor light coming from inadequate windows and a glimpse of balcony-hung washing. Dusty ancestor shelf with red lights and incense. Old boxes on top of cupboards and dim back rooms. From below, street sounds unceasing. Not that there was dirt so much as a lack of concern over dust; but for this visitor who was accustomed to the finesse of Japan's Zenists, oh so... so? ordinary!

Where were the aesthetics of Japanese Zen? The flower arrangement? The neat surrounds and exactitude of furnishing and that subtle flair for the highly cultured? Not that I had expected a Zen garden, as this was the twelfth floor of an older residential building with a tumult of shops on the bottom level. But something, yes.

"In Ch'an Buddhism there is nothing to do with a creator, you do it yourself," she was speaking to the same Chinese pal, Yuen Man Chun, who was going to introduce us but was too slow as Mrs Ch'an had already begun getting into theme. On our formal meeting Mrs Ch'an shook hands with a tight but friendly grip and bade us all sit. I asked her about her Ch'an practise.

"The way of cultivating the seeds of enlightenment or *bodhi* is to be quiet and look inside and find Buddha Nature. It's formless."

She was so ordinary. The pinafore, the hairdo in a bun, the face quite alive but many an elderly lady in any early morning market has this look, this certitude - the lined face of experiences over a long life.

"In living Ch'an, use is made of the thinking faculty. When you read a *sutra*, or when you're going about, look around, investigate what is being said, what is seen, with the question: 'what is the Buddha Mind?' Maintain awareness and hold the question."

I understood the 'theory' - ordinary mind is Buddha Mind and all that. But, I was used to Buddhist priests in full regalia lotused into ornate chairs telling me this. Or, beatific monks with *moxa*-marked skulls and shining eyes - *moxa* is used in Chinese healing as a burning incense-like material. All these extra-ordinary fellows telling me, a family man, about ordinary life. So much for ordinary mind!

"The world would be at peace if people followed the Buddha's teaching. All beings have the merit of Buddha Nature. The cock crows in the morning, this is a service, and its merit. Dogs keep watch and bark at night, this is their merit. Bees produce honey, this is their merit. The human being can become a Buddha, that is the human being's merit."

In Japan the serving of tea would be a ceremony, even if the common *bancha* was served. There would be a fitting cup, a trifling of snacks, a little flower or touch of fresh green leaf.

Mrs Ch'an's flask was only half full, yet she knew we were coming. Guests had brought snacks so we ate oranges that made the flat smell like Christmas morning. Eventually, tea did come but the pot ran out half way through the serving, and no more tea was made so some did without. As there were a group of us, a certain amount of chaos had entered the apartment in our wake. There was no attempt at organising. Things just sort of happened, or didn't.

"Buddhist actions better the quality of life and Buddhists are mild people and avoid conflict. Not effected by the environment," she flatly stated from amidst attempts to drain an already drained teapot.

I thought I had a good question, "If a human's merit is to become a Buddha, what is the meaning of becoming a Buddha?"

"Enlightened mind is ordinary mind - a person who lives without harming others. Enlightenment is not a great thing," she said.

This old Ch'anist's clutter was entirely external. A simple but studied housewife committed to the realisation of truth in a backwater area of one of the world's most renown centres of commercialism. Far from the interests of trade and high finance, she redeemed the city. Far from the mountains and retreats of the mainstream Buddhists, she held the flame and was not unknown. Hong Kong Ch'an, who would believe it?

Chinese Ch'an can be said to be a particularly direct approach to the original teaching of Buddha in that what the Buddha awakened to is similarly 'caught'. Ch'an turned into Zen in Japan.

There is sitting meditation, iconoclasm, 'a teaching outside of the scriptures', strict and sometimes wild masters, and lots of fun anecdotes from the lives of crazy practitioners who's actions were questionably Buddhist - if these legends are to be believed. Zen has had a firm grip on the West since the Sixties when the enlightened North American beatnik Jack Kerouak wrote, *On The Road* and, *The Dharma Bums*.

Chapter Eighteen

Ch'an teaching in China

The Sixth Patriarch (and last) Tang Dynasty monk Hui Neng (638 -713), or Wei Lang, resided in later life at Po Lam - Nan Hua Shan Monastery in northern Guangdong near Shaoguan, at the Southern China Monastery as it's called nowadays.

His native place was Hsin Chou (or Shiu Chow), in Guangdong Province. Even today his preserved body lies at Nan Hua Shan Monastery, said to be the earliest recorded 'fleshy body'. Images of Hui Neng are recognisable by the small dragon in his begging bowl. He is considered to be the founder of the Vegetarian Sects of Buddhism, Ch'ih Su Chiao.

The story goes as follows: Hui Neng, who became outstanding as the Sixth Patriarch of Ch'an, was originally a poor illiterate peasant boy from Hsin Chou, Guangdong. One day, after he had delivered firewood to a shop, he overheard a man reciting the following line from the *Diamond Sutra* - "Depending upon nothing, you must find your own mind." Instantly, Hui Neng 'got it', he understood intuitively the deep meaning. The full verse said: "All Bodhisattvas (Compassionate Ones) should develop a pure mind which clings to nothing whatsoever; and so he should establish it."

The man who recited this sutra encouraged Hui Neng to meet the Fifth Ch'an Patriarch, Hung Jen (or Ren), at the Tung Chian Monastery in the Huang Mei District of Chi Chou (now Huanggang, Hubei).

Managing that was by no means easy as there was quite a journey and on the encounter, Hui Neng said to the Fifth Patriarch: "I am a commoner from Hsin Chou Kwangtung. I have travelled far to pay you respect and I ask for nothing but Buddhahood."

"You are a native of Kwangtung, a barbarian? How can you expect to be a Buddha?" asked the Patriarch.

"Although there are northern men and southern men, north and south make no difference to the Buddha Nature. A barbarian is different from Your Holiness physically, but there is no difference in Buddha Nature," was the upstart's reply.

Master Hung Jen immediately accepted Hui Neng as his disciple, but he had to hide this fact from the educated northern monks at the monastery. At the time of the Fifth Patriarch, Ch'an was still influenced by Indian Buddhism, which did not emphasize direct awakening, but the importance of study and metaphysical

debates. To protect Hui Neng, the Patriarch sent him to the kitchen to split firewood and pound rice, which lasted for eight months. Eventually, Hui Neng was told to leave for the South and to hide his enlightenment and understanding until the proper time arrives for him to propagate the Dharma.

Hui Neng was the last in the line of patriarchs. After Hui Neng the robe and the bowl ceased being passed on - it was so troublesome - those items had become politicised and were symbols of power, showing that Buddhism had become institutionalised.

At Nan Hua Shan Monastery itself the last three masters remain in preserved state. My local Lantau friend Yuen Man Chun's own master's (Sam-meng Fa-tse) master was also from that monastery, the very well appreciated Hsu Yun (or Xu Yun - 1840-1959). Twenty years or more ago my pal 'Man Chun' was in London and noticed a book that was a translation of Hsu Yun's teaching (likely by Charles Luk). The content really took his fancy and since then he has maintained interest in Hsu Yun and passed that interest on to me.

In 1934 Hsu Yun came to rebuild Nan-hua Si as it had become run down in the chaos and turmoil that ensued since the fall of the Qing dynasty. In July 1997, friend-of-a-friend - of Eric Johns (see Further Note at Chapter end), a Mr John Crook (died, July 2010), paid a visit to Nan Hua and he tells us about that visit in *Chan Revival in Mainland China*:

"Although of great antiquity, the monastery has had a chequered history with periods of affluence alternating with times of stagnation and decay. The original foundation by the monk Zhi-yao San-zhang followed his discovery of this beautiful place below the spring of Cao-xi river in 502. When Hui-neng began teaching here after his years in hiding following his secret transmission of the patriarchs robe and bowl, the monastery achieved fame and was reconstructed. Later however it again fell on hard times. In 1601, master Han-shan arrived at Nan-hua and found that the nine-hundred year old monastery had been converted into a meat market. The few resident monks did nothing to stop the profanation so Han-shan approached the Viceroy of the province for aid. This was forthcoming and Han-shan went on to do major construction and repair work re-establishing the fame of the monastery. He himself was a remarkable patriarch and his revered statue stands together with others in the monastery. The present reconstruction and preservation of ancient relics is due to Master Hsu-yun who, having collected funds, repaired the ravages of decay in 1934...

"... Although it was the prestige of this Master that probably caused Chou-en lai to preserve the buildings, various outrages none the less occurred. In one chapel we found the white marble statue behind glass of the revered Master Wei-yin. A photo beside the statue reveals a face of profound compassion and sweetness. He was beaten to death during the Cultural Revolution. The present abbot, Master Fo-yuan, now in his late eighties, was also severely treated but survived. Hsu-yun himself was beaten [1951] and only a miracle seems to have kept him going at a very advanced age (112 years) - eventually dying at 120 years in 1959. [Luk, Charles, 1988. *Empty Cloud. The Autobiography of the Chinese Master Hsu-Yun*.

"... This was a Dharma-ending age, [one monk named] Zhen-de told us, and the best one could do was to preserve and perhaps develop basic values. He described how a Korean Master had visited the monastery with a large group of disciples. They had met with the monks for retreat. The teacher had suggested they should all solve the koan "What is it?" and to demonstrate he had held up a cup and shouted "EEEEK; this is it! What else?" Zhen-de said that everyone had been confused and that, as head monk at the time, he had to challenge the Korean master. He argued that such teachings were all very well when many monks were close to enlightenment through intense practice and the influence of great teachers but in China today that was nowhere the case. They had to begin with the fundamental teachings on the spiritual life as enshrined in the Four Vows and the Precepts.

"... I was keen to explore his personal practice. Zhen-de said he repeated the name of Buddha over and over; "Amitabha, Amitabha, Amitabha", continuously until a shift in awareness overcame him. I was interested to see this mantric Pure Land practice adopted as the activity in retreat of a Ch'an monk. I enquired whether he ever used the koan "Who is repeating Buddha's name?" He did not reply directly to this, remarking only that the sincere meditative repetition of the name did in itself induce clarity and purity.

Master Hsu-yun had also considered such practice important. Zhen-de said it was an effective practice when carried out with devotion.

"... Some older monks however had *koan* or other methods which they had used earlier in their lives. Everyone could use their preferred method when sitting in the Ch'an Hall, Zhen-de affirmed. He also remarked that simplicity of mind was an asset and that northern and southern monks differed in this respect. Northerners, among whom he counted himself, come from the poverty stricken regions of China, are used to dogged survival, and make good use of simple practices which work. Southerners, in their agriculturally rich homeland, can be devious, looking for short cuts or using complex methods for which there are no teachers available. The result can be a mental muddle."

That was the state of Ch'an teaching in China in recent years.

Further note: Eric Johns most recently visited Guang Jue Temple late 2011.

"This is a small local temple situated in Zhejiang Province, a forty-five minutes drive from Hangzhou, near the small rural town of Zaoxi. He relates: "Chinese Buddhism still remains a bit of an enigma to many in the West as Zen, Tibetan and Theravada Buddhism are frequently highlighted due to good resources available in English. "Chinese Buddhism, especially that from Mainland China, has been emerging from a period of relative inactivity almost like a butterfly emerging from gestation in its chrysalis. Many people visiting China as tourists would have come across a temple or two in their travels and even been a bit confused between Taoist and Buddhist temples or at worst a bit exasperated at the seeming commercialism of many of China's "tourist temples".

"However, in the often-unpublished background is an emerging Buddhism of deep faith and action often found in small local and financially struggling monasteries. Such communities are awakening to a new dawn and trying to find their feet again but this time in a fast-paced and very materialistic world. While the lure of the glamour and seeming power of the materialist environment in which these temple find themselves is powerful, most are resisting the temptations and are deeply committed to strengthening the foundations upon which they were once built - by offering a way of life that is in contrast to the rapidly developing world of market share and money, one which promotes peace, community and humanism that is so quickly eroding. Many temples are developing aged-care facilities, education centres, youth services and even medical services, much to the praise and support of local authorities.

"Chinese Buddhism is rich in history and culture. The architecture of the temples, the vibrant art and designs, the rich musical heritage of Chinese Buddhist hymns and chants are a golden terrain for exploration and personal transformation. Guang Jue Temple's origins date back to the Qing Dynasty and it was almost completely destroyed during the Sino-Japanese war. It is surrounded by a backdrop of gentle waving bamboo forested mountains. Often, the only sounds heard are the sounds of crickets and other insects that make their homes in the trees about the temple.

"Ten years ago the present abbot, Master Zheng Rong, arrived with a vision and commitment to restore the temple to not only its former glory but with a Buddhism of relevance to the modern society it now finds itself in. Five monks joined his efforts. Gradually, the local community is returning. I discovered the temple by most unusual chance (that is another story for another time) two years ago. I was drawn in by its "ling" – a type of unseen force that beckons you to personal change. Chinese Buddhism has much to give to the world. While the world focuses on the Red Dragon and the powerful economic development of China, quietly and almost unseen, a small most exquisitely beautiful butterfly emerges from its cocoon, offering the gift of hope."

Chapter Nineteen

The Mystical Experience

The mystical experience - or conversion experience as Silo prefers - is suddenly, finding yourself able to look back into the entire evolutionary process whereby what is essentially oneself, as a human being, is seen in depth and in completeness as a cosmic event; 'its' origins, or plainly, your origins and my origins, related to the present moment.

Seeing in this the relativity of all things, and as a sensation, as if mentally speeding through the Universe which could be thought to digress itself into a point but no, there is a beyond that last point, when the last (and first) thing disperses into no-thing.

There is the total seeing of everything, all at once, in a rush of speed. This necessarily overwhelms the consciousness, which is as if flooded. The White Light is a light containing all colours. Just so, in the end-beginning there is the White Light but devoid of white -beyond the white-not-black.

Blackness is commonly understood to be what's left when there is no light. But we cannot have a real word for nothingness -rather, there is the sensation and oblivion of everything-at-once which is beyond anything and beyond colourlessness.

There is the grandeur of the whole scheme. The designer and the design and the designed are conjoined. Immediately there is the breaking through, which is a rebirth into the Now of being -back to square one.

However, all of what is, is seen 'in a different light'. No thing has changed except the me. I am complete -and there is no message.

The only path or course thereafter seems to be sharing this reality with others. Thinking, writing, speaking with or in this new dimension, symbolically say, the seventh dimension if looked at as 1) Black Absolute, 2) Point, 3) Line, 4) Square, 5) Box, 6) Box moving in a direction, 7) Circle (all everywhere at once or exploded box) -but no difference between point and circle, or, one hundred percent difference but both extremes hitting-bursting through their own limits. This experience takes us beyond the limits.

Our creator and this self are not two. That which created us placed within us that proclivity to trace our journey. The prodigal son returns home. Being there, home becomes HOME which in turn becomes home. Simply where we live. Where I live. Here.

The struggle for justice, for human rights, against poverty, discrimination and violence, is a necessary action of conscious man. If a majority cannot reach this finalising moment, then, at least, they deserve adequate conditions to live a happy life. It is an honour to assist in the achievement of human progress at all levels.

That's where Silo came in... and to introduce the relevance of Silo in the context of the present writing on the Buddha's Way, Silo's interchange with a friend is relevant.

In a conversation between Silo and Enrique Nassar, 26 November, 2006 in Mendoza, Argentina, Silo answers the question: "What is the story with messages and messengers, where sometimes the message is from god, as in Judaism and Islam, and other times it's the message of the messenger, as in the case of Buddhism?"

"The message comes from the profound, the messenger is the translator. What you have to observe is whether in the profound the messenger sees gods; the prophets of the Bible saw one god, so they spoke of the message of god; Mohammed saw one god and so he talked about the message of god. Buddha said, "the gods are so far away from men that talking of the gods has no meaning," but even so Buddha spoke of a message from the profound, a message that told him how to teach people to let go of the beliefs and mental conditioning that were making them believe in illusions that were generating suffering and keeping them from reaching nirvana. Buddha does not deny God, he is preoccupied with the profound and with or without god he tries to reach man, to teach him to overcome suffering and reach nirvana. So we see that Buddha's message came down in history not as the message of a god, but as the message of the Buddha. In reality the message is an interpretation by the translator, the message is from the translator." Further: "Religions have different value systems; it's not true that all religions say the same thing. Religions have some books, a liturgy, an organization and ways of doing things that are not all the same; they only have one point where they coincide, and that is the value they give to transcendence. In synthesis, the religions differ in what they say about this world, and resemble each other in what they say about the other world. "In religions the issue of transcendence is contemplated, that which does not end with death."

QUESTION: What does "conditionings of perception" mean? The structure of your perception depends on the world you see outside your skin, the world of the space and time of the I. Don't get confused and think that your images, thoughts, emotions and registers are of another world. The images that are in your memory are images of the world outside; the registers that you experience in your cenesthesia are registers of your interaction with that world; the emotions are emotions of your interaction with that world. The thoughts are thoughts based on that world. Of the spaces and times of the deep internal world, which transcends this one, there is no perception.

QUESTION: How are the signals that give rise to myth translated?

If you don't situate yourself in that other world, the signals are not translated. There has to be a vision that there is something beyond perception. You have to situate yourself in an internal space that is different from that of habitual perception in order to recognize the meaning of these internal signals and so that they can be translated into myth in you. That is what inspiring experiences do, they serve as a uniting bridge between the worlds. If you situate yourself in that world you will at least recognize the signals of that world through its translations.

QUESTION: If a myth arises from the translation of the signals – originating in the profound spaces and times – how could those signals be translated in this epoch, in accordance with the conditioning of perception?

There can be bad and good translations of those signals from the profound; those deep truths can be translated using the computational language and imagery of the epoch and end up saying things like: "flying saucers, superior civilizations, powerful good and evil extraterrestrial beings..." – but of course this way you don't set in motion a myth that reproduces the signals of the profound even if they're translated... How can a profound truth be translated in the language of flying saucers?

[some text omitted]

QUESTION: How can one connect with the profound?

People can connect with the profound in different ways, even accidentally. For example unexpectedly having experiences of ecstasy, rapture and recognition. When they occur accidentally, in general, people have nowhere to situate them in their lives and these experiences are not integrated. The myth contributes the framework where people can begin putting these experiences and where they can begin to get an answer to their need for orientation and reference. The writing Psychology 4 deals with the subject of the profound and the translations of the profound and the structures of consciousness that have to do with that connection. Psychology 4 explains the phenomena of connection; it neither describes nor explains the imagery that there is in relation to the other world. It explains the mechanisms that are activated when there is a connection between different planes. It is the psychology of that which transcends the every-day, it talks about what happens when you make contact – outside the I and the time and space of the I – with the profound. It does not describe the profound or its imagery, it describes what happens in the psychism when there is contact.

Chapter Twenty

Toe Holds and Finger Crevasses

When the South American writer, thinker and spiritual guide Silo speaks of valid action producing a clean flow-through of the vital energy (my words and manner of presenting this) in such as his writing titled, *Silo Speaks*, I immediately relate that to the acquisition of Pure Mind - as per the Buddhists but also the Shintoists - or, to a state of 'vigil without reveries' (see, *Self Liberation* by L. A. Ammann).

To be in that state one needs achieve harmony between the thinking, the feeling and the doing. Given that, it would seem to me, that the free energy that flows as a consequence of getting oneself so sorted out bequeaths the perfect condition to trigger the brain synapses into a cumulative advancing and spiralling spark, which can result in the breakthrough of *satori* (to use the Japanese Zen term).

Silo Speaks introduces and describes the 'inner pathways' (to go to the written source see, *The Inner Look*, by Silo) and tells why identifying with the project of Humanizing the Earth works to ignite the conversion experience, another term for *satori*, without the flashiness and unessential mystique of the non-English term. Indeed, this is the same as in Way of the Buddha, that can 'procure' enlightenment. This is why Silo relates here in this writing and why his works and words took my interest then, quite a while ago!

But why delve Silo when we have the words of the Buddha? Because the more than two thousand year history of the development of Buddha's Way, and the deposit of such an immense body of works on the theme - all claiming degrees of authenticity, need addressing. So why not turn to a modern mind to relocate that Road, the Way, and its toe holds and finger crevasses?

While Siloism does not have an explicit 'sudden' and 'gradual' division in its Way, no doubt the pilgrims will reach the goal in one of those passage-of-time-counted treks, or maybe in a more middling one - what else! That said, there is an argument that working in the realms of the self-less activism of the Humanist Movement can be equated with a 'gradual path' and in *Silo's Message*, a 'sudden path'!

As I have said elsewhere, the Way of Chan, or Zen, is not for everyone. Whereas, the Way of Silo has a much wider arc of entrance for those heeding such matters pertaining to the Sacred and is more generally applicable today, especially for educated minds. As is well seen, Westernized-style education has gone global. This now means that the West dominates East in education, as in many aspects of life today - whether for the good or bad. Thus, even the Indian and the Chinese have gone Western in their thinking, having largely abandoned the ancient diffuse meanings of certain terms for those of today, no matter how precise those terms were used in the past. That past has gone. Today there is a different formative landscape.

Cutting straight through to Silo's words on where the consciousness observes its own perceptions we reach the theoretical position of self-observation and can intellectually grasp the meaning of

consciousness-of-self and its import. With *satori*, this is what we get. Suddenly, we 'get it'. It's no big deal, it's just as things are, but having not seen that, but rather seeing everything in a sort of messy way, that simple clarification 'is a big deal'. It's astounding. It's wonderful in that it fills one full of wonder - at the simplicity and yet complexity resolved, of all and everything.

To reach that point-in-time, of self-development, under the guise of the Way of Silo the usual beginning is to attend to the works contained in the book *Self Liberation*. A perusal of that writing places in your lap the studies concerning getting rid of un-necessary tensions, locating disturbing daily reveries and deeper or occasional climates and moods. Also, on the use of catharses as a temporary relief to enable one to go into transferential works to discharge those strange tensions once and for all - or at least to the point where life is manageable and to gain access to energies useful for one's own evolution into human being.

After those works then we are in condition to know what consciousness-of-self is and we can look objective consciousness in the eye as well.

Then also, the possibility of taking a Discipline (see note on the Four Disciplines of the Silo School later in this chapter) presents itself. The Disciplines are different from conventional science in that they do not have as an objective to accumulate or to develop knowledge; but rather to produce direct transformations in the operator that works with them.

Note: Science affects the operator but only as technologies develop - and do not affect the operator directly. The Disciplines are intended to have a transformative action related to an essential change in the man or woman. They are not fixed techniques, but rather process guidelines determined in each case by the previous steps, by the development of the operator. They are not to be looked at from a technical point of view as that would distort the process. The goal is not specific and is not anticipated in the work. The Disciplines transform and recreate themselves in the work of the operator. Disciplines produce permanent changes.

Sticking with the Silo School, speaking today, there are Four Disciplines: Material - working through materials (even if these 'materials' and the associated processes have been internalised) or external elements (alchemical); Energetic - working with the vital energies of the body; Mental - working through Mind (transcendental); and Forms - working through morphological action. Each takes a serious intention and a certain amount of time, and, essentially, a like-minded group of affiliates also serious about that study. This latter point of 'the group' is an imperative.

The days of the Masters are gone for the Siloists. This does not mean there are no Masters in such Ways or Disciplines. But it does mean that in the Way of Silo it is no longer the Master, but the group, that matters. This works and acts in an even better, more efficient and extendable manner than what took place when the Master was an individual. Something happens in the group study that brings out the best of each, and which adds to the grand total and produces something beyond what any one mind could have supposed. This is the way today.

It's a process.

On the other hand there is *Silo's Message* - that walks in the way of the 'Sudden School' in that the written materials are absolutely minimised and words are frowned upon! Of course people come together, do a little ritual or ceremony to calm down, to rid the scene of interferences from outside life - as if crossing a threshold that keeps the externals at bay - for the period of self study and reflection.

In fact, the Parks of Study and Reflection are precisely that, what is said, and the central idea of the Parks - initiated by Silo - is to provide a realm where people can mutually study and reflect on all matters pertaining to human life, internally as in self-studies and externally, in relation to the world we live in.

Whereas in this latter Way the proposal is to get in touch with what we call the Profound directly, which entails a disposition of mental and emotional clarity; in the former Way, as encouraged by the activities of

the Humanist Movement organisms that have emerged until now, it's more in the Way of Karma Yoga, the Way of Action.

Note -Karma Yoga: "All action can be transmuted into Yoga as service of the sick, the suffering and the poor, and this purifies the heart faster and enables us to realise His Omnipresence quickly," said Swami Venkatesananda, disciple of Gurudev Sivanada, and a personal friend - likely he would say acquaintance - while I lived in Mauritius in the early Seventies... "Working without profit-motif will ensure the individual's salvation and social welfare, peace in the heart of man and harmony in society." Yoga as a discipline transforms through the body."

The organisms of the Humanist Movement are: the Humanist Party, the Community for Human Development, Convergence of Cultures, World without Wars and Violence, not to overlook the World Center for Humanist Studies - as stated, these offer the same 'promise' as with Communities of Silo's Message, however, the approach is radically different.

An instance can be taken from the guided experience, The Volunteer (*Guided Experiences*, by Silo): as one that expresses an inner meaning out into the world: and in so doing carrying out an empirically transferential function. This works because in this Way the volunteer leaps over his or her own problems and goes to the pain and suffering of the other. We are also made aware of the importance of fair and just production and distribution of the means of subsistence, health care, education, and an educational system that creates intellectuals with a sensitivity to social issues.

"It is the individual that must take responsibility and act for society and all human beings.... You will not fulfill your mission if you do not apply your energies to vanquishing pain and suffering in those around you and through your actions they in turn take up the task of humanizing the world, you will have opened their destiny toward a new life," Silo.

"How this activity, in transforming the world, transforms the producer of the actions as well. The human being constitutes itself and constructs itself by action-in-the-world, and in that way gives meaning to this journey through life and to the absurdity of non-intentional nature," Silo.

Another way of looking at the task lies in the building of a centre of gravity, as the precursor to a substantial self, which is exactly as indicated in the Zen fields where it is spoken of 'not being carried away by every whim and whistle' but rather to be basically the same in different situations. The ensuing aim then was to make permanent that centre of gravity, that Self, to become a SELF - a daily consciousness of Self which can be equated with a spirituality in the forming Essence. Spirit is permanent centre-of-gravity.

"To have such centre-of-gravity isn't something that happens by itself but is something that is constructed. Being 'de-centred' produces suffering; one feels that, 'everything is happening to me', and one does not know why."

"Differently, with a centre-of-gravity, one is freed and this is extraordinary. That inner freedom is what is important even if it offers nothing attractive as seen from the outside. That centre-of-gravity and that inner freedom do not bring suffering, neither to oneself nor to others. Inner freedom is the indicator of a centre-of-gravity and valid conduct towards others is its human correlate." Silo.

Thus it is said in Ch'an Buddhism: "What is the value of enlightenment? The same value as the skin of a dead cat. But no one can put a price on the skin of a dead cat. Exactly, it is priceless!

This recalls another statement:

"The state of internal non-contradiction, humbleness, and of affection for oneself and for those who work with us is the necessary climate to do things in an evolutionary sense," Silo.

The efforts described here are to take the person on an ascent that can be declared as: from sleep or 'the crepuscular'; to semi-sleep (both passive and active states); to ordinary vigil; to true vigil or consciousness-of-self. Silo has labelled the 'self' 'Mind' in order not to confuse it with the operations of consciousness, nor with the consciousness itself.

Another term enters here, conscience, which is a property of the normal human being. The conscience is not to be identified with the "I". The conscience appears as the environment in which the "I" appears. The "I" is variable, occasional and is related to reality in many different forms. Notwithstanding the modifications that conscience can experience, it maintains its identity as an ambit, which the "I" does not maintain as its own. In this sense it is legitimate to say that there is not only one "I", but several according to circumstances.

However, due to the perplexities of modern life, in modern man and woman, conscience is crusted over. This is seen in the automatic and in extreme cases hysterical re-actions. People fail or are not able to consider events objectively. Thus are wars started, thus is violence perpetrated. All because of a lack of conscience - or, applied conscience.

This points at the importance of this work which seems quite self-interested in some ways but really only asks that a person, if so inclined, study the dynamics of his or her self and the way of operating in the world - because the personal behaviour is of vital consequence when wanting to help better everything for others. If we walk into situations in a statically conditioned state - where auto-reflexes take place - and not spontaneous actions dependant on the verities of the place we will simply impose our beliefs.

To act in the realm of non-violence is exemplified by such as the Mahatma Gandhi, also by Martin Luther King, and César Chávez (Mexico-USA) - the latter seeking rights for farm workers in California. But a non-violent attitude is needed in everyday affairs, not just for those of grander dimensions. The importance of holding to such attitude cannot be over-estimated, in the dealings with family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues of course with one's couple.

To seek higher consciousness may sound high-falutin but it is directly related to achieving that stance of non-violence in life on a daily basis. And the advantages are clear, for both the individual and for society. War will gradually cease; factions will lose their sharp edges, family strife will be replaced by warm exchanges.

This is the overcoming of pain and suffering spoken of by all those engaged in bettering the human condition, whether religious people or artists or scientists. This is, What the Buddha Taught...

In this attitude of non-violence the generation gap can be bridged, as, over time, as society continues to change, the human generations succeed one another and when a generation's time comes to act it does so trying to impose values and gives interpretations that have been formed in an earlier moment. Such that, in times like the present of tremendous dynamism and change, the gap between generations widens alarmingly - as the world changes before our eyes. But there is a way out, a way of surpassing, and the answer lies in non-violence as an attitude in life not by trying to emulate the great exemplars but by getting in touch with our own self.

Then, besides the steamroller of Globalisation which is so readily observed in its effects the world-over, there is its corollary, an ever accelerating process of plantetisation, of harmoniously converging diversity moving towards a universal human nation.

The foregoing brings the writing back to reappraise the already mentioned 'humanist moment', which the *Dictionary of New Humanism* definition states:

"With the configuration of the single, closed global civilization (planetarization) that is now taking shape, the opening of a new h.m. inaugurated in a top down fashion, from the summit of political, economic, or cultural power, is no longer possible. Rather, we believe a new h.m. will emerge as a consequence of the increasing disorder in today's closed system, and that it will be protagonized by the social base who, even while undergoing the general destructuring, will discover, driven by their immediate needs, the possibility of promoting the growth of minimal autonomous organizations. It is precisely such concrete, local actions that are today on the verge of becoming a demonstration effect, thanks to the shrinking of space brought about by the development of technology and, in particular, the growth of communications. The worldwide synchronization of protests that took place within a small generational stratum during the 1960s and early 1970s was a symptom of this type of phenomena. Another example may be seen in the social upheavals that at times exhibit synchronization in geographical points far removed from one another."

In its most recent application the Jasmine Revolution, Arab Spring, and Occupy movements come immediately to mind.

December 23, 2010.

Dear friends,

When I walked sleepily into our garden this morning, having woken late, there was my little Buddha perched on his driftwood platform, peering down onto the rocky scene below, just as if he were high in the Himalaya, or nearer, up on Ngong Ping overlooking Po Lin Monastery on this island of Lantau.

His immovability struck me, it (he) had sat all night, all yesterday, all week, all these years, for how many years and it struck me also that that was the Vajra, the Diamond Teaching. The Absolute Truth is that unwaveringness that cannot be quite pinned down in words but yes, that flash, the lightening strike of realisation which leaves an illuminated mental space.

There is value in the little chap, just as a Jesus figurine can perpetually remind the Christian of Christ's compassion which is also never wavering - it's not a question of whether or not Jesus actually lived!

There is no harm in it; there is that goodness factor. Om Mani Padme Hum - "the Jewel within the Lotus".

Cheers for a merry season of fun and joy as our world rolls into itself and we ride on the crest of suffering...

Tony

(From an exchange among the English-speaking Mental Disciplines group, as part of the studies begun by the group I took part in at the Parks of Study and Reflection, Khandroli, India, in 2009 and ending at the Parks of Study and Reflection, Banahaw, Philippines in 2011.)

A long time ago it was emphasised that the purpose of these works, though referring to those contained in the book *Self Liberation*, was to help produce a balanced human being; because, when presuming to be of some use to society - which is the direction we aim at in doing our social-political acts, we need to add value to and not place a burden on society and the people we work with.

The Disciplines of the Silo School go beyond bringing about that state of equilibrium sought in the initial works and launch the disciple into an active process that moves him or her further on, freeing up that energy that was curtailed in eddying bye-waters of deviated behaviour or laziness, that inertia that can bog one down and that delays the processes of personal liberation.

Maybe it works like this: the grander the perspective, the more relations are seen and felt, the more energy arrives in the form of stimuli and the more energised one becomes. In a highly energised state it's as if a special facility is activated - the analogy of the higher centres can be usefully employed in its description, with the higher emotional and higher intellectual centres firing. The most non-flashy term for the result revolves around the word 'intuition' - defined here as a pleasing amalgam of the higher centres working in harmony. Thus one sees more or to a greater depth, and one's behaviour is modified toward the human life positive, the Good. Impossible to be at all violent when acting within and from such an elevated perspective.

When you can see all sides of a story, or are aware that the other side has a story, too, a more generally agreeable way forward can be mounted. This is where the favoured words of team, co-operative and reciprocity arise - a far cry from individualism and competition - which brought us all this far. This is also the standpoint where non-violence arises; violence is seen clearly as the old way, when the general mentality was thick, turgid, small, narrow, limited, and the self was enclosed and fearful.

Having left all that behind and leaping over the problems that grab to detain, a better way is found where there is involvement with the upcoming new. This means initiating projects looking to develop possibilities rather than combating what's obviously wrong - despite that injustices do need addressing.

To be in the world but not of the world hints at the stand taken. A detachment that is liberating rather than an identified-with-the-problem attitude which might bring a lot of energy, a lot of passion, into play, but which also has the danger of self-defeat lurking - given the immensity of the problems which seemingly have no end - we will burn out! I mean, how to work in an undeveloped country or a very poor neighbourhood, if one is continually taken by their problems? Seeing the big picture allows one to be among the results of poverty and violence and still be useful. That is the state of mind to be in.

Whether reached 'of a sudden' in a magnificent 'mind-blowing' personal event, or reached over-time in a gradual way, it is the same standpoint. The world is seen as it is and one's personal being as part of that world is also realised. A clear view is obtained. This is reality. This is not an illusion.

We have to be our own reference. Having reached this juncture in our own lives, here we make a stand and make a pitch. Our aim being: a better world, a really human world. We are the collective end of an aware being that lives on and through this Earth and is the instrument of liberation - or demise - of all creatures. Being aware of this pushes us to accept our job-description and destiny, knowing that we forge that destiny.

Afterward

Belief in the importance and singularity of the "I" Silo

At some point, hopefully in the near future, the human being will realize that the root of suffering lies in the belief in the singularity of the "I". Then he will comprehend the most internal root of himself, which is expressed in moments of letting go, of treating others well. It's the same in him and in everyone else, it's the same in him and in the other. And all of us have the same destiny here on this planet, that is, to allow this inner center to break through and grow. To say it another way, we are nothing more than one single organism that is developing unified as one structure, although this one structure is subdivided into several billions of individual cells. When we understand this and let go of our fears we can free ourselves of this great generator of suffering, the belief in the importance and singularity of the "I."

Appendix One

Bill Pickard's letters to Eric Johns, 1984-1987

Edited by John Crook

(reproduced by permission Eric Johns)

In *New Chan Forum* issue 18, Eric Johns described how he set out to discover the Buddha Way by visiting Bill Pickard at Mousehole in Cornwall, at the southern tip of England, where there was a small group living under his instruction in Soto Zen. During the subsequent years of Eric's training as a monk (Sik Hin Lic) in Hong Kong, Korea and Japan, Bill sustained a flow of letters to him, acting very much as an older spiritual councillor to a young man on the way. In many ways his letters recall the spiritual counselling offered to a young priest in *The Cloud of Unknowing* written by an unknown spiritual director in the Middle Ages in England. Eric showed me these letters suggesting that they could be the basis for an article in NCF and to this Bill readily agreed.

I have edited the letters to bring out teachings that will be useful for all who travel the way, whether monk, nun or lay person. The letters are very warm in tone and must have been a great support to Eric who was usually the only Westerner in his monasteries. I have removed the more personal comment, discussions of Masters and acquaintances, and matters extraneous to the issue in hand. Bill wrote on small blue letter forms in a neat spidery writing and had to pack a great deal into limited space. The admirable condensation of his views under this strict discipline gives us all some very pointed directions in our quest for understanding Chan. Ed.

5 April 1984

I will try and give you some hints on how to use the huatou (1) in meditation. It is not easy or simple; after all, like all Zen training, it is mostly a question of what you shouldn't do! Of course you will have read Hsu Yun's remarks on its use in Charles Luk's books, so you will understand that a huatou signifies the state of mind before a thought has started: so it is the state of mind one is in when one's thoughts, inner chatter, picture making, dreaming in zazen have stopped.

What I do is to start by following my breath till the mind stops producing any pictures or thoughts; even the awareness of the actual movement of the breath has faded from consciousness, so there is only an awareness of emptiness. At this point you must remember that this also means you must not continue 'looking' for something called a 'huatou' either; for your thought of the huatou is now also a barrier, a hindrance! But still you may feel a sense of doubt at this point. This is natural. If any idea or thought, or perhaps even some kind of vision, comes into your mind you must take no notice; but the moment you realise that you are aware of it, bring your pointed concentration back to that mental stillness. At first you will not be able to hold this for even a second; but if you keep on with determination, these seconds of mental stillness will increase. So the huatou is really another name for what I have usually called... the 'zazen mind'. Don't worry about the Great Doubt; that is the mental state we are all naturally in before we realise that all our words, thoughts about meanings, mental pictures etc. are themselves this doubt. When we know that we cannot know, the doubt slips away.

Don't get impatient with yourself. Don't think about progress. Simply keep on bringing your attention back in zazen to that state of mind when you have no mental activity going on. Once you can experience the 'feel' of this one-pointed concentration you will find it easier to get back to it. Simply to become the breath, in and out, no other thought, idea, mental picture in your field of consciousness at all, is for me the quickest way to the huatou state.

There are various levels of consciousness that you will become aware of; but to all of them you must pay no attention. Don't expect things to happen. Drop, and keep on dropping, everything that comes into your mind. Return always to the 'feel' of your breath, till that moment comes when you will really know that there is nothing to 'know' with your mind. You have all that you need just as you are.

5 May 1984

You must be guided very much by your intuition as to the rightness, for you, of the teaching and the teacher you decide to follow. He must feel right for you. If he is a real teacher and he knows your potential, and knows he is right for you, he will accept you. But if he does not, it may well be because he can see you must go to someone else. Teachers who appear to accept everyone, and Eastern teachers who accept every Westerner, are often more concerned with the so-called prestige a Western pupil is supposed to bring them. Simply prepare yourself so that you are ready when the right teacher is available: when the pupil is ready the teacher appears.

15 May 1984

From my own practice I know it is good advice to cut out reading when really engaged in intense meditation; and what reading you do needs to be selective, probably only Sutras, and probably again only one or two of those: the Heart Sutra, the Diamond Sutra and the Surangama to help with psychological problems. Once you can communicate with your teacher you must be guided entirely by him; while always remembering that even Shakyamuni tells us we must not take even his words as correct for us till we have experienced the truth for which the words stand. This is why we must have total trust in our master.

After you have been meditating rigorously for long hours, for many days, you will no doubt enter a stage where you will probably be filled with doubts, you will feel stale, everything becomes cloudy, you may even think you are in the wrong place or have the wrong teacher. This is the testing time. Everyone goes through this stage at some time. You may feel depressed, homesick, lonely. It is not something peculiar to you and your situation. I reached a point where I nearly killed myself; but I was alone and had no teacher.

30 May 1984

Do you still have the huatou in the pit of the stomach, the 'Who?' as your whole field of consciousness, turning the mind inwards? What is the state before even the 'Who?' is asked? Where does that 'Who?' come from? When the doubts or questions fill your whole content of consciousness, there will come a moment when everything stops; hindering thoughts stop, and there is only a stillness, you are one with the question. This is no longer your usual consciousness. You and 'Who?' are one. There is no sensation of body, no consciousness 'of' anything. And of course this is the state of mind before a thought arises; in other words it is the huatou. It can be endless space, a brightness, a kind of great joy, it turns the world upside down. There is nothing you can say profitably about it, but you know it.

26 June 1984

Every situation, at that moment, is perfect for our practice; just as every sense intrusion such as pain, noises, mental creations, are subjects for meditation. All we have to do is drop all the hindrances, preconceptions and attachments.

You will find you will never come to the end of doubts. But doubts are the driving force that set you on your path, and that will keep you on it. As you deepen your meditation you will find that your sense of doubt becomes more subtle; it will be seen to be less about external concrete concepts, opinions, situations and much more to do with moral attitudes, a sense in which nothing can be distinguished or be said to exist apart from anything else. Doubts never end but in the end become of themselves also void; these are the doubts

not subject to answers. Having to examine doubts (in order to answer others) clears the ground of our minds, so we can be free of clutter; or at least some of it. The subtle doubts are of a different kind.

You are right about robes being powerful; but don't forget they can also become a barrier, a hindrance, if we live behind them. They focus attention on us; they can make us feel special. The fact people expect a special kind of wise answer from you will show you this. Don't let this fool you into thinking you really have what others may expect. Answer always from your heart, from the truth you know for yourself. Remember in the end the real question, which is also the real doubt, can only be answered by silence. The Buddha showed us that. Just because one may be wearing robes, be he Easterner or Westerner, does not mean he has travelled very far on the spiritual path. A real teacher will be hard to find because in the end he will only be found within! That is hard to accept but the Buddha also told us that.

I think it will be wise to discuss your meditation less with other monks and only with your teacher. Others may not understand, conversation can be confusing and raise expectations both for you and them.

22 July 1984

Ah! I know how you felt, and I am so very happy for you. Of course one is beside, or outside oneself at first, or simply with no self. It's wonderful, so obvious, and quite impossible to put into words. And of course one has to calm down after a while. But no matter; now you know it's just this, your view of things will never be the same again. Your real training starts here. I share your joy.

Now you will find deeper meanings in the Sutras. You have the answer and no one has anything to 'give' you. The need to keep rushing about the world simply ceases. Yet the need to go on deepening your insight never stops; for all is instant change and flux, including what you are, how you are, the situations around you. Life is constant practice. Every moment is new and pregnant with possible births.

Your old friend still has a suggestion to make. Forget the first experience and do not expect the next insight to be as big. Each moment is just it. There must be no smell of Zen, and that only happens when you are unaware that 'just this', be it a deep insight that lifts your heart filling it with a love for all things, or the dreary drudgery of occupations you don't like, is all one. You must learn to hide your discovery; don't let even a hint be known, or that subtle poison, spiritual pride, creeps in. Even present joy must be let go. Nothing very important has happened. Be happy, be sad, with all your might; the next moment is new.

One does each thing as new because one has to do it. Nothing special. One does zazen not knowing, one sits because it is the next thing. That is Zen samadhi. All the multiplicity of the flux of the Universe is the One, and that's also the present moment, writing this, reading this. Nothing special. Wonderful! No stink of Zen. Nothing holy. You are a Bodhisattva and have all the beings (who do not exist!) as numerous as the sands of the Ganges to save. Keep on doing this and never give it a thought. That is how we pay the debt of gratitude. It flows from the heart and we don't know it with the head at all.

19 September 1984

With regards to our Bodhisattva vows: if from the first not a thing is, who takes the vows or precepts and what beings are there to be saved? The idea that there is a 'you' who will take these vows; that at a ceremony these precepts of a Bodhisattva will be 'given' to you; that then you will for all time try and 'keep' them, is simply a simplistic view of the meaning. There are no beings to be saved, and nothing that is a Bodhisattva, for all is One. Form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form: this is true of everything. But still, as the very emptiness is also form, so, though no such being called a Bodhisattva can even hold an idea of saving any beings, that 'no-person' must, by his whole way of life and attitude, create around himself the atmosphere where such 'no-beings' can wake up and realise that which is! So, in a dualistic sense, which is no-sense, beings can be saved. Ask "Who is there to be a Bodhisattva?"

Truth is beyond words but there is an insight that will, moment by living moment, infuse your presence with the atmosphere that will help all (no-) beings. Even the summit of human aspiration is a concept; but

we can all try by great attention to live in compassion for all beings. We are what we think. Yet who holds these views?

24 October 1984

I'm delighted to learn that you have had the ordination... even if it was a rather more noisy ceremony than you had anticipated. The only important part is what took place within you. The rest is froth and will settle...

The inner truth and insight of your meditation is all that matters. You have committed yourself to a great adventure that never ends. That is the transmission and each time you enter into samadhi in meditation this transmission takes place. The Bodhisattva is one who is living in a state of constant transmission, for the Buddha nature naturally flows through his every act. Nothing is self centred...

You may often find the tears flowing or you may see visions or get some 'Chan disease' manifestations. This is why it is such a help to have a Chan master, quite apart from the 'presence' that a right teacher can give your practice.

I am now 70 years old and have followed the way since I was 16 and each day is new and there's still no goal in sight.

24 November 1984

As you have asked me, I'll give you a few details of my early stages on the path. Like you I first became aware of the Dharma through reading a book when I was 13 or 14; it was as if I somehow had known about it all the time. I seemed to remember it. Then one day, I suddenly had the experience of my body and everything around me simply dissolving into a brilliant space that had no limitations and I realised that somehow I was not really separate or apart from anything. But I knew nothing of training or meditation nor that there were different paths to follow. I only read books on Buddhism and the vision got dim.

Then, during the war in Burma I was wounded and got malaria and was sent up into the Himalayas to a rest camp where it was my karma to go and stay with some English Buddhists who introduced me to my first master. He was a Chinese lama who was meditation teacher in a local Tibetan monastery; but was also a disciple of the Venerable Chan Master Hsu yun who was at that time still alive in China. He gave me the Precepts and introduced me to Chan meditation and for a month I had the privilege of sitting every day

(night) with him. Later, through him, I was put in touch with Charles Luk.

On my return to England I became a hermit for two years, living in a tent on the cliffs here in Cornwall. After another experience of dropping body and mind and going through a difficult time because I could not have the guidance of my old teacher (who had said I must find my own path on my own), I discovered how kind he had been.

One day a Japanese lay brother came to visit because of a dream, and, through this, a Zen Roshi eventually came to England and I was ordained and given transmission in to the Soto sect of Dogen. Yet I have always lived as a layman and do not wear robes. I also sat for a while with the Venerable Chogyam Trungpa who also had my Chan Lama Linchen (2) as his meditation teacher when he was a young monk. My ordination name was Myozen Daizui.

1 January 1985

You are right: deep concentration brings about many physical as well as mental changes. These are quite natural and there is nothing either special or 'holy' about them... As I think you realise, these various manifestations of auras, lights, demons and Buddhas are all fairly common. They are all projections from your own subconscious, or in some cases a kind of telepathic or joint sharing of the hallucination of someone else.

In meditation, when you have reached the state of really stilling the stream of thought and images, that reservoir of memory of which we are not normally aware seems to throw up these phantoms. It is the same place as that from where our dreams come in sleep. Sometimes they can seem to take on a life of their own and can be frightening; they won't go away. They won't go away because secretly the more egotistical surface consciousness becomes fascinated. This is certainly the case when hallucinations seem to suggest we are being favoured, for instance when it is a holy image, such as the Buddha or a 'divine being', who comes and seems to suggest we're making great progress.

So take no notice of any such manifestations. They are all illusions, projections of your own mind however 'objective' they may appear. This also goes for 'lights', 'voices', 'scents' as well. What they do show however is that your meditation is maturing... but don't 'stick' at this point. Many 'mystics' have done so.

A few suggestions now about this sense of evil, of being possessed by an evil power that apparently came from what should have been 'good', that is a Buddha statue. You are quite likely to experience a number of such paradoxical transformations of right and wrong, good and bad, light and dark. They will take many forms. Remember, all these concepts, values, judgements are within; they are all attributes of the self and must be seen for what they are. Remember that even the concept of 'Buddha' must be seen for what it is, a concept, idea, created by minds and so it is for all values. Precepts must become actualised, we must become living embodiments of them, Bodhisattvas who are not even conscious of being Bodhisattvas, otherwise we are not Bodhisattvas. In Zen we are told to 'kill' even the Buddha: that is we must not hold to the concept of Buddha as being other than what we are.

I have the feeling that you are still objectifying some of the experiences that you have or which arise in your meditation states. I mean that you are placing outside of yourself a kind of power, the 'power of your vows', or even your 'wish to teach Buddhism to others'. You are still giving off the smell of ego, of pride, even if in a subtle way. Who has this 'power of your vows'? Who wishes to teach Buddhism for the 'good of others'? All powers, all demons, all energies, are in a sense the natural manifestation of the flux we call reality; but when they pass through our senses and are filtered through our brains and become 'real' in consciousness, they appear to be apart, or outside, or other than we are. You should have no problems if you still your mind and return always to 'Who is it?' who experiences whatever it be - demon or Buddha.

You must always start from where you are and from who you are. You will always be who you are. We are all the result of our past karma; this cannot be altered so far as the past is concerned. It just is. Yet this very moment, this place, is where change also occurs. In this constant flux of the eternal present there is also change. Yet, even in all the apparent movement, our very self is the mental habit of moment by moment creating this illusion of an ongoing apparently permanent entity or being. All is one void, process, energy and at the same time quite beyond all our concepts of the mind. We will never know or understand, though we will experience.

I think, secretly, you are a little proud of what your 'self' or ego has achieved: it's all been mind blowing of course. But now your real inner journey must get underway. No doubt there will be many slips and the possible help of an English speaking teacher will help at such moments. If you trust your intuition and watch the tricks of the self you will have all you need.

I think you must bow in gratitude to your master Sik Sing Yat who, although he may not be Lin-chi (What vanity to tell him what he should have done!), seems to have guarded you well. Yes, I know the country you are passing through but what are dreams to trouble the incredible perfection and beauty of this moment. The best mantra is always the one eternal question 'Who?' The answer is no answer but only the experience of 'Who?'... The only demon is within; that persistent little self. It fights to the end yet it is an illusion.

At your stage I don't think learning mantras is anything but a diversion. After all, your master told you not to play around with such antics. I rather feel you are showing too much interest in your mind's tricks. Yes.

I also had my demons and not all are gone yet. Practice never ends. There is always a further mountain to climb. That's what it is all about.

I am sure you have been very impatient at times. We all experience this. It is of course yet another manifestation of pride, isn't it? I wonder why we make what is simple so very difficult?... I think you are at the point where you'll find the answers that are in the Heart Sutra within you. You know you are ripe for experience and I wouldn't read anything unless it is the Heart Sutra... in any case more a meditation than a reading. Please bow to Sik Sing Yat for me. I think your gratitude to him will increase with time.

1 March 1985

It sounds as if you are wise not to get mixed up with Westerners who are at popular temples in Japan. I think that since Zen became popular in the 60s and 70s the more comfortable Zen temples have become overrun with Westerners seeking quick and easy 'answers'. I am sure the serious monks and teachers must find them a problem at times. There will no doubt be many that are neurotic or very disturbed.

You obviously now understand that all the exciting 'states', 'visions' and other experiences that you had last year were stages of no consequence except that they showed your powers of concentration to be getting stronger. Do not become attached to their fascination or feel that you are somehow special or important because of them. There is no special 'god' handing them out to you, they are produced simply by your own effort in zazen. And all that business with the finger burning! Your wise teacher Sing Yat knew there was a lot of pride and vanity in that affair but worth it in the end for what you learnt. Some of us have to travel a stony path as we are so full of ego.

Soon you will find that there is only emptiness, both inside and outside; that you require no outside guide. At each moment and in each situation you will know how to respond adequately. Gradually you will realise that you are increasingly in an empty state, you will be aware of the working of your mind and the objects of your thoughts as somehow floating in space. Inside and outside are the same in the process. There is nothing static, fixed, with a separate reality. You will find yourself increasingly in the present moment fully and your past thoughts and deeds will lessen their grip on your habits. As Sing Yat said, "the real work is to forget the self, so one can benefit others". Others and self are one. The only disturbance is within.

14 November 1985

This rude, unhelpful, uninterested in Westerners, Zen master (of whom you write) sounds interesting. What reputation has he among the Koreans? No master can give you anything, except perhaps a little encouragement and a push now and then. I cannot know but perhaps he is a master from whom you have things to learn. Sometimes the nice, friendly, apparently helpful, master is not what we need. It becomes comfortable, safe, predictable. Maybe he is uninterested in Westerners because he doesn't consider they are there with enough inner commitment. If it is a question of life and death, then even the question of the master's attitude must be dropped. So it's not what he can give you or do for you, but what you can realise in yourself. If you think he's unhelpful it's surely because you expect him to be helpful; in other words give you something -help! You are well on the way; you have the tools; it's up to you. It's right there in front of you, whatever the circumstances. I know you can do it. Hard slog yes; polishing the mirror yes; till you realise there's not even a mirror.

Zazen is the gate. Nothing else matters. Just where you are is the place. Now is eternally the right and only moment. It's a question of life and death; your head is in the pail of water and all you want is air, nothing else will do. I know you have the strength. All your battles are with yourself; only you can conquer and win through. You have it all. Who are you?

? June 1986

I've been in Nepal for a month. Managed to step into Tibet, but things are not too happy there; though better than they were. Met one or two interesting Tibetans. It all helps to knock off the tough corners of one's ego box. Travelling in the Himalayas was the real testing. I needed to return to the high mountains again. Just to trek in such places, camping away from Western life and conditions, living with the Sherpas, tough simple people, was a tonic. In many ways reluctant to return; but my karma is here, I know.

Had a dream about you; partly why I felt this was the moment to write. You'll probably understand what it means. I see you climbing steep rocky steps to a building on top of a high hill; could be a temple on the top, a Chinese temple. You're struggling to climb the steps because you are holding a goat and a tiger by two long ropes, and they are pulling back down the hill. You do not seem to want either of these animals, but you say you cannot leave them. Perhaps you can interpret this? I awoke somehow expecting to have news of you. The Bodhisattva's great delusion is that knowing all are Buddhas, he still goes around trying to help everyone realise that. Look after yourself.

30 August 1986

Your letter... has broken the long silence; for I had been wondering how you were getting on; or had you perhaps vanished into China, lost to our world? I can see you've been discovering many things. This is the perennial wonder and beauty of the path; that it is ever changing and will not end; certainly not in this life or on this earth.

I can feel in your letter, as much as in what you say, that inner certainty that comes with the true inner vision that deep zazen brings: seeing and experiencing the total ultimate emptiness of what we call 'self'; the total oneness of what we call reality. As you now realise for yourself nothing can ever be the same again. This insight, the total oneness and its paradoxical constant flux and change, must now become what you are; it's not something 'you' have somehow become; it's what you have always been!

Yet, equally, as there's no static, ultimate thing we can call 'you' to be, this has to be realised or woken up to moment by moment. In this sense, none of us ever achieve enlightenment; but enlightenment is when all our illusions (our wrong views) are dropped. We all struggle so hard just to be.

Yes, sex and drink and fasting simply are; not good or bad, but facts or aspects of reality, of the flux of existence: but how and when and how much they are experienced is what must concern us. Are they at this particular moment in time either conducive or a hindrance to our waking up? There is no value in a load of guilt; that can be not only another hindrance but actually an indulgence. So we make a mistake and indulge overmuch; greed of one kind or another overcomes us, we see this, acknowledge it to ourselves, and then, endeavouring not to break this particular precept again, we carry on into the next moment of this flux of time. If karmic harm has been created then we must expect to pay. Beyond this make no big deal out of it. We will all fail sometime.

Do not think too much about 'progress' in meditation; if there is real meditation, where is the 'you' who can consider it greater or less improved since the last time? The 'progress' comes when you are no longer apart from the process; when you don't even consider it something that is being done by 'you'. It is as natural and as inevitable as your next breath. The less of 'you' there is in your meditation, the more 'result' others will probably see in you; but 'you' won't know it!

I see you have arrived at the difficulty of living the meditation mind state from moment to moment: but you've stated the answer; no discriminating mind but complete attention to each moment, mind state, and action resulting from it. It becomes more and more subtle, always requiring awareness and vigilance. Much of the change that comes with the life practice is in the character. Without knowing it your perception and awareness become more acute. The practice will never end, though your intuition will gradually disclose to you a different dimension when you experience it: then the third eye is open.

6 December 1986

Even if you found your situation on a Korean sesshin rather chaotic at times with much switching around and even arguments, how good it must have been for your practice. That's the beauty of the way; all situations are the right and perfect way and place and time for practice. Just where you are, as it is, can be the right place. In fact there can be no other for it is where you are.

Tho' you know the silent place in your meditation you have by constant mindfulness to actualise it in your total being. The inner nature that you are, beyond the conditioning of your character, has to become the living, moment by moment, you that you potentially are. Remember the way is a constant progression with no goal. We shall never achieve or reach an end in our journey but must always be in a state of practice. By constant practice we slowly become more aware; if only more aware that we all have a long journey ahead. Even our Lord Buddha practised till his last meditation.

If you check your actions and thoughts with reference to the Precepts the fruits of what you do will be right for all situations. The precepts, the ethical concepts given us by our teachers, are our staff for the journey. By such constant reference we all have the guidance and the map of the way.

2 February 1987

The enemy within us is the habits we have accumulated both in mental baggage and as the results of our actions. The more we can develop the way of dealing with the present moment with the free and open mind that meditation shows us the less habit-controlled we will be. The practice has no end. Razor sharp awareness and vigilance is required.

You will no doubt have people suggesting all kind of attractive Buddhist projects that could use the money [you have acquired]. All of them may no doubt be worthy projects but I think you should take your time. Your idea of a retreat house is very good; but all such places require a strong purpose and well grounded individuals (not just one or two) to really carry on and not become a bolthole for little groups of rather inadequate people. Such places need a nucleus of people with strong convictions and the practical ability to attend to the organisational side. Many fine ideas and good intentions float around but come to nothing because the people are not practical enough...

As you ask me, I would suggest that you carry on with your practice, with the teacher that seems right for you, till you feel it's time to come back here and then let what will be right, at that time and place, grow slowly. Perhaps a small cottage where you can carry on your practice and let those who will, come to you and share your practice. Don't fall for that ego trip, "I am a teacher, I can teach you!" Even Buddha said he could only point the way. The heart of a 'centre' has to be right motive.

17 July 1987

You seem to be a traveller still, for every letter comes from a different place; but I sense there's also somehow a different person writing them. You sound as if in many ways you are slightly disillusioned with many things. Perhaps you should write more on this subject.

"Without really knowing how" you say, you are sharing an apartment with a young lady. That, I suspect, will be the cause of several aspects of karma, if it has not already been so. I am simply thinking of what you told me happened the last time you were in Japan.

I wonder why you have not attempted to find one of those few small temples where some kind of good teaching still goes on under one of four really enlightened Zen masters. If you can speak a little Japanese you will be in a better position than the usual Westerner. I feel that you have an opportunity to open some gateless gates in Japan. What is the weightless Buddha of Nara? Daito lived with beggars under the bridges of Kyoto for twenty years and came back into the world of Dharma and founded Daitokoji. There's something there for you; an insight that you should be able to perceive and two strong karmic fetters that you must break. You have travelled so far, do not waste energy and time on anything less than realising the truth in you!

Why do I feel that there's some doubt, something unresolved in your letter? Is the life of the monk really the way for you? For being a monk or not being a monk has nothing to do with passing through the gateless gate. Fighting constant inner battles to keep a lot of vows can take up a great deal of energy. The only reason for keeping vows of celibacy, like abstemiousness generally, is that otherwise we increase the fetters that blind and enslave us. Even guilt when we do not live up to our intentions becomes an extra guilt and a thief of energy; and to make that last great leap from the top of the hundred foot pole will take all you are. Everything must be sacrificed. There will be no dickering there, no bargaining with truth.

Are you intending to return to Hong Kong and Master Sik Sing Yat or has the time come to move on? There can come a time when one should seek out new aspects; test out the depth of one's realisation in new situations, with different teachers. It is a very old tradition to do this and I suspect Sik Sing Yat may have suggested this when he first sent you off to Korea.

Another thought; don't ever forget that realisation of the Buddha way is not different from its actualisation amid all the temptations of our everyday life. So although we may be disillusioned with weakness in ourselves and in our teachers we must still seek for that one true teacher who will be there when we are worthy. It's then the Dharma takes root. Something is waiting for you.

Your brother in the Dharma

Bill

Notes

1. The huatou meaning 'head of thought' refers to the moment before a thought arises, usually a question often derived from a koan story. The method described here was much favoured by Master Hsu Yun. See C. Luk, *Chan and Zen Teaching*, (London, Rider), First series, p 23. Also: *The Secrets of Chinese Meditation*, (London, Rider), 1964, p48. Master Sheng-Yen often speaks of the methods of Hsu Yun in his books.

2. Perhaps Rinchen (Great Jewel): the Chinese do not pronounce 'R's easily. Ed

3. Bill recommended Roshi Mumon of Shofukoji Temple in Kobe and Roshi Kyodo Sochu at Ryutakuji Temple near Mount Fuji.

Eric's story

I found that another of Charles Luk's books was dedicated to an Englishman, Bill Pickard of the Mousehole Buddhist group at the far end of Cornwall. When I reached 27 I decided to pay him a visit. I harnessed my horse, strapped her in the shafts of my bow-top caravan and set off on a voyage of discovery that was to become a life-long adventure.

Three months later I arrived near Bill's house, having walked all the way from the Midlands. The meeting inspired me and soon I sat my first week-long meditation retreat. One day, returning to my horse and wagon, I stood by the stream to fill my kettle -and there it was -just the stream. The retreat had enabled me to let go of all the things in my mind that had been churning around obscuring that which I sought. Everything was clear and perfect - just as it was. There had been no method and no result. Just the stream running.

That was enough for me. I sold my horse and wagon and a couple of days later I was in Hong Kong at the Precious Lotus monastery (Po Lin) which I had spotted in a travel brochure a few days before. No one spoke much English but this didn't matter as I already had a feel for the thing.

After a few weeks the Master whom I had chosen as my teacher took me to his smaller more secluded monastery, Precious Wood Temple (Po Lam) about a mile from the bigger establishment, the bus stop, the tourists and the sightseers. I liked it and decided to stay. I moved into the meditation hall and sat for a couple of years during which time I was ordained as a Chinese monk, having twelve marks burnt with incense onto my scalp.

Every day followed the same pattern:

3.30 am. Get up

4.00 Morning chanting

5.00 Meditation

5.30 Breakfast and work period

9.00 Chanting the Diamond Sutra

12.00 Main meal. Siesta

15.30 Afternoon chanting

17.30 Supper (Optional) Evening meditation followed by bed at no fixed time. Sometimes there were no visitors for weeks. It was as though the world had forgotten us and we them. Only a dozen or so old and largely illiterate nuns and one slightly mad monk lived there. The monk worked hard maintaining the footpath up to the road. The Master, who was abbot at the Po Lin monastery, divided his time between the two places. One time John Crook visited for a couple of days. That was our first meeting.

Sitting all day in the Ch'an hall made me quite unfit so I started helping the nuns cut brush and scrub grass for the cooking fire. It was our only fuel. I carried provisions for them down the arduous footpath from the road. I swept the courtyard and did minor repairs and decorating. When some new monks came I started to learn Cantonese. They were young and had a modern outlook, giving the place a fresh feel.

We all ate a special diet strictly following the rule excluding onions, garlic, leeks and eggs. Vegetables were grown in the gardens fed by our night soil. The mosquitoes loved that. Water came from a mountain spring. There were large and dangerous snakes on the mountain but, after having lived in my wagon, it all seemed quite luxurious and easy for me. I really felt at home. Master Hsing Yat is an unusual man. He told me he would like to help me but that he was unable to do so. He would only say where I went wrong. Right from the start he advised me to go to Songgwang Sa in Korea where Westerners were training. He told me that the standards there were the best in the world and that I should practice with others of my own kind. Eventually, a couple of years later, I got there but the abbot, Kusan Sunim, had died. I did a three-month retreat with some Americans and then went to Japan.

Finally I decided to return to England so I disrobed and came back, yet continuing to practice and keeping more or less to myself. I had to let all the excitement and pride at having been a fully fledged monk settle down and, putting it aside, I continued looking at the mind before thought with which I was becoming familiar. During my attempts at Chan I noticed that the best insights usually came off the cushion rather than on it. Sitting on the cushion was preparatory work and training. Insights were always spontaneous and entirely natural. Many Japanese Zen books miss this point although nowadays they are improving.

Master Hsing Yat at Po Lam taught by actions that had to be understood intuitively. He rarely said anything to me and gave me no particular instruction or method. All he did was to snatch away anything I had done or thought about, even clarity and stillness. He was particularly down to earth and practical, having a Chinese Buddhist sense of humour that allowed a lightness of touch and being at ease with a situation. Now he is quite old and has retired from being the abbot at Po Lin.

Today a large airport has opened down below at the foot of the mountain and the noise is disturbing. I was fortunate to have been at Po Lam when I was. It seemed as though I had stepped back several centuries in time only to return with a clearer understanding of the stillness I had known before that running stream of my first retreat. Nothing learnt, just a jumbled mind cleared for a timeless moment or two.

Appendix Two

Vajra - Symbol of the Mental Discipline

Notes compiled from various sources

The *vajra* is the symbol chosen for the Silo School Mental Discipline. This is a Sanskrit word meaning both thunderbolt and diamond. A thunderbolt is seen to have an irresistible force and immediate effectiveness, as in a lightning strike; the diamond is adamant hard.

In Buddhism the *vajra* is the symbol of Vajrayana, one of the three major branches of Buddhism. Vajrayana is translated as "Thunderbolt Way" or "Diamond Way" and can imply the thunderbolt experience of Buddhist enlightenment or *bodhi* (awakening), while Diamond implies indestructibility.

The *vajra* is widely used in Buddhism and Hinduism, both traditions of Dharma. Dharma in the Sanskrit or in Pali *dhamma*, has various meanings, all of great importance in Indian philosophies and religions. In a Hindu context, it means one's righteous duty, and a Hindu's *dharma* is affected by a person's age, class, occupation, and gender. In modern Indian languages it can mean simply religion - 'one's *dharma*', the spiritual path one follows. The word *dharma* translates as that which upholds or supports, and is usually translated into English as Law.

According to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, beings that live in accordance with dharma proceed more quickly toward personal liberation. Dharma also refers to the teachings and doctrines of the founders of Buddhism and Jainism, the Buddha and Mahavira.

Because of its symbolic importance, the *vajra* spread along with Indian religion and culture to other parts of Asia. It was used as both a weapon and a symbol in Nepal, India, Tibet, Bhutan, Siam, Cambodia, Burma, China, Korea and Japan. The equivalent word in Tibetan is *dorje*, which is also a common male name in Tibet and Bhutan. *Dorje* can also refer to a small sceptre held in the right hand by Tibetan lamas during religious ceremonies.

To take an instance of the way the *vajra* is used, that in Nepal, where the people of the *dharma* finally gave a name to the One, the Uncreated, the Svayambhu, the 'existing in himself', they called 'him' the Adi Buddha or First Buddha.

In Tibetan Buddhism, the Gelug-pa or Yellow Sect identify Adi Buddha as Jajradhara for instance - he who holds the lightning - *Dorje-chang*, 'the indestructible lord of all mysteries, 'the master of all secrets'. Vajradhara as icon is depicted in sitting position, wearing a jewelled crown and the clothing of a young prince. For associated symbols he holds a thunderbolt *vajra* (yang) and a mystical bell (yin). He is often shown united with his *shakti*, Prajna-paramita, the Goddess of Transcendental Wisdom.

In the Tibetan teachings, the *vajra* can be found in connection with the Primordial Buddha which carries the sense in which instantaneous realisation is all that is possible at a certain stage. One way is to take a gradual approach but at a certain point one has no choice but to 'leap naked into expansiveness'.

The *vajra* is the item that a Buddhist lama or teacher usually holds in his right hand and represents spiritual authority as a "diamond sceptre." The *vajra* also symbolizes the focus and centrality which it suggests and is the backbone, the stability and equanimity, and it is also associated with the Blue Buddha whose name means "steadfast" or "unflappable."

Diamond is the hardest gemstone: cuts everything and nothing can stop it, also it is absolutely pure and incorruptible and will not rust, like iron, and nothing can stain it, thus it remains pure even under layer upon layer of dust.

The central portion of the *vajra* symbolizes the reality as the source (egg or seed) of all existence. The lotus in general denotes birth, development, growth, especially harmonious growth. Therefore, the two lotuses that grow on opposite sides of the central sphere, represent the emergence of the basic duality of existence, arising from the undifferentiated reality. They represent the initial and primary division of Reality into two poles, in two halves, into two worlds.

Appendix Three

Shakyamuni Buddha's Predecessors - the lineage

Ancestors in India

Mahakashyapa, Ananda, Shanavasin, Upagupta, Dhitika, Mishaka, Vasumitra, Buddhanandi, Buddhamitra, Parshva, Punyayasha, Anabodhi, Kipimala, Nagarjuna, Kanadeva, Rahulabhadra, Samghanandi, Samghayathata, Kumaralata, Shayata, Vasubandhu, Manorata, Haklenayasha, Simhabodhi, Bashashita, Punyamitra, Prajnadhara, Bodhidharma.

Ancestors in China

Bodhidharma, Hui-k'o (Wei Ho), Seng-ts'an (Tsang Tsan), Tao-hsin (Tu Shun), Hung-jen (Hwang Yan), Hui-neng.

And who would oppose that Hsu-yun be added to that list...?

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