

The Mind Itself is Buddha

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Our study will be concentrated for a while on the statement: “The mind itself is Buddha.”[1] It is pretty difficult to study, to listen to our lectures or our teachings. Usually when you study something, and even when you are listening to our lecture, I think that what you understand will be an echo of yourself. You think you are listening to me, but actually you are listening to yourself, so no progress will result. You always understand our lecture in your own way. Your understanding is always based on your way of thinking. So I think that you hear my voice and see my face, but actually you see yourself, and what you hear is nothing but an echo of yourself.

My study was like that for a long time. I think this is often the case when we study Buddhism. If you want to study Buddhism, you have to clear your mind. You should not have any prejudice. You should forget all you have learned before.

You say, “Speak up.” “Speak up” is to speak up to here. We say, “Talk out.” We do not talk in the realm of reasoning or thinking. We talk out, we get out of our talk. When you hear our lecture, you should not hear my voice or what I say. You should understand what I “talk out.” Do you understand? It is rather difficult to express. Not up to here. You should understand something more than what I say in terms of reasoning or logic. That is how you study Buddhism and how to talk about Buddhism.

As you know, the teaching is, as we say, a finger pointing at the moon. You should not see the finger, you should see the moon. But usually your understanding of what I say and your questions are always in the realm of your thinking or conscious understanding. That is not the purpose of the study of Buddhism.

In “Sokushin-zebutsu,” one of the important fascicles of the *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen-zenji emphasizes this point. Although this is a very brief fascicle, what he talks about in this small fascicle is very deep and very wide. So I want to talk about it now. For a while my talk will be concentrated on verbal understanding. So now you have to listen very little, but later you should know what you have studied.

When we talk about Buddhism, it is liable to be a strained application of our teaching. You know we have certain faults of teaching and logic, so our talk is liable to be a strained application of Buddhist logic. This means a little, but it doesn’t help so much. So we have to destroy the logic, and we should feel what we say, or we should have some intuition to grasp the teaching.

I think most of you have studied the five sense organs and mind. We call them the six sense organs, including the mind. Mostly our study will be limited to the six consciousnesses: eyes, nose, tongue, body, ears, and mind. The mind controls various senses, produces some ideas, and thinks. So our understanding will be limited to those six consciousnesses. But you have one more, in actuality. The reason you make so many mistakes—the reason your

understanding of life does not accord with the truth—is because you have one more faculty, the egoistic faculty.

According to Buddhism, you do not make mistakes without any reason. You know, there is a reason why you make mistakes—there is a big reason. You cannot see things as they are, although you have a mind and your five sense organs are perfect. Your eye is good, your taste and tongue are complete, but nevertheless you always make a big mistake. Why is this? There is a good reason. Do you know what it is? It is because of your ego-centered faculty, something which should not be mind. I don't know where this faculty is, whether it is in the faculty of your brain or not. I'm sure our brain does not make any mistakes, but something makes a mistake. What is it?

According to Buddhism, that is the ego-centered or seventh faculty, *mana-shiki*, in Japanese.[2] This one always makes our judgement wrong. When your understanding is ego-centered, that is not right understanding. Your understanding is not universal. Your understanding is always ego-centered and partial. This is quite true with human beings. Without knowing that you are always making a mistake, you insist on yourself, your feeling, and you project your ego-centered ideas. That is why you make so many mistakes and we get into confusion.

But that is not all. According to Buddhism, there is an eighth consciousness that will correct the mistakes of the seventh consciousness. “You are mistaken,” you may say. “You always make a mistake. Why is it?” it says. That is the eighth one.

So if we want to study Buddhism, we should not study it in the realm of the five sense organs or the mind. When you realize that we are always making a mistake, we say you have entered one step into the teaching of Buddhism. And when you understand what the eighth consciousness is, that is enlightenment—enlightened mind.

But usually almost all the teaching is limited to the realm of the first five or six faculties. This is what Dogen-zenji talks about in this fascicle. He says the mere stage of a little bit more than good and bad, right or wrong, agreeable or disagreeable to your six senses may be mysticism. A little bit more than the six senses is mysticism, but not much more than that. What he says is very brief, but I have to explain it in this way: I want to explain what holy mind or divine nature is.

Dogen-zenji referred to that heretical understanding, which I read to you in the last lecture. They understand that holy mind is always clear, independent of our surroundings, and eternal. The things the mind sees or understands are not eternal, but mind itself is eternal and has limit-less faculties. It reaches as far as it thinks, and there is no limit to the faculty of mind. It will reach to the moon or to various stars in space, and it reaches them immediately. It doesn't take much time, or any time. So in this way the mind has a great faculty, and mind itself has a divine nature. The mind sometimes is called *atman* or “big mind” or “great mind,” in comparison to our small mind. This mind is limitless; that is why it is called divine mind. This kind of understanding is called the understanding of immortality. We have a similar word, but we do not mean by immortality something that is immortal. Our understanding of immortality cannot be understood by your thinking.

You may ask, then, how should I understand what immortality is? That is wrong too. “How” also belongs to your mind faculty. You wonder how, your eyes wonder, your ears wonder. “Why is it?” you think. That is not the way to understand what it is. By the time we finish this series of lectures, you will understand what I mean, but I don’t think I should strive to make you understand right now.

He also talks about Buddhist philosophy in this fascicle. According to Buddhism, the origin of suffering is very deep. Originally, we understand that there is some unconditioned being. But when unconditioned being is conditioned, something happens. I don’t know what it is, but something happens. When this unconditioned being makes some movement, it is the beginning of ignorance. When an unconditioned being remains unconditioned, that is wisdom. But when that unconditioned being takes some form or color or movement, that is the beginning of ignorance. Accordingly, that movement will result in suffering or problems. This is quite understandable, I think.

This stage is called the stage of ignorance, or as we say in Japanese,

mumyō.[3] Mumyō means “not clear.” Anyway, this word is not appropriate, and “ignorance” is not appropriate, but conditionality is what we mean by “ignorance.” By “movement,” we mean that unconditioned being is conditioned in terms of color or form. As soon as it takes color or form, it will create some problem. This is the subtle beginning of the problem.

As soon as this conditionality takes place, we have subjectivity of mind, and, at the same time, we have objectivity. Subjective and objective: something that sees and something that is seen. Here we have three stages already. In the first stage, conditionality takes place. The second stage is subjectivity. And the third is objectivity. This kind of functioning of our mind is very subtle. You do not usually realize it.

But the faculties of your mind become more and more clear as they become rough instead of subtle. When the activity of your mind is more vivid, “This is desirable, and that is not desirable,” or “I like this one, but I don’t like that one.” The faculty of your mind is more vivid. And as soon as this kind of dualistic functioning takes place, we will have the idea of the continuity of our mind. That is the first stage of attachment. Actually, your mind is not continuous, but you want what you see to be continuous if it is pretty, if it is good. But if it is bad, you don’t want it to be continuous. If you think what you see is not continuous, that is right. But usually we think our mind is working very well when we have some attachment to something. Actually you are already making a big mistake because you misunderstand your mind as something which is continuous. Our mind is not continuous at all—or it is more than continuous or discontinuous.

As soon as you have the idea of continuity of your mind, you will have some attachment to what you observe, and then you will have terminology—terminological conception. You will start to think in terms of concepts. You put labels on the many conceptions you create, but those conceptions are involved in attachment.

When you study logic, you think you have no attachment. But it is like mathematics. When you actually apply the mathematics in your everyday life, attachment is always involved. Big or small, good or bad, heavy or light—this is not pure mathematics. Pure mathematics is very abstract and doesn't actually exist. But this is a shadow of your attachment, a shadow of your mistake. This is actually true. But you are quite sure about the logical conceptions you have, so your study will create a bigger and bigger ego. Now our ego is pretty big. And as soon as you have some terminological conception, you will put it into action. Now you have to fight with each other. We call this karmic action. "Oh my! What I think should be right. But see what has happened to me. This is awful," you may say. You are creating suffering in this process, according to Buddhism.

This is the third subject Dogen-zenji talks about in this fascicle. First of all, he talks about our eight consciousness, and next about the usual understanding of holy mind or our divine nature, and then he talks about how we make mistakes in our everyday life, starting from ignorance or the subtle movement of our mind.

We say there are three subtle functions and six rough faculties of our mind. The delicate movement of our mind (ignorance),[4] subjectivity, and objectivity are the subtle functions. The rougher functions are dualistic feeling (desirable or undesirable), continuity of our mind, attachment, terminological conception, karmic action, and suffering.

When we suffer, our mind becomes very rough. All the subtle functions of our mind will be lost. This is the last suffering, you know. Next will be peace. We will not survive the next one, so we have no taste of this as the last suffering, the last one. You should not be lost in suffering. That is why we study Buddhism.

So anyway, we have to know that we are turning our face to our own call. You should understand it is all right to listen to me, but you should not turn your ear to your own talk. [You should not be hearing an echo of yourself when you listen to me.][5] Okay?

Source: City Center transcript edited by Brian Fikes. This transcript is a retyping of the existing City Center transcript. It is not verbatim. Entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Reformatted by Bill Redican (5/10/01). The audio tape is not available. Another earlier and more verbatim transcript is available in typed form.

[1] From the first sentence of Shōbōgenzō "Sokushin-zebutsu."

[2] Sanskrit mano-vijñāna. Fikes transcript had manas.

[3] mummyō: mu (Jap. "no"); myō (Jap. "to be clear"); ignorance in a deep sense; ignorance of the true nature of existence (cf. SR-70-07-10).

[4] Words in parentheses are from Fikes version. Some of the parenthetical terms were said by Suzuki-rōshi; others were added by Brian Fikes.

[5] Sentence in brackets was added by Brian Fikes. It is similar to a sentence by Suzuki-roshi in Paragraph 1.

See more at: <http://suzukiroshi.sfzc.org/dharma-talks/august-14th-1967/>