

MODEL SUBJECT NO.82 From The Blue Cliff Records

DAI-RYU'S IMMUTABLE LAW -BODY

Translation and Commentary by Reverend Suzuki

Introductory Word:

Introducing En-go said: Only a man with open eyes knows the catgut line of the fishing rod. Only an advanced mind catches the true idea of the extraordinary procedure. What is the catgut line of the fishing rod and the extraordinary procedure?

Main Subject:

Attention! A monk asked Dai-ryu, "The physical body is disintegrating, but what about the immutable spiritual body?"

Note:

As you may see, this monk is apparently asking a question based on a dualistic idea; an immutable spiritual body and a disintegrating physical body. However, not speaking of Zen experience or pure Enlightenment, according to the Buddhist philosophical canon: every existence has the same essential nature which is spiritual and physical, permanent and impermanent.

The constituents of every existence are supposed to be the five aggregates (skandas): matter (yupa), feeling (vedana), ideas (sanjna), volition and other faculties (samskara), and pure sensation and consciousness (vijñana). Each existence is spiritual as well as material because these constituent elements are sense data itself or the so-called five doors. These elements are not substantial or idealistic, but are pure momentary flushes (of appearance) in the phenomenal world.

Space and time are the same as each existence, and existence can be viewed in two ways: One is as an endlessly changing continuity (in this sense nothing really exists); and the other view is that the world is an eternal moment: each existence manifested in each moment and manifested again in each successive moment. These two views are two sides of one coin, but for this Model Subject let us concentrate on the second view. From this view each momentary existence seems to be independent and disconnected from existence in successive moments. In each moment each existence is perfect and immutable. Although this is true, each existence arises moment after moment contiguous to the existence which came before it and to the one which will come after it and also concurrent with all existences in each moment. Between each successive manifestation of existence there is no connection and yet there is a connection which is in a realm beyond our intelligibility.

This is an intellectual interpretation of the non-duality of duality. Our intellectual desire for the non-duality of duality is really at the same time an absolute desire for attaining the oneness of duality in the pure experience of Zen practice, and our intellectual desire gives rise to right effort (to improve our true Zen life).

However, when the monk asked Dai-ryu, "The physical body is disintegrating, how about the immutable spiritual body?" his intellect was content with an external observation of the world. His practice was probably aimed at the attainment of some psychological state, and was probably not based on the inmost claim of the essential nature of all existence (as we have discussed it).

There is a saying that if you want a true answer and true meaning, don't ask a question which is based on a dualism (some aspect of a dualistic conception of the world). You can not understand the meaning of our existence with dualistic ideas. But when you are through with dualistic conceptions and have attained the non-duality of duality, then you will understand the true meaning of the phenomenal world as well as the immutable Law-Body (Dharma-kaya Buddha).

Dai-ryu knew that if he answered the monk's question in a dualistic form, the monk would not be able to get free of dualistic ideas, and so Dai-ryu turned to an immediate fact of phenomenal beauty.

It might have been a chilly Spring morning when some early bird was singing, that Dai-ryu gave the monk his beautiful answer, that on the hillside the wild-flowers open up like a piece of brocade and down in the ravine the limpid stream never ceases being violet blue.

Appreciatory Word of Set-cho:

Innocent question of an ignorant monk. An accurate answer is given to the point. The moon is cold and the wind is high. Oh the cold cypress trees on the sheer frostbound cliff. Isn't it wonderful not to say anything even though you happen to meet an enlightened master! Dai-ryu held the

white jewelled whip in his hand and broke the pure black horse pearl. If he had not broken the pearl, it would have caused as many crimes as there are sentences in the three thousand clauses of the law of the country. (1)

Note:

The monk's mistake was that he didn't know how to raise his question about the true way. He was asking a question only with his intellect. Dai-ryu's answer was so precisely to the point that there would have been no time for even an alert fellow to make a retort. His answer is said to be like moonlight which passes through pure water to the bottom without disturbance.

Do not say I practice zazen for a certain time, in a certain place and posture. If you have no time to spare for Zen practice, if you have no zendo, or if you lose your legs, what will you do? Zen is the practice of all existence with everything else, stars, moon, sun, mountains, rivers, animate and inanimate beings. Sometimes the pain in our legs practices zazen. Sometimes our sleepy mind practices zazen on a black cushion, on a chair, or even in bed.

Zen practice for the purpose of obtaining a sort of psychological tranquility or joy or power is called Shu-zen, and is not our true zen practice.

Each one of us is an independent existence and yet at the same time not separated from other existences. If you find someone suffering, you will naturally be involved in the suffering. When all sentient beings are in the midst of suffering, how is it possible for you to be free of suffering. However, if only you practice zazen when you are suffering, the suffering mind will practice zen instead of you. In other words, the suffering you have, will drive and help you to attain the singularity of your mind.

On the other hand, if you practice zazen to overcome your suffering, or to keep suffering away from your self, then suffering or the fear of suffering will prevent you from attaining the singularity of mind. We must know that all the difficulties we have are incitements to right zazen, and not obstacles. Even though you can attain the oneness of your mind, this state of mind may be some special psychological tranquility or joy to which you will be attached. Set-cho says such a state of mind is a pure black horse pearl which should be broken by Dai-ryu's white jewelled whip.

Once you attain singularity of Mind, then oneness of mind and body, oneness of the subjective and the objective world, and the oneness of duality is also attained. You accept everything as it is. Everything that exists is your own.

Should you expect some outside help? Should you expect to attain something especially valuable only for you, knowing that it will create anxiety about losing it?

This is why Dai-ryu said, "On the hill mountain flowers are coming out. Down in the ravine indigo pure water is flowing."

In his Appreciatory Word about Dai-ryu's answer, Set-cho quotes Kyo-gen (famous for attaining Enlightenment hearing a stone hit bamboo), "Wonderful not to say anything to an Enlightened master whom you may happen to meet!"