

INSIDE OUT

Lecture by Zentatsu Baker-roshi
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I do not like to be always adding something to your reality, something unnecessary, by asking as we do in Zen—What is your/our reality? However, all religions have some sense of another place where God lives, or another realm of spirit, of seeking, or understanding, some sense of a special state, grace or samadhi, some reference to something unaccountable. Religious people, more than other people, take into consideration the unaccountable. In fact, doing so is very practical and useful. Things do not add up in the long run for people who do not leave some space for the unaccountable.

In religions, especially those from the Near and Far East, it is very common to hear, "Do not seek outside yourself!" But practically speaking, where is this "inside"? Where is this not outside yourself? Commonly we do have some sense of this "inside." We often say, "Inside I feel such and such." But what does it mean?

We are inside this room. But actually there is not too much difference between inside here and outside there, except that the weather is somewhat modified. And outside "there" we are inside the biosphere, inside something. Most of you would say you are inside yourselves. But again, what is inside there? Isn't it just flesh doubled back on itself? A kind of loop. Is inside someplace that we cannot reach, cannot get to, and outside some place we can reach, something accessible? Who is the we who reaches? What is accessibility? Is not everything reached by itself, so everything is already inside? Does accessibility deprive us of insides? Is anything actually accessible to other than itself?

But if you do put two things together something happens by their being together. (When are things not together?) Nagarjuna says that a plus b is not equal to a and b , but rather equals c , a third, something other than the simple sum of the first one and the second one. It is like a good camp or fireplace fire—with the logs together in a certain way you can create a great deal of heat in the spaces between the logs. This heat, or "third," or " c ," is close to what we commonly mean by "inside." So I think we can understand "inside" to mean something that is more or other than the sum of two or more things in a particular conjunction, and something that is not enterable, or something that is privy only to itself. If you can enter, another outside or two insides are created. Is there only one outside—one big outside and many insides? Or is there no outside at all? How do we seek in what is not enterable?

You know the story of Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch, and Shen-hsiu, the head monk under the Fifth Patriarch. The story has been an important teaching for many years, despite the likelihood that it is largely fabrication. Shen-hsiu was requested to demonstrate his understanding with a poem and he wrote the following:

Our body is the Bodhi tree,
Our mind a mirror bright.
By polishing, from dust keep free
And let no more alight.

When Suzuki-roshi was a boy, his teacher told him his mind should be like a mirror, just reflecting each thing as it comes. This is good advice for the beginning stages of practice. Let circumstances speak for themselves. You will be more patient and compassionate. As Dogen said, "To practice and confirm all things by conveying one's self to them is illusion; for all things to advance forward and practice and confirm the self is enlightenment."

You notice that your mirror distorts and obscures things quite a bit, and so you have to polish and clean your mirror in some way. You find that doing certain things leaves you feeling contaminated, uneasy or unclear. And then find by doing zazen you feel purified, washed clean, and through many simple situations learn that we do have to take care of things.

Across the street in the Neighborhood Foundation building there was an apartment of an alcoholic. Employed, he always paid his rent, but seems to have virtually never cleaned his apartment. Because of the health and fire danger the Neighborhood Foundation insisted that he clean it, and finally when he refused, the Neighborhood Foundation volunteered to clean it for him. In the end he seemed unable to face having anyone face his apartment, so he moved. Cleaning the apartment they found that in front of a broken refrigerator he had placed a new one that was already gaggingly full of spoiled food and covered in raised relief with cockroach eggs. He had replaced a couch with another in front of it too. The plaster was so filthy it fell off the walls when it was being cleaned. And under the trash on the floor we found disintegrating rats. What is surprising is that more people do not live this way. It is obvious that if you do not polish your mirror, if you stop washing your face and picking up after yourself, things get very bad quickly. Our state of mind and life can deteriorate rapidly. The mayonnaise-like suspension of our life and culture can degenerate rapidly back into yolk and oil when personal or cultural credibility is gone.

We feel the power of the outside world, the power of the illusion—of the mayonnaise—and the necessity and need to take care of and maintain things at least minimally. But the concept of a mirror is not adequate for these subtleties. The mirror still poses an "outside" and a "who" that wipes it. However, the closer you look at the wiping of the mirror, to the illusion drawn by taking care of ourselves, presenting ourselves, the more the horizon of our imagined singularity recedes. We find ourselves in a world some physicists describe as "participatory reality." Which produces further questions such as: are there gradations of participation, or are we always participating fully beyond choice or intention? Here we have gone beyond the mirror to mutual interdependence, or mutual interpenetration—immersion in the totality of details, in the preciseness and oneness of co-emergent minute reality. So the Sixth Patriarch answers Shen-hsiu with the poem:

—
There is no Bodhi-tree,
Nor mirror to wipe.
With all completely void,
Where can dust alight?

In this poem the mirror itself is eliminated as a kind of dust, and the illusion of a "who" is wiped away.

Let me tell you a story about the priests Tao-wu (Dogo Enchi) and Chien-yuan paying a visit to a house where someone had died. As they came into the house Yuan knocked the coffin and said, "Alive or dead?" Wu answered, "I won't say alive, I won't say dead!" Yuan persisted, "Why won't you say?" Tao-wu answered, "I won't say, I won't say." This is not just a casual question, but a question in which Yuan was investing his own life, as is necessary if we are to realize these fundamental questions. Not knowing what to do, as they were walking home, he chased, or continued to follow Wu's words and said, "Tell me right away, Teacher. If you do not, I'll hit you." Wu said, "You may hit me, but I won't say." There is a commentary at this point that to hit him is like making a notch in a boat to mark where you are in the water. But Yuan felt this question so strongly that he did hit Wu. This proved to be the pivotal question for Yuan and it turned his own investigation and his times with other teachers. Finally he was enlightened by it.

In his introduction to this Blue Cliff Records story, Yuan-wu (Enko) says, "Secure and intimate with the whole of reality, realization occurs right here. In contact with the flow, able to turn it about, you assume responsibility directly." The feeling here is not just that you are in the midst of the flow going with it, accepting it; but that you are so one with it that you are the flow itself. This is to show people a "continuous path in their home territory."

Intellectually it is pretty easy to see that Yuan was caught by the words and ideas, and was unable to let the coffin, and the dead person, speak for itself. He had neither the patience nor the eye to allow circumstances to speak for themselves. This is one sense of the word samadhi, "to receive correctly." Samadhi in this sense means that your mind is not full of assumptions and patterns but is able moment on moment to receive correctly.

Someone reminded me this morning how Catholicism uses, and how Brother David explained, the word obedience as meaning to listen completely. This meaning is contained in its etymology too. For example, because we do not, are unable to listen completely, in most of our political activity we are pushing a goal which has already been accomplished, beating a dead horse that may return to life because we will not leave it alone. The change has already occurred, but we are unable to see it. We do not have the patience to allow the change its own time because we want the change to occur for our anxiety or ego. The initial accurate push is usually made very quickly and only the alert can go on just as quickly to the next action. The mayonnaise, the flow, can be turned, changed very immediately when we realize it is in our own possession, and that all change occurs this way. But it seems to take nine years of wall-gazing, or a century of fumbling to realize that fundamental changes or steps are possible and within our possession.

The same is true with people and every situation; we seldom realize the communication has been received, and we do not understand the person's and situation's own time. We do not realize we have been understood. To understand without even having to acknowledge understanding is to receive correctly

and to obey. We do not like the idea of obedience, and obey has this interesting and common paradoxical turn, of meaning not just the ability to take orders, but also the ability to be responsive, to be free to love, to change the flow.

So although in the story Yuan did not obey actually, he was listening, he was open to move, he did not try to defend himself, he vulnerably chased Wu's words. He made himself a target. This is a kind of obedience, a willingness to go into something.



*Amida Buddha, in the
Buddha Hall of the
San Francisco Center,
80 inches.*

The commentary says that Wu “met an error with an error, baring his heart completely.” It also says, “He buys a hat to fit the head, kind-hearted as an old lady.” Or, “When a dragon exhales, a fog gathers.” And, “The first arrow was light, but the second is deep,” (I won’t say, I won’t say). This is how Chao-chou teaches too, a simple ordinary answer that does not quite pass the time. Yuan was finally enlightened when overhearing a workman in a small temple chanting the Lotus Sutra, “To those who would attain salvation as monks, Buddha appears as a monk to expound the Dharma for them.”

The next related story I want to tell you is about this Chao-chou (Joshu), one of the great Chinese Zen Masters. Although he was famous for his mild and ordinary way of teaching, it is said that his lips flashed light. One day, doing the morning sweeping, a monk said to him, “You are a man of knowledge, where does this dust come from?” Or it could be interpreted, “Why are you not free of dust?” Chou answered, “It comes from outside.” Here you can see his reputation for not setting up a solitary path, but for reaching people in their home territory. Chou just said it comes from outside. Then the monk said, “Why in such a clean and pure monastery, is there dust at all?” Chou answered, “There goes another one.” It seems the mirror and the “outside” are back. What happened to the Sixth Patriarch’s understanding, his pointing out of the void.

Let’s go back to zazen. When you are doing zazen and are able to simply follow your breathing, you will often find the quality of your inner space

Detail of Green Dragon Temple bell (see p. 26).



becomes more open with an increasing clear, permeating, blissful feeling. But then you may become distracted and deeply buried in storyline thinking. Your state of mind will feel neutral or deteriorated and the spacious, intense, connected, and blissful feeling will be gone. It is almost as if that blissful feeling is too much for us. We are scared of it, or scared to relax our guard against the outside world. But then something will come to remind you to return to counting or following your breathing. But then where does that which reminds you come from? In fact, where does the storyline come from? The origin is very elusive. We can at least say the reminding reminded you. The breathing breathed you. Here again there is no mirror, no dust, no origin.

The Perfect Wisdom Sutra puts it, "The nature of all dharmas in its true reality is empty. It does not come nor go; it is not produced nor stopped. It is the same as the reality limit, it is the same as the true nature of Dharma, non-dual, not discriminated, like unto space. Therefore the skandhas, sense-fields, and elements are without self, and have non-existence for their mark. This is the perfection of wisdom which demonstrates to the Bodhisattvas the practice of the ten stages." And Nagarjuna, the outstanding logician of Buddhism, says, "Those of lesser insight who see only the existence and non-existence of things cannot perceive the wonderful quiescence of things."

There is another story about Joshu based on his being named for the city of Joshu. Someone asked Joshu, "Where is the path?" Joshu said, "Outside the wall (or gate)." And then he was questioned again, "I was not asking about that path, where is the Great Way?" Joshu answered, "The main artery runs through the capital." This is the same outside/inside we have been talking about.

Another time Chao-chou was asked, "For a long time I have heard of the famous bridge of Chao-chou city, but now I find only a simple plank foot-bridge." Chou said, "Yes, you see the plank bridge and do not see the stone bridge." This response is to base yourself on the other's question, and the monk climbed on to the hook, "Where is the stone bridge?" Chou said, "Donkeys cross, horses cross."

The Sixth Patriarch is pointing out that everything is inside, that you are already in the inside—there is no mirror, there is no dust, etc. While Joshu is emphasizing that the outside which is already inside is entered by your intention—the inside is entering itself, that entering is a creative or co-emergent activity, privy unto itself. The outside then is a name for the past. The point ascribed to the Sixth Patriarch is the more philosophical or absolute point of view. While Joshu is emphasizing practice—how we enter this inside which cannot be entered from the outside. (Like the problem my Grandfather gave me when I was very young—to get up early enough to see the squigamumzee swallow itself.)

Your hands are separate and joined, from their outside and their inside, and yet we tend not to notice that they are joined, that everything is joined, that your body is one big hand that drooped, or that the universe is a hand that drooped. So it is fundamental to practice to question what separate means, what kind of arrangement boundaries are. Dogen Zenji says that if you examine



everything carefully you will see that everything shares a common life. Sangha is a distillation of this recognition.

This inside of which there is no outside is what Dogen Zenji means in *Zenki* by “inner dynamic activity.” Getting your *mojo* working. At first, we enter in this way. The inner dynamic activity of practice is similar to when the logs of the fire are close enough to generate heat. Nagarjuna says, “Fire is not wood, nor is it in something else than wood. Fire does not contain wood. There is neither wood in fire, nor fire in wood.” He points out that the relationship of any two concepts into a whole, for example fire and wood, entails a mutual denial of each other. He also says, “Nothing can be known apart from entity and non-entity, characterization or characteristics. This is also true of all elements—earth, fire, water, wind, and consciousness.” In other words, he says, through conceptualization into existence and non-existence you can never reach real perception or understanding.

And Dogen says, “Firewood is firewood, and ash, ash; neither can turn back into the other. One should not take the view that it is ashes afterward and firewood before. Firewood is beyond before and after. Firewood and ash both have their own past, present, and future. Dogen also says, “When the Dharma is still not fully realized in man’s body and mind, he thinks it is already sufficient. When the dharma is fully present in his body and mind, he thinks there is some insufficiency. The remaining virtue is always inexhaustible.”

So from your simple breathing practice you begin to notice when your mind deteriorates and when it maintains a pure concentrated state, ready to accept

everything. As your practice matures, in your whole life activity you will begin to see the manifestation of this inner dynamic activity as the matter of everything you do. In Dogen's words, "The total dynamic working is being activated by the manifestation." So you begin to know where the "capital city" is, where donkeys and horses cross.

We begin to have a sense of when the "inside" is there for us in the widest sense, and when we are trying to approach things from outside like Yajnadatta, who thought he had lost his head when he looked into the back side of the mirror. As soon as you shift to seeing things from the outside, you notice again a kind of decay in your state of mind. This is what is meant by seeking things outside yourself, thinking an inclusive outside exists in which you can seek, not recognizing all conception as past. So to be secure and intimate with reality means to be in contact with this inside of which there is no outside. (There is nothing but entrance.) Depending on Buddhism or zazen is to seek outside yourself, to try to make a tile a jewel. But a tile is a tile, a jewel is a jewel. Hsuan-sha said, "The whole universe is one bright pearl." This is a deep understanding of causation. The fertility of two people being able to produce another person, of every joining producing a third. This is the creativity of our intention, of our concentration, of our manifestation of every moment. You yourself cover everything already.

There goes another one.

