

UJI

“Being-time”

AN ancient Buddha¹ once said: “Being-time stands on the highest peak and lies on the bottom of the deepest ocean, being-time is the shape of demons and Buddhas, being-time is a monk’s staff, being-time is a *bossu*, being-time is a round pillar, being-time is a stone lantern, being-time is Taro, being-time is Jiro, being-time is earth, being-time is sky.”²

“Being-time” means that time is being; i.e., “Time is existence, existence is time.” The shape of a Buddha statue is time. Time is the radiant nature of each moment; it is momentary, everyday time in the present. Even though we have not calculated the length of day by ourselves, there is no doubt that a day contains twenty-four hours. The changing of time is clear so there is no reason to doubt it; but this does not mean that we know exactly what time is. Generally speaking, when someone doubts something he does not understand completely, it remains uncertain until it is resolved later on; by then, the doubts are different. The doubts themselves in each case are shaped by time.

All things exist in ourselves. Every thing, every being in this entire world is time. No object obstructs or opposes any other object, nor can time ever obstruct any other time. Therefore, if we have the resolve to attain supreme enlightenment the entire world will also be seen to possess that resolve at the same time. Here, there is no difference between your mind and time; you are related through the resolve for enlightenment. It is the same for practice and attainment of the Way.

The entire world is included in ourselves. This is the principle “We, ourselves, are time.” Study the principle that everything in the world is time. Each instant covers the entire world. If we can comprehend this, it will be the beginning of

¹ Zen Master Yakusan Igen (Yueshan d. 834).

² A *bossu* is a fly whisk; Taro and Jiro are very common Japanese names—like “Tom, Dick, and Harry.”

practice and enlightenment. When we attain this level, we have clear understanding of the significance of each and every practice: one blade of grass, every single object, each living thing is inseparable from time. Time includes every being and all worlds.

Ordinary people, unlearned in Buddhism, think that being-time sometimes takes the form of a demon, sometimes the form of Buddha. It is like the difference between living in a valley and then wading through a river and climbing a mountain to reach a palace. That is, the mountain and river are things of the past, left far behind and have no relation to living in the present. They are as separate as heaven is from earth.

This is not true, however; when you cross the river or climb the mountain, you are [time]. We cannot be separated from time. This means that because, in reality, there is no coming or going in time, when we cross the river or climb the mountain we exist in the eternal present of time; this time includes all past and present time. Crossing the river, climbing the mountain, living in the palace exist together, interrelated, in being-time. Demons and Buddhas are yesterday's time, a tall Buddha image is today's. Yesterday's time is experienced in our present existence. It appears to be passing but the past is always contained in the present. Like this, the pine tree is time, the bamboo is also time.

Do not think of time as merely flying by; do not only study the fleeting aspect of time. If time is really flying away, there would be a separation between time and ourselves. If you think that time is just a passing phenomenon, you will never understand being-time. The central meaning of being-time is: every being in the entire world is related to each other and can never be separated from time. Being is time and therefore it is my own true time. However, there is movement of time in the sense of moving from today to tomorrow, from today to yesterday, from yesterday to today, from today to today, from tomorrow to tomorrow. This movement is the characteristic of time and the past and present cannot be duplicated [i.e., independent and not overlapping]. But the master Seigen is time, Ōbaku is time, Kōsei is time, Sekitō is time. Since we are in being-time, practice and enlightenment are also being-time. The difficult task of teaching others is, again, being-time.

Because the thinking of unenlightened people is not based on proper understanding of being-time they cannot discover the True Law. The True Law is within themselves but they do not realize it. Their ignorance of the Law causes them to transmigrate. Furthermore, such people think that the True Law is not in present time or within themselves and convince themselves that there is not even a possibility of any kind of eternal, perfect law. However, even this very

limited view is also one part of being-time. People who think they are unenlightened must know this.

For example, we can calculate time as *Uma no koku* [11:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.], *Hitsuji no koku* [1:00 p.m.—3:00 p.m.], *Ne* [11:00 p.m.—1:00 a.m.] or *Tora* [3:00 a.m.—5:00 a.m.]; but all these are only independent, instantaneous moments of being-time.

Both enlightened and unenlightened people are being-time. Demons and Buddhas are being-time. Indeed, being-time covers everything. It is pure Being; in it resolve, practice, enlightenment and detachment are acting, i.e., not different from being-time. The eternal present includes limitless space; there is nothing beside this.

Even if you make a false step, or lose your way temporarily you are still rooted in being-time because before and after you have lost your way, you are in, of course, being-time. Every living thing is rooted in pure, original Being. Do not think, however, that being is a stable concept; being encompasses all temporary lapses. Most people think time is passing and do not realize that there is an aspect that is not passing. To realize this is to comprehend being; not to realize this is also being [Both realization and ignorance are contained in being-time.]

However, if you do not understand being-time, you can never be truly detached. Even though you think you know exactly what you are, it is very difficult to have real understanding of oneself. Your self-conception continually changes as you discover more and more about your Real Self. If you have complete understanding then even the ideas of the wisdom of enlightenment or the status of detachment will be seen for what they are—tentative and delusive.

Remember, however, that being-time is not dependent on ideas; it is the actualization of being. Heavenly beings like gods and celestials are in being-time. All the things in the water or on the land are being-time. The world of life and death and everything in them is being-time; it continually exists, actualizing itself in your present experience. Everything exists in the present within yourself.

Continuous existence is not like the rain blown by the wind east and west. Continuous existence is the entire world acting through itself. Consider this illustration: When it is spring in one area, it is spring everywhere in the surrounding area. Spring covers the entire area. Spring is only spring; it does not presuppose winter or summer. It is the actualization of the wind and sunshine of spring. Continuous existence is like this. But continuous existence is not spring; rather, the continuous existence of spring is spring.

If we fail to study Buddhism earnestly we will think that continuous existence

is located far away and things chase after it, and it keeps changing over long periods of time.

For some reason, Great Master Sekitō Musai made Master Yakusan Kōdō visit Zen Master Daijaku. Yakusan asked Daijaku, "I have learned the contents of the three vehicles and the twelve schools but I do not know the spirit behind the sūtras. Please tell me why Bodhidharma came from the west." Yakusan replied, "Sometimes we raise our eyebrows and blink, sometimes we don't." When Yakusan heard this answer he had great enlightenment and said, "When I studied under Zen Master Sekitō I could not understand at all. I was like a mosquito trying to bite an iron cow."³

Daijaku's sayings are very different from other people's. Here, eye and eyebrow symbolize mountain and ocean because enlightened people are in harmony with nature. If they raise their eyebrows they see a mountain, if they blink they may learn about the ocean. They possess the truth. But do not think that actions are important; whether you raise your eyebrows or not is not related to the truth.

The real meaning is always in being-time. Mountain is time, ocean is time. Mountain and ocean exist only in the present. If time is destroyed, mountain and river are also destroyed. From this standpoint, morning stars, Buddhas, the wisdom of enlightenment, and the transmission from mind to mind are enlivened by being-time. No being-time, and none of these things could occur.

One day Zen Master Kisei of Sekken⁴—the direct descendent of the Rinzai Zen sect and transmitter of Shūzan's teaching—told his monks, "Sometimes mind surpasses words. Sometimes words surpass the mind. Sometimes mind and words surpass themselves. Sometimes they do not surpass themselves." Mind and words are in being-time. Surpass and not surpass are also being-time. Coming-time is not coming; not coming-time has already come. It is like a donkey and horse: mind does not leave and words have already come; mind has already come and words cannot leave. Coming does not come from outside, not-coming has not yet come. Being-time is like this. Coming or not-coming should only be thought of as coming or not-coming. Think of mind as only mind and words as only words. They are the function of being-time.

The total penetration of being-time can only be accomplished in ourselves. Total penetration of being-time is complete activity. It is like the following

³ *Rentōeyō*, chapter nineteen. Daijaku is Baso (Ma-tsu).

⁴ Shê-hsüang, dates unknown.

example: When I go out to meet someone I meet him as another person, as a fellow human being and finally as someone possessing the same essence as myself. This is natural activity. If any of these are separated from being-time they could not exist. From the standpoint of practice, when we say "mind" is being-time, it is the occasion for the Buddhist Way to appear; "word" is the time to open the door of enlightenment. Coming-time is detachment; not coming-time is neither attachment nor detachment. If we recognize this we can find being-time.

The previous sayings are the words of Buddhas; the following is also very important: "Mind and words are between coming and going, not-coming and not-going; and they are also being-time." Clear understanding of this is essential. Raising the eyebrows or blinking the eyes is only half being-time or even an illusion of being-time. The beginning of study, the completion of study, the actualization of study and even not studying are being-time.

This was written during November, 1240 at Kōshōhōrinji and recopied by Ejō during the summer training period of 1243.