

The Zen Critique of Pure Land Buddhism

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PROFESSOR WINSTON L. KING has recently noted that in the western world, Pure Land Buddhist tradition (Jōdo-shū and Jōdo-Shinshū) has often been viewed as standing in direct opposition to Zen Buddhism's teaching of "self-effort"¹ because of its stress on "other-power"² as the prerequisite for salvation.³ Indeed, in China both traditions were found within the same monastery representing somewhat different patterns of discipline and meditative practice.⁴ Even in Japan during the twelfth century, when rather sharp divisions developed between the Pure Land tradition and the older Japanese schools of Buddhism because of Hōnen's and Shinran's revolutionary emphasis upon *nembutsu*⁵ and faith as the unique and ultimately only means of salvation

¹ *Jiriki* in Japanese. As used within the Pure Land tradition, *jiriki* is a technical term which refers to all schools of Buddhism other than Pure Land schools which teach the necessity of self-effort—religious and mental discipline and moral perfection—as the prerequisite for "salvation." Cf. Ui Hakuju (ed.) *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary* (Tōkyō: Daitō Shuppansha, 1965), p. 138.

² *Tariki* in Japanese. Both Hōnen Shōnin (1133-1212) and Shinran Shōnin (1173-1258), the founders of Jōdo-shū and Jōdo Shinshū respectively, used this term to refer to their own specific teachings. Basically, *tariki* stands for total non-reliance upon one's own efforts in the attainment of "salvation," within the context of the Pure Land tradition meaning "rebirth into the Pure Land" (*ōjō*). Thus, *tariki* is the total self-surrender of the individual to the objective "other-power" of Amida Buddha to effect one's rebirth into the Pure Land. I have argued elsewhere that *tariki*, as used by Shinran in his soteriology, is in many ways equivalent to what Martin Luther called "grace." See my article "Shinran Shōnin and Martin Luther: A Soteriological Comparison," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, xxxix/4 (December 1971), 430-447. Also Cf. Ui, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

³ Cf. Winston L. King, "A Zen Critique-Interpretation of Pure Land Practice and Experience (Hakuin Zenji, 1685-1768)," (unpublished paper delivered at the national meeting of the American Academy of Religion at Atlanta, Georgia, 1971). Professor King's paper is included in the section papers *Asian Religions, 1971* (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania: The American Academy of Religion, 1971), pp. 45-64.

⁴ Cf. Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 53-77 and Sir Charles Eliot, *Japanese Buddhism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1964), pp. 156, 303 ff.

⁵ The whole kernel of Hōnen's doctrine of salvation rests upon the recitation over and over again throughout one's life of the phrase *namu amida butsu*, "I put my faith in Amida

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available to men living in the age of *mappō*,⁶ Pure Land's relation with Zen was not one of sharp conflict, although it was one of sharp doctrinal contrast. Throughout the histories of Pure Land and Zen in China and Japan, teachers in both traditions took note of the similarities and differences in doctrine and discipline. These differences were regarded to be serious enough to seek some kind of rapprochement and synthesis. This paper will be concerned with the traditional Zen critique of Pure Land and its resulting attempt at rapprochement and synthesis of Pure Land teaching according to its own Buddhist philosophy. The thesis of this paper is that Zen has traditionally read its presuppositions into the Pure Land tradition so as to synthesize Pure Land teachings with its own. This is, in effect, a rejection of Pure Land Buddhism as practiced and understood by Pure Land teachers and devotees. At the same time it is a remolding of traditional Pure Land doctrine and practice according to Zen presuppositions which has the effect of transforming Pure Land into an "inferior" form of Zen. To demonstrate this thesis we shall first investigate the critique and evaluation of Pure Land Buddhism of the late Tokugawa Period Rinzai Zen master Hakuin Zenji, whose evaluations of Pure Land tradition in his *Orategama* and *Orategama Zokushū* are a kind of paradigmatic model for the evaluation of Pure Land tradition by such contemporary Zen teachers as D. T. Suzuki, Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, and Abe Masao. Accordingly, after investigating the critique of Pure Land by Hakuin Zenji we shall see how his evaluations are more or less repeated in the writings of the above named contemporary Zen teachers and philosophers.

(Amitābha) Buddha." It is this practice that is called *numbutsu*, the purpose of which is to help a man gain the necessary faith in Amida Buddha's efforts to save him, and at the same time strengthen what faith, primarily defined in terms of "intellectual acceptance of a doctrine," a man already has. See Hōnen's *Senchakushū* in *Shinshū Shogyō Zenshō*, vol. 1 (Kyōto: Oyogi Kobendō and Kōkyō Shoin, 1958), pp. 942-943, 992. All further references to this work will be abbreviated SSZ. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Pure Land sources used in this paper will be mine.

⁶The third of three periods of gradual decay and decline of the effectiveness of Gautama the Buddha's teachings (*dharmā*) from his death to the present. These three periods of history are, in Japanese (1) *shōbō*, the period of "correct doctrine," lasting for five hundred years from the time of Gautama the Buddha's death, (2) *zōbō*, the period of "counterfeit doctrine," lasting for the next one thousand years, and (3) *mappō*, the "latter days of the law," which is the period of final decay and termination of the effectiveness of the Buddha's teachings, lasting for ten thousand years. The presupposition of this theory of history is that the period into which one is born determines one's physical, mental, spiritual, and moral capacities. Thus, no one born during the age of *mappō* is able to save himself by means of the traditional Buddhist disciplines of self-effort, such as meditation, scholarly study of the sūtras, and moral perfection. This is because all men born during the age of *mappō* have been totally corrupted by the very fact of having been born into this age. Several Mahāyāna sūtras concern themselves with this theory, for example, the *Mahākāraṇika-sūtra*, the *Kumāratana-pratisarṇa-sūtra*, and the *Karunā-pundarīka-sūtra*. This theory is also found in the *Lotus Sūtra*. See H. Kern (trans.), *The Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra* in vol. 21 of *The Sacred Books of the East*, ed. Max Müller (50 vols: At the Clarendon Press, 1894). The Sanskrit terms for these three periods are: *saddharma*, *pratirūpadharma*, and *paścimadharmā*.

Hakuin Zenji. Hakuin makes his appearance in the mid-Tokugawa Period (1686-1769).⁷ He is known as the "receiver" of Rinzai Zen tradition in Japan. He was in the tradition of the classical T'ang and Sung Chinese masters, and this tradition, which he in turn handed down to his disciples, is still preserved in contemporary Rinzai Zen monasteries. He was the synthesizer of the *kōan* discipline that is so important to Rinzai tradition. Fundamentally, his teachings were a return to the emphasis upon the strict *kōan* meditation of the Southern School of Tang and Sung times in China. However, he added new elements of his own to this discipline. For example, the *kōan* "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" originated with him, and is still one of the primary introductory *kōan* given to those just beginning their practice of Zen. In this way, Hakuin grounded himself in the Southern School of Chinese Ch'an (Zen) while at the same time adding elements of his own so as to create a kind of Zen suitable to the culture and temperament of the Japanese.⁸

In evaluating Hakuin's critique of the Pure Land tradition, we must keep in mind that he in all probability was familiar only with the Jōdo tradition of Hōnen Shōnin, and that he possessed very little, if any, knowledge of the Jōdo Shinshū (True Pure Land) teachings of Shinran Shōnin. In fact, he does not even mention Shinran in his writings. Consequently, when Hakuin spoke of the *nembutsu* of the Pure Land School, he was specifically referring to the teachings of Hōnen and the school founded by him. He apparently had no acquaintance with Shinran's interpretation of *nembutsu* or with his doctrine of faith.

Hakuin's Zen is a discipline of strenuous self-effort. In order to experience the personal "awakening" which Zen calls *satori* (enlightenment), the practitioner of Zen must possess three basic qualities: an overriding faith in one's own abilities and the instruction of one's master, a "Great Doubt" when confronting a *kōan*, and a strong-willed aspiration and perseverance.⁹ The only task of the student seeking enlightenment is to "see into his own nature" (*kenshō*) and the continual life-long deepening of this initial *satori* experience. To this end, Hakuin championed "active meditation" on *kōan*, specifically the *mu kōan*, and

⁷ The biographical details of Hakuin's life are well known, but are based largely upon his own works, in many of which he gave detailed descriptions of his career. His disciple, Tōrei Engi (1721-1797), used much of this material in compiling Hakuin's biography. Hakuin's own autobiography appears in his *Itsu Made gusa, Orategama*, and other works. For a critical edition of Tōrei's *Hakuin nempu* see Kikugawa Taiin, *Kōshō Hakuin osbō shōden* (Tokyo: 1963), pp. 443-564. For a brief summary of Hakuin's biography see Heinrich Dumoulin, *A History of Zen Buddhism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 242-268.

⁸ Hakuin was a voluminous writer as well as a poet and artist. The writings which shall concern us here are those which contain his evaluations of Pure Land tradition, mainly his *Orategama* and *Orategama Zokushū*. The exact meaning of *Orategama* is not clear. It is the name of Hakuin's favorite tea kettle. All references to these and other of Hakuin's works cited in this paper will be from Philip B. Yampolsky's excellent translation *The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971).

later in his life the *sekishu no onjō* (sound of one hand clapping) *kōan*.¹⁰ Each *kōan* is to be "solved" by disciplined "active" *zazen* (meditation), accompanied by periodic interviews with the Master (*sanzen*), during which time the Master gives guidance and eventually sanction to the student's understanding of a particular *kōan*. Once initial *satori*, called *kenshō*, has occurred, the student must go on in further "active" meditation on other *kōan* in order to deepen this initial enlightenment experience. This unremitting discipline is a life-long affair for both student and Master.

However, in spite of the fact that we know something of the content of Hakuin's *kōan* discipline, the exact details of his teaching system are not clearly known. Evidently he tailored this basic system to suit the capacities and abilities of each monk under his care. It is also evident that progress in the discipline as such required a progression through a specified series of *kōan*. As the student's depth of understanding progressed, new *kōan* were added to his program of study. *Kōan* investigated at an earlier stage might also be re-investigated again at a more mature stage of development. Finally, those few who had the physical, moral, and spiritual stamina to survive this program were sanctioned as teachers and/or masters (*rōshi*).

In addition to *kōan* meditation, the student was required by Hakuin to live within a strictly regimented monastic community free from all worldly concern, although he recognized that some laymen might be able to experience *satori* outside of the monastery.¹¹ Monastic life under Hakuin was an extremely regulated and disciplined affair, an important feature of which was the work period in which temple buildings and grounds were cared for, food grown, and other tasks of physical labor accomplished.¹² Physical labor, as Hakuin conceived it, was part of the *kōan* discipline, for during such labor one was to meditate on his particular *kōan*. In regard to this kind of "active meditation" he once said:

I am not trying to tell you to discard completely quietistic meditation and to seek specifically for a place of activity in which to carry out your practice. What is most worthy of respect is a pure *kōan* meditation that neither knows nor is conscious of the two aspects, the quiet and the active. This is why it has been said that the true practicing monk does not know he is walking, sits but does not know he is sitting. . . . For penetrating to the depths of one's own true self-nature, and for attaining a vitality valid on all occasions, nothing can surpass meditation in the midst of activity.¹³

¹⁰ The *mu kōan* is as follows: Chao Chou was asked, "Does a dog have the Buddha Nature? Chao Chou's reply was *mu*, literally "no." If the student's assigned *kōan* is *mu*, he is told to meditate only on *mu* and to present his resulting understanding of why Chao Chou answered *mu* to the question whether or not a dog has the Buddha Nature (the general Mahāyāna doctrine is that all things contain Buddha Nature) in some non-intellectualized symbolic way. Hakuin expounded on the virtue of this *kōan* and the "sound of one hand clapping" *kōan* in his *Yabukōji*, pp. 163 ff.

¹¹ *Orai-gansa* I, pp. 66-71.

¹² Hakuin took Pai-chang's (749-814) admonition, "A day of no work is a day of no eating," very seriously. Pai-chang is traditionally considered to be the founder of the *zendō* (meditation hall) tradition.

In other words, meditation on the *kōan* must be at the center of all of one's activities, and is not just an affair that occurs during the time one is seated in the meditation hall (*zendo*).

Hakuin was also interested in the religious life of the common man. This is indicated by the large number of verses, in imitation of the popular songs of his time, that he composed in order to teach basic Buddhist morality and piety to uneducated laymen. One kind of "popular practice" which he advocated for both common man and samurai was the recitation of the *Emmei jikku kannongyō*, or "The Ten Phrase Kannon Sūtra for Prolonging Life."¹⁴ He championed this sūtra of fifty-two characters and ten verses for the power it possessed to bring about miracles. In fact, he was fond of telling stories of the *inga monogatari* type ("cause and effect tales") concerning how recitation of this sūtra resulted in miracles such as escape at the last second from the executioner's sword, the wrath of an irate feudal lord, and the curing of mental and physical diseases,¹⁵ including his own "Zen sickness."¹⁶ What is surprising about Hakuin at this point is that he seems to be advocating a practice quite similar to the popular understanding of *nembutsu*, which is a good deal different from the *nembutsu* teaching advocated by Hōnen and Shinran.

The whole kernel of Hōnen's teaching is contained in the repetition of *nembutsu* in the faith that by so repeating over and over again the phrase *namu amida butsu* one will be released from rebirth into the phenomenal world of suffering and pain, and be reborn in Amida's Pure Land. This is because, he taught, the eighteenth vow of the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha* promised that Amida will cause any man's rebirth into the Pure Land if he calls upon Amida in faith only one time.¹⁷ The practice of *nembutsu* is thus a sign that a man has faith in Amida Buddha, as well as a means by which to deepen what faith a man already has. "Faith" in this context means "trust in the promises of Amida's vows," especially the eighteenth vow, the so-called "original vow" (*bongan*). It should be noted that nembutsu is still a "work" which a man must do to attain salvation in the age of mappō. It should also be noted that Hōnen never denied that the practice of *nembutsu* might result in miracles of the type Hakuin discussed concerning the recitation of the *Emmei jikku kannongyō*. However, he thought these miracles were not very important.

The essential difference between Hōnen and Shinran is that for the latter nothing a man does during the age of *mappō*, including chanting *nembutsu*, can effect his salvation. Hōnen had said the same thing, but Shinran was more consistent with this presupposition than was Hōnen. Man in the age of *mappō* is totally incapable of doing anything worthy of salvation. Therefore,

¹⁴ *Heibichigo* I, pp. 185 ff.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-214.

¹⁶ *Orasigama* II, pp. 75-86.

¹⁷ Cf. *Senchakushū* SSZ I, pp. 939-942, 947-948. Also see Fujimoto Ryukyo, "Hōnen and his Doctrine of the Pure Land," *Journal of Ryukoku University*, no. 345 (December 1952), pp. 22-44.

"faith" is essentially trust in Amida and non-trust in all human effort in the process of salvation. *Nembutsu*, accordingly, is merely an expression of gratitude which a man may or may not utter for the salvation which Amida has freely given to him. It is not a "work" which merits salvation.¹⁸

In any case, Hakuin was quite specific in his denunciation of the practice of any sort of recitation by those who had chosen to undertake Zen discipline for the purpose of gaining *satori*. The miracles that are caused by chanting the *Emmei jikkū kannongyō* are only worldly effects which have nothing to do with final enlightenment, which can only be obtained through the strict discipline of *kōan* meditation.¹⁹

This leads us directly to Hakuin's critique of *Jōdo-shū*. Throughout his critique runs the theme that Pure Land doctrines and practices are suitable only for persons of inferior and mediocre mental, physical, and moral capacities. His main argument is that traditional Buddhism rejects the concept that it is possible to attain enlightenment by relying on the "other power" of anyone or anything, be this a god, *bodhisattva*, or the historical Buddha. Ultimately, all men are utterly alone in the quest for salvation. Each person must reach *his* enlightenment in terms of who *he* is. All anyone can do for another man is to point the way that leads to the goal. But all men walk to the goal alone and no man reaches the goal without the rigorous self-discipline of meditation. Hakuin's point is that

... the quality of the accomplishment depends upon the degree of perseverance. If in your meditation you have the vitality of a single man fighting ten thousand, what is there to choose between being a monk and being a layman? If you say that seeing the way can only be accomplished by monks, does this mean that all hope is lost for parents among the commoners, for those in service to others, for children? Even if you are a monk, if your practice of the Way is not intense, if your aspiration is not pure, how are you different from a layman? Again, even if you are a layman, if your aspiration is intense and your conduct wise, why is this any different from being a monk?²⁰

Therefore, "true meditation," that is, making "... everything: coughing, swallowing, waving the arms, motion, stillness, words, action, the evil and the good, prosperity and shame, gain and loss, right and wrong, into one single *kōan* ..." is the only way of "seeing into one's true nature."²¹ For Hakuin, nothing else is possible or necessary for the attainment of enlightenment.

Hakuin was also highly critical of the theory of *mappō*, the foundation upon which rests the entire structure of both Hōnen's and Shinran's teachings. According to this theory, man is now living in the third, most degenerate stage of the historical process, an idea similar to the *kali yuga* of Hindu tradition and the Iron Age of Greek tradition. Accordingly, no man is capable of saving

¹⁸ *Kyōgyōshinshō*, SSZ II, pp. 106-107, 118-119; *Songō Shinzō Meimon*, *ibid.*, pp. 579-580.

¹⁹ *Orategama Zokushū*, pp. 147-148.

²⁰ *Orategama* I, p. 57.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 58.

himself by means of the traditional Buddhist disciplines of moral perfection, meditation, scholarly study of the sūtras, or various forms of cultic activity. The reason for this is that the Buddha's *dharmā* has reached its final stage and has "run down," so that man's physical, mental, moral, and spiritual capacities are now totally corrupted by the very fact that he now lives in this age. Thus, no man is capable of attaining enlightenment by means of the traditional disciplines of Buddhism, all of which rely upon self-effort for their effectiveness.²²

Hakuin's criticism of this theory was that it made it too easy for men not to take the responsibility for their lives that he believed was so necessary for enlightenment. The theory too easily led men to groveling in self-pity over their seeming inability to obtain enlightenment. It made it too easy for men to make excuses for their failures. Besides this, it tended to make men give up seeking enlightenment by the very fact that it taught that enlightenment was now impossible in this degenerate age. Therefore, the theory did not lend itself to helping man realize his potential as man simply because it taught that man had no potential to begin with in this age of history.²³ For Hakuin, the theory of *mappō* was simply too pessimistic about the nature of man. Thus, even though he was willing to admit that the present age was indeed the age of *mappō*, he believed that enlightenment was still possible only through rigorous self-discipline. In a letter to a nun of the Hokke (Lotus) School, he made the following comment:

Although the world is in a degenerate age, the Law itself is not degenerate. If you take the world as degenerate and cast it away without looking back, you will be like someone who enters a treasure mountain, yet suffers from hunger and cold. Do not fear that because this is a degenerate age enlightenment cannot be accomplished.²⁴

Therefore, while Hakuin did not deny that the present age is the age of *mappō*, he did affirm that enlightenment was still possible and could only be accomplished through the intensive self-effort and discipline of "seeing into one's own nature," for "There is no Buddha or patriarch in the three periods and the ten directions who has not seen into his own nature."²⁵ Even though it may be extremely difficult in the age of *mappō* to successfully realize enlightenment through *kōan* meditation, it has always been difficult in all ages of history. It has never been impossible.²⁶

At this point it might be interesting to take up Hakuin's comments on the

²² For a fuller explanation of Hōnen's and Shinran's interpretation of the *mappō* theory, see *Senchakushū*, SSZ I, pp. 956-959, 972-979 and *Kyōgyōshinshō*, SSZ II, pp. 166, 496. Shinran essentially follows Hōnen's interpretation of the *mappō* theory. Also see Masatoshi Doi, "The Buddhist Interpretation of History," *Studies in Christian Religion*, vol. 30, no. 1 (July 1958), pp. 59-66 and Eliot, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-187.

²³ *Orategama III*, pp. 99 FF.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

superiority of the *kōan* discipline to *nembutsu*, the main concern of his *Orategama Zokushū*. He begins his discussion with the analogy that killing a man with either a sword or a spear is equally efficient if the wielder of either weapon is skillful and disciplined in their use. But a man not skillful in the use of a sword but in the use of a spear ought to use a spear.²⁷ The point of this analogy is that both *kōan* and *nembutsu* may lead to the same goal, enlightenment, if the practitioner of either is "skillful" and dedicated in their use. There are many ways to enlightenment, all of which are valid if the devotee pursues *his* way with total commitment, self-discipline, and perseverance. No discipline, *kōan* or *nembutsu*, in and of itself is superior to another. The result gained by either is dependent upon the "skill" of the practitioner.²⁸ On the other hand, no discipline will lead to enlightenment without full and total dedication, effort, courage, and "skill."²⁹

It is at this point that Hakuin offered his definition of the Pure Land term for "salvation" (*ōjō*).³⁰

What is salvation (*ōjō*)? It all comes down to one thing—seeing into your own nature. . . . Is it not the innate self-nature with which you yourself are endowed, standing bright before your very eyes? If you have not seen into your own nature it will not be easy for you to see this Pure Land. Yet nowadays those who practice the Pure Land teaching recite the name daily a thousand times, ten thousand times, a million times, but not one of them has determined the Great Matter of salvation.³¹

It is clear that Hakuin has in effect redefined the Pure Land conception of *ōjō* in terms of the Zen idea of salvation as "seeing into one's own nature," thus implicitly denying that the Pure Land notion of salvation has any truth or merit. It is certain that Hōnen's notion of salvation was not "seeing into one's own nature," for this is exactly what is impossible for a man to do in the age of *mappō*. The same notion is found in Shinran definition of *ōjō*.

²⁷ *Orategama Zokushū*, pp. 121-127.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

³⁰ Both Hōnen and Shinran used *ōjō* as a technical term to denote "rebirth into the Pure Land." The literal meaning of this term is "death." When one has been granted *ōjō* by Amida Buddha, one has "died" to the phenomenal world of birth, suffering, death, and rebirth at the death of the physical body. Thus *ōjō* is that kind of death that causes rebirth into the Pure Land. Hōnen did not identify *ōjō* with final salvation, defined as *nirvana* in general Buddhist tradition. Rather, he considered *ōjō* as a preparatory stage leading to final enlightenment. In other words, when one obtains *ōjō*, one is reborn into Amida Buddha's Pure Land in a perfect physical, mental, and moral condition. Then one is able to perfectly hear and understand the correct *dharma*, as taught by Amida himself, perfectly practice it, and from the Pure Land achieve the final liberation that is *nirvana*. On the other hand, Shinran identified *ōjō* with *nirvana* in that he taught that beings reborn into the Pure Land are reborn there as perfectly enlightened beings. Compare *Sanchakushū*, SSZ I, p. 990 and *Kyōgyōshinsō*, SSZ II, pp. 106-107. Also Cf. Kaneko Daiei, "The Meaning of Salvation in the Doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism," *The Eastern Buddhist, New Series*, vol 1 (September 1965), pp. 48-63.

Hakuin's redefinition of the Pure Land notion of salvation in terms of the Zen notion enlightenment is illustrated by the following *mondo* or Zen story in which he relates how a Pure Land monk used the *nembutsu* as a means of "seeing into his own nature," thereby obtaining *ōjō*. A Pure Land monk once visited the old Obaku Zen master Dokutan and had the following conversation:

Dokutan asked: "From what province do you come?"

Enjo replied: "From Yamashiro."

Dokutan asked: "To what sect do you belong?"

"The Pure Land," Enjo replied.

Dokutan asked: "How old is Amida Buddha?"

Enjo replied: "The same age as I."

"And how old are you?" Dokutan continued.

"The same as Amida," Enjo replied.

Then Dokutan asked: "Then where are you right at this moment?"

Enjo clenched his left hand and raised it a little. Dokutan was startled. "You are really a true practitioner of the Pure Land doctrine," he added.³²

This *mondo* is only one of Hakuin's ways of stressing the need for self-effort and meditational discipline as the prerequisite for enlightenment, which he always defined as "seeing into one's nature." The foundation of *kōan* or *nembutsu* is always *jiriki*.³³ Hakuin's point is that any discipline is merely a tool to help man "see into his own nature." As such, one tool is as good as another since all are fundamentally exercises in self-effort (*jiriki*).³⁴ Thus, it ultimately does not matter which tool a man uses to attain enlightenment.³⁵ However, all of this is highly qualified by Hakuin's statement that:

... if you imitate the custom of today by depending upon the power of the Buddha while alive, and hoping to go to the Western Land after you have died, then throughout your whole life you will never be able to achieve *samādhi* and will never be able to determine your salvation. How much less so will you be able to achieve the Great Matter of seeing into your own nature.³⁶

Thus far, we have seen that Hakuin was opposed to traditional Pure Land teaching at three points: (1) the Pure Land understanding of the theory of *mappō*, (2) the Pure Land teaching that salvation can only be effected through *nembutsu*, the foundation of which is the "other-power" (*tariki*) of Amida Buddha (Hōnen's teaching), and (3) the Pure Land notion of *ōjō*, which he rejected by the very fact that he redefined it according to the Zen notion of "seeing into one's own nature."

The third point is clearly evident in Hakuin's readiness to admit that all of the Pure Land "saints"—he specifically mentioned Genshin, Hōnen, and Rennyō

³² *Orategama Zokushū*, pp. 129-130.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 132-133.

Shōnin—were enlightened because they "saw into their own natures" by means of *kōan* meditation. He believed that these Pure Land "saints" in fact did not rely on the "other-power" of Amida Buddha, but upon their own self-effort through the use of *nembutsu* as a meditational discipline. Hakuin believed that *nembutsu* actually functioned for these Pure Land teachers the same way the *kōan* functions for the Zen devotee. None of the "Pure Land Saints" would have accepted this interpretation.²⁷

Ultimately, however, Hakuin believed that the *kōan* discipline was much superior to the Pure Land *nembutsu*, which he regarded as merely an "expedient means" (*upāya*) to be used mostly by ignorant men of inferior abilities. Chanting *nembutsu* may result in miracles of the sort obtained by chanting the *Emmei jikku kannongyō*, but only a few exceptional men like Genshin and Hōnen had even a partial glimpse of enlightenment by means of this method, and only then because *nembutsu* functioned in ways similar to the *kōan*.²⁸ It is precisely because *nembutsu* must be practiced in ways similar to *kōan* meditation that *kōan* as such is superior to *nembutsu*. This in turn is the reason that one should never combine the two disciplines together, as is done in Ōbaku Zen, a tradition which Hakuin totally rejected.²⁹

Apparently Hakuin felt that combining a superior teaching and discipline with an inferior one resulted in the weakening of both. His position at this point is made clear in the following statement:

If you discard the *Mu* koan and, by intoning the name of the Buddha with the power of concentrated recitation of the Buddha's name you can make clear your own nature and penetrate at once to the bones and marrow of the Buddha's and Patriarchs, then this is fine. Even if you cannot see into your own nature clearly, by the power of the calling of the name you will without fail be reborn in Paradise. But if what you are really trying to do is to clearly accomplish both things at the same time, then by all means discard at once the practice of calling the Buddha's name and take up in purity the *Mu* koan. Why do I say this? It is because some two hundred years ago evil and careless Zen followers decimated the Zen monasteries and corrupted the true style of Zen, spreading vulgar and debased heretical understanding.³⁰

The nub of Hakuin's objection to *nembutsu*, as well as his objection to combining *kōan* meditation with *nembutsu*, was that it is ineffective in materializing the experience of "Great Doubt," which he and traditional Zen regarded as essential to the experience of final enlightenment. It is here that again and again the *kōan* discipline has demonstrated its superiority to *nembutsu*. Describing this experience he says:

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-143.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 143-144.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141. The "evil and careless Zen followers" to which Hakuin refers are Ōbaku Zen devotees. Hakuin was especially critical of Yin-yuan Lung-ch'i (Ingen Ryūki, 1592-1673) who introduced the Ōbaku School of Zen to Japan from China in 1654, whom he regarded as the worst of heretics. Cf. *Yabakōn*, pp. 171-174.

When a person faces great doubt, before him there is in all directions only a vast empty land without birth and without death, like a huge plain of ice extending ten thousand miles. . . . Within his heart there is not the slightest thought or emotion, only a single word *Mu*. It is just as though he were standing in complete emptiness. At this time no fears arise, no thoughts creep in, and when he advances single mindedly without retrogression, suddenly it will be as if a sheet of ice were broken and a jade tower had fallen. He will experience a great joy, one that never in forty years has been seen or heard. . . . This is the time of the great penetration of wonderful awakening, the state where the "ka" is shouted. It cannot be handed down, it cannot be explained; it is just like knowing for yourself by drinking it whether the water is hot or cold.⁴¹

There was nothing in Hakuin's experience and understanding of *nembutsu* which led him to believe that it gave rise to this crisis experience called "Great Doubt," the prerequisite experience which must be overcome before the "Great Joy" of enlightenment can happen. And although Hōnen did experience a period of complete utter despair prior to the religious experience that led him to advocate *nembutsu* as the sole means of salvation available to men living in the age of *mappō* that is in many ways similar to the Zen experience of "Great Doubt";⁴² Hakuin believed that Hōnen had not fully experienced this state of existential anxiety. Consequently, he felt that Hōnen and the other Pure Land "saints" were not fully enlightened.⁴³

Hakuin's critique of Pure Land Buddhism is completely summarized in the "Supplement" to his *Orategama Zokushū*. (1) The teaching of the Pure Land School is suitable only for persons of mediocre capacities and abilities. In Pure Land teachings such people have only a means to partially glimpse the "jewel of enlightenment" and a moral code by which they can live in the phenomenal world. But generally, Pure Land teachings will not help people "see into their own natures" and thereby attain enlightenment—the only possible "salvation" available to people even in the age of *mappō*. Only a man of superior capacities can gain salvation (enlightenment) by means of Pure Land practice, but only by using *nembutsu* in the same manner as the *kōan* discipline, in effect transforming *nembutsu* into a *kōan*.⁴⁴ This in turn implies that *kōan* meditation is superior to *nembutsu*. (2) Zen and Pure Land rest upon essentially different presuppositions. Zen is a "direct transmission" of the "true dharma" that leads to enlightenment from "mind to mind." This "transmission" is not dependent upon sūtras, philosophical knowledge, logical discourse, or veneration of Buddha's objective to a man's mind, which is fact have no independent existence apart from a man's "mind."⁴⁵ This realization of the "original mind of the Buddha" can only

⁴¹ *Orategama Zokushū*, pp. 144-145.

⁴² Cf. Harper Havelock Coates and Ryugoku Ishizuka, *Hōnen: The Buddhist Saint* (Kyōto: The Society for the Publication of Sacred Books of the World, 1949), pp. 185-187.

⁴³ *Orategama Zokushū*, p. 146.

⁴⁴ *Orategama Zokushū*, Supplement, p. 152.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

be accomplished by "seeing into one's own nature," an experience that leads to the discovery that a man's "mind" and the "Buddha's mind" are the same "mind" because he has discovered the Buddha Nature which is within himself and all things. This realization leads to the "sudden enlightenment" which Zen calls *satori*. The way to *satori* is one of difficult self-effort and discipline requiring a man's total energy. In other words, Zen is a school of radical self-salvation (*jiriki*).

The philosophical presuppositions of Zen are also different from Pure Land Buddhism. Zen is philosophically grounded in what might be called in the West "philosophical monism." Accordingly, Zen is severely critical of any form of dualism, epistemological or ontological, explicit or implicit. This is really the fundamental basis of Hakuin's criticism of Pure Land tradition; it is dualistic to the core because "it takes ego into account" and "attaches itself to form."⁴⁶ He believed that at most, Pure Land teaching was merely a kind of "psychological egolessness" in which a man devotes himself in total surrender to a Buddha conceived to be objective to him and upon which he is completely dependent for his salvation. But for Hakuin, no Buddha has any reality "apart from a man's mind." Concerning this issue he says:

But non-ego is of two kinds. Take the man who is weak in body and mind. He is afraid of everybody, destroys his vitality, and is influenced by all external circumstances. He does not get angry even when reviled; he does not even care if he is rejected but always stupidly plods along getting nowhere. . . . Such a person is a torn rice bag, bloated from gorging himself on the swill of swine, an ignorant, blind fool. This does not represent true non-ego. How much less so for the man who, relying on the power of the calling of Buddha's name, hopes to "go" to the Pure Land and thus to "become" a Buddha! What is this "going?" What is this "becoming?" If it isn't ego, then what is it?⁴⁷

All dualism, psychological and ontological, must be overcome and negated. All men are essentially Buddhas already, and this is discovered when a man "sees into his own nature." Consequently, since Buddha Nature is present in all things, there is no Pure Land apart from the place where a man, a latent Buddha, now resides.⁴⁸ Therefore, (3) Pure Land practices and disciplines must not be combined with Zen practices and disciplines, as in *Ōbaku Zen*, since this involves

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154. "Buddha Nature" in the Pure Land tradition does not mean the usual Mahāyāna notion of the metaphysical or ontological unity of all particulars composing existence. In the Pure Land tradition, Amida Buddha and man are completely separated by an ontological gap that can never be overcome by any kind of human self-effort. Therefore, the "unity" between man and Amida comes to man when Amida offers the gift of salvation to him. Then man begins to totally trust Amida's efforts to save him and totally mistrust his own efforts in the soteriological process. In this way, Pure Land tradition transforms an originally ontological category into a psychological category defining the "saved" man's relation to Amida Buddha as "psychological egolessness." Cf. *Kyōgōshinbō*, SSZ II, pp. 137-140 for Shiuran's interpretation of Buddha Nature and Alfred Bloom, "Shinran's Philosophy of Salvation by Absolute Other-Power," *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, vol. 2 (June 1964), pp. 129-132.

⁴⁷ *Orategama Zokushū*, pp. 134-135.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

contaminating a superior teaching and discipline (Zen) with an inferior dualistic teaching and discipline meant to be only an "expedient teaching" for men of inferior capacities and abilities (Pure Land).⁴⁹

The contemporary Zen critique of Pure Land. Modern Zen evaluations of Pure Land Buddhism essentially follow the lead of Hakuin. Ōbaku Zen, however, is not now an important Japanese religious tradition. Consequently, most Zen teachers today simply ignore it. To illustrate this we need only briefly examine the critique of Pure Land tradition by three modern Zen thinkers whose ideas are fairly typical of current Zen thought: D. T. Suzuki, Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, and Abe Masao.

We shall begin with Suzuki since he is the most prolific interpreter of Zen to the West and, therefore, the best known. As do all Zen Buddhists, Suzuki assumes that Zen, because it totally transcends all forms of dualism and consequently cannot be limited by any philosophical or religious world-view, is the root of all forms of Buddhism in particular and "true religion" in general. This is so because, "Zen in its essence is the art of seeing into the nature of one's own being, and it points the way from bondage to freedom."⁵⁰ Essentially, then, Zen is a method by which one "sees into his own nature" thereby attaining "enlightenment" (*satori*), which in turn is the "solution" to all of the existential problems of human life. Zen accomplishes all of this by its methods of "directly appealing to the facts of personal experience and not book knowledge."⁵¹ For Suzuki, Zen is total in its non-reliance upon the intellect and reason as a means of gaining *satori*. Consequently, the whole goal of Zen is a non-verbal and non-rationalized immediate experience of one's own "suchness." This is enlightenment, and it can only occur by means of personal strenuous disciplines of self-effort, defined in terms of *kōan* meditation.⁵²

It is within this context that Suzuki evaluated all forms of Buddhism, including Pure Land. Ultimately, he did not believe there was any essential difference between Zen and Pure Land. According to him:

⁴⁹ *Orategama Zokushū, Supplement*, pp. 154-155.

⁵⁰ D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism, First Series* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961), p. 13.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19. It is my distinct impression that most Zen masters are not as "anti-intellect" or "anti-rational" as Suzuki. One is tempted to find merit in William Johnson's comments concerning the paradoxical nature of verbalized mystical experiences, which he says are based on an "... acute, if difficult metaphysic. Zen, on the other hand, has not found a metaphysical basis; nor is it likely to do so if it follows the path traced out by Dr. Suzuki, who has carried the irrational element to the furthest limit. Whereas the Zen masters and the Christian mystics declared that it was impossible to say anything about mystical experience, Suzuki seems to say that it was impossible to say anything about anything. And so he devoted page after page to affirming that it was impossible to affirm and denying that it was impossible to deny. . . . In Japan, the Zen masters maintained their traditional silence, but the West was greatly impressed." William Johnson, *The Still Small Point* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 95-96.

⁵² Cf. D. T. Suzuki, *The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk* (New York: University Books, 1965) for a readable account of the training methods used in contemporary Rinzai Zen monasteries.

The *karuna* [compassion]-idea is more emphasized in the Pure Land School, while Zen is apt to emphasize *Prājña*. *Amitābha* (Amida) is introduced as the manifestation of *Karuna*, while Zen develops the *Prājña* aspect in its own peculiar way, and *Karuna* appears inconspicuously. . . . *Amitābha* comes from *Karuna*, *Karuna* giving substance to itself. This means that all beings are my children and I love them as parents love their child. But when you say that if *Amitābha* attained enlightenment, and this enlightenment signifies that we are saved, what is the use of practicing Zen, for we are saved anyway, *this is the interpretation of our logical mind but in real life we cannot be sure of Amitābha attaining enlightenment unless we ourselves attain it.*⁸⁸

Clearly, Suzuki has interpreted the Pure Land doctrine of salvation in terms of Zen's presuppositions about the fundamental non-dual nature of enlightenment. He has rejected traditional Pure Land teaching by reducing it to "an interpretation of our logical mind." He consistently read Zen philosophy into Pure Land so that he could say that both Zen and Pure Land ultimately have identical doctrines of enlightenment. Another example of this may be seen in the following:

The interpretation the Shin people give the "Namu-Amida-Butsu" is more than literal though not at all mystical or esoteric. It is in fact philosophical. When Amida is regarded as the object of adoration, he is separated from the devotee standing all by himself. But when *Namu* is added to the name the whole thing acquires a new meaning because *it now symbolizes the unification of Amida and the devotee, where duality no longer exists.*⁸⁹

Suzuki's attempted unification of Zen and Pure Land teachings is also evident in the following remark concerning the "difference" between *jiriki* and *tariki*:

Now here is the difference between *Tariki* and *Jiriki*. This differentiation is possible only on the plane of relativity. When that plane is transcended there is no *Tariki* or *Jiriki*, no "other-power," no "self-power;" *the difference of "self" and "other" is possible only at the level of discrimination.* When that level is effaced there will be no self, no not-self, thus no Shin to be separated from Zen.⁹⁰

Because dualism is the product of unenlightened intellectualism and rationalism, the differences between Pure Land and Zen are only apparent and not real. Accordingly, Suzuki, as did Hakuin, tacitly rejected traditional Pure Land teaching by the very fact that he reinterpreted Pure Land according to the Zen philosophy of non-dualism. For Suzuki, there was no ultimate difference between Amida and man, the Pure Land and where a man now is in the phenomenal world, *jiriki* and *tariki*, differences which were real for Hōnen and Shinran. He, like Hakuin, simply explained away the differences between these two Buddhist tra-

⁸⁸ Suzuki, *The Field of Zen*, p. 42, emphasis supplied.

⁸⁹ D. T. Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* (New York: Collier Books, 1957), p. 123, emphasis supplied.

⁹⁰ Suzuki, *The Field of Zen*, p. 77, emphasis supplied.

ditions by denying that there were any differences "from the point of view of enlightenment."⁸⁸

Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, a master of the Sōtō tradition of Zen, is not well known in the West. Few of his writings have been translated into English. However, his Zen is much more traditional and intellectually rigorous than Suzuki's. Even though Zen, for Hisamatsu, is "not a religion of words and letters," this statement should not be taken to mean a total rejection and negation of language, scripture, and philosophical discourse. In Hisamatsu's view, Zen radically condemns any kind of dogmatism which makes either scripture or irrationalism the norm of truth. On the contrary, Zen seeks to return to the "source" of the scriptures which is "prior to" the scriptures in the sense of being the foundation for whatever truth the scriptures contain.⁸⁹ This source Hisamatsu calls "Mind," that of which a man becomes aware when he "sees into his own original nature." Apart from this experience of Mind there are no Buddhas and no scriptures. Therefore,

... Zen greatly differs from Christianity and even from the Shin or Jōdo Shin school of Buddhism. Christianity and the Shin School are religions which rely absolutely upon a God or Amida Buddha. . . . Their duality is never removed. It is for this reason that Christianity is called a religion of absolute dependence and the Shin School a religion of absolute "other-power." Consequently, the understanding of man in these religions is that of a being absolutely dependent upon and supported by God (in Christianity) or Amida (in the Shin School). This is not the Zen view of man.⁹⁰

The "true man" of Zen is emancipated from the external authority of all Buddhas, patriarchs, and scriptures. Such a man is utterly non-dependent upon anything except his own inner source of authority and truth, the "Mind" he discovers when he "sees into his own nature" and attains *awakening*. It is this which is the source for all truth and authority that all Buddhas, patriarchs, and scriptures possess. Therefore, the fundamental aim of Buddhism is to help a man experience this "Mind," and is best represented by Zen, which Hisamatsu believes to be the "root source of Buddhism" and not merely a "school of Buddhism."⁹¹ Zen is a method of gaining total freedom from every form of bondage to duality. Any self dependent upon anything objective to itself is not an emancipated, free, enlightened self. Thus, no Buddha, including Amida Buddha, exists apart from a man's awakened "Mind."⁹²

⁸⁸ For example, see his *On Indian Mahayana Buddhism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 132-137 where he tried to show that all duality, including the *śūnyā*-*śūnyā* duality, are unified by "wisdom" (*prajñā*), the result of the enlightenment experience of "emptiness" (*śūnyatā*).

⁸⁹ Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, "Zen: Its Meaning for Modern Civilization," *The Eastern Buddhist, New Series*, 1/1 (September 1964), p. 24.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 27-32.

Consequently, Hisamatsu explicitly rejected traditional Pure Land teaching on the same grounds as Hakuin and Suzuki—Pure Land teaching is dualistic. Unlike Hakuin and Suzuki, Hisamatsu did not try to effect a Zen-Pure Land synthesis. He regarded Pure Land teaching as fundamentally wrong, especially its emphasis upon *tariki* because it involves seeking a saving relationship with a Buddha conceived as existing externally to a man. Zen, for Hisamatsu, is a radical religion of *hriki* in the Sūtā tradition defined primarily in terms of *zazen* (seated meditation), which can in no way be "unified" with *tariki* because of the explicit dualistic presuppositions of *tariki*. Accordingly, Hisamatsu implicitly rejected Pure Land as a valid form of Buddhism.⁶¹

Abe Masao is a disciple of Hisamatsu Shin'ichi. Unlike his master, he has written more in English and has lectured and taught quite extensively in the United States. He states Hisamatsu's conviction, held by all Zen teachers, that "Zen is not merely one form of Buddhism, but rather its fundamental nature, the very root and source of all forms of Buddhism."⁶² This is expressed in the traditional four-line summary of Zen teachings: (1) *furyū monji*, "not depending upon words and letters," (2) *kyōge betsuden*, "an independent self-transmitting apart from any teaching," (3) *jikishi nishin*, "directly pointing to man's Mind," and (4) *zenjō jōbutsu*, "awakening to his (original) nature, thereby attaining Buddhahood."

According to Abe, in relation to Pure Land, the Zen distinction between *kyō* (teaching) and *zen* means that all forms of Buddhism are grounded in the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha as preserved in the sūtras. Therefore, all non-Zen Buddhist schools have their particular sūtra or sūtras to which it looks as its ultimate authority in matters of faith, teaching, discipline, and ethics. However, Zen alone does not rely upon any sūtra as a source of authority, but instead "seeks to go to the source of the sūtras," which is "the self-awakening of Sakyamuni Buddha" and which transcends all sūtra and doctrinal definition. This is the meaning of the first two statements, "not relying upon words and letters" and "an independent self-transmitting apart from any teaching" (*kyō*).⁶³

This also implies a tacit rejection of the traditional Pure Land teaching that salvation in the age of *marjō* depends upon the "other-power" of Amida Buddha's eighteenth vow contained in the *Larger Sūkhāvastī-ryūba sūtra*.⁶⁴ It also implies that because Zen teachings are non-dualistic, and traditional Pure

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-67.

⁶² Abe Masao, "Zen and Buddhism," *Japan Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3 (September 1965), pp. 1-11.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶⁴ The Chinese text reads as follows: "If all beings who hear that name believe and rejoice even for one thought-moment, and sincerely transfer (the merit of the thought) into desire to be reborn in that land, they will obtain birth and abide in a state of non-retrogression. One must exclude who have committed the five deadly actions and have slandered the sūtra." SSZ I, p. 24. The term "state of non-retrogression" means that once being reborn in the Pure Land, a man does not "regress" or return to the phenomenal world of suffering and pain.

Land teachings are not, its authority rests in the very enlightenment experience of the historical Buddha, and is the foundation of all sūtra verbalization. Because non-Zen Buddhist schools do not go beyond the sūtras they consider to be most authoritative, they are only limited versions of the truth of Buddhism. The full truth of Buddhist experience and enlightenment is found only in Zen precisely because only in Zen is all dualism overcome, including the distinction between authority as sūtra and authority as awakened Mind; only Zen is grounded in the experience of enlightenment that transcends all sūtras while at the same time being the foundation of whatever verbalizations of the truth the sūtras contain. Therefore,

Real enlightenment . . . is no other than to experience real delusion in its quality of real delusiveness. So in genuine Enlightenment one becomes free from both so-called delusion and so-called enlightenment, and thereby comes clearly to realize what they are in their discrimination from each other.⁶⁶

Thus, the philosophical underpinnings of Pure Land are wrong because they are consciously dualistic. Neither enlightenment-ignorance, man-Buddha, this phenomenal world-the Pure Land, exists independently from one another or apart from a man's Mind. However, Abe's critique of Zen appears to be a bit different from Hisamatsu's at this point. Abe rejects Pure Land teachings as traditionally taught and practiced, but he also has a tendency to find value in Pure Land to the degree that he can interpret it in terms of Zen non-dualism. He is not as extreme in this as Suzuki and Hakuin, so that his position on this issue would probably represent a middle position between Hisamatsu and Suzuki (and Hakuin).⁶⁶

In summary, the Zen critique of Pure Land has traditionally involved three aspects: (1) Pure Land is an "expedient teaching" meant only for men of limited physical and mental capacities (Hakuin, and to some degree Suzuki), (2) a philosophical objection to Pure Land on the grounds that it is dualistic (Hakuin, Suzuki, Hisamatsu, and Abe), and (3) an attempt to synthesize Pure Land and Zen according to Zen's philosophy of the non-dual nature of the enlightenment experience (Hakuin, Suzuki, and to some degree Abe). This has the effect of transforming Pure Land into a kind of inferior Zen and is basically an attempt to show that "ultimately" Pure Land and Zen preach the same message of salvation to mankind.

⁶⁶ Abe Masao, "The Idea of Purity in Mahayana Buddhism," *Numen*, vol. XIII, fasc. 3 (October 1966), p. 186.

⁶⁷ I have no basis for this conclusion from the writings of Professor Abe as such. It is merely an inference. I am not aware that he has spent much effort in systematically dealing with Pure Land Buddhism in his writings. However, he once told me some years ago that ultimately, there can be no essential difference between *tariki* and *jiiki*, since enlightenment is an experience which totally unifies all forms of dualism.