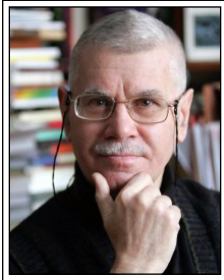


SCIENCES OF MAN



Sergey HORUJY

Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, professor, Major Research Fellow of Department of Philosophical Problems in Social Sciences and Humanities. RAS Institute of Philosophy, Gonsharnaya St. 12/1, Moscow 109240, Russian Federation; e-mail: horuzhy@orc.ru

ZEN IN THE PRISM OF SYNERGIC ANTHROPOLOGY

Zen is famous for its specific style of spontaneous actions and illogical sayings, its hostility to everything systematic and predictable. Nevertheless, it possesses its own rigorous rules and methods, and we can find in it once more the principal elements of our paradigm of spiritual practice. In describing them, we shall base ourselves on the most general framework of Zen practice, avoiding all the intricate web of particular variations, local traditions, historical modifications, etc. (Only the division into the two main schools, *Soto* and *Rinzai*, cannot be avoided.) The central component of this framework is *zazen*: practice of meditation in the immobile sitting posture (the lotus posture) ascribed to Buddha himself. *Zazen* is not a pure intellectual meditation: it is a holistic practice that includes the regulation of breathing and the training of perceptions as well as some elements of the training of muscular system and physiological mechanisms. Moreover, it includes an important trans-individual or collective component called *sesshin* (union of a mind with another mind, in Japanese) and has multiple forms of the two principal kinds: 1) meetings of a disciple with a master, 2) collective meditations, often in walking, or special collective works of rhythmic and not too hard nature. Further main parts of the general framework are the most famous elements of Zen having well-known names *satori* and *dharma*. As for *dharma*, it is the basic reality of all the Buddhist (and Hinduist) worldview that cannot be expressed by any concept. Luckily, in our brief description of *Zen as anthropological practice* we can avoid speaking

about dharma or dharmas, except very few points. The main of them is that Zen practice should perform the “transmission of dharma” from Master to Disciple, and in this context one can imagine dharma as something having the nature of energy, but surely not material energy.

On the other hand, *satori* or enlightenment is also not a well-defined concept in the Zen discourse, but nevertheless it has many detailed descriptions presenting it rather clearly. It is the goal of *zazen*: the event or the state of consciousness, to which Zen practice is directed. However, it cannot be simply identified with the *telos* of Zen as spiritual practice since one cannot assert that it is *the last and highest* goal of all the Way of Zen. At closer look, *satori* is seen as a center of a certain complex or may be a web of notions characterizing the *telos* in its different aspects. To start with, one often distinguishes two gradations of it, “small” and “big” *satori*. Then the complex includes *kensho* or the state of “seeing into one’s true nature” that has many kinds and many degrees and is usually considered as a “prelude to the depths of *satori*”; *samadhi* or “purification of consciousness”, a state known in all Far-Eastern spiritual practices and going back to classical yoga; *nirvana*, another basic reality of all the Buddhism and Hinduism that is considered as the highest state of Buddhist consciousness and the highest goal of all Buddhist practices including Zen. Undoubtedly, it is *nirvana* that is the true *telos* of any Buddhist practice; however, Zen does not identify or merge *nirvana* and *satori*. What is more, in many discussions of Zen practice, certain stages of this practice are described as going *after satori*. Thus, *satori* is present in the general framework of Zen as a certain striven after and culminating event that does not coincide, however, with the *telos* of Zen. And we see the first questions that we should answer basing on the paradigm of spiritual practice: what is the place and role of *satori* in the structure of Zen practice? And what is exactly the *telos* of this practice?

First, let us point out the last necessary elements of general framework. Of course, we should mention *koans*, these famous enigmatic or absurd statements that have no logical sense and serve as objects of Zen meditation. To find an answer to koan (always by means of insight, not logical reflection) is the decisive advancement to *satori*. However, as said above, Zen includes the two main schools, Soto and Rinzai, and the art of koans has the central place only in the Rinzai Zen, the school named after its founder, the Chinese master Lin’ Zi (Rinzai, in Japanese, † 867). “The Rinzai school is more austere, rigorous and puts more emphasis on sudden enlightenment” [1, p. 5]; besides koans, it also cultivates many illogical, shocking or aggressive techniques. Hakuin (1685-1768) was the great teacher who has developed all this eccentric repertory to a new stage, inventing many new tricks, like the famous koan: *What is the clapping with one palm?* The Soto school has been brought from China too, but it has been thoroughly reformed and renewed by the Japanese master Dogen (1200-1253). It is more moderate, giving the pride of place to strict *zazen* and trying to incorporate into practice more elements of Buddhist teaching.

Now, let us look at this framework from the viewpoint of the paradigm of Spiritual Practice. Can we find here the basic elements of the latter: the holistic self-transformation directed to ontological transcension; the ladder paradigm, a method and organon; the telos belonging to a different horizon of being; the presence of the “outer energy” factor and the paradigm of synergy; the “ontological mover” and manifestations of starting changes of all the human being? It turns out that there is no simple *Yes* or *No* answer. It is an important specific feature of Zen: many questions relating to the higher stages of the practice remain open in Zen discourse or, better to say, have many ambivalent and mutually diverging answers.

Still the principal structural features can be singled out confidently. Sure, Zen is a practice of man’s holistic self-transformation that has an ordered and directed character. Special study is needed to decide whether it is directed to the telos of a different ontological horizon, but in any case, it is directed to the Anthropological Border: satori as enlightenment is evidently extreme experience and so the breakthrough to the Anthropological Border, although a priori it may be not the Ontological Border. Hence it is a practice of the Self realizing a certain kind of anthropological unlocking and containing a certain paradigm of human constitution. Next, in the problem of the presence and role of the ladder paradigm we discover a complicated situation. On one hand, descriptions of Zen practice include not one, but many ladder schemes for various aspects of the practice, chiefly, states of consciousness; the most popular of them is the set “10 pictures of the taming of a buffalo” claiming to embrace all the Way of Zen. On the other hand, these schemes use mostly figurative and metaphoric language and do not disclose neither methods of the practice nor principles that secure the step-by-step advancement. Moreover, they all are not complete enough, most of them leaves aside some important moments of Zen practice: e.g., the scheme of the “Ten Pictures” does not include the figure of the Master and leaves aside all the specific work of achieving satori, the culminating event of Zen (though one can say that the buffalo himself is, in a way, the metaphor of satori)! As a result, when it comes to the test, the schemes do not prove that Zen practice really follows the ladder paradigm.

It means that we cannot describe Zen in the same way as other spiritual practices, tracing the ladder of their experience from the bottom up. Instead of it, we turn directly to satori: it is the indisputable key point of Zen, and if we succeed in understanding satori, it gives us a good chance to reach the understanding of Zen as a whole.

On the phenomenal level, we can describe satori as a sudden breakthrough of man’s consciousness to some new Truth or Light or Being. It is characterized by a certain set of very specific properties. First, it is an instantaneous and radical change of the state of consciousness caused by some unexpected external factor (Master’s action or some sudden outer disturbance, like sound, etc.). This instantaneous event must be prepared by special strategies and techniques. An adept starts with zealous efforts to reach the breakthrough

by a frontal way, he intensifies these efforts up to the limit, but has no success; and he falls into the state of extreme psychological tension full of sharp negative affects, feelings of disorientation, anxiety, despair... which sum up and concentrate to the feeling of the deadlock. "You feel that all your inner force is completely exhausted... and this psychological deadlock is the necessary condition of satori" [11, p. 164, 288]. Man's consciousness reaches the "boiling point" (Hakuin) when it is ripe for a big discharge. This discharge is triggered by a sudden, sharp outer disturbance, and the deeper and more hopeless the feeling of the deadlock and despair was, the more explosive and powerful is the discharge, the more striking is the flash and the more radical is the change of consciousness.

This is the psychological plan of satori, but we need to disclose its ontological and spiritual plan and integrate this event into the overall context of Zen practice. The first important fact is that the presence of some ontological and spiritual aspect of satori is universally accepted by Zen teachers and almost all Zen literature. However, the contents of this aspect are always characterized in the most cautious and minimalist way; we find frequent warnings that satori is not the breakthrough to any "God". D. Suzuki characterizes this minimal presence of ontology as the expansion or conversion of man's individuality into some different modus of reality that is "indescribable": "My individuality begins in some way to go out from its borders and get absorbed in something indescribable and completely different from anything habitual to me" [11, p. 172]. D. Suzuki, big authority of a few decades ago, considered a bit obsolete today; J. Austin, the contemporary author, presents a more subtle characterization shifting the focus to cognitive or epistemological plan: "Insights in kensho and satori... realize the *timeless, immanent, interrelated nature of all things*" [1, p. 362]. Such shift or modulation of ontological discourse into epistemological one is typical of Western Cartesian thinking although Austin goes directly into polemic with Kant's thesis on unknowability of *Ding an sich* stating that Zen experience in satori is exactly the cognition of thing in itself.

In any case, the described psychological pattern of radical change or turn of consciousness together with the property of irreducible presence of ontological dimension in this turn makes it possible to see the proper spiritual context for the event of satori. As many authors (including D. Suzuki) noticed, there is a close parallel between satori and one of basic paradigms of religious experience, the *conversion* discussed briefly in our last lecture. It is one of universal elements of the paradigm of spiritual practice, the starting event of entering the path of such practice. The close resemblance of satori and conversion is evident, for instance, in such classical example of conversion as the sudden change of consciousness of the future apostle Paul on his way to Damascus; and the main term for conversion in Christianity is *metanoia*, the change of mind. Taking into account that conversion should be conceived as not a specifically Christian notion, but an universal concept of religious and intellectual life, *we can interpret satori as a particular*

Zen representation of the conversion paradigm. Basing on this conclusion, we start moving to our main goal, the structural comparison of Zen practice with our paradigm of spiritual practice.

Let us remind the general structure of the latter. As said above, conversion (Spiritual Gate) is the starting event of the ladder of the practice, and it is followed by the ascent by the steps of the ladder. However, it is a very special event that is always prepared by profound inner processes, chiefly, of ethical nature. This “ethical prehistory” is very personal, not regulated and not included into spiritual practice as such because it belongs still to usual practices of empiric existence and has no ontological dimension. It is clearly understood and accentuated (not only in Christian hesychasm, but, say, in Tibetan Tantric Buddhism) that the change of consciousness is only the foot of a long ladder leading to a certain telos that does not belong to empiric being. Contrary to it, in Zen the preparatory works like *zazen*, *koans*, etc. leading to the change of consciousness are not just included into the practice, but constitute all the main part of it. They have the same function of preparing the crucial intellectual and anthropological change, but they are not of ethical nature; in general, Zen minimizes or even ignores the role of ethics (cf. the statement of a recognized expert: “The doctrine of Zen did not distinguish between Good and Evil” [2, p. 285]). Instead, they represent a very rich and subtle world of highly original psychological techniques, and this contributes a lot to the great popularity of Zen in contemporary Western society that pushes aside its traditional ethical foundations and is much attracted and fascinated by all kinds of new psycho-techniques.

What about the ladder of spiritual practice that is supposed to lead from the conversion up to the telos? What is Zen practice after the achievement of *satori*? Sure, Zen does not deny the existence of this “upper part” of the practice. It is presented in many schemes and, in particular, the scheme of the “Ten Pictures” devotes to them 3 or 4 pictures out of 10. First of all, various degrees of *satori*, like “small” and “great” *satori*, are often distinguished. Great *satori*, as distinct from the small one, is a more stable state, in which the new vision of things is retained firmly. Like the higher states of other spiritual practices, great *satori* is characterized by properties that are related or directly belong to categories of the corresponding religious teaching, in our case, Buddhism. It is close to *nirvana* (though their exact relationship is complicated and not too clear), it implies the possession of *samadhi* and *prajna* (“the flashing insight-wisdom of Enlightenment”, by Austin). In general, Zen (and other Buddhist practices, in contrast to Christian ones) puts to the foreground and represents more clearly epistemological and not ontological dimensions of the higher states. It accentuates not the transformation or transcension of the human being, but a new epistemological perspective, new vision of and relationship with things that is reached in the practice. *Prajna* is one of the principal predicates of this perspective, and the others are *non-duality* (the overcoming of the separation of oneself and world, the unity of inner and outer reality conceived as one’s true nature) and *suchness* (*tathata*, Sanskrit, *sono-mama*, Japanese: “seeing all things as they

really are”, by Austin) that means the direct vision of things in themselves, thus representing the polar opposition to Kantian epistemology. It should be noted, however, that, notwithstanding this epistemological orientation, Zen conveys very clearly the general Buddhist message with the rejection of the principles of Ego, Self, individuality, personality, etc. “Zen Buddhist traditions emphasize a key point: one’s personal sense of self dissolves during kensho and satori” [1, p. 364]. J. Austin complements this thesis with the detailed experimental discussion concluding that in Zen practice a special modus of consciousness emerges that “is unattached, selfless, bodyless, completely *impersonal*” [1, p. 365 (*Author’s italics.*)]. Exclusively negative character of all the predicates listed tells us another evident, but important thing: Zen practice brings forth the dismantling of man’s personological structures (in particular, the elimination of emotions) and thus represents a typical *cool discourse* (in contrast to hot discourses of hesychasm and Sufism).

Finally, most of the schemes of Zen practice include the concluding stages of the return of man and his mind back to activity after the state of insight, contemplation and concentration when consciousness stands still. The 9th of the “Ten Pictures” is called “The Return to the Pure Source” and corresponds to the “activity of the purified mind ... when you discover the face of Buddha wherever you look” [5, p. 653]. This stage is favorable to artistic practices that are inseparable of Zen forming there a kind of a special section, “Zen arts”. The last picture is called “The Return to the Marketplace” and is characterized by a complete openness and compassion to other people. This stage is also called “The Cloud of Dharma” since it is the state of free pouring of Dharma to all around, in fact, to all living beings, not just humans, in order to help them to actualize their own original Buddha’s nature. As we said in the hesychast lectures, this stage of the Return or rather the paradigm of the “Flight followed by Return” is present in hesychasm too; in fact, it is natural for any spiritual tradition.

Turning to the conclusion of our brief discussion of Zen, it is equally important to point out what we do not find in it. Although Zen has no firm and unique scheme for the higher states of its practice, it is indisputable that it did not elaborate any “ontological mover” and does not include the spontaneous generation of new dynamic anthropological formations. It means that it did not develop to the full-fledged form the key mechanism of spiritual practice, synergy or the anthropological unlocking, the coherence and collaboration of inner and outer energy, although the outer energy factor in a certain preliminary and rudimentary form of synergy is present in satori (like in conversion-repentance in Christian practices). Having well-developed and highly original psychological and epistemological dimensions, it openly neglects ethical aspects and reduces to a bare minimum the presence of the ontological dimension. The post-satori part of the practice is not presented in a unique and well-defined way and is rather vague about its techniques, methods and the order of its actions. Thus, as compared to the paradigm of the spiritual practice, Zen has the under-articulated higher block of the ladder of the experience.

Keywords: philosophy, Zen, satori, samadhi, koan, hesychasm, synergic anthropology, spiritual practice, conversion, repentance

References

1. Austin, J. H. *Zen-brain reflections. Reviewing recent developments in meditation and states of consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass, The MIT Press, 2006. 586 p.
2. Dumoulin, H. *Istoriya dzen-buddizma* [History of Zen-Buddhism], trans. by Yu. Bondarev. Moscow, Tsentrpoligraf Publ., 2003. 371 pp. (In Russian)
3. Horujy, S. "O nekotorykh osobennostyakh sufiiskoi praktiki" [About Some Features of Sufi Practice], in: S. Horujy, *Ocherki sinergiinoi antropologii* [Essays on Synergetic Anthropology]. Moscow, Institute of synerg. anthropology Publ., St. Thomas Institute of Philosophy, Theology and History Publ., 2005, pp. 229–239. (In Russian)
4. Horujy, S. *O starom i novom* [On the Old and New]. St.Petersburg, Aleteiya Publ., 2000. 477 pp. (In Russian)
5. Katsuki, S. "Praktika Dzen" [The Practice of Zen], in: *Dzen-Buddizm* [Zen-Buddhism]. Bishkek, Odissei Publ., 1993, pp. 469-668. (In Russian)
6. Laszlo, E. "Vek bifurkatsii. Postizhenie izmenyayushchegosya mira" [The Age of Bifurcation. The Attainment of a Changing World], *Put'*, 1995, no 7, pp. 3–129. (In Russian)
7. Masunaga, Reiho. "Budda i dzen" [Buddha and Zen], in: *Antologiya dzen* [Anthology of Zen], trans. by S. Burmistrova. St.Petersburg, Nauka Publ., 2004, pp. 366–369. (In Russian)
8. Stheiner, E. "Chelovek po-yaponski: mezhdru vsem i nichem" [People in Japanese: Between Everything and Nothing], *Tochki – Puncta*, 2008, no 1–4, pp. 149–180. (In Russian)
9. Stheiner, E. "Satori, priroda Buddy, dkharma: kak eto sootnositsya s soznaniem i chto delaet s poslednim dzenskaya praktika" [Satori, Buddha Nature, Dharma: How Does It Relate to Consciousness and What Zen Practice Makes With It], *Tochki – Puncta*, 2008, no 1–4, pp. 181–220. (In Russian)
10. Stheiner, E., Horujy, S. "Dkharma, Dzen i sinergiinaya antropologiya" [Dharma, Zen and Synergetic Anthropology], *Fonar' Diogena. Proekt sinergiinoi antropologii v sovremennom gumanitarnom kontekste* [The Lantern of Diogenes. A Synergetic Anthropology Project in the Modern Humanitarian Context], ed. by S. Horujy. Moscow, Progress-Traditsiya Publ., 2010, pp. 477–572. (In Russian)
11. Suzuki, D. "Osnovy dzen-buddizma" [Foundations of Zen-Buddhism], in: *Dzen-Buddizm* [Zen-Buddhism]. Bishkek, Odissei Publ., 1993, pp. 3-468. (In Russian)
12. Yu-Lang Fen. "Shkola chan" [School of Chan], *Antologiya dzen* [Anthology of Zen], trans. by S. Burmistrova. St.Petersburg, Nauka Publ., 2004, pp. 115–139. (In Russian)