

ZOOM on 19 December 2020

Excerpt from the *Shobogenzo* Chapter *GANZEI*, the *Eye-Pupil*¹

The Pupil of the Eye symbolises our most precious possession. It is the treasure that we must find within ourselves, because we think we have lost it.

"Ungan Donjo² was in the process of weaving straw sandals when Tozan Ryokai³ came to question him.

Tozan asked Ungan, "Master, I would like you to give me the Eye-Pupil" (a legitimate request from the disciple to his master to ask him for the essence of Zen).

Ungan replied, "To whom did you give yours?"

Tozan: "Me, but I don't have it!"

Ungan: "Yes, you do. What direction are you turning it in right now?"

Tozan remained without a word.

Ungan said: "Begging and seeking to obtain the Pupil (Awakening) is none other than the Eye-Pupil, isn't it?"

Tozan says: "No, it is not the Eye-Pupil."

He really doesn't want to understand that the Buddha-nature and himself are not two, thus maintaining the feeling of separation that causes the suffering of beings.

Ungan reprimanded him.

To study the path, the sutras, to sit in the dojo is to seek/ask for the Eye-Pupil. This is what all spiritual seekers do. Practising the Way in the *sōdō* (monks' hall), gathering to listen to the teachings, even through Zoom, the *teishos*, entering the master's room, is to seek/ask for the Eye-Pupil. It is also acting in accordance with the teachings of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs who constantly repeat to the disciples that there is not a moment to lose to awaken to the Truth.

1 *Ganzei* has sometimes been translated as *Eye*, or *Eyeball*. Here, Maître Guy chooses to express the term with even greater precision. Note that Great Master Dōgen might also have been enjoying a pun here - a secondary meaning of the *kanji* characters is the 'crux of the matter' or 'heart of the matter'

2 Yunyan Tansheng (780-841), tenth Chinese Ancestor; Jp. Ungan Dojo in the Soto Zen lineage

3 Dongshan Liangjie (807-869), eleventh Chinese Ancestor; Jp. Tozan Ryokai in the Soto Zen lineage; author of the *Hokyo Zanmai*

We seek awakening because we live the feeling of being separated from the Truth. Motivated by the desire to find, to achieve awakening, we inevitably think that the other, the master, the Buddha, have obtained the Eye-Pupil, the Enlightenment that we must obtain in our turn.

What Ungan Donjo answers is that, "the Eye-Pupil is neither mine nor another's, has never been another's, will never be mine." It is not something that can be acquired because it is the essence of all activity, all practice, all searching, all illusion and all awakening. In reality, the Eye-Pupil is the Reality of That which we are, which presents itself in the appearance of the five *skandhas* (aggregates), that is to say, in a totally impermanent evanescent form.

The Eye-Pupil is what I am, what we are, the essence. It is beings, and all the activities they produce. It is therefore not possible to obtain It, to obtain what is already there or That which we already are.

That is why, in his great compassion, Ungan asks Tozan again, "To whom did you give yours?" (how could you possibly have lost your identity, your buddha-nature?).

Tozan's answer: "I don't have it" also springs forth from the Eye-Pupil itself. There can be no 'me', no ego separated from its Source that could utter the words 'I don't have it'.

Everything arises spontaneously from the Eye-Pupil itself and returns to it. To understand this truth is to understand what enlightenment is and to allow oneself to live it in all circumstances.

"Yes, you have it," Ungan assures him. "In which direction are you turning it at this very moment?" Ungan points out *twice* to Tozan that he already has the Eye-Pupil: firstly, he *is* the Eye-Pupil, and secondly, wherever he goes, he always takes it with him, because he is 'not two' with It. All beings are no- two with Eye-Pupil, or in other words, all beings *are* Buddha.

Tozan no longer knows what to say. He doesn't understand; he is perplexed and divided. He thinks he needs a rational explanation. Compassionate, Ungan adds: "Begging (or searching) for the Eye-Pupil, is none other than the Eye-Pupil, don't you see?" The seeker is what he seeks! Or to put it another way, what is sought is the seeker himself. The search ends when this is understood/realised. It is the awakening to the Truth that all things are emptiness, and that Emptiness is all things (which can only be realised as Presence,

everything being only the present moment). When this is realised, "your surroundings comes to life", writes Master Wanshi Shogaku⁴ in the *Song of Silent Illumination*.

Dōgen continues: "It is Ungan Donjo's answer that gives an Eye to the Eye-Pupil and makes it come alive. See and understand that there is only the Eye looking through the eye. There is only Buddha in the form of the *skandhas* (aggregates), which are also empty of substance. It is the Eye-Pupil which seeks the Eye-Pupil and finds it within Itself in the heart of zazen: *Ji Ju Yu Zan Mai*. It is the light that illuminates itself within itself, by itself.

This is what Ungan teaches Tozan: "Water attracts water; mountains line up with mountains; the hen and the chick in the egg both peck the shell at the same moment of birth. In order to save all beings, beings of awakening, bodhisattvas cannot set themselves apart from beings because they know themselves to be all beings. And like [these] beings, they are the Eye-Pupil.

Tozan, who did not understand, said: "No, it is not the Eye-Pupil." That is to say, I don't have it!

And yet, even this doubt is nothing other than the Eye-Pupil which engages in self-criticism (which doubts itself). The refusal to recognise (to recognise oneself) also has its origin in the Eye-Pupil. It is therefore essential to meet the Eye-Pupil which reveals itself to Itself at every moment during the life of things. To plunge into the Eye-Pupil is to unfold the heart of Awakening, to practise the Way and to attest to the Great Awakening without beyond (*Anuttara-Samyakusambodhi*).

"The Eye-Pupil, from beginningless time until today, has been neither my own nor anyone else's, and there's nothing whatever to hold onto."

⁴ Wanshi Shogaku (1091-1157), Hongzhi Zhengjue. Dharma brother of Changlu Qingliao (1088-1151), 21st Chinese ancestor; Jp. Chōro Seiryō in the Soto Zen lineage. Wanshi had no known dharma heirs.