

Zazen Zoom Saturday, May 8, 21

"**Bonnô soku bodai**", passions, sensory pains, negative emotions are Awakening. This proposition is a keyteaching of our masters. It is important to come back to this point, following last Saturday's kusen on *makyô*, the hallucinatory and negative emotions which constantly encumber us in our daily life, and also in our meditation.

It is because they are impermanent that illusions and passions cannot be considered real. But then, how can they be considered as Awakening? Like all things in the universe, inside and outside, they appear and disappear. The flow of impermanence and illusions is the way in which the fundamental Consciousness, the original Source, Emptiness, takes form, awakens to Itself, becomes perceptible to Itself, becomes aware of Its empty nature.

"*Ku soku ze shiki*", like "*Bonnô soku bodai*" means this perfect oneness of the Original Principle, of emptiness, with things, phenomena and illusions. This truth is revealed at every moment in our daily life, in Presence, as Presence. This is what we can and must see and realize in our meditation: everything that appears and disappears, everything that happens in us is the Awakening of Emptiness, Presence itself.

Everything is Awakening. Illusions as well as passions are also this truth. As they are of the same nature as emptiness, empty, without substance of their own, it is neither possible to grasp them nor to refuse them. And who could claim to make a selection in the flow of the appearance and disappearance of things?

Nor is it possible to free oneself from the *bonnos* by exercising one's own will. The only attitude that the meditator must develop is to accept them as nothing other than Awakening.

"*Bonnô soku bodai*" is the unconditional acceptance of impermanence, of birth and death. It is no other than Master Nyojo's "*Shin jin datsu raku*", the abandonment of all identification with the body and the discriminating mind.

This is also really what *Shikantaza* means!

Master Dogen expressed this truth throughout the *Shobogenzo*. In "*Ikka myôju*", One Bright Pearl, he tells the story of Gensha (835-908) who saw the whole universe as One Bright Pearl, i.e. as the Dharma itself, the indivisible truth, the Reality.

The *Ikka myôju* chapter ends with these words:

"He who meditates on birth and death, how can he doubt the Bright Pearl. Whether we are deluded or troubled, this is still nothing but the Bright Pearl. No action or thought is separate from it. Therefore, going to and from the cave of the demons of the black mountain is nothing but the Bright Pearl."

The cave of the demons of the black mountain is our mind cluttered with passions, illusions and all the negative emotions that we have carried within us from beginningless time. To visit this cave and realize that it is nothing other than the Bright Pearl, is to live oneself as the Bright Pearl and to reach the other side in a single bound.

In our zazen practice, "neither grasp nor reject" is therefore the fundamental advice that we really need to understand and experience. For everything is the Bright Pearl, including our dark stories, our foolish dreams, our bad habits, our *makyô*. The attitude of equanimity that the Buddha and the masters teach in the face of the miseries of existence is to learn to see the illusory without becoming attached to it or taking it for reality.

During zazen we learn to sharpen our faculty of discernment. *Shikantaza* is nothing other than simply sitting in a continuous vision of the empty nature of things, in the heart of a benevolent presence. To live Presence is to contemplate the *bonnos* and thus to hold ourselves in Awakening itself.

"*Bonnô soku bodai*", the passions are Awakening. To understand this truth intimately is to awaken to the truth of existence, to the clarity of the One Bright Pearl.

"If you examine yourself carefully," concludes Master Dogen, "even if you are still encumbered by illusions, you will eventually see clearly as in a mirror."

To see clearly one's own negative emotions, one's *makyo* and one's illusory 'me' is to clarify the world of one's experiences and at the same time to live the Awakening and the truth that the Buddhas teach.
