

Zoom Zazen Saturday 24 Sept 2022

Master Wanshi writes:

"An Ancient said that non-thinking establishes and fulfils [actualises] the way of no-thought. Enacting and fulfilling the way of no-thought, finally you can rest and, proceeding in this way, you are able to guide the assembly."

In saying this, Master Wanshi is relying on his own *realisation*, his own awakening. But it's also possible that he's referring to other masters, and especially perhaps to the Sixth Patriarch, Master Eno, who equated *no-thought* with Great Thought in order to speak about emptiness as well as about Great Wisdom. So what does Master Wanshi want to express? His statement seems incomprehensible because how can non-thinking *'establish and fulfil no-thought'*? Unless it's to say that there is only *one* reality which is emptiness, and that one settles oneself down in non-thought.

In the Platform Sutra, Master Eno taught his disciples that the door to the Doctrine is to take *no-thought* as one's master, *no-form* [i.e. formlessness] as one's way of being, and *non-attachment* as one's foundation:

"Formlessness is, in the midst of phenomena, to be detached from them; no-thought is, in the midst of thought, not to think;

"Non-attachment is the foundation of the nature of human beings."

'In the midst of thoughts, not to think.' This is another way of talking about *Hishiryō*, *beyond-thought*, the heart of zazen from which the empty nature of thoughts is seen.

Thoughts follow one another without ever stopping. We all know this and we suffer when we take them for reality, because we don't see that they carry with them our illusions, our beliefs and our fears.

"It's essential that at each moment in this continuous succession of thoughts," Master Eno goes on, "there's no latching on to any of them, otherwise it's called attachment."

"Beings' own conditioning in illusion produces nothing but thoughts when we come into contact with objects. From these thoughts naturally arise vain and false views and, in this way, birth and becoming appear."

To sit in zazen is simply to contemplate. Without attaching oneself either to thoughts or to the mind where thoughts are born. The mind being emptiness itself, there is, in fact, nothing to observe. Can you understand and *actualise* this? Now?

Master Eno drives the point home again:

"Not seeing that your nature is fundamentally empty causes the arising, in your mind, of the intention to observe 'emptiness' and in this way a dreamt-up kind of emptiness is created. Since this illusion is not based on anything, we know that those who observe it are fools."

To settle oneself down and *actualise*¹ [make real] the path of non-thought, as recommended by Master Eno and Master Wanshi, is to see all dharmas - *phenomena* - without getting attached to any of them; to be everywhere without getting attached to a single thought.

To settle down and actualise the path of non-thought is not to settle anywhere; to give up attachment to the idea that thoughts define us and belong to us. And thus, in this unveiling, our fundamental nature is spontaneously revealed, Great Wisdom. In this way the path of non-thinking is *realised*, which makes possible the teaching of the assembly of disciples.

So, Master Wanshi concludes:

"Sitting in silence, the thoughts clear, walk in the centre of the circle of wonders."

"This is how you must penetrate and study."

To walk in the heart of wonders is to see the pure nature of beings.

As Master Eno puts it:

"It is an azure sky whose goodness is the sun, whose wisdom is the moon. Wisdom and goodness shine constantly with a radiant light."

¹ In *Cultivating the Empty Field*, Teigan Dan Leighton translates the word as 'enact'. Here we use variously 'fulfil', 'actualise' or 'realise' for the French word 'remplir' according to context