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*from The Record of Lin-Chi, translated by Ruth F. Sasaki*

*Discourse XVIII*

*"The true student of the Way has nothing to do with Buddhas, nothing to do with Bodhisattvas or Arhats. Nor has he anything to do with what is held to be excellent in the three realms. Having transcended these, in solitary freedom, he is not bound to things. Though heaven and earth were to turn upside down I wouldn't have a doubt; though all the buddhas of the ten directions were to manifest themselves before me, I wouldn't have any joy; though the three hells were to suddenly yawn at my feet, I wouldn't have any fear. Why is this so? Because as I see it, all dharmas are empty forms; when transformation takes place they are existent, when transformation does not take place they are non-existent. The three realms are mind only, the ten thousand dharmas are consciousness only. Hence:*

*Illusory dreams, flowers in the sky,  
Why trouble to grasp at them!*

If you can manifest the wisdom that understands clearly that there is completely no self whatsoever, then I think you could be called a free person. Everything has a self, doesn't it? Or does it? Does a plant have a self? Does a rock have a self? Do all things have selves?

When you look at anything, for example, as soon as you have turned your gaze to a flower, you have manifested the heart, the consciousness, of that flower as yourself. Or, put alternatively, you are manifesting with your consciousness as a flower consciousness. That's why I ask you, is there a fixated entity, thing, called your self? Forget about fixated self, is there self at all, or is there no self?

Certainly there is a self, but it's not a fixated thing. In the process inevitably there comes about, there arises intermittently, a self that hears and sees. That hearing, seeing self certainly appears, but it also disappears, and when it disappears it manifests as a flower, as a rock, as the sky. Put in an extreme form, when you look, when you gaze upon the universe, the self is arising there. At that time your self has dissolved into the universe and therefore is able to manifest, create, the universe. People talk about dying, but this is not dying, this is hiding in, becoming the universe, melting into the cosmos.

The self manifests a plus self, a positive self, but it also manifests a minus, or negative, self. Inevitably that self will also do the minus activity in order to dissolve into the cosmos. It is in the nature of the self to do the activity of expansion, and through the activity of expansion to manifest the totality of space, and also to do the activity of contraction and manifest through that the ultimately small cosmos.

Along the process of manifesting the ultimately large, great universe and the ultimately tiny universe, within the folds of this alternating process, there comes about through the activity of life a self, and from time to time there comes about through the activity of death a self. In other words, two kinds of selves can arise: one self whose job it is to complete itself through completing the activity of life and another kind of self whose job it is to complete itself by completing the activity of death.

The self that says, I must complete my being through doing the activity of life, absolutely, inevitably will come to the point within that activity wherein there

is no longer a need to live. This could be called a manifestation of a complete self. That complete self doesn't need to live anymore, because it's gone all the way with life. Such a complete self is inevitably manifested by a rock, a plant, an insect, a beast, and also a human being. It's not just human beings that manifest a complete self like that. Every being encounters the situation of manifesting its completeness through the activity of life.

It goes without saying that that state, that situation, is space, is the universe. Everything manifests in its way a complete universe and knows therein true repose of spirit. At that time the self that said, My job is to live, has melted into that universe and therefore is able to manifest that universe. After one has manifested the self that no longer needs to live, then, inevitably, the opposite activity, the minus or shrinking activity, will take the initiative, and one will absolutely, inevitably manifest the state wherein there is no longer a need to die.

The state wherein there is no longer a need to die is called the ultimately small universe. Inside that ultimately small, inside has collapsed, it has disappeared, and every being--from a plant, an insect, through the human being--will manifest such a universe. To be a human being who has manifested the wisdom that really understands this process is to do the activity of life and death.

When you claim, I'm not a bird, I'm not a rock, well, that's true, you could say that, but the reason you say that is because at that time you are a self that has to live or die. You may say, I'm not a man, I'm not a woman, and indeed it's true, but when you encounter such a person you really want to cry. A person who has really manifested the wisdom into the process of life and death, when they hear

people insisting, I'm not a man, or, I'm not a woman, I can't be this, I can't be that, such a person knows that in a sense, yes, it's quite true, but deep down, when they encounter a person who is limited by their humanity in that way, deep down in their bowels they are crying.

I came to the United States 30 years ago. It was troubled times. I even encountered somebody that claimed that black people weren't human. That would imply that yellow people aren't human either. People were so racist, they would say Chinese, Japanese, Jews aren't people, aren't humans. Nowadays if people said things like that publicly they would be liable to be taken to court for their wretchedness.

We say that racial discrimination is bad, but when we say that do we really understand the nature of discrimination, the discriminating consciousness? It's very dangerous to talk about racial discrimination unless you understand the nature of discriminating consciousness. What is discrimination?

In any event, when the incomplete self manifests the ultimately large self, that incomplete self dissolves, hides, inside the universe and manifests the universe. Likewise, when one manifests the ultimately self, the ultimately small great universe, the self dissolves into that self and hides. There are all sorts of different colors--black, yellow, red--all sorts of different beings; but they all manifest in the ultimately large universe that comes about through the activity of life and in the ultimately small universe that comes about through the activity of death. We can see that everyone must be exactly equal.

But in between the ultimately large and the ultimately small there are plus

and minus selves. In the in-between of these two universes there are all sorts of distinctions. There are men and there are women; in other words, there are those who are doing the activity of life with the activity of death following along, and there are others that are doing the activity of death wherein the activity of life follows along. According to Buddhism, according to Tathagata Zen, we have to acknowledge both the perspective of equality and absolute sameness, and also the perspective of discrimination.

You can understand the principle of what is meant by discrimination. Discrimination arises within the oneness. It arises along the way, within the folds of the alternating process of going from ultimately large to ultimately small, back and forth like that. And so we realize that it is not a fixated thing, this thing called discrimination.

A man faces a woman and says, I'm a man, I'm not a woman. A woman faces a man and says, I'm a woman, not a man. I would like to slap them in the face. Don't say stupid things. Do you understand what it means to be a man? When you claim to be a woman, do you understand why you're a woman, what that is? People that fixate themselves do not understand the principle. Don't flap your lips stupidly. What you're being asked to do is manifest that wisdom that understands that neither the complete state--call it God, if you want--nor the incomplete self, neither one is fixated.

The complete self that comes about through having done the activity of life we could call God, and the complete self that comes about through doing the activity of [death], according to Zen, this is what people refer to when they say

devil. The good god is the ultimately large, the bad god is the ultimately small. But when you contemplate the fact that the complete self that comes about through completing the activity of life and the complete self that comes about through completing the activity of death are the same self, then you understand the equality of the good god and the bad god. They're the same.

What you call the good god is just that which comes about through the plus activity. Because it comes about through the activity that we could refer to as the male side, men have arbitrarily designated as the good god. The ultimately small, the complete self that comes about through the female activity, that's, I guess, what people mean by the devil. There's a difference. The good god comes about through the activity of life taking the initiative and the activity of death following along with the activity of life. This is something that men have arbitrarily designated this way. Because of the fact that the activity of shrinking is an opposite activity, men have arbitrarily designated that as the devil. [...] Although they are different, in both cases, whichever one takes the initiative, whichever one takes the following role, the fact is that there is an equality, because both activities are always present. Everything is equal.

We have properly manifested the wisdom that understands about this universe and about us human beings when we understand how it is that separation comes about within oneness. If you have manifested the wisdom that understands that perfectly, then, even though the sky should fall and crush you, you would not be surprised, you would not be nonplussed. Rinzai talks big words, doesn't he. He says, Even if the sky should fall, I would not be confused. And

he wouldn't be confused or shocked, because it's none other than the activity that makes all of us.

But it's scary if you fixate the self. If heaven were to fall and crush all beings to death, anyone would be scared, wouldn't they? If this world that we live on were to explode like a volcano, everybody would be terrified. But if we really have gained for ourselves that wisdom that understands the process that creates heaven and earth, then, if heaven were to fall to earth or earth were to vaporize into heaven, we would understand, it's just a natural process.

All human beings, human beings that claim, I'm not a dog, I'm not a rock, they die. But you don't need to be afraid, because you don't really die; you just dissolve into the universe and manifest the universe.

Then Rinzai goes on to say, If all the buddhas were to appear in front of me--what does he mean by all the buddhas? One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, all different kinds of worlds, different levels of the universe appear before one's eyes--this is merely the activity of expansion and contraction. You and that rock manifest the Buddha's state. When you realize that wisdom, to understand this some people cry for joy, other people dance for joy. But there's nothing particularly to rejoice, it's absolutely natural.

Likewise Rinzai says there's nothing to fear, there's nothing to fear even in the sky falling or the earth exploding. In other words, what Rinzai is saying is you won't be afraid of death if you've really understood that you don't die, you dissolve into space. But you can't expect to have that perspective unless you have a strong will to manifest that, because it takes a strong will to manifest that

wisdom.

You say, I cannot understand. What are you saying? Of course you cannot understand if you are attached to self. When a man and woman together manifest the activity of love, does one of them say, I can't understand? Dogs, cows, horses--they all make love. They're able to do the activity of love just fine without having to understand what love is. You speak of love.

In Buddhism we have this word *maitri* or *metta* in the Sanskrit and Pali [respectively], *jih* in Japanese, usually translated into English as *compassion*; but what we mean by *karuna* and *metta*, compassion and loving kindness, is different from your English word *compassion*. You can call it love if you want, you can call it compassion if you want. The important thing is to understand that there is plus love and minus love, there is plus compassion and minus compassion. When you do the plus activity, this is what is called positive compassion. When you do the minus activity, you do minus compassion. We have two words, *karuna* to describe the first kind, and *maitri* or *metta* to describe the other kind.

As we study deeper and deeper, we understand different aspects of this world. Rinzai then goes on to ask, how can this be? How is it that we are able to manifest the positive compassion called *karuna* and the negative compassion called *maitri*. Unless one has really really practiced, you can't see behind the meaning in Rinzai's phraseology.

When one seeks to complete oneself through doing the activity of life, the activity of death stands in opposition, saying, Don't go there, stay back here with



me. The man may well reject the woman, saying, No, no, I have to complete myself, I can't stick around here, I have to move on. Then plus and minus completely separate. Who can save this separated situation? Who can help this situation? Who can aid the situation? The man wants to realize his ideal and leaves the woman behind, miserable. Inevitably this condition arises as part of the natural principle of the universe.

But the fact is that it is also part of the natural principle of things that, for the male to complete his activity, the female must be there present, must have come along with him, and so the natural functioning of the universe will bring them together in that completeness. Who is it that then helps, that saves the situation? The one that saves the situation is the person that is called the bodhisattva, the person that practices the bodhisattva path. For example, the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara--Kannon, as we [say] in Japanese-- or Samantabhadra, Fugen. The bodhisattva comes to save the situation.

And where [do] the bodhisattva[s] Avalokiteshvara or Samantabhadra arise from? In Buddhism we have really skillful ways of describing things. As soon as the man and woman separate, between them appears the bodhisattva. In other words, there appears a being between them, admittedly an incomplete being. This is the bodhisattva. It is that being, that child, that saves the situation for father and mother, that repairs their separation. Overjoyed to be saved by the bodhisattva, the parents nurture it carefully. This is called the law of cause and effect. Usually in Buddhism, when they talk about the law of cause and effect, it's taken in the negative sense of being punished for bad karma, but the parents giv-

ing birth to a child, nurturing a child, and being saved by the child is the law of cause and effect.

Hahhhh. Having said this much, I think you've begun to understand a little bit about who you are and what your world is. You understand that you are not a fixated thing and you understand that you do not appear and disappear without a process being involved.

If you've heard this much and you still fixate the self, then you're worse off than a bug or a butterfly. Rinzai talks about this important thing about how I see all dharmas as empty. Tomorrow we'll talk about that, because we have just come to our time now.