

Yamada Mumon's Quotations of Zen Texts

Francisco Figueroa Medina

Kyoto University

Yamada Mumon (1900-1988)

- President of Hanazono University, from 1949 to 1978.
- *Rōshi* overseeing Shōfuku-ji, from 1953 to 1977.
- Founded the Institute for Zen Studies in 1964.
- Chief abbot of Myōshin-ji, from 1978 to 1982.

Yamada Mumon's *Lectures on 'Principles of Zazen'* (坐禅義講話)

- Originally a series of *teishō* given at Shōfuku-ji in 1953.
- Published in 1956, as *How to do Zazen: Discourses on 'Principles of Zazen.'*
- In 1974, the Institute for Zen Studies included a revised and edited version in the quarterly *Zen Culture*.
- In that same year, the editor decided to publish it as a separate volume titled *The Path to Zazen*.
- In 1982, this volume was republished with a new title, *Recommendations for Zazen*.

Principles of Zazen (坐禪義)

- *Principles of Zazen* is attributed to Ch'ang-lu Tsung-tse (died 1107).
- It appears in a compendium compiled prior to 1157.
- The manual became well-known after its publication in a monastic code associated with Tsung-tse.
- In Japan, it was included in the *Shiburoku* (四部録)

Bielefeldt's Chapter on *Principles of Zazen*

- *Principles of Zazen* reduces the diversity of the Buddhist practice to a single, simple meditation technique.
- It reduces the perpetuity of the bodhisattva path to a single experience.
- Two reasons:
 - 1) The need to reach larger audiences.
 - 2) The buddha-nature obscured doctrine.

The Essential Art of Meditation

- According to Bielefeldt, *Principles of Zazen* considers that the essential art of meditation is simply this:
- “Do not think of any good or evil whatsoever. Whenever a thought occurs, be aware of it; as soon as you are aware of it, it will vanish. If you remain for a long period forgetful of objects, you will naturally become unified.”

The Relevance of Yamada's Commentary

- Yamada's commentary allows us to see within this brief text the full range and perpetuity of the bodhisattva path, with its implicit cosmology, ontology, epistemology, ethics, and politics.
- Still, this does not mean that Yamada Mumon did not introduce new elements to this soteriology.
- To what extent does the introduction of new elements in a soteriology change not only that soteriology, but also the elements themselves?

What is the “essential art of meditation?”

- 「一切の善悪すべて思量することなかれ。念起らばすなわち覺せよ。これを覺すればすなわち失す。久々に縁を忘すれば、自ら一片となる。これ坐禪の要術なり。」
- “Do not think of any good or evil whatsoever. Whenever a thought occurs, be aware of it; as soon as you are aware of it, it will vanish. If you remain for a long period forgetful of objects, you will naturally become unified. This is the essential art of seated meditation.”
- “You must never think neither of any good nor of any evil. When a thought arises, be aware of it. As soon as you become aware of it, it will vanish. If you leave behind all direct causes and indirect conditions for an extended period, it will naturally become one. This is the essential art of *zazen*.”

What is the “essential art of meditation?”

- 坐禅せんと欲する時、 閑静処において厚く坐物を敷き、 寛く衣帯をつけ、 威儀をして斉整ならしめ、 然る後、 結跏趺坐せよ。
- “When you sit in meditation, spread a thick mat in a quiet place. Loosen your robe and belt and assume a proper posture. Then sit in the cross-legged position.”
- “Whenever you decide to do *zazen*, spread a thick cushion in a quiet place, loose your robe and your belt, and, in a neat and dignified manner, sit in full lotus.”

What is the “essential art of meditation?”

- 「すなわち諸縁を放捨し、 万事を休息し身心一如にして、 動静へだてなく、 その飲食をはかりて、 多からず少なからず、 その睡眠を整えて節ならず、 恣ならず。」
- “Then, by abandoning all direct causes and indirect conditions, and putting all matters to rest, unify body and mind, without distinction between movement and stillness. Weigh food and drink, taking neither too much nor too little, and regulate your sleep, neither depriving yourself of it neither being indulgent.”

What is the “essential art of meditation?”

- 「外、諸縁を息める、内、心喘ぐこと無く。心、牆壁如くならば、似て道に入るべし。」
- “Outside, all relations cut off; inside, a heart without struggles. If your mind becomes like an enclosing wall, you will surely enter the path.”

What is the “essential art of meditation?”

- *Verses of the Five Contemplations* (五観の偈):
 - 「四つには正に良薬を事とするは形枯を療ぜんが為なり．形枯は形は身形のことで、身体がやせ衰えること。」
 - “We truly take this food as good medicine to prevent emaciation.”

What is the “essential art of meditation?”

- Following Yamada, the essential art of meditation is:
- To settle the body (調身), the breath (調息), and the mind (調心)
- These terms are taken from the “T’iao-ho” chapter of the *Hsiao chih-kuan*, which is about preparatory practices.
- However, Yamada uses these terms to explain the practice of *zazen* itself.

Keeping the Eyes Open

- Rinzai:

黒山の鬼窟、誠に怖畏すべし。」

“You ought to be afraid of the hungry ghosts’ cave in a dark mountain.”

- Daitō :

「坐禅せば四条五条の橋の上、往き来の人を深山木に見て。」

“When I do *zazen*, I make a tree deep in the mountains out of every person, who comes and goes on Shijō or Gojō bridge.”

Settling the Breath (調息)

- Regarding the breath, *Principles of Zazen* only tells us this:

「身相既に定まり、氣息既に調い、然して後臍腹を寛放し、」

“Once your posture is settled, you should settle your breath and, finally, relax your abdomen.”

- Yamada quotes the section of the *Hsiao chih-kuan* which explains the four kinds of breathing: wind (風), panting (喘), anxious (氣), and rest (息).
- He interprets the phrase “relax your abdomen” to mean that one should “gently put energy in the lower abdomen, or in the point below the navel known as *tanden*.”

Meditation and Wisdom

- According to *Principles of Zazen*, to settle the mind is:

一切の善悪すべて思量することなかれ。念起らばすなわち覺せよ。これを覺すればすなわち失す。

“You must never think neither of any good nor of any evil. When a thought arises, be aware of it. As soon as you become aware of it, it will vanish.”

- In my opinion the text asks the practitioner not only to be aware of his thoughts but to see that they have no nature of their own.

The Pearl within a Pond

- それ禅定の一門は最も急務たり。もし安禅静慮ならずんば、這裏に到って惣に須らく茫然たるべし。所以に珠を探るには、宜しく浪を静むべし。水を動かせば取ること応に難かるべし。定水澄静なれば、心珠自ら現ず。
- That is why it is said, “to look for a pearl, it is better to appease the waves. If you stir the water, it will surely become more difficult to get. When the water of *samādhi* becomes calm and clear, the pearl of the mind reveals itself.”
- This passage asks the practitioner to see the practice of *zazen* and his own mind in this metaphor’s terms.

The State of No-Mind (無心の心境)

- For Yamada, to settle the mind is to realize that the state of no-mind is the right condition of the mind, after abandoning all thoughts about good and evil.

- Dōgen:

「この非思量底を思量せよ。」

“Think about the foundation of no-thinking.”

Focusing on the main phrase of a *kōan* (*watō*/ 話頭).

- To abandon each thought, one by one, Yamada recommends the technique known as *watō*.
- Jōshū's Dog:

「趙州和尚、因みに僧問う、「狗子に環って仏性有りや也無しや。」州云く、「無。」

“A monk asked Jōshū: Has a dog buddha-nature or not? Jōshū said: No!”

- Mumon Ekai's commentary:

「外内打成一片」となって、「啞子の夢を得るが如くただ自知することを許す。」

“Inside and outside will naturally become a single piece, but only you will acknowledge it, as a mute dumb who has seen a dream.”

What is Awakening?

- To describe awakening Yamada quotes the next sentence of Mumon Ekai's commentary:

「爆燃として打発すれば、天を驚かし地を動じて、」

“But, when it hits you suddenly like a thunderbolt, the heavens will resound, and the earth will tremble with fear.”

- What is Mu?

「上は三十三天の頂から、下は奈落のどん底までぶち抜く。」

“From the summit of the thirty-three heavens, it sinks into the very bottom of hell.”

Discursive Activity in *Principles of Zazen*

- 「こいねがわくば諸禅友、この文を三復せば、自利利他、同じく正覚を成ぜん」。
- “Friends in Ch'an, go over this text again and again. Benefiting others as well as ourselves, let us together achieve perfect enlightenment.”
- “Fortunately, Zen companions, if you constantly repeat this text, you will all realize the same perfect awakening, benefiting yourselves and others.”

The Buddha's Teachings Lead to Wisdom

- 「もし善くこの意を得れば、即ち自然に四大軽安、精神爽利、正念分明にして、法味神を資け、寂然として清楽ならん。」
- “If you grasp the point of this [practice], the four elements [of the body] will naturally be light and at ease; the spirit will be fresh and sharp; thoughts will be correct and clear; the flavor of the Dharma will sustain the spirit; and you will be calm, pure, and joyful.”
- “If you follow this advice, then the four elements [that conform the body] will be light and relaxed, and your spirit will be fresh and clear. With right mindfulness and clear understanding, the flavor of the Buddha's teaching will lead your spirit to complete calmness and pure joy.”

The *Kōan* as Revelation

•*Tannishō* (歎異抄):

「源空が信心も如来より賜りたる信心なり。善信房が信心も如来より賜わらせたまいたる信心なり。さればただ一つなり。別の信心にておわしまさん人は、源空が参らんずる浄土へは、よも参らせたまいそうらわじ。」

“Genkū’s faith is also a faith received from the *Tathāgata*. Zenshinbō’s faith is also a faith received from the *Tathāgata*. Being that the case, it is one and the same. Those who think it is different, will not take part of the same Pure Land as Genkū will.”