

THE PHILOSOPHY OF NYOZAI OR THUSNESS¹

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I: *Nyo* 如 or *Tathatā* and the intermediate between *ku* 空, 'nothingness,' and *u* 有, 'reality'

The following terms are often used in daily language as well as in Japanese literature and have become familiar to such an extent that we do not consider them strange or out of place: *nyozai*, *nyojitsu*, *nyoze*, *ichinyo*, *shinnyo*, *nyorai*, and *nyoko*.² However, when we attempt to think about the true and basic meaning implied in *nyo* 如 and its compounds we find it

1. *Nyo* 如 or *tathatā* is translated 'thusness' (cf. *shinnyo* in note 2 below).

2. *Nyozai* 如在 —thusness

Nyojitsu 如実 —reality— cf. *shinnyo* below.

Nyoze 如是 —has a variety of meanings: (a) usually the first word occurring in a sūtra; (b) indicates that one believes conforming to truth without error; (c) indicates the absence of any doubt.

Ichinyo 一如 —the one *tathatā* (*shimyo*), the adjective 'one' indicating the indivisibility and absolute unity of the *tathatā*.

Shinnyo 真如 —thusness or suchness, the true form of things, reality. Primarily a Mahāyāna term. In general it indicates the absolute reality which transcends the multitude of forms in the phenomenal world. It is regarded, on the one hand, as *real existence* (*jitsu-u*); and on the other hand as a form of *nothingness* known as *śūnyatā* or *kū* 空.

Nyorai 如来 —one who has arrived from and gone to *tathatā*.

Nyoko 如去 —one who has gone to the world of truth, viz. nirvāna.

These translations are all taken from *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, Tokyo 1965.

elusive and difficult to understand. This is particularly true when such words are translated into foreign languages, and even the vague understanding we might have had of the concept of *nyo* seems completely lost in translation. For example, the word *nyoho* might be rendered 'pious' in English, but this is not a satisfactory translation. Even the word 'honest' falls short of the real meaning. 'Faithful' leaves something to be desired. However we might try to translate the word *nyoho*, the root meaning of the *nyo* is practically impossible to convey. Similarly if we translate *nyojitsu ni* 如実に as 'truly' or 'realistically', we are laying stress on the *jitsu* aspect and we lose the *nyo* concept involved. Even if we translate the concept as 'just as it is' or 'as things really are,' what we are saying is that these meanings are close to the actual meaning of the word and in a certain manner do express the meaning contained in the term *nyo*, but we still feel that certain important elements in the basic meaning have been omitted. The real difficulty in explaining this concept lies in the English language itself, or in the non-Oriental philosophy, both of which lack the concept of *nyo*. This is true not only of English but of German and other foreign western languages.

It is often said that *nyojitsu* and *shinnyo* are the same. *Shinnyo* has been translated as 'thusness' or 'suchness,' and has been explained (cf. note 2 p. 52) as 'the true form of things, reality.' However, such an explanation does not clarify the true meaning of the *nyo* in the word *shinnyo*. The essential meaning of *shinnyo* does become somewhat clearer in the explanation that *shinnyo* is of Mahāyāna usage and is taken to mean on the one hand the *jitsu-u* or real existence, and on

the other hand the *kū* or *śūnyatā* which in Oriental philosophy conveys a 'nothingness' which has positive aspects.

The *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary* states on page 284 :

In general Mahāyāna usage *tathatā* indicates the absolute reality which transcends the multitude of forms in the phenomenal world. It is regarded as being identical with *hosshin* 法身, and cannot be expressed in words or contemplated by the unenlightened man. It is regarded, on the one hand, as real existence (*jitsu-u*); and on the other hand as *śūnyatā* (*kū*). *Tathatā* is the underlying reality upon which all phenomenal existence depends.

With the aid of this explanation something of an outline of *nyojitsu* or *shinnyo* can be seen. *Shinnyo* on the one hand is real existence (*jitsu-u*), and yet at the same time it implies the concept of *kū* or *śūnyatā*. The true meaning of 'nyo' in *nyojitsu* or *shinnyo* is found as an intermediate between real existence and nothingness (*kū*). Thus *nyo* has a definite special meaning and its origin is found in the Mahāyāna doctrine.

The idea that *tathatā* is regarded as *jitsu-u* (real existence) on the one hand, and *kū* (nothingness) on the other hand means that actual existence (*shin no jitsuzai-sei* 真の實在性) mediates *kū* or *śūnyatā*, and that *kū* (nothingness) and *u* (existence) are actually the *ichinyo* (one indivisible *tathatā*). This concept of *ichinyo* between non-existence and existence is put forth as 'truly existent, but mysteriously existent' (*shinkū myō-u*).³ It is extremely important to consider the existence (*u*) mediating non-existence or nothingness (*kū*), and that we consider the *shinkū myō-u* as the intermediate relative between *kū* and *u*.

3. *Shinkū myō-u* (真空妙有)

The following explanation⁴ of *shinkū myō-u* is far from satisfactory :

The state of true non-existence can be attained by removing all erroneous thoughts. The state of the mysteriously-existent is that state which is permanent and has existence. When all forms of existence and phenomena are observed in their real nature, this state is attained.

This definition does not fully explain the non-dual and non-different aspects (*funi fui naru*) of the *ichinyo* between *kū* and *u*. And this difficulty in explaining it is found in the concept of the *nyo* as an intermediating relative.

In fact, contained within the concept of *nyo* are certain qualities of the *dharani* (mystical invocation). Here too we find that the meaning has a certain similarity with the mystical invocation of the Cabala *Quatenus* (In so far as). The Cabala derives from the pantheistic emanation theory of Plotinus. It is said that there is a relation between Plotinus and Gandavyuha Mahāyāna, and some similarities between the intermediate relation of the *ichinyo* between *kū* and *u* are also found in the Cabala.

This *Quatenus* or mystical invocation of the Cabala is said to intermediate in the *En-sof* which exists between infiniteness and finiteness with the quickness of lightening. We could say that Leibnitz had such a keen insight that he was able to find something in common between the ideas of the Cabala and the non-existence (*śūnyatā*) of Buddhism. However, he interpreted this non-existence as meaning “nothing,” and failed to grasp the positive aspects of the concept. Thus his explanation amounted to little more than a criticism of the eternal non-

4. *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, p. 284.

existence found in the Cabala. However, a definite similarity between the *ichinyo* and its intermediary function between *kū* and *u*, and the *Quatenus* in the Cabala as intermediary in *En-sof* between infiniteness and finiteness could have been found.

Such characteristics of the Cabala are much akin to Oriental ideas, but it seems difficult in the West to develop the concept of *nyo*, i.e. the intermediary concept of non-dual and non-different nature which exists between *kū* and *u*. This difficulty is due to the lack of a word or words to convey the meaning contained within *nyo*. When we seek a word similar in meaning to *nyo* we come down to the word *Als-Ob*. It is said that Kant often used this term *Als-Ob* when he attempted to interpret critically the various concepts related to transcendental spheres. Later Vaihinger, in his *Philosophie des Als-Ob*, is said to have attempted to explain on the basis of the Kantian interpretation both the non-real quality and the necessity of non-reality for various religious and metaphysical ideas, as well as for all other intellectual endeavors. However, in his case also, the positive meaning implied in *Als-Ob* is not clearly stated. In his explanation of *Als-Ob* there was ample opportunity to touch upon the essential meaning implied in *nyo*, but he too fails to go beyond the range of reality, and does not develop the positive aspect of the concept. Vaihinger was unable to complete the philosophy of the *Als-Ob* to the point of the intermediary role of the identity between *śūnyatā* and real existence. Jaspers breaks through the deadlock of Kantian transcendental dialectic in his explanation of Kant. On this point, Jaspers seems to realize the non-real element of *Als-Ob* from an existential philosophical angle, and to try to grasp some ideas

which are closer to the meaning of *nyo* as found in Buddhistic thought.

Nyo in Buddhistic thought, or the *nyo* in *nyozai* (*tathatā*), can be conceived as the *chūtai* of the three truths: *kūtai*, *ketai* and *chūtai* (*kūgechū*).⁵ In this light, we can understand the positive aspect of *nyo*. If we consider the structure of the *nyozai* or *tathatā* as the perfect harmony existing within the three truths, *kūtai*, *ketai* and *chūtai*, the *nyo* is applied to the *chūtai*, which acts as an intermediary in the identical conversion between *kūtai* and *ketai*.

In this paper on the *nyo* or *tathatā* I intend to trace the origin of *nyo* (thusness) back to its actual non-reality, and the intermediary role of the *ichinyo* between *kū* and *u* and to explain clearly that perfect harmony which exists among the three truths of *kūtai*, *ketai* and *chūtai*. I shall attempt to elucidate the religious and philosophical meaning of Buddhism, particularly the Zen Sect, and the intimate relationship with the *nyo* or that 'state of thusness' inherent in human existence.

II: NYOZAI — The teachings of the Zen Priest Sōkatsu 宗活

Before I develop the philosophy of *nyozai*, I shall first touch upon the teachings of the late Zen priest Sōkatsu (1870—1954) as they were revealed at the time of his *senge*⁶ (death). Sōkatsu Zenji had devoted his entire life to the enlightenment of his

5. *Kūgechū* 空假中 —the three kinds of truth in T'ien-t'ai doctrine, viz., *kā*, *ke*, and *chū*.

6. *Senge* 遷化 —refers to the death of a prominent priest.

disciples, and taught his followers by means of the dramatical aspects of his *senge* concerning the intermediary role of *nyo* in the *ichinyo* between *kū* and *u*.

Two days after his cremation, memorial services were held for Sōkatsu Zenji, and many disciples from all parts of the country attended. At this time the disciples visited the room where Sōkatsu Zenji had spent his life. However, the figure of their master who had lived so faultlessly in the eyes of all, and who had been so active and lively was no longer there. The room was marked with a deep serenity and peace, and their eyes fell upon the furnishings and the picture scroll in the alcove. The large Japanese *zabuton* (cushion) near the small hand brazier stood out prominently simply because its master no longer sat there. These disciples had in former times bowed deeply and sat erect before this *zabuton* on many occasions, but today the master whom they respected was no longer there. In its own way, the existence of this *zabuton* symbolically highlighted the absence of their beloved Sōkatsu Zenji.

As the disciples raised their eyes they saw a large tablet hanging just above the cushion. Sōkatsu Zenji had hung the scroll beforehand fully realizing the situation which would present itself on this day. With bold strokes, the word *Nyozai* was inscribed on the tablet, *Imasu ga gotoshi* (As things really are). Words flowed from the lips of the disciples. They felt as though their master had suddenly appeared in front of them. Feeling deeply the staffs and shouts⁷ of Sōkatsu Zenji who revealed

7. Staffs and shouts (*bōkatsu*) (棒喝): used by Zen masters to instruct trainees.

such vivid enlightenment even after his death, the disciples involuntarily said again and again, "*Imasu ga gotoshi.*" He isn't alive, but he is dead. He isn't dead, but he is alive. Sōkatsu Zenji upon this occasion of his *senge* indicated the non-reality of this contradiction as containing a hidden and true reality within it, by stressing the word *nyozai*.

There are other similar teachings regarding the question of death in the records of the deeds and sayings of various Zen priests. Nansen Zenji can be cited as one such example. It is said that Nansen Zenji jumped with joy at hearing of the death of his own master. When others failed to understand his conduct, Nansen changed his mood and shed copious tears in evidence of deep grief. However, this apparently strange conduct of Nansen is simply a vivid 'enlightenment' which was naturally revealed because he realized the identity between life and death in an inseparable unity with the concept of the *ichinyo* intermediating life and death.

We find a similar example in one of the *kōan* of the *Hekigan-roku*. The *kōan* was written by Dōgō Zenji to console a certain family. A young priest, Zengen, who was at a loss as to how to solve this problem of life and death, participated in the funeral services with his master Dōgō, knocked on the coffin, and asked, "Being or not being?" His master's only answer was, "I will not answer 'being or not being.'" Upon their return, Zengen again asked his master, and pressed him for an answer under the threat of beating him unless he did get an answer. Zengen inflicted blows upon his master, because he remained silent. Later on when Zengen spoke of this to Sekisō, an older disciple, after the death of Dōgō, Sekisō also said,

“I will not answer, ‘being or not being.’” Dōgō himself had then been so enlightened. Zengen for the time fully realized through these experiences that in spite of the possibility of distinction between life and death as mutually incompatible, man cannot judge the difference of life and death in the light of the law of contradiction. Zengen also understood that this question implied a very deep significance for those who realize the inseparable relationship between life and death. Zengen had in this instance related above asked, ‘Being or non-being?’ in the presence of the dead, and by this he also thrust an antinomy between life and death in front of his master. And his master, who has already realized life and death as the relation of the *ichinyo* or inseparable unity, instructed him plainly, “I will not say being or non-being, without falling into the trap of antinomy. This expresson itself, ‘I will not answer being or non-being’ is the most explicit answer.” Thus both Dōgō Zenji who gave this latter reply and Sōkatsu Zenji who revealed the *nyozai* are actually in full agreement concerning the question of life and death. Life and death both belong to human consciousness, and are understood only in their mutual relationship. Since life and death are different from other happenings which take place only in the external world, we must first experience and realize for ourselves life and death in their identity and indivisibility to truly understand this phenomenon, and this on both sides of life. It would be virtually impossible to grasp the true meaning from the standpoint of life alone, and must be viewed from the dual relationship and unity of life and death. The true meaning of life and death is the *nyozai* (*tathata*) or the *ichinyo* of life and death. Once one realizes

his true existence as *nyozai*, there is no longer life, nor is there death. This stage was achieved by Kanzan Zenji who said, "There is no life and death in my existence." This is the same stage as the *nyozai* of Sōkatsu Zenji. The true form of human existence is *Imasu ga gotoshi* — as things really are — in the *ichinyo* between life and death which is neither being nor non-being.

III: NYOZAI (TATHATA) AND THE GREAT DEATH (DER GROSSE TOD)

While life and death do differ from each other, they are not really different things. Though they are co-ordinates, they are not two things. They are actually non-different and non-dual. The *nyozai* consists in this, that one realizes oneself as non-different and non-dual in the *ichinyo* of life and death. In the following words of Rainer Maria Rilke, the meaning of such an intertwined state as that of *ichinyo* in life and death is well grasped, and its value is esteemed highly :

Sieh, so ist Tod im Leben. Beides läuft so durcheinander, wie in
einem Teppich die Fäden laufen ...

Wenn jemand stirbt, nicht das allein ist Tod.

Tod ist, wenn einer gar nicht sterben kann.

Vieles ist Tod; man kann es nicht begraben,

In uns ist täglich Sterben und Geburt.

These lines of the German poet sound like an explanation of the *nyozai* or *tathatā*. I should like to use these words as an introduction to explain the religious and philosophical aspects of *nyozai*.

When Rilke says, "So ist Tod im Leben," it brings out the

idea that true life actually mediates death, or more simply that to be dead is to live and to live is to die. However, such an observation is not deduced from common sense. Life and death have mutually contradictory characteristics, and both of them cannot be valid at the same time. Life and death are contradictory concepts as are inactivity and activity. The concept that to live is to die is formal-logically a contradiction. Be that as it may, Rilke states that there is death in life: "Beides läuft so durcheinander, wie in einem Teppich die Fäden laufen." However, if we cannot view such a situation from common sense alone, we must learn how to re-think in order to admit such an apparent contradiction. In existential philosophy, this method is considered as existential thought and is expressed as *Hannya no chi* (intuitive wisdom) in Buddhist thought.

"Wenn jemand stirbt, nicht das allein ist Tod." What is generally considered as death is passed by temporarily when we come to existential thoughts on death. "Tod ist, wenn einer gar nicht sterben kann." The author is dealing with a death which differs from the ordinary understanding of death. What kind of death will this be? This sort of death has much in common with that concept of death visualized by the philosopher who said that 'death is a laughable impossibility.' Rilke continues: "Vieles ist Tod; man kann es nicht begraben." The death of the body and the ceasing of the physiological functions which are called *bundan-shōji* (transmigration in different forms) are natural phenomena. Death which cannot simply die is truly absolute death, and is not easily dealt with. In the Zen usage of '*shi ni narai*' (practice death) it would be considered that death which is attained through the repeti-

tion of this 'practice death.' Such death is death 'just as things really are,' and cannot be buried. It is that death which becomes death with life, and lives while yet dying. In such a death one always dies and resurrects himself through the *ichinyo* between life and death. "In uns ist täglich Sterben und Geburt." Rilke calls such a death 'Great Death' and ponders that various human lives are the fruits created by such death.

Der große Tod, den jeder in sich allein hat, das ist die Frucht,
um die sich alles dreht.

When Rilke writes, "Der große Tod, den jeder in sich hat," this expression, "great death," has something in common with the 'absolute death' propounded by the Buddha. As Max Scheler says, the Buddha became a great teacher of salvation, not because he was a teacher for the individual, but more because he was a man who saw and taught the possibility of true absolute death. The 'Absolute Death' as perceived by the Buddha is akin to the 'Great Death' as conceived by Rilke. Existential philosophy considers this 'great death' as 'existential death' and regards it as the 'symbolic existence' of human beings. I might also add that the *nyozai* which Sōkatsu Zenji taught to his disciples explicitly mentions this 'great death.' Sōkatsu Zenji enlightened in life desired to make this 'great death' understood by his disciples. The disciples devote themselves as seekers of the enlightenment of the Zenji simply because they are searching for this 'great death.' 'Great Death' or 'Absolute Death' is extremely meaningful and is not an object of sorrow, grief or terror. The true value and character of life on the contrary is found in this 'great death.' For this reason the existential reason of man in his nature is finally

explained through the problem of death. Heidegger interpreted death much in the same manner when he said that 'Sein zum Tod' means that limiting experience of 'being there' and the 'Sein zum' as the end of the being there. Death has always been playing a meaningful role in the history of modern philosophy. This death was re-discovered by existential philosophy in its relationship to the absolute meaning or value of the subsistence of the entire human being.

There is tremendous value in life in the concept of this 'great death.' Rilke says, "das ist die Frucht, um die sich alles dreht." Great death is the fountain of great life. Great death acts as a nucleus of all human conduct to such an extent that it can be said that from it all else is produced. Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Holiness—all are fruits derived from this great death. In Buddhism this situation is expressed in the words *Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi* (perfect enlightenment) which is attained through the teaching of the Buddha.

But how do we experience this 'great death' as the nucleus of our human conduct? According to Rilke it is through good works :

Dies war ein Tod von guter Arbeit vertieft gebildet, jener eigene Tod, der uns so nötig hat, weil wir ihn leben.

Great death is 'moulded' death but not naturally experienced and realized. It could not be moulded without effort and devotion. Rilke says, "Dies war ein Tod von guter Arbeit vertieft gebildet." What, however, are these good works? In Zen Buddhism it would be called *zazen-bendō* (meditation and examination) which is aimed at strengthening man's contemplative powers (*zenjō-riki*), to develop the power of thinking to the

extent that he can pierce beyond the thinkable and non-thinkable areas. Considering this element as important in life, people do make efforts to practise this with fervor. And acquiring this power of enlightenment through these various practices, man can acquire great contemplative powers. "Dies war ein Tod von guter Arbeit vertieft gebildet" is the death of a man of such great contemplative powers. To live truly as a man is to live such a formed death, and the contemplative powers act as a nucleus for the esteem of man. Therefore this moulded death is most important and indispensable. Rilke goes on to say, "jener eigene Tod, der uns so nötig hat, weil wir ihn leben."

As I mentioned above, I believe that the *nyozai* as taught by Zen Master Sōkatsu does have something in common with the 'Great Death' concept of Rilke on the one hand, and also with that existential death or 'existence in death' of Heidegger on the other. And I feel this same concept of *nyozai* is derived from the 'Absolute Death' as put forth by the Buddha. Thus the philosophy of the *tathatā* or *nyozai* could be considered as the philosophy of death.

IV : NYOZAI AND THE DIALECTIC OF DEATH

The problem of death has been studied from philosophical and religious viewpoints in the East and in the West. Particularly in Buddhism, freedom (*vimukti*) from death is dealt with as a fundamental tenet. Death is considered as the most important element in the Zen sect of Buddhism, and stress is placed on inquiry into and the realization of death.

Previously I gave a general explanation of the meaning of the 'great death' and 'existential death' and the '*Nyozai* Death' in the Zen sect, and briefly compared this with the poem of Rilke. I have not yet delved into the fact that the *nyo* in *nyozai* implies an intermediary role and identity in the *kū-u* relationship, and that *nyozai* actualizes in a practical way that harmony which exists between the three truths: *kūtai*, *ketai* and *chūtai*. Nor have I touched upon the idea that the '*Nyozai* Death' is actually found in this focal point.

I finally wish to touch upon this point and to explain the *nyozai* as the dialectic of death and elucidate the teaching of the Zen sect. Also in reference to this point I wish to refer to the *kōan* of Nangaku Ejō 'On Polishing a Tile':

A Zen priest, Nangaku Ejō, a disciple of the sixth patriarch Enō, used the polishing of a tile with a stone in order to teach his disciple, Baso Doitsu, who was constantly sitting in contemplation to become a buddha. Ejō told him that both sitting in contemplation to become a buddha and the polishing of a tile were equally meaningless. When one realizes the powerlessness of his own acts (sitting in contemplation or polishing a tile) he abandons his desire to be a buddha or to polish the tile into a mirror and transforms himself into *śūnyatā* (nothingness). He destroys himself in these acts and loses the will to be a buddha. A real buddha free from avarice can actually appear through the practice of meditation. It is exactly like the old mirror lurking at the bottom of man's heart which begins to shine, but not like the tile which is outside man becoming mirror-like.⁸

In the words of this *kōan* the intermediation of the *nyo*-existence between *kū* and *u* is cleverly indicated, and the principle of *nyozai* in the perfect harmonious unity found in the *kūtai*, *ketai* and *chūtai* is fully elucidated. Furthermore, because this principle of intermediate interchangeableness

8. Complete Works of Hajime Tanabe, Vol. 13, 1964, p. 168.

between *kū* and *u* is the basic tenet, Dōgen Zenji says: "Even a small dosage of meditation makes one a little buddha," and he had great esteem for this *kōan*. We might ask why are both acts, that of polishing a tile with a stone, and that of sitting in contemplation to become a buddha, to be considered useless? As long as one sits in meditation attempting to become a buddha he does not truly sit in meditation. It would be meditation expecting enlightenment and thus it is dead or meaningless meditation. Therefore the aim to become a buddha could not possibly be attained. This is much the same as the fact that a tile could not become a mirror even with great efforts to polish it. In the early states, because of immaturity in meditation, true meditation is unattainable and in the long run all attempts at meditation become the expectation of enlightenment. These formal meditations become dead meditations and bear no fruit. However, through such empty meditations that original meditation characterized by pure and true speculation could be nurtured. In a flash one comes to the *tathāgata* in a direct glance. Reasoned occasions are required in order that the way be naturally opened. When the cause and effect phase has matured the way is opened.

Ejō revealed to Baso Doitsu that meditation is insignificant without such a tension to maturity. However, this type of meditation, although apparently simple, is really quite difficult to practise. Since it is actually the attainment of the final stage of the *tathāgata* through the simple practice of meditation, it is extremely difficult to seek out in meditation the maturing opportunities. It is something like the Gospel passage, "Those

who persevere to the end will be saved.”

It is said that Jaspers found his way out of the antinomy of Kant's idea in this concept. It can be applied to the case of meditation and examination. Jaspers found that persevering in the state of failure to the end through repeated failures, a collapse appears when we overcome failure, and in the long run failure and achievement become identical. However, because of this identity of failure and achievement there is a way out of the predicament.

In the case of meditation and examination in the Zen sect, the disciple is continually practising a way to get out of the antinomy in order to have the cause and effect of the opportunity become mature. During the practice of meditation which involves in many cases the danger of becoming dead meditation or going astray into false meditation, the disciple is saved by the staff and shout of the master, i. e., he is saved from falling into the antinomy. The master's staff and shout is a warning not to fall into the antinomy, and yet at the same time the master tries to tempt his disciple into the same antinomy by constantly putting before his eyes the antinomy of the *kōan*. But through the perseverance in the practice of failure and achievement, the opportunity to mature does come and one can attain enlightenment. He always realizes the fact that there is always a way out. Only those who fully understand that truth can ever attain the truth of the *tathatā*. It is for this reason that I first mentioned that Jaspers does actualize the non-reality of the 'Als-Ob' concept in existential philosophy, and that he does seem to come close to the intermediation of identity in the *kū* and *u* relation basic to the *nyo* of

nyozai.

With this understanding of *nyozai* there is always a way out, and in the *kōan* 'On Polishing a Tile' we find that this is true. In the instance of Baso Doitsu, meditating and expecting to become a buddha, such a way out is not present. Naturally when one is driven to extreme ends, a way is opened. But in Baso Doitsu's situation we do not find the situation of 'one driven to extreme circumstances.' Ejō Zenji saw through the situation. When meditation has matured, i. e. "when one actually does practise *prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya*," all things are absolutely denied, and then all phenomena become relative and dependent upon other phenomena. "People penetrate into *śūnyatā* of all *pañca skandhāḥ*. From the idea of looking into oneself, one's powerlessness is realized, oneself is changed into *śūnyatā*, and the desire to become a buddha oneself is gone. One has passed through into *śūnyatā*. In existential Philosophy the 'limiting stage' or the 'limiting situation' expresses the identical situation. One cannot go forward nor can one go backward. It is the state of being driven up against a wall. The way is opened naturally when one is completely driven to the extreme and absolutely denies all. Man cannot revive until he becomes like dead. Thus this situation of being driven to the extreme limits and then finding a way out is called *zetsugo ni saiso* (that identity of complete negation and revival). In other words, it is a 'death-resurrection.' Then it can be said that absolute negation is one with absolute affirmation. Identical conversion between *kū* and *u* takes place at this point. It is *nyozai*. The *kōan* 'On Polishing a Tile' tries to elucidate the truth of this *nyozai*.

So considered, *nyozai* is actually non-existence, and yet it is mysteriously existent. The meaning of *zai* in *nyozai* implies a mysterious existence. *U* (real existence) is mysterious existence in virtue of the intermediate interchangeability with actual non-existence. Because *nyo* assumes the role of intermediate conversion in the *ichinyo* of non-different and non-dual, this same *nyo* in the *nyozai* is not merely the non-reality of the Als-Ob, but is a non-reality implied within the actual reality.

In *nyozai kū* is identical with *u*, and *u* is *kū*. Matter is one with *śūnyatā*. (It is in no way different from the matter which constitutes our world.) *Śūnyatā* is not different from form or matter. Such a principle of identity of interchangeability between *śūnyatā* and *u* should be called the dialectic of death. It becomes clearer when we consider the *nyozai* as the perfect harmony of *kūtai*, *ketai* and *chūtai*.

Ketai and *kūtai* cannot be separate things. If *kū* is separated from *ketai* specifically as *kūtai*, it becomes fixed and loses its character of *kūtai*. In the same way, *ketai* loses its essential character if divorced from *kūtai*. *Ketai* is the hypothesis established from the position of *kūtai*, and at the same time *kūtai* is actually *śūnyatā*, and has absoluteness in relation to *ketai*. As long as the absolute *kūtai* requires *ketai* as its intermediary in this way, *kūtai* can not be considered independent from *ketai*, just as *ketai* can not be established apart from *kūtai*. *Kūtai* and *ketai* are mutually intermediary relatives. Matter or form is identical with *śūnyatā*. *Śūnyatā* is not different from form or matter. *Ketai* thus finds its reason for being in *kūtai*, and *kūtai* comes into being through *ketai*. Existence is the end result of the cooperation of the two. The

mutual intermediate movement in this relation is *chūtai*. The concrete organizing of existence is found in the fact that these three (*kūtai*, *ketai* and *chūtai*) intermediate each other, interchange mutually and form a harmonious unity. The principle of the perfect harmony among these three truths (*kūtai*, *ketai* and *chūtai*) is to actualize this unity. And this is nothing but the principle of *nyozai*. If we look at it from the point of view of meditation, *nyozai* has something in common with Dōgen's thought that even a bit of meditation makes one a little buddha.

The 'Great Death' and 'Existential Death' explained above, and the *Nyozai* Death, should be considered from the principle of this perfect harmony among *kūtai*, *ketai* and *chūtai*. The elucidation is found in Heidegger's expression that death is the mysterious box of *śūnyatā*. According to his explanation, man is the only being which can experience dialectical death, and man subsists as a mystery of existence itself, because death itself contains the nature of existence as a mysterious box of *śūnyatā*. To experience this dialectical death explained here, is identical with the 'Great Death,' 'Existential Death' and the *Nyozai* Death. When everything is absolutely negated (*śūnyatā*), all existence and the constituent elements which make up existence depending upon causation, then man can experience dialectical death. The brink of the deep abyss of nothingness (*śūnyatā*) opens up when man finally reaches this extreme truth through absolute negation (*śūnyatā*) and complete death. All existent things themselves are exposed to the brink of the deep abyss, and exist through intermediating this abyss. They revive only in death and negation. Life intermediating death is the

true life as the identity of life and death. Death itself therefore, as the mysterious box of the *śūnyatā*, implies the very nature of existence. Therefore in death, which exists as the mystery of human existence itself, the principle of the perfect harmony within the *kūtai*, *ketai* and *chūtai* is found. However, doubt still remains whether or not Heidegger's concept satisfactorily realizes the perfect harmony among these three truths. Heidegger, in spite of his significant contributions on the absolute *śūnyatā* in the concept of the mysterious box of *śūnyatā*, the mystery of the death-resurrection and the decisiveness and execution of death as immediately converted into the re-incarnation, fails to reach the fullness of the concept of *śūnyatā*. In the works of Rilke, the so-called symbol of the absolute *śūnyatā* appears in the hymn of the resurgent. However, also negation and the extinction of existence must be criticized, for his concept does not attain to the depths of that true and absolute death as conceived by the Buddha, or to that of the *nyozai* (*tathatā*) of the Zen sect. 'Death' in Zen certainly deserves the name of 'absolute death.' Death in the *nyozai* sense in Zen (Great Death) has the implication of transcending not only the universe and oneself but also the Buddha and the patriarchs. Such a death is so complete that through it man surpasses the domination of the Buddha by *chōbutsu-osso* (transcending the Buddha and the ancient patriarchs). Thus the true way to the dialectic of death is opened as absolute *śūnyatā*.

In the following quotation from the late Professor Hajime Tanabe, death in the Zen concept of *nyozai* and the dialectic of death in the identical interchangeableness of *kū* and

u are precisely explained :

Lotusblumen in den Flammen overcome Nihilism. Pure happiness is in the identity between the agony of death and ecstasy. Absolute possibility. Un coup de dés jama's n'abolira le hasard. Life is identical with death. The ways are opened in all directions.⁹

“Lotusblumen in den Flammen overcome Nihilism.” This is an exquisite expression for its allegorical elucidation of the true character of *nyozai*. The deepest and the keenest insight into *nyozai* is particularly revealed in the phrase ‘absolute possibility.’ When the conversional intermediation of *kū* and *u* is fully grasped in this ‘absolute possibility,’ the true character of the *nyozai* is finely traced out for us. ‘Absolute Possibility’ is the subtle insight into existence which opens naturally from an actual extreme. Zen possesses the deep significance which can elucidate such a keen insight into that ‘absolute possibility.’ The nature of Zen consists in the purity of the ‘Lotusblumen in den Flammen’ in the existence of death-resurrection. This is evident in the words ‘Pure happiness is in the identity between the agony of death and ecstasy. Absolute possibility. ... Life is identical with death. The ways are opened in all directions.’ The true significance of the *kōan* ‘On Polishing a Tile’ is probed into deeply, and is in a practical way realized here; and the *kōan* implies the meaning of the dialectic of death as the philosophy of *nyozai*.

And finally, a word on the significance of this philosophy of *nyozai* for modern man. We stand at a moment of crisis in history — in an ‘Age of Death,’ and if there is a philosophy which can save man it is the ‘dialectic of death.’ It may also

9. Complete Works of Hajime Tanabe, vol. 13, 1964, p. 616.

be said that the enlightenment in Zen has no equal as an effective guide to face this crisis in history. Thus further inquiry into the philosophy of *nyozai* as a dialectic of death would be 'the way' to solve this human problem.