

Returning to
Silence Dainin
Katagiri

Understanding Life and Death o 137

health, that is wonderful. But once more again, we have to think about what happiness is. If we accept vegetarianism as a certain rule or doctrine, it becomes dogmatic. If we do zazen to obtain something, then we should ask ourselves where we are heading. Can we carry this kind of zazen or happiness to heaven? Eventually, we have to say good-bye to everything. Suzuki Roshi's final words were, "It's all over." "All over" means he really touched the core of human life—where are we heading? For sixty-eight years he worked hard and taught Buddhism in the United States, and then where was he heading? In such circumstance, could we say that because we do zazen we can die in peace and harmony, or that by doing zazen our mind will become calm and strong? If we believe zazen is like this, what's the difference between us and a bank robber? By doing zazen, we can become a bank robber with a calm mind, and steal money from the bank with a calm mind. It is ridiculous if we believe in zazen in that way.

Finally, we should ask ourselves where we are heading. Without doing this we cannot see eternity. When we have to do zazen, just sit zazen. Just sitting zazen is not just sitting zazen; it is gazing at eternity with no sense of mystery. Right in the middle of the limitations of human life we do our best to do zazen wholeheartedly. This zazen is apparently nothing but a fading away, appearing and disappearing; it appears as a flashing light—good zazen, bad zazen. But beyond this, right in the middle of this kind of zazen, there is beauty. That is the eternity of zazen. If we think, even slightly, that we would like to be happy by doing zazen, at that time it is not perfect happiness. It is not real zazen. It is very simple, although not many people understand this. But this is exactly life and death. There are no exceptions. Everyone has to live and everyone has to die. There is completely no choice. For many, many years we have trained ourselves to use something as a means to find happiness, always to use something as a means. But when we die where are we heading? To ask this question constantly is Buddhist faith. Our zazen must be grounded in no misunderstanding, no delusion, just like a ballerina. She had no delusions like "I am a good teacher" or "I am a perfect teacher" or "I have a stiff body." She just trained, just practiced in the world of impermanence. Our great responsibility as human beings is to manifest eternity, perfect beauty, right in the middle of this impermanence. If we want to help human beings, this is our responsibility. Then, very naturally, we understand human life and death.