

ZEN  
AND THE  
PSYCHOLOGY OF  
TRANSFORMATION

— The Supreme Doctrine —

HUBERT BENOIT

FOREWORD BY ALDOUS HUXLEY

*Beginning of excerpt  
from the literal translation by Terence Gray  
of Hubert Benoit's  
"La Doctrine Suprême"*

## Chapter Nineteen

### THE IMMEDIATE PRESENCE OF SATORI

**M**Y primordial demand to be a distinct being conditions all my desires and, by my desires, my hopes and my beliefs. Bearing this claim, I am the bearer of an aspiration, of an expectation: believing myself to lack something, I await that which will be able to fulfill my need.

This general aspiration manifests itself in the fact that I await a 'true life', different from my actual life in that I shall then be totally, perfectly affirmed, no longer in a partial and imperfect manner. Every human-being lives, whether he realises it or not, in the expectation that there shall begin at last the 'true life' from which all negation will have disappeared.

What this 'true life' may be each of us represents to himself differently, according to his structure and the moment. More exactly, each man represents to himself that which, according to him, might inaugurate a new era in which the imperfections of his present life would be abolished. Voices arise in me in order to tell me that it would definitely be marvellous if at last I had this... or if at last I were like that... or if such and such a thing were to happen. Sometimes I think I see very clearly what could inaugurate the 'true life';

sometimes it remains vague, I merely await 'something' which, I am persuaded, would settle everything. Sometimes this expectation remains dumb in me, but it is only a passing drowsiness from which there will arise again very soon my aspiration for a life at last perfectly satisfying. Everything happens in me as if I believed myself exiled from a paradise which exists somewhere and as if I saw, in such and such a modification of the outside world or of myself, the key capable of opening the door of this lost paradise. And I live in the quest of this key.

While waiting I kill time as I may. One part of my vital energy can devote itself to the effective preparation of the key: I struggle to achieve this or that success, material or subtle. But I can only put into that one part of my energy; the rest I devote to an imaginative elaboration, to reveries concerning the famous inner trial, the successful issue of which should be obtained for me by the key. I feel myself obliged to invest my energy somewhere, to fidget, externally or internally. I cannot remain motionless in my expectation. Besides, without movement, there could not be expectation, tension towards that which should come, aspiration; and without this aspiring movement I would be dead. In the measure in which I cannot fidget externally in order to obtain the expected key I fidget internally by fabricating images which relieve my expectation.

Like everything that I can observe in my natural structure, this expectation is sound in itself but wrongly directed. It is sound in itself because it manifests my deep need of this vision-of-things-as-they-are which will usher in for me a true life. But it is wrongly directed because my aspiration is turned towards things as I see them in actuality. As long as my understanding has not been awakened by

correct instruction I necessarily let my aspiration direct itself towards what I know, towards what I can picture to myself, to the dualistic world of phenomena. Searching for the key of the lost paradise in what I can picture to myself, it is inevitable that I picture this key either as something already experienced by me (at least partially), or as something not yet exactly experienced but of the same general nature as what I know. Even when I do not see the key clearly, formally, I picture to myself my return to the lost paradise as an inner state that is perfectly positive, perfectly happy, analogous to, but better than, the happy states I have already experienced. The 'natural' orientation of my aspiration is necessarily situated on the horizontal plane of temporal dualism; it does not tend towards anything new, outside this dualism, but towards an amelioration of that which I know.

There is therein a manifest error. In effect I expect thus, from an amelioration, something that is perfect; but no amelioration of something imperfect, however unlimited one may suppose this amelioration, could succeed in reaching perfection. No 'evolution', no 'progress', can reach that which Zen calls 'the asylum of rest'. Let us note, besides, that my aspiration, turned towards the dualism of satisfaction and unsatisfaction, joy and sorrow, has no right to hope for the dissociation of this inseparable dualism which can only be conciliated in the Tao. Aspiration, turned towards this dualism, can only bring about the dualism itself, with its two poles. The stronger my aspiration thus directed, the stronger becomes my own inner dualism, whether I am conscious of it or not. When my thirst is thus directed the water which comes to me is like salt water which increases my thirst after a THE IMMEDIATE PRESENCE OF SATORI 173 moment of

apparent quenching. The man who expects the true life from the world of manifestation, from the world which he knows, waits for it in vain until his death.

What is correct in my aspiration itself is revealed in the following manner. In expecting something other than my life of the moment, I escape complete identification with this life, I save my consciousness from being completely swallowed up in the forms that are actually present. But at the same time, on account of the false orientation of my aspiration, I founder in another identification; I identify myself with something that I imagine, more or less clearly, as being absolutely desirable; and this thing, since I imagine it, also has a form (however subtle one may suppose it) in which my consciousness loses itself. If my dream concerning the paradise to be regained saves what I have at my disposal among the circumstances momentarily lived, it abdicates this precious power of disposal in the process of imagining a chimerical phenomenal perfection.

This false direction of my aspiration creates for me the illusion of time and the painful impression that time is unceasingly escaping me. When I conceive that to which I aspire as an amelioration of what I know (which is phenomenon, conditioned by space-time), I necessarily project my perfect satisfaction into the future. Thus there is created for me the illusory absolute reality of time, time which seems to me to stretch out between the present imperfect moment and the future perfect moment to which I aspire.

In face of this time illusorily endowed with an absolute value, my attitude is ambivalent. When I look back I bitterly deplore the passage of time, I would like to make it come back or at least prevent it from flowing on further; when I look

ahead I would like to see it flow on with infinite rapidity, because I am impatient for the opening up of the lost paradise. When I evoke some epoch of my past life I feel it quite differently from the way in which I felt it when it happened: in fact, when I evoke it, I am freed from this vertiginous aspiration towards a better future which was then possessing me, snatching me from the moment itself and preventing me from living it. Thus is explained in me my regret for a passage of time which, however, I did not appreciate. In the degree in which my understanding awakens as a result of correct instruction, a change takes place in me. I understand that my primordial unlimited aspiration has nothing to expect from the phenomenal world, however universally and subtly one may envisage this. I understand that what I have always been waiting for, while incarnating it in an illusory manner in one kind of representation or another, is that which Zen calls *satori*. I understand that this *satori* could not be conceived as an amelioration, however fantastic one may suppose it, of that which I know actually; there could not be dissociation of an inseparable dualism, progressive purification of a 'good' cleansed of all 'evil'; rather is it access, beyond dualism, to 'something' which conciliates the dualism in a trinitarian Unity. This 'something' I cannot evidently picture to myself, I can only conceive it as indescribable, unimaginable, entirely different by its very nature from anything I know today.

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*End of excerpt*

For an idiomatic translation, excluding the parts in grey text, see:

<http://perpetual-lab.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/pursuing-dream.html>

The excerpt is taken from <http://terebeck.hu/zen/mesterek/Hubert-Benoit-The-Supreme-Doctrine.pdf> which reproduces Terence Gray's literal translation of *La doctrine suprême selon la Pensée Zen*, by Hubert Benoit.