

Chapter Four

Causality

The first subject to be examined is causality. I chose this to be first because, according to the *roshis* that I interviewed, causality forms the basis of the Buddhist world-view. Several of them clearly stated this. Tanaka Soyo Roshi asserted, “*En*, for example, this is the teaching of Buddha, famous fundamental teaching of Buddha” (April 4, 2001, p. 4). Nagashima Ryohin Roshi agreed, saying, “*En* is one of the fundamental themes of Buddhism and so we human beings are born and eventually we die. Our life cycle is also based on the concept of the *en*” (February 20, 2001, p. 2). Nakajima Gikan Roshi said, “This concept originated from the founder of Buddhism, *Shakamuni* (Jap. 釈迦牟尼 = the Buddha)” (June 26, 2001, p. 2).

Harada Sekkei Roshi explained the reason that causality is fundamental to Buddhism is that “the world is created out of conditions and then it will come apart because of conditions. That’s our reality” (November 14, 2000, p. 3). This is the view that all phenomena are created by conditions, composed of conditions, and will pass due to being conditional. Phenomena are only conditions. There is no organizing force or center around which a phenomenon is organized. Yasunaga Sodo Roshi stated, “We have to accept causation as causation” (November 21, 2001, p. 6).

Mind is considered to be a phenomenon in the world just like any other. It is not special. Like all others it functions according to causality. Therefore, as

such causality serves as the basis through which mind is understood. Causality is the fundamental way that mind functions. Harada Roshi said in his second interview in responding to a question about the existence of the ego, “There’s nothing other than causality” (May 17, 2001, p. 6). All of mind, ego included, exists only according to causality. We cannot exempt anything from causality or add something that functions with causality that is not subject to causality. Harada Roshi emphasized, “All people and all things are subject to causality” (May 17, 2001, p. 5).

It was this common view among Japanese Zen roshis of the centrality of causality to all phenomena that led me to be interested in how mind functioned according to causality. In the introduction I discussed causality theoretically. Now in this chapter I want to focus on how the roshis have experienced this fundamental idea of Buddhism and what meaning they have given to these experiences.

Experiences of Causality

I asked the six *roshis* I interviewed to talk about an example of their experience of cause and effect. A sample of their answers are as follows:

Reggie: Can you give me an example from your own experience of some kind of experience of *en*?

Nakajima Gikan Roshi: Countless. Many in our daily life. Our lives can’t be separated from *en*. Everyday our living is based on *innen* (Jap. 因縁 = direct and indirect causes), so we cannot be separated from *en*. (June 26, 2001, p. 8)

Nagashima Ryohin Roshi: “From me personally I am 56 years old and I have encountered lots of people by the activation of the *en*. (February 20, 2001, p. 4) I’m not thinking about the *en* so

deeply. For example, the best example is the marriage. I also get married by the certain action of *en*.” (February 20, 2001, p. 5)

Yasunaga Sodo Roshi: Let me put it this way – a supernatural power, something like that. Such power to meet drew me to him and at the same time something supernatural took my master and drew him to me and as a result we could meet each other. (April 18, 2001, p. 3)

Harada Sekkei Roshi: Well, if I express it in words in my case it happened through a thought. Someone asked me, ‘Where’s the way of the Buddha?’ And then I thought to myself, ‘Where’s the way of the Buddha?’ I asked myself that question. At that time, and first of all, it’s not really a matter of becoming *en*, but more like a matter of realizing that you always have been one, right? So, and I couldn’t say I really knew it, but certainly, yes, ah, there’s a sensation or this understanding, this realization, ah ... at that time it’s not a realization of having become one, it’s a feeling or sensation shall I say that everything has disappeared.

(November 14, 2000, pp. 5-6)

Fukushima Keido Roshi: Speaking from the Zen experience there’s a sense in which the basis of the self, not the ego now, but more of the true self, we can speak of that being the basis of all things rather than a kind of interrelationship. (January 23, 2002, p. 5)

Tanaka Soyo Roshi: So one day one of my masters said to me while I was a student, “When you attain to true enlightenment everything you before experienced will surely become *sutra*. I said, ‘Ah, that so?’ Everything, not only good thing, but bad thing, all become *sutra*. I can understand his words very well at this time because I’m in the midst of happiness. (April 4, 2001, p. 7) With my present mental situation every meeting is nice for nice. So everything is good *en* for me. (April 4, 2001, p. 10)

These are the primary ways that each of the Zen masters interviewed described their experience of *en* and causality. This is an array of experiences that were given as examples of *en*. This breadth points to the fundamental nature of causality from the *roshis*’ point of view.

Nakajima Roshi’s attitude was that since *en* is operating in all experience, any attempt to single out one special experience misses this point that causality is not special, but rather is a fundamental component of all experience. Thus,

Nakajima Roshi was saying that each event in a person's life could be understood to have occurred through previous causes. When I asked him directly for a description of an experience of *en*, his response was what I quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

Nevertheless, previously Nakajima Roshi said, "I met you today as the working of the *en* by the activities of Mr. Miyagawa.⁶ This is a wonderful example of *en*. We call this situation *en*" (June 26, 2001, p. 7). At this time he gave a very specific example of causality. Thus, both of these aspects, the general consideration and the specific events, were important to Nakajima Roshi.

I have found that this style of expression is common to Japanese Zen *roshis*. It is a style that often appears contradictory and confusing unless it is properly understood. It is what I can call a contextual response. In answer to one question a *roshi* will answer one way and to a similar question later will answer a different way. Each answer is very precise to the particular situation. The greater whole must be understood to understand a specific answer. Nakajima Roshi here I think is demonstrating this style of expression.

Nagashima Roshi also stated that *en* is an integral part of how he understands his experience in daily life. He particularly pointed to relationships with other people as an activity in which he experiences *en* and talked extensively in his interview about how his marriage with his wife⁷ occurred through the activity of *en*. He believed that all relationships occur through *en* and as his marriage relationship is his most significant relationship, this relationship very clearly shows the workings of *en*. His willingness to discuss in

detail his marriage was quite unique among the roshis I interviewed who were married.

Nagashima Roshi, however, in selecting his marriage relationship as a prime example of *en* was not asserting that *en* had special attributes associated with human beings. He stated, “Human beings are not selected as the supreme beings” (February 20, 2001, p. 18). His view, like Nakajima Roshi’s, was that *en* is universal, applying to all beings and all things.

Yasunaga Roshi spoke of another relationship that is very significant for Japanese Zen monks, the relationship between the master and the student. In this relationship also it is easy to see how it came about as the result of various causes. Yasunaga Roshi spoke of these causes as “supernatural” causes. By this he did not mean a God in the Christian sense of supernatural, but something to which all people are subject, something that is outside of people, and something that people cannot control. He said, “As a word of *engi* in a way there is something which human beings cannot handle. ... As for these issues (*en*) human beings are powerless. He or she cannot handle it” (April 18, 2001, p. 2). Here he also is pointing to the universal nature of causality plus the important understanding for him that humans are part of something greater than themselves. This emerged as an important theme in understanding causality. Great respect is given to that which people cannot control. This sense of respect I have come to believe is very important to understanding the psychology of causality.

Yasunaga Roshi’s explanation of his experience is helpful. He said:

If someone wants to go through the full *koan* (Jap. 公案 = statements and questions by Zen masters used by students as

subjects for meditation) system as a Zen practitioner sometimes as you know despite his own will, in this case his will could be called a direct cause, okay? But for instance maybe there are some problems that might happen. His father or his mother may pass away or something like that or maybe his physical condition, sometimes he might get sick or something like that. So in this case those can be indirect cause. As for these issues human beings are powerless. (April 18, 2001, p. 2)

Yasunaga Roshi acknowledges a person's will and ability to choose, but he understands will as operating within a bigger picture, that of cause and effect. This sense of a bigger picture I found repeatedly reflected in the *roshis'* discussions of their experience.

Harada Roshi chose to talk about his own personal experience of *en* rather than talking about a relationship with another person. The personal experience that he described was his enlightenment experience. This was his *satori* (Jap. 悟), his awakening to the Truth of his being. This was surprising for me, as I was not expecting this kind of answer. I had been thinking of cause and effect more in linear terms, A cause effects B result. Harada Roshi, however, chose to talk about his experience of truly understanding cause and effect itself. His enlightenment experience was the moment at which he “became” causality. He said in his second interview, “I think it would be good if in the West there was this idea that the self perceiving the change to become one with that and then there would be an understanding of causality as we talk about it” (May 17, 2001, p. 5). What he refers to as “the self perceiving the change to become one with that” is the experience that he describes.

Harada Roshi describes his thinking process that led to the feeling or sensation that “everything has disappeared” (November 14, 2001, p. 6). The

meaning of this phrase appears to be central to his experience. Later in the same interview when I was asking him questions about this, he responded, “Well, when we say things disappear, that doesn’t mean suddenly it’s a void. It’s just that it means that they can’t be perceived” (November 14, 2000, p. 11). My sense is that by “disappearance” Harada Roshi is speaking of a psychological experience, not an experience of external reality. Disappearance is a personal experience. Reality continues.

Harada Roshi continued in his description of his experience: “Everything has disappeared. And then a little bit later there’s a realization, ah, there’s no longer any separation between me and other things” (November 14, 2001, p. 6). Thus, the realization or understanding came after the experience. During the experience itself there was no perception, no realization. The realization came in retrospect. He said later in the interview, “I had actually realized it and that’s the way I expressed it, so I have to say one step further that I also did not perceive the conditions either” (November 14, 2000, p. 15).

When I asked Harada Roshi about this not perceiving in our second interview, he said:

This is something that is very difficult for me to say, but the one way I can describe it is, and maybe I did this the other time, I can say while things exist, they don’t exist. While things do not exist, they do exist. So there’s kind of a gray area there. (May 17, 2001, p. 2)

He appears here to be referring to reality as a combination of being and non-being, of perception and non-perception.

Harada Roshi says that the realization that he had was that this “disappearance” was a disappearance of the separation between him and all other things. He asserted in our second interview about this experience that “in any case, I can say that I returned to the origin, but even if you think and think about that, that’s not something that you can understand I think” (May 17, 2001, p. 2). Very humbling, very challenging, and crucially important I believe. So it appears from what Harada Roshi said that the “disappearance” was a “return to the origin,” this origin was a realization that there was “no separation between me and all things,” and he “became” this origin. This origin is his self, or, in psychological terms, his true identity.

Fukushima Roshi also, rather than speaking about human relationships, spoke of causality in terms of himself. He spoke of causality theoretically. He said that causality is about how relationships function: “I think of this *engi* as more of an ontological description of the world. *Inga* would be actually more how this applies in the field in the world between things” (January 23, 2002, p. 5). He understands causality as being the interrelationships between things. Phenomena arise according to the interaction of these interrelationships. Each phenomenon is thus not separate from its relationships. A phenomenon is its relationships. A phenomenon as its relationships does not have any independent self nature. Fukushima Roshi said that in his “Zen experience” this theory is a description of what he experiences as himself. Like Harada Roshi, this is a self that is not separate from all things. It is what Fukushima Roshi called “the selfless self” (January 23, 2002, p. 6). This non-separation or selfless self is his

“basis.” What he means by “basis” in psychological terms is identity, his self. His “basis” is what he identifies with psychologically. Thus, he is talking about a self very similar to that which Harada Roshi described.

When Fukushima Roshi spoke here, he stated that he is “speaking from the Zen experience.” He speaks very theoretically about causality as I have outlined here, but he makes it clear that this theory is based on his own experience. The important aspect of his experience relative to causality was that when he realized the selfless self as his identity, the sense of duality between him and the environment disappeared. He “became” the environment, or, in other words, he became cause and he became effect. He explained to me when I asked him about this:

So we’re talking now not about the ego, but about the self which has cut off the ego, the selfless self. Here when we talk about the kind of actions, it’s not a question of a duality between the two, but it’s actually the self becoming the environment and so that distinction no longer applies. (January 23, 2002, p. 6)

He is describing an experience of non-separation of cause and effect, something that is commonly experienced in a dualistic manner. This non-separation is what he experiences as his self, his identity. Understanding this is very important to understanding the roshis’ sense of self.

Tanaka Roshi said that because he was “in the midst of happiness,” everything that happened to him was “good *en*.” In terms of *en*, Tanaka Roshi expressed the heart of this I believe in the following:

There is no substance. There is no property that is our property. So we Zen master, we Buddhists, we testify this fact by our body and mind in the midst of *samadhi*.⁸ So I’ve no attachment against this is my property. So if perhaps Gautama Buddha, the founder

of Buddhism, thought if we recognize everything occurs by *en*, *engi*, we should cut our attachment against everything. Because everything, even our body, our mind, is not our own property. (April 4, 2001, pp. 4-5)

Because Tanaka Roshi understands that everything occurs through causality and not through his personal agency, he has “cut” or given up his personal attachment to how things occur. Even his own body and his own mind he regards as not “his.” What happens in his life is not personal. This is truly a radical psychology with far-reaching implications.

The result for Tanaka Roshi of this recognition of causality is that he’s always in the midst of happiness and everything is a good *en*. A very mundane experience that Tanaka Roshi spoke of represents this recognition well. He once had to walk fifteen minutes from a train station to his family home in the rain without an umbrella. He described the situation as:

Then I was walking in the midst of the crowd, no thinking, become heavy rain, cats and dogs. I have no umbrella, but for me that’s no problem. As soon as I came back to my born house my mother and my younger brother were very surprised. Because my wet clothes were so uncomfortable. So for me that’s no problem. I said to them that I had a good experience. So they couldn’t understand. So, this is a good day I said. So my mother of course couldn’t understand what happened, but she said, ‘That’s very nice.’ (January 18, 2001, p. 1)

Here Tanaka Roshi appears to be describing a mental state of mind that is not dependent on conditions; or, in terms of causality, not dependent on cause and effect. He can’t control all the conditions in his life. However, even when bad things happen, he still has a “good experience” and is in the “midst of happiness.”

So, from this array of experiences, what can be understood about the psychology of causality of these Japanese Zen masters that were interviewed? What is this “understanding of causality as we talk about it” (Harada Roshi, May 17, 2001, p. 5). To do this examination I felt I needed to heed the words of Nakajima Roshi. He said:

The heart of Zen is to seek for the truth, to have the contemplative mind in peace. ... Peaceful contemplation is literally to think quietly. The main point is what is the contemplation, what are you contemplating? Of course you should contemplate to the truth. (July 10, 2001, p. 1)

So what is the heart of causality as the roshis experience it? The heart of causality appears to me to be expressed in Tanaka Roshi’s happiness, Fukushima Roshi’s selfless self, Harada Roshi’s disappearance, Yasunaga Roshi’s supernatural, Nagashima Roshi’s activation of *en*, and Nakajima Roshi’s countless events. There is a psychology here that can be described in certain ways, as having certain themes, but at its heart the *roshis* say it is really indescribable. Nakajima Roshi said it is “ungraspable by words. ... Only your own experience is the way” (June 26, 2001, p. 7). I want to elucidate the themes, but always trying to do so within this indescribability. This is the “gray area” (May 17, 2001, p. 2) to which Harada Roshi pointed.

Mind and Causality

Tanaka Roshi described this “gray area” in the following way:

We Zen monks talk relation, connection, a chance. If we plant the same seed the harvest will be different by under different condition. This different condition we call *en*. ... So according to the Buddhist teaching *engi* and emptiness, *shunyata* (Skt., Jap. 空

ku = emptiness) is a relation. Everything occurs by *en* accidentally, accidental relation, accidental condition, which we call *en*. So everything is not a substance, but occurs only by *en*. So the essence, the true form of everything, the true face of everything, is *shunyata*. For example, this house, this small room, is made from a lot of special wood and sand and so on. This room is made by special *en*, special accidental condition, special condition. But there is no substance. (April 14, 2001, p. 4)

He states that everything appears in this world by causality, but its true form is nothingness, emptiness. This is true of mind as it also is a phenomenon-- it occurs according to causality, but its true nature is nothingness.

Harada Roshi also talked about nothingness, speaking of the nothingness of *en* in terms of perception. He said:

En is a word to describe the way we perceive reality. Actually there's nothing, there's nothing. We look back when something has passed and already happened and then we say, yes, it was *en*. ... Everything in the universe is created through *en*, but we have to remember that that's something that we have labeled condition and essentially there is nothing. (November 14, 2000, pp. 2-3)

So he agrees with Tanaka Roshi that the true nature of conditions is nothingness. When he talks about perception, he is speaking of how mind works within the reality of nothingness, as he understands it.

Harada Roshi distinguishes between perception and the reality of the condition. He believes that perception is a function of consciousness and always occurs as seeing the past. He explained, "Once you understand something or once you perceive something, that's already past. I use the image that we see the shadow of the thing. We don't see the essence or the real matter. We see an image or shadow of it" (May 17, 2001, p. 1). He said that thought also is not the present condition, but is about the past or the future: "Thought itself implies that

we can think about the past, something that's already past, we can understand that, or the future, we can imagine what might happen in the future. But in the moment now there's nothing" (May 17, 2001, p. 1). The present condition is nothingness. The reality of this present condition is what he experienced in his experience of *en* as described. Perception and thought disappeared.

However, as Harada Roshi was quoted, disappearance does not mean he experienced a void. It just means things couldn't be perceived. Mind is conditions made through causality, but there is no substance to these conditions, which is a way of saying psychologically there is no self or substance around which mind is organized. That Harada Roshi said he couldn't perceive means that he can't say definitively what mind is. At one point in my first interview with him I tried to pin him down and get him to say something definitive about how mind works. We had this dialogue:

Reggie: There are certain things that you can identify that if you do this, then this will happen, so in the same way with the mind, (can you say) that you have these different parts that interact in certain kinds of ways?

Roshi: It cannot be decided. We can only decide that it can't be decided, and that's why it's difficult.

Reggie: Mystery?

Roshi: There is something mysterious, but it's important, there is something and it's mysterious. (November 14, 2000, p. 18)

Other *roshis* also reported that due to the nature of causality they were in a position of not knowing. Several said that it is not possible to know the cause, only the result. They explained this in different ways. Nakajima Roshi said, "In our daily life we only see the result, the output of some kind of action, so we cannot tell" (June 26, 2001, p. 2). He also said, "So *in* (Jap. 因 = cause) is

unchangeable. There is a cause that we cannot tell what the cause mixed together” (June 26, 2001, p. 7-8).

Yasunaga Roshi explained it as, “So when people do, ordinary people use the word *en*, in my opinion as a result, as a conclusion, this is *en*. Past tense – this was *en*. Something like that. But right now or the future, maybe we have *en*, I don’t think so” (April 18, 2001, p. 4).

This is fundamental to understanding causality as the *roshis* experience it. Causality is an explanation of how things occur. The past can be perceived. However, in the moment psychologically people are not knowers of all the various causes and indirect causes that are at play in any given situation. These *roshis* are acknowledging their position, which is one of limited knowledge.

Nagashima Roshi’s comment about this situation of people was that “Life has lots of immeasurable things or occasions” (May 8, 2001, p. 7). There are many things that mind cannot know or control. In talking about how causality works without people’s knowing, he explained, “One example is breathing. Without acknowledgement or not we breathe every day naturally, so from this point of view *engi* actually I think is truth. But we are not aware of the working of the *engi* effects the daily life” (May 8, 2001, p. 6).

The *roshis* did not always talk of the truth of causality as nothingness or not knowing. Nakajima Roshi, like Harada Roshi, said nothingness is not a void. He explained, “From the Western point of view or maybe some not in the West normally the nothingness is misregarded as zero, which means non-existent. In the Zen sect nothingness is the everything which transcends nothing and also

existence” (July 10, 2001, p. 5). Fukushima Roshi said that he prefers to use the word “*mu* 無⁹” instead of the common English translation “nothing” because “*mu* 無” means both being and non-being together at the same time. He explained, “I think it’s better not to translate “*mu* 無,” for example as nothing, but just to keep it as “*mu* 無.” I think it’s better to keep it as “*mu* 無” because of the experiential sense, all is vanity and vanity is all, it has both senses, not just nothing” (January 23, 2002, p. 1).

Causality, therefore, is not lifeless or dry, without what I had thought of as “human” qualities. I was very surprised to hear Nakajima Roshi say the following: “So the concept of *innenga* (Jap. 因縁果 = cause and effect) is a very scientific approach of observing things. But there is one thing that does not apply to this *innen* concept. That is life” (June 26, 2001, p. 3). He said that life is eternal. The body passes, but life never does (June 26, 2001, p. 3). He asserted that “in Buddhism we believe in life. We follow after the life. We also preached not to neglect the life” (July 10, 2001, p. 2). He explained, “The Zen sect relies on the life itself, the unthinkable life itself. Zen training is the Zen meditation to focus on, to try to investigate on the life working in him or her self” (July 10, 2001, p. 1). He described his experience of life as having three aspects that are important: “Number one, impossible to think, impossible by the intellectual approach. The second, impossible to explain, and the third, impossible to measure the value, immeasurable” (July 10, 2001, p. 1). He said, with a face that I would describe as a peaceful glowing, “There’s nothing else so wonderful than life itself” (July 10, 2001, p. 1).

Impossible to intellectualize, impossible to explain, impossible to measure. Nakajima Roshi asserts that there is something that is alive that is active in our self, but this something can't be known through the discriminative processes of mind. When I asked him if this could be described as mysterious, he responded:

You asked me the mysterious, but what I would like to say in our common life we measure up and calculate everything by common sense, but the life in this context cannot be grasped by intellectual approach. So we may call it mysterious. (July 10, 2001, p. 2)

So how can this mysterious be understood? He answered, "So it's not thinking. It's a kind of intuition" (July 10, 2001, p. 2). In Nakajima Roshi's experience the discriminative mind, functioning through thinking and perception, has limitations, but he was able to understand his true nature through another aspect of mind, that of intuition.

Nakajima Roshi explained that life is his way of talking about nothingness or emptiness: "Life is ungraspable. So we can say that nothingness and also emptiness are also ungraspable. This question of the life is the question of what is God? The God doesn't have any shape" (July 10, 2002, p. 4).

When I reviewed my interviews with the other *roshis* I found several references to life. This was a part of causality that I had not understood before. Nagashima Roshi talked quite a bit about the interaction of life and causality. He said:

The life itself in Buddhism has more profound and large meaning. We the human beings originated from the life source. Not only me, but every human being originated or produced from unseen life. We come out from the unseen life source and also coming back or coming back to the life source again. ... Our life cycle is

also based on the concept of the *en*. ... from the Buddhist point of view we came from a much larger flow of life. Accidentally I was born such a time and such a day and such a year and still we do not know when we are passed away. Our death is also one of the cycles of *en*. ... the life itself is also a long chain of life. We also come from; I believe there is a certain flow of life which cannot be seen in the long run. But I'm sure there is a certain flow of life. Now along this flow of life we are born eventually and we also die away, passing away eventually. (February 20, 2001, pp. 3-4)

Nagashima Roshi here talks about causality as “accidental”. Things and events occur by the connection of conditions without a purpose or plan. Purpose and plan are personal qualities, but not causality qualities. Causality mysteriously arises from the “unseen” life and eventually returns to it. His description of life as “unseen” seems very similar to Nakajima Roshi’s description of life. Nagashima Roshi claims that there is a “flow of life”, that life continues and supports all existence.

Self and Causality

Tanaka Roshi also spoke of life. He said that life is a person’s true identity, but it doesn’t have the personal qualities commonly associated with identity. He explained, “There is no ego. If we attain to our source of our life, ultimate source of our life, we will recognize in fact that there is nobody. The essence of our true face. Our true face is no form” (April 26, 2001, p. 5). Life is our true identity, but it is not individual, unique, or personal. Tanaka Roshi claims that if we equate our ego with our real self this is a mistake. He says at his root he has no ego, no particular form. He is life, but this life is non-personal. He explained, “I could find my true face is nothingness, absolute nothingness. It

is said so-called formless self” (January 18, 2001, p. 6). The manifestation in his life of his formless self he described as, “Personal pleasure is my life. What I want to mean is *dokuraku* (Jap. 独楽 = private or personal pleasure). *Dokuraku* means my being, my whole being itself, becomes a pleasure, become a paradise” (April 14, 2001, p. 14).

Life in the way that these *roshis* use it is another way of expressing nothingness or emptiness, the more traditional expressions that are common in Buddhism and Zen. Nothingness refers to the lack of a personal self and the inability of a person to be in a position of knowledge or control. When Harada Roshi experienced this nothingness, everything “disappeared.” Life is a positive expression of the same truth. As such, life also is impersonal and formless.

This sense of life as not personal was a very hard idea for me to understand. I had always understood the personal as what breathes life into lifeless things. I had thought of the essence of psychology as being personal. As I psychotherapist I am always interested in personal experiences. In causality results happen through causes being connected. I thought to understand the essence of results, as connections for people, would be to try to understand their personal sense of connections, especially in relationships with other people. It was this sense of personal that I had hoped to hear about from the *roshis* when I interviewed them.

When I began the interviews one of the points I asked about was how *tatemaie* (Jap. 建前 = social face) and *honne* (Jap. 本音 = private real intention), a common distinction made by Japanese people, were affected by *en*, by having a

connection with a person. I was searching for personal experiences of *en*. Yasunaga Roshi's response was, "What do you mean by that? Why *tatema* and *honne* here?" (April 18, 2001, p. 5). In his eyes my question was irrelevant to the topic of causality. I was interested in personalizing causality, but Yasunaga Roshi did not have this interest. He said, as previously quoted, "We have to accept causation as causation." I was adding something to causation.

My way of thinking does not come out of a vacuum. Within Western religions there is support for it. For example, in the sect of Christianity that I grew up in, there was often reference made to the "Personal God." Western psychology also has a personal orientation I believe. Psychology in different ways according to theory assumes identity, assumes "I", as a personal self that is necessary for psychological health. Alan Roland (1988) agrees with me. He writes, "Current psychological discourse on the self, regardless of theoretical orientation, always implicitly and unreflectively assumes an individualistic "I-self"--the predominant experiential self of Westerners" (pp. 224-225). The experience and statements of these roshis challenges this personal orientation. They are talking about identity without a personal self.

Tanaka Roshi explained that because everything occurs accidentally by causality, what happens is not a personal matter in the way that people ordinarily understand. He said, "If we recognize everything occurs by *en*, *engi*, we should cut our attachment against everything. Because everything, even our body, our mind, is not our own property" (April 4, 2001, p. 5). Even that which is our most intimate experience, our body, is not personal property. Tanaka Roshi

emphasized, “If our body and mind is our property we can take it when we die, but it’s impossible. ... So there is no substance. There is no property that is our property” (April 4, 2001, pp. 4-5).

According to the *roshis* personalizing life is a common and fundamental mistake that people make. People are forever personalizing events and personalizing their own psychology. There is a common expression in America that reflects this, which is that a person took something personally. Taking something personally originates in believing that there is a self that is participating in life, participating in causality. From this point of view I asked Harada Roshi, “But you’re still participating somehow in cause and effect?” His response pointed directly to the error in my thinking: “I don’t understand well. Who participates?” (November 14, 2000, p. 11). I asked him about this answer in our second interview:

Reggie: If everybody is subject to cause and effect, then the English word is that everybody is participating in cause and effect. Without an ego, then what is this participation like or how can you speak about it?

Roshi: There’s nothing other than causality.

Reggie: There’s nothing other than causality, so it’s just happening and happening?

Roshi: That’s right.

Reggie: Without a self?

Roshi: Yes. (May 17, 2001, pp. 5-6)

There is no individual or personal self that experiences causality. There is life, but it is not personal. The *roshis* spoke of unthinkable life, flow of life, mysterious, formless self. There is a self, but what it is exactly can’t be known. This is a self that cannot be limited or absolutely defined. Fukushima Roshi was quoted earlier as referring to this self as a “selfless self.”

This sense of a self that is not limited I found to be a common experience for the *roshis*. This appears to be one of the main ways that the *roshis* function as a social self.

Tanaka Roshi said during his *zazen*, “My small body and mind disappeared and my whole energy spread out to the whole universe” (July 17, 2001, p. 10). At the end of one of our interviews, Tanaka Roshi and I had this exchange:

Roshi: I have won a lot of pleasure from our discussion, from our talking.
 Reggie: Oh, thank you.
 Roshi: Me, too.
 Reggie: Wonderful.
 Roshi: Because I experienced a reappearance of my bigness. (April 26, 2001, p. 13)

Nakajima Roshi also spoke of a small self and a big self. He explained, “The self has two types of the self. One is the small ego, small self, and the other is the large or great self. In order to awake the great self the small self should be killed, be perished” (June 26, 2001, p. 4). However, it is important not to think of the great self from the point of view of the small self. When I made this mistake, he cautioned me, “Your question is concerned about the small self and the big self, but as long as you adhere to the small self and guide to the bigger self, your understanding is limited. So please remove the concept of the small self and the bigger self” (July 10, 2001, p. 9). We had the following dialogue about his experience of his great self:

Roshi: I will tell you the condition after the smaller self is broken down. Everything can be seen as me. So when you see the flower, the flower is mine and the flower is me. When you see

the nature, the nature is me. Therefore we say it's the great self.
So the self is expanded in the universe.

Reggie: So there's no separation?

Roshi: That's right. So even though I feel the pain, the pain is not originally from my self. I also accept the pain from the others.

So when someone is, if you're painful, I can feel your pain.

Reggie: Is that so?

Roshi: For example, the parent and children are so close to each other. So in our language we say the pain of the children is the pain of the parents and the pleasure of the children is the pleasure of the parents. So this kind of sympathy is expanded to everything. (July 10, 2001, p. 4)

Quite extraordinary I think. This is Nakajima Roshi's experience of non-separation from the world. He is expressing a high degree of sensitivity to others.

Harada Roshi also spoke of "realizing that you always have been one"

(November 14, 2000, p. 5) with the world. He explained, "So if that thought of the ego disappears, then there is no gap or separation between you and things.

So you can say that I am all things, or conversely, all things am I" (May 17, 2001, p. 2). How this occurs he described in the following dialogue:

Roshi: The words themselves have no substance. So in that sense it's no different than seeing the morning star or seeing a flower or hearing a sound, where two things that do not have substance melt together.

Reggie: Two things that don't have substance melt together?

Roshi: Yes, that's the self or the thing hearing it and the thing that was heard. Both things have no substance. So in that instant those things became one. If there is a thought that there is a self on this side, it's just not possible for that to happen. (May 17, 2001, p. 3)

This is a good description of the "gray world" that Harada Roshi spoke of, the discriminative mind and the formless mind interacting. He described his experience of oneness as:

This is maybe a little bit hard to understand, but if you feel pain, the whole world, the whole universe, is painful. If you feel happy,

the whole universe is happy. If it's not like that, then there's no true awakening. There is this principle that if something is stolen, it affects the whole world. We say the six senses are the world. They are one. There's nothing here. It's actually one with the whole, with everything. So whatever you do affects everything else. (May 17, 2001, p. 5)

Interconnectedness

This is an important aspect of causality. This is the sense that everything is interconnected and nothing exists independently. Nakajima Roshi's experience of feeling others' pain and Harada Roshi's experience of when he's happy, the whole world is happy, are experiences of this oneness of causality. This oneness also explains why the *roshis* emphasize not knowing. Knowing requires intentional consciousness, a subject being able to perceive an object. Oneness means that it is impossible to be outside or objective. A person can only be causality. I could say that causality is the field within which a person is situated. However, I have to acknowledge that according to Harada Roshi there is no one who is situated. This is an existential reality for the *roshis*. Harada Roshi explained:

In Buddhism we say cause-condition-effect as sort of a process of causality, but within these three elements, within the cause, for example, there is also condition and result, and within the condition there is also cause and result, and within the result there is also cause and condition, so that's a way of saying that nothing, we can't just say that there's just this one thing, everything is interconnected. (November 14, 2001, p. 2)

Thus, cause and effect are not separate entities or events that occur only linearly. One cannot be without the other. As each is related to the other, each

has an aspect of the other within it. To view them as independent is to miss their interconnectedness. Conditions are a relational existence.

Cause and effect are not independent, linear entities. Each is both conditioned by the other and conditioning of the other. However, each is also not identical to the other. Each is differentiated from the other through their distinct aspects. It is therefore more correct to say that cause and effect are either the same and different, or conversely, neither the same nor different.

Fukushima Roshi also spoke of this oneness of cause and effect. He talked about it in terms of the self that is not separate from all things. He said, “To explain it in terms of this cause and effect we can say that one is oneself the cause and one is oneself the effect as well free of the ego” (January 23, 2002, pp. 7-8). When he had his “Zen experience,” he let go of the separate self sense, so he became one with whatever arises through causality. Phenomena interact according to causality. This interaction is not a dualistic experience, as in A, then B, but rather an experience of both sameness and difference. His experience cannot be said to be only this or that. He continued:

If you look at it in terms of cause and effect, if you separate yourself from it, yes, yesterday was the cause for today in a sense, but from the point of view of tomorrow, today is the cause of tomorrow, so you can't limit it that way. You can see why Zen focuses on today, on the present moment, because it's all found there. (January 23, 2002, p. 8)

In this sense cause and effect have an aspect of mystery, or not knowing. Fukushima Roshi is embracing this. He experiences himself in a way in which he does not separate himself from events and situations. His identity is not a

separate personal self. He becomes, or fully identifies, with each moment and space.

The self becoming the environment means that the self is the environment. Psychologically speaking this is in the sense of identity, what one is. When one identifies with something, one is that thing. There is no separation between oneself and that thing. It was this experience of identity that Fukushima Roshi spoke of when he discussed causality. Whatever arises, be it cause or effect, he becomes that arising.

This sense of self as being interconnected has some parallels in Western thought. Hermeneutics stresses that all meaning is situated within a historical context. To understand meaning it is necessary according to hermeneutics to understand the situatedness, the context of what is being understood (Kvale, 1983). Existential-phenomenologists focus on human situated experience, the total embodied human response to a perceived situation (von Eickartberg, 1986). The *roshis* in their oneness emphasis could be thought of as having a situated perspective. Within psychology family systems theory views people as being part of a greater whole, the family. Ideas like circular or mutual causality, which is that the relationship among the parts of a system provides an understanding for an event, are a product of viewing people from the wholeness of their situation (Nichols and Schwartz, 1995). Feminist psychology also asserts that the social situation of a person is a necessary viewpoint to understand the psychology of a person (Hare-Mustin, 1987).

These ways of thinking are not antithetical to oneness as the *roshis* describe it. What is different about the *roshis*' way of thought is the absoluteness of oneness. This applies to each individual in the social system as well as the social system itself. Both the social system and the individual are systems, composites and the coordination of conditions. There is no individual as an entity who is separate from the system.

Fukushima Roshi emphasized that interconnectedness itself is not another entity. Being non-separate means that oneself is fundamentally nothing. Thus, he was quoted earlier as saying that *mu*, which is being and non-being at the same time, is "the basis of all things rather than a kind of relationship" (January 23, 2002, p. 5).

Living Causality

One of the ways that this sense of oneness was manifested by the *roshis* was that several of them talked about not escaping from how causality manifests in a person's life. This is something that people commonly attempt to do when something is painful. Tanaka Roshi said, "Ordinary people try to escape disasters" (July 17, 2001, p. 12). Yasunaga Roshi emphasized, "Do not try to escape from *samsara* (Skt., Jap. 輪廻 *rinne* = transmigration). Jump into *samsara* itself" (November 21, 2001, p. 6). Our dialogue went as follows:

Reggie: "Can you say this is the Zen understanding of causality?"

Yasunaga Roshi: "Yes."

Reggie: "Don't try to escape from causality?"

Yasunaga Roshi: "Yes. We have to accept causation as causation." (November 21, 2001, p. 6)

Both of these *roshis* made these comments while talking about case #2 in the *Mumonkan* (Huikai, 1228/1977), “Hyakujo and a Fox.” This case focuses on understanding causation. Yasunaga Roshi said, “Do not try to escape from *samsara*. That’s the key point of this question as *koan*” (November 21, 2001, p. 6).

Tanaka Roshi said that the way to be free of causality is to not separate oneself from causality. He explained, “If you encounter serious disease, you better encounter serious disease. If you encounter disasters, that is the way of escaping from, true escaping, true way of escaping a lot of disasters, a lot of problems” (July 17, 2001, p. 12). He continued by explaining how he is happy regardless of what happens through the following story: “We Zen monk never think the disaster as disaster. No problem. The poor life with water and no pillow became the life of pleasure for Confucius. He has a pleasure in his mind already. So he was never unsatisfied with his poor life” (July 17, 2001, p. 12).

Nakajima Roshi said it is very important not to counsel people not to suffer anymore. He said, “If someone you face is suffering from the real pain do not, please do not tell him or her do not suffer any more. Instead, you have the pain and think of it and have your suffering and pain more completely” (July 10, 2001, p. 13). He emphasized that it is vital for people to believe that they can handle their pain. He said, “If you try to run away from the suffering, the suffering always follows you” (July 10, 2001, p. 13).

Nagashima Roshi had an explanation for why a person should not try to escape from disasters. He explained:

Buddhism isn't seclusionistic religion. Everything should be included into, absolved into the person. ... in order to gain the real peace of mind you have to absolve and include everything, comprehensive. So therefore we need a certain wider view to grasp the whole concept as one.... Therefore, Buddhism emphasizes no discrepancies, no *sabetsu* (Jap. 差別 = discrimination), no discrimination." (February 20, 2001, p. 17)

In order to have real happiness, which should be in my opinion the basic goal of all psychology, Nagashima Roshi asserts that certain mental characteristics are necessary--non-exclusion, oneness, no discrimination. This kind of use of mind is mentioned in many other contexts by the other *roshis* and will be investigated thoroughly as this report progresses.

My sense is that this understanding of not escaping is also based in the belief of the necessity of causality. Causality, as was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, is understood to be the condition of all phenomena. Harada Roshi expressed this when he said, "All people and all things are subject to causality" (May 17, 2001, p. 5). As causality is an invariant, any attempts to escape it only result in problems. The *roshis'* concern, rather than trying to escape from or change causality, is how to live within causality. Their point of view is that detachment from causality is impossible. Rather than detachment, they are existentially involved in causality.

This nature of causality as being an invariable that cannot be detached from differentiates it from the Western scientific notion of causality, which is based on the theory of causality being a probability that can be objectively observed. Western causality was influenced by the philosophy of David Hume. It states that if A occurs, B will probably occur, but not always. Causality as the

roshis understand it means that if A occurs, then B will always occur. Causality is an absolute. Causality also as the roshis understand it cannot be worked with according to the Western scientific method. This is detached observation of the occurrence of causality. Rather than being able to observe causality objectively, the *roshis* are observing causality from the point of view of always being within causality.

This position of not knowing, not controlling, and not escaping causes does not mean that the *roshis* felt powerless over the result. All of them, when asked, said that choice and intention could affect the result. Furthermore, this position, rather than weakening a person, actually made them more able to affect the result. This is a very paradoxical sense that by becoming something, erasing the boundaries between I and it, one is thereafter able to control it.

This relationship to causality is thus not a passive one. Some of the *roshis* talked about how passivity is a sickness and that this sickness afflicts some Zen practitioners. The *roshis* were unanimous in agreeing that causality is not pre-determined or fatalistic. They have great respect for that which is greater than themselves, but they also assert that they have an active part and thus a responsibility in causality.

There were three themes that emerged from the discussions about this matter. One was that a person has the ability to choose among different options. Cause, being composed of a variety of direct and indirect causes, presents a person with choices. Nagashima Roshi said, "From my experience of my life I choose every situation which is much more suitable for me every time and of

course when something happens I figure it out and try to find what is the best way. I actually choose the best way” (February 20, 2001, p. 8). When I asked Tanaka Roshi if a person could choose, he said simply, “Yes, you can choose” (April 4, 2001, p. 13).

The second theme was that people through their intention and effort could affect and change the result. Nakajima Roshi explained, “In is unchangeable. There is a cause that we cannot tell what the cause mixed together. But *en* (here used meaning result) can be changeable. You can choose the *en* and you can alert the situation, the environment, with your effort” (June 26, 2001, pp. 7-8). Nakajima Roshi is saying that both choice and intention can be causes that are included with all the other various direct and indirect causes. This is the reality of cause and effect – it is a mixture of known and unknown, controlling and not controlling, manipulating and accepting.

Fukushima Roshi went further than just being able to affect the result. He asserted that this position of not knowing, not controlling, and not escaping causality actually allowed a person to be free to control a situation as they see fit so to do. Fukushima Roshi said that this was the Zen idea of freedom, *jiyu* (自由) in Japanese. He said that freedom is usually understood as free “from” something, but the understanding of *jiyu* is free “to” do something: “Here in this sense, not just free from, but actually free to – a positive, active sense” (January 23, 2002, p. 6). When a person becomes something, they don’t lose their functions. Becoming something is not being swallowed up by that thing. But it is dissolving the boundaries between oneself and the thing and identifying with

the “*mu* 無” that is the basis of both oneself and the thing. One in this position is able to be fully functional. He explained, “One is then free to not only act, be active, but also you see that in a sense you can even say to control the surroundings because you’re not separate from them” (January 23, 2002, p. 6). Thus, the purpose of oneness with causality is to be able to pro-active, to be fully involved in the field of life. It is freedom to participate.

Not acknowledging this freedom to act within causality is a mistake that Buddhists sometimes make according to two of the *roshis*. I had this dialogue with Nakajima Roshi:

Roshi: Some of the Buddhists still misunderstand the concept on *innen* and sometimes we say *innen* is the word to be reluctant. If someone wants to do something and if they cannot make it and they were discouraged by the word – you cannot do it because of *innen*. So in this sense we use this word very negatively.

Reggie: You mean as a kind of excuse?

Roshi: Yes, it’s a kind of excuse. If the situation is hopeless and there is no room to make an effort, we say the word to show the reluctant *innen*. But this is the misleading concept, misunderstanding. (June 26, 2001, p. 7)

Harada Roshi made similar comments in my discussion with him about this same matter. I made the comment to him that I thought Japanese people too easily used the expression “*shikata ga nai*” (Jap. 仕方が無い), which means it can’t be helped. His response was:

This is definitely a weakness or bad point about Buddhism, because if one person says it can’t be done, then other people will imitate them, so nothing gets done that way. This is definitely a weakness or bad point about Buddhism, a sort of passive or negative way of thinking about *en*. (May 17, 2001, p. 6)

The third theme was this position was actually one in which the roshis felt less affected by events and circumstances. Paradoxically through becoming

one with causality they felt less subject to causality. Fukushima Roshi said, “Ordinarily the ego is something that gets wrapped up, in a sense used by the cause or the effect, following after or being chased by. That’s not true of egolessness” (January 23, 2002, p. 8). He asserted that the reason for this is: “Being free of ego the subjectivity, the source, is different. That’s why you’re able to say free of ego one is both the cause and the effect” (January 23, 2002, p. 8). Harada Roshi expressed the same relationship to causality when he said, “We can say that someone who has lost the self by means of the way of Buddha, they are no longer, shall we say, swayed or controlled by conditions” (November 14, 2000, p. 4).

Being “swayed or controlled by conditions” is being “wrapped up” in conditions. The self that these roshis are describing is free of this. Its happiness is not dependent on conditions. Tanaka Roshi expressed this very well when he described his experience of walking home in the rain that was quoted earlier. He said in his present mental condition “I’m in the midst of happiness” (April 4, 2001, p. 7).

Considering these aspects of causality, Nakajima Roshi said that there are two things that are important for people about *en*:

One is to try to avoid the bad *en*. But even though you try to avoid the bad *en*, maybe you’ll encounter one of them. So in this case if you fall into the encounter with the bad *en*, you will make it the better way by your efforts. (June 26, 2001, p. 8)

People have the ability to choose between different possibilities. When the possibilities presented are not what the person likes, they have the ability to improve the situation through their effort.

How people use their choice and intention is determined by their psychology. Results can therefore be manipulated according to people's self-interest. Nakajima Roshi said, "*En* can be manipulated by human's activities, human conceptions, human thinking" (June 26, 2001, p.7). However, because people cannot see the whole picture and are in a position of not knowing and not controlling, "even though one thing is conceived and regarded as a good condition, it turned out to be a bad condition" (June 26, 2001, p.7). Thus, people can influence causality, but fundamentally people are subject to causality.

Yasunaga Roshi's following discussion of causality reflects the attitude of the *roshis* regarding how to be in this world:

In my opinion causation *in* or *en*, both side like one paper. One side it goes over our handling so we do not have anything to do for ourselves. So in a way it's a kind of pessimistic or nihilist. But on the other hand, on the flip side, no one knows the future. So as long as we do our best, that's not our responsibility. I did my best. After that anything will happen that's okay, no problem. So in this case it's a very hilarious, even hilarious. So in a way *en* is an interesting word, both sides. (April 18, 2001, p. 5)

Causality contains both elements – that which people can affect and that which they cannot. Yasunaga Roshi asserts that people's responsibility is to do their best. After that the result is out of their hands. Then what happens is "even hilarious." One can let go of their personal involvement, their self, and then one's perspective changes. Life becomes lighter, more humorous.

Tanaka Roshi also spoke of humor in the context of his relationship with the parishioner who was suicidal. He said the wife of this parishioner "tried to support too seriously, but it's because she couldn't support him anymore too seriously" (January 18, 2001, p. 15). The wife became tired because of her

seriousness and couldn't continue to take care of her husband. However, Tanaka Roshi said his approach was "not serious, but heartfelt. ... So I try to increase his feeling naturally. So I say this joke. ... I told this naturally, without thinking" (January 18, 2001, pp. 16-17).

Like Yasunaga Roshi Tanaka Roshi also expressed this wonderful sense of being completely involved and letting go at the same time. They are involved in what they do, asserting themselves, taking responsibility for the consequences, but also being very respectful of that which they cannot control. I found that this combination is basic to Zen practice and the Zen approach to being in the world.

Yasunaga Roshi described *koan* practice, which is the basic form of practice in the Rinzai school of Zen, in the following way:

Each *koan* has it's own electric wave, a kind of electric wave. So the *koan* practitioner is a receiver. So you can imagine an old radio. If you want to listen to some music or news, tune the dial, adjust the wave to that wave. Okay, so like that Zen practitioner tunes their state of mind. So if you can tune in, the answer of the *koan* will come into you yourself. (May 8, 2001, pp. 19-20)

He described the "answer coming into yourself" by then saying "in a way something jumped into my self. ... Passivity. So all of your active work, activity, does not work as for *koan* practice. It's meaningless. ... So your active work is in vain. However, you have to do it" (May 8, 2001, p. 20).

You have to give your complete effort. This is the preparation that is necessary to be able to receive the answer. However, the answer itself comes from outside a person's intention and choice. A person receives the answer. Until conditions are right, something that has many unknowable and uncontrollable factors, the desired result does not occur. Nagashima Roshi

explained this clearly: “When the situation is prepared, the thing occurs” (February 20, 2001, p. 19).

Harada Roshi reflected this attitude when he was discussing what would help cure mental disease. He said that he had had a lot of experience with seriously mentally ill people. I asked him what his ideas were on what would help these people and he responded, “I’m always thinking that it would just be some opportunity, some chance, well, we could say *en*, that could change the situation” (May 17, 2001, p. 8). When I was discussing this answer with Daigaku-san, my translator with Harada Roshi and a monk at Harada Roshi’s monastery for twenty-seven years, I said that I thought this reflected a passive attitude. Daigaku-san’s response was, “I wouldn’t take it so passively. ... He really has both sides too and he’s free I think. But he has quite a passive side and he waits for people to come to him. But on the other hand, he’s pushing too. He’s really both” (July 9, 2001, p. 14). My sense is that while this is true, he has an unusual amount of trust in circumstances and accidents and a lot of patience waiting for conditions or circumstances to come together.

It is important to understand I think that these different aspects of causality, like conditions occurring, nothingness and the lack of a personal self, do not mean detachment. This is similar to the Zen idea of *jiyu*, freedom. As Harada Roshi and Nakajima Roshi were earlier quoted, nothingness does not mean a void or non-existence. Quite to the opposite of detachment, the lack of a personal self means for the roshis being completely involved in cause and effect,

being free to act. It means no separation from cause and effect or oneness with cause and effect.

I had the following dialogue with Tanaka Roshi:

Reggie: So you say that *shisei* (Jap. 至誠 = ultimate fidelity or sincerity) and *muga* are the same thing?

Roshi: Yes. The same thing. This is not my private opinion. A lot of eminent people say the same thing. They testified by body and mind. (April 4, 2001, p. 1)

Tanaka Roshi described *shisei* as doing something “heartfully” (April 4, 2001, p. 1) and with “sincerity” (April 4, 2001, p. 1). This is to do one’s best, as Yasunaga Roshi was earlier quoted. Often over the years I have heard my Zen teachers say I should do something with *isshokenmei* (Jap. 一生懸命 = for dear life, working very hard with concentration of mind).¹⁰ This is the spirit of no separation from cause and effect.

I asked Nagashima Roshi about *isshokenmei*, “So is it important, this kind of idea when you’re given a function, like *tenzo* (Jap. 典座 = head of the kitchen), you are cooking all day, is this important for Zen practice? This kind of doing this with sincerity?” He responded quickly, “Of course yes! That’s right” (May 8, 2001, pp.1-2).

The respect that I saw in the roshis for causality greatly impacted their approach to human relationships. How Nagashima Roshi spoke about his marriage as the workings of causality was the most striking example of this. He said, “I also get married by the certain action of *en*. As long as I received this kind of *en* I would like to make it more better way and I would like to cherish this *en* more preciously” (February 20, 2001, p. 5). I was struck by this sense of

receiving his marriage, especially because in my way of thinking marriage is an event in which I am particularly active and seems very personal. I emphasize my partner as my choice much more than someone whom I accepted through accidental events. I asked Nagashima Roshi about this and he replied, “Well, I think there are both ways, a more assertive way and a more natural way” (February 20, 2001, p. 8). By assertive way he meant making choices and by natural way he meant going with the “bigger flow of life” or “chain of life” (February 20, 2001, p. 8). Going with means accepting or receiving something. However, even his own choices he saw as part something bigger than him, part of causality. He said, “I spend lots of energy to find out which way is the best and a good way for me. Actually this is my decision, but from the other point, the more higher point of view, this is one of the flows, one of the parts of the bigger flow of life” (February 20, 2001, p. 12).

Nagashima Roshi’s respect for causality was reflected in how he spoke of how he got married. He described some of the events, “So I actually received a lot of requests (from his parishioners) to get married and therefore I didn’t ask any conditions. As long as a person wanted to get married to me, I will accept her without condition” (February 20, 2001, p. 9). He said about the *nakodo* (Jap. 仲人 = a matchmaker) who arranged his marriage, “Accidentally there was another go-between who knows my wife and actually the two persons served as a go-between to build up the ties between me and my wife” (February 20, 2001, p. 9). He thus did not approach marriage as a personal situation, but rather as

something that came as a result of the conditions of his life. His concern was more how to make a better marriage than to exercise his personal preferences.

Certainly there are many important cultural considerations here. My sense is that personal considerations are much more important for Westerners than Japanese people. Harada Roshi spoke of this in relation to some of the Westerners who have come to study Zen with him. He said, "It happened some times or at least in one case the person came and said that after some time that he didn't feel a connection with me, so he went to another place where he did feel a connection" (May 17, 2001, p. 6). The implication was that feeling a personal connection was more important for Westerners than for Japanese.

I think it is very important to try to sort through what is cultural and what is a psychological function. The phenomenological methodology assumes that there are common psychological functions among all people and that everything is not only cultural or situated. My methodology is based on this belief. The present consideration, respect for causality, has many cultural influences I believe. However, respect for causality also reflects important psychological considerations for the *roshis*' sense of self.

The respect for causality in human relationships is basic to the ethical concerns of the *roshis*. If causality is a given in every situation and each person has an active part in the workings of causality, then it is not surprising that the *roshis* gave a great deal of thought to their participation in human relationships. This is demonstrated in how they reflect on events.

Nakajima Roshi reflected on how to deal with conflict between people.

He said that he thought human relationships were the most difficult thing for people. This is because:

It's impossible for the people to remove, to go away the self centered concept. It's totally impossible. Therefore, if someone is aware of his own self-centeredness, when he or she tries to soften his or her self-centered concept, which means to understand the other party, another person. Then the friction is getting less than before. Therefore, this kind of change and shift to a softer attitude reduces the struggling. So this situation can be said in the Japanese language *omoiyari no kokoro* (Jap. 思いやり の心). It's the heart or the mind of the considerate the others. (July 10, 2001, p. 8)

To have this *omoiyari no kokoro* Nakajima Roshi said:

From my own experiences it's very difficult to follow this concept all the time. Not only the thinking is sufficient enough. We have to do. We have to make certain actions. So in order to make the appropriate actions I always try to reflect myself. ... So I always adjust between what is wrong and what is good. So as I mentioned before last time all the lifetime is the period of the training of my self. (July 10, 2001, p. 8)

This *omoiyari no kokoro*, the heart-mind that is considerate of others, appears to be basic to Nakajima Roshi's ethics. He therefore practices reflecting on whether he is being selfish or considerate. He spoke about how he valued harmony, which is a traditional Japanese value: "If there are two or three people in one group and each person should have the peace in mind and should share a certain effort to make harmony within the group" (June 26, 2001, p. 8). Part of his contribution to achieving harmony with others is through his self reflection.

Nagashima Roshi also spoke of how he makes effort to have harmony in groups. In talking about meeting with his parishioners, he said:

When I have any kind of gathering or small meeting with the neighborhood, if someone strongly expresses his or her own opinion without regard to the majority of the assembled people, so in this sense if someone says his opinion strongly this feels that it's a kind of example of ego. So for me, and maybe this is my personality, I don't insist or I don't hold my opinions strongly in the meetings. (May 8, 2001, p. 4)

Nagashima Roshi talked about how he tries to be very aware of his preconceptions. He explained:

When I meet someone else, if I have a pre-concept, pre-information, or prejudice about the person I meet, when I meet him or her directly I have to separate the different impressions. Of course I change myself to cope with him or her. (May 8, 2001, p. 3)

There is sensitivity to others and awareness of self he is expressing that is important to him.

Nakajima Roshi said that one thing that was very important for him in his reflections on his personal conduct was his conscience. He said, "From my personal opinion the conscience is the voice coming out of the life, in our self or in our life" (June 26, 2001, p. 5). The conscience is the voice of the inner self and it tells him what is right or wrong behavior. He said, "Everyone can hear the voice of the inner self regardless of training or not. Maybe my understanding is only shared among Japanese. ... Everybody listens to the inner voice, but everybody does not acknowledge the inner voice" (June 26, 2001, pp. 5-6). We had this dialogue:

Roshi: In our language we say you don't have the ears to listen to.
 Reggie: I see. So in training you develop the ears. (laughter)
 Roshi: Yes. (June 26, 2001, p. 6)

At the opening of this chapter Tanaka Roshi was quoted as saying he is always in the “midst of happiness.” This he said was true even in difficult situations with other people. In fact, he said, “Sometimes strange to hear, sometimes I want more difficult suffering, more difficult problem” (April 4, 2001, p. 14). He spoke about relationships with people as an opportunity to practice his realization of nothingness. In speaking about his suicidal parishioner, he said, “To live with him for me a practice of non-ego” (January 26, 2001, p. 18). This is a very non-selfish ethic that he practices. In speaking about taking care of his dying master and wife he said, “The most important thing is sincerity, shisei. I tried to do this kind of shisei, but I felt unsatisfied about my attitude, my taking care of my master and his wife. Unsatisfied forever” (April 4, 2001, p. 12). Unsatisfied because he is always seeking to do better and deepen his practice.

Tanaka Roshi spoke of certain psychological aspects that he considered important to deepening his practice when he is in relationship with other people. One was to be what he called a “naked person” (January 26, 2001, p. 14). He described this while talking about a nineteen year old woman who visited him: “When she visited me, when I am visited by anybody, I never speak to someone about Zen Buddhism. I have no self-consciousness of *roshi* or even Zen. ... So talking to each other is my Zen practice without Zen” (January 26, 2001, p. 14). Another is not to try to use the situation for some gain. About being with the suicidal parishioner, in this respect he said it was like sweeping the grounds of the temple. “I expect no harvest, no gain” (January 26, 2001, p. 10). A third is

not to escape from his circumstances. To the suicidal man, “I said to him, I’ve never escaped, refused you even if you become serious mental sickness. So never mind, count on it” (January 26, 2001, p. 9). A fourth was to be with people “naturally” and “spontaneously.” Again, in speaking about interacting with the suicidal man, “I told this naturally, without thinking. ... Without plan, yes. The only pure mind to support him” (January 26, 2001, pp. 17-18). A fifth would be to be and do with *shisei* as he was quoted about taking care of his master and wife.

What was significantly absent from the *roshis*’ ethical concerns about causality was the idea of *karma* (Skt., Jap. 業 *go*).¹¹ About *karma* Nagashima Roshi and I had the following discussion:

Nagashima Roshi: From my point of view *go* is something that we human beings can’t control, like it is an unborn element and even though you like it or not, it always follows you. Like for me I’m a Japanese and a male and this is not my decision.
 Reggie: But this is the same kind of thing with *en*. There’s a part of *en*, which is not things that I control.
 Roshi: But *en* has a certain portion to make his or her free will.
 Reggie: I see. But *karma* does not.
 Roshi: Yes. (May 8, 2001, p. 7)

Causality is cause and effect. Karma as Nagashima Roshi explained it is effect only. People participate in causality with some freedom of will. *Karma*, after it occurs, is something that is outside of people’s control. Causality is interrelated, more circular. *Karma* is linear, effects from the past or for the future. In causality people have the possibility to make a better life. In *karma* they do not. Thus, in old Japan a person’s handicap was considered a result of their past *karma*. Nagashima Roshi explained:

The old Japanese believed the handicapped person was the outcome, the result, of the wrong *karma*. This kind of teaching was believed from the Buddhist teaching. So the present Buddhism denies this. What is important for the handicapped person is how to make a better life for them, how to provide a better life for them. (May 8, 2001, p. 8)

I think that the reason for this differentiation between causality and *karma* is that causality refers to the neutral functioning of cause and effect, while *karma* refers to the moral functioning of cause and effect. Causality is ontological. Fukushima Roshi said, “I think of this *engi* as more of an ontological description of the world” (January 23, 2002, p. 5). It is an activity that occurs invariably and human beings are within it. *Karma* is ethical. The *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary* defines *karma* as: “A deed which is produced by the action of the mind” (1999, p. 84). Bernard Faure (1991) has a similar definition: the “retribution of acts” (p. 67). *Karma* specifically refers to human acts, deeds, and behaviors – the ethical dimension of life. *Karma* operates according to causality; i.e., good deeds result in good effects and vice versa. *Karma* as Nagashima Roshi discussed it reflects what the *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary* writes is the common Japanese understanding of *karma*: “In common Japanese parlance, *go* indicates bad *karman*” (1999, p. 85).

I think it is important not to equate causality and *karma*, a mistake that many have made. Bernard Faure, for example, appears to make this mistake when he discusses the fox *koan*, case 2 in the *Mumonkan* (Huikai, 1228/1977). Faure writes about this case:

The fox, appearing to Baizhang as an old man, tells him that he was once a Buddhist abbot who fell into this evil destiny for having asserted that an enlightened man does not fall into

causation. He is saved when Baizhang tells him that an enlightened man does not ignore causation. The point of the story is that the true Chan master espouses the theory of *karmic* retribution instead of denying it in the name of a questionable ‘inneism’ or ‘spontaneism. (1991, p. 68)

In this discussion Faure first describes the fox *koan* as focusing on causation, but then writes that the “point of the story” is to accept the theory of *karmic* retribution. He switches from using the word “causality” to the word “*karmic*.” He is asserting that although *karma* is not mentioned directly in this story, it is the point of the discussion of causation in this story. The implication appears to be that causality and *karma* is the same thing.

Faure further blurs this distinction as he continues from the previous quote: “Unlike Dogen’s, however, Wumen Huikai’s comment seems to undercut the traditional interpretation of *karma*: ‘if you have a eye to see through this, then you will know that the former abbot did enjoy his five hundred happy blessed lives as a fox’” (Wumen, *Wumen Guan*, as quoted in Faure, 1991, p. 68). From the point of view of viewing the theme of this *koan* as being *karma*, then it is true that “Wumen Huikai’s comment seems to undercut the traditional interpretation of *karma*.” However, if this *koan* is viewed as being about causality distinct from *karma*, then Huikai’s comment is completely congruent with how the *roshis* understood causality. There is no undercutting of the traditional idea of causality.

Contrast this writing of Faure with my discussion with Tanaka Roshi about Wumen Huikai’s comment:

Tanaka Roshi: After enlightenment he was fond of his former life as a wild fox.

Reggie: After enlightenment he was fond of his former life as a wild fox?

Tanaka Roshi: Yes, as a wild fox.

Reggie: Not ...

Tanaka Roshi: Not enlightened. The life of wild fox was better than a life of enlightenment. This is very deep thought. ... We say sometimes, one of the most eminent patriarchs of another sect of Zen Buddhism said, after he became the head of a sect, he confessed, 'Today I thought my hard training of young times was better than nowadays.' (July 17, 2001, p. 12)

For Tanaka Roshi, Wumen Hukai's comment, rather than undercutting the traditional idea of *karma*, expresses beautifully the enlightened understanding of causality. This is because Tanaka Roshi does not blur together, as Faure appears to do, causality and *karma*.

Yasunaga Roshi's discussion of this story, like Tanaka Roshi's, also reflects a clear understanding of the distinction between causality and *karma*. He said, as discussed earlier in this chapter, "We have to accept causation as causation. ... Do not try to escape from *samsara*. That's the key point of this question as *koan*" (Nov. 21, 2001, p. 6). Accepting causality as an ontological reality is not the same as accepting the ethical ramifications of one's acts. Yasunaga Roshi is speaking of the former and does not equate it with the latter. Causality functions neutrally, without regard to human concerns. *Karma* functions ethically, directly in regard to human concerns. A person participates in causality and is subject to the ethical ramifications of their acts. The two are not the same.

Spatial Self

This concern with their behavior in relationships is an aspect of the roshis' social self. As they do not value an individual or personal self, it appears to me that this psychological space is filled by their social relationships. I think this is a manifestation of their orientation to causality.

I think it is prudent to be careful how this sense of self is conceptualized. Alan Roland has written that the Japanese (and the Indians) have more of a "familial self" or a "we-self" while Americans have more of a "individualized self" or "I-self." Roland (1988) writes what he refers to by the "familial self": "By the familial self of Indians and Japanese, I mean a basic inner psychological organization that enables women and men to function well within the hierarchical intimacy relationships of the extended family, community, and other groups" (p. 7). The familial self encompasses several sub-organizations for Roland, including the we-self:

The experiential sense of self is of a 'we-self' that is felt to be highly relational in different social contexts; narcissistic configurations of we-self regard that denote self-esteem derived from strong identification with the reputation and honor of the family and other groups, as well as with the others in hierarchical relationships, from nonverbal mirroring throughout life, and from culturally encouraged idealization of elders. (1988, p. 8)

In contrast to the "we-self," Roland describes the "I-self" as:

The individualized self is characterized by inner representational organizations that emphasize: an individualistic 'I-ness' with relatively self-contained outer ego boundaries, sharp differentiation between inner images of self and other, and considerable social individuation orienting the person toward relatively autonomous functioning, inner separateness, and initiative. (1988, p. 8)

After describing the “we-self” and the “I-self,” Roland writes:

It is my strong impression that the traditional psychological makeup of Indians and Japanese consists of varying integrations of a familial self with a spiritual self with very little of the more individualized self I have outlined above – which is not to deny the considerable individuality of Indians and the more subtle individuality of Japanese. This contrasts dramatically with predominant modes of American psychological makeup, where the individualized self is the dominant note, with background chords of the familial self. (1988, p. 9)

After talking with these *roshis*, my sense is that Roland’s conceptualization should be used with care. It’s not so much the psychology that he describes, but the terms he uses to describe this psychology. It has almost become a stereotype that Japanese are group-oriented and Americans are individualistic. After talking with these *roshis*, I don’t think they would consider themselves strictly as Roland describes to have a we-self or a familial self. When their behavior and their reports are examined, they exhibit characteristics of both types of self. Each of the *roshis* considers themselves to be an individual, more individual than what Roland describes as “the subtle individuality of Japanese” (p. 9). Each talked about making choices and each was quite different in character. Each had taken a different path in life. Yet each also exhibited great sensitivity to and respect for the people and social situation around them. While they may be more oriented to group concerns than Americans are, they still act in very individual ways. Using Roland’s conceptualization, although he writes, “which is not to deny the considerable individuality of Indians and the more subtle individuality of Japanese” (p. 9), I think it is easy to think that a we-self person does not have an individual character. The reverse is also true. It is

easy to miss the group concerns or situatedness of an I-self person. In reality I think that the *roshis'* self is an I-self acting within a we-self. Their sense of self seems to be one that allows them to function in both ways.

I have noticed how Americans often talk about Japanese people as being group people and lacking an individual self. Yet if you ask Japanese people if they consider this to be true, they usually say they consider themselves to be very individual. What Americans understand as individual they don't see in Japanese. Because Japanese are different, however, does not mean that they are not individual people.

Rather than having a we-self or an I-self, I think the *roshis'* reports reflect a self that is closer to the conceptualization that Yasuo Yuasa (1987) uses in *The Body*. Yuasa bases his way of thinking on what he names a temporal self and a spatial self. Thomas Kasulis writes in the editor's summary to *The Body*, "Yuasa sees in the modern Western philosophical tradition a bias toward understanding the human being as primarily an individual, self-conscious subject located in temporality. Missing is Watsuji's emphasis on human being as located in 'betweenness' (*aidagara*)" (p. 32). Yuasa asserts that while Westerners emphasize an individual self that continues over time, Japanese emphasize a "betweenness" (Jap. 間柄 = *aidagara*) self that is located in spatial social relations. This is reflected in their language. Thomas Kasulis (1981) writes how the Japanese word for human beings, 人間 *ningen*, which literally means "between people," reflects an understanding that "the person is always in a context, in a necessary relationship with what is around him or her" (p. 6). I've

also heard informally from Japanese friends that the character in Japanese for person (人 *hito*) represents two people leaning on each other, which one can easily imagine when one looks at 人.

The roshis, as I've elucidated in many ways, are individuals with unusual sensitivity to the context within which they live. Their sense of oneness results in an ability to be more fluid spatially and much less located at one psychological point. Outstanding examples of this are Nakajima Roshi's ability to feel other's pain, Harada Roshi's sense that when he's happy, the whole world is happy, and Fukushima Roshi's sense of *jiyu*, freedom.

The historical self is what continues over time. This the roshis give much less value to than the social self. Certainly part of this is due to the roshis' view that there is no self that continues. As Harada Roshi said, "Who participates?" It is basic to the *roshis*' way of thinking that there is nothing, no self or entity, that continues over time. Harada Roshi said this is because the self is always changing and is in constant movement. He explained, "This is happening at a very fast speed, that's why we cannot say that it's one thing, it's continually changing. Because it's moving so quickly that we end up thinking that it's one thing" (Nov. 14, 2000, p. 18). Regarding psychological theories he said:

It's impossible for the mind to remain constant in any one condition. So that means it's impossible to say, we can't say the mind is like this. So I think, in terms of psychology where you get different kinds of thinking, different theories and so saying the mind is this or that, that's really not possible. I think it's impossible. (Nov. 14, 2000, p. 15)

Harada Roshi is speaking from his point of view of oneness. Mind does continue through causality, but not in any fixed form. This does not mean there

is chaos as that is obviously not his experience. What it does mean is that mind is always functioning, interacting with its environment, and changing as appropriate. We had the following dialogue:

Roshi: When I say the mind is always moving, that's what I mean, that it has different functions – perception, thought, emotions.

Reggie: So there are these different parts of mind, there's no center?

Roshi: Yes, that's right. At that instant there's only that function. (Nov. 14, 2000, p. 17)

Nakajima Roshi made similar comments. When I asked him if mind changes from one thing to another very quickly, he answered, “Yes, mind is changing” (July 10, 2001, p. 12). He continued by using an analogy that mind is like a mirror:

Mind changes as the mirror reflects the sight, as it reflects. If the mind follows the movement, the mind can recognize the nature of the phenomena itself and you cannot adhere, you can't be moved by the pleasure, and also any sorrow. So what is important is to not make a stop, like the water flows downward. ... So as the situation changes, so the mind also follows after the situation. Then you don't cling to the certain point. (July 10, 2001, p. 12)

This last part I think is very significant. Mind changes its form rapidly, so it can't be said to be this or that. However, it is always in relationship to its environment--“mind also follows after the situation.” Nakajima Roshi says that when mind functions this way, then it is possible to “recognize the nature of the phenomena itself.” In this way mind is able to function clearly and understand what is occurring. This seems to reflect Yuasa's spatial self and de-emphasize the temporal self.

I think what is being expressed here is that mind is temporary and therefore has no basis for a fixed or stable identity. There is no conception of

anything that never changes, like the soul in Christianity. What is eternal in Buddhism is nothingness, which is neither form nor formless and is not a time-based understanding. What can serve as a basis of self is the point where one is in their activity and their relationships. Mind itself is only activity and relationships. Adaptability, alertness, and responsiveness are characteristics that are important for such a spatially oriented self.

This conception is a different from that which Mark Epstein (1995) theorizes. He writes:

We all tend to think about the self as Freud did, in spatial terms: as an entity with boundaries, layers, and a core, much like an onion or a building or an archaeological dig. ... The primary operating metaphor remains a spatial one that carries with it a subtle belief in the “thingness” of self, in the possibility of finding the core, the root, the center, or one’s true identity. (pp. 137-138)

For Epstein a spatial self is one that promotes boundaries, separation, and self as an entity. He states that the spatial sense of the self is undone as a person discovers that they are only change. He writes:

With the mindfulness practices comes a shift from a spatially based experience of self to a temporal one. ... Rather than promoting a view of self as an entity or as a place with boundaries, the mindfulness practices tend to reveal another dimension of the self-experience, one that has to do with how patterns come together in a temporary and ever-evolving organization. (1995, p. 142)

Thus Epstein understands a spatial self as an entity self, one with boundaries and a fixed nature that resists change over time. He asserts that viewing the self as change over time is a more healthy way to understand the self. He writes, “This progression from a spatial metaphor of self to a more temporal one is portrayed in the Buddhist literature as inexorable. Once mindfulness has

been developed, the self can never be thought of in the same spatially based manner again” (1995, p. 142).

This is not how I understand the way that the *roshis* spoke of a spatial self. The *roshis* spoke of a spatial self as oneness, not as a separate and limited entity as Epstein writes. The spatial self is the activity of the self within space, within oneness. It is the person always in relationship, within himself or herself and within the environment. It is, as Epstein was just quoted, the “one that has to do with how patterns come together in a temporary and ever-evolving organization” (1995, p. 142). These “patterns” are what the *roshis* refer to as the spatial self. The temporal self according to the *roshis*’ language is what the self is not rather than what the self is. The temporal self for the *roshis* is the part of the self that is change, the part of the self that brings fluidity to the spatial self.

Patterns in space is what a self is at any given moment. Such an understanding supports a self that is not just nothing, but also is something, something that always is a social self, a self in context, a self that is an active part of this world.

In terms of causality this means that cause and effect are a process of change, one that can be characterized by continual formation and dissolution. Phenomena are temporary combinations of conditions in which the seeds of dissolutions are already present. Understood this way phenomena cannot be said to be exactly this or that, but rather always include the “gray area” that Harada Roshi spoke of.

Tanaka Roshi spoke of how any attempt to fix a self is a mistake. When I asked him if mind changes quickly, he answered, “Yes. Because its true face is no form. Because our true face is no form, we can reform to everything” (July 17, 2001, p. 2). Again he expresses the understanding that there is no form or entity that continues over time. What is important is being able to be adaptable to changing situations. Any kind of mental fixating disturbs this ability to “reform to everything.” In speaking about the table that was between us, Tanaka Roshi said:

Because the essence, the true essence of this, is very difficult to utter, to say. Because if we say with a word, we’ll fix it. Because it is changeable. ... So we don’t have to fix anything. Even this is an amazing opinion of a Zen Buddhist. Even we shouldn’t fix our mind on the enlightenment. (April 26, 2001, p. 2)

Fixating disturbs the natural flow of life and upsets the natural functioning of mind. When mind fixates, it loses its ability to “follow after the situation” or “reform to everything.” Fixating is an attachment to something being a certain way or having a certain form. Attachment is one of the basic forms of mental disease from the Zen Buddhist perspective. It is described by the *roshis* in many ways. Nakajima Roshi used the word “clinging” in the previous section during which he discussed mind following after situations. What attachment is and how it functions will be explored in the next chapter.