

Chapter Five

Attachment

Attachment, as defined in the introduction, is one of the basic ways that causality functions. It is through conditions being attached to each other that phenomena occur. Harada Roshi explained:

With regard to condition and attachment, really these are things, well, shall we say, they exist before people become human beings. Or, another way of saying it, it wouldn't be a mistake to say that this world is made of condition and attachment. (November 14, 2000, p. 4)

Tanaka Roshi said, "*Engi* and *shujaku* are the fundamental word of ancient Buddhism" (April 26, 2001, p. 1).

Attachment is thus considered to be a basic component of all phenomena. Attachment is the adhering or affiliation of conditions together. Attachment itself, as a phenomenon of causality, is transient and is essentially nothingness. This could be said to be the "gray area" to which Harada Roshi refers or the "*mu* 無" that Fukushima Roshi talks about. Attachment in its nature is both adhering to conditions and, as it is transient, letting go of conditions. It both exists and does not exist. All phenomena, as it is made of conditions and attachment, has this same quality--it both adheres and lets go.

The basic nature of mind, as it is a phenomenon like all others, includes condition and attachment. When attachment manifests in mind, it is this "gray area" or "*mu* 無" with which human beings have trouble. People become attached to attachment. They want to be, but don't want to not be. They don't

want change. Attachment thus becomes, as was described in the introduction in the Twelve-linked Chain of Dependent Origination and the Four Noble Truths, one of the principle causes of suffering in human beings.

Attachment thus in Buddhist thought is complex and subtle. It is fundamental both to the manifestation of life and the manifestation of suffering. Attachment has also received a lot of attention in Western psychology. It is very important, for example, in Object Relations theory. John Bowlby (1982), for one, has written extensively on the role of attachment between mother and child. Attachment is thus a major concern for both Western and Eastern thought. From the Buddhist point of view, however, the Western research into attachment is only investigating part of attachment. It is this Buddhist point of view that I have wanted to investigate. In this chapter I will examine the experiences of attachment and meaning given to these experiences by the *roshis* I interviewed.

Experiences of Attachment

The following are some of the primary ways that the *roshis* talked about their experience of attachment:

Nagashima Roshi: The attachment situation cannot be solved. Every situation has a certain clinging, a certain attachment, whatever occasions. What is important is how to make peace in your mind, how to not move your mind against the attachment, so ... so this is the training of your mind and this is how to, how do I say, hold your mind in the right position. (February 20, 2001, p. 15)

Harada Roshi: Within attachment itself there's neither good nor bad. That is decided from the person who is deciding it. (November 14, 2000, p. 4) Attachment happens in the moment. Therefore, you can't say if it's good or bad. Attachment to the moment is delusory. However, in some ways attachment is good.

In the case of *Shakamuni* Buddha if he were alive today many people probably would say that his drive to find a resolution to the basic sufferings of life would be unhealthy. Nevertheless, his attachment had a good result. (November 14, 2000, p. 10)

During our conversation about his suicidal parishioner, I asked Tanaka Roshi: So you have some kind of attachment to this man?

Tanaka Roshi: Yes. Not only against him, but against anybody.

Reggie: Anybody you meet?

Tanaka Roshi: Yes.

Reggie: You naturally feel this kind of ...

Tanaka Roshi: Yes, a natural attachment. This is not a kind of egoistic attachment. A kind of non-egoistic attachment. I think so. (January 26, 2001, pp. 9-10)

I asked Nakajima Roshi: "How does attachment effect the mind?"

Nakajima Roshi: The mind loses the freedom. ... Loses the freedom means to adhere to one thing and the mind does not pay attention to the rest. Like the feeling of the sadness can bind and attach the mind. ... Attachment is the self-centered concept. (June 26, 2002, pp. 9-10)

Fukushima Roshi: We can speak basically about both conscious and unconscious or non-conscious attachments. ... Because unless you get to a point in your practice beyond mere discrimination and consciousness it's not possible to get through those unconscious attachments. With that first Zen experience, awakening, the world is transformed, it's a completely different world, depending on whether you've had that or not. (October 21, 2001, p. 4)

Yasunaga Roshi: Once you find out the real basis of the attachment, so like no attachment or detachment or something like that, maybe you can handle it. ... But also, for instance like this attitude, right now I'm attached to something like blah, blah, blah. So I'm a Zen practitioner. I have to cope with this attachment this way. This is not a true answer. I don't talk about such an attitude. It's a little bit difficult. Unconsciously ... unconscious is not a good word. Without conscious, without consciousness maybe you will be able to cope with all of your attachments. ... Otherwise it's also an attachment. (May 8, 2001, p. 18)

Natural Attachment and Ego Attachment

Nagashima Roshi said that attachment is basic to life and is a given in any moment. For him any attempt to eliminate attachment only

created more difficulties. Rather than to try to escape attachment, he was more concerned with psychologically how to handle attachment. This is for him the purpose of his Zen training. He explained:

So everything starts from your mind. ... Every situation occurs according to how to perceive the situation. So therefore everything is up to how you perceive, how your mind reacts against, to the situation you face. Right? So everything and this (the *Roshi* picks up an ashtray) is a situation, attachment, there are certain ways of attachment all over the situation, but what is important is how to make peace in your mind even with this attachment. If you stay out of the situation you'll also face another situation of attachment and so you have to start from the beginning again. So what is important is now to settle your mind within this chaotic situation. ... how not to cling to the situation. (February 20, 2001, p. 16)

What is important for Nagashima Roshi is how he perceives and reacts to attachment. He said that it is important to be aware of attachment in our daily life. The essence of his response to attachment is “not to cling” to attachment. This requires great mental training. “The enlightened person ... doesn't cling to attachment in his mind. ... what we stress here is not to activate the attachment. In other words, we are not aware of the existence of the attachment. We are unconscious of attachment” (May 8, 2001, p. 10). This means leaving attachment as it is, without becoming involved in it, letting it function naturally. And it isn't a matter of consciously adopting such a mental position against attachment. Such would be another attachment. It is to be non-attached to attachment to the degree that this is not a conscious effort. “We are unconscious of attachment.” This points to pre-conscious levels of mind, the roots of mind according to Buddhist psychology. This is not the unconscious as is commonly

thought of in Western psychology. It is the root of both the conscious and unconscious to which Nagashima Roshi is pointing.

Harada Roshi also spoke of how attachment is perceived as being important. As an inherent part of mind attachment is neither good nor bad, it just is. It is the person viewing attachment who gives meaning to it. It is this viewing person that creates problems with attachment. He said:

The problem is that we latch on to or get attached to what we like and we want to get rid of what we don't like. It even happens that if someone really loves somebody, that they could even kill them. It could turn into hate just because of that attachment. (May 17, 2001, p. 4)

This viewing person fixates on, becomes attached to, how they value and perceive things.

Harada Roshi refers to this viewing person as the ego consciousness. He said, "That thing which perceives consciousness is what in Buddhism we call the ego consciousness" (November 14, 2000, p. 7). Ego consciousness perceives, values, and attaches. This activity creates the illusion of a separate self, self as an entity. In truth there is no ego to be attached to. However, people experience their ego consciousness as a reality. Nagashima Roshi emphasized this: "We have the illusion that we have the attachment in mind. Please be sure that Zen emphasizes no attachment" (May 8, 2001, p. 11).

Harada Roshi said that a person who is free of ego attachment is "no longer, shall we say, swayed or controlled by conditions. That's one thing. The second thing is that they're not attached to one thing in the sense that it limits their vision shall we say" (November 14, 2000, pp. 4-5). Being "swayed or

controlled by conditions” is being emotionally attached to things occurring in a preferred way. “Limits their vision” is being mentally attached to perceiving things according to one’s values or judgments.

As attachment is fundamental to phenomena, there is attachment without ego consciousness. Harada Roshi said that the difference between attachment as a natural function and ego attachment is:

someone who is too fixed in the way that they see things. We say narrowminded or they cannot see things in a broad way, the broad view. Then in that case if they’re too fixed--it’s gotta be this way--then that’s a case of attachment. (May 17, 2001, p. 9)

So ego attachment is an emotional clinging or a mental fixation that results in a limiting of their psychological ability. However, what is clung to or fixated upon is not real. Ego attachment is fundamentally an illusion. There is no ego to be attached to. It is a false sense. Nagashima Roshi clearly stated this: “Having the attachment is actually the illusion of the mind” (May 8, 2001, p. 12).

I think that the distinction between natural attachment and ego attachment is a useful way of viewing attachment. It helps to clarify the dual nature of attachment and is useful in clarifying which aspect of attachment is being referred to. I will use it in this report to serve this purpose. I should be clear, however, this terminology is my own. It is not the *roshis*’ nor is it written of this way in the Zen Buddhist literature and the Buddhist *sutras*. Attachment in Buddhism usually only has a negative connotation, that of ego attachment. Several of the *roshis* mentioned this. For example, Yasuanaga Roshi said, “As far as I know the word attachment has a negative connotation in Buddhism”

(May 8, 2001, p. 12). Nagashima Roshi said, “Attachment is not a good meaning, good notion, in Buddhist concept” (February 20, 2001, p. 11).

Despite this traditional meaning of attachment in Buddhism, I found the *roshis* often speaking in terms of what I am naming natural attachment. Tanaka Roshi often spoke of what he called living “naturally.” He spoke about how he naturally feels an attachment to anyone he meets. He stated, “We Zen master say never deny our natural feeling” (April 26, 2001, p. 10). This is very important I believe, but also very difficult to discriminate. People are easily fooled as to what is and is not “natural.” He spoke of the following *koan* to illustrate this:

A monk one day for a long time in China the earnest monk was training in the small house and one day the old lady tried to check his state of mind. She commanded a young girl to try to embrace the monk. She tried, but the monk said, ‘I’m like a big rock and never feel even if you young girl embrace me.’ So after coming back and she told the word of the monk and the old lady got angry. ‘I’ve been taking care of a bad monk for a long time!’ So she led him away and burned the small house. It’s a famous *koan*. One of the difficult *koans*. ... Natural is in this case very difficult.¹² (April 26, 2001, p. 10)

Tanaka Roshi said that to live naturally without ego and ego attachment is an Eastern tradition. He explained, “We Japanese, we Eastern people have a tradition to live naturally. Naturally, without ego, egoistic thought and way of life, way to live so naturally” (July 17, 2001, p. 7).

There are examples in Zen literature of this Eastern tradition that Tanaka Roshi speaks of. One such example is the first paragraph of the *Genjo Koan* chapter of Dogen’s *Shobogenzo*. It is translated by Nishijima and Cross as:

When all *dharmas* are (seen as) the Buddha-Dharma, then there is delusion and realization, there is practice, there is life and there is death, there are buddhas and there are ordinary beings. When the myriad *dharmas* are each not of the self, there is no delusion and no realization, no buddhas and no ordinary beings, no life and no death. The Buddha's truth is originally transcendent over abundance and scarcity, and so there is life and death, there is delusion and realization, there are beings and buddhas. And though it is like this, it is only that flowers, while loved, fall; and weeds while hated, flourish. (Dogen, 1233-1253/1994, p. 33)

Here Dogen is writing to Japanese sensibilities, so non-Japanese people might not grasp the full implications. First he describes the truth of the *dharma* as being both form and emptiness, or being and non-being. Then, in the last sentence, he writes that although "it is like this," human attachments still arise. Flowers are loved and weeds are hated. As explained to me by my Japanese mentor, Prof. Shoji Muramoto, these are feelings that are given much attention in Japanese culture. They are supported by Japanese culture. The implication in this writing of Dogen is that these strong feelings of attachment are natural.

Tanaka Roshi explained that natural attachment does not create suffering for him. He said, "If you gain the true liberty, you don't have to avoid and escape from the attachment" (April 26, 2001, p. 9). Harada Roshi also talked about attachment in a similar way to Tanaka Roshi. He spoke of how even people who are enlightened (a person who has realized their true self) need attachment to do things for other people. He explained: "In terms of someone who has lost the self and then has any aspiration to do something for other people, there must be attachment. This will not happen without attachment" (May 17, 2001, p. 5). However, this kind of attachment does not create problems for such a person. He said, "There must be that attachment. ... I think that's, you

could say, essential. I think that's just there. But it's not like something that is a heavy burden. It's not like a heavy burden, but it's there" (November 14, 2000, p. 5).

Fukushima Roshi spoke of this matter in terms of "good and bad attachments" (January 23, 2002, p. 2). He explained, "There are good attachments, to make money in order to support your family for example, to learn to get ahead in the world" (January 23, 2002, p. 2). He told a story of a monk in his sect who was qualified to become the successor to his Zen master, but fell in love with a woman and chose to marry her instead of becoming the successor. Qualified successors are the means by which the Zen tradition continues, but they are very rare, so this was at first very upsetting to his master. However, "Finally the master did accept his marrying this woman. He often would tell the joke that I had a successor, whether it was the license or the woman, and he chose the woman. He would often joke about that" (January 23, 2002, p. 2). Fukushima Roshi said:

I think his falling in love was a good attachment. To be a Zen master is not the only goal. ... We can say the real final goal of all human beings is to fully develop as a human being, not necessarily to be become a Zen master. (January 23, 2002, p. 2)

"Good" attachments or natural attachments are part of being a human being and are to be developed, not discarded.

Nakajima Roshi said that in his experience ego attachment "binds" the mind so that it loses its freedom. This is similar to what Harada Roshi described as "narrowminded" and "swayed by conditions." Due to ego attachment mind becomes focused and discriminates on the basis of that focus. Mind "attaches to

one point” (July 10, 2001, p. 10) or “adheres to one point” (July 10, 2001, p. 10). This kind of attachment interferes with the natural activity of mind. He said, “So what is important is to not make a stop, like the water flows downward” (July 10, 2001, p. 12). Mind as a natural activity is expansive and one with its environment. By ego attachment mind loses this expansiveness and its open relationship with the environment.

Nakajima Roshi says that this “binding” of mind occurs because mind becomes focused on itself. Ego attachment he says is a self-centered activity, viewing everything in terms of me, a narcissistic activity. He says that the basic activity of ego attachment is attachment to one’s small self. In the previous chapter his idea of the small self and great self were described. He explained:

The difference between the great self and the small self is that the small self is the selfish concept, very self centered concept. The great self is to think about others than oneself. We call it compassion in Buddhist terms. ... The great self is to share all. Everything is the same, is equal being. So there’s a big difference between the two. (June 26, 2001, pp. 4-5)

Attachment he says is “adherence” to the perspective or orientation of the small self. It is to see things from the selfish point of view and thereby to lose sensitivity for others. It is a “me-only” orientation rather than a “me-and-us” orientation. This Nakajima Roshi claims is the source of evil in the world. He said, “The bad, the evil, originated from the self-centered concept, which means attachment” (June 26, 2001, p. 6).

In my own personal experience in Zen meditation one of the first lessons I received was that all of my thoughts and emotions revolve around “me.” I am at the center of all my mental activity. All of my experience is viewed through

this center, through this “me.” I believe that it is this kind of experience that Nakajima Roshi is pointing to when he describes attachment as a self-centered activity.

Ego attachment is thus a very deep-seated activity in the mind. It is an activity that occurs at the root of mind that, as I described previously in this chapter, is at the root of both the unconscious and the conscious. Fukushima Roshi describes how ego attachment functions in both the conscious and unconscious and talks about how difficult it is to be free of the unconscious attachments. He explained, “Those unconscious, non-conscious, attachments are really difficult to work with. First of all because you yourself don’t fully recognize that you have it, that it’s there. But it’s still there working underneath” (October 21, 2001, p. 4). He said that attachments are synonymous with illusions and that people possess many, many illusions. He said, “In Japan it’s often said that there are 108 illusions, attachments, that human beings have” (January 23, 2002, p. 3). These are described in great detail in Indian Buddhism, but not in Chinese Buddhism, which is the ancestor of Japanese Zen Buddhism. He explained, “You can see a difference in the character in Indian Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism. Chinese Buddhism tends not to go into all of that descriptive detail” (January 23, 2002, p. 3).

This lack of detail in Japanese Buddhism is reflected in the general Japanese culture. Almost every older Japanese knows that at night on the last day of every year all Buddhist temples ring a bell 108 times, signifying the clearing away of the 108 illusions and attachments of humans. However, very

few Japanese know what each of the 108 illusions and attachments are¹³ (Shoji Muramoto, personal communication).

Fukushima Roshi described his own experience of having attachments that he was not aware of. He said:

My master Shibayama helped me to realize this. Because I had gone through graduate studies and became very learned I was attached, not aware of it, but very attached to my intellectual knowledge. So again before my first Zen experience I had all kinds of attachments. So looking at it from 10 years after that first experience then such attachments are unthinkable. (January 23, 2002, p. 9)

Fukushima Roshi's first Zen experience was his first experience of being “*mu* 無.” This was discussed in the previous chapter as a word that he prefers not to translate. It has both connotations of being and non-being together. His first experience of “*mu* 無” was his first experience of cutting his attachments and being his true self. About this he said, “That first Zen experience is something in which the whole world changes. It's transformative” (January 23, 2002, p. 2). However, ego attachments continue to arise. It takes years of practice to eliminate all of them. Thus, the “first Zen experience” was described by Fukushima Roshi as an “entrance” into a path in which ego attachments and illusions are eliminated:

My first Zen experience ... you can consider the entrance into this path and then there's a long, hard path, many, many years of further training onward until you can really get to that point where all of them are actually cut off. (January 23, 2002, p. 1)

The Root of Mind

Yasunaga Roshi also referred to the depth of the challenge that attachment presents for people. He said that attachment is a basic function for human beings and will always continue. People need to be able to “handle” (his word) attachment, to have attachment without being bound by attachment. “Handling” attachment, however, cannot be done through consciousness, because he says that merely produces another attachment. He explained that this is because of the nature of consciousness: “Consciousness cannot be conscious of consciousness itself. ... So consciousness is a function of your ego. So when your consciousness is conscious of your consciousness, that consciousness is not your own real consciousness” (May 8, 2001, p. 19).

Here Yasunaga Roshi is speaking of an understanding of consciousness similar to that expressed in the *Abhidhamma*. The *Abhidhamma* view is that consciousness is a relation between a subject and an object that occurs only when certain conditions, or aggregates, coalesce. Mind is the subject, that which is conscious of an object. Objects can be either internal, within mind itself, or external, in the world (Narada, 1956, p. 9). This conscious subject is what Yasunaga Roshi refers to as the ego. This ego is conscious only in relationship. When it examines this situation objectively, that examination is not consciousness itself, but rather an examination of consciousness.

Yasunaga Roshi views attachment as a basic constituent of consciousness. Therefore Yasunaga Roshi searches for the correct way to describe how to “handle” attachment. Adopting a conscious attitude or position does not affect

the real activity of attachment. In fact it only makes it worse by complicating the situation. What he says needs to be done is that a person needs to find the “real basis of attachment.” Then a person can “handle” attachment “unconsciously. So in this case, without reflection” (May 8, 2001, p. 19).

Here Yasunaga Roshi is expressing the same attitude towards “handling” attachment as Nagashima Roshi, who was quoted earlier in this chapter as saying, “We are unconscious of attachment” (May 8, 2001, p. 10).

Yasunaga Roshi distinguishes between the conscious, the unconscious, and consciousness. The conscious and the unconscious are transformations, or forms, of consciousness. Attachment functions in all forms of consciousness, but its root is in consciousness itself. Attachment is thus an activity that occurs at the root or base of mind.

Yasunaga Roshi’s view that attachment functions at the base or root of consciousness was a view that all the *roshis* shared. In their experience attachment is a determining factor in how mind functions. Nagashima Roshi said: “The mind actually manifests itself according to what kind of attachment in your mind” (February 20, 2001, p. 24). What is being referred to here is what I have termed ego attachment. There is a Buddhist term for this, *gashu* (Jap. 我執). *Gashu* is defined by the *Bukkyo Gaku Jiten* (1995, p. 62) as ego attachment. *Gashu* refers to clinging to the idea that there is an ego. It is divided into innate ego attachment and acquired ego attachment. A related term is *ho-shu* (Jap. 法執), things attachment, clinging to the idea that every thing has its own substance.

Ego attachment and things attachment are *ni-shu* 二執, the two basic attachments (*Bukkyo Gaku Jiten*, 1995, p. 62).

Nagashima Roshi is saying that the activity of mind will occur according to whatever ego attachments a person has. It is this function of attachment that is fundamental to the *roshis'* view of attachment. I think this is an important understanding of mind that psychology could benefit from. The focus of Zen practice is the root or base of mind rather than the conscious or unconscious aspects of mind.

Depth psychology has focused on the conscious and the unconscious. Understanding how the Zen focus is different I think would clarify many misunderstandings between the two. A good example of such a misunderstanding is the conversation between C.G. Jung and Shin'ichi Hisamatsu that took place in 1958 in Jung's home in Switzerland.¹⁴ Hisamatsu (1889-1980) was a leading Japanese Zen philosopher and a member of the Kyoto School. While both referred to the unconscious during this conversation, they struggled to understand what each other meant by the unconscious. For example, near the beginning of the conversation Hisamatsu asked Jung, "Is the nonpersonal unconscious a fundamental unconscious? In other words, is the nonpersonal unconscious what you call the collective unconscious?" (Muramoto, 1998, p. 41). Jung replies, "The personal unconscious develops in the course of life, for example through experiences, the memory of which I repress" (Muramoto, 1998). This points to a difference between the two understandings of the unconscious, as the unconscious in Zen is never developmental. It is

rather always already as-it-is. This is the Buddhist idea of *tathata* that was discussed in chapter three.

The two continue their conversation, trying to understand the differences. A couple exchanges later Jung says, “There are instinctive excitements observable in animals which are connected with the essence of the unconscious. Perhaps one could say that these are *klesas*¹⁵--namely, properties or symptoms of the unconscious” (Muramoto, 1998). Hisamatsu replies, “From our viewpoint, *klesas* belong to the sphere of consciousness” (Muramoto, 1998). Consciousness in Zen includes both the Western unconscious and the conscious, while the unconscious in Zen refers to something outside of both the psychological unconscious and conscious.

They continue in this way to try to understand each other’s meaning until Hisamatsu asks Jung, “From what you have said about the collective unconscious, might I infer that one can be liberated from it?” (Muramoto, 1998, p. 46). Jung replies, “Yes!” (Muramoto, 1998). Shoji Muramoto, whose translation is being used here, writes in a note to Jung’s “Yes!”:

Hisamatsu’s immediately preceding question is, in my opinion, the gravitational center of the entire conversation, comparable with a critical confrontation between a Zen Master and his disciple in Zen *mondo* (question and answer). We are told, in fact, in Hisamatsu’s commentary to the Japanese version of the translation appearing in Vol. 1 of his *Complete Works* that both he and Tsujimura¹⁶ found Jung’s ‘Yes!’ very unexpected. Unfortunately, however, we don’t know what kind of ‘yes’ it was. Was Jung’s reply a heartfelt affirmation, an expression of exasperation, or a ‘yes’ which was somehow forced from his mind, perhaps even against his will, by Hisamatsu’s penetrating and somewhat intrusive questioning? Personally, I believe the latter was the case, and suspect that this was one of the reasons

why Jung refused to have the conversation published in *Psychologia*. (Muramoto, 1998, p. 48)

Psychologia was a journal published by the Kyoto University in Japan. The reasons that Jung cited for refusing to allow publication were mainly “inevitable and profound gaps in his and Hisamatsu’s understanding of each other’s traditions” (Muramoto, 1998, p. 38).¹⁷ Jung was clearly dissatisfied with the conversation.

This dissatisfaction showed at the end of the conversation. Hisamatsu said, “Unlike the ordinary *atman*,¹⁸ the true self of Zen has neither form nor substance. It has no form, mental or physical” (Muramoto, 1998, p. 46). Jung responds:

I cannot know what I don’t know. I cannot be conscious of whether the self has attributes or not, because I am unconscious of the self. The whole human person is both conscious and unconscious. I only know that I may possess a certain set of attributes. What you say (concerning the ordinary *atman* and the true self of Zen--SM) is possible, but I can’t know if that’s really the case. I can, of course, make assertions. I can state metaphysical matters until I am blue in the face but, fundamentally, I don’t know. (Muramoto, 1998)

In a footnote to this comment of Jung’s, Muramoto writes:

Jung’s final two comments evidence his harsh criticism of Hisamatsu’s conviction, which, in its resistance to any psychological investigation, resembles those Jung observed throughout his life in clergy and believers. Basically, we can see Jung opposing his psychological viewpoint to Hisamatsu’s ontology. In this light, a freer translation of Jung’s response might read: ‘Professor Hisamatsu, we must distinguish between your understanding of the true self of Zen – as one possible archetypal image of the self – and the archetype of the self as such. You may well know the self in your sense – be it fundamental, true or formless – but while I am sorry that I do not, neither of us can know the self as such.’ (Muramoto, 1998, p. 49)

The result of this lack of understanding of what Jung referred to as “each other’s traditions” (Muramoto, 1998, p. 38) was what appears to me to have been an unsatisfying conversation for both men. This occurred in large part because of the confusion over what unconscious meant. For Jung the unconscious was the unknown part of mind. For Hisamatsu Jung’s unconscious is a part of consciousness. Hisamatsu’s unconscious refers to the root of mind and to what is called in Zen literature variously as the True Self, no mind, and no-self. Understanding this difference will enhance the possibility of dialogue between the two traditions.

Nagashima Roshi’s description of his experience of ego attachment reflects this understanding of ego attachment as being at the root of mind and being very negative. He said:

I feel the attachment is more deeply rooted in the mind. There must be certain layers of mind. So maybe desire is placed in the much more shallow place. But the attachment is more deeply rooted, and also relates to the so-called *mumyo* (Jap. 無明 = ignorance), the condition of the no light, actually the bottom of the desires and the negativity of the human mind. (February 20, 2001, p. 29)

He said his experience of this darkness and negativity was “heavy”:

I have also felt this in my mind, a certain heavy, and my heart has sunk. So my heart has sunk. We have a difference between mind and heart, so the mind sunk, the heart sunk, is it okay?¹⁹ Getting sunk and felt a very heavy and I was in attachment. (February 20, 2001, p. 29)

The effect that ego attachment has on mind, being at its root, is that it diminishes its ability to interact with its environment, supports the sense that there is an illusory separate psychological self, and interferes with its natural

changeable nature. The ideal for the *roshis* was what Nagashima Roshi described as “flowing” or Tanaka Roshi called “natural.” Nakajima Roshi described the ideal using the metaphor of a blackboard:

If I can write the letters on the blackboard, when it is necessary the letters are eliminated, erased. Therefore the blackboard can be used again. So this is the most effective way of the using of your self. So when something is attached to mind, then eliminate it. Then you can be white again, pure again, and use your self again. (July 10, 2001, p. 10)

Ego attachment interferes with mind forms being forgotten when they are not appropriate to a situation. It thus diminishes the utility of the self.

Descriptions of Ego Attachment

All of the *roshis*’ descriptive words and phrases of ego attachment reflect this understanding and this ideal. Nakajima Roshi used the following descriptors: “adherence” (June 26, 2001, p. 4), “Adherence, attachment, is very, very difficult to let it go from our experience because we have lots of desires” (June 26, 2001, p. 5), “self-centered concept” (June 26, 2001, p. 6), “fixation” (June 26, 2001, p. 9), “mind loses the freedom” (June 26, 2001, p. 9), “adhere to one thing and the mind does not pay attention to the rest” (June 26, 2001, p. 9), “adhere to the small self” (July 10, 2001, p. 9), a habit that “imprints” mind (July 10, 2001, p. 11), and “clinging” (July 10, 2001, p. 12).

Nagashima Roshi spoke of ego attachment in the following ways: *en* as being “knotted by attachment” (February 20, 2001, p. 19), “adherence” (February 20, 2001, p. 20), “warping activity of ... the natural condition of the mind “ (February 20, 2001, p. 20), “the very limited activity of the human mind”

(February 20, 2001, p. 20), mind being “binded” (February 20, 2001, p. 22), the “condition that is the tightening up” (February 20, 2001, p. 23), a “one-sided viewpoint” (February 20, 2001, p. 23), a “negative activity of the mind” (February 20, 2001, p. 23), “more like a personal orientation” (February 20, 2001, p. 29), “the condition of the remaining, always something remains” (February 20, 2001, p. 30), “the frame of the mind of the present activity, the present condition” (May 8, 2001, p. 8), “clinging” (May 8, 2001, p. 10), and “illusion of the mind” (May 8, 2001, p. 12).

Yasunaga Roshi’s descriptions of ego attachment were: “greed” (May 8, 2001, p. 13), in truth it is “meaningless” (May 8, 2001, p. 13), “attachment itself has both connotations, good and bad and positive and negative” (May 8, 2001, p. 14), “in a way it’s kind of being a slave” (May 8, 2001, p. 15), “the word chains is almost equivalent to attachment. You cannot move. You are tied up” (May 8, 2001, p. 15), “unnecessary desires” (May 8, 2001, p. 15), a kind of “determination” (May 8, 2001, p. 15), “captured” (May 8, 2001, p. 16), and “being held, being occupied” (May 8, 2001, p. 16). He also said that viewing attachment as bad and trying not to be attached is an attachment: “If you try to be non-attached, try to not covet for anything, I do not need anything, this is also an attachment” (May 8, 2001, p. 17).

Harada Roshi used the following descriptors for ego attachment: “the reason for that attachment is delusion” (November 14, 2000, p. 4), “Within attachment itself there’s neither good nor bad. That is decided from the person who is deciding it” (November 14, 2000, p. 4), “swayed or controlled by

conditions” (November 14, 2000, p. 4), “it limits their vision” (November 14, 2000, p. 5), “something always remains” (November 14, 2000, p. 5), “hang on” (May 17, 2001, p. 4), “latch on to” (May 17, 2001, p. 4), “fixate” (May 17, 2001, p. 7), “too fixed in the way they see things” (May 17, 2001, p. 9), “narrowminded” (May 17, 2001, p. 9), and “cannot see things in a broad way” (May 17, 2001, p. 4).

Fukushima Roshi’s descriptions of ego attachment were: “illusions” (January 23, 2002, p. 3), “the ego tends not to really see what’s good and what’s bad, to not really see what’s there, but to say what’s good for me and what’s bad for me. It’s just the ego’s attachment and illusion” (January 23, 2002, p. 3), “before my first Zen experience I had all kinds of attachments” (January 23, 2002, p. 9), “a little hair of ego crops up” (January 23, 2002, p. 9), “when the ego gets wrapped up in it and then in order to get ahead you’re willing to, you know, cheat someone else or you’re willing to kill someone in order to get money, well, you can see what’s happening there” (January 23, 2002, p. 9), “those unconscious, non-conscious, attachments are really difficult to work with” (October 21, 2001, p. 4), and “He finds himself unexpectedly forming attachments or illusions in the outside world so to speak. Concerning money. Women. Or attachment to position. I should be of a higher rank” (October 21, 2001, p. 5).

Tanaka Roshi described ego attachment in the following ways: “think our body and mind is our property” (April 4, 2001, p. 4), “holding” (April 26, 2001, p. 1), “because we have attachment ... we make it exist. ... But in fact there is no

substance” (April 26, 2001, p. 1), “fixing” the mind on something (April 26, 2001, p. 2), “attachment creates suffering” (April 26, 2001, p. 9), “If we deny and avoid from the attachment, like detachment, this is a kind of attachment” (April 26, 2001, p. 9), “He was proud of himself. So he was attacked by a kind of attachment” (April 26, 2001, p. 12), and “mental dust” (July 17, 2001, p. 9).

Attachment and Other Functions of Mind

Attachment as an activity at the root of mind affects all of the other functions of mind. The primary activity that the *roshis* were concerned about was the sense of self. Attachment to the personal ego creates an illusory self. This personal ego (*nin-ga* 人我 in Japanese, the attachment to which is called *ga-shu* 我執 as noted earlier) is at the root of consciousness. Harada Roshi earlier was quoted as calling this “ego consciousness.” This will be examined more thoroughly in the next chapter on no-self. In the previous chapter I discussed the non-personal understanding of causality. Ego attachment is a primary way that this false personal sense is manifested. Fukushima Roshi explained, “As long as there’s the ego naturally attachments arise in relation with the ego. So we can say the basis for all attachments, including illusion, would be the ego” (January 23, 2002, p. 3). Thus, Zen practice can be said to be oriented to eliminating this ego attachment. Fukushima Roshi described it as: “The basis of the Zen experience can be said being oneself “*mu* 無.” Another way to put that is getting rid of all attachment to ego” (October 21, 2001, p. 4). Here he

expresses the centrality of the activity of attachment to the personal self in Zen psychology.

Tanaka Roshi expressed the same view of attachment when he said, “In Zen you should abandon all attachment. Abandon attachment about body and mind, about our life. We should abandon our life and body. If not, we are not able to gain the essence of Buddhism” (April 26, 2001, p. 1). To realize the truth of Zen ego attachment must be eliminated.

Harada Roshi expressed the importance of this root activity of attachment to ego in the following: “In Zen practice the fundamental question is how are we dealing with consciousness” (May 17, 2001, p. 9). If a person deals with consciousness through attachment, through “ego consciousness”, then mind is manifested according to this “ego consciousness.” Attachment to self is thus a pivotal activity for mind. He said:

The only point of difference here between someone who is awakened and someone who isn't is a matter of consciousness and how consciousness is dealt with. If there's no self, then you're really free to use consciousness for the good of other people. But if there is a self, then you get lost in your own thoughts and attachments and it's very difficult. (May 17, 2001, p. 5)

This getting “lost in your own thoughts and attachments” is the self-centered approach to life. It is narcissism. This is I believe the fundamental effect of attachment to self--that a person becomes me-oriented. Through attachment to self a person perceives the world according to this attachment. Everything is valued according to the likes and dislikes of attachment. Fukushima Roshi explained, “The ego tends not to really see what's good and

what's bad, to not really see what's there, but to see what's good for me and what's bad for me" (January 23, 2002, p. 3). This is the "small self" that Nakajima Roshi was quoted at the beginning of this chapter and in the previous chapter discussing. The *roshis* through their ethical concerns that were discussed in the last chapter demonstrated great sensitivity to how ego attachment affects relationships with others.

Because of the centrality of attachment to ego to the functioning of mind, mental illness in Zen is thought about in terms of attachment and the creation of an illusory self. Western psychology usually describes mental illness in opposite ways, using terms like fragmenting, decompensating, loss of self, having a lack of autonomy and appropriate boundaries, an inability to constitute their self, or colloquially losing it or fallen apart. The general understanding is that mind loses its cohesiveness and integration. Harada Roshi talked about his experience of living with very mentally ill people. He described how they became fixated on him. He said:

These people would get very attached to something, unreasonably attached. Some of them became very attached to me. These people would only listen to me and not to anyone else. If I told them to do something, even if they didn't want to do it and even while crying, because they were attached to me, they would do it anyway. (November 14, 2000, pp. 8-9)

We had the following dialogue about this experience:

Reggie: So these people would get fixated?

Harada Roshi: Yes.

Reggie: This is the opposite of what psychology usually says about mental illness. Mental illness is always spoken of in words like fragmenting or coming apart.

Harada Roshi: (laughing) I'm a fragmented person! (November 14, 2000, p. 9)

This kind of attachment that Harada Roshi is describing results in a very solid and fixed, albeit illusory, self. This does not mean a self that is coordinated and functions smoothly. Fixed does not mean an integrated whole. It is a very dysfunctional and non-coordinated self. In talking about these people, he said, “I don’t think they have a solid self in the sense of being coordinated. For example, I don’t think really mentally ill people are capable of suicide” (November 14, 2000, p. 9).

The aspect of the self that Western psychology focuses on is what Harada Roshi refers to here as a “coordinated” self. This is where integration and wholeness is important. In the Zen understanding this is the “natural” self that Tanaka Roshi speaks of. Natural attachment functions within this “natural” self. Ego attachment is a function of a false personal sense of self that interferes with the natural workings of causality and limits the ability of mind to function optimally.

The *roshis*, in addition to attachment to the personal ego, talked about how other functions of mind are affected by ego attachment. One of these functions discussed was emotion. I had the following dialogue with Harada Roshi:

Harada Roshi: Emotions are just a natural function I think in life. ... But when emotions arise, it should be like the example of something hot and you drop water on that, on something that’s hot, just in an instant it evaporates. That’s the way emotions should be.

Reggie: So the difficulty is that they stay or that people hang on to them?

Harada Roshi: Right, people hang on to them. The problem is that we latch on to or get attached to what we like and we want to get rid of what we don't like. (May 17, 2001, p. 4)

Emotions are natural function of mind. However, when people emotionally attach to what they like and don't like, then emotionally they hold on to certain conditions. Emotional attachment thus has an inherent perceptual quality to it. Within it is a judgment--emotions are pleasurable, neutral, or unpleasurable. This is a common understanding in the history of Buddhist psychology. Feelings are described this way in both the *Abhidhamma* and in the Yogacara School.

Emotions can be as much a function of ego attachment as can be the cognitive mind. This is an important aspect of emotions to which attention should be given. James Hillman (1992) acknowledges the dangers for psychology of not recognizing this aspect of emotions. He writes:

Since the main task of therapy consists in interiorizing all psychic events whatever so that they can be reflected, it tends to conceive emotions inside as 'mine.' This assumption leads therapy to take somewhat uncritically the feeling of affliction, thereby literalizing the heightened feelings of 'me-ness' that result from emotions. This, in turn, leads to an exaggeratedly personal sense of abuse and victimization, a sense that comes from the personal way we conceive emotion, and not only from abusive persons. (pp. x-xi)

Emotions functioning in this way increase ego attachment.

In Zen emotions themselves are not thought to have a special role in the healing of mental pathology. Attachment and the ego self are considered to be the cause of pathology. Emotions are viewed within this context. This is quite different than some forms of Western psychology, which view emotions as having special therapeutic value. Hillman (1992), for example, writes "the main

substance of therapeutic analysis since its inception with Freud are emotions” (p. ix). He asserts that emotion, when understood properly and not as he described in his quote in the preceding paragraph, is crucial to healing mental pathology. He writes, “emotion has long been recognized as playing the crucial role in the body-mind relation” (p. 3) and “much, if not all, the judgments concerning aetiology, diagnosis, treatment and cure in these several related fields of psychology depend to a great extent upon concept of emotion in the mind of the practitioner” (p. 4). There is also a belief in some psychology schools that healing occurs through the suspension of the conceptual mind in an attempt to experience “purely” through one’s feelings. An example of this can be seen in the title of Claudio Naranjo’s (1993) book, *Gestalt Therapy: the Attitude and Practice of an Atheoretical Experientialism*. “Atheoretical Experientialism” can easily be misunderstood to mean that to feel is better than to think. Zen, as I’ve described, also emphasizes the limits of the conceptual mind. However, it does not advocate an emphasis on feeling instead of thinking.

When a person hangs on to or gets attached to emotions, then difficulties arise. Harada Roshi views emotions as changeable in the same way as mind as a whole is understood to be changeable. In the Zen view emotions optimally function when they arise and disappear according to conditions and causality.

This sense of changeability as being the natural healthy condition of mind was reflected in Harada Roshi discussing mentally ill people as having “something always remains” (November 14, 2000, p. 9). This is ego attachment, holding on to something so that natural change does not occur. Nagashima

Roshi also discussed ego attachment in a similar way in regards to emotions. He said attachment can manifest as an emotion that “follows after the gaining one thing, so keep continuing following after. . . . It remains in your mind” (February 20, 2001, p. 22). Ego attachment thus can be an emotional holding on to something that should be released from Nagashima Roshi’s point of view.

One emotion that received particular attention from the *roshis* was love. This was quite an interesting consideration. From what the *roshis* said the tradition of love in East Asia is quite different than that of the West. In the West love is associated with ideas like the love of God, salvation, and romantic love. A good example of this is this writing of Victor Frankl (1992), founder of Logotherapy:

Love is the highest and ultimate goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love. (p. 49)

In Japan and China the associations are different. Harada Roshi said, “Love in Japan has traditionally been different than that in the West” (November 14, 2000, p. 10). Probably a whole dissertation could be written just on this topic.

The understanding that the *roshis* expressed was that love is a natural function that can easily turn into an expression of attachment to self. When I asked Harada Roshi if he thought romantic love was bad thing, he responded, “No, I don’t think so” (May 17, 2001, p. 4). Nakajima Roshi agreed, saying, “I don’t deny the romantic love. . . . Of course this love needs self-centeredness. Because of the self-centeredness the male and female make love together and also produce the next generation” (July 10, 2001, p. 7). Nakajima Roshi also

said that he thought it was possible through “the love sexual energy” for the small self to disappear:

In the case of the bigger self the sexual love is the unification of the two persons when their real bigger self is working. So the physical intercourse and also the mentality can also unite in one. So you are not you and I am not I and you are me and I am you. (July 10, 2001, p. 7).

However, it is very easy for love to become what Yasunaga Roshi called “the negative meaning of love” (May 8, 2001, p. 13). He said:

Love, *ai* 愛 in Japanese, is the worst attachment in Buddhism. ... *ai* 愛 originally means being thirsty. So we say *katsu-ai* 渴愛. *katsu* 渴 means thirsty. So thirsty ones covet, really need and want water. The word *ai* 愛 has a very, very negative connotation. (May 8, 2001, p. 12)

The American folk expression “love is blind” applies here. Through one’s attachment to love it is easy for a person to lose the openness and responsiveness of mind that the *roshis* value so highly. Harada Roshi expressed this understanding of love when he said, “It even happens that if someone really loves somebody, that they could even kill them. It could turn into hate just because of that attachment” (May 17, 2001, p. 4).

Another function of mind considered in terms of how it is affected by ego attachment was attention. Attention is very important to Zen practice. It is the key mind function that a person intentionally activates during practice, both in meditation and in everyday life. When Nakajima Roshi was discussing the use of *koans* in Zen practice, I asked him, “So is this done through attention, with your mind just paying attention to the *koan*?” His response was a quick “Yes, of course!” (July 10, 2001, p. 10). This was something that was obvious to him.

In the consideration of mind and causality in Zen attention also plays an important role. A mind that is unhampered by ego attachments is able to pay attention to and be alert to the non-ending changes in its environment. Free attention, attention without ego attachments, allows a person to be fully present in the moment, something that is given high value in Zen.

Nakajima Roshi was expressing this relationship of ego attachment and attention in his previously quoted description of adherence: “Loses the freedom means to adhere to one thing and the mind does not pay attention to the rest” (June 26, 2002, p. 9). Through ego attachment mind pays attention to one thing and ignores other things. Such attention is limited in terms of its ability to function. Yasunaga Roshi spoke of the value of free attention: “If you do not pay attention to just one thing, in this case you pay attention to everything around you” (May 8, 2001, p. 17). If attention is not fixed or adhered, then it is available to attend to all of the unending changes in one’s environment. Ego attachment results in selective attention to what arises. Attention, like all other functions of mind, should be flexible rather than rigidly attached to a particular perception or value.

Another function of mind that is important to Zen psychology that is influenced by ego attachment is discrimination. Discrimination is considered to be a basic function of mind. Mind is understood to be a sense organ like the usual five senses in common Western thought. In Buddhist psychology there are six sense organs (Jap. 六根 *rokkon*), mind being the sixth sense organ.²⁰ Mind as a sense organ “on one hand apprehends psychic events, and on the other

synthesizes experiences supplied by the other five senses” (Williams, 1989, p. 90). It is “the categorical perception which brings categories into sense data without abstracting them from it” (Guenther and Trungpa, 1975, p. 15). Through discrimination mind separates and recognizes the differences between things, thus giving it the ability to categorize things. Discrimination is an activity that functions with perception. Through discrimination a person is able to distinguish the differences between what they perceive.

These six senses each function in relation to their environment. In this sense they are all similar. Mind is different from the other five in that it is more easily influenced by ego attachments. Harada Roshi said, “Let’s just take the first five sense functions. They are purely responding in accord with conditions” (May 17, 2001, p. 2). The eye usually sees regardless of whether a person likes what they see. Mind, however, commonly discriminates according to its ego attachments. Thereby, it is not just “purely responding” to conditions. Nakajima Roshi talked about this:

How you set the values on the things. When you fixated one thing, it means it’s also equivalent to the narrow sided value, setting value. ... Because everything has its own value, so if you set the values on the one place this is the neglecting of the value. This is attachment. (June 26, 2001, p. 9)

Mind thus discriminates according to the values to which it is attached.

A couple of the *roshis* talked about how they try not to discriminate according to attachment to valuing. Nakajima Roshi described his practice in relation to attachment as: “Don’t discriminate the others and try to be kind to all people” (July 10, 2002, p. 8). Nagashima Roshi echoed this sentiment. He said,

“Buddhism emphasizes no discrepancies, no *sabetsu* (Jap. 差別 = discrimination), no discrimination. ... Every being and every person is born to be precious being. Every being is equal in existence, right?” (February 20, 2001, p. 17). Discrimination according to attachment to how one values things creates conflict. “We don’t exclude something out of the concept and if there is something excluded, there is a certain confliction and attachment arises” (February 20, 2001, p. 17).

Perception is a closely related function to discrimination that also is very much influenced by ego attachment. The difference is that while discrimination is the act of distinguishing between forms, perception is the seeing itself. Perception has been discussed both earlier in this chapter and in the previous chapter. In terms of the present consideration, the influence of ego attachment, what is significant is that attachment to perception reinforces the sense of what Harada Roshi named “ego consciousness.” Perception in Zen psychology means subject looking at object dualistically. This is intentional consciousness. Harada Roshi said, “Perception means there is a distance. ... once you perceive something, that’s already past” (May 17, 2001, p. 1). Mind attaches to the subject that perceives and believes that there is a separation between this subject and what is perceived. This creates the sense that there is an entity, an ego, that is central to mind. In reality, however, there is no such entity. In the present, in the moment now, there is no ego consciousness. There is in truth only empty conditions. Attachment to the subject of mind only functions in relationship to the past or the future, that which can be separated and perceived. Harada Roshi

explained: “In terms of attachment it’s not possible to be attached to something in the moment now. People think that they’re attached to something in the moment now, but actually it’s either in the past or the future” (May 17, 2001, p. 10). In the present there are just functions interacting according to conditions. People confuse the subject, the doer, of perception as an entity and attach to the subject, not understanding that actually this subject is only an activity. The result, Harada Roshi said, is that “the usual everyday life that people live is mistaken perception or perception of reality” (May 17, 2001, p. 2).

Also relevant to this consideration of how ego attachment affects mind is the role of attachment in the development of mind. This is the area of attachment that John Bowlby (1982) has focused on. What the *roshis* indicated in the interviews was that the Zen understanding is that development is a mixture of what I am referring to as natural attachment and ego attachment. This of course is a major consideration and needs to be researched more thoroughly. Development, however, is not a major interest of Zen practitioners and the *roshis* discussed it very briefly. Thus here I will only briefly outline the *roshis*’ understanding.

Attachment is human nature. Each person is born through conditions and attachment and continues through the same. I asked Yasunaga Roshi, “Attachment is human nature? It keeps arising?” and he answered, “Yes” (November 21, 2001, p. 5). In the womb and early life a baby through its natural attachment to life greedily absorbs what it needs. Cognition and discriminative awareness gradually develop. This is part of the development of mind.

Perception is a natural function of mind. Nakajima Roshi explained, “You have to nourish and cherish the smaller self in the time of the growing period. ... So when the baby was born I don’t know if the baby has the smaller self or not, but we need to grow the smaller self first” (July 10, 2001, p. 3). However, in the process of this development of mind through attachment people become attached to the one who perceives during the function of perception. This was discussed in the previous part on perception. Harada Roshi spoke of how this occurs in an interview that was broadcast on Japanese national television, NHK, and published in the newsletter of his monastery:

When the baby is born, even if there is an ego-self it isn’t conspicuous. For some reason, there is only the deep attachment to sustaining its own life. Gradually, the self develops. That is the beginning of the ‘ego-self.’ And until then, what has simply been attachment--the function of just that--is something that the ego-self perceives. Because of that perception, the self creates a separation between it and other things. ... From that point on, dualistic consciousness arises--the ego-self intervenes in that awareness. This is the beginning of what we refer to as the ego-self. (*Hosshinji Newsletter*, 2001, p. 4)

From the *roshis’* point of view people get stuck or fixated at this point in their development. Nakajima Roshi expressed this when he said:

Any certain knowledge and also technical skills can be learned, can be acquired by the activities of the small self. ... So the knowledge and the skills and any sort of accumulation of the acquired knowledge turn out to be the attachment in the latter stage. ... Sometime they become the obstacle for their own development. (July 10, 2001, p. 3)

The next step is to eliminate the ego attachment and realize what Nakajima Roshi refers to as the “big self.” The *roshis* contend that development occurs

naturally, so it is not their major concern. What they focus on is this next step, the dropping of ego attachment.

This could be said to be a major distinction between most Western psychology and Zen psychology. Most Western psychology focuses on what Zen considers “natural.” Its focus is normal functioning of mind and what could be said to be below normal, abnormal psychology. Zen psychology focuses on aspects of mind that Western psychology does not give so much attention. Its focus is normal functioning of mind and what could be said to be above normal, perhaps transpersonal psychology. Yasuo Yuasa (1987) writes about this:

The cultivation techniques found in Eastern religions attempt to go beyond the standards of normality in its everyday (ontic) sense. ... cultivation aims at enhancement and perfection of the personality by elevating various capacities of the body-mind from average normality to a supranormal standard. (p. 208)

I write perhaps transpersonal psychology because generally people in America associate “trans” with above. Being outside the personal self is conceived as being above it. However, Zen in its direction is not above. Rather, in its focus on the root of mind its direction is below, beneath the conscious and unconscious minds. This reflects the primary Buddhist metaphor of sitting on the earth. In sitting a person settles into their self.

Detachment vs. Non-Attachment

How to realize this elimination of ego attachment is a big and very important challenge for the *roshis*. People often come up with false solutions. A common one is seeing all attachment as bad, so the solution becomes detachment.

This is the person who handles attachment by withdrawing from attachment. A story that I've commonly heard that is an example of this is the monk who escapes to the cave in order to handle his lust. The *roshis* are not talking about this kind of solution. Tanaka Roshi spoke of this: "If we deny and avoid from the attachment, like detachment, this is a kind of attachment. So there is a famous word, the true hermit lives in the midst of the town, not in the mountain. ... Midst of the town. So crowded" (April 26, 2001, p. 9).

What the *roshis* prefer is something more like what I can name non-attachment. What I mean by non-attachment is being completely involved in what one is doing, but not being attached to the results of one's actions. When I described this distinction between detachment and non-attachment, Nagashima Roshi said, "From the point of view of Zen and the Zen Buddhism in general, non-attachment is the best way to lead our lives. If you ask for the detachment, detachment doesn't provide a solution of the suffering you have in mind" (February 20, 2001, p. 15). Fukushima Roshi's response was: "Buddhism really emphasizes this idea of non-attachment" (January 23, 2002, p. 4). He said the reason that he agreed with this distinction was: "Because as long as there's the ego, there's that tendency to want to control, to want to have the result go your own way, so I would agree with that, yes" (January 23, 2002, p. 4).

Non-attachment is an expression of the attitude of not escaping that the *roshis* demonstrated regarding causality. Detaching from attachment is impossible because attachment is considered to be fundamental to mind. Thus, the challenge for the *roshis* is rather how to be attachment without being attached

to it. This is non-attachment, being attachment without what Harada Roshi called “ego consciousness.”

The *roshis*’ approach is based on this kind of non-attachment. This was reflected when Nagashima Roshi said, “ In our language we say the large size of attachment equals to the non-attachment. Big attachment is equal to the non-attachment” (February 20, 2001, p. 14). Yasunaga Roshi explained this by: “If someone tries to be no-attached or be detached, such attitude is also an attachment. So in a way I could tell you that being no-attached is being attached to everything. So if you do not covet for anything you covet for everything”(May 8, 2001, p. 17). If you are attached to everything, you give your attention to everything. There is no discrimination based on ego attachment as to which thing is given attention. It may seem strange, but everything is equal to nothing and a person is thereby able to be fully functional in their environment. Non-attachment means being able to participate fully in life, without any detachment at all.

Buddhist psychology is often understood as advocating detachment. This is not what the *roshis* are advocating. An example of this way of understanding of Buddhist psychology is the writing of Jeffrey Rubin (1996). He writes:

No one eludes death. Buddhism’s strategy for coping with this intractable fact is to depersonalize mind and human history by viewing them as, in Althusser’s words, a process without a subject or self, thereby denying the reality of human existence. By eliminating human existence, which obviously disengages subjects from affective life and the world, Buddhism attempts to avoid and ward off human finitude and misery. ... With its emphasis on selfhood’s insubstantiality, Buddhism promotes self-nullification, which can preclude questions of human agency and inhibit political engagement. (p. 27)

The *roshis* in their advocating of non-attachment would agree with Rubin as to the psychological effects of detachment, which are elimination of some functions of mind and a negation of the self. Some of Rubin's (1996) descriptions of these effects are, a "self-alienating and impoverished" (p. 92) self, a fostering of "self-impoverishment by encouraging mediators to unconsciously renounce and become detached from the complexity and passion of an embodied human existence" (pp. 91-92), "it seems to minimize our inevitable embeddedness in relationships and their potential value" (pp. 91-92), "the privileging of self-negation and the consequent devaluing and repression of self-centeredness ultimately engenders the egotistical behavior sometimes acted out in Buddhist communities" (p. 93), "if there is no subject, then there is no one who is alienated or oppressed, and thus no evil to challenge and no one to contest it" (pp. 93-94), and "renouncing self and other leads not to freedom but to self-alienation" (p. 94). Quite to the contrary of encouraging these kinds of psychological effects, non-attachment allows for the possibility of healing these psychological tendencies.

As a reflection of the attitude that big attachment equals non-attachment, people with strong attachments are regarded as people with great potential. Harada Roshi said, "Maybe we could say that those people who are attached can awaken more quickly" (May 17, 2001, p. 9). People who are strongly attached to something have the ability to accomplish their goal. The Buddha is regarded as such a person. Through his attachment to wanting to realize the cause of his suffering he was able to resolve this problem. Harada Roshi gave the example of

someone receiving a Noble prize: “Someone who has worked and worked and worked towards some end, this is a kind of attachment. Many people would probably say that that’s a good attachment, that’s a good thing that they did there” (November 14, 2000, p. 4).

Rather than detaching, attachment is used for the betterment of people.

Nagashima Roshi explained:

We can utilize the attachment to happiness to other people. So in this sense attachment can be used in the best way. ... And *Sakya* (the Buddha) himself, the founder of Buddhism, also has an attachment, but his attachment also was used for the salvation of the people. (February 20, 2001, p. 14)

Tanaka Roshi expressed this same sentiment, saying:

So you can easily use your attachment. Because attachment in fact is not so bad. If we are attached by attachment, attachment becomes bad, evil. But if we use, if we become a master of attachment, attachment becomes a kind of expression of our No Mind. This is a most important point and difficult to understand. (April 26, 2001, pp. 9-10)

As Yasunaga Roshi said in his previous quote, someone trying to be non-attached is just another attachment. This points to the subtlety of non-attachment. The earlier discussion as attachment being at the root of consciousness is relevant here. It is not as simple as trying to use a cognitive psychology technique such a counter thought or a positive counterstatement. Such techniques don’t deal with the root of the attachment. They are activities within consciousness itself. If attachment is in the root of consciousness, then it can only be “handled” at the root. This was what Yasunaga Roshi and Nagashima Roshi referred to when they were quoted earlier as “handling” attachment

“without reflection” (Yasunaga Roshi, May 8, 2001, p. 19) and being “unconscious of attachment” (Nagashima Roshi, May 8, 2001, p. 10).

Fukushima Roshi addressed this when he was discussing what was quoted earlier as “conscious and unconscious or non-conscious attachments.” He said the unconscious or non-conscious attachments are very hard to work with and to be free of. They are in the unconscious, so a person is usually not aware of them. Therefore, he asserted, “Unless you get to a point in your practice beyond mere discrimination and consciousness it’s not possible to get through those unconscious attachments” (October 21, 2001, p. 4). While talking about non-attachment, he agreed with my definition of this, but he emphasized:

I would want to urge you that this non-attachment is not a simple thing. So not just to understand attachment in your head, but actually to be non-attached would require to break even from those unconscious illusions that we talked of before, so it’s not an easy thing. (January 23, 2002, p. 4)

A person has to get beneath the conscious and unconscious minds to resolve ego attachment. Thus, Zen imagery often speaks of “going down”, finding the “ground”, or the “fundamental” mind, in positive ways. This is quite different from Christianity, which generally speaks of the lower realms in negative ways. Zen, rather than speaking of a “higher power” as is common in Christian groups, could be said to speak of a “lower power.” Zen is “lower power” psychology.

Non-attachment thus, rather than a change in the conscious or unconscious mind, requires a change of the root of mind. Changes in the conscious and unconscious mind can support change at the root of mind, but

fundamentally these kinds of changes are outside the root of mind and cannot affect a change to non-attachment from ego attachment. The root of mind itself must be changed. Tanaka Roshi explained, “The base is egocentric. So we should change the base. So radical mental revolution” (July 17, 2001, p. 4). Attachment to self is the egocentric base that Tanaka Roshi refers to. This attachment must be forgotten for a person to live non-attachment.

Healing Ego Attachment

The methods used by Zen Buddhist practitioners to eliminate ego attachment and realize non-attachment are based on the understanding of attachment as being at the root of mind. Since attachment is basic to human nature, this change can only be accomplished within attachment. It cannot be accomplished by working on attachment from outside. Tanaka Roshi expressed this when he told the following story about trying to clean a bloody sword in a pond of blood:

We Japanese say a man who tries to cut his attachment is like this: never wash your sword with blood, in the pond of blood. If you wash your sword after killing anybody with blood, if you wash your sword with blood in the blood pond, pond of blood, the blood will never disappear. So never try to cut our consciousness with a kind of human consciousness. In this way it's impossible for us to cut completely. (April 26, 2001, p. 6)

The root of mind cannot be changed by the conscious and unconscious minds, which are outside this root. It can only be changed within the root itself.

There are particular ways that the *roshis* spoke about regarding how this change or “cutting” ego attachment is done. One is that the Zen master makes use of attachment. Yasunaga Roshi explained:

The Zen master makes a use of this greed. So knowing the negative meaning of love. So in a way using this just one love for *satori* he tries to diminish all other unnecessary love. ... And finally the practitioner finds out that the love for *satori* was meaningless. (May 8, 2001, p. 13)

By focusing one’s ego attachment on the desired goal, this attachment is utilized. He described this methodology as: “So we say, “*kugi* (Jap. 釘 = nail) *o motte* (Jap. 持つて = have, hold), *kugi o nuku* (Jap. 抜く = draw out). Pull out the nail with the nail” (May 8, 2001, p. 15). By working this way person does not try to be what they are not. This is a realistic use of the situation. A person stays within them self. Eventually the person is able to understand that ego attachment is an illusion because there is no ego. In truth there is nothing to be attached to. This will be more thoroughly explored in the next chapter on no-self.

Fukushima Roshi talked about how sometimes extraordinary measures are employed to get to the root of mind. He talked about how *rohatsu* (Jap. 臘八 = a meditation period from December 1st to the morning of December 8th, in commemoration of the Buddha’s enlightenment) is useful for this. He explained that in the style of his sect of Zen:

You don’t lay down the whole week. The first time I actually went through the *rohatsu* myself, the whole week not laying down, I thought, ‘This is crazy. This is insane.’ ... But as a matter of fact on my third *rohatsu* I also had my Zen experience. As a matter of fact many monks have their first real insight, breakthrough, during *rohatsu*. That’s why I can say with

confidence that it is abnormal, but it's very effective. It works.
(October 21, 2001, p. 4)

Through this “abnormal” experience Fukushima Roshi was able to get to the root of his ego attachments and see through them. He said, “That’s what the *rohatsu* is so useful for, working on those unconscious, non-conscious, attachments” (October 21, 2001, p. 4). The result was that he had his first *satori*, awakening to his true nature.

Tanaka Roshi explained that while ego attachment is used in Zen practice, it is not focused on. As he was quoted previously, consciousness is not used to try to cut ego attachment. Rather, by using ego attachment the root of mind is concentrated upon. He said, “Cut completely our attachment seems impossible. ... In fact you don’t have to cut your attachment. If you concentrate your mind to one thing, every attachment will disappear, will abandon naturally” (April 26, 2001, p. 5). Focusing on ego attachment and trying to eliminate it only create problems. It only further entangles a person in their ego attachments. Tanaka Roshi again:

So never mind the difficulties of cutting attachment. This is very important. A lot of training monks have a problem about this. You don’t have to try to cut attachment. That is the shortest way of cutting attachment. So, in other words, if we conquer a dark room, we don’t have to erase the darkness. We only light a candle. (April 26, 2001, p. 5)

Rather than focusing on the problem of ego attachment, Zen focuses on the solution, which is, in the context of the present discussion, natural attachment. Dogen, the founder of the Soto Zen sect, wrote in the *Fukanzazengi*, “If you wish to attain ‘suchness,’ practice ‘suchness’ immediately” (1227/1998, p. 116). This

can be said to be the basis of Zen practice. There are differences between the different sects of Zen on how to do this, but both Soto and Rinzai practice essentially focus on the solution, not the problem. Nakajima Roshi, a Rinzai priest, reflected this when he said that the “main point” of Zen meditation is that “you should contemplate to the truth” (July 10, 2001, p. 1).

This focus on the solution is something that Zen has in common with some Brief Therapy techniques, such as Solution Focused Brief Therapy (de Shazer and Berg, 1988). Both emphasize that focus on the solution can bring a change that revolutionizes a person’s psychological system. A major difference between these two psychologies is that what happens after the change occurs. Solution Focused Therapy essentially says in my opinion that the change itself is sufficient. After that everything else will fall into place. That is why psychotherapy needs only to be brief. Zen psychology, however, emphasizes that after the change practice is necessary to allow the solution to permeate the system. Fukushima Roshi expressed this when he discussed his “Zen experience.” He said that one purpose for him in his life is:

Until I die for the rest of my life to continue to deepen this experience. Even though you’ve had this experience it’s not something that comes to an end or final point. Using the example of looking at a mountain, that you deepen your experience yourself. You’re able to express more and more deeply about that mountain. (October 21, 2001, p. 8)

Fukushima Roshi referred to this as after-*satori* practices (Jap. *gogo no shyugyo* 悟後の修行), meaning after realization practices.²¹ The purpose of these practices is to fully develop as a human being. He explained, “One of the main purposes of such training is to continue to ripen and mature that by yourself,

on your own. Another purpose is to make sure the personality is fully developed and ripened” (January 21, 2002, p. 9).

After-*satori* practices are important to understand. The *roshis* in general asserted that it is possible to cut completely and finally all ego attachments. For example, Fukushima Roshi said, referring to ego attachments, “you can really get to that point where all of them are actually cut off” (January 23, 2002, p. 1). However, this point does not mean that practice ends. Rather, it is often said in Zen that this is when real practice begins. Yasunaga Roshi said about the certificate of enlightenment (Jap. *inkashomei*) given by a Rinzai Zen master to a student who has realized the Way, “In this certificate you can read this sentence: you have to study more” (November 21, 2001, p. 4). Thus, the dropping of ego attachments does not mean a person enters a fixed state of non-ego attachment. Rather, according to the previous discussion, an enlightened person is able to “handle” attachment. Rather than entering a static state that is hierarchically superior, such a person actually becomes more dynamic, more process-oriented.

Misunderstanding enlightenment as a static state is commonly found in writings about Buddhist psychology. Jeffrey Rubin (1996) writes that enlightenment in Buddhism is understood to be the one thing that does not change in an ever-changing world:

Buddhist models of the mind also acknowledge that the mind, like the universe, is always in flux. But, with its recognition that everything changes – except Enlightenment, which is posited as an unchanging achievement – Buddhism attempts to eat its cake of flux and have it too. (p. 90)

Rubin understands the state of enlightenment as being the complete detachment from self: “the emptied inner world of the Enlightenment experience” (p. 94). Rubin quotes several different sources to support his understanding, which indicates that he is not alone in understanding enlightenment this way. Ironically, what Rubin describes as mental health is one that the *roshis* in their advocacy of non-attachment and enlightenment as dynamic and process-oriented would agree with:

Mental life is fluid rather than static, involving the continual, dialectical interplay of various states of consciousness, subject-positions, or self-states and modes of being that are sometimes at cross-purposes and in conflict. Living a human life is thus more like sailing, confronting exigencies that are both everchanging and unpredictable, than attaining any sort of permanent and irreversible state. (pp. 89-90)

What is focused on through one’s *kufu* (Jap. 工夫 or 功夫 = meditation device²²) in Zen practice is what is considered to be the root activity of mind in Zen psychology. The root of mind, as described earlier, is where attachment to consciousness is misunderstood by the ego as attachment to itself, the ego, thereby creating the illusion of self and a self-centered orientation to life. It is necessary to get beneath the conscious and unconscious minds to work with this root of mind. Thus, Fukushima Roshi said, “Unless you get to a point in your practice beyond mere discrimination and consciousness it’s not possible to get through those unconscious attachments” (October 21, 2001, p. 4).

In the Rinzai sect of Zen *koan* practice²³ is the basic *kufu*. A *koan* is a statement, a question, or an action of a Zen master that is used as an object of meditation. In the context of the current discussion I can say that *koans* are

always based on some expression of the mind of non-attachment. Thus, using a *koan* is a device to get the practitioner to focus on and realize non-attachment.

Yasunaga Roshi, a Rinzai practitioner, described this using the metaphor of iron chains and golden chains. He said:

So the chains of desires. So whenever I try to translate the word *bonno* (Jap. 煩惱) in Japanese into English I can't find out an appropriate English word. Unnecessary desires. Such word means iron chains. On the other hand golden chains means chains of *satori*. ... In a way here the word chains is almost equivalent to attachment. You cannot move. You are tied up with *bonno* or *satori*. ... So the master chains a person with *koan*. (May 8, 2001, p. 15)

The master uses a person's attachment to *satori* or enlightenment and has the person focus on a *koan*, which is a way for them to contemplate and realize the truth of their being. The greater the person's attachment the greater is the chance for *satori*. Thus, "attachment in Zen Buddhism is a kind of tool" (Yasunaga Roshi, May 8, 2001, p. 15).

This has been a brief discussion of the Zen psychology approach to working with and healing ego attachment. It will be more fully considered in the next chapter, the consideration of no-self, the foundation of Zen psychology. While in Zen psychology attachment is fundamental to the problem, no-self is fundamental to the solution.