

So, "On Zen" itself is an exhortation, or rather, I'm going to read it this way.

I experience it as an exhortation toward breaking through, which is really the core of the Zen practice in all of our ritual.

So, here we go.

I'm going to try and empty out and read it from here.

There is a reality prior to heaven and earth.

Indeed, it has no form, much less a name.

Eyes fail to see it.

It has no voice for ears to detect.

To call it mind or buddha violates its nature, for it then becomes like a visionary flower in the air.

It is not mind or buddha, absolutely quiet and yet illuminating in a mysterious way.

It allows itself to be perceived only by the clear eye.

It is dharma, clearly beyond form and sound.

It is dharma, having nothing to do with words.

Wishing to entice the blind, the buddha has playfully let words escape his golden mouth.

Heaven and earth are ever since filled with entangling briars.

All my good worthy friends gathered here, if you desire to listen to the thunderous voice of the dharma, exhaust your words, empty your thoughts, for then you may come to recognize the one essence.

So I'm happy to do an initial commentary on this.

I'm happy to have you all offer your commentaries and I'm happy to respond to the question.

How, let me know what you'd like to do.

I'm always up for listening to a good commentary.

That's kind of what I'm up for now.

Okay.

Mainly because I'm going to see if your commentary matches mine.

And they show interpretation.

Sure.

Well, the first thing that I want to point out is that the amount of Daoist language in here is phenomenal.

So if you're familiar at all with Daoism, then you're going to recognize that Zen, as we know it today, is heavily integrated with Daoism.

Buddhism and Daoism came together.

And there are people who refute that position, and I don't understand their basis for it, besides just really wishing that the world was clean and tidy.

So there was a reality prior to heaven and earth.

This is exactly what you see in the Dao De Jing, which preceded this text by over a thousand years.

Okay.

And so basically what we're talking about at the very beginning of this is the primordial essence of all that is.

Okay.

That's why it has no form.

Because it's pre-form.

It's like the neutron soup at the beginning of the cosmos, before things started picking up an electric charge and combining in various combinations to create the universe.

So this is where it gets really interesting.

To call it mind, or Buddha violates it, nature, for it then becomes like a visionary flower in the air.

What this is basically saying is that when we reify something, when we abstract from our senses to create language, and then we give language to a phenomenon, and then we take the word we give it as having some sort of substantiality, then we have removed ourselves from direct experience and placed ourselves in a land of abstraction.

And when we abstract in this way, that is delusion, and delusion, which gives rise to clinging, attachment, craving, aversion, and all the things.

Okay.

It's not mind or Buddha.

Mind or Buddha are both things.

But *it* is not mind or Buddha.

*It* precedes mind and Buddha.

So to get in touch with Buddha, which we'll talk about in a little bit, and to recognize the power of the mind are both wonderful and essential things.

But neither of those things are *this*.

Okay.

And so what is this?

Well, it's absolutely quiet, yet illuminating in a mysterious way.

It's like a luminous blackness.

Somehow it allows everything to be clear, everything to be perceived, and yet we don't really know that it's there.

It's the capacity for perception.

It's the capacity to turn a sensation into a perception.

Wow.

That's pretty friggin' cool.

No wonder it goes unnoticed, because we perceive so immediately that we forget the idea that to have the capacity to turn a sensation, a feeling, into a perception, a meaningful experience, is a frickin' miracle.

Right?

It is Dharma.

Dharma is just natural law.

So this thing, this immovable, mysterious illumination that is everywhere, the reality prior to heaven and earth, **it is Dharma.**

It is natural law.

They are not two.

It's an equating statement about how natural law and the one thing are the same thing, which means that the one thing is actually a process, not a metaphysical, ontological, unchanging reality.

The reality is change, an unfolding process.

It is Dharma, having nothing to do with words.

Restatement.

Summary sentence.

Rhetorical device.

Wishing to entice the blind, the Buddha has playfully let words escape his golden mouth.

Heaven and earth are ever since filled with entangling briars.

Now, this is fascinating here, because we have multiple levels of interpretation we could take.

It's very easy and more sensical for Buddha to be a historical figure who taught the way, and hence created structures that then tripped people up, because they took the structures and the abstractions to be the thing, instead of actually breaking through to be with the thing itself.

And this is going to be your most standard interpretation, is to place the Buddha as the historical figure.

However, Buddha is one's own capacity to make sense of the world.

Your Buddha nature is your ::smack:: ow.

That thing that goes "ow," that's Buddha.

Right?

It is our own Buddha that playfully lets these golden words slip from our mouths.

It's our own Buddha that labels, that names, that conceptualizes, that abstracts.

And because our own Buddha is doing this, we are filling our own lives with entangling briars.

It's not some dude 2,400 years ago that taught some other people some stuff that we're still trying to deal with. No!

It's our own radically immediate perceptual capacity to reify things through abstracted language that creates the briars of our lives.

So, *audience*: much better, well said.

I don't need you.

Well, sorry.

If we are here, if we desire to listen to the thunderous voice of the Dharma, what is the thunderous voice of the Dharma?

It is the direct, instinctual, and intuitive knowing of the unfolding process of being-becoming.

Okay?

And this is critical.

Being and becoming are not two.

The structure of becoming is the nature of being.

And if you think that you can just be and not become, you're f\*\*\*\*\*g insane.

I'm sorry.

I love you.

But stop it.

Structuralism is Dharma.

It is Dharma.

Therefore, structuralism is the process of the being.

Okay?

It says it right here, through my interpretive lens.

So, how do you do that?

Exhaust your words.

It said at the very beginning, right, that it has no words.

It can't be a word.

It isn't a word.

Language.

Exhaust it.

Get it out.

Thoughts.

What are thoughts?

Thoughts are words.

Thoughts are narrative experience.

Empty your mind of thoughts.

That's why we have to train to still our minds.

Because as long as there's cognition, as long as there's reification through abstracted language, you can't have a direct experience.

So you have to interrupt the me, me, me, me, me, me process, which I believe is on page 7 of the Mondo Manual, for those of you who like to tie everything to Jun Po.

Okay?

For then, you may come to recognize the one essence.

What is the one essence?

The one essence is, again, that neutron soup of the unnameable thing at the basis of existence prior to its differentiation into this and that.

What's critical about this is when you really get this, you understand that that one essence is in everything all the time, whether it's perfectly still in your deepest meditation of cessation, or whether it's in the horrible chaos of just everything that's happening in the world.

It's all the one essence.

That's it.

That's why samsara ends up becoming nirvana.

Nirvana and samsara are not two.

It's not because the nirvanic state and the samsaric state are experienced the same.

It's not because of any other reason than the fact that what these things are made up of is the one essence living out its own procedural being-becoming.

That's the one essence.

We recognize it when we stop thinking about it long enough to actually know it in our bones somatically because then we unfold with it, and then we're not trying to be a still rock.

We melt into the waves and the rivers and the oceans and the streams.

But they're all going somewhere.

They're all changing constantly.

And so this, I think, is what "On Zen" is about.

And I think that this is not the original meaning.

I'm going to say that.

I think that either that or the original meaning failed to transmit to students so horribly that every couple hundred years somebody got the insight that being-becoming and structural process and Tao and Dharma were all the same thing.

And they would tell everybody that, and everyone would be like, cool, and then they would immediately make it two things again.

So I'd like to think that actually this is talking about it the way that I just interpreted it and the way that Jun Po taught me and the way that I'm communicating with everyone else.

But I do recognize that this is a big divergence from what you will hear from a typical or from the institution of Zen practice that does not respect the interpenetration of structuralism with being, with transcendentalism.

And I think that's ironic because they call themselves non-dual, and they talk about the interpenetration of form and emptiness, but then they make these distinctions about what's okay and what's not okay and having an ego and not having an ego.

And it's like, are you even listening to yourself?

That's the most incoherent philosophical position I've ever heard.

Okay.

I'm done.