

# Transmission of Religious Experience in Soto-Zen Tradition

Satoko Akiyama

This article is to deal with the unique form of transmitting religious experience of Soto-Zen, which can be seen in the expressions like “Tanden 單傳” (direct transmission), or “Shoshi shoden 正師正傳” (transmission of the true law from the true master), from the human side of an individual under the light of depth psychology. It is of course dangerous to try to adopt the modern methods and theories of the West in order to understand the religious phenomena in the East, nevertheless it can not be denied that there are certain similarities which can be the common base between these two different traditions.

In “Shobogenzo Menju 正法眼藏通授”, Master Dogen quotes the original transmission of religious experience from Buddha to Mahakasyapa, explaining that since it is transmitted from Buddha face to face, the transmission itself carries the Buddha’s face. He says that if it is not so, then the whole lineage of successive Buddhas can not be called Buddhas. It is transmitted face to face successively without fail from master to disciple till now through the encounter with the original Buddha’s face. So he says that when we worship this face to face transmission of the right law, it is in itself to worship the seven Buddhas who appeared in succession and Shakamuni Buddha as the last being. Dogen writes this face to face transmission as follows: “The transmission to the eyes and from the eyes takes place through the opening of the eyes The transmission to the face and from the face takes place through the showing of the face. The face to face transmission is not just from one to the other but between both ……My own face is not the face, but it is the Tathagata’s face which is transmitted from face to face”.

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In the field of depth psychology, the key point in understanding the transmission of religious experience might be the so-called transference phenomenon. The expression "transference" derives from folklore, where, for instance, the transferring of an illness to a tree for purpose of healing is taught in magical terms. In depth psychology, this is used to explain a phenomenon which occurs during the course of psychoanalysis, when a patient directs his repressed feelings toward his parents against the real person of an analyst, that is, the image of the parents is transferred onto him. Sigmund Freud says that the unconscious contents can become conscious only through projection onto the external world, and so the patient projects his inner problems to the outer object, and when he re-enacts them in reality, he can be aware of them.

Freud amplified this theory in "Totem and Tabu" which deals with the cultural problems analysing the primitive society, there he regards totemism as the primal model of human culture, and its essence is the projection of the Oedipal complex into a real (animal) substitute-object in the external world, and the establishment of the social group by complicity in this symbolic solution to the Oedipal problem. Thus according to Freud, the transference phenomenon is the necessary libidinal process to inherit the numen of the father figure, which culturally establishes the group with certain restriction, namely, the sacred society. On the other hand, it produces the cure or the change of personality therapeutically, through the efforts of both patient and analyst to make the unconscious conscious in the course of time.

We can carry this point of view further when we take our base upon C. G. Jung's theories of analytical psychology. C. G. Jung also took the transference as the central problem of psychoanalysis. He thought, however, that after the personal contents of the unconscious are projected as can be seen from symptoms, dreams, and fantasies, there appear sometimes forms of fantasies which go beyond something personal, but more archaic and collective. Jung writes in "The Psychology of the Unconscious" that "We have now found the object which the libido chooses when it is freed

from the personal, infantile form of transference. It follows its own gradient down into the depth of the unconscious, and there activates what has lain slumbering from the beginning. It has discovered the hidden treasure upon which mankind ever and anon has drawn, and from which it has raised up its gods and demons, and all those potent and mighty thoughts without which man ceases to be man". Jung called these unconscious products the archetypal images, since they seem to represent a set of variations on a ground theme which is mythological. All archetypal representations appear with overwhelming affect and bring emotionally excessive situations. Jung found something there which directly affects all that is uncontrollable in man, and which Rudolf Otto aptly named the numinosity. For Otto, however, this is the Creature feeling, that is, the feeling-response to something holy, while in Jung, the concept of numinosity involves more innate supernatural power, which can be coped with the Melanesian concept of Mana.

The central figure of all archetypes is what Jung calls the Self, which is a psychic totality and at the same time a centre. neither of which coincides with the ego but includes it. In unconscious fantasy the Self often appears as supra-ordinate or ideal personality, or sometimes it takes the geometrical or mathematical structure of quaternities and circles, similar to the Mandalas of Tibetan Buddhism. As a matter of fact, Jung uses the sanskrit word of Mandala as a psychological term to point out these phenomena.

These images can appear spontaneously with the synthetic meaning, but it can also be approached more actively through the analytical procedure of the individuation process. According to Jung, this is the process whereby one becomes a psychological "in-dividual", that is, a separate, indivisible unity or "whole". And here the transference plays a very important role. C. A. Meier explain this complexity of transference in "Projection, Transference, and the Subject-object Relationship in Psychology", he says that the transference does not always operate one-sidedly from the patient to analyst, but also in a symmetrical system. Practically every analyst becomes

a saviour-god to his patient, and this constellates an archetype which brings the patient powerful affluxes of emotion, but this image will not leave the analyst untouched, since the archetype, as a content of the collective unconscious, is the common denominator of subject and object. So the analyst must also work on himself, and the process between subject and object becomes oscillatory. Meier suggests that the mode of action becomes more understandable if we accept the hypothesis of the "cut" (the distinction between subject and object) moving into the object. What is present in the object then to some extent passes over to the subject, or vice versa, and even though neither of them may be aware of this fact.

Returning to Dogen, it may not be so inadequate to understand what he says in "shobogenzo Menju", at least psychologically, that in the oscillatory relationship of master and disciple, there constellates the third quantity in their unconscious, and in the final stage, it will flow out as the symbolical image to be intuitively felt by the whole personality of both master and disciple. And it is very likely that in the tradition of Buddhism, this will appear as the image of Tathagata or the Buddha's face. This is an irrational life-process which expresses itself in definite symbols. But here we have to note that sometimes in the practice of Zen, there come out the bizzare images in the state of "Makyo 魔境" (the delusional territory) which evidently carry some archetypal characters, but they are from the temporal constellations in the early stages, and we should not confuse these images with the image which can be reached ultimately as explained above. And in any case to identify ego with these images is of utmost danger.

Since the relationship in this procedure proceeds more or less unconsciously, it goes beyond reason and becomes absolute, and through this relationship the ultimate image which can be called in analytical psychology, the archetype of Self, or in Zen Buddhism, "one's original face" is experienced and understood emotionally as well as intuitively. Here the transformation takes place on both master and disciple renewing the original religious experience, as Dogen exactly expressed that the transmission from face to face is the transmission to both sides.....it is the Tathagata's face

which is transmitted. And thus the transmission of religious experience is completed.

Although there are many parallels between Zen Buddhism and analytical psychology, naturally we find also many aspects which are incompatible. Zen Buddhism maintains "sudden enlightenment" denying the progressive process of dialectics, while the methods of analytical psychology is essentially based on the dialectical relationship. Jung writes in the forward to "Introduction to Zen Buddhism" by D. T. Suzuki, in comparing Zen with his own methods that "Psychotherapy is at bottom a dialectical relationship between Doctor and patient. It is an encounter, a discussion between two psychic wholes in which knowledge is used only as a tool. The goal is transformation—not one that is predetermined, but rather an indeterminable change, the only criterion of which is the disappearance of egohood". Theoretically speaking, Zen Buddhism insists the transcendence of subject-object relationship, therefore it does not talk about the goal to be reached, nor the confrontation with the object. But actually in the tradition of Soto-Zen, the confrontation with the master is a decisive factor for transmitting the religious experience. This inconsistency might be able to understand that the confrontation in Zen Buddhism is not the confrontation of conscious ego, but it happens between two psychic wholes, as Jung also points out that the criterion of transformation is the disappearance of egohood. This is the confrontation in the level of collective unconscious where the subject-object distinction disappears. Until the archetype of Self can be felt intuitively, it needs a long period of psychological contact between two persons. And even though Zen Buddhism emphasises "sudden enlightenment", in fact, it is recorded and seen in the history of Zen, this long period of personal contact and discussions between master and disciple, though whether this can be called dialectical relationship or not is another matter.

Teruji Ishizu writes in "Basic Structure of Religious Experience" that "Hermeneutically speaking, the religious experience of the religious founder is originally based on religiosity. At the same time it interchanges with the tradition and environment of that time, and compose the actual religious

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experience with these elements which is attributed to the religious founder with its specific limitations. And when the religious experience prescribed as above with these elements is presented and transmitted, it takes a positive character, and it is more settled and codified positively in the religious order, then this limits the religious experience of an individual in the order according to the time and place". Zen Buddhism is one of many forms of religions in the East, and as Ishizu aptly explains it has its own limitation in its traditional form. of creeds and rituals. But it is religion based on actual practice, it can not be understood only from creeds and rituals, but one has to consider also its psychological side. Zen Buddhism is full of images of religious symbols which can be understood from the point of view of analytical psychology.

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