

THOSE WHO GREATLY REALIZE DELUSION ARE BUDDHAS—
GUIDANCE IN ZAZEN

Adapted from *Realizing Genjokoan* by Shohaku Okumura

I. Delusion is not some fixed thing within our minds that, if eliminated, will be replaced by enlightenment.

The world we live in is the world we create based on how our mind encounters the myriad dharmas. We cannot prevent our mind from creating the world as it does, but it is possible to realize that the world of our creation does not reflect true reality. Practicing with this realization and letting go of rigid belief in the narratives and preferences of our minds is opening the hand of thought.

Within consciousness, reality is [always] distorted; we don't see things as they are, and that is delusion. We take our distorted ideas and desires and move toward the world trying to *find reality*. We try to *see reality* with our minds, abilities, willpower, and effort—[but all of this] is delusion.

To practice is to awaken to the self that is part of all things—[but] the subject of practice is not the personal self but all beings. In other words, it is not we who [engage in our] practice, but rather Buddha who carries out Buddha's practice through us. It is not a matter of individual actions [or experiences] based on individual willpower or effort. Zazen is not a practice that makes beings into buddhas; Zazen itself is Buddha's practice.

Zazen enables us to see clearly that we are part of the world, part of nature, part of Buddha. We *actualize* the self that is connected with all dharmas. We don't personally become a Buddha, but rather we awaken to the reality that from the beginning we are living Buddha's life. There is no separate individual who practices zazen and becomes enlightened. Enlightenment is not the *self* awakening to *reality*, but zazen awakening to zazen, Dharma awakening to Dharma, Buddha awakening to Buddha.

This is the meaning of “practice and enlightenment are one.”

2. No matter how hard we practice, our motivation for practice is [always] still based in some amount of self-centeredness. [Yet] the act of truly seeing our self-centeredness is itself Buddha. To awaken to the reality of our delusion is itself Buddha.

To realize delusion is to be a buddha. Awakening to the incompleteness [and self-centeredness] of our practice and returning to our path is the meaning of repentance, [of atonement].

In zazen, we let go of our narrow, limited, karmic selves and [actualize] the total interpenetrating whole that is absolute reality. We cannot [ever] see this absolute reality as an object of our discriminating minds, but we are naturally a part of it. We cannot be an observer of absolute reality because we ourselves are part of its total movement. [And yet] though we are deluded, we are still living within absolute, universal reality; and even though we are living within this [absolute,] universal reality, we are still deluded as individual karmic selves. This is the reality of human life.

In zazen, it is not the “I”—the limited karmic self—that awakens to reality; rather, it is universal reality that is itself practicing and manifesting reality. Great realization actualizes great realization through our practice.

Our zazen is not a method of correcting the distortion of our fabricated conceptual maps. Instead, we let go of [all] mapd and sit down on the ground of reality. Letting go is at once the complete rejection of any [mental formation arising in] our limited karmic mind, [and also] the acceptance of [all formations] as mere secretions of the mind. We let thoughts come up, and we let them go away. We neither negate nor affirm anything in zazen. Zazen goes beyond and yet includes [both] complete rejection and complete acceptance of thought.

When we sit in the upright posture, keeping the eyes open, breathing through the nose, and letting go of [mental formations], reality manifests itself. This is *genjo-koan*, the actualization of reality. At this time, only manifesting reality exists, and manifesting reality includes our delusions.

Practicing in this way helps us understand that our maps of the world are biased and incomplete, and this understanding allows us to be flexible. [Practicing in this way] broadens our view, and this broadened view allow us to be better at working in harmony with others.

In zazen, there is no way we can judge ourselves because we cannot step outside our [mental formations] into objectivity. True reality is beyond such judgments. There is no way to conceive of being a buddha or of being enlightened. [So, in zazen], without trying to be a buddha or become enlightened, keep settling more deeply into immeasurable reality.

Zazen itself is this immeasurable reality.