

Zen and Minjung Liberation

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Religion and Liberation

Can Zen and people's liberation (*minjung haebang*) meet? Are they compatible? Zen is often viewed as a form of religiosity that seeks withdrawal from life to pursue individual peace of mind. It is criticized by many for its "escapist" and ahistorical attitude toward the world. This popular perception is not based upon an entirely accurate understanding of Zen. Zen rejects such an escapist attitude as "quietism," another form of attachment which is no less mistaken than a passionate involvement in worldly things. For those who are familiar with the lives of eminent Zen masters, it is obvious that Zen is a down-to-earth religion, in close contact with everyday life and full of vigor and vitality. What one can say is that Zen does not seek a transmundane or otherworldly form of salvation, since Zen does not admit of a metaphysical reality separate from the phenomenal world.

In spite of Zen's "this-worldliness," however, there seems to be a great gulf between its so-called affirmation of life and the modern affirmation of the historical world with all its conflicts and revolutionary changes. The latter requires a totally different kind of outlook on the world, and a different attitude toward life. To affirm, as Zen does, "things as they are" is one thing; to confront the harsh reality of injustice and oppression in the socio-political world face to face is another. Can the Zen attitude toward the world then allow us to have a serious and concrete concern for the dispossessed and the dehumanized? Can

the amoral (or, supramoral) religious experience of Zen go together with a passionate moral commitment to, and a strong sense of partisanship with the weak and the downtrodden? These are some of the fundamental questions we will have to deal with as we try to explore the ways Zen can contribute to the liberation of the *minjung*.

Of course, Zen is not alone in having to meet this challenge of liberation. Today religious traditions across the world are being awakened from their medieval slumber and are beginning to face the historical world. It is no longer possible for any religious community to turn away safely from the burning fire of people's liberation. How can religion relate itself to the historicized world? What can it do for people awakened to their rights as human beings and as "makers of history"? What Moltmann says about Christian theology today perhaps holds equally true for other traditions as well, including Zen:

Theology in modern times will inevitably become a *theology of freedom*. The modern world was born out of liberation movements and is still caught up in such movements. Since the church and theology have too long held on to the traditional "authoritative principle," many movements of freedom have allied themselves with atheism. If the Christian theology is going to overcome *modern atheism*, then, it must first overcome its impact and prove that the biblical God of the exodus of the people and the resurrection of Christ does not hinder but rather lays the ground for, preserves, and defends the freedom of human beings.¹

All religious traditions promise liberation. Buddhism is no exception; its ultimate goal has been no less than the liberation of beings from the sufferings of the impermanent world. The crucial question is thus whether the religious liberation and the modern secular liberation are of the same order and nature, and if not, how the two are related. Do they converge in some manner, or are they radically divergent or even inimical to each other? Religious liberation has come under heavy attack by the secular critics. It is charged that religion has promised a transhistorical and metaphysical liberation, a false liberation, instead of the real historical liberation. Hence religion has been the "opiate of the people" which diverts their attention from the harsh reality of their life through the false promise of an ideal world somewhere after death. Religion is also criticized for having preached a predominantly asocial liberation

1 Jürgen Moltmann, *Was ist heute Theologie?* (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 32.

confined to individual souls, disregarding the “real” problems of the outer world, the socio-political realm; religion merely talks about inner spiritual freedom.

Religious conscience today can no longer close its eyes to these criticisms. Religious liberation may not completely coincide with the temporal liberation which the secular visionaries pursue. Religion may also oppose the secularist’s claim to monopolize the right to define what “reality” is and adjudicate religious truth according to it. Yet, it is self-evident that religion and its message of liberation should not in any way hinder or weaken people’s commitment to justice and peace in the socio-historical world. If we can discern a “religious” dimension in the oppressed people’s cry for liberation – “Cooked rice (*pap*) is God” as a Korean *minjung* movement leader has put it – and in their irrepressible aspiration to live their life as full human beings, then there must be some ways for the two promises of liberation, the religious and the secular, to meet in their common efforts to restore full humanity.

Let us now turn to Zen and see what role it can play for *minjung* liberation.

Zen and the Liberative Concern

If Zen is to contribute to people’s liberation movements, first of all Zen religious experience itself has to be shown to be compatible with a serious concern for the concrete sufferings of the oppressed. Commitment to *minjung* liberation requires a strong historical consciousness as well as a penetrating analysis of the complexities of the social world. Is Zen experience of liberation compatible with such an historical consciousness, and does it allow us to see the social reality *face to face*? In his *Total liberation: Zen Spirituality and the Social Dimension*, Ruben L. F. Habito comments as follows concerning this issue:

The answer to the third question – What can Zen’s role be in God’s liberating action in history? – can emerge as one goes through a genuine experience of enlightenment, the very fulcrum of Zen itself, which liberates the person from ego-centeredness, toward a life emptied of selfishness and now lived in total freedom and in oneness with all beings. Such personal liberation can dispose the individual to see that the ego-centeredness that blinds and enslaves human beings has also contaminated the very socio-economic-political structures of our concrete world. This corporate ego-centeredness is seen now as ingrained and

expanded into the social relations that make for oppression and exploitation and violence causing the misery of multitudes. True, the Zen experience by itself does not assure a socially-oriented vision that sees through the structural evils of society and calls for social involvement.

Habito continues:

What is called for is another step, which is the actual exposure to the realities of oppression and exploitation in being one with the sufferings of the oppressed and exploited in their concrete situations. Such an exposure, which draws forth the well-springs of *com*-passion (suffering-with) that is the concomitant of the liberating wisdom of enlightenment, opens the social dimension in Zen and enables the individual to plunge himself or herself totally into God's liberating action in history, in all that this implies.²

Here we must in all seriousness ask whether the Zen experience of enlightenment itself does not block this "other step, which is the actual exposure to the realities of oppression and exploitation in being one with the sufferings of the oppressed and exploited in their concrete situations." What I am asking is to what extent the liberating experience of Zen, which is based upon the absolute non-discriminating (*nirvikalpa*) wisdom of *sūnyatā*, can really do justice to the painful experiences of the oppressed. This is not a matter to be solved by a sequential order, namely the Zen experience first and then a separate exposure to the social reality. The question is rather how the experience of enlightenment affects our perception of and attitude toward the social reality in all its seriousness; the question concerns the relationship between Zen experience with its underlying ontology and the socio-ethical consciousness demanded by the liberation movement. Nor do I believe that this question can be satisfactorily solved by recourse to the well-known traditional scheme of Mahayana: wisdom (*prajñā*) *cum* compassion (*karunā*). For the question again arises whether the insight into reality (*sūnyatā*), which is given by the enlightenment, allows a genuine flesh and blood compassion for the *real* sufferings of the people without diminishing their force.

In discussing this question elsewhere, I argued that Zen may indeed be free to negate the empirical world (form is emptiness) or affirm it

2 *Total Liberation: Zen Spirituality and the Social Dimension* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis, 1989), xv-xvi.

(emptiness is form) *totally*, but it has no way to do so *selectively* or discriminately. In other words, Zen ontology does not allow us to accept certain parts of reality and reject others; either it accepts everything or rejects everything, or both at the same time. Zen accepts “things as they are,” but it lacks the inner logic which enables us to strive for “things as they ought to be.” The latter is only possible on the basis of a selective affirmation or negation.³

Persuaded that a mere emphasis on the world-affirming aspect of Zen or its compassion coupled with wisdom does not constitute a firm ground for Zen and the liberative concern to meet, I am going to explore in this paper another way in which the two can be organically linked. What I have in mind is the “humanistic” element in Zen which may be able to provide an intrinsic, that is, Zen’s own religious, motivation for the commitment to *minjung* liberation. For this purpose I have chosen to examine the Zen thought of the Chinese master Lin-chi I-hsüan (d. 866), who is undoubtedly one of the most dynamic and creative figures in Zen and who has been greatly influential in East Asian Zen tradition. By the “humanistic element in Zen” I refer to Lin-Chi’s strong emphasis on “man” 人. D. T. Suzuki says, “The *Rinzairoku* is preached on the basis of this ‘man,’ and it records his activities; if you understand this ‘man,’ you grasp that which pierces through the entire book.”⁴ The word “man” occurs 196 times in *The Recorded Sayings of Ch’an Master Lin-chi Hui-chen of Chen Prefecture*.⁵ Concerning this word, Yanagida Seizan states:

The assertion of “man” certainly runs through the entire *Recorded Sayings of Rinzai*. Rinzai was undoubtedly the first, and perhaps at the same time the last, to have grasped the problem of subjectivity in Buddhism directly in terms of the real concrete man, throwing away such

3 See my “Minjung Buddhism, Zen, and Socio-Ethical Concern,” *The World Community in Post-Industrial Society*, vol. 3, *Confusion in Ethics and Values in Contemporary Society and Possible Approaches to Redefinition* (Seoul: Usok, 1989).

4 臨濟の基本思想[“The Fundamentals of Lin-chi’s Thought”], 鈴木大拙金集 [Collected Writings of Suzuki Daisetz], vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1968).

5 See Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山, trans., 臨濟錄 [The Record of Lin-chi], Button kōza 30 (Tokyo: Taizō, 1972), 314. The English translation of Lin-chi’s text used throughout this paper is that prepared by Ruth Fuller Sasaki (Kyoto: Institute for Zen Studies, 1975). I have occasionally altered the translation in the light of the Chinese original. I have also consulted Paul Demiéville’s *Entretiens de Lin-tsi* (Paris: Fayard, 1972). For the Chinese text and Japanese translation, in addition to the above work by Yanagida, I have relied heavily on the translation by Akizuki Ryōmin 秋月龍珉 in vol. 10 of 禪の語録 [Zen Annals] (Tokyo: Chikuma, 1972).

concepts as dharmanature, suchness, or Buddha-nature, *tathāgata-garbha*, mind-nature, or true nature – names used by the traditional Buddhist scholars before Rinzai.⁶

And Yanagida rightly discerns in this “humanism” of Rinzai a new kind of Zen approach to the world which differs from the traditional Mahāyana ontology. Rinzai’s emphasis on “man” and his subjectivity makes possible a new relationship between human beings and the world. A passage from Yanagida, long as it is, is worth quoting here because of its importance:

In general, for Buddhism the present world is mundane and impermanent whereas truth is considered to lie beyond this mundane world. To be sure, the mundane and the transmundane are mutually identical [in Buddhism], and what is called the transmundane is not separate at all from the mundane, nor does it negate the mundane. Rather, the true transmundane must be identical with the mundane. That is, the mundane, once negated, is again affirmed as the changing aspect 隨緣 of the transmundane and becomes the locus where the transmundane truth is at work. It goes without saying that Rinzai is aware of this common teaching of Buddhism in general. Yet, he himself does not use the word *mundane*. Barely two instances are found in the *Recorded Sayings*, but they are merely quotations from the ancient masters. . . His view of the three worlds 三世 and the mundane does not differ at all from the general teaching of Buddhism.

Yanagida continues:

Yet, while he starts out by reflecting on the impermanence of the present world, when it comes to the problem of what to do with this impermanent world, he points out that this world is ultimately nothing but the names and phrases which the “man” listening to the dharma attaches. Here Lin-chi’s words change abruptly. . . Thus the three worlds are not separate from the great ground of the mind of the man listening to the dharma; on the contrary, they are no more than the names conferred by the man listening to the dharma. That is to say, both the mundane and the transmundane are equally the locus where “man” works; they are no more than the names and phrases conferred by “man.” Names and phrases are what we rely on 依 or our clothes;

6 Yanagida, *Record of Lin-chi*, 318.

they are ultimately none other than the traces of the activities of the independent man of the Way 道依道人... This is not the so-called idealism; it is not that mind or consciousness produces the entity called the three worlds. . . . In other words, it is a direct confrontation with the dignity of real human beings, and such a meaning is extremely strong when we come to Rinzai.⁷

Let us now examine this aspect of Lin-chi's thought more closely to see if this Zen humanism, if we may call it so, can indeed constitute a firm ground upon which Zen can collaborate with the *minjung* liberation movements.

The Zen Humanism of Lin-chi

If tradition and liberation are contradictory values, as some radical rationalists argue, and if religion has been the foundation of tradition, then all movements of liberation have to begin with the denial of religion, that is, with the liberation from religion. As Marx said, "the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism."

The criticism of religion, however, has not always come from the secular side. Religion has also been criticized from within by those who are unable to find any meaning in the established forms of religious life. Zen is a good example of this. No longer satisfied with the elaborate systems of scriptural exegesis, doctrines, rituals, and even meditations, Zen began with a great revolt against the values of the traditional Buddhism. The strong iconoclastic antitraditionalism of Zen is nowhere better demonstrated than in its radical devaluation of the scriptures, the very words of the Buddha and the foundation of the Buddhist tradition. Zen may even be called in this respect a Buddhism which is not a Buddhism. Zen's mistrust of words is well known.

Words, by their nature, can only represent abstract ideas and theories. Words are believed to alienate us from the lively truth revealed to us in the immediate experiences of life; they are incapable of capturing the truth as "event." Words, says Zen, distort reality by making it conform to the logic and built-in prejudices of language. It is no wonder that Zen has a predilection for enigmatic expressions, puzzling remarks, and even outright contradictory statements. These are not to be taken

⁷ Yanagida, *Record of Lin-chi*, 369-71.

as ordinary language but as a sort of “antilanguage” or anti-linguistic language. It is also natural that Zen masters prefer as a medium of communication lively conversations in everyday language – as is witnessed in their recorded sayings – to formal treatises. In short, the repudiation of words and scriptures in Zen is tantamount to its rejection of the authority of the tradition, which goes back to the Buddha himself. Zen rejects all truth in so far as it is not one’s own but merely conveyed by others, be they the Buddha or the Zen masters themselves. No universal truth is worth anything until one has appropriated it through one’s own enlightenment.

Nowhere is this Zen antiauthoritarianism more forcefully manifested than in the thought of Lin-chi. According to him, Zen begins with faith in oneself 自信 and the rejection of the authority of other persons. Lack of faith in oneself is repeatedly pointed out by Lin-chi as the greatest impediment to enlightenment:

Followers of the Way, the eminent predecessors we have had from of old all had their own ways of saving men. As for me, what I want to point out to you is that you must not accept the deluding views of others. If you want to act, then act. Don’t hesitate. Students today can’t get anywhere: what ails you? Lack of faith in yourself is what ails you. If you lack faith in yourself, you’ll keep on tumbling along, bewilderedly following after all kinds of circumstances, be taken by these myriad circumstances through transformation after transformation, and never be yourself.⁸

Here the phrase “accept the deluding views of others” is to be more accurately translated as “not let oneself be deceived by others” (“ne se laisser abuser par personne” as Paul Demiéville renders it).⁹ To let oneself be deceived by others through lack of faith in oneself means the loss of subjectivity, which is for Lin-chi tantamount to a spiritual slavery. One has to reject it fiercely. Here are the famous words of Lin-chi:

Followers of the Way, if you want insight into Dharma as is, just don’t be taken in by the deluded views of others. Whatever you encounter, either within or without, slay it at once: on meeting a buddha slay the buddha, on meeting a patriarch slay the patriarch, on meeting an

⁸ *Recorder Sayings*, X:7.

⁹ *Entretiens de Lin-tsi*, 55.

arhat slay the arhat, on meeting your parents slay your parents, on meeting your kinsman slay your kinsman, and you attain emancipation. By not cleaving to things, you freely pass through.¹⁰

One who does not let oneself be deceived by others and refuses spiritual slavery is called by Lin-chi “the independent man of the Way” 無依道人. And Lin-chi says that Buddhahood is born of independence:

There is only the man of the Way, listening to my discourse, dependent upon nothing – he it is who is the mother of all buddhas. Therefore buddhas are born from nondependence. Awaken to nondependence, and there is no buddha to be obtained, either. Insight such as this is true insight.¹¹

The person who refuses to be deceived by others never becomes a “guest” 客 but always “plays a master” 作主.¹² Such persons never allow themselves to be treated as an “object” 境 by others and never lets others see through them. According to Lin-chi, when two Zen masters meet there is bound to be an intensive spiritual battle between them lest one’s subjectivity be “taken away” 被奪 by the other and lest he be reduced to being an object. One who holds on to his subjectivity to the last minute emerges the victor or the master, while the other becomes a “guest.”

The independent man of the Way not merely refuses to be “deceived by others” 人惑 but also to be “deceived by objects” 境惑,¹³ whether they be the affairs of the world, changing circumstances and states, or doctrines and ideals. No matter what may come, man should always be a master who can “ride on” 乘 and “make use of the objects and not be driven around by them.”¹⁴ Let us listen to Lin-chi’s own words:

Just make yourself master of every situation, and wherever you stand is the true [place]. No matter what circumstances come they cannot dislodge you [from where you stand]. Even though you bear the remaining influences of past delusions or the karma from [having committed] the five heinous crimes, these of themselves become the ocean of emancipation. Students nowadays know nothing of Dharma. They are just like sheep that take into their mouths whatever their noses happen

10 *Record Sayings*, XVIII:25

11 *Record Sayings*, XIV:14.

12 *Record Sayings*, XII: 12.

13 *Record Sayings*, XVIII:24.

14 *Record Sayings*, XV:16 不被境轉 處處用境

to hit against. They neither discriminate between master and slave, nor distinguish host from guest. Such as these, having entered the Way with crooked motives, readily enter bustling places. They cannot be called true renouncers of home – on the contrary – they are in fact true householders.¹⁵

Concerning his own approach to truth, Lin-chi adds the following:

Resolute men, don't just pass your days in discussion and idle talk, arguing about authorities and outlaws, right and wrong, licentiousness and wealth. As for me, whoever comes here, whether he be monk or layman, I discern him through and through. Regardless of the manner in which he presents himself, as far as [his] words and phrases are concerned, they are all dreams and illusions. On the other hand, it is obvious that the man who avails himself of every circumstance is embodying the mysterious principle of all the buddhas. The state of buddhahood does not of itself proclaim, "I am the state of buddhahood!"; rather than that, this very man of the Way, who is dependent upon nothing, comes forth availing himself of every state.¹⁶

Objects (states, circumstances) are for Lin-chi like the robes we wear; the independent man of the Way can freely change his robes without ever losing his subjectivity or identity. Again, Lin-chi says concerning himself:

With respect to my own activity today – true creation and destruction – I play with miraculous transformations, enter into all kinds of circumstances, yet nowhere have I anything to do. Circumstances cannot change me. Let someone who is seeking come here and I immediately go out to look at him. He doesn't know me. Thereupon I don various kinds of robes. The student, putting some meaning on to this, straightaway falls into words and phrases. What a pity that the blind shavestate, a man without the eye [to see], grasps at the robe I'm wearing and declares it to be blue or yellow, red or white! When I disrobe and enter the state of purity, the student takes one look and is immediately filled with delight and longing. Then, when I cast off everything, the student is stunned and, running about in wild confusion, cries, "You're naked!" If I say, "Do you know me, the man who wears these robes?" he'll abruptly turn his head around and recognize me through and through.

15 *Record Sayings*, XII:12.

16 *Record Sayings*, XVI:17.

Lin-chi goes on to warn:

Virtuous monks, don't acknowledge robes. Robes cannot move, but a man can put them on. There is the robe of purity, the robe of Birthlessness, the robe of *bodhi*, the robe of *nirvāna*, the Patriarch-robe, and the Buddha-robe. Virtuous monks, as for spoken words and written phrases, they're all but a transformation of robe.¹⁷

“Do not be fooled by the robes!” this is what Lin-chi is saying. “Words and phrases” 名句, concepts and ideas, systems and ideologies are all alike nothing more than the robes we may wear (or “expedient means,” *upāya*, to use the traditional Mahāyāna term), but we should never be attached to them or taken in by them. Isn't this truly a liberating message? It is a message which may even liberate us from the very message of liberation and from the oppressive element inherent in every ideology of liberation, secular or religious. Paul Demiéville sees in this a manifestation of “Chinese humanism.” Concerning Lin-chi's words just quoted above, he says:

This passage makes one think of Anderson's tale about the grand-duke and his imaginary clothes: “But it seems to me that he has no clothes at all,” observes a little child. “Good Lord,” says his father, “hear the voice of innocence!” But it evokes above all a famous saying of Confucius: “It is man who is capable of magnifying the Tao, not the Tao that magnifies man”; or yet that of Chuang-tzu: “There is true man, and then there is true knowledge.” God is nothing without man; everything is in man.

This is the humanism of Lin-tsi. It is a Chinese humanism, the humanism of a Chinese Buddhist, perhaps more Chinese than Buddhist. Nothing is more Chinese than this prodigious sense of the concrete, the immediate, the living practice, joined to a wild denial of all sorts of gratuitous theories. Contrary to India, China clings to the real; there is no thought more down to earth. This is why this thought disconcerts us, by very reason of its simplicity. But shall I say that when one has tasted it, the abstractions seem dull. And the Marxist dogmatics has only to hold fast to that, if it does not wish to suffer the fate inflicted by Lin-tsi on the Buddhist dogmatics.¹⁸

17 *Record Sayings*, XVIII:30-31.

18 “Les entretiens de Lin-tsi,” *Choix d'études bouddhiques* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 454-55.

Lin-chi says that he himself has nothing to give to his students. Just as they should not be deceived by others, they should not depend on him either. Lin-chi's Zen pedagogy is simply to let each student stand alone in "solitary freedom":

Among all the students from every quarter who are followers of the Way, none has yet come before me without being dependent on something. Here I hit them right from the start. If they come forth using their hands, I hit them on the hands; if they come forth using their mouths, I hit them on the mouth; if they come forth using their eyes, I hit them on the eyes. Not one has yet come before me in solitary freedom. All are clambering after the worthless contrivances of the men of old. As for myself, I haven't a single dharma to give to men. All I can do is to cure illnesses and unloosen bonds. You followers of the Way from every quarter, try coming before me without being dependent upon things. I would confer with you.¹⁹

No one, according to Lin-chi, essentially lacks anything and hence there is no reason to run around seeking truth from others. Have faith in yourself, be ordinary, and have nothing to seek! This is what we hear again and again in Lin-chi's recorded sayings:

I say to you there is no Buddha, no Dharma, nothing to practice, nothing to realize. Just what are you seeking thus in the highways and byways? Blind men! You're putting a head on top of the one you already have. What do you yourself lack! Followers of the Way, your own present activities do not differ from those of the patriarch-buddhas. You just don't believe this and keep on seeking outside. Make no mistake! Outside there is no dharma; inside, there is none to be obtained. Better than grasp at the words from my mouth, take it easy and do nothing.²⁰

Indomitable faith in oneself, independence, subjectivity and freedom, mastery of all circumstances and objects; these are the qualities of Zen humanity which Lin-chi preaches, the qualities of a liberated man, the

19 *Record Sayings*, XVIII:25.

20 *Record Sayings*, XVIII:25.

“independent man of the Way.” Let us then consider how this Zen humanism of Lin-chi can relate itself to *minjung* liberation.

Zen Humanism and Secular Humanism

Yanagida Seizan finds in Lin-chi’s affirmation of the “absolute unconditional value of man” “a typical Oriental view of common man” which “corresponds to the spirit of modern humanism or the standpoint of democracy.”²¹ But we should be more cautious here lest we make the mistake of simply identifying Zen humanism with modern secular humanism. Lin-chi’s Zen humanism is clearly based on a particular religious view of man. “The independent man of the Way” or “the true man of no rank” of Lin-chi is by no means the empirical self familiar to us in our deluded mode of thought. It is nevertheless said to be very subject of our everyday activities, an infinite free being whose subjectivity can never be stolen by others. What significance does this idea of man in Zen have for the freedom and autonomy which modern men and women pursue?

While it is true that modern liberation movements have been based by and large on secular ideologies, we may nevertheless ask the secular humanists on what ground their belief in the value and dignity of human beings rests. Why should not a human being be reduced to an object, and why should not a person be treated like a slave? Why ought not a person’s conscience be violated by the authority of a tradition? What is it in human beings that creates in them such an irresistible urge for freedom? If human dignity is not simply an ordinary empirical fact which is self-evident to all, but requires a faith – or a *prājña* insight – then Zen humanism may indeed be able to play an important role in inspiring faith and courage into the modern movements of liberation. Zen’s repudiation of all kinds of authority – human, institutional, ideological, and even religious – and its firm belief in man’s subjectivity and freedom, and its belief in the equality of all human beings; these are clearly to be considered as some of the liberating elements of Zen humanism which are eagerly waiting to be tapped by the *minjung* movements today.

Further questions remain. What are the concrete ways in which Zen subjectivity and freedom can be implemented and realized in the socio-historical world? What can Zen Buddhists themselves do in order to

21 Yanagida, *Record of Lin-chi*, 284-85.

translate the humanistic element of Zen into social terms in the actual world of intense political and economic conflicts? If Lin-chi were alive today to give us practical advice on this matter (instead of thumping on us!), perhaps he would not disagree with the view that those systems and actions are desirable which are conducive to the spirit of Zen humanism, that is, systems and actions which elevate and enhance human dignity and freedom and reduce the slavery and dehumanization (“objectification”) of man. Meanwhile, a word of criticism from a Korean *minjung* Buddhist leader, Popsong, is worth listening to:

Zen has not been able to establish human freedom as a social freedom through transforming [man as] social being; it has brought about the disease of confining human freedom to our inner subjective freedom.²²

The Zen spirit of subjectivity is one thing; its penchant for subjective freedom is another. The future of Zen participation in the *minjung* liberation movements may well depend upon how Zen is capable of converting the former to a socially transformative power which can establish objective freedom for all men and women on earth.

²² Popsong, “Minjung pulgyo undong ui inyom kwa kyorijok paegyong,” *Minjung pulgyo ui t’angu* (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1989), 33.