

[Commentary on Shinji Shobogenzo, Book 2, Case 47]

Master Rinzai said that there was a true human being without rank who went in and out through our face.

When we hear 'face', we often think of Original face, the face you had before your parents were born.

If we pay attention, we can be aware of the musculature of our face; the fixed patterns we hold, the tensions, the habitual moving contours. And if we have this awareness, we can experience our face as a kind of mask. Indeed, we might identify our sense of self with this social face. If we didn't have a face to present to the world, could we have a self to present to ourself?

Rinzai's person without rank is something in us which is true and alive, and which can never be entirely suppressed by our social face. And so, he emerges. And sometimes, we suppress him. And so, he goes back in. This person without rank is our original face. There is not a true face behind our social face. There is not another self behind the self. There is just life channelled by us, like light falling through windows.