

Daisetsu Suzuki's Zen Buddhism

Kohei Koketsu

鈴木大拙の仏教哲学

纈 纈 康 兵

Daisetsu T. Suzuki (1870-1966) is considered in this paper as an example of how Buddhist philosophy can be expressed in Western terms.

A) According to Jaspers, philosophy began with the question "What is ?," but Dogen says "to study Buddhism is to study oneself," and by searching for self, one reaches the real world. Intuition which grasps the true self is called *prajna*, and this refers to a subject which can see itself without objectifying. *Prajna* knows all things as they are and as they happen. Suzuki calls the true self "pure subjectivity":

Zen takes up this "I" as the subject of its study. What is "I"? That is, who is the self that is engaged in talking (or questioning)? How does the talker come to know "me" when I am the talker himself? How can I make myself "him"? If I succeed, I am no more "I" but "he," and "he" cannot be expected to know "me." As long as "I" am the talker, "I" am talking about me not as myself but as somebody who stands beside or opposite me. The self is an everreceding one, one who is forever going away from the "self." The self can never be the self-in-itself when the self is made the object of the talk. . . . To be more exact, perhaps, the self cannot be understood when it is objectified, when it is set up on the other side of experience and not on this side. This is what I mean by "pure subjectivity."¹

What concerns Zen is the problem of the self which plays with "six lions" or looks out through the "six windows" . . . the subjectum, or what I call pure subjectivity. This is what interests Zen and Zen wants us to get acquainted with it. But the Zen way of acquaintance is unique, for it does not proceed with the dichotomy of Man-Nature or subject-object.²

Pure subjectivity is pure objectivity ; in Suzuki's words :

When we come to this stage of thinking, pure subjectivity is pure objectivity, the *en-soi* is the

pour-soi ; there is perfect identity of Man and Nature, of God and Nature, of the one and the many. But the identity does not imply the annihilation of one at the cost of the other. The mountains do not vanish; they stand before me. I have not absorbed them, nor have they wiped me out of the scene. The dichotomy is there, which is suchness, and this suchness (*tathata*) in all its suchness is emptiness(*sunyata*) itself. The mountains are mountains and yet not mountains. I am I and you are you, and yet I am you and you are I. Nature as a world of manyness is not ignored, and Man as a subject facing the many remains conscious of himself.³

Pure subjectivity implies subject only, and therefore, the nonexistence of the object. In this case, subject and object are not mutually related, but rather two things in opposition to each other, like seer and seen. Since they are opposed to each other, and one is existent, the other is non-existent. "Only the subject exists" implies that the object does not exist, but the appellation "subject" does presuppose the existence of an object. Here, we have a contradiction : we have stated that the object does not exist, and that the subject presupposed an object, so in order to account for the presupposed object, the nonexistent object would have to become existent, making the subject, in turn, nonexistent. As a result, the idea that only the subject exists can be established only in conjunction with the notion that it does not exist at all. Non-existence of the subject means existence of the object, and "pure subjectivity" means nonexistence of the object, but the existence of the subject implies its own nonexistence, thus establishing "pure objectivity." The nonexistence of the subject establishes "pure subjectivity" and the nonexistence of the object establishes "pure objectivity." "I am not I, therefore I am I"⁴ refers to pure subjectivity. The following remarks by Suzuki are helpful in understanding "pure

subjectivity is pure objectivity” :

Buddhist philosophy is the philosophy of “Emptiness,” it is the philosophy of self-identity. Self-identity is to distinguished from mere identity. In an identity we have two objects for identification; in self-identity there is just one object or subject, one only, and this one identifies itself by going out of itself. Self-identity thus involves a movement. And we see that self-identity is the mind going out of itself in order to see itself reflected in itself. Self-identity is the logic of pure experience or of “Emptiness.” In self-identity there are no contradictions whatever, Buddhists call this suchness.

I once talked with a group of lovers of the arts on the Buddhist teaching of “Emptiness” and Suchness, trying to show how the teaching is related to the arts. The following is part of my talk. . . . I often hear Chinese or Japanese art critics declare that Oriental art consists in depicting spirit and not form. For they say that when the spirit is understood the form creates itself; the main thing is to get into the spirit of an object which the painter chooses for his subject. The West, on the other hand, emphasizes form, endeavors to reach the spirit by means of form. . . .

How does the painter get into the spirit of the plant, . . . The secret is to become the plant itself. But how can a human being turn himself into a plant? . . .

The discipline consists in studying the plant inwardly with his mind thoroughly purified of its subjective, self-centered contents. This means to keep the mind in unison with the “Emptiness” or Suchness, whereby one who stands against the object ceases to be the one outside that object but transforms himself into the object itself. This identification enables the painter to feel the pulsation of one and the same life animating both him and the object. This is what is meant when it is said that the subject is lost in the object, and that when the painter begins his work it is not he but the object itself that is working and it is then that his brush, as well as his arm and his fingers, become obedient servants to the spirit of the objects. The object makes its own picture. The spirit sees itself as reflected in itself. This is also a case of self-identity.⁵

The statement, “the subject is lost in the object” means that the object exists, but the subject does not ; however, it also means that the object becomes the subject. But if it becomes the subject, it is no longer the object. Thus, to say the subject is lost in the object means that the object produces the subject. Here, we must recall Dogen’s saying : “To forget oneself is to

realize oneself as all things.” If an object paints a picture of itself, this establishes the fact of the subject, because an object cannot paint itself without a subject painting itself. The idea that “the object makes its own picture” is the obverse of the idea that “the spirit sees itself as reflected in itself.” Thus we understand that we cannot truly know ourselves without knowing all things as they are at the same time: this is Suchness (tathata). We must try to know ourselves before we can know all things as they are instead of as they appear to us. As Dogen said, one cannot learn one’s true self without “realizing oneself as all things.” Thus, Buddhist philosophers could reach the real world as it is by liberating themselves from subjective and self-centered views. A manifestation of this can be seen in the system of “non-identity and non-differentiation” of the knower and the known, or the thinker and the thought about.

“Subject” and “Object” can be explained in terms of *vijñāna* and *prajña* as follows: Unless it is non-existent, the subject cannot be known as a subject without making itself its own object, any more than a finger can point to itself. But since the nature of the subject is not to be a subject, it can be wholly comprehended as a subject without making itself an object. It is only by being “pure objectivity” that “pure subjectivity” can exist. Since the essence of the subject is non-subject, it can comprehend itself as subject without being-object, and, because it is beyond the subject-object bifurcation, it is not *vijñāna*, which is the principle of differentiation.

This kind of subject is called *prajña*, which is the basic noetic principle through which the whole can be synthetically apprehended. As a non-subject itself, *prajña* is negatively opposed to the subject, yet it is identical with the subject.

This *prajña* cannot be included under any category, it is not knowledge, nor is it wisdom, nor mere cleverness, nor intelligence of any order. In Suzuki’s words ;

In *prajña*-intuition the object of intuition is never a concept postulated by an elaborate process of reasoning ; it is never “this” or “that” ; it does not want to attach itself to any one particular object.⁶

We cannot objectify *prajña*; working with all things in the outside world, it perceives them as they are without making objects of them. *Vijñāna*, on the other hand, views things in terms of a subject-object dichotomy, and *vijñāna* thought observes all things in this way. *Prajña* sees things from its own unique viewpoint, objectively, meaning without a subject-object bifurcation, and therefore we can say that it views things from their interior rather than from their exterior, or in their essential nature, as they are. The expression for this is “knowing Suchness,” or the

Characteristic of Reality, or all things as-they-are.

The following is a comparison between *prajna* and *vijnana* :

Prajna and *Vijnana* — a Comparison⁷

On the *prajna* side we may list the following :

On the *vijnana* side we may have these counterbalancing :

Sunyata (emptiness)	A world of beings and non-beings
Tathata (suchness)	A world of clear-cut definitions
Prajna-intuition	Vijnana-discrimination
Nirvana	Samsara (birth-and-death)
Bodhi (enlightenment)	Avidya (ignorance)
Purity	Defilement
The mind (citta)	The senses (vijnana)
The Dharma (ultimate reality)	Sarvadharmas (Individual entities)
Pure experience	Experiences of multitudes
Pure act (akarma)	A world of causation
Undifferentiated	Differentiated
Non-discrimination	Discrimination
No-mind, or no-thought	Individual consciousness
Eternal now, or absolute present	Time relations
Non-duality	Duality
Etc.	Etc.

A final remark is in order. Suzuki was rarely criticized in Japan. In fact, to the best of my knowledge, the first unfavorable articles on him were published shortly before his death.⁸ Therefore, I would like to set down my own impressions of his thought.

As I mentioned before, non-identity and non-differentiation are the main bases of Suzuki's Zen. But unfortunately, not being an academic philosopher, he has been unable to convince Western philosophers due to an insufficiency in logic; indeed, he may not even be interested in undertaking this task. He teaches the psychology of Zen, or Absolute Nothingness, rather than its logic. He brings his own rich experience of Zen to his vivid explanations of it, and this is very valuable because it is a unique approach to the philosophy of Absolute Nothingness and Pure Subjectivity and Pure Objectivity. Furthermore, he never uses analogies to Western thought to explain Zen; on the contrary he emphatically asserts that there is no common ground between Eastern and Western thought.

Briefly, I think Suzuki's attitude on Christianity is prejudicial. There are many fragmentary remarks that he has made, and I would like to give a few examples.

In October of 1960, Suzuki and other Buddhist scholars met with Hendrick Kraemer at the Otani University. When Kraemer asked Suzuki what his

main objections to Christianity were, he gave the following answer :

I have nothing to object to, I just cannot accept Christian doctrine. Let Christians have what they like . . . let Buddhist have what they like. Let us agree to disagree so we go on peacefully. One thing I cannot accept in Christianity is their dualistic view of existence. They make too sharp a distinction between divinity and humanity and they think God commands, and man obeys. I do not like this legalistic idea of God as commander, as creator and men as being commanded and obeying and therefore when men do not obey what they call divine commands men are punished. I most strongly do not like this idea of punishment. Judaism and Christianity are both legalistic. Christianity did not like the way of Judaistic legalism. Christ came and proclaimed the gospel of love. Love is very fine, indeed. I am in complete agreement with Christ. But Christ could not eliminate this legalistic residual of Judaistic thought. According to my way of thinking, love ought not to be relative, love ought to be absolute. If it is real love, love cannot make any distinction between so called sinners or non-sinners. Rain falls on the just as well as the unjust, or we can say on the unjust as well as the just. This words 'justice'. I don't like it either.

There is no justice. We cannot judge each other. God, Christians say, God judges. We are not judges, human beings are not judges. But how could men conceive that God is a judge unless men judge each other which I don't like.

Now another thing about Christ's own teachings. Christ would say if one strikes the right cheek, (or left cheek, I forget, but that does not matter), turn the other. Here is something not quite innocent. Here is something discriminating, that I don't like. If a Buddhist were struck on the right or left cheek he would just accept it and wouldn't turn the other cheek. This is real love. There is another thing Christ says, "love your enemy." Buddhism would say there is no enemy. When you say love of an enemy in distinction from friends there is a certain thing which I cannot conceive of as absolute love. That is one thing. And then when divinity and humanity are forced, so strongly distinguished, there is what Dr. Tillich would call participation. I don't like participation. Love is a total thing. Love can never be divided into parts. If God loves, that love must be whole, totalistic. If man loves God that also cannot be particularistic. But that does not mean that God and man are identical. I don't like the word identical either. I would say that God is God and man is man. They are quite distinct. At the same time God is man and man is God. This is the most important part.⁹

This remains his most detailed and poignant statement on Christianity. On numerous occasions, he has insisted that:

... Buddhism is more intellectual than Christianity and that the whole drift of Buddhist thought tends to encourage an intuitive grasp of the emptiness of existence instead of being embraced in the love of the highest being.¹⁰

He feels that Christianity is more symbolic than Buddhism. To support this theory, he notes such examples as "the story of creation, the fall, God's sending of Christ to compensate for the ancestral sins, his Crucifixion, and Resurrection . . . they are all symbolic."

In this respect Christianity is more symbolic than Buddhism. The story of Creation, the Fall from the Garden of Eden, God's sending Christ to compensate for the ancestral sins, his Crucifixion, and Resurrection—they are all symbolic. To be more explicit, Creation is the awakening of consciousness, or the 'awakening of a thought'; the Fall is consciousness going astray from the original path; God's idea of sending his own son among us is the desire of the will to see itself

through its own offspring, consciousness; Crucifixion is transcending the dualism of acting and knowing, which comes from the awakening of the intellect; and finally Resurrection means the will's triumph over the intellect—in other words, the will seeing itself in and through consciousness. After Resurrection the will is no more blind striving, nor is the intellect mere observing the dancer dance. In real Buddhist life these two are not separated; seeing and acting, they are synthesized in one whole spiritual life, and this synthesis is called by Buddhists Enlightenment, the dispelling of Ignorance, the loosening of the Fetters, the wiping-off of the Defilements, etc. Buddhism is thus free from the historical symbolism of Christianity; transcending the category of time, Buddhism attempts to achieve salvation in one act of the will; for returning effaces all the traces of time.¹¹

This kind of reasoning implies that "Buddhism may be considered more scientific and rational than Christianity, which is heavily laden with all sorts of mythological paraphernalia." Contemporary Christian have attempted to "denude their religion of this unnecessary historical appendix," but they may not necessarily succeed, because "in every religion there are some elements which may be called irrational."¹²

I must clarify my ideas about logic: I feel logic is that which gives unity and a framework to my relations with all others, both animate and inanimate. First of all, I would like to explain man.

Man is a materially finite spirit. He lives in a material world and deals with material objects, particularly other persons. Man is made real not only by the things he makes or uses, but also in his relationships with other human beings who communicate with him and inspire his confidence and love. It is only through communion with other men that man can reach his full potential: it is others who help him attain self-awareness. Other persons act like mirrors, and it is by their reflections that one discovers himself as a person. In the same way, only through loving others can one fulfill his own highest potentialities. The more I understand another person, the more I can love him, and the more I love him, the better I know him. This is true because of the ultimate unity of knowing and willing in the free self-actuation of the spirit.

Man is unique among all forms of life in that he possesses himself in knowledge and disposes himself in freedom. Essentially, his spiritual actions are free, and it is only when we can freely understand and choose our moral values that an action can be called moral. In this way we can perfect ourselves both spiritually and personally. Thus we can say that moral freedom is an essential of moral activity.

Nevertheless, man's freedom is not unlimited. It is

conditioned by previous conditioning factors, which are necessarily co-existent when a free action is initiated. The first, most basic factor is transcendence, because, as a finite spirit, though ever moving towards the infinite, man's activity cannot be determined by finite good. He must be capable of freely determining himself in each instance of activity, and in doing so, he implicitly affirms his own transcendence. This is called the dynamism of man's intellect. Thus, one could say that the more man moves away from himself, rising above this world towards an Ultimate Reality, the more he becomes what he really is and must be. Man can become himself only by transcending all finite being towards the Ultimate Reality.

Man experiences transcendence more through free and personal spiritual activity than through knowledge and moral activity (the dynamism of man's intellect.) This activity means freely and explicitly turning towards the Ultimate Reality. Acceptance is more than simple knowledge. It implies the free welcoming and admittance of the Ultimate Reality, or a free giving of self, and therefore an action on the part of the will (man's intellectual dynamism.) The Ultimate Reality cannot be understood in terms of this world or of man, and as a spirit standing in front of this Ultimate Reality, man's horizon can be opened up only by accepting this Ultimate Reality.

The definition as spirit is part of man's personal nature. Man is individual, free, open, dependent on community and a person in the world. Man is a question unto himself, with the ability to transcend any horizon. As a person, man must be capable of receiving Ultimate Reality's love with faith and comprehension and yearning for it. Thus, from the very beginning man was made to be a capacity for Ultimate Reality, and this is his chief and determining dimension of existence. To impart significance, meaning and life to my relation with others, both animate and inanimate, I have only my connection with Ultimate Reality. How can I say this? I am existentially convinced that my whole being is sustained in Ultimate Reality.

I feel that Ultimate Reality is not an object for factual study or knowledge, but the pre-existing condition that makes knowledge possible at all. He is the unrestricted horizon against which I frame all that I know. When I think or speak of Ultimate Reality, I make it into an object due to the limitations of human language, but in fact, Ultimate Reality is not such an object: It is the precondition. That makes possible the existence of any object.

Therefore, I feel that logic is that which gives unity, solidarity and structure to my whole relation with all other things, both animate and inanimate.

As stated above, I am convinced that there must be conformity between logic and my whole being. In this sense, I reject any logic that is not related to my

whole being. However, Suzuki's thought does not provide any point of connection with my existence. For, before I with my existence, mind and spirit can enter into his thought, his thought seems to jumping over my existence, leaving me behind. For me, his logic and his thought lack responsibility. Suzuki says :

... Zen is not explainable by mere intellectual analysis. As long as the intellect is concerned with words and ideas, it can never reach Zen.¹³

This is Suzuki's thought but I do not accept it. It seems to me that for example, World War II was a result of Japanese ignoring logic. As Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle diagnoses it :

Often it is said that it is difficult, if not impossible, for a European to understand the mentality of the Japanese. One reason is that the origins of Japanese culture are quite different from those of European culture. In a nutshell, it can be expressed this way. European culture is based on thought; Japanese culture is based on non-thought, that is on intuition and feeling. The Japanese do not like to think dialectically, and in theoretical discussions they easily pass over logical contradictions. . . . The predominance of feeling over reason also helps to explain some of the mistakes of Japanese foreign policy. The Second World War is a classical example. The Japanese experts knew and admitted that they did not have a chance against the technically superior enemy.¹⁴

B) Yoshinori Takeuchi states :

Whenever discussion arises concerning the problem of encounter between being and non-being, Western philosophers and theologians, with hardly an exception, will be found to align themselves on the side of being. This is no wonder. The idea of 'being' is the Archimedean point of Western thought. Not only philosophy and theology but the whole tradition of Western civilization have turned around this pivot.

All is different in Eastern thought and Buddhism. The central notion from which Oriental religious intuition and belief as well as philosophical thought have been developed is the idea of "nothingness." To avoid serious confusion, however, it must be noted that East and West understand non-being or nothingness in entirely different ways.¹⁵

A synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophies demands careful observation of differences as well as similarities, even where systems resemble each other.

One of the greatest contemporary Zen philosophers in Japan, Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945), suggested that Western philosophy is based on the concept of Being, while Oriental philosophy concerns itself with the idea of Nothing.¹⁶ In the same sense, we can say that Western mysticism is involved with the concept of Being and Zen works with the idea of Nothing, through both systems use the same method, intuition, to achieve their goal.

Zen philosophy denies all the assumptions of Being, preferring to state its total concept of reality as nothing, while in Western mysticism, the mystic directs his efforts at achieving unity with God. In doing this, however, he either becomes a god himself, or an enlightened or enlarged Self, but either way, he is still involved in the concept of Being. A Zen Buddhist, on the other hand, strives to reach that stage of existence where everything, even the self, is perceived as nothing. P'u-Yuan (died A. D. 830) expressed this idea well when he said,

If you really comprehend the indubitable *Tao*, it is like a wide expanse of emptiness, so how can distinctions between right and wrong be forced into it?¹⁷

Tao-Shen said that unity with *wu* (non-being) is a prerequisite to Buddhahood.¹⁸ Zen cannot assimilate faith in God as ultimate reality, because it then must ask, "Where is God?" and further, "Where is God prior to the creation of the world?"

Prajna will ask: "Even prior to the creation of the world, where is God?" Or, more personally: "When you are dead and cremated and the ashes scattered to the winds, where is yourself?" To these questions *prajna* demands a "quick" answer or response, and will not allow a moment's delay for reflection or ratiocination.¹⁹

Furthermore, Zen demands an immediate answer, in fact the first thing that comes to mind, for example, your black teacup, or your sister's notebook. Since the answer could be truly anything at all, it is practically the same as nothing, which is Zen's basic assumption.

Zen Buddhists say of their own sect that it teaches nothing, but this should not be taken literally.

Zen has nothing to teach us in the way of intellectual analysis; nor has it any set doctrines which are imposed on its followers for acceptance. In this respect Zen is quite chaotic if you choose to say so. Probably Zen followers may have sets of doctrines, but they have them on their own account, and for their own benefit; they do not owe the fact to Zen. Therefore, there are in Zen no sacred books or dogmatic tenets, nor are

there any symbolic formulae through which an access might be gained into the signification of Zen. If I am asked, then, what Zen teaches, I would answer, Zen teaches nothing. Whatever teachings there are in Zen they come out of one's own mind. We teach ourselves; Zen merely points the way. Unless this pointing is teaching, there is certainly nothing in Zen purposely set up as its cardinal doctrines or as its fundamental philosophy.²⁰

It is a fact that Zen constructs no philosophical systems and rejects any conceptualizing, because it recognizes that conceptual description is impossible to apply to the nature of reality. Therefore Zen has turned to poetry and art, as Suzuki notes in the following statement: "Zen naturally finds its readiest expression in poetry rather than in philosophy because it has more affinity with feeling than with intellect; its poetic predilection is inevitable."²¹ It is perhaps to this idea that Rudolph Otto is referring when he says that Zen is anything but a philosophy in the Western sense of the word.²² This, however, should not be taken to mean that it is an artistic method totally dependent on immediacy without medium. The paradox lies in the fact that, it takes intellect to refute an intellectual method. Therefore, we can restate the Zen declaration by saying that it teaches that it teaches nothing, in the same way that Socrates, in refuting the Sophists' thesis, modestly and ironically declared "I know that I know nothing." This positive feature in Zen philosophy is frequently glossed over by its critics, but as a matter of fact, Zen's genius lies in the logic of the illogical. Zen is not a-logical but trans-logical, transcending the dichotomy of subject and object, mind and matter, being and non-being, all of which can be classed as relational knowledge. Zen's total attitude cuts through relational knowledge to attain the absolute viewpoint. It strives to perceive the world as an absolute whole with the true philosophical spirit. Suzuki states this clearly :

... the reader will now know why Zen stands in opposition to logic, formal or informal. It is not the object of Zen to look illogical for its own sake, but to make people know that logical consistency is not final, and that there is a certain transcendental statement that cannot be attained by mere intellectual cleverness. The intellectual groove of "yes" and "no" is quite accommodating when things run their regular course; but as soon as the ultimate question of life comes up, the intellect fails to answer it satisfactorily. When we say "yes", we assert, and by asserting we limit ourselves. When we say "no", we deny, and to deny is exclusion. Exclusion and limitation, which after all are the same thing, murder the

soul; for is it not the life of the soul that lives in perfect freedom and in perfect unity? There is no freedom or unity in exclusion or in limitation. Zen is well aware of this. In accordance with the demands of our inner life, therefore, Zen takes us to an absolute realm wherein there are no antitheses of any sort.²³

Zen begins with actual reality, or *samsara* (birth-and-death), of the world as we know it with its sufferings and dualities, but according to Zen, if we limit ourselves to this world of antithesis, with its mutual conditioning of opposites, we can never really feel complete. To emancipate ourselves, Zen recommends that we adopt a non-dualistic attitude and we can achieve this only by the method of *prajna*-intuition.²⁴ Intuition calls for viewing all things as beyond discussion or demonstration, transcending knowledge or argument. Thus absolute purity can be intuitively understood only if one can go beyond both purity and non-purity. It is only by rising above the duality of being and non-being that the absolute viewpoint can be achieved. Zen masters are interested not in a mere void, but rather in arriving at a state where all distinctions are nullified. Therefore, we can say that Zen is not without knowledge: rather it has a knowledge that is not knowledge, and for this reason, Zen is said to consist of the logic of the illogical. While this seems paradoxical, it is necessary for Zen to rid itself of all ordinary laws of logic in order to attain the absolute viewpoint.

Zen disregards the logical law of contradiction, and thus reveals its paradoxical nature. It does not try to refute the law of contradiction, but simply ignores it in order to illustrate the law of identity. Zen states the logical proposition: "A is not A; therefore, A is A." Zen feels that the actual import of the statement "A is A: can be comprehended only when "A is not A." Suzuki says:

We generally reason: "A" is "A" because "A" is "A"; or "A" is "A", therefore, "A" is "A". Zen agrees or accepts this way of reasoning, but Zen has its own way which is ordinarily not at all acceptable. Zen would say: "A" is "A" because "A" is not "A"; or "A" is not "A"; therefore, "A" is "A".

Our thinking on the worldly level is: Everything has its cause; nothing is without its cause; the causation works on and in all things. But Zen will agree with some Christians when declare that God created the world out of nothing, or that God willed and the world came into existence, or that "to say that God created the world yesterday or tomorrow would be foolishness, for God created the world and everything in it in the one present Now."

Mathematics has this: $0=0$, $1=1$, $1+1=2$, and so on. Zen has these too, but it has no objection to

the following either: $0=1$, $0=2$, $1+1=3$, etc. Why? Because zero is infinity and infinity is zero. Is this not irrational and beyond our comprehension?

A geometrical circle has a circumference and just one centre, and no more or less. But Zen admits the existence of a circle that has no circumference nor centre and, therefore, has an infinite number of centres. As this circle radius from such a centre is of equal length—that is, all are equally infinitely long. According to the Zen point of view, the universe is a circle without a circumference, and every one of us is the centre of the universe. To put it more concretely: I am the centre, I am the universe, I am the creator. I raise the hand and lo! there is space, there is time, there is causation. Every logical law and every metaphysical principle rushes in to confirm the reality of my hand.²⁵

There is another aspect of the thinking-method of erasing all distinction which is expressed by the Zen doctrine of continuum. In this case, the character of the thought-process is revealed by a certain type of logic, which could be called "Zen dialectic." According to Zen teaching, there are no individual entities in reality, but rather all are melted into one infinite continuum, and therefore it is the nature of things to be interchangeable. For example, as we have seen, "A" is the same as "B," "C," "D," etc. Human language, however, is an expression of rational and conceptual comprehension, and cannot express anything except by distinction and differentiation. Thus, when we use language to express some truth which is inherently connected to the continuum, we must use a certain type of logic whose viewpoint is similar to dialectical logic.

From the absolute viewpoint of Zen, "A" equals "B" and everything else too. However, in rational and conceptual understanding, "B" is not "A" or as Zen would put it, "B=non-A". Thus, in the view of the continuum, $A=B$ can be expressed through conceptual thinking as $A=non-A$. This is similar to the logic of the *Prajnaparamita Sutras*, which exerted a great influence on Zen. *The Diamond Sutra*, for example, states: ". . . although innumerable beings have thus been led to *Nirvana*, no being at all has been led to *Nirvana*."²⁶

In the continuum, no distinction is made between one who has attained *Nirvana* and one who has not, and therefore no one should be pointed out as having attained *Nirvana*.

This type of logic occurs frequently in Zen; here is a slightly more complex example:

Riko (Li K'u), a high government officer of the T'ang dynasty, asked Nansen (Nan-chuan) : "A long time ago a man kept a goose in a bottle. It

grew larger and larger until it could not get out of the bottle any more ; he did not want to break the bottle, nor did he wish to hurt the goose ; how would you get it out?" The master called out, "Oh officer !" —to which Riko at once responded, "Yes !" "There, it is out !"²⁷

In the continuum, the goose inside the bottle is identical to the same goose outside it, and therefore, the goose inside the bottle is the goose not-inside the bottle. The emphasis, however, here is that the student of Zen does not gain this insight through reason but through intuition. Neither would he attempt to explain his insight through reason, thus his response, "Oh, officer !" This is a typical example of Zen dialectic.

Occasionally, the relationship between the subject "A" and the predicate "A" is nominal, with the two remaining distinct until the conclusion, when the subject "A" is once more identified with itself. This can occur while this simultaneous perception of two different dimensions—the world as seen from the continuum and as understood by conceptual reasoning—loses its simultaneity and the two dimensions are sensed as distinct from each other. It is in this situation that Zen teaches that there is real Seeing only when Seeing is not-Seeing. If Seeing means to see being as specific, then it is not real Seeing. It is only when Seeing is not-Seeing, when it is not a particular act of Seeing state of "being" with definite limits, that it can be called the true Seeing. There are many similar examples in the Diamond Sutra ;

And why? Because from it has issued the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment of the Tathagatas, Arhats, Fully Enlightened Ones, and from it have issued the Buddhas, the Lords. And why? For the Tathagata has taught that the dharmas special to the Buddhas are just not a Buddha's special dharmas. That is why they are called 'the dharmas special to the Buddhas'.²⁸

Naturally, the question arises as to whether we should compare Zen dialectic with Hegel's dialectic. In both cases, the steps of the dialectic take place at different levels. Hegel's logic, however, is dynamic, and moves forward as his thought moves from one level to another. Zen, on the other hand, does not move, but rather thinks simultaneously in two dimensions. This is because, absolutely speaking, there is only one plane in Zen where the worlds of the absolute and relative can be conjoined, and therefore, there can be no forward movement.

We have seen that there is no absolute contradiction in Zen logic, if each of its logical "moments" is divided into two dimensions. Contradictions only seem apparent because the logic of two dimensions must be expressed through the instrumentality of the

logic of one dimension, in language or conceptual and discursive thinking. Consequently, Zen logic displays its own consistency, and we can say that it is not "a-logical" but rather, "trans-logical."

While Zen dialectic was influenced by the Madhyamika school, it must not be forgotten that in borrowing and adapting this logic to their own needs, the Chinese did not adopt the Indian habit of speculation. Madhyamika often uses speculation to refute intellection, but Zen does not indulge in this approach at all, preferring to use imagery and meaningful gestures for communication. Masters frequently relate their experiences and thoughts through the images of poetry and art. In truth, it is possible that we communicate more through acts and gestures in our daily lives than through language. For example, when we visit someone, we knock on the door to communicate the fact that we have arrived, and someone come to invite us in. We also respond to the feelings of others as communicated by their eyes and facial expressions; as we see, movies are full of meaningful scenes without dialog. Indeed, silence is sometimes more eloquent than words. Zen has realized the value of this type of communication and uses it to express its teachings.

As we have seen, the way of thinking in Zen can be paradoxical and confusing. Suzuki calls this method "Soku-hi." *Soku* means non-difference, or non-diversity (identity), and *hi* means non-uniformity (difference). Suzuki maintains that Zen expresses this paradox through the logic of the soku-hi in the Diamond Sutra,²⁹ which says : "Because all beings are not all beings, therefore they are called all beings."³⁰ Because there is no Buddha, there is Buddha; because there are no sentient beings, there are sentient beings.³¹

NOTE

- 1, D. T. Suzuki, "Zen and Pragmatism-A Reply," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol.IV, No.2, 1954, pp. 167-168.
- 2, D. T. Suzuki, *Studies in Zen*, ed. by C. Humphreys (New York : A Delta Book, 1955), p.190.
- 3, *Ibid.*, p.188.
- 4, *Ibid.*, p.86.
- 5, D. T. Suzuki, *Mysticism : Christian and Buddhist* (New York : Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp.33-35.

It seems to me that Suzuki's pure subjectivity and pure objectivity are somewhat disconcerting to Western readers, because we can easily point to an Oriental mood and way of thinking which heavily influenced Suzuki's ideas. In understanding the meaning of an Oriental emotion Isaiah Ben-Dasan's following remarks will be helpful: Many years ago a missionary came to Japan. One day he happened to see an old man standing reverently with hands clasped in prayer in front

of a bronze statue of the Buddha. The missionary said to him: "God does not reside in things made of gold or bronze." Opening his eyes wide in surprise, the old man said: "Of course." It was then the missionary's turn to be surprised; he asked: "If you know that, why are you praying in front of this bronze statue?" The old man answered: "First one sweeps away the dust, then one looks at the Buddha. What is your answer?" The missionary stood silent, as the old man, after saying softly, "The Buddha is also dust," went away. Even if the missionary had tried to interpret the old man's question in the light of Christian teachings, I doubt if he would have found an answer. Both the partners in this chance encounter spoke in mutually unintelligible ways. The Japanese way was well expressed by the late novelist Yasunari Kawabata, who said, in an address delivered at the University of Hawaii, that the Japanese communicate by means of a quiet understanding, a kind of telepathy, since for them truth lies in the implied rather than the stated. (Isaiah Ben-Dasan, *The Japanese and The Jews*, tran. from the Japanese edition by Richard L. Cage, New York, Weatherhill, 1972, p.111.)

- 6, Suzuki, op. cit., p.89. cf. D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism, Third Series (New York : Samuel weiser Inc., 1971)*, pp.239-331.
Cf. Suzuki, *Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist*, p.42: "The one thing" I wish to call to the readers' attention is the term "wisdom," *panna*, or *prajna* in Sanskrit. This is a very important term throughout Buddhist philosophy. There is no English equivalent for it. "Transcendental wisdom" is too heavy, besides it does not exactly hit the mark. But temporarily let "wisdom" do. We know that seeing is very much emphasized in Buddhism, but we must not fail also to notice that seeing is not just an ordinary seeing by means of relative knowledge; it is the seeing by means of a *prajna*-eye which is a special kind of intuition enabling us to penetrate right into the bedrock of Reality itself. I have elsewhere given a somewhat detailed account of *prajna* and its role in Buddhist teachings, especially in Zen Buddhism.
- 7, Suzuki, *Studies in Zen*, p.108.
- 8, In *Gendai no Me*, March 1966 (Gendai Hyoronsha), Satoshi Ikeda attacked Suzuki's intuitionism and lack of social concern.
- 9, L. Newton Thurber, "Hendrik Karemer and the Christian Encounter with Japanese Buddhism," *Japanese Religions*, May, 1961, pp.84-85.
- 10, D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, Second Series (London: Rider, 1958), p.308.
- 11, D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, First Series, (London: Luzac, 1927), pp.154-155.
- 12, D. T. Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp.9-10.
- 13, D. T. Suzuki, *Studies in Zen*, p.136.
- 14, H. M. Enomiya-Lassale, *Zen Way to Enlightenment*, (London Burns and Oates Limited, 1967), pp.62-63.
- 15, See *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich*, ed. by W. Leibrecht (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1959), p.292. See also, cf. Torataro Shimomura, "On the Varieties of Philosophical Thinking," *Philosophical Studies of Japan*, Vol.IV, 1963, pp.1-21. Also cf. Hideo Kishimoto, "The Cultural Background," *Philosophical Studies of Japan*, Vol.III, 1961, pp.25-32. Cf. Jan Van Bragt, "Absolute Nothingness and God, The Nishida-Tanabe Tradition and Christianity," *BULLETIN*, Vol.V, (Nanzan Studies in Religion and Culture), 1981, pp.29-47.
- 16, Cf. Kitaro Nishida, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, trans. by David A. Dilworth (Tokyo : Sophia University Press, 1970), esp. pp.237-254. "What, then, were the differences in the form of culture of East and West seen from a metaphysical perspective? I think that we can distinguish the West to have considered being as the ground of reality, the East to have taken nothingness as its ground." (p.237)
See also, cf. Hans Waldenfels, *Absolute Nothingness-Foundations for a Buddhist-Christian Dialogue*, trans. by J. W. Heisig (New York : Paulist Press, 1980), pp.24-34.
Cf. Heinrich Dumoulin, *Christianity Meets Buddhism*, (Illinois, Open Court Publishing Company, 1974).
Cf. Hans Küng, *Christ Sein*, (München: R. Piper & Co., Verlag, 1974), pp.96-108.
- 17, Quoted by Fung Yu-Lan in *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), p.261.
- 18, *Ibid.*, p.250.
- 19, D. T. Suzuki, *Studies in Zen*, ed. by Christmas Humphreys (New York: A Delta Book, 1955), p. 92.
- 20, Daisetz Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (New York: First Evergreen Black Cat Edition, 1964), p.38.
- 21, *Ibid.*, p.117.
- 22, *Ibid.*, introduction by C. G. Jung in p.11.
- 23, *Ibid.*, pp.67-68.
- 24, Suzuki calls this method, "SOKU HI NO RONRI" non-difference or non-diversity is SOKU, "identity"; non-uniformity is HI, "difference", RONRI is "theory" in *Writing from Suzuki Daisetz* Vol.7, (Tokyo : Shunju-sha, 1952), p. 201.
- 25, D. Suzuki, *Studies in Zen*, pp.152-153. Cf. D. Suzuki, "The Philosophy of Zen," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol.1, 1951, p.10.
- 26, Translated and explained by Edward Conze,

Buddhist Wisdom Books—The Diamond Sutra and The Heart Sutra (New York : Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), p.25.

Note ; This English translation from the Sanskrit is not as accurate as the corresponding Japanese and Chinese translations. In quoting Conze, I have first compared his working with that of the Japanese and Chinese translations, and I have noted whenever I took exception to Conze's translation.

- 27, Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, p.70.
 28, Conze, op. cit., p.40. Cf. Daisetz Suzuki, *On Indian Mahayana Buddhism*, Chapter One, ed. with an Introduction by Edward Conze (New York: Harper and Row, Publisher, 1968), pp.32-99.

29, *Writing from Suzuki Daisetsu*, Vol.7 (Tokyo: Shunju-sha, 1952), p.201

30, 一切法者即非一切法是故名一切法。

Hajime Nakamura, Kazuyoshi Kino translated and explained *The Diamond Sutra* (金剛般若經), *The Heart Sutra* (般若心經), (Tokyo: Iwanami Publishing Co., 1959), p.50.

31, Kitaro Nishida, "Religious Consciousness and the Logic of the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*," trans. by David A. Dilworth, *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 25, 1970, p.207.

(Received Jan. 16, 1982)