

Reflections on the Pure Land

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There's much I'd like to say regarding the Pure Land, but with no systematic approach to the subject I'm afraid this essay of mine will be hopelessly disordered and may even lead to misunderstanding. My thoughts on the whole border on the nontraditional, and so I'm sure there will be more than one orthodox scholar who will find grounds to criticize me. All the same, I will venture my opinions in the following.

MOST DISCUSSIONS of the Pure Land revolve around the notion of the *Mind-at-one*.¹ The Mind-at-one does not issue from a mind/matter, subject/object dichotomy; it is the unattainable ground alluded to in the *Diamond Sutra* passage, "The mind unattainable in the past, the mind unattainable in the future, the mind unattainable in the present."² It will not do to conceive of this unattainable ground in terms of emptiness, if, whether we call it emptiness or nothingness or whatever, we take that emptiness or nothingness as a simple negation. While the unattainable is sometimes described as a form of negation, all that the term unattainable is meant to express is the sheer limitation of the attainable; the term emptiness, in contrast, conjures up the sense of an existential void or stillness. Important here is that we sense in the infinite ground of the unattainable the working of the Infinite. Thus, while embracing the working of the Infinite, in that infinite moment

* This is an adapted translation of "Waga Jōdo kan" (1961), in D. T. Suzuki's *Collected Works* 6:323-35. It originally appeared as "Jinen ni ikiru: Waga Jōdo kan" (Living in Naturalness: My Views on the Pure Land) in *Kōza: Kindai bukkyō* [Discussion: Contemporary Buddhism] (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1961), Vol. 5: 7-20. In this essay, written when Suzuki was ninety, we can glimpse his attempt to reconcile his Zen-mediated approach to Buddhism with the mystical and theological concerns of Shin's Pure Land teaching. This essay reflects Suzuki's long-time interest in the modern Shin mystic Asa-

where there is not a hint of wavering to-and-fro, we can at last begin our discussion, our feet planted firmly on that unattainable ground of the Mind-at-one moving yet unmoved.

This Mind-at-one we can perceive in Vasubandhu's declaration, "O World-honored One, I, with Mind-at-one, pay homage to the Tathāgata. . . ."³

The Mind-at-one is not emptiness; it is the working of the Infinite. This working is called simply the Vow as well as the Vow of compassion. Seen from the other side, it is the Original Vow of Amida Buddha; seen from this side, it is the spiritually unendowed's act of taking refuge. The act of taking refuge is grounded in the vow; the vow is

hara Saichi (d. 1932). Suzuki compiled and edited Saichi's poems, published posthumously in 1967. In these final years, Suzuki was also involved in the English translation of Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō*, later edited by the Eastern Buddhist Society and published in 1973. With its discussion of various texts cited in *Kyōgyōshinshō*, the essay also brings to light important aspects of the author's own unique understanding of this central work of Shin theology. Notes have been provided by the translators.

¹ The *Mind-at-one* —心 *isshin*; lit., "single-mind" or "one-mind." The importance of the term in Shin theology derives from the emphasis Shinran places on T'an-luan's commentary, and actually marks a rather significant departure from the Pure Land teaching formulated by Shinran's teacher Hōnen, who relied on Shan-tao rather than on T'an-luan. In Hōnen, the same term, in the context of the deathbed ritual of reciting the nembutsu, is regarded as equivalent to the triple mind of the *Contemplation Sutra*, the necessary determinant for birth in the Pure Land; here, singlemindedness would refer to the assiduousness with which the seeker practices as he crosses from this world into the next. The passage to birth is also alluded to in Shan-tao's well-known parable of the white path where the lone traveler, at journey's end, must walk a thin path in order to reach the other shore. From that other shore, Amida beckons to the traveler to call his Name with a single-mind, that is, free of all doubt as to the efficacy of his Vow.

² Elsewhere, D. T. Suzuki translates the *Diamond Sutra* passage as follows: "Subhuti, thoughts of the past are beyond grasp, thoughts of the present are beyond grasp, thoughts of the future are beyond grasp" (*Manual of Zen Buddhism*, London: Rider, 1950, p. 49), with a note to the effect that "thoughts," or *citta*, stands for both mind and thought.

³ See Vasubandhu's *Gāthā on Birth in the Pure Land*, in Suzuki's translation of that verse in his "A Preface to the *Kyōgyōshinshō*," in *Eastern Buddhist* 6-1 (May 1973), pp. 1-24. It should be noted that the author is here discussing the central Shin work, *Kyōgyōshinshō*, a compilation of passages from various sutras and commentaries on the Pure Land teaching, of which this particular treatise by Vasubandhu is one.

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to be moved by Amida to take refuge. And so it all comes down to whether one takes refuge and then realizes the vow, or realizes the vow and then takes refuge. Either way, it is the manifesting of the Mind-at-one, it is the working of the Mind-at-one.

The Mind-at-one is the working of the Infinite as such; it is the unattainable ground. But, more than merely refer to it, as we have done above, as a "working," we must inquire into the nature it manifests. T'an-luan's *Commentary on Vasubandhu's Treatise on the Pure Land* characterizes it as wisdom, compassion and skilful means. As to these three elements, if we take compassion and skilful means as one, then the great wisdom/great compassion would be seen as the Mind-at-one.

In support of my interpretation I cite the following passage from T'an-luan's *Commentary*, where he strives to characterize⁴ the mode of activity of the Mind-at-one:

[From *Vasubandhu's treatise*:] "Of the aforementioned three concepts, wisdom (*chih-hui*, J. *chi-e*), compassion and skilful means, all three are inclusive of prajñā, with prajñā holding within it skilful means. This should be known." [T'an-luan's gloss:] "Prajñā apprehends the Suchness of reality, hence it is called wisdom (*-hui*); skilful means communes with reality-in-its-manifestations, hence it is called wisdom (*chih*). When one apprehends the Suchness of reality, absolute tranquility prevails [in the activity of one's mind]; when one communes with reality-in-its-manifestations, one comes to consider the aspect of reality manifested by individuals. Wisdom (*chih*) that considers the aspect of reality manifested by individuals responds in detail to every particular event, while it remains essentially transcendental wisdom (*wu-chih*, J. *mu-chi*; lit., "unknowing"). The wisdom (*hui*) of absolute tranquility is also transcendental wisdom, yet it does not forget to take into account the world of individual realities. This being so, wisdom and skilful means are mutually dependent; they act, yet they remain still. Moving yet unmoved, this is the way of wisdom (*chih-hui*); unmoved yet moving, this is the function of skilful means."⁵

⁴ Suzuki uses the word *dōhatsu* 道破, which conveys the sense of struggling to break through (*hatsu*) to express (*dō*) an essential meaning, as one might express the resolution of a Zen kōan one has been struggling with.

⁵ Based on Suzuki, trans., Gutoku Shaku Shinran, *The Kyōgyōshinshō* (Kyoto: Shinshū Ōtaniha, 1973), p. 195 (amended more than slightly), which cites T'an-luan

Wisdom, compassion and skilful means—while all these bespeak the unattainable Mind-at-one, we cannot fail to note its mode of activity, unique in that it requires no wisdom, no skill. It is from this dimension the working of the Dharma comes into play naturally (*jinen hōni*), likened to the asura's harp that plays of itself, its wondrous music issuing forth naturally, with no musician.

The compassionate activity of the Mind-at-one is the Original Vow; the personification of the Original Vow is Amida Buddha, wherein personification could be called the wisdom of skilful means. Thus, instead of saying that the Original Vow issued from Amida, I think it would be more logical to say that Amida issued from the Original Vow.

It is said that Amida made forty-eight vows, but were we to view it from the compassionate activity of the Mind-at-one itself, the vows—though never referred to as forty or fifty in number, much less one hundred or one thousand—would have to be infinite in number; “forty-eight” as the number of vows is only a form of skilful means, for the finite could never be said to be the source of the Original Vow itself. The vows said to have been “selected,” it is sufficient merely to have one or two select vows. But, since the Buddha-mind is the manifestation of the great compassion, from the Buddha-mind there issue skilful means countless in number. There is not the slightest necessity to concern oneself exclusively with such [Shin theological] notions as the “turning and entering of the three vows” or the process of “turning and arriving” [at the vows]. When we *collide with*⁶ the Original Vow of great compassion as the compassionate activity of the Mind-at-one, our passage to birth in the Land of Bliss is decided by necessity.

extensively. For a recent and more accessible translation, see Dennis Hirota et al., trans., *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way: A Translation of Shinran's Kyōgyōshinshō*, Vol. III, Shin Buddhism Translation Series (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1987), p. 385.

⁶ Suzuki here uses the forceful expression, *butsukareba*, lit., “to run into physically”; in this case, the world of the seeker must *collide with* the world of the Vow. The emphasis shown here is indicated in the original text.

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Turning our attention to the Pure Land of supreme bliss, the preconception that the Pure Land abides on a spatial plane in the western direction is purely arbitrary, for the eastern or southern direction would do just as well. The Pure Land is what each of us, as the individual sentient beings who dwell in this *saha* (corrupt) world, has to bear on our shoulders; it is the wisdom of skilful means that would have us conceive of the *saha* world as separate from the Pure Land. It is unnecessary to claim the unity of the Pure Land and the *saha* world, for when the *saha* world enters the Pure Land, all things are as such made over into the Pure Land.

Firstly, thinking about Vasubandhu's statement that the Pure Land is "ultimately like the sky: vast, uncharted" —can we not assert that the *saha* world, hell, and heaven would all fit into the Pure Land? And, secondly, in that the Light of Amida is said to pervade all directions, can we not say that his Light is being shed limitlessly on this *saha* world? A light shed only on the Pure Land would not be a purifying light or an undefiled light or a majestic light, and would be little different from the light of the sun and moon of the *saha* world. Once we have made the long journey to the Pure Land, there is no reason for us to appear pious.

The Pure Land is said to be "supplied with rare treasures of every kind, outfitted with wondrous majestic features," but all that paraphernalia is proper not to the Land of Bliss, but to the *saha* world. There is no need for us to exit one *saha* world merely to enter another. In the *saha* world the "wondrous majesty" is simply to be accepted as such; there is no need to treat the majestic features the sutras extoll as so many commodities to be imported into the *saha* world. Nor should there be any need for me to detail these matters here.

The notion that there are no women in the Pure Land is utter nonsense.⁷ If there were no women, then it goes without saying there could be no men. If there were men, these would have to be genderless, that is, they could not be male. Long ago, I remember there was a discussion as to whether bodhisattvas were male, female or hermaphrodite. That sort of problem arises when we assume we can impose the distinc-

⁷ Here Suzuki comments on a view based on the thirty-fifth vow, which states in effect that, in order for a woman to achieve birth in the Pure Land, she must first be transformed into a male.

tions of the saha world on the Pure Land. Were we to let the saha world be at once the Land of Peace and Light, then the working of the Dharma would naturally come into play.

Wondrous to my mind in view of this notion that the saha world is at once the Land of Peace and Light is that those who feel the imperative to become "receivers of the faith"⁸ all find the pure-flower dais they are seeking in the midst of their groping desperately in darkness. Even though the world around them be filled with the sounds of the Dharma being preached, it is as if they had been always deaf and dumb. Thus, were they to observe the flower petals stirred even by the slightest breeze, in that moment they would recall the warmth of the Light that shone upon them.⁹

As for the "receiver of faith," it is not easy to arrive at a correct understanding of this term. When one finally understands it, one realizes the saha world is the same as the Land of Peace and Light, that the various impediments to awakening are in fact aids to supreme enlightenment. In the formulation of one thinker, religion is characterized by absolute dependence; in that of another, by absolute passivity.¹⁰ At the other end of the spectrum, however, there are utterances such as

⁸ To become "receivers of faith" 信受 *shinju*, lit., "to receive faith."

⁹ In another work Suzuki refers to the experience of young Helen Keller who, though blind and deaf, is able to uncover what she calls "the mystery of language," that is, the correspondence of words to things, thus initiating the process of her education; for this particular instance, see his "Shinshū gairon" (1964), in his *Collected Works* 6:416-417; translated as "Thoughts on Shin Buddhism," *Eastern Buddhist* 14-1 (1981), p. 24.

¹⁰ The notions of absolute dependence and absolute passivity may refer to the influence exerted on modern Shin thought by Western religious philosophers such as Schleiermacher and Bergson, among others. Buddhism mediated by Western philosophy was a model early on explored by Shin reformer and religious philosopher Kiyozawa Manshi (1863-1903) of the Shinshū Ōtani-ha denomination. Achieving its fullest development in Kyoto school philosopher Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945), it became an important feature of religious philosophy in contemporary Japan. Here, Suzuki's dissatisfaction is with doctrinal studies focusing exclusively on the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. At the same time, he appreciated the work of the leading Shin thinker Soga Ryōjin (1875-1971), whose philosophy can be said to go beyond Shinran.

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“Heaven above, heaven below, I alone am the Honored One,” and “Sitting alone on Mount Ta Hsiung,” and “Heaven and earth, all for this one man.”¹¹ All of these declarations would receive the sanction a Zen master confers by proclaiming, “That’s it, that’s it!” —meaning, “You have arrived at last, haven’t you!” When subsumed within the compassionate activity of the Mind-at-one, self-power (*jiriki*) is Other power, Other power (*tarik*) is self-power.

In a poem Asahara Saichi sets it forth in these terms:

In *tarik*, there is no *jiriki*,
there is no *tarik*:
It’s all just wall-to-wall *tarik*.
Namu amida butsu.

It’s only because we make an issue of *jiriki* that *tarik* becomes problematic. In fact, in the Mind-at-one where there is no *jiriki*, no *tarik*, it would be just as well to call it *tarik* as *jiriki*; whatever we call it would do just fine, just as whatever we call it could never quite do it justice. By contrast, Saichi’s utterance, “Namu amida butsu,” as well as his engaging phrase, “wall-to-wall *tarik*,” points to his grasp of the significance of the Mind-at-one. It is from here that Saichi draws inspiration for the many poems he writes down. And unless we too bore down to the bedrock of understanding, we never reach this dimension.

Once you start me on Saichi, there’s no end to the thoughts that come to mind, and so let me simply cite a few of his poems by way of introduction:

The Land of Utmost Bliss: it’s mine to enjoy!
Where, day in, day out,
I listen to Namu amida butsu.

That heart of yours, Amida,
has become mine to enjoy,
Revealed to me naturally through your working.
Namu amida butsu.

¹¹ The sources of the first two quotations are: 1) the words of the Buddha soon after birth; 2) Pai-chang’s response to a monk’s inquiry in case 26 of the *Blue Cliff Record*.

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That mischievous heart of mine
floods the world rampantly,
The Name of Amida wondrously
wraps it all up and puts it away.

Reading expressions such as these obviates all need for theological proposals such as the “turning and entering of the three vows” and the discussion of “three minds or one mind.”¹² Our maker of wooden clogs, as was Saichi’s calling, regales himself as he sits in the midst of the infinite Mind-at-one of the compassionate vow. The sentiments he expresses might also be found in the words of a Zen man, as follows:

“The sky can’t cover it; the earth can’t support it; empty space can’t contain it; the sun and moon can’t illuminate it.”
Where there is no Buddha and you alone are called the Honored One, for the first time you’ve amounted to something.
(*The Blue Cliff Record*, case seven; T. Cleary trans.)

When put into kambun, it somehow gets cluttered up with terms. In contrast, there is something rather difficult to surpass in the unassuming style of the Shin myokonin Saichi who speaks to our hearts when he says, “The Land of Utmost Bliss: it’s mine to enjoy!” and “That mischievous heart of mine/floods the world rampantly.” Here is another of his works:

As for me, I don’t know.
I know not, not a single thing;
Wrongdoing I know not,
Compassion I know not.
By my not knowing anything like this,
I wonder: Is it my destiny to fall into hell . . .

Of interest to us is the closing phrase, “I wonder: Is it my destiny to fall into hell . . .” with its implied refrain, “I don’t know, I don’t know,” for does it not bespeak the Pure Land way of life to spend one’s life “leaving all our morrows to the whims of destiny, leaving all our todays to destiny’s whims”?

¹² These ideas are discussed by Shinran in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, and have been the traditional focus of Shin doctrinal studies.

In the *Treatise on the Pure Land*, the inhabitants of the Pure Land are described as being “forever free from illness of any sort, . . . [and] uninterruptedly pleased with everything about them,” but this is complete nonsense. Without the worries that beset body and soul there would be no joy; for joy to exist it could never be “uninterrupted pleasure.” In that an interrupted state can accommodate neither pleasure nor pain, it could be neither the Land of Ultimate Bliss nor hell. It would be more to the point to emphasize that the Pure Land coexists with the saha world, as the saha world coexists with the Pure Land.

The *Treatise* also says: “The Light of majesty undefiled, from its first instant until its first hour, is destined to shed its light wherever there are Buddha assemblies, and benefit all sentient beings universally.”¹³ With this I am in full agreement. The phrase, “from its first instant until its first hour,” points to the Heavens before their bifurcation into heaven and earth; these were the conditions that obtained when all things were consumed by the flames of eternal conflagration.¹⁴ These conditions made analogous to light would be described as “majesty undefiled.” We should appreciate this in the vein of the *Heart Sutra* formulation, “Emptiness is no other than form, form is no other than emptiness,” where the *undefiled* is “emptiness” and the *majesty* is “form.”

Moreover, there is no separate existence of the so-called Buddha assemblies and the so-called sentient beings. The Buddha assemblies are none other than us, the sentient beings, who carry on our lives today in society. This life is again none other than the majesty of the Pure Land. It will not do to regard the majesty of the Pure Land as merely some kind of ornamental feature, for such majesty is what imparts meaning to the lives of each and every individual. Were this world we live in the Pure Land, we, the sentient beings, would be the individual residents of that land, and this would be how the ranks of the Buddha

¹³ From Vasubandhu’s work, *Gāthā on Birth in the Pure Land*, translated in D. T. Suzuki, “A Preface to the *Kyōgyōshinshō*,” *Eastern Buddhist* 6-1 (1973): 23 (amended more than slightly).

¹⁴ This passage shows the influence of Nishida, whose Zen-tempered philosophical inquiry explores the relation of language and experience.

assemblies in the Pure Land would be filled. And so, outside of individual sentient beings, it is not possible for there to be Buddhas. For that reason, Vasubandhu's treatise says, "*Together* with all sentient beings, I desire to obtain passage to birth in the Land of Peace and Happiness." In this phrase, "Together with all sentient beings," we can intuit the society of man, the world of animate and inanimate existences and all myriad things.

Since the society in which we sentient beings pursue our present lives is divorced from the natural activity of the Dharma, we are prone to apply our discriminatory faculties to distinguish the Pure Land from the Land of Utmost Bliss; this is definitely a *twisted view* of reality. When we bore down to the Mind-at-one, however, we distance ourselves from the twisted views arising from our discriminatory faculties, and are born in the family of the Tathāgata. T'an-luan's commentary characterizes discrimination as follows: "Either existence or nonexistence, either affirmation or denial, either attraction or repulsion, either good or evil, either this or that—such views comprise the various forms of discrimination."

"To be born in the family of the Tathāgata" indicates a birth of non-birth, not birth into another cycle of life-and-death; this should not be lost sight of. The passage of birth in the Pure Land is the passage of birth that is not just a rebirth in paradise, but is none other than a return passage to this world to work for the benefit of others. Hence, the following remarks apply:

"The Pure Land so-called is [what was fulfilled on the basis of] the immaculate Original Vow of Amida Tathāgata. [To be born there] is the birth of nonbirth. It is not the delusory birth of the three forms of existence. The reason for this is that, the nature of the Dharma being immaculate, [the birth one attains is] ultimately nonbirth. What is commonly called birth does not go beyond the character of the one receiving birth" (T'an-luan's commentary; with bracketed material provided by Suzuki).

Here, the term "character" represents an extension of the discriminatory faculties. When we distance ourselves from it, we understand what the nothingness (*mu*) of nonbirth (*mu-shō*) means, and so acquire a life inexhaustible. The pure and immaculate qualities of the Original Vow

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point to its significance as the Absolute; transcending discriminatory faculties, one perceives the world of nonduality. When one *experiences* the dimension of *birth* so-called, the *Pure Land* is fulfilled, a Pure Land encompassing the dimension of "I, with Mind-at-one. . . ."

Thus, when we inquire as to who resides in the Land of Utmost Bliss, the *Larger Sutra* says: "Neither human nor divine, they naturally acquire bodies of nothingness-as-it-is; they know no limitation."¹⁵

If they are neither devas nor humans, who then are the residents of that Pure Land? And, as used here, what does the term "naturally" mean? Said to "acquire bodies of nothingness-as-it-is . . . [and to] know no limitation," what can we tell of the character of those non-devas, non-humans? Were we limited beings of this defiled realm to be reborn in this place, would we be able to abide in such conditions? Further, if upon rebirth we had to assume that form the sutra describes, would this still be the land of happiness we desire? Imaginably there would be those who would regret having attained birth there, saying, "This isn't what I expected at all."

At any rate, when the Pure Land is manifested in terms of the Mind-at-one, I would question whether the world described in the sutras and commentaries is fully satisfactory. Are not our existences as such the very "bodies of nothingness-as-it-is . . . [that] know no limitation"? And, further, are not we ourselves those who are "neither human nor divine"? There are those who assume that the Pure Land, the world of the great compassion of the pure light, exists as an entity separate from this world, but since this is already to apply our discriminatory faculties to the *noble path*, are not we subsequently limiting the possibilities of such a path? For me to so assert this may well invite the criticism that such a position is merely the Pure Land of intellectual fabrication of "only the mind." But in the true sense of the Only-the-Mind philosophy, there is neither an *only* nor a *mind*. In that world of the Mind-at-one, there is neither affirmation nor denial, neither good nor evil, neither pure nor defiled, neither existence nor nonexistence. Whatever question is involved, there is not the slightest room for any form of limitation to enter, in that world brilliant with light.

Once we accept these premises, it is possible to speak of the natural

¹⁵ The *Larger Sutra of Infinite Life*, in D. T. Suzuki, trans., *The Kyōgyōshinshō*, p. 176 (amended slightly).

working of the Dharma, of freely imparting benefit to beings everywhere, of supernatural powers to sport through the universe, of the wisdom of non-wisdom (transcendental wisdom). It allows us to understand why the sutra opens with the words, "Thus have I heard," and enables us to realize its final invocation, "As a receiver of the faith I vow to work for the welfare of others."

The power of Amida Tathāgata's Original Vow is symbolized, as such, by the original compassionate activity of the Mind-at-one.

Sentient beings delivered to the Pure Land arrive at the place of the undelivered. Passage to birth in the Land of Utmost Bliss is the birth of nonbirth. The going phase of merit transfer [to benefit self] is, as such, the return phase of merit transfer [to benefit others]. The bodhisattvas' onerous task of converting others is what they take on themselves for their own amusement. A fall into hell holds for them the same significance as a stroll through a shady grove. It being none other than their karma to be where they are, here they can enjoy bringing their wisdom into play. Only when mired in the mud of the passions of sentient beings does the flower of enlightenment bloom. The various Buddha assemblies are not added to this world, but were originally here, and are brought to awaken unto themselves. In this sense, *Namu amida butsu* is the *wondrous* character of the Name.¹⁶

The *wondrous* character of the Name is the *Suchness* of reality.

[In T'an-luan's commentary:] "The Suchness of reality is the true ground 正體 of all things. [*Suzuki's note*: This is the Mind-at one.] When grounded in Suchness, actions are carried out, those acts 行 are nonactions 不行. [*Suzuki's note*: This is to act without acting.] To act without acting is the cultivation of Suchness in the world of individual reality. [*Suzuki's note*: This is also known as "the practice without karmic aftereffect." The notion of "acting yet leaving no karmic trace" is also indicated here.] Since the ground is simply Suchness alone, its significance can be perceived."

Simply Suchness alone is the Mind-at-one; it is the Suchness of reality, apart from words; it is the ground unattainable in the three worlds. All of these statements are extraordinary, though it is said: "Extraordinary statements never enter the ears of the ordinary." Of course, one

¹⁶ The term *the wondrous character of the Name* (*myōgo*) 妙號 is a homonym coined by Suzuki after *myōgo* 名號, the Name of Amida Buddha.

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needn't pass judgment on what is ordinary and what extraordinary, and when pressed on the matter it is sufficient to dismiss it with a wave of the hand.

“Born mouth first” is sometimes said of man, for among all his attributes language is first and foremost, and it is from this that all sorts of ensnarements arise. Logic, hermeneutics, epistemology, symbolic reasoning, etc.—all manner of academic pursuit whose names I know not—issue therefrom. So disposed, the words we use to express a fact become the fact itself, and likewise the world of Truth, as well as man truly alive, becomes captive within the realm of the ABC's. Trapped in the world of words, and further charged with the mechanistic framework it imposes, human creativity begins to fade into the shadows. When this happens, whenever someone talks about *nondiscrimination*—to be free of the tyranny of our discriminatory faculties—it is taken to mean the negation of discrimination, and we are left with no idea as to how we are to think of this matter. And so, when someone speaks of the Mind-at-one as the mind of nondiscrimination, it is made out to be of an impractical character and burdened with an unusual nature. The frightening thing about these developments is that people start to fail to understand such matters altogether.

Under certain conditions, however, the identity of the Name and the Dharma applies; it is not always the case that the Dharma is incompatible with language. While the finger (linguistic device) pointing at the moon (reality) of course is not the moon, the finger sometimes becomes the moon, when the moon becomes the finger; this happens when both the active agent and the passive recipient enter into mutual identification. To participate in the world of buddhas as only a buddha can is none other than the experience of the Mind-at-one; it is the myriad things that appear when the one-finger distance between us and the myriad things pointed to by the finger vanishes, it is the heavens that appear when the one-steed length between us and the heavens manifested by the steed vanishes. Saichi addresses the case when *Namu* becomes *Amida*, when *Amida* becomes *Namu*, saying:

Oh so mysterious the Name [of Amida]!
Ever since I became a receiver of Faith,

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Faith, so inconceivable,
Is mine to enjoy!
Namu amida butsu, Namu amida butsu.

The thread that unravels this poem is the identity of the Name and the Dharma. The Name is the Inconceivable, the Inconceivable the Name. If we can compress language to this limit, then we can say the symbolic [that is, language] is none other than the actual experience. Making a sharp distinction between the Pure Land and hell, the Pure Land in the western direction and hell in the depths of the earth, making the "I, with Mind-at-one" out as two things, the distress of one cancelling out the other becomes unbearable.

Those who have no suffering
Tumble into hell,
Those who suffer
Are brought around
To the Land of Utmost Bliss.

Where there is suffering we find those who have no suffering. Those who cling to emptiness out of a meek distinction between existence and nonexistence end up falling into hell. Where there is existence, where there is nonexistence, where there is suffering, where there is bliss, and yet where the distinction between existence and nonexistence, between suffering and joy is transcended, there one finds the birth of nonbirth, where one takes passage to birth in the Pure Land.

Laying my pen to rest, at present I have no inclination to explain the above matters in any greater detail.

Here are some lines from the diary of myokonin Asahara Saichi for readers to study and reflect upon.

Filled with joy, full of happiness are you!
As for me, wretched, only that, am I!

Seen from one perspective, Saichi's sentiments ring true. How *wretched* Saichi feels. But in that place where he laments his plight and is ashamed of himself, that is where he is indeed *filled with joy*. It is where we are possessed with the impediments to awakening that we

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find the path leading to enlightenment.

This here Saichi is all yours,
You Amida are all mine,
Namu amida butsu.

When my Event and your Dharma become one,¹⁷
Namu amida butsu.

When my sadness and your joy [become one],
Namu amida butsu.

When you render my Event and your Dharma into one,
I am filled with happiness,
Namu amida butsu.

This heart of mine is the Oyasama's,¹⁸ I say.
Our hearts are the one heart of
Namu amida butsu.

Namu being pleaded to by Amida,
Amida being pleaded to by Namu:
This is the six-character formula of
Namu amida butsu.

The one brought to pray, the praying, the Oyasama:
This me is the Oyasama, this me is the Oyasama,
Namu amida butsu.

When buddhas go a-buddhaing,¹⁹

¹⁷ Event and Dharma are here used as renderings for *ki-hō* 機法. These terms occur in the philosophically important notion of *ki-hō ittai*, the identity (*ittai*, lit. 'one body') of the object or occasion of enlightenment (*ki*) with the agent of enlightenment (*hō*). In the context of the Buddha's mind, each person is seen as a moment or event in the ongoing process of enlightenment. Elsewhere, Saichi uses the terms "Namu" and "Amida" from *Namu amida butsu* to represent the seeker (*ki*) and the Dharma (*hō*) sought after. A similar case is seen in the Shin theological term, *nōsho* 能所, the active agent and the passive recipient.

¹⁸ *Oyasama*, lit., the Parent, referring to Amida Buddha who is parental in his love for all beings.

¹⁹ "Buddhas a-buddhaing" is a free rendering of *butsu-butsu*, "to grumble." As the term *butsu* can also mean "Buddha," Saichi makes a play on words to have them mean "buddha-buddha." In the same verse, Saichi also uses the term *Hotoke*, a native Japanese term for Buddha.

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Buddhas plead to buddhas,
Hotoke pleads to Hotoke,
Namu pleads to *Amida*:
This is for buddhas to go a-buddhaing.
Namu amida butsu.

When the active agent becomes the passive recipient, and the passive recipient becomes the active agent, here emerges the dimension where one sports through the world without hindrance; this is the bearing of the compassionate activity of "I, with Mind-at-one." Seen from the aspect of wisdom, T'an-luan's *Commentary on the Treatise on the Pure Land* says:

"All Buddhas [possess] transcendental wisdom (*wu-chih*). Because they possess transcendental wisdom, there is nothing they do not know. The knowledge of transcendental wisdom is true omniscience. It is knowledge so deep and broad it cannot be measured, and so is likened to the sea."

Elsewhere: "The saying 'the mind makes the Buddha' means that the mind has the ability to create a Buddha, that this mind is this Buddha, that outside the mind there is no Buddha."

TRANSLATED BY W. S. YOKOYAMA