

## Brian Victoria and the Question of Scholarship

KEMMYŌ TAIRA SATŌ  
in Collaboration with  
THOMAS KIRCHNER

LET ME begin by joining Professor Victoria in expressing my thanks to *The Eastern Buddhist* for permitting this extensive exchange of views. With an allotment of 15,000 words from *The Eastern Buddhist* for his response to my article, “D. T. Suzuki and the Question of War” (Satō 2008), Professor Victoria has had ample opportunity to fully clarify his position on Suzuki and answer the issues raised in my article. It is gratifying to see that in some ways he has substantially changed his viewpoint, dropping several of his central charges against Suzuki in *Zen at War* (Victoria 2006). He no longer claims, for example, that Suzuki was an active supporter of Japan’s 1930s aggression in China and its WWII militarism, but instead recognizes that Suzuki was “one of a kind” in refusing to engage in the promotion of emperor worship or support for the “holy war” against the West.

Unfortunately, instead of seeing Suzuki’s stance on these issues, even at the height of wartime hysteria, as evidence of unusual courage, Victoria launches a slew of new attacks. Given the nature and scale of his broadside, I welcome his admission that it is not intended as a balanced analysis of Suzuki’s views. Readers would do well to keep this acknowledgment in mind as they consider Victoria’s response.

Let me initiate my comments by repeating a statement at the beginning of my original article: that I have no disagreement with Victoria’s central contention that prior to and during WWII, Japanese Zen and the Japanese Buddhist establishment as a whole strayed from the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha and helped enable Japan’s military atrocities in China and elsewhere. The point of my article was not to excuse Japanese Buddhism’s

record during this unhappy period, but to set the record straight on what Suzuki, as an individual, actually said and did at that time, as well as to point out questionable arguments and techniques Victoria used in his critique. In his response Victoria not only fails to address most of the major issues I discuss, but also ignores substantive questions concerning his scholarship.

I understand why Victoria might desire to avoid discussion of such issues, but they reflect on the credibility of his entire attack on Suzuki and must therefore be dealt with. The most basic of these issues, and the one most disturbing to readers I have heard from, concerns Victoria's use of sources. How a scholar employs quoted passages and other data is not a minor issue that will go away if ignored. It is indicative of a scholar's integrity, providing a gauge of his or her attitude toward the academic endeavor as a whole.

Since few readers can take the time to check a scholar's sources, especially those in foreign languages, readers depend on scholars to accurately represent the passages they cite in support of their arguments, arguments that are trustworthy only to the extent that they are true to the material upon which they are based. The scholar's responsibility is especially great in a case such as this, which involves an attack on a person's reputation. What is a reader to conclude, then, if the evidence on which the attack is based turns out to have been seriously misrepresented?

In my article I cite a number of passages from *Zen at War* that inevitably raise this question. To clarify the issues involved I will review several examples; the page numbers accompanied by the letter "S" refer to the relevant portions of my article, which may be accessed online at <<http://web.otani.ac.jp/EBS/eb3914.pdf>>.

(1) Victoria, quoting his mentor Ichikawa Hakugen 市川白弦, presents the chapter "Shūkyō to kokka to no kankei" 宗教と国家との関係 (hereafter "The Relation of Religion and State") in *Shin shūkyō ron* 新宗教論 (hereafter *A New Theory of Religion*)<sup>1</sup> as an endorsement of Japanese aggression in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. In fact, the chapter does not even mention this war, much less offer any justification for it. Suzuki's comments concern defensive war only.<sup>2</sup> I will return to *A New Theory of Religion* and the issue of defensive warfare below.

(2) Victoria, selectively excerpting a passage from *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (Suzuki 1970), claims that Suzuki supported Shin Buddhist initiatives to use "Buddhism as the basis for forming an anti-Western alliance between

<sup>1</sup> *A New Theory of Religion* appears in SDZ, vol. 23 (pp. 1–148). "The Relation of Religion and State" is chapter 15 (pp. 134–140).

<sup>2</sup> See S, pp. 63–73 for my full argument.

Japan, China, and India.” Suzuki’s original passage, in fact, does no more than make the obvious point that Buddhism provides a cultural bond between the cultures of India, China, and Japan as contrasted to the major cultures of the West.<sup>3</sup>

(3) Victoria argues that during the 1940s Suzuki opposed the war with the United States owing to his familiarity with U.S. power, yet was “quite enthusiastic” about the 1930s war with China. He writes:

Nowhere in Suzuki’s writings does one find the least regret, let alone an apology for Japan’s earlier colonial efforts in such places as China, Korea, or Taiwan. In fact, he was quite enthusiastic about Japanese military activities in Asia. In an article addressed specifically to young Japanese Buddhists written in 1943 he stated: “Although it is called the Greater East Asia War, its essence is that of an ideological struggle for the culture of East Asia. Buddhists must join in this struggle and accomplish their essential mission.” One is left with the suspicion that for Suzuki things didn’t really go wrong until Japan decided to attack the United States.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the paragraph immediately following this clearly shows that Suzuki’s point had nothing to do with the war in China, and certainly nothing to do with a feeling that “things didn’t really go wrong until Japan decided to attack the United States.” The article in question was, in fact, calling for a respectful and creative engagement with the cultures of the West, an extraordinary proposal in 1943, at the height of anti-West xenophobia in Japan. The paragraph reads:

In the area of culture and ideology, though one may speak of “struggle,” “conflict,” or “rivalry,” what is involved is not throwing your opponent to the ground and pinning him so that he cannot move. This is especially true when the opponent is not necessarily your inferior intellectually, materially, historically, and otherwise. In such cases not only is it impossible to destroy him, but even if it were it would not be to your benefit to do so. Western culture is qualitatively different from that of the East, but for precisely that reason it should be accepted. And those on the other side need to accept our culture as well. It is important to arouse the frame of

<sup>3</sup> See S, pp. 86–87.

<sup>4</sup> S, pp. 108–9.

mind that seeks to accomplish this. That, truly, is the role with which Buddhism is charged, for it is Buddhist thought that functions at the center of the Eastern way of thinking.<sup>5</sup>

This point is even clearer when considered in the context of the entire article.<sup>6</sup> Particularly troubling is the fact that Victoria advances this misrepresented passage as the sole evidence in *Zen at War* for his claim that Suzuki was “quite enthusiastic” about the war in Asia, while leaving clear evidence to the contrary unmentioned.<sup>7</sup> In the conclusion of his response to my article, Victoria produces new evidence in support of his contention that Suzuki supported the war in Asia; I will consider the merits of this evidence later in this essay.

(4) Victoria extends his attack to the post-WWII era, claiming that Suzuki remained an unregenerate apologist for the war:

Even in the midst of Japan’s utter defeat, Suzuki remained determined to find something praiseworthy in Japan’s war efforts. He described the positive side of the war as follows:

Through the great sacrifice of the Japanese people and nation, it can be said that the various peoples of the countries of the Orient had the opportunity to awaken both economically and politically. . . . This was just the beginning, and I believe that after ten, twenty, or more years the various peoples of the Orient may well have formed independent countries and contributed to the improvement of the world’s culture in tandem with the various peoples of Europe and America.

Here, in an echo of his wartime writings, Suzuki continued to praise the “great sacrifice” the Japanese people allegedly made to “awaken the peoples of Asia.”<sup>8</sup>

Compare this to Suzuki’s full statement:

The great losses suffered by the Japanese people and nation can be said to have provided the various peoples of the countries of the East with the opportunity to awaken both economically and politically. Needless to say, embarking on the “Greater East Asia

<sup>5</sup> S, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup> See S, pp. 104–11 for further discussion and passages from Suzuki’s text.

<sup>7</sup> S, pp. 88–89.

<sup>8</sup> Victoria 2006, pp. 150–51.

War” was a highly unreasonable course, the result of the Japanese militarists at the time instigating reckless campaigns that were supported by Japan’s “politicians.” But it would be a fine thing, I believe, if with this as a beginning the various peoples of the East are able in a few decades to form nations that are independent in every way, and are contributing to the improvement of the world’s culture in tandem with the various peoples of Europe and America. Asians originally learned of things like imperialism and colonialism from Europe, but at the same time it was also from Europe that we learned of concepts like independence, freedom and equality, peaceful economics, and equal opportunity. Therefore, I believe that we owe great respect to the people of Europe and America, who are the origin of these ideas that were planted in Asia. . . . With regard to this past war, Japan must bear its full share of moral and political responsibility. What is fortunate, however, is that Japan has renounced engagement in war and is venturing out, naked, among the nations of the world.<sup>9</sup>

In the examples cited above, the disparity between Suzuki’s actual meaning and Victoria’s characterization of it is, in my opinion, too great to pass off as mere carelessness or scholarly ineptitude, and leads me to question Victoria’s assertion that he is not out to “get” Suzuki but is committed “to gathering and presenting as much relevant information as possible before reaching a conclusion” (as he claims in another response to my article).<sup>10</sup> Victoria’s failure to even acknowledge, much less explain, misrepresentations such as these suggests to me that he sees nothing wrong with them and exempts himself from the no-compromise-with-truth standard he applies to Suzuki. Moreover, distortions of such seriousness give rise to a question quite relevant to the present exchange: if Victoria’s presentations of even straightforward passages cannot be taken at face value, how much credence can be accorded his discussions of far more complex and nuanced issues such as the nature of Suzuki’s views in *A New Theory of Religion* and his articles on Bushido?

Victoria will no doubt take umbrage at the implication that he has chosen to deliberately deceive the reader. I myself would prefer to think otherwise,

<sup>9</sup> *Nihon no reiseika* 日本の靈性化, SDZ, vol. 8, p. 237.

<sup>10</sup> See “The Fog of World War II” in the Internet edition of *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, Summer 2010 issue (<http://www.tricycle.com/feature/fog-world-war-ii>). Victoria’s comments appear in the Community Page discussion, access to which requires registration; quoted with permission.

so I would very much welcome a forthright and convincing explanation of why he handled Suzuki's statements as he did. Elsewhere Victoria has claimed that his selective quoting resulted from his publisher's demand that he shorten the book,<sup>11</sup> but such claims defy belief for the simple reason that it would have required no more space to represent Suzuki's position accurately.

Unfortunately, I see little evidence that Victoria has had any second thoughts regarding his use of sources subsequent to the publication of *Zen at War*. For example, in concluding his response in the present issue of *The Eastern Buddhist*, Victoria quotes a passage from Suzuki's article "Zen to Bushidō" 禅と武士道<sup>12</sup> that he regards as expressing support for the 1930s war in China. Victoria writes:

Contrary to Satō's claims, later in the same article Suzuki clearly alluded to Japan's war with China. Specifically, after discussing the successful defense of Japan mounted by Zen-trained Shōgun Hōjō Tokimune against thirteenth-century Mongol invaders, Suzuki wrote: "in reality the struggle against the Mongols didn't last for only three or even five years but continued for more than ten years. There is, I believe, no comparison with what we are experiencing today [in the war with China] and the tense feelings of that time."<sup>13</sup>

By comparing Japan's then four-year long, full-scale invasion of China with the more than decade-long resistance to the Mongols what was Suzuki's intent? Was it not to *encourage* his Japanese readers to continue striving for victory, just as Hōjō had done, no matter how long it might take or whatever adversity they might encounter? And given that Japan's thirteenth-century war with the Mongols was truly defensive in nature, wasn't Suzuki also making the claim, at least by analogy, that the war against China was defensive too? Far more importantly, it is noteworthy that Suzuki's article contained not so much as a single word acknowledging the immense suffering inflicted on the Chinese people by Japan's ongoing aggression.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> This article appeared in *Bushidō no shinzui* 武士道の神髄, edited by Handa Shin (Suzuki 1941). A considerably expanded and revised version is included in SDZ, vol. 16 (pp. 110–35) under the title "Zen no ichimen to Bushidō" 禅の一面と武士道.

<sup>13</sup> SDZ, vol. 16, p. 120.

<sup>14</sup> pp. 135–36 in this issue.

Let me begin my consideration of Victoria's contention by translating the full passage from which he quotes:

When Hōjō Tokimune confronted the Mongol invasion of the Genkō era, I believe that his attitude was that of [the Chinese Zen master] Yunmen's golden-haired lion. He remained in Kamakura, not moving a step out of town. Yet he directed the armies in Tsukushi [Kyushu] like he directed the movements of his own arms and legs.

With the exception of the Russo-Japanese War in the modern age, I doubt if Japan has ever confronted as great a crisis as this one. Moreover, at the time there were even fewer means of communication, so the situation [in Tsukushi] wasn't known in detail. In fact the struggle against the Mongols didn't last for only three or five years but for over ten years. I believe that the state of tension during that period was far different from what we are experiencing today.

At that time, Hōjō Tokimune emptied himself and took up responsibility for the welfare of all Japan. As a Japanese citizen, as an embodiment of the experience of Bushido, Tokimune is almost unmatched at any time in Japanese history, I believe, in the quality of his character.

People frequently speak of the Divine Wind, but Tokimune wasn't counting on a Divine Wind. The Divine Wind can be regarded as an accidental occurrence. Since there is no guarantee that such divine assistance will arrive, people must employ their understanding methodically and to the greatest degree possible. Moreover, what underlies understanding is spirituality. It can be said that at this time spirituality was expressed in Tokimune's character. I think that Bushido is to be discerned in this sort of thing.<sup>15</sup>

The only "clear allusion" to the war in China in this passage is the parenthetical mention of the conflict that Victoria inserts into his own translation. Suzuki was not averse to mentioning specific wars when that is what he intended, as demonstrated in the above passage by the reference to the Russo-Japanese War; as it is, regarding the situation in 1941 he says no more than "what we are experiencing today," and what Japan was experiencing at that time was far more complex than just the conflict on the continent. Moreover, Victoria suggests

<sup>15</sup> Suzuki 1941, pp. 76–77 (SDZ, vol. 16, pp. 120–21).

that the passage conveys an implicit message of support for this war, but other scholars have reached quite different conclusions. Yamazaki Mitsu-haru of Musashi University, for example, argues that Suzuki, in characterizing the situation faced by Tokimune as much more difficult than that of Japan in 1941 and then stressing the sound planning and spirituality with which Tokimune handled it, was implicitly criticizing the Japanese military's reckless adventurism and false religiosity, which were then leading the nation toward disaster.<sup>16</sup> Victoria will no doubt disagree with this explanation, but Yamazaki's interpretation (unlike Victoria's) at least has the merit of being fully in line with Suzuki's views as expressed in his private correspondence at the time.<sup>17</sup>

More serious questions are raised by another recent piece, in which Victoria cites evidence that, he claims, shows Suzuki was supportive of Nazism. This new argument appeared in a statement he posted on the website of the Buddhist journal *Tricycle*, in response to an article by the poet Gary Snyder and the American Zen teacher Nelson Foster that reprised some of the main ideas of my original essay in *The Eastern Buddhist*; as Victoria's piece mentions my article by name, it deserves to be responded to here. Victoria says:

Further, Satō accuses me of having unfairly linked Suzuki to the Nazis. However, Sueki Fumihiko, a leading scholar of Buddhist intellectual history in Japan, touched on this very issue in a 2008 Japanese language article entitled: "Japanese Buddhism and War—principally D.T. Suzuki." In his discussion of Suzuki's 1936 visit to Europe, Sueki wrote: "While in Germany Suzuki expressed approval of the Nazis. As for the persecution of the Jews, [Suzuki wrote]: 'It appears there are considerable grounds for this, too . . .'" I do not want to believe that if Snyder and Foster were aware of Suzuki's 1936 support for the Nazis let alone his endorsement of the persecution of German Jews that either of them would be as uncritical of Suzuki's wartime record as they appear to be.<sup>18</sup>

The claim that Suzuki held pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic views is, needless to say, an extremely inflammatory one, and thus should be made only on the basis of the most solid research and evidence. Before drawing any conclusions, let us here, too, examine the entire passage upon which Victoria makes his accusation.

<sup>16</sup> Yamazaki 2005.

<sup>17</sup> S, pp. 88–89.

<sup>18</sup> See note 10, above.

The passage in question is found in a 1936 essay that Suzuki published in the newspaper *Chūgai nippō* 中外日報 under the title “Rain kahan no ichigū kara” ライン河畔の一隅から (From a Spot on the Banks of the Rhine).<sup>19</sup> Suzuki’s original essay, comprising eleven pages in his *Collected Works*, reports on his visit with some distant relatives living at the time in Rüdesheim, a small village on the Rhine west of Wiesbaden. The first eight pages are a fairly ordinary travelogue in which Suzuki describes such things as his visits to local churches and his thoughts on the cultural implications of a stone-based architecture versus a wood-based one. On the ninth and tenth pages come his observations of the political events unfolding at the time, which I translate as follows, keeping as close to a literal reading as possible:

These relatives have been living in the town for a long time, so their acquaintances are many. Each time they meet one, both sides raise their arms in Nazi salutes and greet each other with cries of “Heil Hitler!” When I asked the reason for this Hitler veneration, this is roughly how they explained it: “Before Hitler took control, there were so many political parties in Germany that the government was unable to set any course of action. Day by day public support eroded, and everyone was at their wits’ end, wondering what would happen. Anyway, Hitler came along and unified things and led the nation according to a fixed policy, so today we feel much more secure than before. Isn’t that reason enough to praise Hitler?” This is how my relatives explained it. I agree that what they say is quite reasonable.

Changing the subject to the matter of the expulsion of Jews,<sup>20</sup> they say there are considerable grounds for this, too.<sup>21</sup> It is a truly cruel way of doing things; viewed in terms of the present and future happiness of the populace as a whole, is it really necessary

<sup>19</sup> SDZ, vol. 32, pp. 208–19.

<sup>20</sup> Soon after Hitler’s assumption of power in 1933 a series of anti-Jewish laws had been enacted in Germany, restricting the ability of the Jews to earn a living, marginalizing them socially, and, in 1935, stripping them of their German citizenship. As a result, many tens of thousands had fled the country or were seeking to do so. The severest persecutions of the Jewish population began several years later, after the Kristallnacht riots in November, 1938.

<sup>21</sup> This is the line, “*hanashi wa Hitorā no yudayajin tsuihō no ichiji ni utsuru ga, kore mo mata ōi ni riyū ga aru yō de aru*” 話はヒトラーの猶太人追放の一事に移るが、これにも亦大いに理由があるやうである (SDZ, vol. 32, p. 216), that Victoria translates as “it appears there are considerable grounds for this, too.” The line can indeed be translated this way when standing alone. There are, however, several reasons why the present version is preferable when the line is taken in context. First, the presence of the words “*yō de aru*,” suggests that the conclusion expressed was something conveyed to Suzuki, just as the reason for the “Hitler

to resort for a time to this sort of extreme policy? From the Germans' point of view, the state of affairs in the country has been pushed to this point. In England also one sometimes sees Jewish people. Not long ago I met there a young German Jewish man who identified himself as a wealthy poet. He told me that he had experienced this kind of persecution and been driven out of Germany. I felt sorry for him, having to suddenly live the life of a pauper in a foreign land. The situation of each and every one of these people is sad beyond words.<sup>22</sup>

At this point Suzuki starts a new section.

There was a Nazi convention recently in the city of Nuremberg. From Hitler's speech at the time, I understood what one might call the reasoning behind the expulsion of Jews. This was as follows:

The Jews are a parasitic people, they are not indigenous—that is, they never get close to the earth. They are not farmers or craftspeople; they are tradespeople who exist between the consumers and the producers and extract profits from both sides. In this respect they can be said to be far more developed intellectually than the indigenous Germans. After WWI they came like a tide into Germany. Taking advantage of the nation's exhaustion, they monopolized the profits of commerce and in politics used their power solely for their own benefit. As a result the Germans have been placed in an ever more anxious situation. This led to the appearance of the likes of people such as Hitler.<sup>23</sup> That is, the German expulsion of the Jews is an act of self-defense.

---

eneration" was conveyed to him immediately before. Second, subsequent lines in this paragraph follow much more naturally from this reading.

<sup>22</sup> The original sentence, "*kojin kojini ni wa makoto ni kinodoku senban na shidai de aru*" 個人個人には誠に氣の毒千萬な次第である (SDZ, vol. 32, p. 216), can be more literally translated as: "The situation of each and every individual is pitiable a thousand times, ten-thousand times."

<sup>23</sup> The Japanese expression that Suzuki uses to refer to Hitler, "*koko ni Hitorā no gotoki jinbutsu no shutsugen to natta mono da*" 此処にヒトラーの如き人物の出現となったものだ (SDZ, vol. 32, p. 217), is one that conveys a clear lack of respect for Hitler and his associates. The same can be said of the line that follows this quoted passage, "These are, apparently, the feelings and assertions of Hitler and such" "*kō iu no ga, Hitorā nado no kanji to shuchō de aru rashii*" かう云うのが、ヒトラーなどの感じと主張であるらしい。

It is the fate of the Jews not to have a land of their own. They became a wandering people with no attachment to the earth, their destiny being to enter the systems of nations built by other peoples. Thus they came to engage primarily in intellectual activities and manifested exceptional abilities in those areas. Intellectual activities signify, in the broad sense, those of the ruling classes of society. In the present case of the Germans, they find it unbearable that the nation they built up is being disrupted by a foreign race.

These are, apparently, the feelings and assertions of Hitler and such.

For this reason, the Nazis revile Soviet Russia in the most vehement terms. Beginning with Stalin, they assert, the core members of the Communist Party are either Jewish or, if not, then they're related to them or somehow connected with that heritage; as such they're up to no good, so it is the manifest duty of the German people to destroy the Soviet Union. At the Nazi convention in Nuremberg, the speeches given by all of the Nazi leaders were violent in the extreme. Directly attacking the Soviet Union as the immediate enemy, they exhausted all words issuing the vilest of abuse without the slightest regard for diplomatic considerations. Reading the newspaper reports, one could sense a terrifying determination. People said that in the past, if a nation's leaders had done anything like this, within twenty-four hours the other country would have declared war. In any event, the determination of the Nazis is frightening.<sup>24</sup>

The Nazis have set their eyes on youth groups, which perform volunteer labor or line up with mattocks on their shoulders in order to regain contact with the earth. This, I believe, is a fine thing regardless of what country it might occur in. I will refrain for the moment from commenting on the way totalitarianism is being stressed or how all youth group members are required to

<sup>24</sup> The original reads “*tonikaku, Nachisu no ketsui ha erai mono de aru*” とに角、ナチスの決意はえらいものである (SDZ, vol. 32, p. 217). The final word, *erai*, can actually be one of two separate terms, each with its own entry in the dictionary. One, written 偉い, means “great, grand, wonderful, admirable.” The other, written えらい (as in the present case), means “serious, violent, awful, menacing, serious (consequences).” Suzuki here is strongly criticizing the attitude of the Nazi leadership, and hence the latter meaning is clearly indicated.

wear military uniforms, but I would like to see Japanese youth, too, carrying mattocks to harvest the bounty of the good earth or helping themselves and others by engaging in volunteer labor.

Regardless of what Communist ideology might say, the central membership is composed of intellectuals who have never had contact with the earth. Moreover, since the ideology is a direct foreign import that has no roots in that country's history, its followers treat their own claims as absolute and do not hesitate to massacre<sup>25</sup> those who oppose them. This fact is something they are unable to recognize themselves. The Nazis and Fascists are also committed to totalitarianism; in a sense they can be seen as resisting the methods of Communism, yet they utilize those same methods for their own purposes.<sup>26</sup>

Given the severity of his accusations, one would expect Victoria to have carefully checked the context of the line quoted by Sueki, but I can only conclude that he has not. A reading of the entire passage makes it clear that Suzuki was expressing neither support for Nazism nor agreement with their anti-Semitic policies. The line Victoria cites is, in fact, the lead-in sentence to a paragraph conveying deep sympathy for the plight of the German Jews. Although Suzuki recognized that the Nazis had, in 1936, brought stability to Germany and although he was impressed by their youth activities (though not by the militaristic tone of these activities), he clearly had little regard for the Nazi leader, disapproved of their violent attitudes, and opposed the policies espoused by the party. His distaste for totalitarianism of any kind is unmistakable. Not only does the passage fail to support Victoria's contention that Suzuki approved of the Nazis and their persecution of the Jews, but it actually turns out to be another example of Suzuki taking a public stance at odds with the ideology of the Japanese militarist government—and another example of the faulty scholarship that underlies Victoria's case against Suzuki.

I would like to devote my remaining space to some of the specific issues raised in Victoria's response. He commences his riposte by citing the need for a "close examination of *Shin shūkyō ron*" (A New Theory of Religion),<sup>27</sup> a book he characterizes, as in *Zen at War*, as an "extremely nationalistic [text that] established the theoretical groundwork for religion in modern

<sup>25</sup> Suzuki uses the word *gyakusatsu* 虐殺, a term generally employed to translate "genocide."

<sup>26</sup> SDZ, vol. 32, pp. 216–18.

<sup>27</sup> p. 98 in this issue.

Japan to serve as a loyal servant of the state in times of peace *and* war.”<sup>28</sup> His discussion, however, amounts not to a “close examination” of *A New Theory of Religion*, but to a partial reading of only one of its sixteen chapters, “The Relation of Religion and State,” and especially of the approximately 650 words therein that pertain to defensive war.

Victoria attempts to associate *A New Theory of Religion* with Japanese nationalist ideology by conjecturing a link, unsupported by any evidence, between the book and the thought of Suzuki’s Zen teacher, Shaku Sōen 釈宗演. Suzuki himself, however, in a letter unmentioned by Victoria, clearly identifies the primary outside inspiration for the book as Paul Carus (1852–1919), a liberal religious thinker with an interest in interreligious dialogue.<sup>29</sup> *A New Theory of Religion* is not a nationalist text by any stretch of the imagination. It is (as Victoria had earlier conceded in *Zen at War*) a wide-ranging work on topics related to religion in general. Its chapter titles include “God” (chap. 3), “Faith” (chap. 4), “Ceremony, Ritual, and Prayer” (chap. 5), “The Relation of Religion and Philosophy” (chap. 10), “The Difference between Religion and Morality” (chap. 12), “Religion and Social Problems” (chap. 14), and “Religion and the Family” (chap. 16). The manner of discussion is abstract; Japan is not even mentioned. Victoria would have us believe that Suzuki devoted nearly the entirety of *A New Theory of Religion* to general essays on religion, then suddenly shifted to a nationalist polemic in the final third of a single chapter, “The Relation of Religion and State,” and that there he established, in a few hundred words, “the theoretical groundwork for religion in modern Japan to serve as a loyal servant of the state in times of peace *and* war.”

As I discussed at length in my original article, “The Relation of Religion and State” deals, in fact, with an issue of natural concern in any overview of religion and everyday affairs: the relationship between spiritual ideals, the inner life of the individual, and the political reality of the state. (An English translation of the entire chapter is now available online for interested readers.<sup>30</sup>) As I noted in my article, “The discussion includes the question of war, as any responsible analysis of the relation between religion and the state must. Although the passages are expressed in a nineteenth-century prose that does have a certain nationalistic tone, a balanced view of their content shows them to constitute . . . a justification for defensive war only.” Since Victoria has failed to respond to the major points raised in my origi-

<sup>28</sup> p. 132 in this issue.

<sup>29</sup> SDZ, vol. 36, pp. 75–76.

<sup>30</sup> <http://iriz.hanazono.ac.jp/newhomepage/ronsyu/pdf/tom05.pdf>.

nal discussion, I will not burden the reader by repeating them here; they can be found in my original essay.<sup>31</sup>

Victoria's response, consistent with *Zen at War*, simply assumes that the only acceptable Buddhist stance on war is pacifism. As I noted in my article, the issues of pacifism and defensive war are complex, and Buddhists continue to discuss them over two-and-a-half millennia from the time of the Buddha. In the Pāli sutras, the Buddha clearly identifies renunciation of war and killing as the ideal for the ordained *sangha* and an attainable ideal for world-leavers who can freely accept death rather than cause death to another person. I fully agree with Brian Victoria that during WWII the Japanese Buddhist authorities, which allowed the conscription of monks, failed to live up to this ideal. However, I do not agree that the Buddha's position on war was as clear for laypeople as it was for monks.<sup>32</sup> As I point out, "Suzuki's position was that of someone who recognized that war has always been an inevitable part of the human condition and that aggressive nations throughout history have attacked weaker nations, forcing even Buddhist nations to face the question of when armed resistance may be justified." Suzuki was hardly alone in the conclusions he came to; indeed, every Buddhist nation throughout history, both Mahayana and Theravada, has found a need for self-defense, an armed police force, and a professional military.

Victoria begins his renewed critique of *A New Theory of Religion* with passages from Reinhold Niebuhr, implying that this eminent theologian's views support his position. Yet Niebuhr, the most prominent representative of the movement that came to be known as Christian Realism, was in fact an influential critic of pacifism and a leading proponent of just war, arguing that full realization of the Christian ideal of love is impossible in the historical world owing to the self-interest of nations and the fallibility of the human condition. Justice is the best that can be hoped for, Niebuhr maintained, and occasionally requires the judicious use of force.

Victoria claims that his position, too, is based on realism and takes Suzuki sternly to task for characterizing the relation between religion and the state in idealistic terms:

As Satō notes, Suzuki also placed the following conditions on the state: "*if* every action and movement of the state takes on a religious character and *if* every word and action of religion takes on

<sup>31</sup> S, pp. 63–75.

<sup>32</sup> S, pp. 73–75.

a state character, then whatever is done for the sake of the state is done for religion, and whatever is done for the sake of religion is done for the state. The two are one, and one is the two.”

Yet in terms of *historical reality*, when and where has there ever been a state, past or present, in which “*every* action and movement of the state takes on a religious character”? [Victoria’s italics]<sup>33</sup>

It is true that Suzuki set a high standard here, but Victoria goes to the opposite extreme in his critique of defensive war, suggesting, as far as I can tell, that the very concept of defensive war is bogus:

Conflict between nations, fundamentally based on the *collective* greed of each “wego” state, is integral to the very structure of *all* states as they exist today. So-called “defensive wars,” that states inevitably claim to be fighting, are no more than convenient, if effective, facades to disguise the pursuit of national aggrandizement, euphemistically known as the “national interest.”<sup>34</sup>

This sweeping statement, although valuable in exemplifying the sort of ideological thinking that underlies Victoria’s position, has no better purchase on “historical reality” than Suzuki’s does. It ignores the reality of the invasions, genocides, and ethnic cleansings that peoples and nations have found it necessary to defend themselves against through the centuries, and contradicts Victoria’s own use of the concept of defensive war when it suits his purposes (as in his argument regarding Tokimune and the Mongol invasions, quoted on p. 144, above). By Victoria’s standard, for example, it was wrong for the Yugoslavs and Poles to resist German aggression in the 1940s, or for the Vietnamese to oppose the French reassertion of colonial control after WWII. Victoria is certainly free to espouse pacifism as an ethic, and I have no reason to doubt the sincerity of his personal beliefs. However, if one wishes to advocate pacifism as a politically viable response to the fact of violence in human history, and not utilize it simply as a convenient weapon to criticize one’s opponents while claiming the high moral ground for oneself, I believe one has first to answer some difficult and unavoidable questions. A clear presentation of the type of issues involved was made by George Orwell in an essay on Gandhi:

<sup>33</sup> p. 99 in this issue.

<sup>34</sup> p. 132 in this issue.

Nor did [Gandhi], like most western pacifists, specialize in avoiding awkward questions. In relation to the late war [WWII], one question that every pacifist had a clear obligation to answer was: "What about the Jews? Are you prepared to see them exterminated? If not, how do you propose to save them without resorting to war?" I must say that I have never heard, from any western pacifist, an honest answer to this question, though I have heard plenty of evasions, usually of the "you're another" type. But it so happens that Gandhi was asked a somewhat similar question in 1938 and that his answer is on record in Mr. Louis Fischer's *Gandhi and Stalin*. According to Mr. Fischer, Gandhi's view was that the German Jews ought to commit collective suicide, which "would have aroused the world and the people of Germany to Hitler's violence". . . . One has the impression that this attitude staggered even so warm an admirer as Mr. Fischer, but Gandhi was merely being honest. If you are not prepared to take life, you must often be prepared for lives to be lost in some other way. When, in 1942, he urged nonviolent resistance against a Japanese invasion, he was ready to admit that it might cost several million deaths.<sup>35</sup>

If one wishes to condemn Suzuki for recognizing the Buddhist community's right to self-defense, then I submit that one is obliged to answer not only Orwell's question but several others as well. Are lay Buddhists denied the right to defend themselves and their families from attackers? Are Buddhist policemen forbidden from exercising lethal force in cases where failure to do so will result in a greater loss of life? More concretely, were Chinese Buddhists wrong to defend themselves against the invading Japanese armies during the 1930s and 1940s? Such questions, particularly the last, have been put to Victoria on at least several occasions; to the best of my knowledge he has yet to offer any answers. No one would be happier than I if angry denunciations of war sufficed to eliminate it, in Buddhist nations or anywhere else on earth, but that, unfortunately, has not been the historical reality. This is not to reject pacifism out of hand; Gandhi remained a committed exponent of nonviolence, but he had the courage and integrity to answer the questions involved in a way that took into account all of the implications of his position. I await an equally forthright response from Victoria.

<sup>35</sup> Orwell and Angus 1970, pp. 528–29.

Victoria next considers the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895:

I note that Satō suggests that because Suzuki omitted references to the recently ended Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 from his first book, this omission may be considered an indication of his opposition to this war—a war that Satō admits was “aggressive in nature.” While I possess no definitive information to the contrary, silence is more typically a sign of assent or at least acquiescence to an action rather than opposition. Further, it should be noted that in the aftermath of this particular war, Buddhism had come under criticism within Japanese society for having failed to aid the Japanese war effort in any practical manner. This failure was contrasted unfavorably with the Christian church in Japan that despite its small numbers actively engaged in such war relief activities as visiting wounded soldiers in hospitals and extending aid to soldiers’ families.<sup>36</sup>

From what I have seen of Victoria’s handling of things Suzuki *does* say, I am not particularly inclined to accept at face value his interpretation of what Suzuki *does not* say. I find even less persuasive his suggestion that silence on the 1894–1895 Sino-Japanese War might somehow relate to Buddhists having failed to equal Christians in enthusiasm for that war: I would like to remind Victoria that he himself fills several pages in *Zen at War* with contemporary Buddhist statements endorsing that conflict.<sup>37</sup>

More to the point, however, Victoria’s position fails the test of history. Documentary evidence shows that the Japanese populace, across the board, was euphorically demonstrative in support of their nation’s performance during the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>38</sup> That, along with broad acceptance in the nineteenth century of imperialism as the prerogative of a “great power,” means that the only logical explanation for Suzuki’s silence on the conflict is that he did not, in fact, support it. Suzuki’s letters from 1897 to 1904 back this conclusion, being consistently critical of the Japanese leadership’s nationalistic rhetoric and policies.

Regarding the Russo-Japanese War, Victoria makes much of the fact that Suzuki, in a letter written at the outset of the conflict, expressed satisfaction with news of the opening battles: “The Chicago papers this morning published two naval battles fought at Port Arthur and Chemulpo, in both of

<sup>36</sup> p. 101 in this issue.

<sup>37</sup> Victoria 2006, pp. 19–20.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Hearn 1972, pp. 87–108.

which the Japanese seem to have won a complete victory. This is a brilliant start & I hope that they would keep on this campaign in a similar manner till the end.” In my article I clearly recognize that “Suzuki was not without patriotic sentiment,” specifically with reference to the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Victoria considerably misconstrues the war’s historical context by emphasizing Japanese imperialism only and overlooking the fact of Russian expansionism in northern Asia, the issue that was of major concern to the Asians themselves. During the nineteenth century, Russia had moved steadily east through Siberia into regions that were traditionally Chinese territory, eventually forcing China to cede vast regions north of the Amur River and as far east as the Pacific coast.<sup>40</sup> This included the area where Russia established the city of Vladivostok, its port on the Sea of Japan. In the 1850s Russian forces went further, occupying the island known today as Sakhalin and also threatening the Japanese island of Hokkaido, immediately to the south; increased Japanese settlement on Hokkaido during the Meiji period was intended in large part to prevent a Russian incursion. Russia’s expansion into China during the later nineteenth century culminated in its occupation of the Kwantung Peninsula, its coerced lease of Port Arthur, and subsequent movement of troops into Manchuria.

In short, at the beginning of the twentieth century Russia was poised to take control of most of the Asian continent north of the central regions of China and directly west of Japan. From the outset of the Russo-Japanese War the Chinese government supported Japan, going so far as to offer military support (support that was declined owing to the complications it would have caused with Japan’s Western allies). This is not, of course, to deny that Japanese nationalistic interests were also involved or that Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War eventually fueled the fires of Japanese nationalism. But the conflict was fundamentally different in nature than the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. At the time Suzuki wrote his letter taking note of Japan’s early victories, Russia was a major power that, within the living memory of the average middle-aged Japanese, had demonstrated the political will and military capacity to annex vast swathes of Asia and occupy territory directly bordering on Japan. Suzuki, with no way of foreseeing the results of the war, had every reason to regard it as a defensive action—a view fully shared by China, on whose territory the war was fought.

<sup>39</sup> S, p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> In the Treaty of Aigun in 1858 and the Convention of Peking in 1860.

In any event, as the material quoted in my original article indicates, Suzuki's view of the war subsequent to the opening battles was far from that of an enthusiastic supporter.<sup>41</sup> After the conclusion of hostilities, his antipathy toward the military continued and, contrary to Victoria's assertion, was expressed even in published essays like "Ryokuin mango" 緑陰漫語, which appeared in the journal *Shin bukkyō* 新仏教 in 1910.<sup>42</sup> Ignoring this, and lacking any direct evidence that Suzuki supported Japan's militarist ambitions subsequent to the Russo-Japanese War, Victoria suggests that such support is indicated by Suzuki's translation of Shaku Sōen's 1906 book *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*. Academically this is a questionable approach, amounting to guilt by association. In the absence of statements by Suzuki himself, Victoria does not really know (nor do I) why Suzuki translated Sōen's book, the great majority of which, it should be remembered, deals with standard Buddhist subject matter. One need not agree with everything in a book in order to translate it, and Victoria himself cites a number of cases in which Suzuki held ideas clearly antithetical to Sōen's.

Victoria also chastises Suzuki for his willingness to maintain relations with the imperial household, despite views on Suzuki's part that Victoria represents as anti-imperialist. An objective reading of Suzuki's statements on the subject<sup>43</sup> shows, however, that Suzuki's criticism focused not on the imperial family as such but rather on its exploitation by government authorities who "lack any democratic spirit"<sup>44</sup> and "manipulate the weaknesses of the Japanese people, embracing the imperial family and the imperial rescripts and attempting to imbue them with a religious significance."<sup>45</sup> The closest Suzuki comes to disparaging the imperial family itself is a statement that it "still seems to cling to the dream of its ancient days of transcendence and sanctity."<sup>46</sup> If this level of criticism were sufficient to make a person an anti-royalist, nearly the entire British population would have to be labeled as such. Suzuki's only direct reference to the emperor himself is a positive one, praising him as a "man of good sense."<sup>47</sup>

This is hardly the sort of thing that would render it problematic for Suzuki to accept employment at Gakushūin University or to allow one of

<sup>41</sup> S, pp. 82–83.

<sup>42</sup> S, p. 83.

<sup>43</sup> S, pp. 78–82.

<sup>44</sup> S, p. 81.

<sup>45</sup> S, pp. 78–79.

<sup>46</sup> S, p. 79. Contrary to Victoria's assertion, the overall passage contains no suggestion that the family's outlook constitutes a hindrance to Japan's progress as a nation.

<sup>47</sup> S, p. 81.

his books to be presented to the emperor. Nor does it validate Victoria's attempt to bolster his case by associating Suzuki's position with the anti-royalist polemics of Uchiyama Gudō. Suggestions that Suzuki erred in associating with acquaintances in the Imperial Household Agency or dining with aristocrats like Count Makino seem exaggerated at best; even Victoria has to admit that "none of this is particularly sinister." Śākyamuni himself would have to be condemned if associating with the ruling classes were off limits for the religious.

Victoria's comments on Suzuki's interest in socialism follow much the same pattern of indicting Suzuki for failure to meet Victoria's own standards. As Victoria says (and as I say in my original essay), Suzuki was clearly sympathetic to socialism early in the twentieth century and continued to be so during the ensuing decades. His interest was practical as well as intellectual, judging from a letter indicating that, until Japanese democracy became dysfunctional in 1932, he was casting votes for leftist candidates.<sup>48</sup> Another letter, written in 1935, demonstrates that even after the establishment of the totalitarian regime Suzuki was willing to intervene on behalf of a jailed leftist acquaintance; although not a major act of resistance, neither is this an act Victoria can properly dismiss, especially in light of the close watch the Special Higher Police were keeping on intellectuals at the time.

It seems that, for Victoria, nothing less than public political agitation and direct confrontation with the authorities are acceptable, and he apparently wishes that Suzuki had followed the activist priest Uchiyama to the gallows. While the noble sacrifices made by individuals like Uchiyama should never be belittled, surely it is valid to question what Suzuki could actually have accomplished by direct resistance, particularly after a totalitarian regime took power in 1932. Uchiyama's sacrifice effected no change in government policy, nor did the resistance of the other priests mentioned in *Zen at War*, such as Kondō Genkō, who renounced his abbacy and returned to his home province, "never to be heard from again," or Takenaka Shōgen 竹中彰元 (1867–1945), who was tried, silenced, and kept under police surveillance until the end of the war.<sup>49</sup>

On these grounds alone, Suzuki might reasonably have decided not to engage in overt protest. We know that Victoria's mentor Ichikawa Hakugen, a left-wing radical before the war (Victoria incorrectly calls him a "staunch supporter" of the government at that time), abandoned his advocacy of

<sup>48</sup> S, p. 86.

<sup>49</sup> Victoria 2006, pp. 74–75.

“Buddhist-Anarchist-Communism” out of fear of the Special Higher Police and began writing material that was supportive of the war. Even Victoria himself, for all his good intentions, has publicly described—to his great credit, I should add—how in 1980, while serving on the destroyer USS Knox as a civilian professor teaching the Japanese language to members of the crew, he let fear of imprisonment prevent him from reporting that the ship, in clear violation of the U.S.-Japan security treaty, kept nuclear weapons on board while docked at the naval base in Yokosuka. Victoria, who was quartered in the same room as the ship’s nuclear weapons officer, became aware of the presence of the weapons when he saw the operations manual as well as receipts for the unloading of warheads.<sup>50</sup> According to the videotaped proceedings of a conference and discussion, conducted in Japanese and held at the University of Tokyo on 14 June 2004, Victoria commented:

I could easily have taken the manual and receipts, left the ship, and given the material to the [opposition] Socialist or Communist Parties. This would have led to an uproar in the National Diet, with accusations of American deceit.

So why didn’t I do it? I asked myself what would happen if I did. There would be big commotion for two or three days, the news would fill the papers, and there would be a debate in the Diet. But the Japanese government authorities are fully aware that U.S. naval ships at Yokosuka carry nuclear weapons and wouldn’t be the least bit surprised. The [ruling] Liberal Democratic Party probably has some arrangement with the U.S. government and would claim that the weapons had been off-loaded in Guam [before the ship arrived in Japan] without my knowledge. They’d make a few such excuses and that would be the end of the matter. But what would have happened to me? I would of course have been arrested under the provisions of the security treaty and been imprisoned as a noncitizen for ten or twenty or I don’t know how many years. I was afraid of that.<sup>51</sup>

Here Victoria accurately and forthrightly states the problems inherent in confrontational activism, even under a liberal democracy. Given his intimate awareness of the difficulties involved, I find it disappointing that he has so little sympathy for Suzuki and others of his day who opposed Japanese imperialism yet saw nothing to gain by going to prison. In pre-1945

<sup>50</sup> As reported in Victoria 2009.

<sup>51</sup> Author’s translation; used with permission.

Japan the consequences of resistance would have been far worse than Victoria foresaw for himself, with no parliamentary commotion, no reports in the newspapers, and nothing resembling a fair trial.

Moreover, there is little in Suzuki's writings to suggest that he ever regarded political activism as a solution to society's problems; indeed, as his comments on all types of totalitarianism show (see p. 150, above), Suzuki was clearly aware of the dangers of attempting to effect social change through radical political action. Suzuki's interest in political action appears not to have gone much beyond that of other educated citizens. In his response Victoria seems to agree, claiming he never portrayed Suzuki as an important ideological figure in the war effort. Although this claim hardly squares with his argument in *Zen at War*, which has left countless readers convinced that Suzuki was an influential militarist thinker, I nevertheless welcome this shift in view. The fact is that political commentary comprises a tiny percentage of the total body of Suzuki's work, with his remarks on socialism, for example, almost entirely accounted for by the few passages Victoria and I have quoted. Suzuki's publications are devoted almost entirely to topics pertaining to religion, ranging from Mahayana thought to Christian mysticism to Swedenborg's theology. When he did write on ways in which to fundamentally reform Japanese society, as he did after the end of the war, it was always from the standpoint that true renewal for Japan was possible only if rooted in genuine spirituality. Suzuki's response to the wartime situation was not that of the activist, but it was true to his religious principles and I submit that it was an honorable one.

The larger part of Victoria's response consists not so much of a direct attack on Suzuki himself but rather of an indirect attack that focuses on condemning the entire Zen Buddhist tradition with which Suzuki was associated. Victoria first discusses how the Zen hierarchy cited Mahayana teachings to justify support for repressive governments and sanction participation in offensive warfare (the prime example, of course, being Japan's war in Asia during the 1930s and 1940s) and, second, uses selective quotations to suggest that Suzuki was a willing participant in these endeavors.

Victoria's discussion of the Zen schools' cooperation with the wartime military authorities is in many ways accurate but essentially irrelevant here, since everyone, myself included,<sup>52</sup> agrees that many figures in the Rinzai and Sōtō leadership distorted Mahayana thought and the teachings of Zen in support of the war. Likewise, everyone agrees that both military

<sup>52</sup> S, pp. 61–62.

and Zen authorities used Zen concepts to promote the martial valor that led to millions of deaths among both the Japanese and their enemies on the battlefield. Important though it is to understand these fundamental issues, Victoria's recourse to them here serves mainly to obscure the purpose of my original essay, which was to determine *Suzuki's* actual attitudes and actions at the time.

Victoria states that "one of the distinguishing features of Buddhist ethics is its stress on 'intentionality.' That is to say, to determine whether an action is wholesome/skillful . . . one must look at its impelling cause or motive."<sup>53</sup> I fully agree, and therefore submit that the only way to judge the ethicality of Suzuki's actions is to ascertain, as best we can, the intentions behind them, the sole evidence for which is Suzuki's actual writings. His private correspondence is notable for its opposition to the Japanese military, especially as the nation moved into the totalitarian era of the 1930s and 1940s. Moreover, although Suzuki did not issue the type of political declarations Victoria would prefer, he did make a number of public statements countering the militarist agenda that Victoria overlooks or leaves unmentioned. During the war years alone, a fair accounting would have to include his public statement to conscripted students at Otani University in the mid-1940s, when he characterized the war as "absurd" and asked his listeners, "What possible reason do young Americans and young Japanese have to kill each other?";<sup>54</sup> his 1943 essay, "Daijō bukkyō no sekaiteki shimei: Wakaki hitobito ni yosu" 大乘仏教の世界的使命：若き人々に寄す (The Global Mission of Mahayana Buddhism: Addressed to Young People),<sup>55</sup> in which he called for the enrichment of Japanese culture and religion through a creative engagement with the cultures of the West;<sup>56</sup> and another 1943 article, this one in the journal *Chūgai nippō*, explicitly denying that the Bushido concept of *makujiki kōzen* 驀直向前 (rushing determinedly forward) implies meaninglessly throwing one's life away and stressing, to the contrary, that "Zen absolutely never teaches one to throw one's life away."<sup>57</sup>

Although Suzuki's wartime articles on Bushido may legitimately be questioned, even Suzuki's critics recognize that there is much which differentiates his work from other wartime Bushido writings. Here again we must judge Suzuki's intentions by closely examining the contents of his

<sup>53</sup> p. 124 in this issue.

<sup>54</sup> S, pp. 103–4.

<sup>55</sup> SDZ, vol. 30, pp. 420–35.

<sup>56</sup> S, pp. 104–11.

<sup>57</sup> S, pp. 101–2.

essays, not measure them against our own political yardsticks. The complete absence from his wartime Bushido essays of militarist catchphrases like *tennō heika banzai* 天皇陛下万歳 (Long live the Emperor) and *ichioku gyokusai* 一億玉砕 (one hundred million shards of jade) immediately sets them apart from contemporaneous writing on the subject, as does his refusal to mention the ongoing wars in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>58</sup> An inclusive survey of Suzuki's Bushido writings (not just the snippets Victoria repeatedly quotes) makes it clear that, for Suzuki, the highest attainment in Bushido is marked by a calm transcendence of pride, anger, and violent action and that the goal of a great warrior is victory without resort to conflict. These were the qualities of classical Bushido that Suzuki chose to call to the attention of the Japanese military, a point conceded even by the Suzuki critic Victoria cites, Sueki Fumihiko.<sup>59</sup> My article discusses these points at great length in arguments that Victoria leaves unaddressed, so I will not reiterate them here.<sup>60</sup>

One further issue that should be addressed, however, is the exception Victoria takes to my claim that *zazen* is value-neutral:

Satō goes on to claim that the reason Zen, as simply meditation, can be linked to fascism or any other “ism” is because it is “value-neutral” and as such, “it can be employed *equally* for either good or evil.” This assertion raises the critically important question—is *Buddhist* meditation (as compared to other meditative traditions) *really* value-neutral?<sup>61</sup>

Not unexpectedly, Victoria misrepresents my actual statement:

Being prior to the arising of good and evil means also, of course, that it is value-neutral, with all the dangers that accompany this. It can be employed equally for either good or evil; when misused it can enable killing unrestrained by pangs of guilt or conscience, but when used in conjunction with an ethical system that stresses benevolence, magnanimity, and compassion, it can provide an important spiritual foundation to that system and help minimize the ego concerns that form “the root of all quarrels and fightings.” Hence Suzuki's constant emphasis on the moral aspect of training.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> S, pp. 90–91.

<sup>59</sup> Sueki 2010.

<sup>60</sup> See S, pp. 89–102.

<sup>61</sup> See p. 122 in this issue.

<sup>62</sup> S, p. 99.

Zen meditation is fundamentally *dhyāna* meditation (the word *zen* is simply the Japanese transliteration of the Sanskrit word *dhyāna*, as Victoria himself notes), and *dhyāna*, even in the Theravada tradition (which describes all of the higher *dhyāna* [Pāli, *jhāna*] states as beyond dualistic thought), is unquestionably nondiscursive in nature and thus value-neutral. Without transcendence of thought, the limits imposed by the conditioned mind prevent realization of the identity of self and other; saying that *zazen* is value-neutral is simply acknowledging that it involves this age-old aspect of meditative practice. This point is so elementary to the Buddhist path that it hardly merits discussion, and I find it strange indeed that Victoria, as a Sōtō Zen priest, fails to recognize this. I also do not understand why he ignores my plain statement that *dhyāna* can be abused and must therefore be accompanied by ethical training, precisely as Suzuki stressed in his writings on Bushido.

Victoria's final sections, in which he launches a broad attack on the entire Zen tradition, throw a new light on the nature of his critique of Suzuki, suggesting that, in his view, the Zen tradition has been corrupt almost from the time of its historical formation owing to its ties with state institutions and its willingness to serve "the state's needs, in war as well as peace." Anyone who supports that tradition is therefore tainted, including, of course, Suzuki—though, after all this debate, Victoria now recognizes him as one of Zen's least corrupted representatives.

Gratifying as that concession may be, it must not deter consideration of Victoria's wholesale indictment of Zen, which he develops at considerably greater length in a recent article, "A Buddhological Critique of 'Soldier-Zen' in Wartime Japan," which appears as a chapter in the collection *Buddhist Warfare*.<sup>63</sup> In the final section of that book, "Afterthoughts," the Buddhist scholar Bernard Faure reviews and responds to the preceding chapters, offering the following comments on Victoria's contribution:

Brian Victoria's chapter is the only one in this book that definitely denounces Buddhist war ideology. While acknowledging that other Buddhist schools were involved in the war effort, he restricts his sharp criticism to Zen, the tradition that nurtured him and that he tends to contrast too quickly with some timeless, universalist Buddhist ethics. Although, as a Buddhist, he is justified in underscoring the moral imperative of non-killing, I find it more difficult to follow him when he seems to imply that

<sup>63</sup> Jerryson and Juergensmeyer 2010, pp. 105–30.

this moral imperative has been and should remain the horizon of Buddhist ethics and was once historically embodied in a specific (“authentic”) form of Buddhism. This view of an authentic early Buddhism (as opposed to “decadent” Zen) flies in the face of reality. As far as we can tell, Buddhism has always been closely associated with rulers, even if the Indian context gave Indian monks more autonomy than their Chinese and Japanese counterparts. From the start, Buddhism was seen in these countries as an instrument of power. The same is also true in Tibet and Southeast Asia.<sup>64</sup>

I agree: the grounds upon which Victoria condemns Zen apply to virtually every historical manifestation of Buddhism. Certainly in the modern world, as the other chapters in *Buddhist Warfare* show, Buddhism throughout Asia, whether of the Theravada, Mahayana, or Vajrayana traditions, has commonly supported the governments of its home countries and has recognized those nations’ right to maintain and use military force. Are these traditions to be condemned as well? And if that is the case, why stop there? What major religion, subjected to the same type of treatment that Victoria imposes on Zen, would come out looking any better? Every religious tradition that reaches a certain degree of integration with the society in which it exists must inevitably address the historical realities of violence and warfare and define its relationship with that society’s government. Regardless of what the original teachings of Christ may have been, the Christian establishment has been closely associated with governments throughout most of its history and has been at least as involved with war, the military, and military ideology as Zen. So have Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism. If we follow Victoria’s argument to its logical conclusion, every mainstream religious tradition is as deserving of censure as Zen. Zen, like other traditions, can certainly benefit from constructive criticism, but Victoria overstates his case.

I can only conclude that Suzuki has been similarly treated. Victoria’s attack on Suzuki, if I may be permitted to conclude this article with a personal opinion, has taken on the character of an obsessed holy war of Victoria’s own, in which Suzuki, as the best-known proponent of Zen, must be discredited by any means possible. True, Victoria forthrightly admits that his present article presents a negative view of Suzuki. However, so do *Zen at War* and every other article Victoria has written on the subject. Victoria

<sup>64</sup> Jerryson and Juergensmeyer 2010, pp. 216–17.

questions Suzuki's intentions, but what are *his*? Why the determination to see only the negative in Suzuki, even in the case of passages that reveal the man in a very positive light when read in their entirety? Why the refusal to consider the full context and complexity of Suzuki's work on subjects like Bushido? And why, I find myself asking, the contemptuous tone of so many of Victoria's comments on Suzuki and his writings?

If there is a sound case against Suzuki, then it can be made with solid scholarly arguments; there should be no need to resort to repeated and unexplained misrepresentations of Suzuki's words, attempts to lodge capital charges against him for "crimes" like having dinner with an aristocrat friend, or claims that he should have subjected himself to imprisonment and execution. Suzuki's work, let alone the greater issue of why the Zen establishment went so far in supporting the militarist government during WWII, deserves far better, balanced treatment.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

- S See Satō 2008.  
 SDZ *Suzuki Daisetsu zenshū* 鈴木大拙全集. New enlarged edition, 40 vols., ed. Hisamatsu Shin'ichi 久松真一, Yamaguchi Susumu 山口益, Furuta Shōkin 古田紹欽. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999–2003.

#### REFERENCES

- Hearn, Lafcadio. 1972. *Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life*. Boston, Rutland, New York: Tuttle Publishing. Orig. pub. 1896.  
 Jerryson, Michael, and Mark Juergensmeyer, ed. 2010. *Buddhist Warfare*. New York: Oxford University Press.  
 Kiritā Kiyohide. 1994. D. T. Suzuki on Society and the State. In *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism*, ed. James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo, pp. 52–76. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.  
 Orwell, Sonia and Ian Angus, ed. 1970. *In Front of Your Nose*. Vol. 4 of *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. Orig. pub. 1968.  
 Satō, Kemmyō Taira. 2008. D. T. Suzuki and the Question of War, trans. Thomas Kirchner. *The Eastern Buddhist* 39, no. 1, pp. 61–120.  
 Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士. 2010. Daisetsu hihan saikō 大拙批判再考. *Matsugaoka bunko kenkyū nenpō* 松ヶ岡文庫研究年報 27, pp. 19–35.  
 Suzuki Daisetsu. 1941. Zen to Bushidō 禅と武士道. In *Bushidō no shinzui* 武士道の神髓, ed. Handa Shin 半田信. Tokyo: Teikoku Shoseki Kyōkai.  
 ———. 1970. *Essays in Zen Buddhism*. 3d series, ed. Christmas Humphreys. London: Rider. Orig. pub. 1934.

- Victoria, Brian. 2006. *Zen at War*. 2d ed. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.
- . 2009. U.S. Nuclear Arms in Japan: A Firsthand Account. *The Japan Times*, November 17. <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fl20091117hn.html>.
- Yamazaki Mitsuharu 山崎光治. 2005. Suzuki Daisetsu no sensō sekinin ni tsuite: Brian Victoria, *Zen at War* no shosetsu o megutte 鈴木大拙の戦争責任について : Brian Victoria, *Zen at War*の所説をめぐって. *Musashi daigaku jinbun gakkai zasshi* 武蔵大学人文学会雑誌 37, no. 2, pp. 266 (99)–229 (136).