

# Reflections on the Study of Buddhism

## Notes on the Approaches of Ui Hakuju and D. T. Suzuki

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**BUDDHIST TRADITION** is taken as an object of study in a number of academic fields, including history, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, art, sociology, religion and literature, but surely these cannot all be viewed as disciplines directed to probing its essential nature. If there is indeed a discipline that may be called Buddhist studies in this sense—not merely because it takes Buddhist tradition as an object—then there must be a methodology that distinguishes it from other fields treating Buddhism.

The predominant methodology in modern Indian Buddhist studies is philological. It is not the only approach being applied, but it may be said that focus on literary remains and research through the study of texts forms the mainstream of Buddhist scholarship both in Japan and elsewhere. Such study is, of course, an important tool, but I wonder if greater reflection on its limitations as a means of illuminating the core of Buddhism is not necessary.

The fundamental problem inherent in such an approach may be seen by examining the prefatory verse to *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*:

I pay homage to the perfectly enlightened one—the Buddha,  
who is supreme among teachers of the dharma—who has  
taught co-dependent origination characterized by no ceasing,

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\* This is a translation of “Ui Hakuju to Suzuki Daisetz,” which appeared in *Suzuki Daisetz zenshū geppō* 21 (June 1982), pp. 1–5, and 22 (July 1982), pp. 1–10. Readers are also referred to “Bukkyōgaku no hōhōron ni tsuite,” in *Daijō bukkyō no shisō* (Tokyo, 1977), pp. 63–86.

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no arising, no discontinuance, no permanence, no oneness, no manyness, no coming, and no departing, in which all discriminative discourse is quiescent, and which is blissful.

The central concept of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is emptiness (*śūnyatā*) or co-dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) (these two terms are said to be synonymous). This verse states that co-dependent origination is characterized by the extinction of all discriminative discourse (*prapañca*), all verbal expression based on false discrimination. Similarly, it is later stated that in emptiness, all discriminative discourse dies away (Chapter 18, verse 5). In Candrakīrti's commentary, this discriminative discourse is taken to indicate simply "words" (*vac*). If this is the case, however, then emptiness or co-dependent origination cannot be explained in words. The question therefore arises, for Buddhist scholarship, how a philological method, which deals with words, can illuminate what cannot be verbally expressed.

Looking again to the prefatory verse, however, we must consider the phrase, "the perfectly enlightened one—the Buddha, who is supreme among teachers of the dharma—who has taught (*desayāmasa*) co-dependent origination . . . in which all discriminative discourse is quiescent." Here, the words of the Buddha are spoken of as teaching (*desanā*). Co-dependent origination, which is inexplicable, nevertheless can be taught through the words termed *desanā*. The question concerning methodology, then, is whether the words dealt with in philological study are *prapañca* or *desanā*. If they are *prapañca*, then they may be amenable to a philological approach, but they are totally useless for leading to a grasp of emptiness or co-dependent origination. If they are *desanā*, then the question arises whether scholarly training can enable one to deal with them even though one is not enlightened. It is widely assumed that if we think along the lines indicated by Buddhist texts, our thoughts and expressions will naturally be *desanā*. But it is because the Buddha is enlightened that he can preach *desanā*. How is it possible for us, in our research, to select our words so that they are free of *prapañca* and become *desanā*? Must not such a consideration form part of our methodological self-awareness if we are to have a field of research that may genuinely be called "Buddhist studies"?

If research in Buddhism is to advance not merely in quantity—in the number of texts taken into the domain of linguistic study—but

qualitatively also, new approaches must be formulated. It is impossible to outline such an approach here, but as one step toward such effort, I would like reflect on the limitations of a strictly philological method, and on the danger of inadvertently overstepping those limitations, by comparing the approaches to several basic concepts of two modern Japanese figures, Ui Hakuju and D. T. Suzuki.

Suzuki's work is of course well known and widely read, but his influence on methods of academic Buddhist studies has not been great, and the depth and originality of his contribution to our knowledge of Buddhism is not as well recognized as it should be. As a scholar, Ui's position is much more firmly established. He was one of the pioneers of modern Buddhist studies in Japan, and his monumental research in Buddhist thought, based on meticulous textual study, continues to wield a dominating influence. In such research, however, there is a tendency to assume that Buddhism is fully open to exploration through these methods. Thus, there is a constant danger of falling into error by attempting to grasp through a philological methodology what lies beyond its limits. Below, I will consider several examples.

#### Subjectivity-only as Discrimination of Nondiscrimination

The understanding of the term "subjectivity-only" (*vijñaptimātratā*) is a central problem in the study of Yogācāra Buddhism.<sup>1</sup> Subjectivity (*vijñapti*) basically signifies all mental activity of perception, thought and feeling—the seeing subject that knows by discriminating objects. Through practice, the bodhisattva eliminates discrimination and realizes suchness or true reality, which is free of the subject-object dichotomy. The suchness that is attained, however, is termed subjectivity-only. Why should the realization that the bodhisattva attains through the elimination of the discriminating subject be called "subjectivity-only"? In his study of *Mahāyānasamgraha*, Ui comments on this

<sup>1</sup> The Yogācāra term *vijñapti* holds two opposing meanings. Fundamentally, it is synonymous with *vijñāna*, the knowing (*jānāti*) of things by division (*vi-*) into subject and object. At the beginning of *Vimśatikā*, Vasubandhu states that *citta*, *manas*, *vijñāna*, and *vijñapti* are all synonyms. That is, they all indicate the active knower. Thus, the Chinese translation of *vijñapti* is almost always the same as that of *vijñāna*: *shih* 識 (to know).

In addition, when used together with *pratibhāsa* (*ābhāsa*, etc.), "to appear as," *vijñapti* implies that which is known. Without losing the significance it shares with *vijñāna* (what perceives and knows), it is said to appear as form (*rūpa*), etc.

problem:

What is it like when one has reached the true and real subjectivity-only (唯識) in which both object and subject are eradicated? In Paramārtha's exposition, it is called "undefiled subjectivity, the mind pure in its nature"; the term for it includes the word "subjectivity." Since he has employed "subjectivity" in such compounds as "subjectivity-only with no object" and "subjectivity-only as means," he adopts the term here also. Strictly speaking, however, the term "subjectivity" should have been abandoned. (*Shōdai-jōron kenkyū*, p. 72)

In the stage of "subjectivity-only as means," all objects have been made empty but the perceiving subject has not; it is therefore understandable that this stage should be called "subjectivity-only with no object." In the stage of "true and real subjectivity-only," however, both subject and object are made empty and abandoned. The question arises, then, why it should be labeled "subjectivity," as in "undefiled subjectivity." Why even the term "true and real subjectivity-only" to indicate a state in which the perceiving subject has already been eradicated? Ui reasons that because the term "subjectivity" has been used up to this point, it continues to be employed. This, however, is not persuasive. If "subjectivity-only as means" is an appropriate term for the stage in which there is a perceiving subject but no object, then when there is neither subject nor object—when the subject-object dichotomy has been eradicated—it would be natural *not* to use "subjectivity." Why is a term that should, "strictly speaking," be abandoned still used? Unless this is explained, Ui's interpretation is inadequate.

Ui's understanding of the use of the term "subjectivity" in subjectivity-only is representative of the interpretation that dominates the world of Indian and Buddhist studies in Japan at present. According to this understanding, "subjectivity" in such compounds as "undefiled subjectivity," "true and real subjectivity-only," and "pure subjectivity" is a misnomer. Ui states:

In the case of the eradication of object and subject as "true and real subjectivity-only" the term "mind" [as in "Buddha-mind"] should be used; it should certainly not be called "sub-

jectivity.” (*Shōdaijōron kenkyū*, p. 72)

From the stance of philological research, however, once one has ascertained that the term “subjectivity” appears in the texts, one must interpret its meaning. To claim, because its usage does not agree with one’s own interpretation, that it should not have been used and to try to do away with it, must surely be called a violation of one’s own methodology.

The question that Ui raises is not simply a problem of Paramārtha’s translations. In *Trimsīkā* verses 25 and 26 and Sthiramati’s commentary, subjectivity-only is identified with thusness of mind (*cittadharma*), suchness, and the nonexistence of both grasped object and grasping mind. If one takes Vasubandhu, Sthiramati, and Paramārtha literally, in nondiscriminative wisdom, suchness, or thusness, that there is no subjectivity and that there is only subjectivity are both established simultaneously. The intellect that works in philological research, however, cannot accept this self-contradiction, and ways to overcome or neutralize it are sought. Ui’s explanation quoted above was born in this way, and it must be said to be an error arising from failure to recognize the limits of philological methods. Unless we have methods by which we can grasp the inherent self-contradiction in nondiscriminative wisdom or suchness, not by rationalizing or effacing it, but as it is, we will not be able to understand the Buddhist texts.

Suzuki offers a viable alternative interpretation. He explains, concerning *Treatise on No-Mind* (*Mushinron*) attributed to Bodhidharma, “Precisely because it is no-mind, it is able to see, hear, think, and know.”<sup>2</sup> This is diametrically opposed to Ui’s understanding quoted above. To perceive or know is for the perceiving subject (i.e., grasping, *upalabdhi*) to be functioning; thus, according to Ui, if there is seeing or knowing, then there is subjectivity (mental activity), not no-mind. However, nondiscriminative wisdom or suchness in which there is neither subject nor object is in fact called subjectivity-only; this means that subjectivity (false discrimination) has been transformed into nondiscriminative wisdom and that in this wisdom (Vasubandhu calls it “no-mind”),<sup>3</sup> there is subjectivity (seeing, hearing, thinking, knowing). This corresponds to the thought of *Treatise on No-mind* as explained

<sup>2</sup> *Zen shisōshi kenkyū*, in *Suzuki Daisetz zenshū* (Tokyo, 1982), vol. II, p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> *Acitta*, in *Trimsīkā* verse 29.

by Suzuki. "No-mind" here does not mean simply that there is no mental activity, but indicates the nonduality of nonexistence of mind (both object and mind are eradicated) and its existence (seeing, hearing, thinking, knowing). This is expressed in the *Treatise*, "Where should there be no-mind apart from seeing, hearing, thinking and knowing?" Thus, Suzuki explains no-mind as the "mind of no-mind" and "discrimination of nondiscrimination," indicating the simultaneous establishment as a single whole of absence of discriminative perceiving and knowing (no-mind) together with perceiving and knowing.

Subjectivity-only as used by Vasubandhu and Sthiramati has, in its ontological aspect, this same meaning. "Only" implies the nonexistence of objects and also of the subject. On the one hand, it means that a thing known or perceived is not known as it is; though seen as an existing object, it does not really exist. The seer that stands opposite the object in the relationship of knowing is designated false discrimination (*vikalpa*), for it takes an object that does not exist as existing. This nonexisting object is discriminated nature (*parikalpita-svabhāva*). The seer itself exists, for it is other-dependent nature (*paratantra-svabhāva*), meaning that it arises from causes and conditions.<sup>4</sup> Since the object does not actually exist, there is only the seer.

On the other hand, however, if there is no object grasped, neither can there be a subject that grasps. This is expressed, "Through [grasped objects being] discriminated nature (i.e., nonexistent), other-dependent nature (subjectivity) is empty."<sup>5</sup> Subjectivity, then, exists, for it arises through causes and conditions, and at the same time it is empty or nonexistent through the nonexistence of its object. This emptiness differs from the nonexistence of perceived objects in relation to the existence of the subject. The emptiness of the subject embraces other-dependent nature (existence of subjectivity or *vikalpa*) itself, so there is no existence that stands relative to it. This nothingness or non-being (*abhāva*) signifies the emptiness of all dharmas taught in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*; it is absolute nothingness, and is termed fulfilled nature (*pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*).

Thus, the "subjectivity" of subjectivity-only affirms the existence of the perceiving subject precisely where subject and object have been eradicated. With both subjectivity-only and no-mind, where there is no

<sup>4</sup> *Trimsika* verse 21.

<sup>5</sup> Sthiramati's commentary on *Trimsika* verse 22.

mind or discriminative thinking, there is mind, and this mind (discrimination) is always thoroughly pervaded by the nonexistence of mind (nondiscrimination). Maitreya's *Madhyāntavibhāga* states:

It is established that grasping (*upalabdhi*, i.e., subjectivity) has the self-nature of no-grasping (*nopalabdhi*, no-subjectivity). No-grasping and grasping are therefore the same. (I, 7)

Here, existence and nonexistence or affirmation and negation are identified.

We see, then, that in subjectivity-only, the three natures discussed in *Yogācāra* are all included. The nonexistent object is termed discriminated nature, and the existence of the subject is other-dependent nature. Further, through the nonexistence termed discriminated nature, other-dependent nature is also empty. The emptiness in which discriminated nature and other-dependent nature are one is fulfilled nature.<sup>6</sup> Other-dependent nature (subjectivity) and fulfilled nature (emptiness) are therefore both different and nondifferent.

Fulfilled nature is thusness (*tathatā*), the object of supreme wisdom (*paramārtha*). Since supreme wisdom is nondiscriminative, it is always nondual with its object; hence, fulfilled nature indicates both thusness or suchness (the seen) and nondiscriminative wisdom (the seer). The expression "subjectivity-only" does not include a term indicating wisdom such as *jñāna* or *prajñā*, but since it signifies suchness<sup>7</sup> and is nondifferent from fulfilled nature, it must be seen to indicate nondiscriminative wisdom also.

Since subjectivity-only is a term for the wisdom or suchness realized by the bodhisattva, its two aspects of existence and nonexistence reflect the fundamental nondualistic structure of reality in Mahāyāna thought. Other-dependent nature is the essence (*ātma*) of all things, which arise from causes and conditions and are thus karma-created (*samskrta*) and existent. Fulfilled nature is the thusness of all things<sup>8</sup> and, as we have seen, has the nature of absolute nothingness. Since other-dependent and fulfilled nature are both different and nondifferent, the relationship of all things (*dharma*) and thusness (*dhar-*

<sup>6</sup> *Trimsikā* verse 22.

<sup>7</sup> *Trimsikā* verse 25.

<sup>8</sup> Sthiramati's commentary on *Trimsikā* verse 25.

*matā*) is also one of both difference and nondifference. This is also the relationship of the karma-created and the uncreated. In subjectivity-only, the "subjectivity" is karma-created, and "only" points to the nonexistence of subjectivity implied by the nonexistence of objects, that is, to fulfilled nature or the uncreated.

### Subjectivity-Only With No Object

The basic structure of subjectivity-only also has an epistemological aspect. That other-dependent nature (karma-created) and fulfilled nature (uncreated) are both different and nondifferent means that subjectivity and no-subjectivity or nondiscrimination (*avijñapti*) are also so related. Subjectivity-only refers to discriminative thought and perception that occurs without departing from nondiscrimination (non-duality of wisdom and object); this is the discrimination of non-discrimination. In the thought of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as seen in *Mahāyānasamgraha* and *Trimsikā*, subjectivity refers basically to the seer in contrast to the seen. Hence, "subjectivity-only" is seeing and knowing without any object. This is subjectivity where both subject and object have been eradicated; it is, as we have seen above, both non-discriminative wisdom and suchness.

Perception without any object, however, presents a paradox that cannot be dealt with through a philological methodology; hence, subjectivity-only cannot be understood literally, and it comes to be understood conceptually. Throughout most of the history of Yogācāra thought in China and Japan, it has been interpreted to mean that things regarded as existing objectively, independent of the subject, actually exist only within the subjectivity. In this interpretation, Yogācāra thought is clearly a kind of idealism. Further, Dharmapāla's commentary on *Trimsikā*<sup>9</sup> provides a basis for just such an understanding in its concept of the "evolving of subjectivity" into seeing and seen parts. A close reading of *Trimsikā* and *Mahāyānasamgraha*, however, shows that subjectivity-only means not that subjectivity evolves a seen-part but rather that it is the perceiving subject without any object that is seen. Discriminated nature (nonexistent object) and other-dependent nature (perceiving subject) therefore stand in an ontological relationship of nonexistence and existence, and also in the

<sup>9</sup> *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun* as translated by Hsuan-tsang.

epistemological relationship of object and subject. When object and subject are brought into these relationships, subjectivity-only is attained. This is the meaning of subjectivity-only in Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Sthiramati, and Paramārtha.

Earlier we were confronted with the self-contradiction that in no-mind (the eradication of both subject and object) there is perceiving and knowing. Here, in the concept of subjectivity without any object, the intellect is again blocked by something alien to our world of experience, but this is the literal explanation of subjectivity-only in *Mahāyānasamgraha* and *Trimsikā*. These two self-contradictions are two faces of nondiscriminative wisdom, or suchness, or subjectivity-only. Suzuki explains the aspect of seeing and knowing in no-mind as “mind of no-mind” or “discrimination of nondiscrimination.” How does he treat the aspect of subjectivity without any object?

Suzuki poured a great deal of thought into finding an English equivalent for *prajñā*, which is another term for nondiscriminative wisdom, and devised the compound “*prajñā-intuition*.” Late in life, however, he came to feel that there was a sharp distinction between *prajñā* and intuition:

In intuition, there is still an object, but satori is self-realization without any object. In other words, it is unmediated; it is perception by the whole that is established where subject and object are not yet divided. *Prajñā*-philosophy states “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.” It is perception characterized by self-identity that arises from within form itself, or from within emptiness itself. It is not ordinary perception. It is not a perception limited to one faculty like vision or hearing, not perception with subject and object, or mediation. (*Tōyō no kokoro*, p. 94)

Suzuki deeply probed *prajñāpāramitā* and Hua-yen thought, but in the area of Yogācāra, he seems to have been familiar chiefly with *Awakening of Faith* and the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, and not to have read such writings as *Mahāyānasamgraha*. Thus, he seems to have been unacquainted with the meaning of the term subjectivity-only outlined above. Further, this structure of subjectivity-only had not yet been discussed in scholarly studies. Thus, the expression “Satori (*prajñā*) is self-realization without any object” was not derived from Buddhist

texts or secondary sources, nor can it be traced to Zen literature. It was probably a spark born from the contact of Suzuki, who had deeply experienced satori, with western Europe.

According to Suzuki, satori, prajñā, or nondiscriminative wisdom is self-realization without any object, and perception by the whole. "Whole" (*zentaisei*) includes subject and object. Since it is the perception that arises from this whole, it is not a bifurcating mode of perception like vision or hearing; "subject and object are not yet divided." To borrow the Yogācāra expression, "seen and seer are same, same." "Same" is used twice here: on the one hand, the wisdom that sees is nondiscriminative and does not differentiate among dharmas, for it does not stand in dualistic opposition to objects. On the other hand, the suchness that is the seen, the object, is nondiscriminated, and there is no discrimination as dharmas. Nondiscriminative wisdom is the subject and suchness is the seen, but they are the "same," that is, "not yet divided" into seer and seen. Suzuki calls this "perception." It is not our usual perception, but direct knowing, without any mediation of thought or word. It is also "self-realization" (*jikaku*), meaning that since wisdom and object are not divided as subject and object, for wisdom to know an object is none other than for wisdom to know itself. "Wisdom without any object" means that this wisdom does not grasp by objectifying in any way. When, for example, wisdom sees a form (*rūpa*), in that form wisdom is "subject and object not yet divided," and seer and seen are the same; hence, "seeing" has the character of "self-identity."

Because of this "self-identity," in Yogācāra thought, subjectivity (*vijñapti*) is used to signify both the seer and the seen. As the seen, it is "subjectivity that has appeared as form, etc." (*rūpa-ādi-pratibhāsā vijñapti*). This seen is not simply an object, but simultaneously is itself subject or seer. However, since seer and seen stand as opposite poles in the relationship of perceiving and knowing, it is impossible for one to be the other at the same time. Hence, where there is discrimination (seer and seen divided), the seen is at the same time seer, but that seer is negated in the seen; the nondifference of seen and seer is not mere identity, but possesses a self-contradictory structure of mutual negation simultaneous with identity. In the same way, the seer that occurs in discriminative thought and perception also stands in an identity with the seen that is characterized by self-contradiction. Therefore, when

“subjectivity that has appeared as form” is the seen, the seer is negated and, at the same time, is identical with the seen; here, things are known from within, through subjectivity becoming them. Further, when subjectivity as form is established in the standpoint of the seer, the seen is negated and, at the same time, is identical with the seer; here, subjectivity knows itself without objectifying itself.

The first aspect—subjectivity knowing things by becoming them—is expressed by Suzuki as “perception characterized by self-identity that arises from within form itself.” “Self-identity” denotes the state of “subject and object not yet divided,” in which the subject has become one with things. That this seeing “arises from within form itself” means that “subject and object not yet divided” is established in things. Things are seen through the perception at work in this “subject and object not yet divided” or “self-identity.”

In the second aspect—subjectivity knowing itself without objectifying itself—this same perception functioning where “subject and object are not yet divided” is further established in the standpoint of the subject; hence, subjectivity knows itself directly, without objectifying itself and without any mediation. Suzuki’s expression, “self-realization without any object,” signifies the entirety of both aspects—subjectivity knowing things by becoming them and knowing itself without objectification—from the side of latter. Without knowing things by becoming them, it is impossible for the subjectivity to know itself without objectifying itself, just as it is impossible for the finger to point to itself. The realization that is self-knowledge without self-objectification is achieved precisely because, at the same time, one knows things by becoming them. To know things by becoming them is none other than to know oneself without objectifying oneself. Hence, as Nishitani Keiji states, “The stance of being submerged (*maibotsu*) in things is the stance of self-realization.”<sup>10</sup> There is only subjectivity without any object, and since this subjectivity submerges itself in a thing (form)—becomes empty and the same as no-subjectivity—it is seen as form.

<sup>10</sup> *Kono eien naru mono*, with Yoshikawa Kōjirō (Kyoto, 1967), p. 198. This concept is also expressed in the Zen phrase, “No-thing in mind, no-mind in things.” “No-thing in mind” corresponds to subjectivity only with no object; “no-mind in things” is subjectivity as no-subjectivity, appearing as form. It is the mutual conformity of these two opposing aspects that is true reality. See Ueda Shizuteru, *Zen bukkyō* (Tokyo, 1973), pp. 38–40.

In “subjectivity appearing as form” in this way, knowing things and knowing oneself are both established freely and without hindrance, and the bodhisattva carries on a life characterized by both.

Thus we find that the basic structure of *prajñā* as set forth by Suzuki matches that of nondiscriminative wisdom taught in Indian Buddhism. Here, we can draw two conclusions. First, although Zen is often asserted to be a highly specialized offshoot of Buddhism, developed under the influence of Chinese thought and culture, at its roots it draws upon the central current of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. Second, we see that Suzuki’s explanation of Zen is not an exclusively personal and idiosyncratic view, but an exposition that articulates the character of Zen at its fundamental level.

### Form is Emptiness, Emptiness is Form

Nāgārjuna asserts that “the reality of all things” is synonymous both with emptiness and with wisdom. In other words, in it object and wisdom are nondual. On the side of wisdom, it is *prajñāpāramitā*; on the side of object, it is emptiness, suchness, formlessness, dharma-realm, and *paramārtha* (object of supreme wisdom). In that it is “wisdom that has attained the other shore” (*prajñāpāramitā*), it is highest perfect enlightenment. That emptiness and *prajñāpāramitā* are two faces of the same reality is expressed in Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as the nonduality of suchness and nondiscriminative wisdom, and as “seen and seer are same, same.”

Since the *prajñāpāramitā* discussed in the preceding section forms the basis of Nāgārjuna’s thought, its structure of simultaneous identity and mutual negation should be manifest in his concepts of emptiness and co-dependent origination. These have both ontological and epistemological aspects. The ontological aspect is expressed “form is emptiness, emptiness is form.” “Form” is a thing with color and shape; it can be grasped by perception and is one part of existence. “Emptiness” means that there is nothing. “Is” indicates the identity or nondifference of form (existence) and emptiness (nonexistence), and thus clearly involves a self-contradiction. In a purely philological methodology, however, self-contradiction is unacceptable. In order to avoid self-contradiction, Ui asserts that what is negated by the term emptiness is not form itself, but rather form that is conceived as “ex-

isting independently” and not as “existing together with other things in mutual interrelation and interdependence.” Further, the “form” whose existence is affirmed in “emptiness is form” is also not the form itself, but form “that exists together with other things in mutual interrelation and interdependence.” Here, “form” is understood to have two different meanings: 1) form that exists and stands in a relation of mutual interdependence with other things, and 2) form that is conceptualized as independent and not interrelated, but that does not really exist. Since what is affirmed and what is negated are not the same, the original self-contradiction is dissolved.

Suzuki, however, states:

Where the finite form merges into the infinite that is emptiness, at the same time emptiness reflects itself in the finite form. Here, the unmediated perception that is satori becomes possible. (*Tōyō no kokoro*, p. 94)

Suzuki makes no distinction in the meaning of “form”; it is always the identical form. One form—with a certain coloration and shape—completely melts and merges into the vast and unlimited nothingness and becomes the infinite void. Thus, form becomes one with emptiness. At the same time, infinite emptiness takes the limitedness of form and becomes manifest; here, emptiness becomes form. In this way, a self-contradictory relation in which form and emptiness, existence and nothingness, finite and infinite are one and at the same time different is established.

Comparing the understandings of Ui and Suzuki outlined above, we find that Ui’s can be easily grasped, but Suzuki’s presents a number of difficulties. What does it mean that the limited form melts and merges into the infinite? Provisionally, we can take this to describe a mystical experience in which form enters into the formless and becomes one with it. But then what are we to make of the reverse, where indeterminate formlessness reflects itself in finite form? How is it possible for the infinite to enter the finite? Does “reflect” mean that the infinite transfers its own reflection into the finite? If so, since it has then become finite, is it not impossible to speak of the infinite *itself*? “Reflect” implies something that sees, but is it the infinite, or something else? None of these questions are answered. Probably a good number of Suzuki’s readers have felt that his explanation ex-

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presses a special understanding that cannot be grasped without the experience of Zen. Further, many may assume that the emptiness of general Mahāyāna thought taught in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras should instead be understood as Ui does. The general inclination among Buddhist scholars—though with many variations—is to follow an understanding like Ui's. In my opinion, however, it is Suzuki's interpretation that clarifies emptiness.

Emptiness is taught in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, whose central theme is the *practice* of prajñāpāramitā, that is, how the bodhisattva should perform prajñāpāramitā. In other words, prajñāpāramitā is at the same time wisdom *and* practice. The *Heart Sūtra* begins, "When Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva was deeply *practicing* prajñāpāramitā, he clearly saw that the five aggregates were all empty. . . ." It goes on, "Form is itself emptiness, emptiness is form." This emptiness is the content of the practice of prajñāpāramitā.

The other Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras are similar. That "all things are empty" or "ungraspable" is taught in relation to the contemplative practice of bodhisattvas. Edward Conze, in the introduction to his translation, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, speaks of the great repetitiveness of the sutra as though it were a stylistic failing. In fact, the sutra is not a treatise meant to develop doctrine or thought but rather was written to give guidance in practice, and practice is repetitive performance (*bhāvanā*). Chi-itsang (549–623) termed the emptiness of the San-lun "emptiness-contemplation," for emptiness is inseparable from the contemplative practice called prajñāpāramitā.

We see, then, that emptiness in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras is inseparable from practice. When we review Ui's interpretation with this in mind, unacceptable features come to light, for he gives inadequate attention to the practice of prajñāpāramitā. He states:

Emptiness indicates the ungraspability of the definite substance of things that unenlightened beings and those of other teachings consider real, and of the everlasting, existent dharma-substance that followers of Hīnayāna Buddhism speak of. It is, in other words, the absence of a self-nature as real substance. (*Indotetsugakushi*, p. 271)

As we have seen, that "form is empty . . . sensation, thought, feeling,

and consciousness are empty" is taught in relation to how the bodhisattva should view the five aggregates when performing *prajñāpāramitā*. Thus, it refers to the emptiness of form seen by the bodhisattva. If the form negated by emptiness in the statement "form is empty" is the form seen by the bodhisattva in the practice of *prajñāpāramitā*, then clearly the form affirmed in the reverse expression, "emptiness is form, emptiness is sensation, thought, feeling, consciousness," also refers to the form seen by the bodhisattva in practice. Emptiness-contemplation holds a logical structure in which form is both negated and affirmed; this is precisely expressed in Suzuki's words, "Where the finite form merges into the infinite that is emptiness, at the same time emptiness reflects itself in the finite form."

According to Ui's interpretation, unenlightened people and followers of other teachings or of *Hīnayāna* Buddhism see things as possessing a definite substance or as an everlasting *dharma*-substance. The *Mahāyāna* bodhisattva does not see form as real substance, but rather as "being mutually interrelated with all other things and existing as itself for the first time on the basis of this relationship." This mode of existence implies, according to Ui, that things are characterized by co-dependent origination. That form is emptiness and that form is co-dependent origination are completely identical in meaning. Thus, what is negated by the word emptiness, which means "There is no . . .," is the form that is not co-dependent origination, that is, the form conceived as having real substance. It is the form seen by the unenlightened and followers of other teachings or *Hīnayāna*, who have nothing to do with the practice of *prajñāpāramitā*, not the form seen by bodhisattvas. Earlier I remarked that Ui grasps the "form" in "form is emptiness, emptiness is form," which originally has a self-contradictory structure, as two kinds of form—negated and affirmed—and in this way dissolves the original contradiction. As we see here, the negated form and the affirmed form are seen by completely different persons. Moreover, whether form is taken as co-dependent origination or as conceptualized substance, this understanding of emptiness cannot produce an plausible interpretation of the entire expression "form is emptiness, emptiness is form." If form is co-dependent origination, it is not negated by emptiness; hence, even when "form is emptiness" is reversed as "emptiness is form," no new meaning emerges. If "form is emptiness" is taken to mean that form as substance is emptied and

abandoned, it is not without meaning, but the reverse, "emptiness is form," becomes completely meaningless. In this case, emptiness indicates the negation of form as real substance and not the emptiness as co-dependent origination; hence, it is impossible to go from emptiness to form.

By contrast, Suzuki's interpretation well expresses the structure of nondiscriminative wisdom or *prajñāpāramitā*. That the finite and limited form fuses and merges into the infinite emptiness means that in the practice of *prajñāpāramitā*, the form seen by false discrimination is eradicated (false discrimination comes not to discriminate form) and becomes nondiscriminative wisdom or true *prajñāpāramitā* (wisdom that has attained the other shore). This is no-mind, or the eradication of both object and subjectivity, or "all things are empty" (object and wisdom both empty). At the same time, however, in this nondiscriminative wisdom (no-mind), discrimination (seeing, hearing, perceiving, knowing) functions; hence, it sees form. That emptiness reflects itself in the finite form means that this nondiscriminative *prajñā*, in which both object and wisdom are empty, sees form through its discrimination of nondiscrimination (mind of no-mind); hence the word "reflect." Further, emptiness reflects *itself* because emptiness is suchness or dharma-realm, characterized by the nonduality of object and wisdom. Thus, the form seen by the mind of no-mind is identical with the mind that sees it. Here, both mind and object are none other than emptiness, that is, suchness or dharma-realm; hence, for the seeing mind, the object seen is itself. "Discrimination of nondiscrimination" and "form is emptiness, emptiness is form" share the identical self-contradictory structure and are two aspects of the same reality. The former expresses the side of mind or wisdom, and the latter, the side of the seen object.

### Conclusion

What is seen by *prajñā* or known by nondiscriminative wisdom—whether called thusness (*tathatā*) or emptiness or subjectivity-only—is fundamentally inexpressible in words, and yet somehow expressed. Here, self-contradictory verbal structures are unavoidable. If this is the case, unless we devise ways by which we can accept those words as they are with their self-contradictions, we will not be able to grasp

accurately the world of religious experience that Buddhist texts seek to transmit to us and will fall into misunderstandings. Suzuki was able, through Zen, to penetrate to the depths of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Concerning his understanding of the *Heart Sūtra*, he states:

The *Heart Sūtra* should not be approached through the intellect, though at first it may appear to suggest that. It should be approached by following the lines of religious experience. (*Hannyakyō no tetsugaku to shūkyō*, p. 144)

The religious experience mentioned here is, of course, not limited to Zen. Suzuki had a great interest in the *myōkōnin*—"wondrous, excellent people"—of Shin Buddhism and sought to depict their inner lives, for he saw that the world they attained through the nembutsu and that which he had reached through Zen were fundamentally one. Following the lines of religious experience is surely not limited to the areas to which Suzuki directed his attention. Future scholarship in Buddhism must awaken to the necessity of devising such paths and direct efforts in this direction.

TRANSLATED BY DENNIS HIROTA