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AN EVALUATION OF DR. SUZUKI

Koshiro Tamaki

In academic circles, both as a religionist and as a man of Zen, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki was free through and through. He was never a mere scholar nor a mere Zennist. Through Zen he tried to understand the essence of Buddhism, but not confining himself only to Zen, he studied Buddhism according to his own wishes, and the sphere of his study extended further into other fields. His learning, discipline, and thought were characterized by an unbounded attitude with the Enlightenment experience invariably as their nucleus.

Some aspects of Dr. Suzuki's thought may be mentioned from the view of its connection with the established schools of Buddhism. I will touch on three of his concerns: Zen Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, and Avatamsaka, and discuss critically the possibilities of the future evolution of his thought.

I Problems of Zen Buddhism

Though it goes without saying that his thought centers around Zen Buddhism, its tendency is different from that of traditional Zen rōshi. He was a Zen practitioner, and at the same time was a Zen scholar and unique thinker.

His knowledge in Zen Buddhist learning was much more comprehensive than that of most Zen masters. He was well versed not only in Zen literature used as text books for practice and education, but also in the whole range of the history of Zen philosophy. Characteristic of his thought in this field was his effort to clarify the essential

form of Zen Buddhism by tracing Zen historically, from the Sung Dynasty back to the days prior to the T'ang Dynasty.

He is often criticized by professional Zen masters for lowering Zen to the level of philosophy. They mean to say that Zen's business is to go beyond man's discrimination and singularly seek for the experience that frees us from it. Yet this criticism is not necessarily to the point. It rather seems to be due to the critic's inability to understand Dr. Suzuki's Zen. For, according to Daisetz, man is, in Zen, required to transform his psychological experience into *prajñā*, and the copious Zen literature so far produced may be considered to prove this very fact. This is not a problem to Zen alone. It can be said that the history of the main stream of Buddhist thought has been formed with the development and systematization of *prajñā*, the core of religious awakening. Daisetz, especially in the latter part of his life, insisted that Zen experience should necessarily be accompanied by philosophy.

Daisetz wrote about Zen in English, and stimulated interest in Zen in the West. Doubtlessly herein lies the greatest contribution of his Zen. This means that through his efforts Zen is now a common asset among those far beyond our shores. From the standpoint of Buddhism, this orientation is perceived in his interest in Avatamsaka thought; outside of Buddhism the same can be said about his empathetic perception of the essence of Zen in Swedenborg and Eckhart in the West, and in Lao-tze and Chuang-tze in the East. As far as the outward form is concerned, these men are alien to Buddhism, and even more so to Zen Buddhism. In spite of all this, he saw in them a nature identical with Zen.

I have already mentioned some of the characteristics of Daisetz' Zen, characteristics which may be found to be basically interrelated to one another; in a word, it might be called the "manifestation of *prajñā*" or the "philosophical nature of Zen in itself."

These characteristic may be self-evident for those who have already experienced Zen, and yet the fact remains that they furnish some important suggestions for future considerations of Buddhist teaching.

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Śakyamuni's awakening, as the mainspring of Buddhism, was the manifestation of *prajñā* in *samādhi*, which became the basis for the manifold forms of its later unfolding. *Samādhi* is the everlasting breath of life itself, in utter freedom, at first through *zazen* (sitting in meditation) or other forms of practice, until ultimately it is free from all forms. The ultimacy of *dhyāna-samādhi* thus transcends form and is infinite life itself.

Therefore, the history of Buddhism's evolution was formed by the manifestation of form out of formlessness, and the awareness of the life of formlessness through these forms.

The Zen Sect was of course no exception. It aims at the awakening of life in the most direct way — *zazen*. Ultimately in Zen Buddhism the means is the end, and the means is our daily life itself. Unity of means, life, and the ultimate state — in the most direct manner — this is the aim of Zen Buddhism. It is the characteristic of Zen Buddhism to try to enliven the most complicated contents of daily life by the simplest self-awakening. Throughout the long history of Buddhism's evolution, the genius of the Chinese race thoroughly performed the task of the simplification of our life through the simplest manner — *zazen*. In this way the tradition of Zen Buddhism may be said to have aimed, as it were, at subsistence of the formless life itself. And yet there appeared a paradoxical phenomenon. Zen Buddhism, whose principle it was to realize formlessness and to aim at its subsistence, has become formal in the course of time.

Daisetz was deeply aware of this problem. It may be for this reason that notwithstanding his experience of *samādhi*, he did not put himself within the framework of Zen Buddhism. He called himself "Daisetz" (Great Unskillfulness) and seemed like a monk at one time and like a layman at another; he never enrolled in the monkhood, and engaged in secular professions. While a layman, he appeared to be above the mundane world. He invariably criticized institutionalized Zen Buddhism, and never ceased emphasizing the experience of Transcendental Wisdom.

The experience of Transcendental Wisdom — this was what

Dr. Suzuki continually sought, attained, and preached. He rejected the outward form of Zen Buddhism and sought the manifestation of *prajñā* through *samādhi*. This might of necessity have led him to experience intercommunion with Western mystics and Lao-tze and Chuang-tze of China.

A question may be asked: "Did Dr. Suzuki's Zen thoroughly play its role?" He expounded the experience of *prajñā*, but did it actually have the power to move the minds of people? Zen was introduced to the West by Dr. Suzuki in a modern way. It was directly transfused into the modern Western consciousness, but not as the glorious remains of the past. His works exerted a revolutionary and extremely comprehensive influence upon Western minds.

It could be said, however, that his substantial work in the realm of Zen Buddhism did not exceed the interpreting of Zen Buddhism according to *prajñā* experience. The basic trait of his thought was this; he was an enlightener through and through.

Three categories of a Buddhist's relationship with different Buddhist schools may be mentioned:

- (A) Those who create the teaching of a new school upon the basis of the "experience of *prajñā*." Śākyamuni Buddha was the founder of a new school called Buddhism. Similarly, Asaṅgha and Vasubandhu were the creators of the thought of *Vijñaptimātratā*, and Hui-ssū and Chih-i were the creators of the T'ien-t'ai philosophy.
- (B) Those who proceed to the experience of *prajñā* through the established teachings: such people are found among the successors of each school.
- (C) Those who remain to preserve the established teachings. Such people also are found among the successors of each school.

Of the above mentioned, A and B pose questions. That is to say, there is clearly a qualitative difference between those who create a new teaching on the basis of *prajñā* experience and those who proceed to *prajñā* experience through that teaching. We shall not deal with the difference in detail here, but confine ourselves merely to putting it as follows: Roughly speaking, A is creative and positive and therefore than B. Although B also finds itself in a flexible

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situation since it proceeds towards the experience of *prajñā*, its freedom is apt to be negative. For, since B proceeds towards *prajñā* through the teaching, the teaching becomes secondary in significance once B is in *prajñā*. In other words, the relationship between *prajñā* and teaching, and the form and the formless, are not close to each other in this case. We can be truly creative and free only when there is a close relationship between the formless and form, between supra-actuality and actuality. In other words, freedom consists in creating the form on the basis of *prajñā* experience. Using the above-mentioned categories, Dr. Suzuki's thought inevitably falls in the B category. He positively emphasized the need for the experience of *prajñā*, but nevertheless he sometimes gave us the impression that his insistence on the necessity of *prajñā* experience would not go any further. If one should go one step further, some kind of form must be created. This creation must be modern and must be relevant to modern problems. It is only at this point that Zen Buddhism will start beating wings of its own.

II *The Problem of Pure Land*

In Japan, since the establishment of the Jōdo and Jōdo Shin Sects, the Pure Land schools have come to the present in parallel or in opposition. Every now and then, however, some people of Zen schools have expressed views on Pure Land teaching which fell short of bridging the gap between them. Nothing could be odder than this.

For example, although the *Vijñaptimātratā* and T'ien-t'ai 天台 teachings are both Buddhism, they constitute independent and unrelated systems of thought. So is it with the T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen (*Avatamsaka*) teachings. Within each of these schools, a need for *Kyōsōhanjaku*¹ did arise, but none for relating them to each other or unifying them. Pure Land Buddhism and Zen Buddhism in particular, while being practical in nature, have stood in opposition

¹ Classification of the various tenets of Buddhism from some particular sectarian standpoint. The founders of sects both in China and Japan took the classifications they adopted as their respective doctrinal backgrounds.

to each other. It has mostly been the Pure Land camp that has continued to make declarations of opposition. Opposites such as *jiriki* (自力 self power) and *tariki* (他力 other power), the "Path of the Holy" 聖道門 and the "Path of the Pure Land" 淨土門 are indicative of this. "Self-power" and the "Path of the Holy" are not necessarily confined to Zen Buddhism; many other schools have long been regarded as direct opposites.

Somehow the task of bridging the gap between these polarities or unifying them should have been accomplished in some way or other, but it has been virtually unattempted, both in Chinese and in Japanese Buddhism. This may be ascribed to the fact that each school or sect has so confined itself to its own particular sphere that a united body of Buddhism has been hard to realize. Being aware of this problem, Daisetz tried to bridge the gap between these two schools. He was the very first to make such an attempt.

His view of the Pure Land derives from his interpretations through *prajñā*. For example, for him Amida Buddha is not so much a savior residing in the Western region beyond one thousand million buddha lands as the pure subjectivity of one's own personality; it is infinite and ever in action. We can be awakened to the Amida Buddha's deliverance by getting in touch with the infinite subjectivity of our personality. Again, the Pure Land is not a place where we get reborn after death, but the place in which we are awakened. The voice of the heavenly *Kalaviṅka* bird can be heard, not in a far-off land, but here and now.

Several years ago, a discussion on Pure Land teachings was held, with Dr. Suzuki, Rev. R. Soga, and Rev. D. Kaneko participating, conducted by Prof. K. Nishitani. The discussion on this occasion was highly interesting in various respects. Rev. Soga and Rev. Kaneko belong to the Ōtani-ha Order of Jōdo Shinshū. Viewed from this angle, it is apparent that the difference of opinion between Dr. Suzuki and these two reverends consisted in the former's viewing Pure Land teaching through *prajñā*, and the latter's understanding of it from a doctrinal standpoint. While both Rev. Soga and Rev. Kaneko belong to the same school and the same branch of Jodo

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Shin — the Otani-ha Order — a fairly wide divergence of views was seen in their interpretations. All the more so between Daisetz and these two masters. What does this mean? Perhaps it is due to the difference of personality concerned with the subjective inquiry of religion. It is inevitable for the situation and personality of the individual who views the Pure Land to become primary determining factors in describing it, especially when he attempts to view the Pure Land, which in terms of forms is essentially formless.

At this stage, let us glance at what characterizes today's Pure Land teaching. It is well known that Pure Land teaching is based upon the Triple Pure Land *sūtra*. It is such works as Vasubandhu's *Treatise on the Pure Land*, Tan-luan's *Jōdo Ronchū* (his commentary on Vasubandhu's work), Tao-cho's *Anrakushū*, and Shan-tao's four-volume *Commentaries on the Meditation Sūtra* that gradually determined the direction of the Pure Land school. Each of the above mentioned works is singular in its own way. There is no reason why Pure Land Buddhism should necessarily adhere to any one interpretation. The doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism owes much to the personalities of those who developed it. Herein lies the intricacy of Pure Land Buddhism. It may be due to these conditions that we feel something inconsistent in the teachings of Pure Land Buddhism, though fully in agreement with its spirit. Every one of us has his own personal conception of Pure Land. It is difficult to bring our personality into agreement with another's.

A number of views have appeared on Pure Land outside of the Pure Land school. To mention a few examples, Hui-yüan of Lu-shan was a master of deep *dhyāna* before Zen Buddhism appeared in China. He perceived the Buddha in his *dhyāna* and praised the Pure Land. Another Hui-yüan of Jōyō-ji (Ching-ying-ssū) offered his interpretations of Pure Land from various angles. Shōtoku Taishi of Japan made an existential inquiry of Pure Land from the standpoint of his own individual problems. The approaches of both Hui-yüan of Lu-shan and Shōtoku Taishi were alive and personal; but their concept of Pure Land was not yet formalized. The Pure Land concept held by Hui-yüan of Jōyō-ji remained a mere inter-

pretation.

In order for Pure Land teaching to become a religion for the masses, it must be truly vital, personal, and have a form in accordance with the spirit of the day. It is precisely because of this that Pure Land Buddhism in the past has influenced the masses, and its failure to carry out its role at present may be because its life has lost its vitality and its form has become outdated.

It is truly indicative of Dr. Suzuki's insight that he should have interpreted the Pure Land on the basis of *prajñā*. In his interpretation, the subjective nature of the Pure Land is described, which most of the people who belonged to the Pure Land school have not realized. That is to say, he tried to look at the Pure Land from within man's heart, while people of the Pure Land school tried to approach it through doctrine. Brought to the final stage, both sides may reveal a common ground, but Dr. Suzuki's standpoint was entirely free from dogmatics, and it is only from such a free standpoint that there will appear forms of the future Pure Land which are truly vital and truly personal.

Dr. Suzuki's views on Pure Land, however, did end up with interpretations of conventional ideas such as Amida Buddha and the Pure Land. Again, what is called for here is the creation of a Pure Land by a truly vital personality. There are innumerable storehouses where materials for such a purpose may be found; a number of early scriptures, various Mahāyāna sūtras, eminent enlightened predecessors (though not so numerous in number), and the entirety of our minds; that is, the truly "spontaneous" will flowing beneath the ground of the entire world.

Pure Land is the "realm as such" through and through. To seek for it only after death is tantamount to painting a mere picture of it; and to try confine it to this life alone is tantamount to limiting it to mere self-consciousness. The Pure Land is the realm in suchness and yet immeasurably remote. Not only does it embrace the birth and death now, but also leads up to the remotest realm.

The truly spontaneous will has been developed in Mahāyāna Buddhism as well as in Chinese thought. But it is not necessarily

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the product of the East alone. In different forms it exists in the West, too. The Way of Reason is an exposition of Western philosophy. Not only does it permeate philosophy, but also the world of science. Science is, so to speak, the body of the present time. The real substance of this body has not yet been grasped.

Our views on the Pure Land in the days to come must be truly vital and personal, and its forms must be produced from "matter" representing the present time.

III *The Problem of the Relationship between Zen and Pure Land*

As is apparent from what has been discussed so far, the harmonization of Zen and Pure Land will have to be naturally vital and personal. Accordingly, this problem of lack of harmony can be solved only by actual harmonization. I shall present some thoughts in the following pages on the historical development of Buddhist thought.

The past evolution of Buddhist thought is slightly different from that of Western philosophy. Comparing them, we find that in Western philosophy tendencies often appeared that were developed by later thought, and at the same time the earlier thought was carried over in complete harmony. We can see typical examples of this in the English empiricism of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, as well as in the Continental philosophies of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibnitz, or in the process of development from Kant to German Idealism.

There have been similar processes in the case of Buddhism. For example, the development of multi-school Buddhism, the evolution of the Hua-yen (Avatamsaka) school, and the like. When contrasted, however, with Western philosophy, these processes may count for little. A more typical Buddhist historical evolution may be found elsewhere.

For example, in the history of Mahāyāna Buddhism we find such concepts as *Śūnyatā* (Voidness), *Vijñānamātratā* (Mind-Only), and *Tathāgata-garbha* (*Tathāgata* as manifested in the world of defilement) in India. In China, on the other hand, we find such

schools as T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen (Avatamsaka), San-lun 三論 She-lun 四論, Zen, Pure Land, and so forth. Among these schools there has been no development toward unification. They are unrelated and independent of each other.

In the West, there have been themes central to some of the schools concerned; for instance, the idea of "experience," the idea of "substance," or the "apriority." In contrast to these, what have been the themes of Buddhism? We might point out the idea of *pratityasamutpāda* (dependent origination), which has been a basic undercurrent: Fa-tsang of the Hua-yen (Avatamsaka) school expounded the system of the dependent origination of *Ālayavijñāna* (*Vijñānamātratā*), *Tathāgata-garbha* (the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana) and *Dharma-dhātu*. Still, this was an exception which was interpreted by Fa-tsang according to his own reflections. We cannot say simply that because of this Buddhism developed with *pratityasamutpada* as its keynote. As already noted, in the case of most Buddhist schools, all thought systems have been unrelated and independent. This is because they are all based upon *nirvāna* and have realized that all schools are equally embraced within the fold of Buddhism in spite of their differences, and because they have realized *prajñā* by means of *dhyāna* as stated above. All schools in Buddhism have sought to realize *nirvāna*. Consequently, *nirvāna* or *prajñā* through *dhyāna* has been the very theme of Buddhism's evolution. It is man's awakening to his suchness which is beyond all forms.

The theme of the West is formal, while that of Buddhism is amorphous. From this, the first condition for the harmonization of Zen and Pure Land may be evident. However well we may reinterpret the respective forms of Zen and Pure Land, no harmonization in the real sense of the term might ever thereby be realized. No harmonization could be realized except through the formlessness of *nirvāna*. What, then, is to be harmonized? The answer is man's basic idiosyncrasy. Man's basic idiosyncrasy, according to Zen Buddhism, may be said to be "spontaneous subjectivity." In contradistinction to this, that of Pure Land Buddhism is said to be the "most

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natural wholeness." The "subjectivity" and "wholeness" would have to be interfused in the new world view which is based upon a formless *nirvāṇa*. It is in this unity that Zen and Pure Land will first be realized on the basis of Buddhism itself.

IV *The problem of the Avatamsaka*

Dr. Suzuki was profoundly concerned with the world of the *Avatamsaka*. He collated and published the Sanskrit texts of the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* and lectured on the *Avatamsaka* at various universities in the United States.

The *Avatamsaka Sūtra* is a collection of a number of sutras, and is, for the most part, the description of the world of the Buddha. What is the world of the Buddha? It is the actual world as it is reflected upon the eyes of *prajñā*. The world of the Buddha, therefore, is none other than the actual world. However, since it is not the world reflected upon our unenlightened eyes, it appears to be symbolic to us. It also appears as the stage for the activities of innumerable Bodhisattvas who are representatives of the Buddha. Each of these Bodhisattvas, in fact, represents each of us. According to the teaching of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, we are bodhisattvas, or Buddha's representatives, and therefore it is we who make up the world of the Buddha. When we examine our own nature according to the teaching of this sutra, we are expected to practice so as to realize the Buddhahood. We are eternal realizers of the Buddha. The realization of the Buddha in this sense is in fact to be ascribed to the Buddha himself. Consequently, the World of the Buddha is none other than the actual world in which we are forever acting, with the Buddha as the source of this activity.

The *Avatamsaka Sūtra* is infinitely vast in its scale. With this sutra the Hua-yen (*Avatamsaka*) school developed in China. The basic world-view of this school is infinite dependent origination (*Mujin Engi* 無尽緣起) of the interrelated and unobstructed world of Dharma (*Jijimuge Hokkai* 事事無礙法界). It means that all *dharma*s in the universe are mutually interrelated, and influenced by each other without end; it is none other than the world of the Buddha.

Ji 事 means each one of us, or a thing or a matter. These *dharma*s are without exception mutually influenced, and interpenetrated by each other.

Dr. Suzuki was concerned with the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, and yearned for the world-view of the Hua-yen school. Just as this *sūtra* and its world-view are infinitely vast in scope, so his personality was unfathomably great. In this connection, I cannot help but be reminded of his unique personality, in which his thought and life were one. This enabled him to disseminate the seeds of Zen Buddhism throughout the uncultivated lands of Europe and America. His knowledge covered both Zen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism. Such men are truly needed in the days to come.

The ultimate world-view of the *Avatamsaka* school consists in the Dharma-world of *Jiji-muge*. *Ji* means, as stated above, a thing or a matter. What is meant, then, by *ji* in the modern context? We can see in science a typical manifestation of *ji* in modern times. Science is none other than the body of the present time. The reality of this body must be penetrated. Otherwise it could not be said that the Dharma-world of *Jiji-muge* is actualized and realized in the present time. Science is equipped with the place for experiment. I am convinced that the "place for experiment" in "various places of experiments" is none other than the great *samādhi* itself. Space does not allow me to dwell upon it, nor am I capable of it, but the reality of such a body may have to be grasped in *samādhi* itself.

Among Dr. Suzuki's enlightened predecessors in Japan, there appeared great personalities. Kūkai, for example, was one. He extended his insight even into the world of *matter* in terms of science (though in a fairly primitive way) in his *samādhi*. Furthermore, he even penetrated the fact that it is such *matters* in the world of science that are most real in the clear light of *samādhi*. His world-view is an esoteric development of the Dharma world of *Jiji-muge*. Such an insight has long remained undeveloped. It is high time for great *samādhi* to reveal itself even at the foundation of scientific experiments and observations. At the same time it should be demonstrated how *Jiji-muge* is clarified in the context of

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modern *matters*.

Dr. Suzuki may now have entered into a new phase of life, a phase which will surpass such verbose discussions as this. Not only are we following him, he may be chasing after us.

(Translated by Shōjun Bandō)

BUDDHIST AND WESTERN VIEWS OF THE SELF

Donald H. Bishop

There are at least two aspects of the Buddhist view of the self which differ quite radically from the predominant western view of the self. One is the emphasis upon self salvation ; the other is the an-atman doctrine in its two fold aspect of no substantial self and no eternal soul. The Buddhist scriptures contain many statements illustrating the first :

“By one’s self evil is done, by one’s self evil is left undone ; by one’s self one is purified. The pure and impure stand and fall by themselves, no one can purify another.”¹

“One should first establish oneself in what is proper, then only should one instruct others. Thus the wise man will not be reproached. If one would do what one teaches others, then, being himself well controlled, he would control others. For difficult indeed is self control.”²

“Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Seek salvation alone in the truth.

¹ Clarence H. Hamilton, *Buddhism* (New York, 1952) p. 78.

² Venerable Acharya Buddhārakkhita Thera, *The Dhammapada* (Bangalore, 1966) p. 77.