

## ARTICLES

### FEATURE:

## SUZUKI DAISETSU AND COMMUNICATING BUDDHISM

### Suzuki Daisetsu's View of Buddhism and the Encounter between Eastern and Western Thought

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#### *Introduction*

ONE OF THE wonderful things which has happened in modern times, as well as many tragedies and evil events, is that “Buddhism” was discovered by the Western world. Not only was Buddhism discovered by the Western world, it was also transmitted to the Western world. *Discovery*, by Western scholars from the Frenchman Eugène Burnouf onwards, and *transmission*, by many Eastern scholars and advocates such as Nanjō Bun'yū 南条文雄 (1849–1927), Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945) and Suzuki Daisetsu<sup>1</sup> 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966) from Japan, or others from Sri Lanka and so on, belong together in a complex process of interaction. This event of combined discovery and transmission is comparable, in its cultural significance and subtlety, to the transmission of Buddhism from India to China so many centuries ago. Moreover, although this complex process began considerably before his time, there is no doubt that Suzuki played a leading role in it. The fortieth anniversary of his death was marked by a series of events in the context of which the present paper arose.<sup>2</sup> There is

<sup>1</sup> Although Suzuki himself sometimes used the transliteration Daisetz, no doubt in an attempt to stop foreigners from over-pronouncing the last syllable, it does not correspond to formal guidelines and is not followed here.

<sup>2</sup> It was the last of three public lectures arranged in late 2006 by Otani University, Kyoto, the first being given by Ueda Shizuteru 上田閑照 and the second by Norman Waddell. Though originally in Japanese, a shortened version was made available on the internet in English. These events accompanied an exhibition organized by the Otani University Library, in collaboration with the Matsugaoka Bunko (the leading Suzuki archive), with the title: “Daisetsu: Sono hito to gakumon” 大拙: その人と学問. There was an accompanying catalogue of exhibits, the English title being “Special Exhibition in Commemoration of the Fortieth Anniversary of Daisetz Suzuki's Death.”

probably no other single writer whose works have had a greater influence on the European and North American reception of Buddhism in general and of Zen Buddhism in particular. He wrote much, and in an easy style. He carried out scholarly research into Buddhist texts and Buddhist thought, but at the same time he addressed his readers with an endless supply of anecdotes, quotations and teasing remarks. He had his own view of “the West” and of “the East,” and he had his own view of “Buddhism.”

In what follows, I will be considering how these three images of “the West,” “the East” and “Buddhism” influenced each other in Suzuki’s own mind, and to what extent these same images may be maintained today or are in need of correction. Recent discussions about the *construction* of such images of “the East” or “the West” have to be taken into account. Also, views of “Buddhism” today must take into account not only the fruit of much research of international quality carried out both within and outside Japan, but also the impact of images of Buddhism from outside Japan or other traditionally Buddhist countries.

As is well known, Suzuki’s first, albeit indirect encounter with the Western world was on the occasion of the World’s Parliament of Religions which took place in Chicago in 1893.<sup>3</sup> As can be seen from the recorded proceedings of this conference, or as one might better say, this *encounter*, there was a substantial Japanese delegation of representatives who were all at pains to present the claims of Japanese culture, politics and religion to a wider audience. The hosts, on the other hand, mostly saw this encounter as an opportunity to celebrate what they regarded as the superiority of Western civilization and Christianity, sometimes differentiated and sometimes not. Other important voices from Asian countries were also heard, notably that of Swami Vivekānanda and others from India. Evidently the whole event was something of a shock for all sides, and it subsequently led to great efforts by representatives of both Hinduism and Buddhism to get themselves better understood in the Western world.

Typical expressions of this great effort of self-representation in Japan may be found in the pages of early issues of *The Eastern Buddhist*, and perhaps more strikingly in another journal, *The Young East*. While the former concentrated on Buddhist studies, as the name implies, the latter also

<sup>3</sup> He did not actually attend this event, but was quite conscious of it, having been involved in preparatory discussions about it in Japan. In the follow-up period, Suzuki, the young interpreter, was sent to the United States by Shaku Sōen 釈宗演, who had been present in Chicago.

included various contributions from India, e.g., by Rabindranath Tagore, who contributed to the first issue. Another difference between the two is that during the 1930s *The Young East*, having more modest academic pretensions and containing articles on various topical matters, was gradually drawn into a more ideological direction. Its leading editor, the Buddhist scholar Takakusu Junjirō, also well known as one of the editors of the major modern Japanese edition of the Buddhist scriptures in Chinese, the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, developed very clear nationalist tendencies. Suzuki did not go so far. On the other hand he did not entirely escape the intellectual dangers of the *nihonjinron* 日本人論 syndrome, as it later came to be called. It is significant that his book *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture*, based on lectures given in America and England and published in English in 1938, also found favour in Germany under the title *Zen und die Kultur Japans* (1941) at the height of the Second World War in the European arena. This was a time when it was very acceptable in Germany to be astonished at the fascinating exoticism of Japanese culture in general and the connections between Zen Buddhism and martial culture in particular.<sup>4</sup> In all of these matters the construction and interaction of images are of the greatest importance. It is notable that the idea of “the East” (*tōyō* 東洋) is included in the titles of both of the journals mentioned above, that is “East” over against “West.” Indeed there are a great many terms used often in the late nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century which include the element “East.” We see it in the name of Tōyō University (in Tokyo), which in its public presentations has always emphasized the contribution of Eastern thinkers to the history of ideas, and we find it again in such influential works as *The Ideals of the East* (1903) by Okakura Kakuzō 岡倉覺三 (1863–1913, more commonly known as Okakura Tenshin 天心) or *Ways of Thinking of Eastern People: India, China, Tibet, Japan* (1960) by Nakamura Hajime 中村元 (1912–1999).

Suzuki was a most eager communicator in this context, while at the same time he was a serious student of the textual aspect of the Buddhist tradition. Although he began to write much earlier, his most productive period was in the 1920s and 1930s, and during this time he not only wrote several books on Zen Buddhism which have been reprinted and translated again and again, but also carried out textual studies making use of Sanskrit,

<sup>4</sup> The later American edition of this work, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (1959), contained substantial chapters on “the way of the sword” which according to the preface were added at that time.

notably concerning the *Lankāvatāra sūtra*. His translation of this relatively early Mahayana Buddhist text is, to this day, the only one available in a Western language. His three-volume work, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, began to appear in the late 1920s and his other works on Zen such as *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, *The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk*, and *Manual of Zen Buddhism* were all published in the 1930s, that is, during the pre-war period. This meant that, after the end of the war, when a particularly strong interest in Zen Buddhism developed in America and almost immediately thereafter in Western Europe, Suzuki's works were, so to speak, all on the table. German and other translations followed quickly. New writings also appeared. Some dealt again with Zen Buddhism, for example *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind* (1949) which in its very title seemed to challenge the Western philosophical interest in "mind." The concept of *mushin* 無心 (no-mind) must have seemed at that time to represent a denial of all serious philosophy in the West. At the same time, it is interesting that other works specifically took up the interaction with Western religious and secular thinking, notably *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* (1957) and *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (1960), which also contained contributions by Erich Fromm and Richard DeMartino.<sup>5</sup>

### *Orientalism, Occidentalism and "Westernism"*

In the four decades since Suzuki died in 1966, we have seen, as everybody knows, the "orientalism" debate, and we hear frequently about how "Westerners" have created their own images of various cultures and above all religions. We have been told not only about the Western "discovery" of Buddhism, but also about the Western "invention" of "Hinduism," "Daoism," "Yoga," and so on.<sup>6</sup> It is often overlooked that "Westerners" are a very mixed class of beings! Probably they have been invented themselves.

Less frequently debated, but equally significant as a cultural process, is the reverse equivalent which has been called "occidentalism." According

<sup>5</sup> This work was published in 1963 in German translation as *Zen-Buddhismus und Psychoanalyse*. An extensive bibliography of Suzuki's works may be found in *Das Menschenbild bei Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki: Gedanken zur Anthropologie des Zen-Buddhismus* (Rzepkowski 1971). The term "Anthropologie" in Rzepkowski's publication means in effect "doctrine of man," a sub-section of Catholic dogmatic theology. For a more recent, and yet not exhaustive bibliography, see Kirita 2005.

<sup>6</sup> A typical expression of this trend, with many valuable perceptions, may be found in King 1999.

to this well-founded theory, Japanese intellectuals and cultural figures construct their own invention of “the West.”<sup>7</sup> The same is true for other countries and cultures. Thus there is also a Muslim image of “the West,” which is partly appropriate and partly inappropriate. The process of deconstructing these constructions which have been produced in Asian cultures has apparently scarcely begun.

Even more recent is the recognition, admittedly by a very small number of people, that both orientalism and occidentalism are based on a fundamental misconception which may be termed “Westernism.” This refers to the widespread but mistaken idea that somehow modern thought and modern interactions are all the result of “Western” proposals or challenges, against which reactions occurred and occur. This assumption is shared by orientalists and occidentalists alike. Of course there is some truth in it—but it is not the whole truth. When it is argued, as by some, that even “rational thinking” is a Western “project” for which we are all somehow dependent on the ancient Greeks, then things have gone too far. For one thing, we have to remember that there is a serious tradition of Indian logic, which was of course important in the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism, even if it somehow makes use of logic to “go beyond” logic. Moreover, we should also remember that there was a considerable tradition of systematic and critical debate in the intellectual tradition of Japan itself, notably in the Edo Period, during which a sustained critique of Buddhist tradition was mounted by Tominaga Nakamoto 富永仲基 (1715–1746). In the past I have been told that the ideas of Tominaga could not possibly have been developed by himself, because they are comparable to Western ideas! Therefore people often assume that there “must have been” Western influence on him. Such assumptions are not only impolite, they are also quite inaccurate.<sup>8</sup>

Now it must be admitted that it is one of the features of Suzuki’s writings that he frequently seems to have presupposed a clear contrast between “Eastern” and “Western” ways of thinking. In particular he regarded an insistence on logic, as taught in Western philosophy, as an obstacle to the understanding of Buddhism, as may be documented in many of his writings. According to his understanding of Zen, illogicalities are not only frequent

<sup>7</sup> See Pye 2003 and also Pye 2000.

<sup>8</sup> See the introduction to my English translations of Tominaga’s works (Tominaga 1990). This includes a section showing that there can have been no Western influence on his thought. Normally it is not necessary to argue, historically, that something is not the case, but the strength of the expectation to the contrary was evidently so strong that the question had to be addressed.

but also helpful in leading the monk or layman, in training, to a new view of things. This is indeed characteristic of the Zen Buddhist tradition, especially in its Rinzai 臨濟 form. Western readers attracted by Suzuki's works on Zen Buddhism seem to have found this approach particularly attractive. But could they "understand" it? I believe that some of them could. If so, then some Westerners appear not to have suffered unduly from a "Western" way of thinking. Paradoxically therefore, Suzuki held an image, or a caricature, of "Western" thinking which was not entirely appropriate. According to that image, Westerners would not be able to understand what he was trying to explain. On the other hand there will have been those Westerners who helped him to create this image, either by insisting on "logic" in inappropriate situations, or by reinforcing the call for an "exoticist" image of an "East" which was supposed to be "different." In other words, they demanded an "illogical" East, which Suzuki then provided. This "East" was of course superior to the merely "logical" West.

Also rather recent in the international discussion is the recognition that a considerable amount of publishing and other cultural activity such as art, and even sport, serves to promote cultural hegemony. This has been researched extensively in a recent Ph.D. dissertation by Elisabetta Porcu entitled "Pure Land Buddhism and Cultural Hegemony in Modern and Contemporary Japan" (University of Marburg, 2006).<sup>9</sup> Suzuki was caught up in this discourse, and it seems that he narrowly escaped becoming a serious nationalist. As we have seen, some of his writings were published with approval at the height of the Nazi period in Germany. On the other hand, his main international orientation was towards America. As is well known, his wife Beatrice Erskine Lane (1825–1939) was an American, and she had a long-term influence on his work and personal view of the world. At the same time, neither of them were politically progressive or, as far as we know, even tentatively critical of current political attitudes. Perhaps this slight bending with the wind occurred because they were both so conscious of the complexities of cultural interactions and were interested above all in their own function as communicators. Communicators are always caught between languages and concepts, struggling to look both this way and that, and so it undoubtedly was in the case of Suzuki. It somehow seems appropriate that the cover of a recent republication of his book *Buddha of Infinite Light* depicts Amida Buddha looking back, or rather to one side and back, being an illustration of the famous statue at the Eikandō 永観堂

<sup>9</sup> This was recently published as Porcu 2008.

of Zenrinji 禅林寺 in Kyoto, that is, the Migaeri Amida.<sup>10</sup> The exercise of compassion requires flexibility, it may be said.

*Suzuki Daisetsu and the "Essence" of Buddhism*

Suzuki's view of Buddhism can fairly be described as arising on the basis of an "essentialist" approach to the interpretation of religious traditions. This means that he assumed that it is possible, or at least desirable, to somehow sum up or characterize the main point of a religious tradition. This was a widespread assumption in the twentieth century. Edward Conze, for example, a well-known specialist in the study of early Mahayana Buddhism, wrote a book entitled *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (1951).<sup>11</sup> Suzuki himself presented a lecture entitled *Bukkyō no taii* 仏教の大意, the English version of which was entitled *The Essence of Buddhism* (1948). This lecture was held in the presence of Emperor Shōwa 昭和 (Hirohito 裕仁) shortly after the end of the war. The question may arise whether *taii* has exactly the same meaning as "essence," but the general comparability is not in doubt. This term is not all modern, occurring also in the *Liuzu tan jing* 六祖壇經 to refer to that which is passed on from master to master, or from mind to mind.<sup>12</sup> In *Bukkyō no taii*, Suzuki gives a summary view of some of the leading ideas of Buddhism: compassion, wisdom, the bodhisattva, and so on. In other words, he seeks to present in a small space the essential features of Buddhism, or what it is which should above all be transmitted, or communicated.

In many quarters today this approach is criticized as being unhistorical and unsophisticated. People speak of the problem of "essentialism," that

<sup>10</sup> The new edition was edited by Taitetsu Unno (a Shin Buddhist) in 1998. The book was first published in 1970 under the title of *Shin Buddhism* on the basis of talks held in 1958 before the American Buddhist Academy in New York City, when Suzuki was in his late eighties. It has since been translated into other languages.

<sup>11</sup> This influential book was also published in French as *Le Bouddhisme dans son essence et son développement* (1952) and in German as *Der Buddhismus: Wesen und Entwicklung* (1953). We may note that it was also translated later into Japanese under the title *Bukkyō: Sono kyōri to tenkai* 仏教：その教理と展開 (1975), but this title offers no term for "essence" (e.g., *honshitsu* 本質), translating it instead as *kyōri*, meaning doctrine, teachings or dogmatics. This decision displays not only a lack of understanding of the importance of the notion that Buddhism has some kind of "essence" in the Western reception of Buddhism at the time when Conze was writing, but also fails to recognize that this very concept continues to be problematic. It cannot just be swept under the carpet.

<sup>12</sup> See Yampolsky 1967.

is, the problem about those who (as it is said) wrongly assume that it is possible to identify the “essence” of a religious tradition. However, there is often a certain amount of confusion about this. If we are historians, or specialists in the study of religions, we should of course avoid “essentialism.” It is not our task to claim that we can authoritatively say what the fundamental or essential meaning of some particular religious faith or orientation is, as if we had the right to invent it or construct it for ourselves. However, this does *not* mean that religious people, believers, preachers, expositors and so on, themselves avoid this question. They do not. Indeed they may be most concerned to indicate the “real” meaning of their religious tradition, its quintessence, its main point, the ghee of the ghee (*daigo* 醍醐). In fact it may be said that it is one of their normal tasks. For example, in the context of Shin Buddhism we may often hear that everything really comes down to the attitude of *shinjin* 信心. Naturally, this important concept is locked up in its own language, and is therefore often left untranslated elsewhere. It is very special, very essential. Or one might say that the main point of Buddhist experience can be summed up in words such as *sonomama* そのまま or *yama kore yama mizu kore mizu* 山是山水是水 or *mushin* 無心, to use some phrases found in Suzuki’s calligraphy.<sup>13</sup> In such an understanding of tradition, and one’s relationship to it, regular processes are involved, as I tried to explain in an essay entitled “Comparative Hermeneutics in Religion.”<sup>14</sup> In that essay, Suzuki was cited as one of the most interesting examples. On the one hand his work is very wide-ranging. But then again it is *selective* from within the Buddhist tradition, in a very original way. His particular approach, and selection, are not dependent on a denominational position (*shūmon* 宗門), as is often the case. Moreover he seeks to bring it into communication as “Buddhism.” Thus, it is particularly interesting that he used the term *taii* in the title of the lecture mentioned above.

Another example of a famous exponent’s version of the “essence” of Buddhism would be the lines which Nāgārjuna respectfully addresses to the Buddha before providing his own famous exposition of emptiness:

No arising and no ceasing  
 No permanence and no annihilation  
 No identity and no difference

<sup>13</sup> See Ōtani Daigaku Hakubutsu Kan 2006, exhibit nos. 96, 93, 89 respectively.

<sup>14</sup> Pye 1973.



No arriving and no departing  
 Before him who can expound causality  
 And fully destroy all vain theories  
 I bow my head, before the Enlightened one  
 The greatest exponent of them all.<sup>15</sup>

In these eight verses, Nāgārjuna appears to present the teaching of conditioned arising, *pratītyasamutpāda*, as the central point of Buddhism. Indeed he is not the only one to have seen *pratītyasamutpāda* as the central point of Buddhism, whether as a teaching or as a matter to be apprehended. Nevertheless there is a problem about such “essences,” because they can be and often are *contested*. Thus, neutral scholars prefer to leave such matters to the proponents of religions and regard all this respectfully from the sidelines.<sup>16</sup>

It should be noted that this may not always be completely possible. Sometimes we are obliged to try to assess whether a particular movement is a “Buddhist” movement or not. Or we may have to try to assess whether a particular exponent of “Buddhism” is giving a broadly acceptable account of it, or rather, an individualistic or even an eccentric one. Therefore even if we are only historians of religion and not exponents of a faith position, we do have to have some idea, preferably a responsible one, about what we consider to count as “Buddhism”!<sup>17</sup>

In any case, in spite of the problem about “essentialism,” it is extremely interesting to see what “Buddhism” Suzuki was seeking to transmit. Of course everybody thinks at once of his presentations of *Zen Buddhism*, whether in substantial books such as *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, or in shorter works for busy people such as *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*. However,

<sup>15</sup> *Zhonglun* 中論 T 30: 1c8–11 (no. 1564). Naturally the translations of such prominent lines owe something to one another. On the other hand, liberties are often taken with the text. Th. Stcherbatsky, for example, gratuitously inserted the words “relativity” and “nirvana” to serve his overall presentation (Stcherbatsky 1977, p.77). In this attempt, care has been taken to keep the lines in the right order, so that they end with the praise of the Buddha as in the Chinese text.

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Tominaga’s “I am not a follower of Confucianism, nor of Daoism, nor of Buddhism. I watch their words and deeds from the side and then privately debate them” (Tominaga 1990, p 168).

<sup>17</sup> Consider the case of Aum Shinrikyō オウム真理教, which claimed Buddhist credentials, but most implausibly. Other relatively new religious groups, by contrast, have quite a reasonable claim to be regarded as Buddhist, e.g., the Risshō Kōseiikai 立正佼成会 in Japan, or Won 圓 Buddhism in Korea.

Suzuki also carried out studies on Sanskrit texts, this too with a view to the presentation of his results in English for the wider world. It must have been a very exciting time of life for him! When I was a young lecturer in England, in the late sixties, the materials on Buddhist studies available for students were still very limited. At that time I was most grateful for the existence of Suzuki's translations of the *Dacheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 and of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, for his substantial book *Studies in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and his introductory work *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*.

It is important to remember that Suzuki did not formally represent any particular institution. His overall view of Buddhism was therefore not doctrinally located. The major schools of Buddhism in Japan usually have a rather specific understanding of their teaching or their practice, and it is quite clear that Suzuki's position was not "authoritative" in this sense. When publishers refer to his view of Buddhism as "authoritative," this should not be understood in a narrow sense. In fact, Suzuki developed a modern version of "Buddhism" which had not previously existed as such, a pattern of teachings and communications with which he tried to be true to the story of Buddhism in general and of Mahayana Buddhism in particular, but in a new time and under new circumstances.

Suzuki's view of "Buddhism" may therefore be described as non-denominational (*hishūha teki* 非宗派的). However, we should consider it not by means of this negative concept alone, but also in positive terms. While of course he taught much about Zen Buddhism, and not a little about Shin Buddhism, what he was mainly trying to do was to communicate the leading ideas or the basic spirit of Mahayana Buddhism, the Buddhism of the "Great Vehicle." To give an example, without deference to any school, we find in the *Essays in Zen Buddhism* a lengthy translation and exposition of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* from the *Avataṃsaka sūtra*, which is particularly important in the Huayan 華嚴 (Skt. *avatamsaka*) school of Buddhism, but at the same time can be drawn into association with Zen Buddhism. It can be seen from studies of sutras such as this in the early issues of *The Eastern Buddhist* that he regarded them as important in the general historical development of Buddhism in China and beyond.

In view of the plurality of the Buddhist world, it might be said that there is in any case no single view of "Buddhism" which can be regarded as "authoritative." However, when Suzuki began his work few attempts had been made to present Buddhism as a representation of the whole Buddhist world, or as one might say "ecumenically." It is paradoxical that views of

Buddhism which may now challenge a more traditional denominational or confessional version of it are themselves the result of the labours of Suzuki and others. Note that this is also something which was wanted by Westerners. Just as some Japanese converts to Christianity in the nineteenth century wanted a faith without denominations or churches, and (under the leadership of Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三 [1861–1930]) invented the Mukyōkai 無教会 (Non-Church), so Suzuki invented a pattern of Buddhism which had not previously existed as such. This is because his Western readers needed it, or at least wanted it. He was very sensitively oriented towards his potential readers and therefore took their expectations into account. He also took their expected misunderstandings (based on his experience) into account. His “Buddhism,” therefore, was influenced by what he thought was needed for his communication of “Buddhism.” We will return to this underlying theme later.

*Mysticism and Difference*

At this point, I would like briefly to discuss Suzuki’s contribution on “mysticism.” The “essentialist” assumption often leads to problems, and just such a problem appears in the very well-known work *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* (1957). Much of this collection is devoted to a study of Meister Eckhart, a theme which, as we know, was later profoundly pursued by Ueda Shizuteru. Suzuki’s argument in this collection of related essays was, first, that Zen and Shin are intimately related, at that level where discriminatory thought ends, thus overcoming the polarization of *jiriki* 自力 and *tariki* 他力. Second, such an overcoming of opposites may also be found in the mystical writings of Meister Eckhart. In this respect, Suzuki argued, the experience of Zen or Shin can be regarded as very similar to that of Christian mysticism, in so far as the latter also is not dependent on conceptual differentiation. Putting it briefly, this means that the closer one is to God, or “God,” the more radically does the concept of God itself come to be deconstructed.

In my own words, this is expressed in a few lines from a longer poem about other things:

God was there  
 slipping about unnoticed  
 turning back between the leaves  
 (till winter me bereaves)

to brush away some old theology  
selectively  
and patiently

So God deconstructs himself—or herself. Or at any rate, he or she deconstructs our “theology,” if we have any, or brushes it away, quite patiently.

When I first read Suzuki’s book on mysticism shortly after it appeared, in Japan in 1962,<sup>18</sup> I found it most fascinating, and indeed mostly very convincing. It is striking that so much material is drawn here from the tradition of Shin Buddhism, in particular from the letters of Rennyo 蓮如 (1415–1499) and the notebooks of Asahara Saichi 浅原才市 (1850–1932). This was most instructive, especially as I was also studying the *Tannishō* 歎異抄 at the same time. However, I came across one problem in Suzuki’s book. The main argument is that the mystical traditions of Buddhism and Christianity come very close to each other—so close that the publisher of the German edition declares on the cover, rather enthusiastically, that the differences between Zen/Shin and the teachings of Christianity are “artificial” (*künstlich*). Indeed Suzuki teaches us here how close they can be. However, there is one chapter which contradicts this view completely, namely the chapter which contrasts crucifixion and enlightenment. Here, Suzuki explores the significance of the two contrasting physical positions of Jesus on the cross (vertical) and the Buddha, whether in the position of seated meditation or of nirvana (horizontal). He sees a profound gulf between them. Unfortunately, he concludes that the meaning of the verticality of the cross lies in being argumentative and assertive, whereas for most interpreters it would be precisely the opposite. Jesus was on the cross not because he “asserted” (himself or anything else), as some of his disciples apparently had expected, but because he accepted or “suffered” the self-assertion of others. The medieval hymn *Ave verum corpus* refers to this as *vere passum*, “truly suffered,” and we can see here the verbal root from which the grammatical term “passive” comes. Jesus was not the agent of his own crucifixion!<sup>19</sup>

As to the term “mysticism,” it may be added that in recent years the study of “mysticism” has made much progress. In particular, philosophers of religion (Stace, Smart, Katz and others) have patiently clarified the relationship between mystical experience and language. At the same time, less attention has been paid to the character of “mysticism” in comparative

<sup>18</sup> I read the German version: *Der westliche Weg und der östliche Weg* (1960).

<sup>19</sup> There have been a few attempts to argue that he was, but these are marginal in the history of New Testament research.

(and hence typologically abstract) terms. There is a particular problem in this respect when it comes to discussing this theme in Japanese, because the term *shinpi* 神秘, though given in most dictionaries, electronic or other, does not really correspond to “mysticism” at all. It means “mysterious” or even “mystificatory.” The religion of Shinran therefore certainly cannot be described in Japanese as *shinpi teki*, but on the other hand this founder of Shin Buddhism can be characterized in a precise sense as “a mystical religious thinker” in English.<sup>20</sup> This definition would be broadly in line with Suzuki’s use of the term “mysticism.”

### *The Three Bodies of the Buddha*

Suzuki’s choice of Western or Christian theological terms was sometimes appropriate and sometimes less so. As indicated above, it seems to me that, for his time, his use of the term “mysticism” was quite reasonable. I would like to record however that his use of the term “Trinity” was not very helpful. Indeed it caused considerable confusion in Western studies of Mahayana Buddhism. The problem was set up through his treatment of the theme of the three bodies (*trikāya*) of the Buddha in his very influential work *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* (1907), mentioned above. Chapter 10 of this book bears the title “The Doctrine of Trikaya” and, in brackets beneath, the confusing sub-title “(Buddhist Theory of Trinity).” About this he wrote:

“How did the Buddhists come to relegate the human Buddha to oblivion, as it were, and assign a mysterious being in his place invested with all possible or sometimes impossible majesty and supernaturalism?” This question, which marks the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism, brings us to the doctrine of Trikāya,—which in a sense corresponds to the Christian theory of trinity.<sup>21</sup>

This statement is misleading for two reasons. First, it gives the impression that the “doctrine of Trikāya” is a more or less central teaching without which Mahayana Buddhism can hardly be explained. However, this is not

<sup>20</sup> As argued in my article (Pye 2004). This is the German version of a hitherto unpublished paper entitled “Shinran as a mystical religious thinker,” a lecture for the tenth conference of the International Association for Shin Buddhist Studies at Otani University, Kyoto (2001) under the title “Shinran’s Place in World Thought.”

<sup>21</sup> Suzuki 1963, p. 245.

so. The leading themes in early Mahayana Buddhism are the concepts: bodhisattva, insight (or “wisdom”), compassion, skilful means and emptiness. Second, it implies that the concept of *trikāya* was available at the time when Mahayana originated, which is not the case. It seems that for Suzuki these two points were connected and that the concept of *trikāya* was both fundamental and present at the beginning.

Admittedly, it would be open to anybody to argue that an “essential” feature of a system might only come to be satisfactorily formulated some time *after* its “rise.” Indeed, had Suzuki taken the comparison with the Christian teaching of the Trinity seriously he might have adopted this point of view, for this doctrine, in fact, took three or four centuries to be worked up into its classical form, subsequent to which it has widely been regarded as being an essential feature of Christianity. However, he regarded the Buddhist parallel (in so far as it is a parallel) as marking “the rise of Mahayana Buddhism,” and other accounts have tended to follow his lead in this regard. Sukumar Dutt, for example, a respected Indian scholar, could write as late as 1966, referring to early Cambodian kings: “They subscribe to the Trikāya doctrine, i.e., the concept of the Buddha functioning in three kinds of bodies, which is the fundamental doctrine of Mahāyānism.”<sup>22</sup>

This combination of a historical confusion with a doctrinal confusion was probably caused by the false ascription of the *Dacheng qixin lun* to the Indian writer Aśvaghōṣa. He is supposed to have lived in the century preceding the Christian era, and due to this erroneous ascription was thought to have contributed to the original emergence of Mahayana Buddhism. This Chinese text however never in fact existed in Sanskrit, but dates from the sixth century CE. The section on the “three bodies” found there is quite interesting, but for other reasons.

Quite apart from the major chronological error which arose in connection with the *Dacheng qixin lun*, it should also be noticed that the *trikāya* teaching, though interesting, is not at all fundamental to Mahayana Buddhism. It is not even central in the special sense of being a feature which was gradually developed and became “essential” later. On the contrary, the interest which has been attached to it, because of its supposedly being “trinitarian,” has come to obscure a truly fundamental dialectic which runs through most Mahayana teachings on the nature and appearances of the Buddha or Buddhas.

To some extent, the picture was corrected by Louis de La Vallée Poussin

<sup>22</sup> Dutt 1966, p. 93.

in an excursus entitled “Notes sur les corps du Bouddha,”<sup>23</sup> and also in the Buddhist encyclopedia *Hôbôgirin* under the heading “Busshin” (Buddha-body).<sup>24</sup> In their details these two contributions are splendid. Nevertheless the historical perspective remains obscure, which is probably due to the continuing influence of earlier misunderstandings. There is much too much emphasis on the clarification of *ontological* questions. Such questions play an important role in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, but are insignificant (at least in this form) in Buddhism. Much more important for the teaching about the *trikāya* are the *functions* of the different kinds of Buddhas. As a result of this misperception, the significance of the existence of both dual and triple formulations has been barely recognized.

It would take too long to discuss the whole development of the *trikāya* concept or doctrine here, but there is an important aspect to bear in mind. If we trace it out historically, what we find is that in pre-Mahayana and early Mahayana Buddhism there is in fact a *binary* concept. Only later came the *triple* concept. Although hardly any chronological questions about the development of early Mahayana Buddhism can be solved with precision, there is now much greater clarity about the broad outlines. This is quite sufficient for correcting the general framework for discussion about the concept of the *trikāya*. A three-body doctrine as such appears to have been first stated in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, a work ascribed to the earliest nameable exponent of the Yogācāra School, namely Maitreya-nātha, who is reckoned to have flourished around 300 CE. It is therefore not surprising that it also occurs in the *Dacheng qixin lun*, because this work seeks to correlate the Yogācāra and the Mādhyamika understandings of Buddhism in a brief, systematic presentation.

It is significant that the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, proclaiming itself by its title to be “The Ornament of the Sutras of the Great Vehicle,” is significantly later than the early Mahayana sutras themselves, in particular the Prajñāpāramitā sutras and the *Lotus Sutra*. These are now generally agreed to have been compiled (gradually) at a time slightly before and after the beginning of the Christian era. None of them contain the *trikāya* teaching. The “ornament of the sutras” (*sūtrālamkāra*) also postdates the work of Nāgārjuna, who produced his systematic exposition of the Mahayana way of thinking in the second century CE, but did not propose the *trikāya* teaching.

<sup>23</sup> See La Vallée Poussin 1929 (esp. pp. 762–813). See also Masson-Oursel 1913.

<sup>24</sup> *Hôbôgirin*, ed. Paul Demiéville et al. 8 vols. to date. Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1929–.

The *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* poses more difficulties. It is usually regarded as a sutra from the second, though still relatively early phase of Mahayana Buddhism.<sup>25</sup> The relevant passages, being in the main body of the work, may be presumed to have antedated the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*. It is a further irony in the history of images of Buddhism that the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, which Suzuki studied intensively and translated into English, also has a concept of three kinds of Buddha. In fact it is possibly the earliest text which refers to the different kinds of Buddhas as threefold. However they are not referred to as *-kāya*.

Clearly later is *Dacheng qixin lun*. As a summary of Mahayana ideas, this is loyal to both the Mādhyamika and the Yogācāra Schools, presupposing their existence. It was already pointed out that it cannot be dated before the middle of the sixth century CE. The treatment of the idea of the *trikāya* is similar to that of the earlier *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, but the interesting point is that all of the three types of body are correlated with the concept of suchness (Ch. *zhenru* 真如). Thus the underlying dialectic is *binary*. On the one hand there is a certain kind of “body,” and then again each “body” has the character of suchness. In other words, although reference is made to three kinds of “Buddha-body,” these are all understood in two aspects, the aspect of their appearance and that of their suchness.

Chronologically proximate is a highly interesting chapter of the *Hebu jin guang ming jing* 合部金光明經 (The Compiled Version of the Sutra of Brilliant Golden Light), which was completed in 597 CE.<sup>26</sup> The title of Chapter 3 of this sutra can be easily and precisely translated as “Distinguishing the three bodies” (*Fenbie sanshen pin* 分別三身品). Unfortunately, the well-known translator of this sutra into German, Johannes Nobel, slipped towards the wrong view noted above by rendering it “the teaching of the three bodies” (*die Lehre von den drei Körpern*),<sup>27</sup> as if it were a fixed doctrine depending

<sup>25</sup> To judge from its miscellaneous structure, which indicates that it is a collection, it must have been compiled over some time. However, a *terminus ad quem* is provided by the earliest extant Chinese version produced in 443 CE by Guṇabhadra (T no. 670).

<sup>26</sup> This version of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra* was compiled using three earlier Chinese translations by Dharmakṣema (385–433), Paramārtha (499–569) and Yaśogupta (ca. sixth century). Although the translations by Paramārtha and Yaśogupta have been lost, Dharmakṣema’s can be found at T no. 663 and compared with the compiled version referred to above (T no. 664). The chapter in question does not appear in the extant Sanskrit text nor in Dharmakṣema’s translation. However, a Sanskrit version probably did in fact exist.

<sup>27</sup> Nobel 1958, ad loc. His translation relies on the translation by Yijing 義淨 (635–713) of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra*, which is dated at 704 CE.



on the number three. However, in the text we read that on the one hand the *dharmakāya* is without characteristics, while the other two kinds of body are with characteristics. So a Buddha-body is either *with* characteristics or *without* characteristics. In spite of the reference to “three bodies,” it is this *binary* dialectic, a movement of thought from the kind of “body” with characteristics to the kind without them, which counts more than the mere differentiation of characteristics.

Of course there are many more texts which might be taken into account. The main point however is that in the early Mahayana we find a *twofold* or *binary* view of the Buddha. That is, we can discern on the one hand a manifestation of Buddhahood in human form, and on the other hand there appears to be a transcendental being such as is found in Chapter 15 (or in Chinese usually Chapter 16) of the *Lotus Sutra*.<sup>28</sup> The relations between these two forms are *dialectical* in the sense that the more easily recognizable human form is there for humans to perceive, in other words as an *upāya*, while the transcendental form is that which indicates the dissolution of this *upāya* into the goal of the teaching, namely supreme enlightenment or nirvana without residue. The human form (*rūpakāya*) acts out the apparent process of enlightenment and nirvana. On the other hand, the Tathāgata whose life is of unlimited duration suggests the potential transformation of ordinary ways of thinking into a consciousness which no longer differentiates, or to use one of Suzuki's favorite expressions, “discriminates,” between the way and the goal. The interesting thing is that when we look at the various statements of the three-body “doctrine” carefully, we see that this binary dialectic is always maintained. Whatever glorious manifestations there may be, the *dharmakāya* remains as an “absolute” reference point which enables differentiated manifestations to be dissolved, or *resolved* at the conclusion of the salvific process.

So it seems as if Suzuki caused considerable confusion here by talking about the “Trinity.” The question is, why did he do it? The chronological misplacement of the *Dacheng qixin lun* is one thing. It is easy to say this many years later.<sup>29</sup> However, the main problem was that Suzuki was very sensitive, even too sensitive, to the expectations of Western readers. By drawing a parallel between the *trikāya* and the Trinity (and of course the

<sup>28</sup> The binary form also becomes apparent in the treatment of the concept of *ātmabhāva* in the *Lotus Sutra* (Matsunaga 1969).

<sup>29</sup> For English readers, the position is set out in the translation and study by Hakeda Yoshihito (Hakeda 1967).

element *tri-* is very tempting), he assisted Western readers in understanding it somehow. But, in turn, this led to the problem that the *dharmakāya*, or the Buddha of unlimited life-duration, was then absolutized *ontologically*, so that it seemed as if some kind of transcendental theism had been developed, with many other spiritual beings besides. This then came to be regarded as a significant change from, or even a betrayal of early Buddhism. I do not believe that this understanding of the development of Mahayana Buddhism is justified. But the Western readers of those times seem to have wanted it that way. Their wish led Suzuki into his mode of presentation. At the same time, a careful reading of his works shows that he did not himself share such an ontologized view of suchness (though it is not altogether unknown in Japanese Buddhism). Rather, he regarded all such concepts as mere pointers to an ineffable experience which does not depend on assertions of any kind.

*Why Did the First Patriarch Come from the West?*

One of the famous Zen Buddhist questions which Suzuki commented on, when teasing and instructing his Western readers, runs: “Why did Bodhidharma come from the West?” This may be found in an article published in his extremely influential work *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (Second Series, 1933). It is typical of Suzuki’s easy-going approach that he simply changed the original question, for Western readers, by adding the name! The original runs “Why did the patriarch come from the West?”<sup>30</sup> The strange thing is that, in an American perspective, Suzuki himself came from the West, rather from the East. At the same time it may be said that his work reached Europe both from the West and the East.

The basic difficulty in interpreting Suzuki’s writings, as a whole corpus, is that he sometimes wants to find similarities with Western thought, especially but not only religious thought, while at the same time he not infrequently wants to assert a profound difference. This is the fundamental problem about orientalism and occidentalism, which the expressions “East” and “West” inevitably suggest. There is a lot to think about here. We all love “difference.” *Vive la différence!* If there is no “difference,” culturally and religiously speaking, then there is no need to transmit anything. But if there is a profound difference, as Suzuki sometimes suggests, then it may

<sup>30</sup> I commented on this in a lecture for the Japanese Culture Institute in Cologne, published as Pye 1990.

not be possible to transmit anything. The question therefore arises: "Can Westerners understand Buddhism?" One answer is "no." But in spite of all the people met by Suzuki who evidently had difficulties with understanding Buddhism, the answer "no" is not a very good one. A better answer is "yes." This answer can be justified by the counter-question: "Can Chinese understand Buddhism?" Whatever we may think about the character of Chinese Buddhism, it is hard to give the answer "no" in this case. After all, if the task of transmission was by definition impossible, the famous question "Why did the patriarch come from the West?" takes on a particularly hollow tone. In fact, the transmission of Buddhism from India to China may be regarded as one of the great cultural feats of all time. According to R. H. Robinson, "the Chinese" even understood Mādhyamika Buddhism, even though this was very difficult.<sup>31</sup> The Mādhyamika account of Buddhist teaching was originally formulated in an Indo-European language, using a strictly formulated logic previously unknown in China and not used very much in East Asia even afterwards! Moreover, if "the Chinese" failed to understand "Buddhism," how could "the Japanese" understand it? Well, of course, many Japanese do not understand Buddhism. But there have been many great teachers of the Buddhist Dharma in Japan, and in spite of their differences this simple observer has concluded that most of them have understood "it." So the answer "yes" is better than the answer "no." This must also apply to "Westerners."

Of course, if we follow Suzuki (or if he himself had followed his own line of thought more consistently), we might not be satisfied with a distinction between "yes" and "no." After all, these are easily misunderstood words, especially in Japanese. But rather than worrying about such superficialities, we should ask why this question arises at all. It probably arises because people entertain the "essentialist" fallacy. That is, the question "Can Westerners understand Buddhism?" presupposes that there "are" Westerners and that there "is" something such as "Buddhism." Of course, we should use these terms, sometimes, but we should not allow them to trap us in the "essentialist" fallacy.

As far as we know, Suzuki himself did not reflect on these matters very much at a meta-level, because he was after all very busy indeed with the process of transmission itself. By now we have had the advantage of a few more decades to think about it. What is the conclusion? Or, as we should better say, how may we regard this matter now? It is true to say that the

<sup>31</sup> Robinson 1967.

elucidatory process is open, and critically informed, in a way which was not conceivable fifty years ago. Moreover, the process of the diachronic transmission of “Buddhism” has become very complex, culturally. In particular, many share in it who do not maintain a denominational affiliation. Whatever may be felt about the needs of religious organizations, thinking people can be quite happy about this. On the other hand, we should not think too much! The “simplicities” are important and if we think too much we may fail to understand them. An aspect of Suzuki’s skill was that he could often bring things down to a simple point which broke through the complexities. That is the meaning of his coming both from the East and from the West.

*Non-discrimination as an “Eastern,” Buddhist Virtue*

I think we can now understand much better how Suzuki’s view of Buddhism was constructed, why he translated and interpreted the *Lankāvatāra sūtra*, why he wrote *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, and why he translated *Dacheng qixin lun*. In so far as non-discrimination (*funi* 不二) was the message, then the *Lankāvatāra sūtra* was a perfect text. He also used a few of the shorter Prajñāparāmitā sutras for this purpose. He could have used *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa sūtra*, but this was being contemporaneously translated in *The Eastern Buddhist* by another writer, being another work which was published in German at the height of the Nazi period. Suzuki’s presentations of Zen Buddhism spoke to an audience who was prepared to listen to an “authoritative” voice which declared that “Western” ways of thought, with which they were disenchanted, could be overcome by deconstruction. The presentation of Shin Buddhism was insightful and sincere, but showed this Buddhism of faith in a similar light, that is, as based on a subjective experience which did not presuppose a systematic or logically built-up doctrinal structure. Typically, he emphasizes the *konomama* of Asahara Saichi, just as he is at pains to explain the notion of “suchness” (*tathatā*) in his writings on Zen. It is however striking that he took up Shinran’s complex *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証 as his last major task of translation. What was his motivation here? Institutionally it reflects the fact that he not only had a life-long loyalty to the Rinzai Zen tradition of Engakuji 円覚寺 in Kamakura, but also a later loyalty to the Shinshū-oriented Otani University, where the offices of *The Eastern Buddhist* were (and still are) located. But I think there is more. While enjoying the spontaneity and the intellectual elasticity of Zen

Buddhism, to which he found a certain counterpart in the non-intellectual, more or less mystical notion of *konomama* in Shin Buddhism, he also displayed a certain recognition of the *systematic* nature of Buddhist thought. In a sense, this is provided for Shin Buddhism by the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. Systematic teaching is not a feature of Buddhism which Western readers necessarily want to know about, as Suzuki realized, but at the same time they do want to know what the main point of Buddhism is, or as one said in those times, its “essence.” To approach this problem, playful writing was not enough. It was necessary to *summarize* positions in “Buddhism” and in particular in “Mahayana Buddhism” which were not based on specific, selected sutras. Suzuki rather avoided sutras which provide the main doctrinal focus of a particular denomination or sect. There is no work by him on the *Lotus Sutra*, which is central to Tendai 天台 and Nichiren 日蓮 Buddhism, the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*, which provides a key reference point for Shingon 真言 Buddhism, or even the three major sutras of Pure Land Buddhism. But he did write his *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* and he also translated the *Dacheng qixin lun* which is conceived as a systematic work, if a brief one. In a sense the translation of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* continued this aspect of his work although, perhaps unfortunately, it appeared only *after* he had already established his dominant reputation with his works on Zen. As a result, less notice of it was taken in the Western world.

### *Conclusion*

I have four conclusions. But before I come to them I would like to record that, apart from having benefited from reading his works, I have the very slightest, indirect connection (what in Japanese would be called *en* 縁) with Suzuki. This arose when, probably in 1965,<sup>32</sup> I had the opportunity in Tokyo to check through a foreword which he had written for his friend R. H. Blyth, a resident of Japan and another interpreter of Zen who helped to shape its modern image. There was little to correct in the foreword, but unfortunately my hope of meeting the great man briefly myself was not possible because of his very advanced age. Visiting the exhibition at Otani University a little while ago, I experienced some nostalgia when seeing not only the books which I read in those days, laid out in glass cases, but also Suzuki's typewriter, his suit and his suitcase, suitable for travelling abroad

<sup>32</sup> It may have been 1964 or even 1966, the year of Suzuki's death.

by sea. It reminded me of my own first voyage to Japan by sea in 1961, with one suitcase, one suit, some books, and my first, remarkably similar typewriter, acquired *en route* in Hong Kong. It is against the background of these simple associations, perhaps rather sentimental, that I have presumed to make some criticisms of Suzuki's work above. Somehow I feel that I can understand his "project," as they say nowadays.

Now to the four conclusions. First, the choices made by Suzuki were fundamentally led by what he regarded as necessary for the formulation of Buddhism for Western people. In return therefore, it was largely the needs of Western people in the twentieth century which determined Suzuki's own view of Buddhism itself. I put this forward as a hypothesis. In this short exploration my hypothesis is little more than a *hint*, based mainly on the Western language works. It is in no way intended to disparage the importance of his Zen training at Engakuji in Kamakura. Nor do I mean to underestimate the influence of his interaction with the Kyoto School, which however may sometimes have been *overestimated*.<sup>33</sup> In any case, it would be very valuable if future researchers would consider the importance of Suzuki's own view of "the West" more exhaustively, taking into account the Japanese works and in particular Suzuki's correspondence and other occasional writings. I expect that the results might lead to a strengthening of this hypothesis, and in any event to a better understanding of the precise importance of Suzuki's view of the "West" on his view of "Buddhism."

Second, Suzuki's works are a reflection of East-West interaction in the twentieth century. They could not have been written, for example, in the eighteenth century, and it would not be quite appropriate any more to write in this manner in the twenty-first century. Yet, this does not detract from the

<sup>33</sup> What is meant here is that the Kyoto School did not have a particularly strong influence on Suzuki's view of Buddhism (my subject), which seems to have been largely formed before he came to be (indirectly) identified with it. Suzuki's interactions with the Kyoto philosophers can be followed up in Dumoulin 1993, and of course they are interesting. It should be remembered however that there has been a long engagement between academic Catholic missionaries with the Kyoto School, which seeks to establish a common level of philosophical discourse and hence a route for the presentation of Catholic philosophical theology. This engagement would warrant a critical study in its own right. It is in effect a mirror of the interaction of Japanese thinkers in the Nishida tradition with Western philosophy, establishing a discourse in which "Zen philosophy" can be communicated both to the outside world, and consequently also with more authority within Japan itself. Thus, Dumoulin likes to include Suzuki as part of this process, because of his fame, but his participation may be a little exaggerated.

lasting value of his work. It is the story of one man's enduring and patient encounter with a foreign language and way of thinking, mainly American, with which he was concerned through most of his adult life. At the time of writing, there is apparently no substantial biography of Suzuki in a Western language. Yet, the available materials including letters and diaries (also those of his wife) certainly warrant one.<sup>34</sup> Through Suzuki's experiences we can enjoy the fascination of an individual's discovery of a world beyond the first world. It is one of the many such stories of modern Japan.

Third, Suzuki's Zen is drawn from Rinzai Zen, and more or less ignores Sōtō 曹洞 Zen. This is partly because of his experience at Engakuji, and partly because his perception of the Western world was that an interactive discourse, more typical of Rinzai Zen, was expected. Of course, Sōtō Zen has also been transmitted to the Western world, but it is more difficult to write exciting books about it! While Suzuki's Zen is drawn mainly from Rinzai Zen, and from the substantial Chinese tradition, it is not altogether clear whether it clearly represents Japanese Rinzai Zen in general or not. Probably it is best to think of it as Suzuki's Zen.

Fourth, Suzuki's view of "Buddhism" represents a new model which only became possible in modern times. Suzuki is riding a bicycle with two wheels: he is presenting "Zen Buddhism," and he is presenting "Mahayana Buddhism." It would be interesting to consider whether one of these wheels is larger than the other and includes it, and if so, which one. The answer is not obvious. Because of the historically strong denominational (confessional) structure of Japanese Buddhism, it is only in modern times that this question has become really visible. This is partly because of the substantial interest and progress in the identification of reliable manuscripts, in the question of the origins of the Mahayana, and in questions about the relations between the various early sutras and schools. In a new way therefore, it has become possible to ask "What is the Mahayana?" Moreover, quite apart from questions of historical research, Buddhist scholars and teachers in Japan have increasingly tended to present their own particular traditions in the light of this question, in order to avoid being just an isolated relic from the past. As was already pointed out, Suzuki was one of the pioneers in developing this concept with his book *Outlines of Mahayana*

<sup>34</sup> There are innumerable interactions with well-known figures such as Heidegger and Tillich to consider, but also, in Japan, with other leading Buddhist scholars such as Soga Ryōjin 曾我量深, as explored in the lecture by Ueda Shizuteru. Here, the demarcations between one view of Buddhism and another, often very subtle, can be more precisely determined.

*Buddhism* (1907), which therefore in its way symbolizes the opening of a new period of an integral, inter-confessional Buddhism.<sup>35</sup> A tentative answer to the question about the two wheels might be that it is Mahayana Buddhism which is the larger, within which Zen, for Suzuki, represents a smaller, concentrated center. An early recognition of the importance of Shin Buddhism was reinforced in the context of his later association with Otani University, from where he also had converse with the Kyoto School. Yet above all he realized that, as with all the later forms of Buddhism in East Asia, the central insights to which recourse is made are to be found in the origins. It is for this reason that his study and exposition of early Mahayana sutras continued well into the 1930s. In this sense we see in the work of Suzuki, in interaction with the Western world, a new point of departure for the understanding of Mahayana Buddhism. This approach continues to represent a challenge to the contemporary Buddhist world.

#### ABBREVIATION

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 et al., eds. 85 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai. 1924–34.

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<sup>35</sup> The term “ecumenical” might be used here, by analogy with the movement towards unity between at least some Christian churches. However there are also considerable difficulties with this analogy, which is a subject in its own right. It should also be noted that it was Suzuki’s decision *not* to include Theravada Buddhism in this inclusive concept.



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