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Suzuki Daisetz: An Appreciation

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I met Suzuki Daisetz 鈴木大拙 when he was seventy-eight years old, and, until his death at the age of ninety-six, and afterward, he was a central figure in my life. At that time, I set down these memories of him, which I have recently amended slightly.

My introduction to Dr. Suzuki and to Zen came about in an unusual way, through the kindness of two memorable men: Baron Hiranuma Kiichiro 平沼騏一郎, a former Prime Minister of Japan, and Count Durckheim, who was to become a leading German philosopher.

At the time, in 1947, they were confined to Sugamo 巣鴨 Prison in Tokyo. Hiranuma was on trial before the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, while Durckheim was what might today be called an “enemy alien.” As a twenty-five-year-old medical officer in the Army of the United States of America, I was serving as a doctor at the prison, caring for both Japanese prisoners and the American Guard Detachment. This position made it possible for me to get to know the prisoners, and I used to spend evenings in their cells talking with them and trying to learn about the strange country in which I had suddenly found myself.

One of the first things I learned about was Zen Buddhism. In our evenings in his cell, Baron Hiranuma tried to teach me about Zen. He described his studies at Engakuji 円覚寺 Monastery during his summer vacations from university “under the stick” of Roshi Imagita Kosen 今北洪川 and he taught me how to sit in *zazen*. But the language barrier intervened and I turned to

another prisoner, Durckheim, who also tried to teach me about Zen. Soon, however, he told me that I should pursue my efforts with Dr. Suzuki. He wrote me a letter of introduction and told me to take it to Dr. Suzuki who was then living at Engakuji, where Hiranuma had studied.

Getting Acquainted

So, not long afterward, on a lovely, warm Sunday afternoon, when I was off duty, I arrived at the quaint little semi-rural railroad station at Kita-Kamakura, a small suburb of the seaside resort, Kamakura, notable for its ancient Buddhist temples. I walked to the other side of the tracks and up the ancient stone steps, worn down by years, perhaps centuries, of monks and sightseers. The path led between huge dark cryptomeria trees and under the massive Mountain Gate of Engakuji with its thatched roof. Soon I found myself beside a bamboo fence that enclosed a small house and garden, largely surrounded by foliage. In the garden stood a small, bald man in a brown kimono, pruning shears in hand. He looked up from his work and then came toward the gate in the fence, quizzical, smiling gently.

Dr. Suzuki welcomed me, took the letter from Durckheim and led me inside his house where he adjusted his spectacles and read it. As he was reading, I had the opportunity to study him. I was struck by how small he appeared, slender and a bit frail in appearance. His face was dominated by his eyebrows which were long and curved upwards and outwards. Beneath the eyebrows his face radiated kindness and intelligence. Even in this brief encounter he projected a sense of wisdom and serenity.

When he had finished reading Durckheim's letter, Dr. Suzuki looked up and thanked me. He was impeccably polite, asking after Durckheim and how the prisoners at Sugamo were faring, speaking briefly about Hiranuma, and saying he was pleased to learn that I was interested in Zen. Then the meeting was over.

Only later did I learn that in this brief encounter he was far less forthcoming than usual and only much later the reason why. He didn't really like Durckheim. He didn't dislike him; I never heard Dr. Suzuki express dislike of anyone. He just didn't like him and presumably had reservations about someone whom Durckheim had recommended.

Since Dr. Suzuki had invited me to come back, I did so and the next meeting was longer and warmer. It gave me a chance to study the inside of his house, one of the first Japanese houses I had seen. At the time in Tokyo, there was not a wooden house left standing in the areas that I had visited. The only

things that rose above the ground were the tall, thin chimney-like brick structures called “go downs”—tiny warehouses that had been used to store valuables and extra household materials.

Dr. Suzuki’s house was a small wooden structure in the Japanese style with straw mats (*tatami*) for the floor and sliding paper-covered doors that constituted the walls of the rooms. In a bright area near glass doors that faced the garden was a low desk with a typewriter on it and a cushion on the floor in front of it. In future visits, I would often find Dr. Suzuki seated on the cushion, wearing a green eyeshade and hunched over his typewriter.

On this occasion, however, he pointed to a Western-style section of the house with a few low chairs, offered me one and sat down on another. After a while, he asked me if I would like some tea. I said that I would. He went into the next room and brought out a large irregular glazed bowl, wiped it carefully and set it on a low table beside him. Then, he produced a small lacquer box which he opened. He inserted a thin bamboo strip and scooped out some deep green powder, which he tapped into the bowl. Then he poured in steaming hot water from a kettle that had waited on a hot plate beside him and took a little whisk with which he beat the tea into a foamy green broth. He handed the bowl to me with the same grace that he had shown throughout the preparation. During all of this time he had said not a word.

The tea was terribly bitter and unlike anything that I had ever drunk. Even though I hardly understood what Dr. Suzuki was doing, I was struck by the quiet intensity with which he had prepared the tea. Later, after having received tea from Dr. Suzuki’s hands on other occasions, I realized that in his quiet, unpretentious way, he was showing me the essence of the tea ceremony.

Satori

Soon after I met him, perhaps on that same afternoon, Dr. Suzuki began to speak about Zen and, shortly, about “satori,” a major concern of his thought and writing at the time. “Satori is the Alpha and Omega of Zen Buddhism” was how he put it and “without satori there is no Zen Buddhism.” It sounded bizarre but, coming from this quiet, calm man, strangely appealing. And it was clear that Dr. Suzuki could talk about Zen in a way that went far beyond Hiranuma’s earnest efforts.

But what was this satori? Today it is far from the mystery it had seemed in that faraway time and college students identify it as “enlightenment.” But Dr. Suzuki was not to be tied down by definitions and explanations. Satori was satori. It had to be experienced to be understood.

Dr. Suzuki had translated old Zen stories that described persons' "attaining" satori by such improbable means as hearing the click of a stone brushed against a stalk of bamboo, or the sound of a frog jumping into an old pond. These old stories were about as far as he would go in talking about satori. I was left torn between thinking, on the one hand, that he was purposely holding back and obscuring something that had a simpler explanation and, on the other hand, that he was talking about something so profoundly different that a Western mind could never hope to understand it. It seemed bizarre but also strangely appealing.

Part of the appeal and of the feeling that this was not complete nonsense lay in Dr. Suzuki's understanding of Western thought. It was clear that, if he were retreating into an obscure Eastern mysticism, it was not because he didn't know what Western philosophers had taught. But he had a special place in his heart for mystical writers, East and West, and he never tired of talking about Meister Eckehart and Martin Buber. One of his favorite quotations was Eckehart's "the eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me."

Intrigued but also puzzled and even a little troubled by such a completely new experience, I got in touch with my good friend Dr. Theodore van Itallie, who was then serving in the Medical Corps at the American Naval Base further down the coast, at Yokosuka 横須賀. I told him about my meetings with Dr. Suzuki and asked him if he would come up from Yokosuka to Kita-Kamakura to see what he thought of all this. He came and we were soon listening to the old Zen stories and Dr. Suzuki's thoughts about life, and—satori. Then the afternoon was over and we walked silently through the Mountain Gate and down the weathered stone steps. Van Itallie didn't speak for a while. I finally asked what he made of it all. He didn't reply at once, and, being impatient, I volunteered, "It sounds like schizophrenia to me."

Van Itallie smiled. Then he replied in an assured way, "Well, if it is schizophrenia, I'll buy it."

Sunday Afternoons at Engakuji

During the next few weeks, I had the chance to tell another friend, Richard DeMartino, about Dr. Suzuki and ask him to join van Itallie and me at Dr. Suzuki's on a Sunday afternoon. DeMartino had graduated from the Japanese Naval Language School at Boulder, Colorado, during the war and had an enviable command of the language and access to many aspects of Japanese culture. He began to attend the Sunday afternoons at Dr. Suzuki's and brought

his friend Philip Kapleau, who was then working as a court reporter at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. We were soon joined by a young Englishman, Richard Crewdson, whose career as a Junior Officer in the Grenadier Guards had been marked by the deaths or disabilities of the other officers in his company not once, but three times. Crewdson either had, or quickly developed, a strong interest in the kind of religious matters about which Dr. Suzuki talked and planned to embark on a life devoted to promoting such interests. I believe that he did, but I have had little contact with him over the years. Over a period of several months, all of us spent wonderful Sunday afternoons in Dr. Suzuki's little house, listening to him talk, asking him questions and being encouraged in our efforts at understanding. "Yes, yes," he would say, "that is very good. Not quite. But very good."

Occasionally, we were joined by the poet R.H. Blyth who had spent the years of World War II interned as an enemy alien in Japanese prison camps. He eschewed the chairs that the rest of us were only too happy to use and would sit quietly on his knees, listening to Dr. Suzuki with evident awe and occasionally venturing a comment. His comments seemed impressive to me, but apparently, they didn't hit the mark any more than those of the rest of us. Dr. Suzuki would nod, smile benignly and say, "Very good, not quite, but very good."

Very occasionally we were joined by Faubion Bowers, a distinguished Japan scholar who had served as an interpreter for General MacArthur during the war. At the time, he held an enviable position as a kind of cultural overseer of the Japanese theater for the Occupation, deciding which pieces were militaristic and not to be performed and which were acceptable and could be encouraged. His position made it possible for him to provide very real help for the Kabuki theater, because he found very few pieces to be unacceptable and was able to further the production of ones that he found aesthetically more attractive. As a result of his years of study in Japan before the war, Bowers knew a great deal more about Zen and about Suzuki than we younger men. But unlike us, he approached these visits with a measure of detachment, more from the perspective of a cultural historian than of a seeker after Buddhist wisdom.

Those Sunday afternoons had a magical quality, not only for us young men, but I believe for Dr. Suzuki as well. Perhaps he particularly enjoyed them after the isolation of the war years. I was, however, surprised to read in the preface to his 1948 book "Living by Zen" what our meetings had meant to him. "Since the end of the war the author had frequent occasions to meet

several young American and English inquirers concerning the teaching of Zen. Their approach was more or less characterized by the modern scientific spirit. This made him go over anew the ground which he had been accustomed to cover in a rather old-fashioned traditional way.”

Dr. Suzuki rarely talked about himself. It wasn't that he held back, but more that such things didn't come up. When they did, it was usually in response to our questions.

We used to spend the Sunday afternoons drinking tea and asking questions, intrigued and frustrated, trying to understand what he was talking about, and also wondering about his deep tranquility. We had many questions about how Zen affected a person's experience of suffering:

After enlightenment did a person still suffer? “Oh, yes,” Dr. Suzuki quickly replied, “a person still suffers; he can suffer a great deal.”

Had he himself suffered? “Oh, yes. When my wife died.”

How did you feel then? Without a moment's hesitation, he replied, “I cried bitter tears.”

What, then, is so great about Zen? How was his experience different from that of someone who has not practiced Zen? He nodded and there was a long pause. Finally he said quietly, “My tears had no roots.”

Lecturing to the Emperor

The Sunday afternoons often had a wonderful personal quality but they were sometimes very frustrating and it was difficult, if not impossible, to understand what Dr. Suzuki was talking about. This occurred, among other times, during the discussion of an unusual event: lectures that he had given before the Emperor and Empress the year before.

When he told us of this event, we were eager to know what had happened, what the Emperor had seemed like and how he had responded to the lectures. Dr. Suzuki was reserved in his response, saying that it had been a great honor for him to be asked to speak before the Emperor. He said he thought that his talks had been well received. “The Empress seemed very interested in the subject.” He said nothing about the Emperor's response.

Dr. Suzuki told us that he had made an effort to give a general account of Buddhism. To introduce the topic he had begun the lectures with stories about Emperors and Zen masters. One story dealt with the Emperor Hanazono, a devout Buddhist, who had invited the renowned Zen master, Daitō Kokushi 大燈国師, to give a talk on Buddhism. The year was 1324.

The Emperor began the meeting by saying, according to Dr. Suzuki's text: "Is it not a matter of unthinkability that the Buddha-Dharma should face the Royal-Dharma on the same level?"

"Daitō replied, 'Is it not a matter of unthinkability that the Royal-Dharma should face the Buddha-Dharma on the same level?'"

"The Emperor was pleased with the reply."

Dr. Suzuki said that he had used this story as a way of introducing the topic of distinction and non-distinction. Thus, the Emperor spoke out of the everyday world of distinction, referring to the etiquette that prescribed that Daitō sit below him. Daitō, using the term "unthinkability" in a completely different meaning, spoke to the non-distinction of the world of the spirit and that of the Absolute.

Dr. Suzuki said that he had felt that he had not treated the topic of distinction and non-distinction adequately, either in the lectures or in the printed text. He felt that it required a far more detailed exposition. He spent some time discussing this more detailed exposition, particularly with Mr. Blyth, who was helping him in this effort. It was not one of his more successful expositions. At one point in the new text, after discussing the one and the two, he noted that "the one must be found in the two, with the two, and yet beyond the two, that is to say, non-distinction is in distinction and distinction in non-distinction. To state the point more directly and precisely, distinction is non-distinction and non-distinction is distinction."

As he went on, it was possible to get some sense of what Dr. Suzuki was trying to explain, that the world of non-distinction, or the Absolute, has no separate existence but exists in the world of distinctions. "It is spoken of as if it were an independent world transcending the world of distinction. But this way of looking at things is because our intellect requires us to make distinctions." He went on to say that "the merging of contradictions, the self-identity of distinction and non-distinction, is achieved by faith which is personal experience, the opening of the eye of transcendental wisdom." He, then, once again cited Meister Eckehart's "the eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me."

After listening to such expositions over a period of time, I decided that this kind of philosophical talk, whatever the Emperor and Empress may have gained from it, would only confuse me. But in his talk of faith, Dr. Suzuki seemed to be saying that only through faith, or possibly just through *zazen*, sitting meditation, could these matters be understood. This fit in very well with my growing interest in practicing *zazen*.

Reminiscences

Once when we were alone, Dr. Suzuki surprised me by talking about the emotional turmoil he had experienced as a young man during his Zen training. He had always seemed the soul of equanimity and it was hard to imagine him in turmoil.

Dr. Suzuki had, like Hiranuma, begun his Zen training at Engakuji during his summer vacation from Tokyo Imperial University and with the same teacher, Roshi Imagita. Imagita had died not long afterward. Dr. Suzuki told us with evident interest that Imagita's attendants reported that he had fallen to the ground with a loud noise and that when they reached him he was already dead.

Dr. Suzuki then began Zen study with Imagita's successor, Roshi Shaku Sōen 釈宗演. Some time thereafter Sōen was invited to speak at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, at what has since been recognized as a historic event, the first World's Parliament of Religions. At the time, Dr. Suzuki was studying English at Tokyo Imperial University and Sōen asked him to prepare an English translation of the lecture that he had planned to deliver at the Parliament of Religions. Dr. Suzuki said that he had done so but that he later realized how poor the translation had been. He had simply translated each word in sequence, with little sense of the underlying sentence structure. Dr. Suzuki may have been exaggerating the problem with his translation or perhaps the translation was later revised. But Sōen successfully delivered a lecture that was very well received and an excellent version was later published.

Sōen's lecture had a very important result: it attracted the attention of an influential American, Paul Carus. Carus had long been concerned with the conflict between religion and science that was then raging in the United States and had established a press, the Open Court Publishing Company, in an effort to defuse the conflict. The press published works designed to find a middle ground in the conflict and Carus had been impressed with Sōen's ideas, and Buddhism in general, which might offer an unusual new opportunity. Accordingly, he invited Sōen to join him in the Open Court Publishing Company and in his efforts to reconcile religion and science. Sōen felt honored by this request but told Carus that he had to return to his duties at Engakuji. He did have an excellent student, he said, and recommended Dr. Suzuki to Carus as an assistant. Carus accepted this arrangement and plans were made for Dr. Suzuki to join him.

When he returned to Japan, Sōen told Dr. Suzuki of these developments and it was agreed that he would join Carus in the future. Dr. Suzuki told me

that he had not “had” satori at that time and felt that it would be impossible for him to do justice to his obligation to Carus unless he had. Although it was three years before Dr. Suzuki left for America, the pressure for satori mounted. As a result, he dropped out of his studies at the university and spent more and more time at Engakuji, working on his koan, “What is the sound of one hand clapping?”

As the time for his departure for America neared, the tension became unbearable and he made a fateful decision: if he had not “had” satori by the time he was to leave, he would kill himself. Then, suddenly, he experienced satori. It occurred as he was walking up the old stone steps to the Mountain Gate of Engakuji, between the rows of the huge, dark cryptomeria trees, which I had come to know, and love, even before this revelation. Dr. Suzuki recounted his experience as follows:

As I was walking up the steps, I became aware that I was the same as the trees at which I was looking. It was not that I had ceased to be myself, but I had become the trees as well.

Much later, Dr. Suzuki commented on this account that I had included, without telling him, in a 1951 paper I wrote on “Some Interpersonal Aspects of an Oriental Religion.” After reading the paper, Dr. Suzuki referred to my description of his satori. He said that he had not been in the habit of talking about such things, that he had not thought that they were of interest to other people. He didn’t seem to be rebuking me although he had every right to do so. Instead, he appeared to be surprised that I had found his experience interesting enough to write about it. I was impressed with this reticence. It was a striking contrast to the publicity given to the intimate dissection of every psychological state of the young Americans who established the “Zen boom” of the 1960s.

Sitting at Engakuji

Some months went by, enlivened by the wonderful Sunday afternoons and reading books on Zen. These books were just becoming available in two exciting bookstores, Kyōbunkan 教文館 and Maruzen 丸善. They had often been purchased from old libraries and were being sold at bargain prices. Then, there were the discussions with van Itallie. It all fed my growing preoccupation with satori and how it might be, as it seemed, “obtained.” Dr. Suzuki spoke about being alert all of the time and helped to create an atmosphere at his Sunday afternoons, an expectation, that lightning might strike at any time. This was

a period, as I learned later, when he believed that *zazen* was not necessary to understand Zen. He may, in fact, have believed that it would interfere with an understanding of Zen. How he had come to this belief, and how it changed over the years was another fascinating aspect of this old man. I didn't know what he thought was necessary for lightning to strike, but, after some time, I became convinced that, although lightning might strike other people, it was not likely to strike me. If I were going to "get" satori, I was going to have to do more than read about it.

So I started practicing *zazen*. Hiranuma and Durckheim had already shown me how to sit, imperfectly, in the lotus position and I had begun to do so. When I asked Dr. Suzuki how to go further, he was kind and receptive, as he was about everything, but, to my disappointment, he gave me no advice and even seemed quite uninterested in my attempts at *zazen*.

My experience of *zazen* at this time was primarily one of aching muscles and salivation that led either to incessant swallowing or, when that became intolerable, drooling. Gradually I sat longer and longer, but satori seemed no closer at hand. When I told Dr. Suzuki what I had been doing, he received the news without comment. Concerned with what seemed like a lack of progress, I asked him if *zazen* could be made more effective if I worked on a koan but he was equally non-committal. I waited for some time to see if he would say anything more and, when he didn't, I screwed up my courage and asked him to recommend a koan. He thought for some time and then suggested, "Why don't you work on my old koan-what is the sound of one hand clapping?"

I set about enthusiastically meditating on "one hand" and would come to Dr. Suzuki with answers that I knew were off the mark. He would acknowledge them in a kindly manner and let it go at that.

Clearly something more was needed. So I asked Dr. Suzuki if it would be possible to attend a *sesshin* 撰心 at Engakuji, one of the week-long periods of intense meditation undertaken by Zen monks who sit in *zazen* from early morning until late at night. He said he thought that it would be possible and soon made arrangements for me to spend my next three-day pass from the Army at a *sesshin*. He felt that it would be too strenuous for me to take part in the full schedule of the *sesshin*, which began at four in the morning, and arranged for me to join the monks in the meditation hall at the beginning of their afternoon *zazen*. In the meantime, I stayed at his library across the small valley, sleeping there at night, eating packaged Army "K rations" and walking in the countryside.

Dr. Suzuki took me to the meditation hall for the first time. It was a long,

weathered wooden building, open at the front and back and lined, on the sides, with low platforms covered with straw mats. They were the standard straw mats, three by six feet long, known as tatami. Each monk was assigned one mat where he ate, slept and practiced *zazen*. Behind each mat on the sides of the hall were curtains that covered small shelves containing all of a monk's belongings. Toward the rear of the hall was a stand on which was placed, to my surprise, not a figure of a Buddha but a small dark figure riding on a curious mythical creature. I later learned that this was the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī riding a tiger and carrying the sword that cuts off delusion and folly. Mañjuśrī symbolized the “wisdom” (Skt. *prajñā*), that the monks sought in their meditation.

I may have been the first Westerner to sit in *zazen* at Engakuji after the war. Since I was in uniform, I was particularly concerned not to disgrace it. To minimize the ignominy of moving during the sitting periods, I took a codeine pill beforehand. It lessened the pain and helped to avoid disgrace. My concentration, however, was less on “one hand” than on the pain in my legs and the longing for the bell that ends the sitting period.

After the first night, I went to Dr. Suzuki's house where he was waiting for me. It was a wonderful moment, the pain behind me and his warm, welcoming face before me, and, very shortly, tea and cookies.

These two experiences, of *zazen* and of cookies, embody the two virtues of Zen, wisdom and compassion, represented by its two bodhisattvas. In the meditation hall, it was Mañjuśrī and wisdom; in the evenings it was Samantabhadra, riding on an elephant and symbolizing compassion. In Zen, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra are supposed to be venerated equally. But in Zen monasteries, Dr. Suzuki said, Mañjuśrī often takes precedence and Zen monks strive desperately for the wisdom that koan study can bring. When Dr. Suzuki spoke of this dichotomy, it was sometimes in a less than even-handed manner. It was clear that, of the two virtues, he favored compassion. Of the monks and their single-minded striving for wisdom through koan study, he once said, reflectively: “Those monks are very good at solving their koans, but sometimes they seem to forget Samantabhadra.”

One night in the meditation hall with my friend Dick DeMartino, I saw them forget Samantabhadra, as I will describe later.

After tea and cookies with Dr. Suzuki, I walked slowly in the darkness through the Mountain Gate, down the steps and across the valley to sleep under the futon on the floor in the building that housed his library. Dr. Suzuki seemed pleased with my efforts and arranged for me to continue this schedule.

So I spent my three-day pass each month sitting with the monks at Engakuji. It was a golden period, sitting in *zazen* in the mornings at Sugamo, waiting for the monthly *sesshin* and feeling that I was doing everything possible to work toward the satori that was so important to Dr. Suzuki. Then, I went to China and learned more about Dr. Suzuki, and why he had become so skeptical of *zazen*.

A Trip to China

My trip to China occurred in late 1947, about a year after I had arrived in Japan. It wasn't difficult to arrange for a leave, or to hop aboard an Air Transport Service plane to China and spend some time in Peking. The custom was, shortly after arrival, to send word back that you couldn't get out. The Chinese Civil War provided a certain plausibility to this excuse. But, at the time, there was a truce in the war, and you could get out if you really wanted to. There was a kind of understanding, however, that a trip to China was a kind of bonus of life in the Occupation.

Preparing for the trip was a welcome break from my usual duties and I read everything that I could find about China. For practical purposes, the comic strip "Terry and the Pirates" was the best guide to the rough and ready country emerging from years of Japanese occupation into a bitter civil war. But I also read Chinese philosophy and was impressed with the writings of a contemporary philosopher, Hu Shih 胡適. He had been a student of John Dewey at Columbia in the early years of the twentieth century. His book, "Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China," was a highly regarded attempt to see John Dewey's pragmatism in ancient Chinese texts.

I asked Dr. Suzuki about Hu Shih and he said that he knew him and that it would be a fine idea for me to meet him. He wrote me a letter of introduction and said that, as busy as Hu Shih was, he was sure that he would see me and it would be well worth the effort.

Dr. Suzuki gave me the letter with a request. Would I bring back some sandalwood incense? It hadn't been possible to obtain it since the war had begun and the Chinese made very good sandalwood incense.

Hu Shih was busy indeed. At the time he was the President of Peking University, but his responsibilities extended far beyond even that prestigious office. He was in the middle of critical negotiations between the Nationalists of Chiang Kai Shek 蔣介石 and the Communists of Mao Tse Tung 毛沢東. A truce between the two parties had been arranged and General George Marshall, the former Chief of Staff of the American Armed Forces and others

were trying to establish a compromise government. For that purpose they needed someone who would be a highly respected and non-political president. Hu Shih was the foremost candidate.

When I arrived in Peking, I sent Dr. Suzuki's letter to Hu Shih and not long afterward received an invitation to meet him at his office at the university. After a bitterly cold ride by pedicab, I found Hu Shih's office pleasantly warm, as was the tea that he served. At first, he, too, was warm. But after what seemed like an indecently brief period of pleasantries, he turned to the topic of Dr. Suzuki. He knew Dr. Suzuki, all right, he said, they had similar academic interests and he had no use for the man.

Suzuki was a Japanese spy, Hu Shih said, commenting bitterly about the Japanese and what they had done to his country.

"Spy?" I asked, perplexed.

"Yes, spy," was the answer.

Hu Shih then told me about a time when his ship had docked at Yokohama harbor during the Japanese occupation of China.

"Suzuki came down to my ship to invite me to visit him."

"Dr. Suzuki is a hospitable man," I ventured, but was promptly cut off.

"This wasn't hospitality. He came because the militarists sent him. They wanted me to get off the ship in Japan. But I was determined never to set foot on Japanese soil while the Japanese were occupying my country. The militarists knew that they couldn't get me off the ship so they sent their spy to try to do it."

There was a short pause and then Hu Shih began again.

"And he's a bad scholar, too."

How was he a bad scholar?

Hu Shih then told me about the thousand-year-old manuscripts, discovered recently in Chinese caves, which described the early history of Ch'an (Zen in Japanese) Buddhism.

"These manuscripts," Hu Shih said, "show that the traditional history of Ch'an was a fabrication, that it was based on forgeries. Suzuki knows this; he worked on these manuscripts, too. But in his writings, he ignores all this and goes on presenting the old, traditional history of Ch'an, as if it were true."

I asked Hu Shih what it was that Dr. Suzuki had ignored.

"It would take too long to explain it all to you," he said, but I persisted. Then he told me that Suzuki had ignored the fact that Ch'an was an important part of the history of Chinese philosophy.

I said I was sure Dr. Suzuki realized that and asked again what, specifically he had ignored.

Uncertainly, Hu Shih asked me, “Have you heard of Hui Neng 惠能?”

I had. Dr. Suzuki had often written about him. He was a seventh-century monk who was known as the Sixth Patriarch of Zen in China. That meant that he was the sixth person in the line of succession to have received the esoteric transmission of Zen from the Indian monk, Bodhidharma, who was believed to have brought Zen from India to China.

“Suzuki continues to peddle the traditional history of Hui Neng as the Sixth Patriarch, when he knows perfectly well that this is untrue, that the whole story is based on a forgery. In fact, Hui Neng was an illiterate peasant. He never wrote anything and there is almost no mention of him in authentic records.”

After listening to more denunciations of Dr. Suzuki, I thanked Hu Shih and left to spend two fascinating weeks in Peking. With much difficulty, I was able to find some sandalwood incense, and, when I returned to Japan I gave it to Dr. Suzuki. He accepted it graciously, but just how graciously I had no idea until much later, when I found some truly high quality sandalwood incense and realized what it was that Dr. Suzuki had been hoping for.

Regarding Hu Shih, I felt apologetic. Dr. Suzuki asked me if I had met him and I said that I had.

“Was it a good meeting?”

“Yes, a good meeting,” I replied uneasily. It didn’t seem appropriate to ask about espionage. But I needed to find out more.

“He told me about some old manuscripts that had been found in a cave.”

“Yes, the Tun-huang 敦煌 manuscripts. They were found in a cave in China where they had been undisturbed for hundreds of years.”

“Hu Shih said that they raised questions about the history of Zen,” I ventured.

“Yes, they did,” Dr. Suzuki observed and did not go on.

“They raised questions about Hui Neng. That he hadn’t been the Sixth Patriarch. That this was a later fabrication.”

“Yes,” Dr. Suzuki replied smiling, “there has been some disagreement about these matters.”

“Hu Shih said that Hui Neng had been an illiterate peasant and hadn’t written anything.”

“Well, there is some disagreement about these matters. Hui Neng certainly didn’t have much education.”

I still wasn’t satisfied. “But could he have written ‘The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch’ if he had been illiterate?”

“Yes, there is some question about how authentic that text is,” Dr. Suzuki

replied. "It may have been written by someone from his school, not by Hui Neng himself." And there the matter rested as far as I was concerned until, years later, I read the account of the debate between Hu Shih and Dr. Suzuki in the journal *Philosophy East and West* (vol. 3, 1953).

Hu Shih versus Daisetz Suzuki

What I had heard from these two men earlier had only partly prepared me for what they said about each other in *Philosophy East and West*.

Hu Shih begins by saying that he speaks "as a friend who has never concealed from him (Dr. Suzuki) my disappointment in his method of approach. . . . Any man who takes his un-historical and anti-historical approach can never understand the Zen movement or the teachings of the great Zen masters. The best he can do is to tell the world that Zen is Zen and altogether beyond our logical comprehension."

Hu Shih goes on to describe the discovery of the eighth-century manuscripts from the Tun-huang caves and editing them with Dr. Suzuki. He then goes over, in greater detail, the same accusations that he had voiced during our meeting in his office. He was adamant about the lack of authenticity of Hui Neng.

"What do we know about the illiterate monk, Hui Neng, the established Sixth Patriarch?" he asks and proceeds to answer his question "—precious little. He was born of a lowly family in an area where aborigines lived in peace with Chinese people . . . he was one of the aboriginal peoples of the Southeast." Hu Shih's text continues, maintaining that, during Hui Neng's lifetime, another monk had been recognized as the Sixth Patriarch. According to the Tun-huang manuscripts, Hui Neng came to prominence only years later, when a disciple of his, Shen Hui 神会, attacked the teachings of the original Sixth Patriarch. Over a period of many years, Shen Hui was able to supplant these teachings with ones that he attributed to Hui Neng. In the process, he helped to rewrite the history and establish what became the currently accepted view of Zen succession; that Hui Neng had been the Sixth Patriarch and he had been the Seventh.

Hu Shih acknowledges that Shen Hui's teachings were revolutionary. To understand the nature of this revolution, he refers to aspects of Buddhist history. A school of Indian Buddhism characterized by reliance on "meditation" (Skt. *dhyaṇa*), came to China in the fifth century. There it was recognized as Ch'an, a corruption of the word *dhyaṇa*, which, corrupted in turn, became Zen in Japan.

Shen Hui's teachings were revolutionary, Hu Shih writes, because "he condemned the *dhyāna* practice" that made meditation the central feature of Buddhism. He called it "a hindrance to enlightenment" and "swept aside all forms of sitting in meditation as unnecessary." The result, Hu Shih proposes, was a Chinese reformulation, or revolution, within Buddhism.

In the aggressiveness of his response to Hu Shih, it was hard to recognize the Dr. Suzuki of our Sunday afternoons. He begins with his "conviction that Hu Shih . . . is not qualified and equipped to discuss Zen as Zen." Ignoring Hu Shih's account of Zen history, he proceeds to argue for the traditional view, that Hui Neng's ideas were "truly revolutionary" and that they were embodied in the message that "*dhyāna* and *prajñā* are one." He continues, "Before Hui Neng, the two were regarded as separate, which resulted in emphasizing *dhyāna* at the expense of *prajñā*. By his emphasis on *prajñā*, Hui Neng revived the enlightenment experience."

Reading the explanation of what this experience means in Dr. Suzuki's essay, our Sunday afternoons came back to me. He begins by distinguishing between two kinds of knowledge, *vijñāna*, discriminative knowledge, and *prajñā*, "wisdom-knowledge." As the term is generally used, knowledge refers to discriminative knowledge, "public knowledge," which is the relationship between subject and object. When there is no distinction between subject and object, there is *prajñā* "consciousness in its deepest sense . . . a result of an inner experience, wholly individual and subjective."

He goes on, "The strange thing about this kind of knowledge is that the one who has it is utterly convinced of its universality . . . the uniqueness of *prajñā* intuition consists in its authoritativeness, utterly convincing and contributive to the feeling that 'I am the ultimate reality itself, I am the absolute knower.'" Dr. Suzuki never spoke to us in that way, but it was the way that he acted.

Returning to a more familiar tone, Dr. Suzuki continues, "the Zen master, generally speaking, despises those who indulge in word- or idea-mongering, and in this respect both Hu Shih and myself are great sinners, murderers of Buddhas and patriarchs; we both are destined for hell."

Then, sounding like his Sunday-afternoon self, "But it is not a bad thing to go to hell, if it does some good to somebody."

This essay went a long way toward helping me understand Dr. Suzuki's lack of interest in *zazen*. It may well have come from his study of the early Zen patriarchs, perhaps particularly from the impression that the Tun-huang manuscripts had made upon him. But Dr. Suzuki's lack of interest in *zazen* never extended to the radical repudiation that Hu Shih attributed to Hui

Neng's disciple and Dr. Suzuki to Hui Neng. I don't think that he viewed *zazen* as "a hindrance to enlightenment," although for a time he seemed to think that it was unnecessary. But he was unfailingly generous to me in my efforts, helping me to participate in *sesshin* and making sure that things were not too difficult for me. Then, one day he went further.

"Dr. Stunkard, when you are sitting in *zazen*, how do you keep time, how do you know how long you have been sitting?"

When I told him that I used a clock, he said that that was a good way and then asked if I would like to try another way.

"It is very pleasant to use incense to keep track of your *zazen*. That is the way I used to do when I was a young man. Perhaps you would like to have the incense burner that I used in those days?"

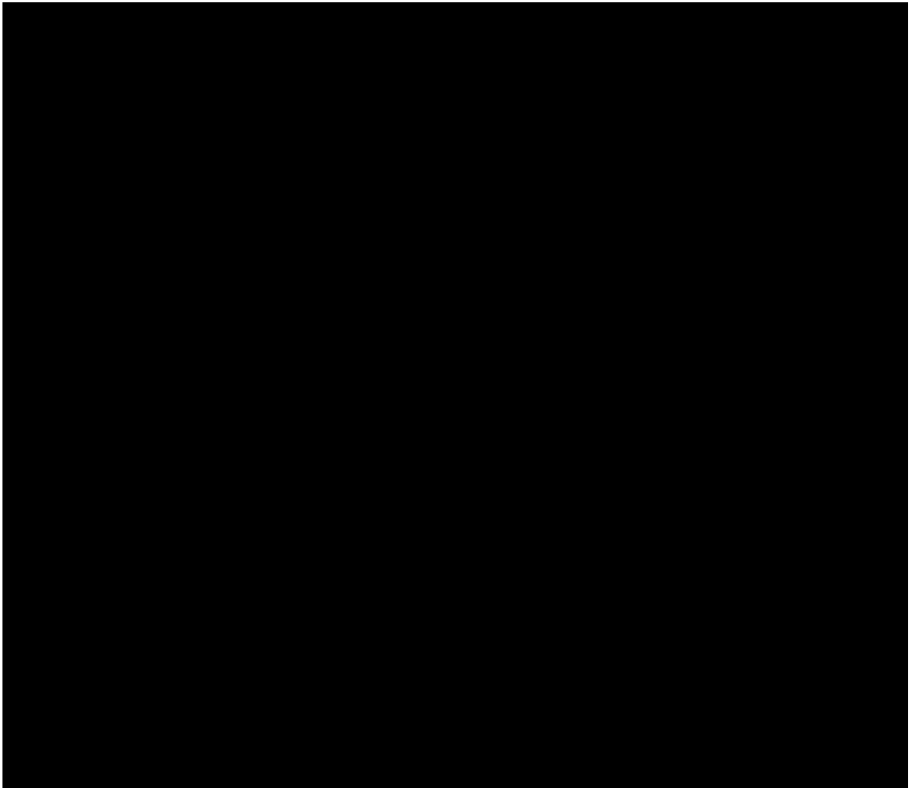


Figure 1. The incense burner given by Dr. Suzuki.

With that, he produced a small figure of Bodhidharma, the man who had brought Zen from India to China. The figure, with a cape over his head, was sitting in meditation and in front of him was a small empty cylinder in which to insert incense sticks.

“I hope that this will encourage you in your *zazen*.”

Over the years, Dr. Suzuki took a more and more positive attitude toward *zazen*, particularly during the 1950s when he taught at Columbia University and experienced the first American reaction to Zen, the “Zen boom.” It may have been this experience that led to his re-evaluation of *zazen* that took place about this time. He may have felt that even *zazen* was preferable to the endless talk about Zen by people whose only experience had been reading books about it, perhaps particularly books by Dr. Suzuki. If they were practicing *zazen*, perhaps they wouldn’t have so much time to talk about Zen. Whatever the reasons, Dr. Suzuki’s views on *zazen* changed to the point where he viewed it again as an important path to the understanding of Zen.

Two Friends

To my surprise, none of my friends at the time of our visits to Engakuji seemed interested in practicing *zazen*. For two of them, however, our Sunday afternoons were formative.

One of them was DeMartino, who later became a professor of religion at Temple University, where he specialized in Buddhist thought. After I had taken part in one or two *sesshin*, I invited Dick to join me during an evening sitting at Engakuji. He wasn’t keen on the idea but he agreed and came with me with no apparent misgivings. The monk in charge led us toward the back of the meditation hall where he assigned us seats not far from the open door through which the monks went out for their periods of walking meditation.

Dick and I settled down on our cushions in the lotus position and soon the pain filled my consciousness and I began to look forward longingly to the bell. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Dick and he seemed to be holding up well. Then I sensed rather than saw the restlessness and fidgeting that I knew so well from my own experience. “Just hold out,” I thought, “it can’t be much longer.” But it was.

The monks were not above hazing newcomers and this time they seemed to have decided to let the newcomer have it. I don’t know how long they kept us sitting. Clearly it was not a problem for the professionals, but it became a growing problem for Dick, as I could tell from the rustling at his place. Then out of the corner of my eye, I could see him bend forward and crawl on his

hands to the front of the platform and then, headfirst, wriggle down the two or three feet to the floor. Once on the floor, he crawled out the back door and disappeared into the night.

We never spoke of the incident and it was a long time before he sat in *zazen* again. For some years, Dick spent large amounts of time with Dr. Suzuki and traveled widely with him. He began graduate studies in Buddhism, became an expert on Zen literature of the T'ang period and could speak at length and with passion about Zen. He also became a student of Hisamatsu Shin'ichi 久松真一, a great layman of this time, and, under his tutelage, combined *zazen* and Zen philosophy. Dick was awarded a degree of Doctor of Philosophy from Temple University and for many years was a beloved professor on the faculty there.

A very different kind of life followed the Sunday afternoons' initiation into Zen of another friend, Philip Kapleau. As he recounts in his pioneering *Three Pillars of Zen*, he continued his interest in Zen after his return to the United States and attended Dr. Suzuki's lectures at Columbia. But he found himself increasingly dissatisfied with his life and with the solace that an intellectualized Zen could offer. Accordingly, in the finest Zen tradition, he gave up his job as a court reporter and returned to Japan to enter a monastery where he spent three painful years. A friend who saw him at that time said that she had been worried about him, because he was so thin and drawn, so apparently malnourished. But he stuck it out and eventually underwent the kind of intense enlightenment experience that featured so prominently in Dr. Suzuki's writings. Returning to the United States, Kapleau established a Zen center in Rochester, New York, and spent the rest of his life as a teacher and Zen master.

The lives of these two friends are wonderful examples of two directions that a Zen life can take. Dick DeMartino became the scholar who taught Buddhist philosophy and Buddhist lore to his students in the classroom. Kapleau became the master who taught Zen to his disciples. The Zen chronicles of tenth-century China also tell of these two directions of Zen life. A thousand years later, the Sunday afternoons created by a kindly teacher pointed in these same directions.

Dr. Suzuki in America

There was always something sweet and appealing about Dr. Suzuki and it came with him when he arrived in the United States in 1950, to teach at the Union Theological Seminary. By that time, I was fully immersed in my

psychiatric training at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, trying to put in perspective all that had occurred in Japan. The news of Dr. Suzuki's arrival brought with it an intense sense of anticipation. How would this little man seem to me in America, in my home, so far from Engakuji and all of the strange and wonderful things that now seemed so far away?

It turned out that Dr. Suzuki in America was not so different from Dr. Suzuki in Japan. The biggest change was in his dress. Instead of his fine brown kimono, he wore a well-fitting tweed suit with a shirt and tie that somehow made his small frame appear even smaller. It was the first time I had seen him in Western dress, but he had lost none of his same, warm manner and lovely smile. In Japan, I had never thought much about his partially toothless mouth. But I was struck by the way his smile had changed, brightened by new dentures. Appearances aside, he had not changed; always the teacher, he was soon back at his old profession.

Dr. Suzuki held small classes during the year that he taught at the Union Theological Seminary and later at Columbia. They were held in a small conference room; we sat in chairs facing him around a large table while he spoke and answered questions. He would often get up from his chair and go to the blackboard to write a Chinese word and then to comment on it, frequently at great length. These words and comments were usually enigmatic and intriguing and seemed to serve as a kind of framework for talks that seemed to have no formal outline. But Dr. Suzuki's lectures, as they were called, were not really different from the Sunday afternoon discussions at Engakuji. There were the same old Zen stories, talk of satori and encouragement. It would seem at times as if a questioner had truly understood a point and then we would hear again, "Very good, yes, very good. Not quite, but very good."

One day, there occurred an event that was perplexing and, as it turned out, instructive. Partway into the class, an intense young man sprang to his feet and loudly challenged something that Dr. Suzuki had said. To Dr. Suzuki's quiet response he shouted out another challenge, sounding like a character in the "Dharma battles" between Zen masters and their disciples that Dr. Suzuki had described in his books. Dr. Suzuki again responded quietly, his answer as enigmatic as the challenge. This went on for another exchange. Then the challenger sat down and Dr. Suzuki resumed his homely discourse.

I was greatly impressed by this exchange and, as I thought more about it, reproached myself. I had been trying for years to understand something about Zen and had never gotten close to this kind of give and take. What was the matter with me? I was glad to have the chance after the class, to ask Dr. Suzuki

what the young man had meant by his challenge. What had he been talking about?

"I don't really know," Dr. Suzuki replied, "He seemed to be a very earnest young man but I don't really know what he was talking about."

Perhaps Dr. Suzuki was guarding the sanctity of some privileged Zen communication but I think not. I was content to believe that the intense young man did not have some special insight that had eluded me. There was something reassuring about Dr. Suzuki's quiet, undramatic approach.

Dr. Suzuki as a Patient

Over a period of years, I had the unusual, and at times unsettling, opportunity to serve as Dr. Suzuki's physician. It began back in Japan while he was living at Engakuji. One day, after green tea and a conversation about Zen, Dr. Suzuki told me that he was having difficulty with his tongue and asked me if I could give him some medicine for it. When I asked to examine his tongue he seemed surprised. At the time I didn't think much about his surprise, except to be a little surprised about it myself. Later, as I learned more about Japanese medical practice, I realized that Dr. Suzuki's reaction was quite in keeping with this practice. Japanese physicians often prescribed medication on request without what we would have considered an adequate examination and diagnosis. Prisoners at Sugamo often appeared at sick call, holding out a hand and saying simply "*kusuri*," medicine. Some seemed surprised when I asked what the problem was for which they wanted the medicine.

A prisoner helped me to recognize the magical function that medicine served in Japanese culture of the time. It was a kind of cure-all for any and all ills, even as a kind of preventive medicine for whatever illness might come along. For all his sophistication, Dr. Suzuki was still a creature of his medical culture.

When I looked into his mouth, I was shocked. Very few teeth remained, discolored and ragged, protruding almost haphazardly from his gums. It was clear why his tongue was giving him trouble. It was enlarged, with reddened, smooth, inflamed edges.

The picture was a classic one of riboflavin deficiency. I told Dr. Suzuki that he needed vitamins and that I would obtain some for him. He seemed grateful and insisted that I go to no special trouble on his behalf.

Prisoners returning from the South Pacific frequently suffered from vitamin deficiencies and we usually supplemented their diets with vitamins during

their first weeks in prison. Accordingly, we had a large supply of vitamins at Sugamo and during my next visit to Engakuji I took a bottle of them to Dr. Suzuki. He accepted it with a gratitude that seemed more than was warranted by this simple gift.

The outcome of my first treatment of Dr. Suzuki was better than I could have hoped. He soon reported that the burning in his tongue had subsided and then that it had disappeared. He was, again, very grateful.

Some time after this occasion, Dr. Suzuki asked me if I could help “that old woman,” Kono, who seemed to be in poor health. Kono was a small, elderly woman in an inconspicuous dark kimono who was often in the background during my visits. I don’t believe that Dr. Suzuki ever introduced us and it was some time before I gathered that she kept house and cooked for him. When I would meet her, she was always on her knees on the straw floor mats and she would bow deeply, almost to the floor. Those of us who spent Sunday afternoons with Dr. Suzuki used to wonder about this shadowy figure, who was always available when something was needed. There were a number of rumors, often romantic, about her. A popular one was that she had been a noblewoman, who had been in love with Dr. Suzuki from an early age and had given up her family to serve as his housekeeper. We never found out more.

The medical history that “that old lady” gave was largely unrevealing. She said that she had been in good health until recently and that her health was still reasonably good but that she seemed to be more tired than usual. When I performed a physical examination, I found a thin, elderly woman with no readily apparent physical problems. Her abdomen seemed clear as did her head, neck, arms and legs. Her chest, however, was another story. When I percussed it, there was an area of dullness in the upper chest that suggested a past or present infection. When I listened there, I heard the unmistakable rales, or small crackles, that spoke of infection. The most likely cause of these findings was tuberculosis, which was widespread in Japan after the deprivation of the war and postwar years. Without an x-ray, the diagnosis was uncertain and there were some favorable signs: her temperature was normal and she was not coughing. But getting an x-ray was a problem. We weren’t allowed to use American Army facilities for Japanese nationals and I didn’t know how to obtain the services of a Japanese x-ray unit.

As van Itallie and I considered the situation, it seemed as if the lack of an x-ray was not as important as it would have been at home. There were no medications for tuberculosis at the time, and, in the States, treatment consisted

of little more than bed rest and good nutrition. These were usually carried out in a sanatorium where time was measured in six-month intervals and few patients left within a year. Long-term hospitalization was the rule.

The situation in Japan was quite different. It was not clear that there were any sanatoria for tuberculosis in the country and, if there had been, they would hardly have served as treatment. Adequate nutrition was very difficult to obtain and patients were better off staying out of the hospital and earning enough money to buy food. As van Itallie and I considered the status of our patient, we reluctantly made a decision: it would be best for her to stay where she was, living in a sheltered environment, with adequate food. We did not feel comfortable with this decision and it was not one that would have been acceptable in the United States. But, all things considered, it seemed the best we could do.

There was the problem, however, that “that old woman” might transmit the disease to Dr. Suzuki. So we spoke to both of them about this possibility, then about the importance of Kono avoiding close contact with him and about taking special precautions when preparing his food. They both understood the situation and did whatever they could to prevent transmission of the disease. And we comforted ourselves, Dr. Suzuki, and “that old lady” with the possibility that she might not have tuberculosis after all.

Some weeks after these events, Dr. Suzuki told me that “that old lady” wanted to give me a present.

He handed me a small wooden box. I slipped back the top to find a piece of brocaded silk that covered a small dark metal figure. Dr. Suzuki said, “This is that old lady’s *Kannon* 観音,” the Bodhisattva of Compassion about which he had so often spoken. I set it down on the low table. It was about two inches tall on a small round wooden pedestal. The tiny graceful little body was standing in the traditional pose with a large lotus leaf behind her head. A hint of gold suggested that the statue had once been gilded.

Dr. Suzuki said, “She wants you to have this in gratitude for what you have done for us.”

I have kept it ever since, beside Dr. Suzuki’s Bodhidharma incense burner.

I was not the only one to attend to “that old lady’s” medical care. Van Itallie examined her eyes when they caused her trouble and discovered that she was suffering from glaucoma. So he raided his medical supply closet at the Naval Station and, as it was then termed, “liberated” some medication for glaucoma. It turned out to be effective.

During my remaining time in Japan, I looked after Dr. Suzuki from time



Figure 2. The statue of *Kannon* given by “that old lady.”

to time for small medical problems. Once, I brought him some cough syrup. I didn't really consider myself his doctor, but more a friend for whom I was doing a favor. I don't know whether Dr. Suzuki had a Japanese doctor at that time but van Itallie also saw him for minor ailments.

When Dr. Suzuki arrived in New York, I had moved to Baltimore and so I saw him less frequently. During those visits, we continued to talk about medical and philosophical issues but he received medical care from others, particularly van Itallie, who was training in Internal Medicine at St. Luke's

Hospital, conveniently located not far from Dr. Suzuki's apartment. Van Itallie's medical training made it appropriate for him to assume responsibility for Dr. Suzuki's medical care but even he did not consider himself as his doctor and never formally enrolled him as a patient at St. Luke's. Dr. Suzuki was in excellent health but van Itallie was concerned about caring for a man who was now in his 80s. Programs of Internal Medicine at that time rarely had patients as old as Dr. Suzuki. Geriatrics was yet to be born as a specialty and very few physicians knew much about the care of elderly persons.

One problem that surfaced was Dr. Suzuki's blood pressure: 170/70 millimeters of mercury. Although his systolic pressure of 170 was severely hypertensive, his diastolic pressure was extremely low. Normal blood pressure is 120/80. The difference between the two numbers is called pulse pressure. Dr. Suzuki's pulse pressure was more than twice the normal. A pulse pressure this high was rarely encountered. It was presumably due to a rigidity in the arteries which did not expand to accommodate the pressure of the blood as it emerged from the heart. But knowing the mechanism didn't help in deciding what to do about it.

At the time, most patients received non-specific treatments such as mild sedatives and rest. There were only two specific treatments for hypertension. One was a major surgical procedure that damaged the sympathetic nervous system and left the patient with enormous disabilities. The other one was the rice diet, a radical regimen that had recently been introduced and was still being investigated. Neither seemed appropriate and, in the end, this fact dictated the decision. Van Itallie reassured Dr. Suzuki about his blood pressure, occasionally prescribed a mild sedative, and hoped for the best. As he had hoped, the best occurred: Dr. Suzuki never encountered any problems with his blood pressure.

Soon after van Itallie began to treat Dr. Suzuki, he told me of another finding that had intrigued him.

"He has an enormous abdomen," van Itallie said and waited for this fact to sink in.

Then he continued, "But it isn't fat. It's as hard as rock."

Van Itallie went on to say that it wasn't Dr. Suzuki's entire abdomen that was enlarged, but only the lower part, a part known in Japanese as the *tanden* 丹田, that features strongly in *zazen*. Zen practice places great importance on the *tanden*, as the site of abdominal breathing. Meditation teachers stress the importance of tightening this area to the greatest possible extent during the outbreath, pushing out every last breath of air. Van Itallie and I speculated

that these muscles might become highly developed in monks and other Zen practitioners who spend hours a day in meditation. But to find such powerful muscles in this old man was a real surprise. Perhaps, they had been built up during his years of Zen training during his youth. But they could hardly have maintained the strong tone that van Itallie had found if his exercise of these muscles had ended with his formal Zen training. We marveled over these muscles and finally concluded that, in his old age, Dr. Suzuki must be continuing the abdominal breathing that he had learned in his youth. If this were the case, it would be one of the most remarkable aspects of this remarkable man. For it meant that he was continuing his Zen breathing at the same time that he was downplaying the importance of *zazen* and meditation.

After his arrival in New York, Dr. Suzuki looked to van Itallie for much of his medical care. When he approached me, it was with a question that befitted my psychiatric training, about psychedelic agents. This question arose about the time he received a visit from Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. It had been a short visit and had not apparently made a strong impression on Dr. Suzuki. However, at the time, psychedelic agents were receiving a great deal of attention in medical circles as well as in the popular press, and Dr. Suzuki had been intrigued by what he had read about them. He was particularly interested in reports that the LSD experience was similar to that of satori.

Dr. Suzuki was sure, he said, that the LSD experience was different from satori. The experiences might *feel* the same, he mused, but they were clearly different. And their consequences must be different, as well. An LSD experience might leave people with a new outlook on the world but it would hardly transform them in the way that satori did after the rigors of years of Zen training. But, even so, he felt that it would be very interesting to have this experience and to be able to compare it to what he called "a Zen experience." He shied away from the word "satori" in describing his own experience. These concerns had obviously been preoccupying Dr. Suzuki when he finally asked: "Would you be able to bring me some LSD, Dr. Stunkard?"

I was impressed that this old man, now in his 80s, was so much in touch with current events. It was not simply his knowledge of current events that impressed me, but also his thoughts about LSD and his desire to undergo the experience.

"But should he?" van Itallie and I wondered. In the early days of the psychedelic revolution little was known about these drugs. There were reports of "bad trips" and we were concerned that LSD might damage his mind or his brain. There had been rumors of a Zen master who had experimented with

LSD and had had a "bad trip." According to the rumor, he had lain down in a fetal position and refused all communication, frightening the people who had arranged for the experience. Eventually, the effects of the drug had worn off and the Zen master returned to the world no worse for wear. We could not bear the thought of subjecting Dr. Suzuki to this kind of uncertainty.

In addition, there was the question of his blood pressure. There were no reports of the effects of LSD upon this at that time, even blood pressure of normal levels, let alone Dr. Suzuki's 170/70.

We met with him and explained our concerns about the possible dangers of LSD in general and particularly in someone of his age and we recommended that he not try it. He listened attentively and thought about what we had said. Then, with obvious reluctance, he agreed to forego something that he obviously wanted very much to do.

Dr. Suzuki and My Parents

Soon after Dr. Suzuki arrived in the United States, I visited my parents in New York and told them that the man who had meant so much to me in Japan was now here. My mother asked me to invite him to dinner and he accepted. This visit became the stage on which the drama of Dr. Suzuki with each of my parents played out.

I came up to New York from Baltimore and met my father, who drove us to the Union Theological Seminary, where Dr. Suzuki was staying. He was waiting for us, dressed in his tweed suit.

We had not been driving for long after picking up Dr. Suzuki when I became aware of tension. My father, a customarily self-assured professor of biology, who conducted research on animals, was unusually silent. Perhaps out of deference, Dr. Suzuki also had little to say. I felt awkward and tried to make conversation but without much success.

As we passed the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, I pointed it out to Dr. Suzuki as the place where I had attended medical school. He expressed some interest and then asked, "Do they practice vivisection?" Aroused, my father spoke out for the first time, once again sure of himself, even didactic.

"Vivisection is necessary for medical progress. Without research on animals, we would not know what we know today and we would not learn anything in the future." Having delivered this pronouncement, my father fell silent. Dr. Suzuki murmured "I see," and the painful silence returned. At least it was painful to me, and probably to my father as well. I think that it was probably not painful to Dr. Suzuki.

During the day that Dr. Suzuki spent with us, my father said little to him and seemed to have little interest in what he said. But he must have been curious about this man, if only because he seemed important to his son. Once he made an attempt in his awkward way to find out what it was that Dr. Suzuki was teaching. Fixing Dr. Suzuki with a firm stare and a stern manner, he asked, "Now, Dr. Suzuki, I want you to tell me just what this Zen Buddhism is all about."

Dr. Suzuki spoke for a while in a pleasant manner without any apparent effect on my father. When he had finished, my father said, with conviction, and not a little satisfaction, "Well, Dr. Suzuki, I don't understand a word of what you're saying." Dr. Suzuki nodded pleasantly and replied, "No, Professor Stunkard, I'm sure that you don't." The words themselves may seem confrontational but the message was not. Dr. Suzuki spoke in such a kindly manner that even my father could not take offense. Dr. Suzuki was just pleasantly acknowledging the way things were.

It wasn't long after Dr. Suzuki arrived at our house that my mother uncovered an improbable relationship. She used to try to put people at their ease and was soon embarrassing me by gushing, "Oh, Dr. Suzuki, you speak such wonderful English. Where did you ever learn to speak such good English?" Dr. Suzuki thanked her and said that he had lived for some time in the United States as a young man; it was then that he had learned to speak English.

My mother promptly asked where he had lived and Dr. Suzuki replied, "I'm sure it wasn't any place that you know of, Mrs. Stunkard, just a small town on the prairie."

My mother exclaimed effusively, "Well, Dr. Suzuki, I come from a small town on the prairie. Which small town did you live in?"

Dr. Suzuki again demurred, and said that it was a very small town; it was called La Salle.

With even greater enthusiasm my mother exclaimed, "My goodness, Dr. Suzuki, you lived in La Salle? Did you, really?" and went on, "I know La Salle very well." She paused and then ventured, "Did you know the Carus family in La Salle?"

Smiling, Dr. Suzuki said "Yes, Mrs. Stunkard, that's where I lived; I lived with the Carus family in La Salle."

My mother immediately asked, "Did you know Elizabeth Carus?" and Dr. Suzuki replied that, yes, indeed, he had known Elizabeth very well.

Triumphantly, my mother then said, "Then you probably met me. We lived in Champaign and every month or so my father used to take me over to La

Salle to play with Elizabeth Carus. My father thought very highly of Paul Carus; he always said that he was a man ahead of his time."

Then my mother and Dr. Suzuki discussed the years when he had lived with the Caruses and the years when my mother visited them and it did indeed seem as if they could have met. In a friendly way, Dr. Suzuki said that yes, he did think that he now remembered a young friend of Elizabeth's who used to come from Champaign to visit her and that that must have been my mother. My mother did not pretend to remember Dr. Suzuki but, since these visits must have taken place about 1900, when she was five or six, that was not surprising.

My mother asked Dr. Suzuki how he had happened to stay with the Caruses and he recounted the tale of his teacher, Sōen's meeting Carus at the World's Parliament of Religions and arranging for Dr. Suzuki to come and work with him.

"So that is how I came to La Salle, Mrs. Stunkard."

A recent biography of Paul Carus cites a letter he wrote to Sōen from this period, "We are all very much pleased with Mr. Suzuki and with the gentleness of his character."

After our lunch, Dr. Suzuki thanked my mother and complimented her on her cooking, and we went into the living room. We had been there for only a few minutes when Dr. Suzuki announced, to no one in particular, but clearly meaning my mother, "Now I would like to lie down. It's time for me to rest." My mother asked Dr. Suzuki if he would like to go upstairs to bed.

"No," he replied, pointing to the couch on which he was sitting, "here is quite suitable."

My mother asked if he would like a blanket and, when he said that he would, she hurried off to get one. Dr. Suzuki took off his shoes and jacket, set them down carefully, and then lay down, as my mother appeared with a blanket. She covered him with it. He thanked her and promptly went to sleep.

During this time, my father was watching these activities from his old easy chair with what may have been curiosity, or more likely, disbelief. When Dr. Suzuki awoke after a brief time, he sat up and my mother and I engaged him in conversation from which my father was notably absent. Instead, he sat silently, hardly masking his emotions, glowering at this presumptuous visitor.

We spoke for some time and then it was time for Dr. Suzuki to leave. My father drove him and me back to the Union Theological Seminary, saying not a word on the way to the seminary or back.

“High Noon”

I was continually surprised by Dr. Suzuki’s ability to relate to different situations. A poignant occasion involved our going to the movie “High Noon.” I had been moved by this Western, which tells the story of a sheriff (Gary Cooper) who has resigned his position and is leaving on his honeymoon when he learns that a “deadly killer” whom he had sent to prison years before has been released and is returning to kill him. The sheriff makes a fruitless effort to recruit townspeople to help him face this killer and the three desperados who accompany him. Then he goes to his office, signs his will, and walks out to meet his fate.

The character of the lone man of integrity, abandoned by his friends, who chooses death over dishonor, revived my old feelings of admiration for my father. I had persuaded him to see “High Noon” with me, hoping to convey to him something of my boyhood admiration. But it didn’t work. He didn’t like the film and said that it was just a lot of violence and shooting and he didn’t have any use for that kind of thing.

Some time after this misadventure, I asked Dr. Suzuki to see “High Noon” with me. I hoped that he would help me to understand what it was that had moved me so deeply. We went along with Dr. Suzuki’s ward, the young Count Ōtani Kōsho 大谷光紹, whose father was the head of Higashi Honganji. Young Ōtani was also intrigued by the film and talked about it so much that we began to call him “Two Gun” Ōtani.

Dr. Suzuki watched the film with rapt attention and afterward threw himself into a lively discussion of it. It was a wonderful film, he said, and it had moved him. He said that he had particularly liked the point when the sheriff, having been abandoned by his friends, wrote his will and went out to die. “That was a very important moment for that sheriff. That was the moment when he really lost his life, lost his self. After that moment, he was no longer concerned with living or dying. He was just performing the duty that lay before him. At that moment the sheriff was a true man of Zen.”

Auras and Personal Influence

One of the things that impressed me about Dr. Suzuki was his ability to calm the tides of human passion. I had had little chance to see this ability during his solitary life at Engakuji and he had not succeeded with my father. But from time to time, I had a chance to see his influence on conflicts that arose among persons around him. His presence somehow led to a quality of calm. It was

difficult to say how he exerted this effect but it seemed to result from his total lack of retaliation to any intrusion on his self. No matter what unpleasant things happened around him, his response was quiet acceptance. It was striking to watch this influence on an angry exchange between two people. They simply stopped responding and the atmosphere became quiet. At the time, I thought that this influence could be conceptualized as an aura that spread out from Dr. Suzuki to the people surrounding him, soothing and calming them.

I had a chance to see this calming influence on a different kind of group—psychoanalysts.

During the previous winter, I had taken a course on psychoanalysis from Erich Fromm at the New School for Social Research in New York and was impressed with how frequently he referred to Zen Buddhism. After one of his lectures, I asked him about his interest in Zen Buddhism, and he told me that it came from books, mostly those of Dr. Suzuki. He would like to learn more about it, he said. At this point, I asked him if he would like to meet Dr. Suzuki. He seemed surprised: “Where could I meet him?” he asked. I told him that Dr. Suzuki was then living in New York, only a few subway stops from his lecture hall. Fromm said that he would like very much to meet Dr. Suzuki, and not long afterward we spent a very pleasant evening with him. Then Fromm proposed that Dr. Suzuki attend a conference at his home in Cuernavaca. From the first, Fromm apparently saw the conference as an opportunity to co-author a book with Dr. Suzuki. He saw to it that the essays from the conference by him, Dr. Suzuki and DeMartino were published under the title *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*.

The conference took place at Fromm’s elegant villa on the edge of town. The villa was situated just above a large swimming pool on which the servants cast flower petals each morning and above terraced lawns over which peacocks strutted. The warm summer sun was a pleasant contrast to the cool mountain air. Sitting on the porch, looking off into the distance, Dr. Suzuki commented, “In an atmosphere like this there really doesn’t seem to be any need for Zen.”

If Dr. Suzuki did not feel any need for Zen, the same could hardly be said for the participants in the conference, primarily psychoanalysts. They began with a lively display of their knowledge of Zen literature and their ability to one-up their colleagues with arcane Zen stories. They had all read a great deal about Zen.

Then, there occurred a magical transformation in the people attending the conference. Over the course of the week, their egotism lessened and then just

seemed to melt away. It was not clear what had caused this change and how much of it was due to Dr. Suzuki, but his presence clearly had an effect. Perhaps it was his radical non-response to affront. Here the affront was not so much anger as it was the pompous self-assurance of the participants. Dr. Suzuki simply listened to their explanations of Zen Buddhism, smiled, said, "Very good," and went on to other things.

During the conference an interchange that occurred between a leading Mexican actress and Dr. Suzuki revived an old interest for me. He asked about her experience while acting and she said that when she entered a role on stage or screen she lost all thought of herself and *became* the person whose role she was playing. She was emphatic about this total absorption, this total lack of self. She was a beautiful woman, no doubt accustomed to attention and she went out of her way to attract Dr. Suzuki's attention. She fully succeeded and Dr. Suzuki seemed entranced with what she reported. Returning to the old satori question, I asked him if she were experiencing satori during these periods. "Yes," Dr. Suzuki said, "it is satori, but it is a limited satori that does not extend beyond the realm of her acting. Nevertheless, it is a wonderful ability to experience this kind of satori. She is truly a remarkable woman."

The one person whose striving seemed not to have been eased by these wonderful days in Cuernavaca was Erich Fromm. He continued to comment on the meaning of Zen Buddhism and devoted much of the closing session to his understanding of it. He pointed out the importance of Zen Buddhism for our contemporary culture. He asserted that it was exemplified by the image of the angel with a fiery sword who stood guard at the edge of Eden after Adam and Eve had been expelled. This symbolized, he said, the imperative that man continue his journey into maturity, and the impossibility of ever returning to the conflict-free Eden where we had been babies at our mother's breast. That way, Fromm cautioned, lay madness; that way lay regression to an infantile state.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Suzuki thanked Dr. Fromm and the participants for the fine meeting and for the fine images. He had been impressed, he said, by the image of the guardian with the fiery sword preventing man from regressing to the infantile state. Then he went on, somewhat whimsically, to say that he had been thinking about the infantile state and that it might be nice to regress into it. Extending his arms as if holding a baby, he said, "The baby must be very happy lying in its mother's lap" and then changing the position he continued, "or maybe lying like this in its mother's lap . . . yes, that must be a very pleasant way to live. I think that I would like to live like that."

Modesty and Assurance

The assurance that Dr. Suzuki displayed in Cuernavaca served him well as he became more widely recognized. But it was always joined to a becoming modesty.

Not long after the Cuernavaca conference, Dr. Suzuki addressed a far larger psychiatric audience. It was at a joint meeting of the American and Japanese Psychiatric Associations in Tokyo. By this time, Dr. Suzuki's writings had attracted widespread interest among mental-health workers in the United States and the Japanese hosts realized that he would make an ideal keynote speaker.

The large audience was eagerly awaiting his lecture on "The Meaning of the Unconscious in Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis." They watched as the tiny figure ascended the podium, took out his prepared text, adjusted his spectacles and looked out. Then he removed his spectacles, paused, and began to speak.

"My lecture today is entitled 'The Meaning of the Unconscious in Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis.' This is clearly a topic of great importance. But as I was walking up the steps it occurred to me that it might be of greater interest to you if I tell you how I spend my day."

He began by telling how he got up in the morning, proceeded through the day and ended by telling how he went to bed. And he finished the lecture on time!

During his last years in America, Dr. Suzuki attracted increasing attention, and not only among psychiatrists. The daughter of Albert Einstein became impressed with Dr. Suzuki and invited him to meet her father. I saw him soon after his return from that visit to Princeton.

"How did it go?"

Dr. Suzuki said that he had very much enjoyed meeting Dr. Einstein and found him to be a very pleasant man.

"And what did he think of Zen Buddhism?" I asked.

"Well, Dr. Stunkard, I don't think that he was very interested in Zen Buddhism. I think he met me because his daughter had asked him to. But he didn't seem to be interested in Zen so we talked about other things."

I had regrets about this meeting but Dr. Suzuki didn't share them. For him, it had just been a pleasant afternoon.

Another encounter, of sorts, was with Dag Hammarskjöld, who was then Secretary General of the United Nations. Dr. Suzuki had been invited to

Brussels to address the opening session of the 1958 World's Fair. When his plane arrived at the airport, a Receiving Committee together with a military band was waiting for him. Hammarskjöld, who had also been on the plane, strode to the exit, greeted the Receiving Committee and delivered a short talk expressing his gratitude for this generous reception.

When he had finished, the Belgian officials, embarrassed, told the Secretary General that the reception had, in fact, been planned for a Japanese philosopher who, they believed, was on the plane. When they entered, they found Dr. Suzuki sitting quietly, looking out the window, watching the reception. They asked him why he had remained in his seat. He had not wanted to interfere with the ceremony, Dr. Suzuki explained. The officials then led him to the exit where they repeated the welcome.

When Dr. Suzuki returned to New York, I asked him about the event. He didn't say very much. "There was some kind of mix-up at the airport," he said, "but they got it straightened out."

Buddhist Scholarship

Over the years Dr. Suzuki's approach to Zen changed. He spoke less about satori and the dramatic enlightenment experiences that had so intrigued him and more about living in harmony with nature and with the world. As I have noted, he came to view *zazen* in a more positive light. But scholarship was always foremost in his interests. And these interests continued to the end of his life.

Dr. Suzuki was about ninety years old when he began to speak to me about Jōdo Shinshū or Pure Land Buddhism. Traditionally, Pure Land Buddhism and Zen had been viewed as having nothing in common. In this view they stood, in fact, at opposite poles in the Japanese classification of religions. At one pole is self power (*jiriki* 自力) and at the other is Other Power (*tariki* 他力). This distinction is somewhat similar to the Christian division of salvation by works or salvation by faith. Zen is the exemplar of self power and in the popular view, it is seen as requiring extraordinary personal effort. Jōdo Shinshū does not require the strenuous training associated with Zen but rather simply uttering the phrase, *Namu Amida Butsu*—"I take refuge in Amida Buddha." It is generally thought that those who say "*Namu Amida Butsu*" with complete faith should be able to cope with the trials of this life and after death be reborn in the "Pure Land." Not only did these traditions differ in their positions in the classification of religion, but also in their perceived philosophic depth.

Some Zen scholars have viewed Pure Land teaching skeptically, and have cautioned against its reliance on faith and on the invocation *Namu Amida Butsu*. They see no relationship between the pieties of Pure Land devotees and the long, rigorous philosophical tradition of Zen.

Another critical difference between Zen and Pure Land lay in their place within the highly structured social class system of Japan. Zen was the religion of the samurai, the elite warrior class that had dominated the cultural life of Japan for centuries. Pure Land Buddhism, on the other hand, was the religion of the peasant class and Zen scholars rarely concerned themselves with this religion of the peasants. But Dr. Suzuki did concern himself with it and saw in it the compassion that he believed had too often been slighted in Zen by the overriding quest for wisdom.

Dr. Suzuki's understanding of Pure Land reflected his understanding of Zen. In his studies of Pure Land, he saw *Namu Amida Butsu* as far more than a mantra or device. Commenting on the writings of an uneducated woodworker named Asahara Saichi 浅原才市, a Pure Land devotee, Dr. Suzuki writes, "As soon as the '*Namu Amida Butsu*' is pronounced, he, as *Namu*, melts into the body of Amida. What has taken place is the identification of Amida and Saichi." Reflecting upon his own enlightenment experience—"it was not that I had ceased to be myself"—he went on, "But the identification is not Saichi's vanishing. Saichi is still conscious of his individuality."

Our Last Visit

The last time that I saw Dr. Suzuki, I found him still working hard, and smiling about a discovery he had made a few days before. We met at his home in Kamakura, Matsugaoka Bunko 松ヶ岡文庫, the library where I had stayed during *sesshin* years before. He was 95 years old and he was feeling his age. "Old age, Dr. Stunkard, is such a problem. Eyes no good, so a need for artificial eyes. Ears no good, so a need for artificial ears. Teeth no good, so a need for artificial teeth. And it is no longer possible to work the way I used to. After two hours I must stop working and take a rest. Then I start working on a different book. It helps me to maintain my interest." At the time, he was working on three different books.

Then he returned to his discovery. He had been working on a commentary about the calligraphy of a Zen master, Sengai 千呆 (1636–1705). Sengai had left behind a collection of sketches that looked very much like comic strips and that was how they had been regarded until recent years. They had attracted the interest of a Mr. Idemitsu 出光, a wealthy industrialist who had col-

lected the sketches and begun to publish them in long scroll-like printings, as advertisements for his company. For some time, Dr. Suzuki had written brief commentaries that accompanied the calligraphy and now he was trying to expand these commentaries into a book on Sengai's art. It was during this task that he had made his discovery.

Dr. Suzuki explained that one of the characteristics of Sengai had been that he was "always laughing" and that even during his lifetime he had been criticized for his laughter. "People would say how can a Zen priest be laughing when the world is so full of suffering. Doesn't Buddhism deal with suffering? With all of the suffering in the world, it doesn't seem right for a Zen priest to be laughing."

Dr. Suzuki went on, "I had been trying for some time to explain why Sengai was laughing but it was such a difficult task. I would say that his laughter was life-affirming, or that it was positive and not negative. But this just didn't seem to be right. Then, I remembered that at some time in the past I had read something about laughter that had impressed me. I thought that, if I could only remember what it was that I had read, it would help me to explain why it was all right for Sengai to be laughing. Well, for quite some time I couldn't remember what it was that I had read. Then, all of a sudden, a few days ago, I had a surprise. I remembered the name of the book. It was called *Le Rire* by Henri Bergson and I remember how much I had enjoyed it when I read it. So now I am reading it again and enjoying it just as much. And it is having a beneficial effect on my writing; it is helping me to explain why it was all right for Sengai to be laughing." *Le Rire* was published in 1903, which meant that 62 years had elapsed between the first reading and the recollection. I was swept up in the emotion that flowed from this old man and we laughed together.

Dr. Suzuki died soon afterward. He was stricken during the night with severe abdominal pain and was taken to a hospital in Tokyo. As he was being carried down the steep steps from his home, he kept saying to the stretcher-bearers, "Thank you, thank you, thank you . . ."



A recent photograph of Dr. Albert Stunkard