

Young D. T. Suzuki's Views on Society

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THIS SHORT ARTICLE attempts to shed light on the thought of D. T. Suzuki's youth, focusing on his views of the state, society, and science. Determining the end of his "youth" is problematic, but here I consider it to be about the time he returned to Japan after his lengthy twelve-year stay in America (Meiji 42 [1909]) and got married (Meiji 44 [1911]). July of the following year marked the shift into Taishō, so for this essay, I have settled on the end of Meiji. He was forty-one years old at the time.

D. T. Suzuki's life spanned approximately a century. In that time, his output was truly vast, comprising more than twenty books in English in addition to the Japanese writings contained in his 32-volume *Collected Works* (*Suzuki Daisetsu Zenshū*; SDZ). Looking only in the *Collected Works*, and deciding on the end of Meiji as the end of Suzuki's youth, we can find a total of about 1,500 pages from volume 23 and from sections of volumes 17, 18, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 31. Put together, it would come to three volumes, which is less than one-tenth of the entire *Collected Works*. In other words, even though Suzuki published much more from the Taishō period on, and although the works of the young Suzuki (ending with Meiji) are quite few in the context of his entire career, they still come to two books in Japanese, three books in English, three Japanese translations, and five English translations. Moreover, there are also about 150 items from journals. Of these journal articles, over forty have not

* This is a translation of "Seinen Suzuki Teitarō Daisetsu no shakaikan," in *Zen-gaku kenkyū* 72 (1994). The notes are those of the author. The translator wishes to thank his colleague Zenno Yasushi for his technical assistance.

been included in the Collected Works published by Iwanami. At some opportunity in the near future, I would like to publish a bibliography of those essays I have researched, since there are many important items for understanding Suzuki's youth.*

In quoting widely from articles not compiled in the Collected Works, this short piece attempts to give as comprehensive a survey as possible of his views on society and the state. Sources for quotes not flagged with "SDZ" are not included in the Collected Works.

1. SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AGE

1-1. *Environment of the Period*

D. T. Suzuki was born in 1870, the third year of Meiji. He was seventeen in 1887, was twenty-six when he went to America in 1897 to work under Paul Carus, and was thirty-eight when he returned to Japan in 1909. He received his formative education in the second decade of Meiji (1878-1887), entered Japanese society in the third decade (1888-1897), and lived in America for the fourth decade (1898-1908). It would be appropriate to say that he formed his basic mindset in Japanese society of the third decade of Meiji and that he established his own philosophy in America during the fourth decade of Meiji. The age in which he entered the world and formed his basic thought—that is, the third decade of Meiji—what kind of age was it? Coming from the fallen samurai class, he himself was economically impoverished, and in 1888, was forced to leave the Fourth Higher Middle School. As to the character of the third decade of Meiji was, I will now give a rough sketch.

In the third decade of Meiji, Japan set a course to rank itself among the great European powers and acquire the trappings of a modern nation state. The imperial constitution was promulgated in 1889; and in the following year, the first general election was held, political parties were formed, and the imperial assembly was convened. At home, the "People's Rights Movement" (*jiyū minken undō*) was pressing forward, and on the international front, various efforts were being made to revise the unequal treaties with the great powers. Industrial production had just begun, and was limited at the time to silk thread manufacture and spinning. Regional spinning mills were starting to

* Since the appearance of this article, the author has published "A Chronological Bibliography on D. T. Suzuki's Articles Published in Magazines and Newspapers," in the *Bulletin of the Faculty of Letters, Hanazono University* 27 (March 1995), pp. 151-224. See also his article on "D. T. Suzuki on Society and State," translated by Richard Szimpl and Thomas Kirchner, in *Rude Awakenings* (1994), pp. 52-72.

come to life, and here and there around the country, railroads were beginning to be built. In 1890, domestic production of cotton thread surpassed imports for the first time, and in 1897, the amount of exports exceeded the amount of imports. Coal, copper, and other minerals were being mined, but the steel industry was not firmly in place until after the Sino-Japanese War. An electric company was established in Osaka, but of course, private homes did not have electric light. The towns and cities had no water or sewer service, and unsanitary dwellings were crowded together. This led to outbreaks of fire and contagious disease, with tens of thousands of people dying each year from smallpox, dysentery, cholera, typhus, etc. For example, in 1893, about 12,000 people died of smallpox and about 41,000 of dysentery. As for fires, in 1892, a conflagration in Tokyo's Kanda section claimed 4,100 homes, and each year across the country, two or three fires would burn more than a thousand homes each. Mount Bandai erupted in 1888, and more than 7,000 people were killed in the great Nōbi earthquake of 1891. Upwards of 27,000 people fell victim to the great tsunami of the Sanriku region in 1896, and the casualties from typhoons, drought, and other natural disasters were great. In 1892, Japan's overall population numbered 40.5 million, and in 1897, 42.4 million.

1-2. *Intellectual Environment*

Wielding the greatest influence in the press of the third decade of Meiji was the *Minyūsha*, which was spearheaded by Tokutomi Sōhō (1863-1957), and which began publishing the journal *Kokumin no tomo* in February 1887. Tokutomi promoted democracy (*heiminshugi*), arguing that it was necessary to reform modernization policies which favored the ruling clans, aristocracy, and well-connected businessmen. He also argued that Japan be completely egalitarian and advance a form of modernization which put the masses at its core. To do so, he advocated replacing the autocratic clans cabinet with one responsible to political parties, doing away with the system of nobility, ending Confucian education in favor of enlightened education, and swiftly creating a "democratic society." That is, in response to the Meiji government's policy of Europeanization from above, it could be said that he promoted a modernization derived from the "common people" (*heimin*) below. Although centered on the wealthy farmer class that supported the People's Rights Movement of the first decade of Meiji, this ["democracy" from below] apparently enjoyed broad support among the masses.

Another major influence was the *Seikyōsha* of Miyake Setsurei (1860-1945), Shiga Shigetaka (1863-1927) et al., who began publishing *Nihonjin* in 1888. The position of those in the *Seikyōsha* is said to be one of "ultranationalism," but it was not a matter of simple reactionism. They resisted the ruling clans'

aristocratic Europeanization (exemplified by the *Rokumeikan*) and defended Japan against colonization. Their fundamental concept, aimed at preserving the country's independence, was that national strength equaled the expansion of productive strength, and they thus tried to mediate between and integrate "Japan's unique character" and its modernization.

In the realm of philosophy, thinkers including Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944), Motora Yūjirō (1858–1912), and Ōnishi Hajime (1864–1900) were active, and the *Tetsugakkai zasshi* (Journal of the Philosophical Society) began publication in February 1887. Writing in the area of Buddhism was Inoue Enryō (1858–1919), and in Christianity, Uemura Masahisa (1857–1925) and Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930). There was a Christian journal called *Rikugō zasshi* (Universum), which acquired the following reputation: "Although there are many journals in the Christian world, there has yet to be one which, like this journal, is known to the world beyond the faith. It has gradually progressed from the first issue ten-odd years ago, and it has had a great many notable achievements. Except for the *Tetsugaku zasshi* [the aforementioned *Tetsugakkai zasshi* was renamed in June 1892—*Author's note*], there are probably no other journals as rich in discussions of religious, moral, and philosophical problems."¹ Graduates of Dōshisha University, including Christians like Uemura and Uchimura, as well as Ōnishi Hajime, were the core contributors. With a Christian conscience, the journal expressed liberal and socialist thought that ran counter to trends of the times. Also leaving a large imprint on the third decade of Meiji through his criticism was Kitamura Tōkoku, who founded *Bungakukai* in January 1893. Likewise, speaking of journals, Tsubouchi Shōyō's *Waseda bungaku* began publication in October 1891, while *Teikoku bungaku* and Takayama Chogyū's *Taiyō* debuted in January 1895.

As seen above, many journals began publication in the third decade of Meiji, and it was an exceptionally fruitful period for intellectual enterprise. Limiting ourselves to religion, and more narrowly to Buddhism, here too we see the emergence of vigorous activity. Buddhist schools gradually began to recover from the violent persecution of Buddhism in early Meiji (*haibutsu kishaku*), and impelled by the sudden influx of Protestant Christianity and its aftermath, started to generate progressive endeavors. For example, when we look only at journals and institutional publications, we see that the journal *Nihon shūkyō* reviewed the following representative Buddhist publications of 1895 and 1896: *Jūzen hōkutsu* (Tokyo: Mejiro sōen), *Sanbō sōshi* (Tokyo: Ryōchikai), *Bukkyō shirin* (Tokyo: Sogenkai), *Bukkyō* (Kyoto: Kyoto bukkyō seinenkai, then Nihon bukkyō kyōkai, then Bukkyōsha), *Hansei zasshi*

¹ *Nihon shūkyō*, no. 1 (6 July 1895): 56.

(Kyoto: Hanseikai), *Shimei yoka* (Tendaishū, Tendaishūmuchō bunshoka), *Mitsugon kyōhō* (Shingonshū, Tokyo: Mitsugon kyōhosha), *Dentō* (Shingonshū, Kyoto: Shingonshū dentōkai), *Kyōyū zasshi* (Nichirenshū, Yamanaishi: Kyōyūsha), *Mida no hikari* (Jōdoshū), *Nihon-ichi* (Shinshū, Kyoto: Kyōekisha), *Shinkyō* (Shinshū, Kyoto: Jitsugo kyōkai), *Dendō shinshi* (Shinshū, Kyoto: Dendō shinshisha), *Zenshū* (Kyoto: Zenjōkutsu), *Zengaku* (Tokyo: Kōyūkan), *Shōbōrin* (Rinzaishū, Kyoto: Rinzaishū shūmushō), *Hanazono shunjū* (Kyoto: Hanazono shunjūsha), *Gohō* (Sōtōshū, Tokyo: Kōmeisha), *Sōtō kyōhō* (Tokyo: Sōtō kyōhōsha), *Nyoze* (Tokyo: Nyozesha), *Mujintō* (Kyoto: Mujintōsha), *Kuse no hikari* (Tokyo: Kuse no hikarisha), *Bukkyōshigaku* (Tetsugaku shoin), *Tōhoku no hikari* (Yamagata: Tōhoku bukkyō senyōkai), *Aikoku* (Aikokusha), *Nori no tayori* (Hyōgo: Nori no tayorisha), *Kyōkai*, *Hō no haha* (Tokyo: Fujin shōbōkai), and *Mikuni no haha*. Newspapers included *Meikyō shinshi* (Tokyo: Meikyōsha), *Bukkyō tsūzoku shinbun*, and *Nōnin shinpō* (Owari: Nōninsha), among others. There were over thirty different Buddhist publications,² as well as *Shūkyō* (Tokyo: Unitarian kōdōkai) and *Nihon shūkyō* (Nihon shūkyōsha).

Starting with *Zenshū* and *Zengaku*, there were also various Buddhist journals appearing at this time that dealt specifically with the Zen school; and in the latter half of the third decade of Meiji, there occurred a phenomenon that could be called a kind of "Zen boom." In the February 1895 issue of *Taiyō* magazine, Katō Setsudō wrote an article entitled, "Zengaku ryūkō no shuin oyobi zengaku no gensei" (The Main Reason Underlying the Fashion for Zen Study, and the Current State of the Zen School), which says that the origin for this fashion lies in the fact that only the Zen school transmits itself outside the scriptures, for it requires meditation without relying on words and letters. At first glance, it seems that one can enter into it with ease, and within Buddhism, it is the school most closely tied to literature. Owing to the Sino-Japanese War, he writes that "the Zen that is near to philosophers and poets has also become familiar to military men. Even though the principle of transcending life and death is the basis for all Buddhist schools, soldiers are most pleased by Zen, which possesses a special kind of vigor." On August 13 of the same year, *Kokumin no tomo* argued that the Zen fashion indicated "weariness in the public mind," and throughout 1895 and the following year, arguments over the meaning of the Zen fashion appeared repeatedly in the *Mainichi shinbun*, *Nihon*, *Jōgaku zasshi*, *Nihonjin*, *Bukkyō*, and other periodicals.

As for the term "Zen study" (*Zengaku*), three phrases were in use at the

² List taken from review articles of new journals in *Nihon shūkyō*, vol. 1, no. 1 (6 July 1895), vol. 2, no. 2 (20 Aug. 1896), vol. 2, no. 3 (20 Sept. 1896), and vol. 2, no. 4 (20 Oct. 1896).

time: "Fashion for Zen study," "Fashion for the Zen school," and "Fashion for Zen." "Zen study" did not refer to teachings among the Zen clergy, but seems to have been used by scholars of philosophy and literature in discussions of Zen and the Zen school.

Suzuki used the term somewhat differently. In the March 1896 issue of *Zenshū*, he wrote an essay entitled, "Emāson no zengaku" (The Zen study of Emerson), which reads, in part:

What is "Zen study?" It is none other than "Not relying on words and letters," "transmission outside the scriptures," and "becoming a Buddha by seeing into one's own nature." . . . Zen study cannot be only the Zen study of the Zen school nor only the practice of Buddhist *zazen*. If we take the special quality of Zen study to be that it "does not rely on words and letters" and that it is transmitted directly, what kind of teaching is not Zen study? What way is not *zazen*?³

Believing Emerson to have taught Zen, Suzuki finishes with, "Zen study is indeed a religion that is a unique product of the East, and I want to argue that it is a rare treasure which our country must preach to the world."⁴ This essay, which Suzuki wrote at age twenty-five, says that "Zen study" does not depend on words and letters and points directly to the human mind. Zen study, therefore, does not exist only in the Zen school. In other words, the term "Zen" is not the "Zen" of the "Zen school," but is used to designate something that underlies Buddhism and all religions. As for the connection between "Zen" and "study,"⁵ the path that leads to "Zen" is called "Zen study."

Suzuki makes statements like "Confucianism . . . as well as Taoism and Christianity, must, in the final analysis, return to Zen." Elsewhere, I want to discuss in detail what he was thinking of when he said "Zen" and what kind of connection there was between "Zen" and "Zen study."

During the time of the Zen study boom, a piece by Imperial University professor Motora Yūjirō appeared in *Nihon Shūkyō* entitled, "*Sanzen nis-*

³ *Suzuki Daisetsu zenshū* [Collected Works] (hereafter referred to as SDZ), ed. Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, Yamaguchi Susumu, and Furuta Shōkin, 32 volumes (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, second edition, 1980-1983), vol. 27, 521. In quoting materials I have used the second edition, which differs greatly from the first edition (1968-1971) as far as the selection and arrangement of items in volumes 27 to 32 go.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 529.

⁵ *Suzuki Daisetsu mikōkai shokan* [The Unpublished Letters of Suzuki Daisetsu], ed. Inoue Zenjō (Kyoto: Zen Bunka Kenkyūjo, 12 Dec. 1989), letter 19, 6 Sept. 1891. "Of course, it is not the entry to enlightenment according to Zen study proper . . ." (p. 114). "The gateway to studying Zen . . ." (p. 115).

shi" (Zen Meditation Diary). Questioning the authenticity of his insight into his true nature, arguments appeared in *Zenshū* and many other journals saying that it was nothing more than a delusion, and so on. This controversy added spice to the "Zen study boom." Suzuki wrote to his friend Kaneda Ryōkichi, "Mōtō's Zen meditation cannot be called great enlightenment. It can only be called a minor awakening."⁶

II. THE THOUGHT OF YOUNG SUZUKI, FOCUSING ON HIS SOCIAL VIEWS

II-1. D. T. Suzuki and the Third and Fourth Decades of Meiji

Suzuki developed his own thought in this kind of historical environment. Again, just before he turned eighteen in 1888, he ran out of money to pay his school fees, and leaving the Fourth Higher Middle School, was thrown into the world at large. In 1897, as a twenty-six year old without any clear prospects, he went to America.

In the third decade of Meiji, Suzuki read *Kokumin no tomo*,⁷ and probably through Kaneda's connections, published a few times in *Nihonjin* some essays and articles he wrote in America, so he must have at least skimmed through it for several years. Since he was registered as a special student in the literature department of the school of humanities at the Imperial University, he surely read *Tetsugakkai zasshi*, which virtually monopolized the most significant articles on the leading philosophy of the day. As for religion, he must have taken up a number of works on the subject, starting with Inoue Enryō's *Bukkyō katsuron joron*.⁸ He also published articles in the Unitarian Society journal *Shūkyō* (published from July 1891) and the *Rikugō zasshi* of Uemura Masahisa et al. (with which *Shūkyō* merged in February 1898), so he must have looked through these journals as well. Also, in April 1894, the *Minyūsha* published Kitamura Tōkoku's *Emerson*, and in the December 5 issue of *Shūkyō*, Suzuki quoted a bit from Emerson in his article "Anshin ritsume no chi" (The Land of Secure Peace of Mind). He then wrote an essay for the March 1896 issue of *Zenshū* called "Emāson no Zengakuron" (The Zen study of Emerson). Because Emerson frequently appears in his writings of this period,

⁶ Ibid., letter 38, 20 Dec. 1895.

⁷ Ibid., letter 1, 1 July 1888.

⁸ Ibid., letter 1, 1 July 1888 (p. 33): "Has the Shūyōkai's *Bukkyō katsuron joron* [The Revitalization of Buddhism: Introduction] already arrived? I have not had time to read it yet." See also "Mōzōroku, sono ichi" (Essay on Delusions, part 1), *Hansei zasshi* 13, no. 7 (1 July 1898), in SDZ 27:471: "Inoue Enryō's *Bukkyō katsuron* has been totally useless up to now . . ."

Suzuki very likely read Kitamura's *Emerson*. At any rate, focusing on religion, Suzuki looked at philosophical and scientific works that were at the forefront of scholarship in Japan at the time. Even though he was a special student at the Imperial University and then dropped out, he was familiar with the level of scholarship there. He had the talent and inclination to read and study both Japanese and foreign works on his own, and possessed confidence and self-awareness.

Japan changed radically in the fourth decade of Meiji. It fought with Russia, one of the world's superpowers, and won. Social and labor problems arose with the sudden growth of the capitalist system. The state was in an economic crisis due to the Russo-Japanese war, people lived in poverty, and most important of all, rural society was collapsing. In response, the system of Imperial nationalism was further strengthened to unify public opinion. Based on a vision of a family state and a divinized emperor, Japan headed in the direction of an imperialist state. Despite the rare antiwar arguments of men like Uchimura Kanzō, when faced with the Russo-Japanese war the intellectual world also slid in this direction. The ideals of individualism, socialism, and liberalism were crushed.

During the fourth decade of Meiji, however, Suzuki was in America, not returning to Japan until 1909. Therefore, it is appropriate to say that he did not participate in the society and intellectual environment of Japan in this period except through a very limited route. Through correspondence with a small number of people, such as his teacher Shaku Sōen (1859–1919) and his friends Kaneda Ryōkichi (1871–1942) and Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), he received a modest number of journals from Japan. These provided him with nearly all the news he received about circumstances there. While in America, Suzuki lived in provincial LaSalle, where the local newspapers probably did not carry any news about Japan. Consequently, Suzuki did not live in the intellectual climate of Japan in the fourth decade of Meiji. Living in a far-off country, he could probably only imagine what was happening, so the letters and journals he received from his friends must have been very significant to him.

Some of the journals that Suzuki read in the fourth decade of Meiji were: *Nihonjin*, *Rikugō zasshi*, *Hansei zasshi*, *Chūō kōron*, *Zenshū*, *Zen*, *Shin bukkyō*, and *Tōyō tetsugaku*. During his stay in America, he submitted several articles and essays to each of these journals, indicating that they were at least available to him. One can see a common bent to these journals, namely, a progressive and reformist character that was antifeudal, promodern, and optimistic about the reform of society and humanity. *Nihonjin* valued Japanese tradition but at the same time acknowledged the importance of Japan's modernization and democratization and possessed a spirit of enlightenment and

reform. As mentioned earlier, *Rikugō zasshi* advocated a modern view of humanity that was linked to Christianity and was one of the few journals to criticize imperial nationalism. *Hansei zasshi* originally stressed [alcoholic] temperance, and was an institutional organ of the Hanseikai. Later, it became *Chūō kōron*. Together with *Shin bukkyō*, it was a journal for young Buddhists who wanted to reform established Buddhism. Concerning *Hansei zasshi*, Suzuki himself wrote:

The purpose of our Hanseikai is, by relying on Buddhist ethics, to advocate temperance and thereby correct the evils of drinking, to preserve the social order, to diminish sin, to lead Buddhists to live in a purified state of peace, and to help defend public finances, the race, civilization, and education from within. Those who support these goals diligently foster cooperation among each other.⁹

Throughout the fourth decade of Meiji, Suzuki lived in America, so he did not directly experience the upheavals of Japanese society in this period. Because he experienced these years only through friends made in the third decade of Meiji and through journals, one could say that the Japanese social and intellectual climate of the third decade of Meiji continued on for him in unadulterated form. He stood completely outside the Russo-Japanese war, maintaining a calm attitude throughout. Living in America, he was strongly influenced by Western thought, but it seems that [his calm attitude] was due to his being able to maintain the antinationalist, individual rationalism that he had cultivated in the vigorous and prolific intellectual climate of the third decade of Meiji.

II-2. Young Suzuki's Views on Science

What was science for Suzuki? What did it mean to him? In his first published article, "Anshin ritsume no chi" (The Land of Secure Peace of Mind),¹⁰ he writes:

Science derives from the experience of the five senses (as people are a clustering of sensations, no one is removed from the five senses) and studies spatial, temporal, and mental phenomena. Science breaks everything down into sixty-three elements, making close analyses and clarifying the relationship between force and matter. Analyzing the organization of the workings of everyday complexities, [science] reduces them to their original causes and underlying uniformity.

⁹ "Naze ni hatarakazaru ya?" (Why doesn't it work?), *Hansei zasshi* 9, no. 3 (31 March 1894). See SDZ 27:444.

¹⁰ *Shakyō* (5 December 1893): 67. Not included in the SDZ.

Among his thoughts about science, this is his most coherent description, and one could say that it is the definition of science he held in his youth. However, this definition was probably not unique to him, but was the authoritative one that circulated widely at the time. At any rate, he used the term "science" quite often, and when he did, he would choose one or two of the terms mentioned above, such as "five senses," "sensation," "experience," or "analysis," to characterize it. According to Suzuki, "experience" derives from "sensation." That is, making various "phenomena" into objects of study, "science" discovers new "relations" among them through "analysis."

Suzuki usually uses the word "science" in contrast to "philosophy" and "religion." Alongside philosophy and religion, "science" is one sphere of knowledge among three, and although there are connections between these spheres, each forms an independent field of study. Furthermore, "science" is a field of scholarship within Western learning, as opposed to Chinese learning or national [Japanese] learning. Centered on the natural sciences, but also including areas like psychology, it is a form of European learning. On the other hand, "religion" is used to designate not the study of religion, but phenomena like doctrines, rituals, and institutions. "Philosophy" usually refers to the world of European thinkers as well as to teachings that concern the ultimate nature of humanity. It is a basic field of learning, but at the same time, is used in the sense of the verb "to philosophize." Suzuki does not just discuss "science" in isolation, nor simply write about ideas concerning science. He also mentions science within discussions of religion and society in which "science" is used mostly in contrast to "religion" and "philosophy" is located somewhere in between. The goals of science are: "to emphasize objective experience,"¹¹ "to appeal, based on observable facts, to the reason of the human mind,"¹² and "to organize facts, divide them into different categories, and discover the laws operating among them."¹³ "Philosophy" deals with those things beyond sensation and experience and "religion" is concerned with faith. Simplifying matters, Suzuki also makes statements such as "Science can attain truth only within the parameters of the senses, philosophy within the bounds of reason, and religion within the realm of emotion."¹⁴

The young Suzuki took an affirmative stance toward science: "I do not think that material progress is a matter of arrogance, but instead provides for the freeing of spiritual activity. After all, by means of scientific progress, we re-

¹¹ *Suzuki Daisetsu mikōkai shokan*, letter 46, 26 November 1897.

¹² *Shinshūkyōron* [A New Essay on Religion], in SDZ 23:109.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 107 f.

¹⁴ "Anshin ritsumei no chi" (Land of secure peace of mind), *Shakyō*, no. 28 (5 February 1894): 155.

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move obstacles that nature has put in the way of our material existence, and I believe this originally comes from our desire for spiritual freedom."¹⁵ Scientific progress brings about material progress, and since material progress creates the conditions for spiritual progress, we must be pleased with the advancement of science. We have to remember that Suzuki affirmed science not just for the material progress that it generated, but for the "freeing of spiritual activity." At any rate, we can detect the expectations for science held by this economically and socially deprived intellectual. But from the third decade of Meiji on, there was a minority, including hardheaded nativist scholars and Confucianists, as well as narrow-minded ultranationalists and religionists, that was opposed to science. For the nativist scholars and Confucian scholars, this was naturally connected to the decline of their schools, while ultranationalists must have feared the possible threat that science and scientific thinking could present to the imperial national polity. Religionists, whether Christian or Buddhist, feared the disclosure of superstitions, blind faith, and dogmatism, as well as attacks against the sacred.

For traditional Buddhists at the time, "Science sometimes destroys religion of blind faith, so they possibly fear damage to Buddhism and the violation of the sacred. Therefore, on the surface, they profess to be disinterested, but on the inside, they hate the assaults of science."¹⁶ As for Christians, "According to Christian teaching, the complete incompatibility of science and religion is just like that of ice and coal. Scientism leads to atheistic arguments and naturalist doctrine. Christianity's deism and doctrine of divine revelation are fixed, so religion and science cannot coexist. Science violates the sanctity of religion and damages the authority of men of God. Those who want to defend the way of God in the slightest must exhaust their strength to expel science."¹⁷

Suzuki's position as a religious man differed from this. He considered himself a "new Buddhist," and used his considerable skill as a writer to reform established Buddhism. He said it was appropriate that science and religion should each have their own domains, and that a foundation had to be built for Buddhism by using science:

The methods and goals of science and Buddhism differ, the purpose of Buddhism being to seek Bodhisattvahood above and to convert the masses of living beings below, while science seeks only to explain the phenomena of the natural world. Religion looks within; science turns without. It is said that the laws of science cannot determine the

¹⁵ *Suzuki Daisetsu mikōkai shokan*, letter 50, 6 Jan. 1901.

¹⁶ "Bukkyō to kagaku" [Buddhism and Science], *Shūkyō*, no. 52 (5 Feb. 1896): 192.

¹⁷ *Shinshūkyōron*, in SDZ 23:105.

truths of Buddhism, so how can Buddhism ever lend an ear toward science? However, the school of 'new Buddhism' is opposed to this [view]. It wishes to use the results of scientific research to explain the foundations of Buddhism. . . . In our view, Christian arguments [against science] have been greatly mistaken from the start, and dismissive Buddhist arguments have also been biased, we should say. Using science, we will wash away religious corruption and promote the true beauty of religion."¹⁸

According to Suzuki, religion and science were not in conflict and were not irrelevant to each other. The religion that could not endure the results of science was not a true religion. At the least, he thought it could not exist as a contemporary religion. The Zen on which Suzuki based himself at this point did not contradict science. He was confident that it would be unshaken by the criticisms of science. This is why he was a "new" Buddhist.

Needless to say, this was also a criticism of the religious establishment, which of course included Buddhism: "In cooperation with science, religion must reform itself;"¹⁹ "using science, we will wash away religious corruption and promote the true beauty of religion;" "in accordance with the assertions of science, religion must dispose of things which defy the facts so that it can shed increasing light. . . . What is now called religion . . . should especially, by borrowing the light of science, dispel phantoms."²⁰ As for true religion, "The spirit of religion is a piety which dispenses with the deluded thoughts of egotism and comprehends the great moral principle shared by people throughout the world. It is perceiving the existence of the one great cable which links humankind and the universe."²¹

As for the limits of science, they could be ascertained by setting them against philosophy and religion. Suzuki pointed out that science cannot take up problems which go beyond sensations and experience; for example, as he argued in "Anshin ritsume no chi," one cannot attain secure peace of mind through science. In other words, science is something that cannot inquire into transcendent and suprasensual matters, cannot answer questions concerning the meaning of existence, and above all, cannot respond to the issue of "secure peace of mind." This is because these kinds of problems are ones of "faith" which cannot be objectively proved. That is, his idea is one which separates science from philosophy and religion, and in a sense, sets up barriers around the borders of philosophy and religion to secure their territory and protect them from the destructive power of science. At the same time, he aimed to

¹⁸ Ibid., 106.

²⁰ Ibid., 109.

¹⁹ Ibid., 109 f.

²¹ Ibid., 120.

revitalize the staid and decrepit Buddhist establishment by drawing on the power of science. In other words, for Suzuki, science was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, one could bring religion up to date by means of science, but on the other, one had to sharply distinguish religion from science to protect it from the incursions of the latter. However, whether religion, and for that matter philosophy, could be truly protected against the destructive power of science was something to be decided by history.

In Suzuki's writings up until the end of Meiji, there are almost no criticisms of science, though he acknowledged that there are cases where the destructive power of science is misused to eradicate belief,²² saying, "I consider the shortcoming of science to be its bias in favor of objective experience and its complete exclusion of subjective intuition. I believe that there will eventually come to be a reaction against this in the twentieth century."²³ In both of these statements, Suzuki expresses his misgivings as a believer in Zen's "new Buddhism," but it is important for us to consider them in relation to those of his later years, and also in relation to the contemporary environment.

Incidentally, in his *Zuihitsu: Zen* (Miscellaneous Essays on Zen), which were written from Taishō through early Shōwa, Suzuki wrote on the subject of "Coercive Pressure Arising from the Application of Science" (*Kagaku no ōyō kara kuru appakuryoku*; SDZ 19:416 ff). This essay says that, starting with machines, science has propelled material civilization to a remarkable extent, that humans have in turn been forced to adapt to that environment, and that [science] has caused labor conflicts and various other social problems. That is, it points out the problem of human alienation within the material civilization of the modern world. It says that "People today struggle to escape the fetters of science," but focuses mainly on changes in the nature of labor, and discusses "efficiencyism," subordination to time schedules, the mechanization and standardization of humans, sexual debauchery, and other ills associated with the "sweeping trend toward a mass society." As is reflected in Suzuki's own words, "arising from the application of science," this essay points to the concrete problems that science has caused in society, and is not a criticism of science in and of itself. It is a criticism of the society which has adopted science; it is not a criticism of science.

When we think from our current standpoint about the problems within science itself, such as its directionlessness and its tendency to swallow up everything as it replicates itself without limit, we should say that the barriers Suzuki

²² "They know only the destructive side of science, and thoroughly abusing it, are set to abandon every traditional belief." See "Bukkyō to kagaku," *Shākyō*, no. 52 (5 Feb. 1896): 192.

²³ *Suzuki Daisetsu mikōkai shokan*, letter 46, 26 Nov. 1897.

erected around the borders of philosophy and religion have been smashed to pieces. To people in the Meiji period, science seemed a good thing for all aspects of society. Scientific progress was something to be celebrated and was thought to be inevitable for the age. The application of science fundamentally changed the nature of labor, and in Japan's case, people began to recognize this as a serious social problem after they had gone through the Russo-Japanese war. It was the same for Suzuki. Science has this demonic trait: "Carried away by a blind craving to comprehend at all costs, [science], without any care, pounces on anything that is knowable" (Nietzsche, *Nietzsche Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, III-2, 1973, 310). But in this period, there were apparently no Japanese who thought about the essence of science itself, nor had doubts about it. It seems that the only one in the world at the time who problematized science and perceived its nihilism was Nietzsche.

11-3. *Young Suzuki's Views on the State and Society*

Looking at Suzuki's published pen name, we see that it was "Suzuki Teitarō" up to the February 1895 issue of *Shōbōrin* and then appeared as "Lay disciple Daisetsu" in the September 1895 issue of *Taiyō* and the October 1896 issue of *Zengaku*. His name became "Suzuki Daisetsu" after appearing that way in an article published in the February 1896 issue of *Shūkyō*. It is not clear exactly when, but at some point he received the lay disciple name "Daisetsu" from Shaku Sōen, head of Engakuji in Kamakura, where Suzuki practiced Zen meditation. Sōen himself wrote in his preface to Suzuki's first translation, *The Gospel of the Buddha*, "My Zen student, lay disciple Suzuki Daisetsu." Since this is dated December 1895, it is certain that this name was given before this point. Starting with "Anshin ritsume no chi," almost all his early writings discuss the relationship between religion on the one hand and science and philosophy on the other, and it is alright to call him "Suzuki Teitarō." But from the publication of his first book, *Shinshūkyōron* (November 1896), and especially during his stay in the U. S. in the fourth decade of Meiji, he wrote many articles on the state and society. Since he was already called "Suzuki Daisetsu" by then, I call him "Young Suzuki Daisetsu." However, in letters addressed to Kaneda Ryōkichi, there are important items for understanding Suzuki's views on the state, and some of these letters extend back into his "Teitarō period."

In *Shinshūkyōron*, Suzuki discusses the relationship between religion and the state, saying, for example, "The establishment of a state necessarily appears on the road of social progress. That is, it is a means for humankind to

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realize the purpose of its existence."²⁴ He clarifies: "The existence of the state is not the goal of humankind, but a means. It is only a station through which humans must pass on the road of progress. Humans live for the sake of humankind, not for the sake of the state."²⁵ The state is never the goal, but only an "expedient" or "means" for humanity. The view of the state developing here, we should say, is an idealistic one which regards the state as a kind of night watchman and presupposes a modern, civic society. However, the fact that the actual state differed from this was naturally recognized by Suzuki. Because the state, "based on the principle of loyalty and patriotism," "makes its ultimate goal the preservation of its own existence," Suzuki acknowledged that "religion should first aim to support the existence of the state and faithfully adhere to its history and customs." He believed that one must use religion in "working for the advancement" of the state. He came to the moderate conclusion that [the state and religion] are in a complementary relationship of mutual aid: "If one makes everything done by the state religious, and makes every word and act of religion relevant to the state, then that which is done for the sake of the state is also done for the sake of religion; that which is done for the sake of religion is done for the sake of the state."²⁶

As for Suzuki's use of the terms "religion," "Buddhism," and "Zen" in his earliest writings (which preceded his departure to America in February 1897 at age twenty-six), he first discussed only religion, then Buddhism, and after that used the term "Zen." In that period, his use of the word "religion" remained consistent in meaning, and the following passage is representative:

My "religion" is not only the preaching of the divine, teaching about love, or lamenting the vicissitudes of life. Such things are all only branches and leaves, while I am speaking of the original source. What I call religion is the consciousness (that is, faith) lying at the foundation which allows us, who are tiny grains in the wide ocean, to perceive the basis for our immortal spirit. Religion becomes the life of the human heart, the pivot of all action, the vigor of the state, and the source of civilization. It straddles the great waves of the struggle for survival, scales the steep slope of triumph and defeat, and effusively manifests its energy.²⁷

²⁴ *Shinshūkyōron*, in SDZ 23:137.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

²⁷ "Shūkyōron" [An Essay on Religion], *Shakyō*, no. 32 (5 June 1894): 68.

In any case, religion and the state are different in principle, and they have many elements which are incompatible, but Suzuki chooses to make a connection between them. That is, a compromise is reached by dividing up responsibilities with the state, and that compromise is negotiated under the leadership of what Suzuki calls religion. However, the "religion" of which he speaks is a very Zenlike religion, and the "state" is also fairly abstract and conceptual, so one could say that they are rather removed from religion and the state in real life.

In contrast, Suzuki's views of the state and society were explained more clearly in the fourth decade of Meiji, after he had left for America. His criticisms were leveled at a state system that incorporated the imperial household, a Meiji government and bureaucracy which advocated that state system, and "state supremacists" and "Japanists." His opinions regarding the imperial household were expressed in a number of journals through, for example, his criticisms of "state supremacists":

The state supremacists tell us to realize the restoration's imperial proclamation, to reverently read the *Imperial Rescript on Education*, to exhibit the spirit of the nation's origins, and to worship the ancestors of the nation. This is all well and good, but they turn reason into an invincible spear and shield and, going on about the results of nineteenth century historical research, prey upon the weak points of the Japanese people, coopt the royal family, exalt the *Imperial Rescript*, and, what's more, attempt to attach religious significance to [imperial authority]. Is this not a case of extreme hypocrisy?"²⁸

He also said, "Stop thinking of the Japanese as a great people just because they have a 2,500 year history and live under an emperor from an unbroken imperial line."²⁹

In a letter to his close friend Kaneda Ryōkichi, he expressed his feelings more frankly, writing,

I believe that progress does not benefit from the fact that the imperial house is still deluded by its ancient transcendent status and by mysticism, nor from the fact that people take the *Imperial Rescript* to be a peerless object of worship. If there is something unfavorable to the government, it straightaway cloaks itself with this and works to stifle speech among the people. Because of this, access to free thinking is

²⁸ "Tabi no tsurezure" (Idle Thoughts during My Travels), *Rikugō zasshi*, no. 210 (25 June 1898): 70 f.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

blocked. Isn't it extremely troublesome that we must kowtow in front of those who use the *Imperial Rescript* as a shield and exalt the imperial house? [In the margins: (These sorts of things should never, under any circumstances, be made public. I must wait for the right time. . .)] *Worshipping the Imperial Rescript on Education*— isn't it troublesome? I must not say too much; what is your opinion?"³⁰

Suzuki wrote these sorts of thoughts to Kaneda on several occasions, the earliest being in 1888, when he was eighteen years old: "I heard that the emperor's birthday the other day was supposedly magnificent. It is unnecessary to make such a to-do even if it is the Japanese emperor's birthday. You might say they are just curious folk, but I still feel that it is unnecessary. What do you think?"³¹

We can witness [in this letter] the repressed heart of a talented youth who languished in the countryside on the tip of the Noto peninsula, a region where there was nothing to speak of. Until mid-Meiji, at least, his critical thoughts about the imperial house did not change greatly. This is because the existence of the imperial house compromised the equality of the four classes, was utilized by the state supremacists and Japanists, and was traditionalist, mystical, and antimodernist. It also served as an excuse for the suppression of free speech and thought and, in general, stood in the way of national and social progress. This basically put it in opposition to Suzuki's vision of state and society and their unification through religion.

We can see Suzuki relativizing the state, regarding it not as an end in itself, nor as a supreme object. He continued to speak out against the dominant trend of the time, which was to make the state into something absolute by linking it with the imperial house and the unbroken imperial line. This was one reason for his criticism of the imperial house. According to Suzuki, the state, as mentioned before, must be "a means for humankind to realize the purpose of its existence." Consequently,

state absolutism is the companion of mammonism. They both confuse means with ends, trying to turn means into ends. [State absolutism] loses sight of restraints imposed by the fact that the state's existence depends on the existence of things that are beyond the state. Absolutizing the survival and authority of the state is like forgetting that money is only valid when it has the power to buy the

³⁰ *Suzuki Daisetsu mikōkai shokan*, letter 48, 14 June 1898.

³¹ *Ibid.*, letter 7, 13 Nov. 1888.

necessities of life and has no worth beyond this. It is like trying to live by feeding on gold and dressing in silver.³²

So what should the state be? What does "the purpose of human existence" mean? He discusses this often in passages dealing with society, not the state. While he was in America, Suzuki commented frequently on Japanese society, primarily through the journals *Rikugō zasshi* and *Shin bukkyō*. He criticized various phenomena, including the institution of nobility, class antagonism, the inferior position of women, military conformism, ancestor worship, the ethic of loyalty and filial piety, educational "formalism," and the "tediousness" and "evil custom of putting the government before the people" among bureaucrats. Chiefly to blame, however, were "the absence of free thought and the many restrictions on speech,"³³ and a nation-state system centered on the imperial house.

Suzuki drew a line between himself and socialists, but acknowledged himself to be a "socialist sympathizer" at the time: "Nowadays I want to study socialism, and I sympathize with teachings like 'social justice' and 'equality of opportunity.' Present day society (like that of Japan, of course) must be reformed at the roots, and I want to express my opinion on this some day."³⁴ He also said:

Recently I have moved close to the extreme by becoming a socialist sympathizer. My socialism does not derive from economics, but from religion. I am not able to preach this "ism" publicly before the masses. People everywhere are foolish and illiterate, and are not yet prepared to listen to my opinions. However, using my "ism" as a foundation, I will work on this so that they will gradually move

³² "Mōzōroku," *Nihonjin*, no. 72 (5 Aug. 1898): 26. Suzuki also wrote three other essays with the title "Mōzōroku" (Essay on Delusions). In chronological order, they are: "Mōzōroku, sono ichi," *Nihonjin*, no. 60 (5 Feb. 1898); "Mōzōroku, sono ichi," *Nihonjin*, no. 61 (20 Feb. 1898); and "Mōzōroku, sono san," *Hansei zasshi*, 13, no. 7 (1 July 1898). "Mōzōroku, sono ni" was also published in *Hansei zasshi* 13, no. 8 (5 Aug. 1898), while "Mōzōroku, sono san" was published in *Hansei zasshi* 13, no. 9 (1 Sept. 1898). Furthermore, there were: "Mōzōroku," *Nihonjin*, no. 72 (5 Aug. 1898); "Mōzōroku, shōzen," *Nihonjin*, no. 73 (20 Aug. 1898); and "Mōzōroku, shōzen," *Nihonjin*, no. 74 (5 Sept. 1898). Among these, only those published in the *Hansei zasshi* appear in the SDZ. They consist of fragments of various thoughts on Zen, religion, science, etc. The first version was completed in November 1897 with 36 fragments, the second with 21 fragments, and the last, completed in May 1898, with 32 fragments.

³³ "Nemurarenu yogotoroku" (Record of Sleepless Nights), *Shin bukkyō* 3, no. 3 (1902), in SDZ 27:618.

³⁴ *Suzuki Daisetsu mikōkai shokan*, letter 50, 6 Jan. 1901.

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toward [my position]. I think it is necessary to study sociology further."³⁵

He wrote an essay entitled, "Regarding the Ban on the Formation of a Socialist Democratic Party (Socialism's Religious Foundation)," and expressed his approval of socialism by stating from the start, "According to the recent pages of Japanese newspapers, the government has banned the organization of a 'socialist democratic party.' I deeply lament that the Japanese government has rashly neglected farsighted consideration and has disregarded social progress and human welfare." Suzuki studied socialist theory through journals like the *Rikugō zasshi*, which published this essay, while close at hand he witnessed the troubled conditions of America's capitalist society during its early rise. He had an eye for targeting various social phenomena as problems: "All the evils of society arise from the imperfections of social organization; and as long as the foundation of the current social structure does not change, no matter how vigorous the attacks on the surface, social evils will not be eliminated. Even if there is a God, you cannot deny this fact."³⁶

At the time, Suzuki painted a picture of the ideal society as follows: "The structure of an ideal society is one which allows individuals to nurture their strong points as they please." [He also said]:

Isn't our one great motive in organizing society to encourage the free development of natural talents so that they may be applied to the advancement of society as a whole? In order to realize this, it is necessary for all individuals to enjoy equal opportunity and environment. Of course, the crucial condition for creating equal opportunity is reducing to a minimum the gap between rich and poor. If each person were freed from worries about food, clothing, and shelter, this would spur the free development of naturally endowed virtue and talent, and if this were channeled toward the progress of society as a whole, the progress of so-called culture would be truly extraordinary.³⁷

The "purpose of human existence" lies in "spurring the free development of our naturally endowed virtue and talent and . . . channeling [this] toward the

³⁵ Ibid., letter 51, 14 Jan. 1901.

³⁶ "Beikoku yori no tayori" (News from America), *Shin bukkyō* 2, no. 4 (1 April 1901), in SDZ 27:615.

³⁷ "Shakai minshutō no kettō kinshi ni tsukite (Shakaishugi no shūkyōteki kiso)" [Regarding the Ban on the Formation of a Socialist Democratic Party (Socialism's Religious Foundation)], *Rikugō zasshi*, no. 249 (15 Sept. 1901): 45.

progress of society as a whole." For the sake of this, the social system must be able to free us from "worries about food, clothing, and shelter." By "furthering material civilization, evenly distributing wealth, and granting equality of opportunity," we must "decrease to a minimum degree the restraints of material existence."³⁸

Suzuki criticized the imperial household, the peers, and the aristocracy. He criticized a hierarchical society which produced differences between rich and poor, discriminated between men and women, and created the distinction of aristocrat and commoner. This is because such a society "tried to sacrifice the whole for one part,"³⁹ and was a direct contradiction of social justice and human equality. He also criticized the centralized, authoritarian government and state which maintained this kind of society, and opposed the "nationalists," "Japanists," and "militarists" who supported this program. He criticized feudalism, traditionalism, antihistoricism, antiscientism, and authoritarianism. Suzuki took up the positions of modernism, individualism, progressivism, historicism, and scientism. He was a Buddhist reformer who took an independent stance and had enough social scientific understanding to argue:

When we look at the poor and weak of today's society, we see that the reason they are poor and weak is not at all due to their own fault, but derives from the imperfections of social organization. There are many things which arise from an imbalance in the distribution of wealth . . . Should we be satisfied with merely providing spiritual comfort without rescuing those poor and weak struggling with material suffering? . . . I earnestly hope that Buddhists are not satisfied with their own secure peace of mind, but actively make it their mission to rescue society at large.⁴⁰

III. YOUNG SUZUKI'S STANDPOINT

III-1. *Critical Spirit*

Suzuki possessed an exceptional critical spirit. This critical spirit could be seen as a compound consisting of the spirit of modern rationalism, the spirit of free-

³⁸ "Yomu *Shin bukkyō dai ni kan, dai ichi-gō*" (Reading *Shin bukkyō*, vol. 2, no. 1), *Shin bukkyō* 2, no. 4 (1901), in SDZ 27:613.

³⁹ "Shakai minshutō no kettō kinshi ni tsukite (Shakaishugi no shūkyōteki kiso)," *Rikugō zasshi*, no. 249 (15 Sept. 1901): 47.

⁴⁰ "Shakai kyūsai ron" [An Essay on Social Relief], *Beikoku bukkyō* 5, no. 1 (1904), in SDZ 28:422 ff.

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dom and self-reliance, and the spirit of Zen. When it came to religion, he did not believe at all in superstitions. He denied the existence of spirits, rejected the Buddhist teaching of transmigration, and held a dim view of the theory of karma. He tried to adhere to a rationalism in both his thought and lifestyle, which extended to temperance in food and drink and to the maintenance of his health through physical training. The fact that, whenever possible, he emphasized the "spirit of freedom and independence"⁴¹ and the "spirit of freedom and self-reliance,"⁴² and preached the need among Japanese for virtues such as "entrepreneurial spirit, daring, strenuous effort, diligence, and efficiency,"⁴³ indicates, more than anything else, that he led a life of freedom and independence from the age of eighteen onward.

What I referred to above as Zen spirit could be viewed as a spirit that does not regard anything as absolute and therefore relativizes all things, whether the imperial household, the government, or any other secular phenomenon. Zen spirit could be characterized as not thinking about matters in a fixed and static way, leading to an attitude of detachment. It means recognizing that all of reality and its phenomenal states do change and must change; it means not adhering to a given thing or condition. To make this possible, however, it is necessary to "awaken one's divine nature" "immediately" "through direct insight."⁴⁴ If one does that, one can live in the state of

the person of the religious life, [that is], the one who realizes that the truth of human existence consists in not being attached to the present world, not anticipating the world beyond, and, although transcending hate and joy, not remaining in that transcendence. [The religious person] accepts the suffering of the struggle for survival as suffering and still does not hate it, and accepts the folly of natural selection as folly and still does not avoid it. Such a person "obscures his own light to mix with the dust," entrusts himself to the place where great changes are headed, and calmly composes himself."⁴⁵

Suzuki lived in this free state, or at least wanted to live in it.

⁴¹ "Gaijin no me ni eizuru gunkokunihon no kusagusa" [Various Aspects of Militarist Japan as Reflected in the Eyes of Foreigners], *Tōyō tetsugaku* 11, no. 8 (5 Sept. 1904): 553.

⁴² SDZ 17:102.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁴⁴ "Anshin ritsumeï no chi (jōzen)" [Land of Secure Peace of Mind, continued], *Shakyo*, no. 28 (5 Feb. 1894): 156.

⁴⁵ "Mōzōroku, sono san," *Hansei zasshi* 13, no. 9 (1 Sept. 1898), in SDZ 27:488.

III-2. *The Main Factors in the Formation of His Critical Spirit*

Let us now examine and sum up the conditions which shaped young Suzuki's views on the state and society on the one hand and science on the other, as well as the critical spirit informing those views:

(1) *He received an early Meiji elite education.* Having been born in the third year of Meiji, he passed his childhood and youth through the birth, upheavals, and final establishment of the modern Japanese state. Everything was new; it was an age that overflowed with youthfulness. As the son of an enlightened domainal doctor, he received his education at the elite higher middle school of Ishikawa prefecture. Being a child of the samurai class, he of course learned the broad fundamentals of classical Chinese learning, such as the four books, the five classics, Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu, and Confucius. But he was also enrolled in one of the middle schools that were gradually being established in each region at the time, allowing him to acquire an open-minded attitude toward mathematics and physics, as well as toward Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Jean Jacques Rousseau and other examples of so-called Western learning. In middle school, because there were many texts written in English, and because there were foreign instructors, Suzuki apparently acquired the ability to read and write quite freely in both classical Chinese and English during his teens. His fellow classmates there were all extremely talented, and most of those in his class continued on to the Imperial University—they certainly nurtured a youthful determination to succeed. The friendships he established with classmates such as Kaneda Ryōkichi, Nishida Kitarō, Fukushima Junkichi, and Fujioka Sakutarō lasted throughout their lives, and were, for all of them, rare and precious. But because his family had run out of money, Suzuki dropped out of higher middle school when he was seventeen and departed from the road of the elite. Furthermore, we can see everywhere in him a fierce opposition to "officials," "bureaucrats," and the "aristocracy." Generally speaking, one can sense the defiant spirit of fallen samurai families which, during the Meiji period, lashed out against authority, pedigree, official rank, and fame.

(2) *Suzuki had no encumbrances.* His father died when he was six years old and his mother when he was twenty. We can imagine that his mother's death had an especially large impact on the course of his life. Due to it, he lost his ties to his family and Kanazawa, his hometown. One could say he became like rootless grass, and that, from then on, he had to seek out new roots to ground himself. At the time, he had two older brothers and an older sister who was married, but they had no means to take care of him. In addition, he had no uncles or other relatives on whom to depend, and there was no one else around

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who could serve as his guardian. There was no one to take care of him, but, by the same token, he did not have to take responsibility for anyone else. Being the youngest child, he had no encumbrances, so he was like a kite cut loose from its string. He only had to manage his own affairs, and in that sense, he had absolute freedom. The shock of losing his mother was incomparable to that of losing his father; for example, her death triggered his decision to go to Tokyo through the help of his second-oldest brother. If his mother had continued to live, he probably would not have traveled to America, or at least, we can imagine, he would not have stayed there for over ten years.

Suzuki was a bachelor from the age of seventeen into his forties. He was always alone and did not form close bonds with people, having no social life to speak of. Neither in Tokyo nor the U. S. did he make the slightest effort to expand his personal relationships. Rather, his character was such that he "aspiring to be a hermit, and avoiding interactions with people, liked to seclude himself."⁴⁶ Accordingly, he did not form any groups, and did not tap into the power of any group to achieve anything. He also did not belong to organizations, nor did he achieve anything through organizations. He did not do anything jointly. This applied not only to work, but even to his leisure. It seems he liked to take photographs, but he had no hobbies or frivolous pastimes, and much less would he have fun together with others. One might say that he accomplished only what he could do through his own resources. The result was that, in his later years, he did not cultivate any disciples and students and did not form an academic clique. We can attribute this to his inclination toward solitude and dignified isolation.

(3) *His experience of poverty.* After Suzuki quit middle school, it appears he could not buy stationery, judging from his letters to Kaneda Ryōkichi; for when Kaneda wrote to him, Suzuki would use Kaneda's stationery to reply. Naturally, he could not buy the books that he wanted to read.⁴⁷ During the six years from his move to Tokyo to his move to America, he received an allowance of six yen a month from his second-oldest brother, and thereby lived a very marginal existence.⁴⁸ Relying on whatever connections he had, he somehow managed to scrape together enough money to buy one-way passage on a boat to America, and for at least the first few years he worked there under Paul Carus, he received only board without pay.⁴⁹ During these few years in

⁴⁶ Fukushima Junkichi tsuitōbun" [Fukushima Junkichi memorial], *Seisai ikō*, 15 Sept. 1899, 392.

⁴⁷ Refer to *Suzuki Daisetsu mikōkai shokan*, letters 4 and 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, letters 13 and 14.

⁴⁹ In a letter addressed to Shaku Sōen, Suzuki wrote, "Even though I do not receive anything resembling a salary, I believe [Carus] intends to give me a little compensation

provincial LaSalle, located outside Chicago, Suzuki translated and proofread journals for Carus without once taking even a small trip. Until Suzuki returned to Japan at age thirty-eight and found employment at the Peers School, he was always short of money. Ironically, he became a teacher at the Peers School while writing such works as *A Book to Instruct the Wealthy* (*Fūki na mono ni ataeru sho*) and his voluminous *Essays on Poverty* (*Bimbōron*).

Suzuki was impoverished for a long time. On the one hand, this guided his view of society and state toward a social scientific awareness, to a recognition that poverty stemmed not from the fault of the individual, but was a social problem that arose from structural defects in society and the economy, and that it was imperative to reform society and the state. On the other hand, from his own religious standpoint, he was not concerned with the poverty of his own life. He was not terribly dissatisfied, and he never did anything just for the sake of money. Rather, in his case, poverty bolstered his free spirit as well as his critical spirit.

(4) *Encounter with Zen.* Suzuki first visited Master Setsumon Genshō (1850–1915) of Kokutaiji temple in Toyama just after he had dropped out of the Fourth Higher Middle School. When he heard from a friend about a *zazen* circle started at the Fourth Higher, he seems to have also wanted to study Zen. Since the *zazen* circle was started by Hōjō Tokiyuki (1858–1929), who was appointed to the Fourth Higher immediately after leaving the Imperial University, and who was extremely popular among the students, it had an intellectual atmosphere from the start. For Suzuki, from the beginning, Zen was different from other forms of Buddhism. It was not bound to traditional doctrines and was not sentimental. Involved in the practice of sitting in meditation through his own will, it seems he felt it to be something intellectual and of the will. Later, he left for Tokyo, and was encouraged by older intellectual peers living in his Tokyo boarding house to practice Zen meditation under Imagita Kōsen (1816–1892) at Engakuji temple in Kamakura. Zen was, for young thinkers at the time, an extraordinarily intellectual religion.

(5) *Spending his young adulthood in America.* Suzuki lived abroad from ages twenty-six to thirty-eight. Generally, this is a period in which one's thinking is solidified, and in which one finds employment, takes up a social position, and begins engaging in suitable work while raising children. Moreover, given that it was the Meiji period, this stage of life corresponded approximately to what is today the period between ages thirty and forty-five—what can be

once I have become somewhat skilled;" and "Right now I have no salary at all" (SDZ 31:225, 226).

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called the prime of life. Suzuki's thinking, which was already fairly set, was forced to adjust when it encountered a radically different culture during this time. Furthermore, he lived in a foreign country as a poor bachelor with no social position and no credentials. This foreign country was America, the so-called "land of freedom," a newly rising capitalist state entering a period of prosperity. The culture of this society was completely different from that of Japan, and the encounter with this alien culture must have been quite a shock.

Through his day-to-day life, he was able to see differences in all sorts of daily customs, while through newspapers and other publications, he became increasingly aware of the problems in American society. As for the former, he was able, in his personal life, to observe the situation of women, the upbringing of children, the entrepreneurial spirit of an emerging nation, and differences in attitudes toward money. He was thereby able to write many essays on women, education, and relations between the sexes for Japanese journals and in letters to friends. As for the latter, he mainly concerned himself with the many social problems which inevitably arose from an emerging capitalist society. Suzuki witnessed phenomena such as the gap between capitalists and labor, the extreme differences between rich and poor, and the greed of capitalists and their showy trumpeting of philanthropic enterprises. He juxtaposed [these problems] with the labor question in Japan, which was gradually becoming a social problem.

These observations, in turn, forced Suzuki to face the question of how to view himself and what to do about it. This led to the problem of reworking, reintegrating, and solidifying his personal identity; and as a twenty-six year old of Meiji, it was only natural that he should seek his identity as an Asian and as a Japanese. Moreover, he had no official title, but was an energetic, reform-minded Buddhist. It follows that in a Christian country, his awareness of himself as a Buddhist believer naturally determined his self-identity. The fact that he was a Buddhist and not a Christian led to his efforts to explicate the differences between Buddhism and Christianity and led further to his conviction that Buddhism was superior to Christianity. Suzuki's doubts and resistance toward Paul Carus's religious views, and especially toward Carus's understanding of Buddhism, contributed greatly to this process.⁵⁰

TRANSLATED BY ANDREW BERNSTEIN

⁵⁰ In another letter addressed to Shaku Sōen, Suzuki wrote, "As for his [Carus's] religion, from my standpoint, there are many things with which I disagree. His knowledge concerning Buddhism is not very profound, and he tends to emphasize Hinayana views. Although, in the beginning, I lent an ear to his 'Religion of Science,' recently I have gradually given rise to views which seem to clash with his opinions."